

GERMAN SOCIALISTS AND THE WAR.

I.

A CRITICISM.

AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. E. D. MOREL.

MY DEAR MOREL,

Is Germany entirely responsible? Such is the question which you ask in the *Labour Leader*, basing yourself upon certain obscurities and contradictions of the *White Paper* published by your Foreign Office.

I am too familiar with your courage and disinterestedness for me to put you among those who think that England could stand aside from a question of justice and liberty. The scruples you have are due to the spirit of fairness. Having yourself worked for better understanding between England and France on the one side and Germany on the other, you are aware of the existence of Germans who desired, as ardently as yourself, a *rapprochement* between the Western nations. Moreover, you have not forgotten the Jingo appeals which have been lavished in France at certain moments. Neither can you close your eyes upon the political unknown quantity represented by Russia. And you anxiously ask yourself whether our representatives have done *all that was possible to avoid the catastrophe*.

These hesitations, these fears, were shared by us in France until the irreparable had taken place. Called upon by Jaurès and Hervé, our (French) Socialists, unhampered by our Government, went out into the market place with the cry "Down with War." Our Socialists proclaimed their resolution not to let France take part in a war of aggression. Thanks to their insistence, when the German investing army was already massed upon our frontier, our troops gave over ten kilometres of frontier to the enemy's incursions, in order to prevent such incidents as might produce a collision.

But the enemy took upon himself to bring the Government and people into agreement. We have not had to inquire whether we should back a Russian attack upon Austria, we have had to defend ourselves against German aggression.

On the other hand, your Government by no means backed France without any reservations. What it did was always subordinated to desperate efforts to keep the peace. Your Government's co-operation was given definitely only after the violation of Luxemburg and of Belgium displayed Germany's disdain for "scraps of paper" and for the engagements she herself had signed.

I quite see that certain persons might incur the reproach of not having exhausted all the resources of negotiation. Our (French) diplomatists, more than yours, appeared at first inclined to put the question upon the slippery ground of *prestige*. But with that lucid firmness which is our admiration and envy, your Foreign Secretary always clearly defined his intention of reserving the liberty of choice of your Government and your Parliament. He turned a deaf ear to the imprudent solicitations of those who, from the beginning, were in favour of giving Germany the handle she wanted.

After this, in those hours of terrible tension, when despatch crossed despatch, alternating hope and fear, what matter the uncertainties which are troubling you?

Did the Austrian mobilisation precede or follow the Russian general mobilisation? Can you believe that the real responsibility of the war relates to such a question as this?

At any rate, already on the 31st July, that is to say the very day of the Russian mobilisation, Germany had proclaimed the "state of imminence of war," which was equivalent to a mobilisation,* even before sending her ultimatum to Russia. And that was merely the culmination of a series of military measures.

And can you seriously believe that in the face of a country whose mobilisation requires at least a month, Germany, if she had wanted peace, could not have postponed her ultimatum, or even her declaration of war, for twelve or twenty-four hours?

For it was Germany and no other who hurled the double declaration of war and took the irreparable step. But I wish to go further back in my search for responsibilities. This war is not merely the result of eight days of negotiations. It is the culmination of a long period of expectation and anxiety which began with the first Franco-German crisis of 1905.

I will concede to your argument that *on this occasion* the diplomacy of the Triple *Entente* was more concerned with removing from itself the appearances of responsibility than in really trying to prevent the conflict. I will concede to your argument that Germany was the victim, as France was in 1870, of a kind of Ems telegram.† I am willing to leave to her diplomatists (whom she agrees to treat as incapable) and to her Government, merely such responsibility as was accepted by the Ministers of Napoleon III. But is it possible to separate from them the German

* It was not equivalent to full mobilisation and it was proclaimed after the Russian general mobilisation became known in Berlin. (No. 112).—E.D.M.

