The Call for a Moderate Peace (December 4, 1917)

Abstract

The Fatherland Party quickly provoked the establishment of a counter-organization, the “People’s League for Freedom and Fatherland,” which embraced more moderate war aims and domestic reform at home. With membership figures that rivaled those of the Fatherland Party, this organization testified to the polarization of opinion that characterized German politics in the last year of war.

Source

In numerous declarations, our government has described a strong and free Germany, in which our children shall live securely, as our German future. This outcome alone will allow our people to become truly united. Freedom at home and abroad is linked to strength at home and abroad. Only a people in which all social ranks and classes enjoy the opportunity to participate freely and responsibly in the political system is powerful externally. Internal reorganization and the external development of a nation’s power cannot be separated. This fact is recognized by all those who believe that they can postpone reorganization, instead of allowing it to be born directly and organically out of the war, just as our empire itself was once born in the midst of war.

The fourth winter of the war makes these demands more urgent than ever. More categorically than ever before, this winter demands the internal consolidation of the nation. Above all, we understand this term to mean manifest unity between the German government and parliament. Specifically we need:

1. In view of our enemies’ still unbroken will to destroy us, the most radical consolidation of our powers, until our enemies’ will to destroy us is broken;

2. Immediate reorganization of domestic politics, the building of our political institutions to promote liberty with the cooperation of all sectors of the population, in order to strengthen the will of the people, to increase its steadfastness, to provide the firm support of the popular will to a government that is willing to undertake reforms, and to draw the necessary conclusions from the character of the modern state – conclusions that every nation must draw today as it contemplates its development.

3. A well-defined foreign policy, which is supported by the people and the government, which works toward peace, secures the provision of raw materials and markets for our trade, and places the existence, honor, and free development of the nations on the firm ground of morality and of law.

Source: “Programm des Volksbundes für Freiheit und Vaterland vom 4. Dezember 1917”, in Paul Umbreit, *Die deutschen Gewerkschaften im Kriege*. Stuttgart, Berlin, Leipzig, 1928, pp. 1889–90. Reprinted in Herbert Michaelis and Ernst Schraepler, eds., *Ursachen und Folgen: vom deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands in der Gegenwart; eine Urkunden- und Dokumentensammlung zur Zeitgeschichte* [*Causes and Consequences: from the German Collapse in 1918 and 1945 to the New State Organization of Germany in the Present: A Collection of Sources and Documents on Contemporary History*]. 29 vols. Berlin: Dokumenten-Verlag, 1959-1979, vol. 2, pp. 50-51.

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