

EDITORIAL

THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DEMONSTRATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A BERLIN visitor to this office brought an account of the suffrage demonstrations, held in Berlin by the Social-Democratic party before permission was granted to hold open air meetings, that no despatches reported, and no papers commented on.

As will be remembered, the issue being the extension of the suffrage for the Prussian Lantag, and a monster demonstration being announced in the Social Democratic and other papers as having been arranged to take place at Treptow Park, about five miles outside of Berlin, the Police was massed at the Park, but greatly to its surprise had hardly anything to do, no masses having congregated at the place. It also will be remembered that, while the Police was drawn away to Treptow Park a monster gathering took place in the very heart of Berlin at the Thiergarten. The more intimate details are the following.

In the center of the Thiergarten is a large place called the "Star" from the circumstance that into it run from many sides a large number of broad avenues. The spot is ideal for a large gathering, still more ideal for a sudden gathering, provided it is held by concerted action, under proper direction. On the memorable Sunday afternoon in question, a lone policeman was sleepily and perfunctorily walking that "beat" when his ears were suddenly startled by the approaching hum of a vast multitude, and by loud though as yet indistinct cheers, proceeding from the farther end of one of the avenues; no sooner had he become aware of that, when a similar hum and similar cheers broke upon him from the distance of the opposite avenue; before he had time to take in that phenomenon similar hums and similar cheers broke out from all the other avenues that converged on the spot where he stood. The fellow did not have time to think. Almost immediately a dense mass

poured into the “Star” from all sides. He could not budge. The mass surged around him. No speeches were made but from night to 100,000 thoughts the cheers went up for the extension of the suffrage. The few mounted Police left available in the city and hurriedly ordered to the spot, trampled over a few people on the outskirts of the throng, but were otherwise helpless. The demonstration had succeeded. What demonstration? One that cheered for manhood suffrage? Not that alone, important though that was. It was a demonstration without which manhood suffrage could not be secured, or, if secured, would be the broken reed we find it to be here in our own country. It was a demonstration that brought home to the powers that be the existence of an organization impregnable to the spy, to the informer, to the traitor, or to the “Insolent”—all of these being infant diseases of young Movements.

Only one Berlin paper, the *Tageblatt*{,} had a reporter on the spot—the *Tageblatt* being the only paper, which, owing to its friendly attitude, was notified by the Social Democratic authorities of what was up, and it kept the secret honorably. Upon all others—from the Kaiser down, and through the ranks of the so-called nobility, and further down to the bourgeois—the secret came like a thunderclap, the effect of which was so sobering that the permission for, that is, the “legalization” of open air meetings was given speedily after.

Of course, no bourgeois paper cared to comment upon this, the leading feature, the only effective feature, of the Social Democratic demonstration. For obverse, but equally obvious reasons, this, the leading fact of the demonstration was not boasted of in the Social Democratic press.

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