

# THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Mr. Roosevelt was often spoken of as pre-eminently a lucky man. It is true that more than one of the high distinctions which he enjoyed, whether as a holder of public office or as a private citizen still conspicuous in the public eye, came as the fruit of what at the moment appeared to be chiefly lucky circumstances; while from more than one of the difficulties into which his temperament or his political methods repeatedly plunged him, a fortunate turn of events, as startling, often as it was unforeseen, repeatedly afforded extrication. Yet we are inclined to think that historians, when they come to review his career in all its aspects, will dwell rather upon his misfortunes. More than that of any American president since Jackson, it was his fortune to span two sharply opposed periods of national development, one reactionary, the other radical, between which flowed a broad but turbid stream filled with wreckage of the one and ill-assorted intimations of the others. The steps which would have carried him definitely over to the firm but rugged ground of the new age, he seemed often to be upon the point of taking; but in the end the past held him, and the more daring company of those who saw, or thought they saw, the riches of the new domain which he had pointed out, passed on and left him at one side.

It was the stranger that he should lose the leadership, because it was of leadership that he possessed, in extraordinary measure, an intuitive gift. The qualities that could win the masses, bid them to him in fervid allegiance, and make them do his bidding, were his in a measure rarely equalled. One scans in vain the earlier years of Mr. Roosevelt's public life for any clear premonition of either isolation or defeat. His strenuous attack upon a corrupt police administration in New York city, and his equally strenuous attempt later to put the administration of the federal civil service upon a plane of honesty and efficiency, thrilled the metropolis and the nation with a realization of his forceful personality, and with a new sense of the responsibilities of citizenship as well. His unconventional and outspoken action in the war with Spain, mixture though it palpably was of unabashed self-advertising and courageous exposure of administrative wrongs, nevertheless won the applause of a sober multitude sick at heart over official rottenness and incompetency, and hungry for a leadership upon whose ability and sincerity it could rely. It was in those days, when the country was beginning to look upon him as a champion of all that was sound and vigorous in American life, that the foundations of his future influence seemed to be most surely laid.

The test of Mr. Roosevelt's quality, however, was the presidency. To say, without qualification or explanation, that Mr. Roosevelt failed of greatness as president would do him an injustice. The times were against him, and the times were his undoing. The old republicanism, with its cult of wealth and class and in-

tellectual superiority, its arrant sectionalism, its gross political partisanship, and its contempt for the people in the face of favored interest, was passing. For more than a generation, save for two brief periods, it had held the country in its grip. Yet the public opinion which at heart had repudiated it, and which was to make its remaining lease of power a record of calamity, was as yet unorganized. Progressivism had reached the threshold of revolt, but as yet it had neither ordered program nor accepted leaders. The tangled succession of events which crowded the first 12 years of the present century in the United States, showed clearly enough that the country was undergoing a social revolution, that the old order was everywhere in question, and that change and reform were cutting wide and deep; yet where the process would end, or what were to be the characteristics of the new order which obviously was being builded, were questions to which nothing in American history afforded a certain answer.

It was the task of Mr. Roosevelt, standing at the watershed between the old time and new, to point the nation on his way. That he did so, for a time, with brilliancy and power, is to be conceded. His great state papers and public addresses, with their trenchant arraignment of evil in high places, their sweeping demand for encyclopaedic reforms, and their stirring appeal to moral rectitude and social sympathy as the mainspring of national life, came as a gospel of a new and lofty Americanism, in any history of the awakening of the American people to such enhanced sense of national integrity and responsibility as they now possess. Mr. Roosevelt will continue to fill a large and distinguished place. Yet his was, after all, a voice crying in the wilderness. He sympathized, but he did not fully understand. He could destroy, but he could not build. He could counsel and exhort with a crusader's zeal, and bring to earth many a doughty adversary with his battle-axe and sword, but the holy city of democracy was to be taken by other leaders. And when the nature of the revolution which he had championed, and which he had done more than any other man of his generation to urge upon its course, stood at last revealed in the fundamental radicalism of its program, he drew back, and thenceforth was numbered with the opposition which he had once defied with unmeasured scorn.