† This refers to the intrigue of which Germany was the victim during the last Morocco crisis, whereby a completely distorted account (as afterwards shown by the French Yellow Book) of a private conversation between the French Ambassador at Berlin and the German Foreign Secretary was foisted upon the British and French public, and resulted in Mr. Lloyd George's famous Mansion House speech (July 21st, 1911). It was when this intrigue became finally and fully exposed with the issue of the French Yellow Book that Mr. Morel publicly referred to it as comparable to the incident of the Ems despatch. It is to this speech, which was reproduced in France, that M. Paix Scaillès refers.—E.D.M.

nation? Can you claim on behalf of the German people that it let itself be dragged into a quarrel which was not its affair? Such a view would be very badly received by the Germans themselves, if they could still hear you. And you would find it difficult to justify that assertion by facts, so far at all events as the present crisis is concerned.

But I have read in the *Labour Leader* a case (for Germany) almost entirely extracted from the book of Marcel Sembat. *Germany*,* it says, has made this war from fear and hatred of Russia, *because she preferred the militarism of Prussia to the tyranny of Cossacks.*

The thesis has weight, and is deserving of examination. The Socialist Edward Bernstein, one of the most remarkable intelligences of the German Socialist Party, spoke to me upon this thesis every time I met him. I even asked him to expound it to the French public; I regret he did not, for it would have saved the *Labour Leader* from borrowing its case for German Socialism from a French Socialist.

The thesis of Marcel Sembat is the same as yours, the same as ours. What response has it met in Germany? As regards yourselves, it has been well received. Although the German Government has obstinately refused every concession to the pacific advances of your Liberal Ministers, yet it has displayed deference and sympathy towards the English nation, and your movement has met with sympathy and deference on the other side of the German Ocean. Although one might dispute the value of a *rapprochement* which never gets as far as official *milieux*, I will admit that it was sincere towards you. But you will admit that a policy of *rapprochement* had neither sense nor value unless it extended to the three Western Powers—England, Germany, France—otherwise it would have been for England nothing but the most lamentable dupe's work. What would an Anglo-German *rapprochement without* France have been, except the

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renewal of the mistake of 1870? Just another concession to German Imperialism, another step in the direction of the subordination of Europe to Prussian militarism.

What requires to be examined is the reception given to the French attempts, carried on in the spirit of Marcel Sembat's book, which you are now using as a case, in favour of Germany. You know how much I for my part have always worked for such a *rapprochement*. I was at Berne and at Bâle, alongside of the French Deputies. I sought passionately in Alsace-Lorraine for the key of the temple of Franco-German peace.

What we come upon here are not the responsibilities of diplomatists, but the responsibilities of nations. The representatives of the French people were face to face with the representatives of the German nation. They brought them the immense sacrifice of their aspirations for a *revanche*. They asked them nothing but the autonomy of the annexed provinces within the framework of the German Empire. We hoped that German Socialism, by insisting that Alsace-Lorraine receive those elementary liberties, would give a decisive blow to Pan-Germanist oppression. Starting from the need of peace, which is so deeply felt in all peoples, German Democracy could set up against aristocratic and militaristic Prussia those claims of internal freedom which would give to Alsace-Lorraine only that which the German Socialists claimed for other Germans. Well! The facts are there. Immediately after the Conference of Berne, the incidents of Zabern gave German Liberalism an admirable opportunity of emancipating itself from Prussian tyranny, but it capitulated disgracefully. While we were fighting shoulder to shoulder against the three years' law which seemed to us the blundering and unnecessary beginning of an aggressive policy, German Socialism, by an ingenious compromise, secured the success of the additional armaments, and when, at Bâle, another Meeting of Deputies attempted to define the conditions of the task of (Franco-

German) *rapprochement*, our friends encountered about the question of Alsace-Lorraine a silence which showed but too well the ravages of Pan-Germanist Socialism in contemporary Germany, ravages which were denounced by Andler in a review which I then had the honour of editing. With that *terre à terre* practicability which the Germans have grafted upon their blundering and quarrelsome sentimentality, German Socialists were unable to see the importance of the question of Alsace-Lorraine. Like their masters, it seemed to them that there was a kind of abdication in our honest pacifism, and they claimed to accept our sacrifice (*i.e.*, of the *Revanche*) without giving up anything of their policy of great Germanic and small Socialistic profits. We found we had not really been dealing with a German democracy, fighting against Prussian feudalism and seeking the moral support of other nations for claims of political liberty and national justice. What we were dealing with were German workmen, anxious before everything about their material interests, very indifferent to the interests and especially to the feelings of others, and more inclined to share in the products of Pan-Germanic rapine than to combat Prussian militarism. The day will come when the revelation of the part played by German Socialism in Alsace will afford an illustration of what I am bringing forward. Nevertheless we did not give up. We did not break off preliminaries of which we might have been the dupes. We wished to refer to international Socialist congresses, we wished to submit the question of peace and the question of Alsace-Lorraine publicly and oblige social democracy to take notice of its duties in the face of Germany and Europe.

