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EDITORIAL

## AGONY OF THE AUSTRIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

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**T**HE Berlin *Vorwaerts* of the 14th and the 15th of this month has two leading articles from Vienna entitled "Conflicts of the Austrian Social Democracy," that are full of matter for thought.

The writer expresses his sorrows at events that threaten to strip the Austrian Social Democracy of its fame for having, in a country of so many nationalities, solved the problem of international unification. The threat proceeds from the Bohemian wing of the party. This wing has set up the principle of "autonomy" with regard to the Trades Union organizations of its own nationality "as is the case with the comrades of other Nations, countries and States." The move being considered disruptive of the Trades Union Movement of Austria, and in violation of the Stuttgart Resolution, the National Committee of the Austrian Unions has prepared an appeal to the coming International Congress at Copenhagen.

The writer of the *Vorwaerts* articles is of the opinion that outsiders may find it difficult to grasp so complicated a situation as that presented in Austria. Seeing that so able a man as the writer of the articles evidently is (judging by the clearness of his presentation of the facts) still he feels perplexed, so perplexed that he imagines a decree by the International Congress can make Bohemia toe the chalk-mark, the conclusion is justified that nearness to the problem, rather confuses than clarifies it in its reality.

The agony, or present conflict, in the Austrian Social Democracy presents an interesting social phenomenon, parallel to the biologic phenomenon that would be presented by a plant, the habitation of whose species is in fertile meadows, sprouting up in a crevice of rocks high up on a mountain. The cause at bottom of the

present tribulations of the Austrian Social Democracy, if it be a malady, is a malady that the mind's eye can perceive not the end of. It happens that American conditions present the, probably, best lens through which to observe what is ailing the Austrian Movement.

The socio-political feature of Austria is the multiplicity of its nationalities: in a way, such is the present socio-political feature of the United States. Few cities in Italy number the Italian population that is settled within a radius of twenty miles from the City Hall of New York; few cities in Hungary contain a larger number of Hungarians than are found in our mining districts; few cities in Bohemia number as many Bohemians as are found in several of our industrial centers; Jerusalem never embraced as many Jews within its walls as are found on our East Side; and so on with almost all other European nationalities—all of them speaking their own languages and keeping up their own press. With such a state of things Austria presents the nearest analogy. The fundamental difference between the two lights the Austrian problem.

In Austria the multiple nationalities are territorial, historically so. There is within Austria a kingdom of Hungary; there is within Austria a strip or two essentially Italian; there is within Austria a slice of Poland inhabited by inveterate Poles; there is within Austria a vast region of South Slavonia; and besides the German and other contingents, there is a huge territory of the Bohemian race. Not so here. Here, our several nationalities are uprooted from the soil that gave them distinct sap. The mind's eye can see the day when the multiple nationalities, distinctly separate to-day in our own country, will be merged into one race; the mind's eye can not see the day when the Czech and the Hungarian, and the Polish, and the Italian, and the South Slavonian, and German, and the rest of the different territories of Austria will be merged into one homogeneous land. The ethnic effects wrought by unnumbered centuries are not, even if desirable, to be effaced over night or even in countable generations. Assuredly Hungary will eventually be absolutely independent, politically; Italian Austria will, as surely, gravitate towards and merge with Italy where it belongs; as surely, will Polish Austria reunite with her dismembered sisters, now held by Germany and Russia, and re-raise her own

nationality; it is in the cards that German-Austria will form one nation with the Germany of to-day; etc.; etc.;—and the Czech will not be behind in reconstituting himself.

In other words—

First. At bottom of the, under present circumstances, unfortunate move of the Czech branch of the Austrian Social Democracy lies, not the petty ambition for “separatism,” at bottom, there lies the strong pulsation for national independence; in other words, the unfortunate Czech move is the consequence of Austria’s being an “impossibility” artificially, hence, only transitorily held together;

Second. The abnormality of Austria, a conglomerate political entity, which is bound to disappear, dictates a treatment for the Czech move different from the regulation treatment applicable to other countries: it dictates special, tactful handling; finally,

Third. The conflict in the Austrian Social Democratic Movement emphasizes the criminality of all attempts in America to cultivate racial differences; consequently, it emphasizes the wisdom of the Socialist Labor Party, hence its loyalty to the cause of Labor’s unification, in setting its face as flint against all anti-immigration manoeuvres, whatever their allurements may be.

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