

EDITORIAL

A BELATED MARIA THERESA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE press despatches from Europe announce that, driven by his domestic straits, Czar Nicholas presented himself before the soldiers, with his baby czarowitch in his arms, and addressed an allocution to them. The despatches are rather silent as to the response evoked by the pantomime, and the piece spoken.

A little over a century and a half ago, a formidable coalition of foreign powers threatening her throne, Maria Theresa appeared before the diet of the Hungarian nobility with her babe, the future Joseph II. of Austria, electrified them with her beauty, pathos, a thrilling invocation spontaneously pronounced in Latin, and forthwith wrung from the assembled noblemen, who enthusiastically drew their swords and brandished them in confirmation of their pledge: “Morimur pro rege nostro Maria Theresa!”—we are ready to die in behalf of our Queen, Maria Theresa.

Is the Czar’s performance an instance of history’s repeating itself, first as a pathetic drama, then as a clownish burlesque?

Or is his performance of a piece with that of the uncouth Haytian Negro insurrectionist, who, anxious to imitate the great Napoleon at the battle of the Pyramids, drew up his rag and tag soldiers in a grove and paraphrased that eloquent general’s sentence—“From {the} heights of these pyramids a hundred centuries look down upon you!”—with the words: “From the tops of these cocoanut trees a thousand monkeys grin down upon you!”?

Whatever it be, Nicholas is a belated Maria Theresa. Wisely do the despatches trip lightly over the scene. The effect wrought by a young woman of surpassing ability, powerful character and beauty to match, pressing her babe at the bounteous sweep of her maternal bosom, before an assembly of youthful, virile and martial warriors in the eighteenth century, is not likely to be reproduced by a shrimp of a

man, imbecile in mind, weak of character and bearing on his face the stamp of a degenerate, holding the cockatrice of a czarowitch in his puny arms, before his soldiers, the hereditary victims of his cruel despotism, and in the twentieth century, at that. Indeed, that the response, evoked by a Maria Theresa in 1741, is not to be evoked by a Nicholas in 1905, of that the crowding proofs are conclusive.

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org