

## Pontius Pilate Scheidemann

By DR. HANS BLOCK (Leipzig)

"Within a few days the curtain will fall upon the fifth act of that great tragedy, the Russian Revolution. What has happened in Russia was not the intention of the Social-Democracy. Before the whole world we declare that the policies that were used against Russia were not our policies." From the Reichstag speech of Deputy Philipp Scheidemann, Feb. 26, 1918.

Truly, a bloody tragedy has been enacted before our eyes, a tragedy as terrible as any that the world has seen.

But Herr Philipp Scheidemann is not the man to speak about it. Not Herr Philipp Scheidemann, the party friend of Herr Otto Braun and Parvus, not Herr Philipp Scheidemann, the erstwhile friend and admirer of the Bolsheviki.

Nineteen centuries have passed since St. Peter answered, trembling with cowardly fear, "Nay, I know him not."

Only a few days ago Herr Otto Braun and Herr Philipp Scheidemann drew a sharp line between themselves and the Bolsheviki. Only a few days ago they, too, denied their former friends and comrades, the one in the "Vorwärts," the other on the floor of the Reichstag. As St. Peter trembled before the Roman soldiers, so did they tremble before the Annexationists of the majority bloc, so they too, murmured fearfully: "We know them not. We know them not."

When Peter realized his own weakness, he went out, and wept bitterly. Those gentlemen, Otto Braun and Philip Scheidemann stand with heads proudly erect. For why should they weep? Are they not great politicians?

And another episode from that great tragedy that happened nineteen centuries ago comes to our mind. When Judas Iscariot led the Roman soldiers he said to them, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast."

How long is it since Messrs. Parvus and Philipp Scheidemann went to Stockholm to exchange fraternal embraces with the Bolsheviki?

"Judas repented himself. He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and hanged himself."

But that Herr Parvus should cast away pieces of silver—how very unlikely! And the death-knell of the Socialist scientific annexationist publishing society is ringing for the funeral train of the Bolsheviki. Impatiently they are waiting for the curtain to fall.

There is something in the bitter tears of the Apostle Peter, in the repentance and suicide of the traitor Judas, that appeals to us.

But in this great human tragedy of the past, neither the cowardly St. Peter, nor even the faithless Judas Iscariot are as contemptible as that great Pontius Pilate, the original cold "politician," who "washed his hands in innocence."

Human repentance and human grief awaken sympathy, even for the faithless. But cold, self-satisfied self-justification can arouse only hatred and disgust.

"Before the whole world we declare that the policies that were used against Russia were not our policies." Thus the "dependent socialists." They have voted for war loans, and will continue to vote for them; they have supported the government, and will continue to support it; they have sworn allegiance to the annexationist majority bloc,—but they wash their hands in innocence and declare, "What has happened in Russia was not the intention of the German Social democracy."

Truly, a bloody tragedy has been enacted before our eyes.

But Herr Philipp Scheidemann should not have spoken about it. Not Herr Philipp Scheidemann, the friend of Herr Parvus and Herr Otto Braun. Not Herr Philipp Scheidemann, a member of the majority bloc and erstwhile friend and comrade of the Bolsheviki. Not Herr Philipp Scheidemann, the carefully calculating Herr Scheidemann, who gives brotherly kisses today, and draws black lines of demarcation to-morrow. In a word, not the self-satisfied politician, not Herr Pontius Pilate Philipp Scheidemann!