Then came the war. A few days before it burst out our Socialists and Syndicalists tried in vain to obtain from the German delegates, at Brussels, an active collaboration in their efforts against war.

We have the right to say that Germany is completely responsible for this war. Not only official Germany, but

the German nation, neither of which did anything or wished to do anything to help the understanding of Western nations in favour of peace.

If you English ever met any private co-operation in your attempts at a *rapprochement*, the German Government has never offered your Government anything except the demand for a cowardly abdication of your European duties for the benefit of Pan-Germanic rapine. And as to us Frenchmen, our efforts, our honest proposal to abandon the warlike ideal of the *Revanche*, a proposal countersigned by the majority of our delegates at Berne and at Bâle, met nothing on the part of the Liberals and Democratic Deputies of Germany except a hypocritical reserve. These men, without power and without responsibility, who had no other mandate than that of representing the aspirations of the German nation, found nothing wherewith to answer the generous gesture of our delegates.

They would very likely have accepted to separate us from Russia in the name of our principles, but they refused obstinately in exchange to renounce their participation in the profits of the aggressive and rapacious policy of feudal Prussia. They appeared, therefore, in the odious light of hypocritical abettors of the Empire, and with the mission of duping us, as German soldiers are at present doing with the Red Cross and the White Flag.

We have not been their dupes. Our efforts have imposed upon our statesmen that desire for peace which forced the enemy to unmask, which has permitted our nation to unite in the unanimous resolution of defending its liberty and its life, and which has placed the English people in the presence of an obvious, undeniable duty. We have remained faithful to the ideal of the France of the Revolution, and it is this ideal which to-day animates our armies in the field. And it is this ideal also, with your good permission, which is fertilising the effort of Imperial Russia. The *Labour Leader* opposes some isolated acts of a bureaucracy, when it was all-powerful, to the public

promises of the Tsar. We are aware of the resistance which old tyrannies oppose to young liberties. Are we not experiencing that in France at present? What right have you to be less confiding in the future than the Russian revolutionaries, the Bourtseffs, the Plekhanoffs, the Rubanovitches?

You raise a doubt about the promises of the Tsar. Good. But the German Emperor saves you that trouble. He has given you war. He promises you nothing but oppression if you are vanquished.

One word more, my dear Morel, just to remind you of our common struggles against the atrocities of the Congo. Come and make a tour in France. I will show you the burnt down villages, the houses pillaged with filthy methodicalness, the towns and monuments destroyed without military reasons. Together we will make the inventory of the Rheims disaster, which is more complete, alas, than the *Labour Leader* imagines. You shall also hear the testimony of the victims of the methods of intimidation practised by the Germans against the inhabitants; you will be able to verify the abuse and the contempt of the Red Cross. All this, you may say, is the German Army directed by the Prussian Junkers, but not the nation. I am convinced of that. I believe, as you do, that there is a profound opposition between Germany and Prussia. But Germany has received the Prussian impress, deeply, completely.

Before giving it our confidence, and in order not to be duped, in order not to risk being victimised a second time, we await that the German nation should show itself, that the German nation should reject all solidarity with this Prussian militarism, which is, in my eyes, far more to be feared than the Russian autocracy.

Have you read the impudent proclamation of the German intellectuals? And if—which is to be feared—Germany should remain united in her insolent pretensions, if she refuses freedom as she has refused peace, what are

we to do after this war? I ask you that! How are we to insure that peace which we have never ceased to wish for, and for which England and France are to-day fighting side by side?

