

Philipp Scheidemann

A PEN PICTURE

Philipp Scheidemann, erstwhile compositor, a good public school education to which he has added considerably, an open head, clever, mentally very active. A born agitator, familiar with all the tricks of a demagogue. He knows the masses, knows how to approach them. He has developed the art of playing up the "horny hand of toil" against the intellectual, until he has reached a degree of perfection that rarely fails in its effect.

Is Herr Scheidemann a social patriot from conviction?

Just as little as he ever was a convinced Internationalist.

Has Herr Scheidemann become a monarchist?

Just as little as he was ever, in spite of his famous accusation of "the traditional perjury of the Hohenzollern," a convinced republican.

Convictions are a ballast with which Herr Scheidemann refuses to burden himself. They are a hindrance to any career. And a career Herr Scheidemann will have, under all circumstances.

To be sure, the possibilities for his political advancement are limited.

He is dependent upon the social-democratic movement. Outside of this movement he is nobody. He knows this and acts accordingly.

It has ever been Herrn Scheidemann's greatest aspiration to stand at the head of a mighty social-democratic party, to be in a position to dictate, in this capacity, to the German national government.

What the character of this social-democratic party shall be, whether revolutionary, reformistic, opportunistic, radical, revisionistic, nationalistic or international, is, to Herrn Scheidemann of absolutely no consequence. He is ready to adjust himself to the prevailing tendency of the moment, in the fullest measure.

So long as the German labor movement was engulfed in a wave of chauvinism, Philipp Scheidemann was a social patriot,

with a tendency toward social imperialism—being careful, however, to avoid open utterances favoring annexations.

Now, that the long duration of the war, and the lack of food have driven all chauvinist ideas out of the heads of the laboring masses, Herr Scheidemann is a moderated social patriot, with pronounced international pacifist leanings.

And we are convinced that he is ready to undergo still further modifications in his social patriotism, to the point, if necessary, where his patriotism will completely vanish, should the continued radicalization of the labor masses so demand.

No, forsooth, the cool mathematician Scheidemann knows no convictions.

He deems to stand high above all things human and inanimate.

And still, perhaps he is mistaken after all.

Perhaps, after all, Bethmann-Hollweg was the wiser of the two.

No scruples, no traditions hinder the former compositor, who has become the leader of the strongest party, numerically, in Germany.

But he has one failing, the common failing of all men of his kind.

He is immeasurably vain and Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg seems to have discovered the Achilles heel of the leader of the social-democratic myrmidons.

Reventlow and his crowd insist that Herr Scheidemann has terrorized Herrn von Bethmann-Hollweg.

Perhaps. But to us it would seem as if Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg had used Herrn Scheidemann's vanity to make of him a willing tool with which to influence the German workers on the one hand, and the foreign workers on the other, in so far, at least, as they are amenable to the influence of the German Social-Democracy.

So the fate that so often overtakes the very ones who deem themselves wisest has claimed Herrn Scheidemann; he deemed himself a master, and is but a tool.

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