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EDITORIAL

AN INTERNATIONAL FAKIR.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Mr. Carl Schurz has obtained his reputation by his “matchless honesty and candor.” He built upon that reputation, and he became more honest and more candid as time went by. He told people about his habit of being honest, and how frankly and ingenuously he could deal with public personages and public events.

When he came here he was supposed to be a revolutionist, who had escaped dire punishment by a narrow margin. The radical element took him up, and placed him on his feet, and for some time he lived upon his reputation as a radical. The Germans with whom he was associated concentrated their efforts in his behalf, and he rose steadily, but always as a man of radical tendency, and each advance which he made was due to his having been in opposition, and having continued his opposition until he became troublesome.



CARL SCHURZ (1829-1906)

His attitude was strictly anti-imperialistic; that is, using imperialism in the sense of concentrated power in the hands of a ruler. Such a position appealed strongly to the Germans of the west, and Schurz came into prominence when the German press was a power. That power declined as the Germans learned to speak the English language, and became in tongue and in ideas citizens of this nation. Still there remained the unrelenting warfare on the part of Schurz against anything and everything that savored of imperialism and of monarchic tendencies. He was still a radical, still a fearless, incorruptible, “honest” warrior for the rights of men, and a champion of humanity.

It was only natural that such a mental makeup should lead him to oppose the administration in its dealings with the Philippines. He did throw himself against the administration at the very outset, and he has continued to battle since. He has

by word and voice, by precept and by persuasion upheld the actions of the Filipinos, and has strenuously condemned the policy of President McKinley. Such a course was consistency itself. It was honest, it was self-sacrificing, it was noble. It held absolutely with his actions when he came here, the enemy of imperialism, the radical leader of a strong radical party.

But there is a slight flaw in the continuity of Schurz's career. It is only a few years ago that he returned to his German home and made his peace with the Kaiser. It may seem only natural that he should do so. He is advancing in years, and a longing to see, once more, the scenes of his youth may have possessed him.

The peace which he made was entire. There was no reservation, and it was wholly to the satisfaction of the most imperialistic monarch in the world—Emperor William. Schurz returned to this country, and assumed again his radical, anti-imperialistic ranting and mouthing. In the midst of them he found time to appear before his fellow Germans, and in a speech full of eloquence, replete with enthusiasm, and overflowing with praise and laudations, he held up the German Emperor for them to admire. He spoke of him as “OUR BELOVED YOUNG KAISER,” and the words in which he sung his goodness knew no limit.

Such actions cannot be excused on the ground that Schurz has forgotten his former opinions. They cannot be extenuated on the ground that he has revised his opinions. We find him yet an anti-imperialist, working might and main against imperialism, Kaiserism, and militarism in this country, yet advocating and depicting, in glowing words of admiration, the self-same thing as it exists in Europe.

“Our young Kaiser,” and “I am a radical anti-imperialist” must be taken together to understand Schurz. He is an anti-imperialist when it means power. Both the gain and the power must accrue to him, or else Schurz is an anti or a pro something else. He is a type of the political mountebank, of the international fakir, of the useful radical, of the man with a mission against the working class.

Such as he are the blankets of revolution. He can be used to centre reaction, and he has been used to checkmate, and to mislead. Carl Schurz, to his eternal dishonor, will be judged by his utterances, “Our beloved young Kaiser,” and “I am a radical and an anti-imperialist.”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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