That is the problem to be resolved; and a more important problem than that of ascertaining with strict impartiality the responsibilities of our diplomatists, who appear mere innocent children compared with those who have taken the initiative of declaring war not only on Russia, but also on France and Belgium.

I should be very glad, my dear Morel, if you could obtain for this letter the hospitality of the *Labour Leader*.* It will complete, not without utility, the quotation from Marcel Sembat by showing its readers the reasons of the present attitude of those numerous Frenchmen who believed, as he did, that a Franco-German *rapprochement* was the desirable condition of a European peace.—I am, etc.,

(Signed) CH. PAIX SÉAILLES,

Editor of the "*Courier Européen*"
and of the "*Droits de l'Homme*."

II.

A COMMENT.

I HAVE so much personal regard for M. Ch. Paix Séailles; so much appreciation of his own past efforts in securing a frank and open discussion of international foreign policy; so much admiration for the courage he has displayed on many occasions in criticising what he believed to be unwise and wrong in the actions of the official classes in his own country, and so many happy recollections of joint labours in days gone by against a great evil, that I prefer to refrain

* We publish it instead, with M. Paix Séailles' consent, in the SOCIALIST REVIEW.

from entering into an elaborate detailed criticism of his letter.

Apart from the point touched upon below, which is of capital importance, I will, therefore, content myself with a brief comment. The article which I contributed to the *Labour Leader* under the title of "Was Germany Wholly to Blame?" was written with the object of inducing thoughtful people at home to look more closely into the official evidence which has been given to us, and upon which we are invited to place the entire blame for the war upon Germany. The queries which I put, and the facts to which I drew attention, seemed to me to possess great significance, cumulatively considered. My French friend does not think so. I am sorry. As for the article containing the extract from M. Marcel Sembat's book which the *Labour Leader* published, I was not the author of it, and in as far as M. Paix Séailles' letter deals with it, I must leave its author to reply.

There is one subject, however, in M. Paix Séailles' letter which cannot be allowed to pass. He says: "We, the French, were not called upon to examine whether we should support a Russian attack against Austria. We were called upon to defend ourselves against German aggression." Now, if that means anything at all, it means that in my correspondent's view, France would not have attacked Germany if she herself had not been attacked by Germany. But can that thesis survive examination on the official facts submitted to us? If it did possess any substance it would imply that the French Government did not consider itself bound by the terms of its alliance with Russia to come to the support of that Power in the event of a collision between Russia and the Teutonic Powers over Balkan affairs. *Had such indeed been the attitude of the French Government, the war would have been confined to the Powers immediately concerned in the dispute; neither France nor Belgium would have been to-day the scene of bloody strife, and Britain herself would not have been*

involved. Quite probably there would have been no war at all.

But such was not the attitude of the French Government, and I cannot understand how M. Paix Séailles can harbour any illusion on that issue. Germany's offensive against France was not unprovoked. It was axiomatic; the inevitable consequence of the unnatural Franco-Russian alliance.

On July 30 the French Ambassador in London told Sir Edward Grey that France would decline to remain neutral in the event of a Russo-German war. (No. 105 White Book.) M. Sazanoff, the Russian Minister, told Sir George Buchanan, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, on July 25, that if Russia felt secure of the support of France she would face all the risks of war. (No. 17.) On July 24 the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg told Sir George Buchanan that "France would fulfil all the obligations entailed by her alliance with Russia if necessity arose, besides supporting Russia strongly in any diplomatic negotiations." (No. 6.)

It is, and has been for long enough, my own contention that had the policy of the French and British Foreign Offices been a policy bent upon peace, such pressure must have been put upon St. Petersburg that the Russian Government would either not have proceeded to the length of the mobilisation of all her armies (*i.e.*, to a directly provocative act against Germany which enabled the German General Staff to sweep the board) or, if despite this pressure, she had done so, France could have honourably declined to have been dragged into a war over a dispute which concerned her not at all, even as Italy has so far succeeded in doing with less cause. But the French Government had not, apparently, the least intention of putting effective pressure upon Russia or of dissociating itself from Russia if Russia went to extremes. Although the French people are as ignorant of the *actual terms* of the Franco-Russian Alliance as are the people of this

