

EDITORIAL

## GOMPERS “ACCELERATING” GERMANY?

By DANIEL DE LEON

**R**ECENT batches of exchanges from Germany, beginning with the Berlin *Vorwaerts*, have a good deal about Gompers.

The first impression the reports make is one of unqualified joy. Gompers, the notorious labor-lieutenant of the American capitalist class, is being recognized by the German Social Democratic press for that which the Socialist Labor Party press has long ago convicted him—and the worthy is being handled accordingly.

The second impression made by the reports is not quite so joyful. Although certain evolutionary stages are necessary to progress, and, therefore, to be welcomed, nevertheless, they bring with them trials that ever accompany a crisis.

That Gompers has gone to Europe as an agent of the capitalist interests centered in the National Civic Federation, of which he is a Vice-President, and which require Gompersistic Trades Unionism to buttress them, was suspected by the alert at the time his trip was first announced. The circumstance that the capitalist Ralph Easley, the Secretary of the National Civic Federation, followed closely upon the heels of Gompers to Europe, for the avowed purpose of organizing there Civic Federations; the further circumstance that the *German Employers' Journal*, as quoted by the Berlin *Vorwaerts*, is singing the praises of Gompers and his A.F. of L. as material worthy the emulation of the material that mans and constitutes the European Unions;—all this, and sundry lesser straws, go to turn suspicion into certainty.

At the International Congress in Stuttgart, Mr. A.M. Simons, a delegate of the A.F. of L.ized Socialist party, announced in his regulation howling dervish style that the Post-Van Cleave capitalists “overtopped” the capitalists of the National Civic Federation. This was a bit of Simonistic nonsense. Top-Capitalism is in and back of

the National Civic Federation, and that body, with the aid of its Vice-Presidential Gompers, has its tentacles in most of the A.F. of L. Unions, whose official Journals, Mr. Easley has boasted, draw their economic and sociologic inspirations from the sub-bureau that is superintended by Secretary Easley himself. By this means American Top-Capitalism has led American Labor by the nose. It was a clever move. It has given satisfaction to its planners. In the meantime, Top-Capitalism is becoming ever more international. The plague, so to speak, is becoming like confluent smallpox. In European, especially continental countries, where there is no Socialist party to debauch things, the Socialist movement has so purified the Labor atmosphere that Unionism is substantially pure, which means substantially class-conscious. That's a nuisance to internationally spreading capitalism. The National Civic Federation having succeeded in America, where capitalism developed fastest, the attempt is now to be made to hitch the continental Unions to an International Civic Federation. It is a typically American Top-Capitalist scheme—get its hook in the snout of international Labor. Hence Easley and his Gompers have hied themselves to Europe.

That the German Socialists are on to the scheme appears from the *Vorwaerts's* reference to "the stroke that Gompers has in mind"; that they know what the success of the scheme portends appears from the statement in the same *Vorwaerts*, that, in that event, the "wood of which the German Trades Unions are made would then become as dry as that which constitutes the A.F. of L." So far so good. But there is worse.

Legien, the Secretary of the German Unions, supported Gompers at the meeting which Gompers addressed in Berlin, and at which Gompers not only lied shamelessly, but at which he turned his back upon the Socialist Movement, as a matter of no international concern. Moreover, such was the wording of Legien's support of Gompers that the Chemnitz *Volksstimme* (People's Voice), as quoted by the *Vorwaerts*, declares that Legien expressed himself so tactlessly upon the conception of the "true revolutionists" that he arouses the suspicion of "occupying entirely the American standpoint, and of looking upon the Social Democracy, to a certain extent, as a disturber of the unity of the economic action of the workingmen of Germany." Nor yet is this all. The Berlin *Correspondenzblatt*, the organ of the

German Trades Unions has opened fire, in its issue of the 7th of this month, upon the *Vorwaerts*, on the subject of the Gompers address, by making peevish criticisms of the *Vorwaerts's* report, and even insinuating against the *Vorwaerts* a charge of hostility towards the unification of the international proletariat.

It has started. Addressing the full session of the International Congress at Stuttgart on the subject of Unionism, the chairman of the Socialist Labor Party delegation said: "You may have Christian Unions and Yellow Unions in Europe—all in support of capitalism. In America, however, the leaders of the large Trades Unions work hand in glove with the National Civic Federation, that is the Top-Capitalists, and its principles are not the class struggle. In order to conceal the antagonism between capital and labor, they affect to stand upon harmony between the classes. The Trades Union leaders lead the working class into a blind alley, where it is impossible to co-operate with them. **THE TIME IS AT HAND WHEN YOU ALSO WILL SEE THIS DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE, AND THEN YOU WILL HAVE TO ACT ACCORDINGLY.**" (Stuttgart report, p. 358.)

Capitalist development in Germany has of recent years been phenomenal. In many an industry German capitalism has recently outstripped Great Britain. The completer capitalist development has brought in Germany its parallel of capitalist requirements. How far the development has gone may be judged from the sequence of facts cited above. A National Civic Federation is planned for Germany with the view to turn her Trades Union Movement into what the Gompers concern has become and is acknowledged to be in America—the bulwark of Capitalism.

The news from Germany is, with regard to the Easley-Gompers machinations, cause for a qualified joy—joy that things in Germany are ripening to the point where our comrades there are bound to draw in closer sympathy with the S.L.P.; sorrow, because of the trials that the ripening of things will bring upon them, and of which they are now beginning to have a few foretastes.

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