One cannot but think that, even if the times had been more propitious, he must nevertheless have failed. With all his boundless interest in men and things, Mr. Roosevelt was not wholly a democrat at heart. His public career, great and honorable as much of it was, illustrated far more the qualities of the prince whom Machiavelli long ago immortalized, than of the thoughtful servant of the people's mind and will. To him as to many another whom the turn of fortune has seated in high places, the end too often seemed to justify the means. The eight years of his presidency are deeply

scarred with incidents which show little moral scrupulousness and small regard even for his own professions. Nor was it his nature to be noble in defeat. It is admittedly a defeat of our political system that it provides no place for an ex-president; but assuredly it adds nothing to the respect which is due to that exalted office to find one who has held it going, as Mr. Roosevelt speedily went, into violent and bitter opposition, turning public discussion into partisan harangue, and identifying national security with that regime of organized force from which the thoughtful world today tenses shudderingly away.

A career like that of Mr. Roosevelt can happen but once in any country or in any age. The American which revered Mr. Roosevelt in his prime will have no place for a successor. The social revolution whose beginning he witnessed has no longer need of cheers and unctuous preambles, but rather of wise, constructive leadership. The west, which he loved, and whose early spirit he embodied, has passed from picturesqueness to maturity, and its own sons now speak for it. The restless sympathy for all sorts of good causes which Mr. Roosevelt exhibited has given place to a demand for systematic, reasoned treatment of social needs. A new generation has come upon the stage with new temper and outlook, new purposes, and new tasks. One would gladly record that Mr. Roosevelt, in the great hour which he lived to see, had grown with its growth and strengthened with its strength, weaving the thread of his great and varied powers into the new fabric of a better national life.

Yet though he failed of this, he was nevertheless a commanding figure, and his memory will long survive. It is strange that he, of all men, after a life of tireless action, should have passed quietly, with none to watch his going, even though on the public stage which he loved so much, he had long stood alone.

## The French Socialists and the International Situation.

(By International Labor News Service, New York.)

The central organ of the French socialists, L'Humanite, writes as follows on the threatened allied military campaign against Russia:

"All those who contributed to provoke and prolong the war are alarmed at the weakening of the masses and demand that the centers of the people's revolution should be promptly suppressed. Their anxiety is no longer to conquer the enemy; but to preserve from the revolutionary peril the capitalist bourgeoisie of all countries. They know that the Russian Bolsheviks have destroyed monarchic and capitalist privileges, have placed their hands upon the property of social parasites. Anything sooner than that. Their hatred of the enemy is giving place to the desire of coming to an understanding with him, so as to bar the advance of this scourge, which is worse, in their eyes, than war or pestilence. \* \* \* That a new war should be undertaken tomorrow—a war waged by the international counter-revolution, a crusade against the peoples who are progressing towards political and economic enfranchisement—this is possible; but surprises await the initiators of such an adventure. They will no longer be able to plead the necessities of national defense, and the necessities of capitalist defense are not of a nature to rouse the enthusiasm of the masses. On the contrary, the workers will perceive clearly that they are being thrown against one another only in order that their chains may be riveted, and the domination of their masters consolidated."

Le Populaire, the organ of the majority socialists reflects as follows on the prevalent policy toward Germany:

"The French press is divided between its hatred of Kaiserism and its anxiety to socialism. Between a Kaiserism which would destroy all liberties, and a socialism which would rule all privileges, their choice is made in advance. They are discovering latent sympathies with the deposed monarchs who, after all, maintained a certain social order—or disorder—and there are too many points of resemblance between German absolutism and the Tsarism which our greatest journals have— not without profit extolled, for them to deny to the former all the respect they gave the latter. How keep the Austrian and German revolutions within the boundary which divides a caricature of democracy— such as ours—from real democracy? Such is the pre-occupation of many Frenchmen, in whom the soul of the holy alliance still lives. \* \* \*

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