country (in itself the grisliest satire upon so-called democratic Government), the French Government made it plain from the beginning of the crisis that if Russia went to war with Germany France would join in on the side of Russia. That France and Russia would act against Germany in the event of a general European war, has been one of the paramount factors governing the international situation since the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance, *i.e.*, for the last twenty years. Had Germany felt safe from assault on her Western flank, an attack upon France was motiveless. At one moment, when—owing, as the official explanation has it, to a misunderstanding over the telephone between Sir Edward Grey and the German Ambassador in London—it seemed possible that Britain's good offices might secure the neutrality of France, the Rulers of Germany immediately responded and offered telegraphically to counter-order all aggressive movements. (*Vide* documents published in "The Diplomatic History of the War," by M. Phillips Price, pp. 77; 256-7.)

The military strategy of the German Headquarters Staff was wholly determined by the belief that the French Government would assist Russia in the event of a Russo-German war. That strategy was based upon what German military men regarded as the only possible strategy to ensure the national safety, *viz.*, an immediate offensive against France; and, for the past seven years at least, upon an offensive through Belgium which had become the only practicable avenue—strategically speaking. This was well-known in England, and British military experts and writers had constantly drawn attention to it. Even as far back as 1887 (when France and Germany were on the eve of war), before the conclusion of the Franco-Russo Alliance, *i.e.*, when Germany would have had to deal only with France, and before the Franco-German frontier had become, on the French side, virtually impassable to modern armies, the German plans included an offensive through Belgium. This was appreciated and understood in

England, and the attitude of the British official world—interpreted by such organs as the *Standard*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *Spectator*—at that time, was that if Germany asked for a right of way through Belgium, Britain should not oppose the request, provided she obtained a guarantee that the *status quo ante* would be restored at the termination of the war. In other words, the significance attached by British officialdom and its backers to that particular “Scrap of Paper” in 1887 was the exact antithesis of the attitude adopted by British officialdom and its backers in 1914. And we talk about the “continuity” of foreign policy! I am not arguing that we were right then and wrong now, or *vice versa*. I am simply showing that, if from the German strategical point of view, there was a case for using Belgian territory in 1887, there was—always from that point of view—an overwhelming case in 1914, when Germany was threatened with war on two sides at once by a combination of greatly superior forces, and when the Franco-German frontier on the French side had become practically unassailable owing to its defences and owing to the immensely-increased number of military effectives needing a wider and more level area for deployment purposes.

That Germany did not want war with France in 1914 is super-abundantly proved by the White Book, and its accessory documents, which Mr. Phillips Price has collected together and analysed, thereby placing the British public under a deep obligation. That, *politically speaking*, Germany made a capital error in not acting on the strict defensive towards France is my opinion, because I believe that a French offensive in that event would have split French opinion in two, and would have made Britain's intervention at least doubtful. But that, failing a declaration of French neutrality, Germany was, *militarily speaking*, unable to remain quiescent until the Franco-Russian nutcrackers had her in their grip is obvious. That Franco-British diplomacy could have prevented that situation from arising out of a

quarrel which did not in a remote degree affect the interests of the British, French, and Belgian *peoples* will, I am persuaded, be the verdict of posterity.

Every attempt by whomsoever made, which would perpetuate the legend that Germany's attack upon France was, in a military sense, unprovoked, must be fought and exposed in the interests of truth. The democracies of Europe will never emerge from the morass into which the secret diplomacy of their so-called statesmen has plunged them, until and unless the truth about the origin of the war is established.

E. D. MOREL.

P.S.—Since the above note was written the French *Yellow Book* has been published, and, despite its careful editing, provides additional corroboration of the facts pointed to above. In No. 106, for example, M. René Viviani, the French Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, informs the French Ambassadors at London and St. Petersburg on July 30 that "France is resolved to fulfil all the obligations of her alliance." In No. 117, M. Viviani telegraphs to the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg on July 31 that he does not intend to reply to the German Ambassador's request for information as to France's attitude in the event of a conflict between Russia and Germany :

I do not intend to make any statement to him on this subject, and I shall confine myself to telling him that France will be inspired by her interests. The Government of the Republic, in effect, only owes to her Ally a statement as to her intentions.

There is all the traditional French subtlety behind this statement. But of its significance there can be no doubt at all.

E. D. M.

FRENCH SOCIALISTS AND THE WAR.

IN ANSWER TO THE PRECEDING ARTICLE BY M. PAIX
SEAILLES.

As Monsieur Paix Séailles' very interesting letter to Mr. E. D. Morel contains allusions to my recent *Labour Leader* article on a passage of Marcel Sembat's "*Faites un Roi sinon faites la Paix*," and as the entire letter is, in fact, an arraignment of the spirit animating that article and the *Labour Leader's* whole attitude to the war, I must ask permission to answer him on one or two points.

The *honest scruples* (*vosre scruple est tout de loyauté*) shown in Mr. Morel's "Is Germany entirely responsible?" were shared, M. Paix Séailles tells him, by French Progressives "*until the moment when the Irreparable had happened.*"

That is just the difference between M. Paix Séailles and us. The *Irreparable*, that is to say, the fact of being at war with Germany, has *not* put an end to Mr. Morel's, to the *Labour Leader's*, and to many English men and women's doubts and scruples about the responsibility of this war. In France M. Paix Séailles tells us "the enemy took upon himself to bring the people into agreement with the Government." That is just it; the fact of the war has made French Progressists neither more nor less than German ones, uncritical of their Government's share in bringing the war about; this "Irreparable" fact has made them, French and German quite equally, accept their

Government's assurance that such a war was wantonly forced upon them by the adversary, the French laying all the blame upon Germany, and the Germans all the blame upon Russia and Russia's allies. And this "Irreparable" fact has closed the eyes of M. Paix Séailles and his compatriots, as it has closed the eyes of Liebknecht, of my veteran anti-Prussian friend Professor Brentano, and all other German Radicals and Socialists, to the remoter origin of the war in Government acts, attitude, and policy, which they had been unwilling or unable to check at the time and in time.

As regards the French share in such remoter responsibilities, it will be convenient to seek them in further quotations from the book of M. Sembat, which M. Paix Séailles apparently accepts as the expression of what he, as well as M. Sembat himself, thought about Franco-German relations before the "Irreparable," in other words the declaration of war, had "brought them into agreement with their Government."

"In the eyes of Germans," wrote M. Sembat eighteen months before the war (p. 83) "the Franco-Russian alliance, and the Triple *Entente* on the top of it, look like a compact between two civilised peoples and barbarism." Moreover, that war with France would be the probable result of such a Russo-French alliance the French Socialists had been warned almost before that alliance came about, by Engels, and again by Bebel. Despite repeated warnings from their German comrades, did the French Progressists make an efficient and persistent attempt to prevent, to end, this Russian alliance? To have done with what M. Sembat calls (p. 84) the "*manœuvres encerclantes de Delcassé*," i.e., the enclosing of Germany in a net of hostile engagements and—as in the case of Morocco—of detrimental secret clauses? Did French Progressists reassure Germany by efficiently interfering against the employment of England as France's catspaw in Morocco (Morel, "Morocco in Diplomacy," 1912) and

the use of the Algeiras conference as something which M. Sembat describes (p. 215) Germany as remembering "as a dangerous trap"—a trap which "will make her suspect sinister designs and take her precautions against their recurrence or their permanent existence"? Then about the *Revanche* and the question of Alsace-Lorraine: "If," wrote M. Sembat (p. 87), "the good intention of the German people and the Emperor are not sufficient to reassure us French, why should *our* intentions reassure Germans? Our (French) intentions? They are, to say the least of it, not straightforward (*troubles*) . . . we have wanted two contradictory things; on one side to keep the peace: the most notorious, furious militarist candidate has not ventured to come before his electorate with the programme of war; on the other hand, never have we (French) consented to admit to ourselves, still less admit publicly, that we accept the Treaty of Frankfort (*i.e.*, annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and the territorial *status quo*). How can Germany take our pacific declarations seriously, when the most notorious partisans of the *Revanche* declare themselves desirous of peace? From all this the Germans conclude that France wishes for the *Revanche* and that only prudence prevents her from declaring it openly. The Germans feel us on the *qui vive*, ready to pounce upon any opportunity of victory. I put it to every Frenchman capable of fair play: are the Germans so mistaken in all this? Can you affirm in your innermost heart that they are wrong in thinking like that? If an opportunity were to offer, obvious, unique, putting a weakened Germany at our mercy, offering us assured victory, should we fail to snatch at such an opportunity? Which of us can promise that our pacific intentions would then have the upper hand, and that a violent wave of war-like patriotism should not sweep away every obstacle?"

M. Paix Séailles is angry with the German Socialists for not having met their French comrades half way about the question of Alsace-Lorraine. This also had already

been answered by M. Sembat (p. 101): "We invite the Germans to seal a bond of peace and justice; and meanwhile, with a wink, we add, 'Besides, we can decide later on. . . . (D'ailleurs nous verrons plustard.'" "I ask" (continues M. Sembat), "whether in thus appealing to their higher sentiments we should not be drawing them into a pitfall?"

In a passage, leaving, however, some doubt which of a succession of *its* he is precisely talking about, M. Paix Séailles claims to have shared the thesis of M. Sembat's "*Faites un Roi sinon faites la Paix*," and in his very last sentence he explicitly places himself among the Frenchmen who shared M. Sembat's views before the *Irreparable* "put them all in agreement with their Government." But he is mistaken about M. Sembat's thesis. The thesis of M. Sembat's was not the naïvely obvious one that, as M. Paix Séailles puts it, "a Franco-German *rapprochement* was the desirable condition of European peace." *It was that such a Franco-German rapprochement was feasible only by leaving Home Rule for Alsace-Lorraine entirely out of the question*, and being content to hope that an improvement for Alsace-Lorraine would be the result of such a perfectly *unconditional rapprochement*. "I do not think," writes M. Sembat (p. 212-213), "and I have explained why I do not think, that Germany would consent to discuss Alsatian-Lorrenese Home Rule as a preliminary condition to a *rapprochement* of which that Home Rule would be the natural and certain sequel. Do not let us ask for impossibilities; this act of wisdom will permit us to obtain all that is possible. The only point of a Franco-German *rapprochement* ought to be in France's eyes the final foundation of European peace, and the safeguarding, in a consolidated Western Europe, of the conditions of France's free development and legitimate influence."

If this was the opinion of a French Socialist leader *after* the Congresses of Berne and Bâle (both of which he

specifies in his book), why should the German Socialists at those Congresses be called militarists, Pan-Germanists, and other hard names by M. Paix Séailles because they did not commit themselves to what M. Sembat calls an impossible policy, when he tells us (p. 169) "*for France to make the autonomy of Alsace-Lorraine, or any condition concerning it, the basis, the preamble, of a better understanding between France and Germany is tantamount to turning any such rapprochement into an impossibility.*" But the naïf unreasonableness of these French Socialists appears, according to M. Paix Séailles' account, to have gone even further, since in return for assistance in this "impossible" Franco-German demand for Alsace-Lorraine's Home Rule, they were offering their German comrades what? The renunciation, M. Paix Séailles tells us, of the "warlike ideal of the *Revanche*," the renunciation of something which the international and anti-militarist nature of Social Democracy absolutely forbade their having kept! And then the German Socialists are slanged as militarists because they did not accept this generous bargain of removing the threat of a possible war!

But all this part of M. Paix Séailles' letters merely brings home to one the hopelessness of M. Sembat's entreaty that his fellow countrymen should make up their minds once for all whether they wanted peace or war, in that terribly sad passage (p. 169) ending, "But you, Frenchmen, are you capable of doing that (*i.e.*, ceasing to think of *Revanche*), are you really, honestly, ready to do it? You are not? Well! I can understand your point of view. I can understand you, but on condition that *you* consent to understand the full meaning of that refusal: your NO means war."

And indeed, after reading M. Paix Séailles' calm taking-for-granted that England's non-intervention in 1870 was an acknowledged mistake (shades of Bright and Cobden!), and that an Anglo-German *rapprochement* would

be merely "another step in the subordination of Europe to Prussian militarism" unless it was made worth France's while to join it; in fact, after recognising the constantly-implied childlike identification of the defence of France's feelings about Alsace-Lorraine with England's duty to civilisation and herself, we English readers of M. Paix Séailles' letter may begin to suspect that, at bottom, what England is at present fighting for is not the neutrality of Belgium but that settlement of the Alsace-Lorraine question which the French Socialists, if we may believe M. Paix Séailles, demanded of their German comrades in return for a promise to give up all hope of war.

Be this as it may, if the French Socialist Party proved unable or unwilling to impose on their Government a policy putting an end to what M. Sembat denounces as the *Algeciras pitfall* and the *encircling manœuvres* of Delcassé, and thus delivering Germany from the constant fear of just such a coalition as we are to-day witnessing, what right has M. Paix Séailles to fall foul of the German Socialists for their mean-spirited acceptance of the German Government policy? And if French Socialists had not prevented their country backing the most shameful acts of Russian despotism with its loans and its military alliance, why expect the German Socialists to be able to make a clean sweep of Zabern and all it was based upon?

Surely the example of his own country, wavering between the wish for peace and the hope of *Revanche*, between the "principles of 1789" and money-lending to the destroyer of the first Dumas and of Finland's liberty, ought to show M. Paix Séailles that it is too soon to expect the parties of peace and reform to make a clean sweep of the prejudices, the ungenerous fears, and the monopoly and concession-mongering of their respective countries, or even to oppose an organised resistance to what is the inheritance of centuries of misrule and apathy. And it would be worthy of M. Paix Séailles' evident love of progress if he recognised that these parties of peace and social

justice can never attain to such efficient organisation and unwavering preponderance so long as the *Irreparable*, the bare fact of war, can unite unanimous nation against unanimous nation, and allow the retrograde elements in each country to hide their crimes, or their blunders, by throwing the entire responsibility of a war upon the adversary.

That is what has happened in Germany: the entire Socialist Party, as M. Paix Séailles so bitterly complains, has enrolled itself under the Kaiser and the Pan-Germanists. The same has happened in France, and M. Paix Séailles' letter proves it, for he also is satisfied with nothing less than throwing the whole and exclusive responsibility of the war, a responsibility which is not a matter of days but of years of mistaken policy, upon Germany. "It is not our business," M. Paix Séailles objects to Mr. Morel, "to examine whether we ought to have assisted Russia in an attack upon Austria. We have to defend ourselves against German aggression."

Exactly! But if France *had* refused, instead of having bound herself for years, to assist Russia in attacking Austria, Germany would not have attacked *her*. Whatever obscurities there may be in diplomatic texts, this much is obvious: that France, unless she admits that she is fighting for her own *Revanche*, is fighting as the ally of Russia; is being fought as Russia's ally. And here again I must quote Sembat when he wrote (p. 77): "In my opinion the present system of European alliances is making for war and not for peace. And when I say *war* I mean war with *infinitely graver consequences than* EVEN THOSE CAN FORESEE WHO FEAR AND HATE IT MOST."

One of these consequences is precisely the wholesale throwing of responsibility on the adversary, such as we see it in the articles of even the most Socialistic of German papers; and see it equally in this very letter of M. Paix Séailles, which ends off with an invitation to view the horrors of war in France, those horrors which will doubt-

less be repeated in Germany as soon as she is invaded by the Allies.

Now, the object of the *Labour Leader*, and of Mr. Morel's criticism of England's share in Europe's joint crime, is precisely to resist this natural and mischievous tendency to throw the whole responsibility for this disastrous war upon the adversary. For the adversary's sins may awaken our vindictiveness and self-righteousness, but insistence upon them will not increase our wisdom or our morality. But we can learn to regret and avoid our own mistakes and our own apathy, to put a stop to *our* share in the diplomatic intrigue and the competitive militarism, which have led us all, whether friends or foes, into this abyss of misery and ruin. This war is a common, a reciprocal, as well as a collective, crime of omission and commission. And each nation can guard against its recurrence only by examining and recognising its own share of responsibility, by keeping alive its habit of self-criticism and refusing to consider itself as a mere injured victim of the villainy of others.

VERNON LEE.