

The Danger of Fascism in Germany

By KURT LANDAU

The advance of Fascism has alarmed the proletariat. The results of the Saxony elections are thoroughly discussed in all the factories, at the registry offices, wherever workers gather.

But it is not the Saxony elections alone that have refuted the blinded leaders of our Party. This holds true to a still greater extent for the developments in Thuringia. On May 9, the *Rote Fahne* editorial took up the reactionary policy of Frick in Thuringia and the anti-labor attitude of the National Socialists (Fascists), and reached the conclusion:

"No wonder that all this affected the National Socialist worker elements like a cold douche. They are beginning to get enough of Hugenberg and Hitler... In the open country too, that is, where the land proletariat found a determined leader in the Communist Party, the advance of the *Hakenkreuzler* was brought to a standstill in recent months."

Two days later the elections took place in Gotha (Thuringia) with the result that the Fascists outstripped the Communist Party and increased—in spite of Frick!—its vote since December 1929 from 5192 to 6136.

What Are the Driving Forces of Fascism?

In 1927-28 we were able to establish a definite Leftward development of the masses. The number of strikes rose from 330 (1926) to 751 (1927) and 687 (1928), the number of strikers from 54,399 (1926) to 224, 131 (1927) to 271,473 (1928).

Simultaneously there began an influx of workers into the trade unions, whose membership rose from 3,977,309 (1926) to 4,150,160 (1927) and 4,653,581 (1928).

The rising activity in the proletariat was accompanied by a Leftward development of the masses in general. The reactionary policy of the bourgeois bloc government had an alarming effect. Enormous masses, swept along in tow behind the bourgeois parties, awakened and turned to reformism. In the Reichstag elections of 1928 the votes of the Socialist Party were jerked upwards from 7,881,000 (1924) to 9,151,100 and the C.P.G. won more than 500,000 new voters.

The accentuation of the economic crisis in the last year brought the masses in the bourgeois camp into a still stronger conflict to the old bourgeois parties. But one thing changed fundamentally: The expectations the masses put in reformism in 1928 were bitterly disappointed. That is how the direction of the departure of the masses from the old bourgeois parties had to change especially because the C.P.G. under its present leadership did not understand how to show these masses a concrete path in the struggle against their growing impoverishment.

The disappointment of the semi-proletarian and petty bourgeois sections, stirred up by the policy of the trust bourgeoisie, with the betrayal of reformism and embitterment with the incapacity of the C.P.G. leadership to help them—that is the real driving force of Fascism.

At the present time, the semi-proletarian, petty bourgeois masses, who formerly followed the bourgeois parties, especially the German National and the German People's Party, are in large part gathering in the camp of Fascism: officials, coupon-clippers, intellectuals, former officers, primarily the petty bourgeois, nationalist youth. But there is no doubt that Fascism has already begun to hammer a breach in proletarian fortresses, especially in Saxony, Thuringia and Northern Bavaria.

Fascism is already exercising a palpable and dangerous influence upon large sections of the proletariat that are politically strange to it. There arises among many workers a feeling of impotence towards the stormy rise of Fascism; a fatalistic attitude becomes noticeable.

It is precisely these phenomena in the proletariat that are especially dangerous; precisely this influence is required by Fascism in order to triumph.

The Party leadership also approaches this attitude when it attributes the growth of Fascism to "a series of objective causes".

These "objective causes"—the impoverishment of the mass, its despair of the old bourgeois parties, its disappointment with reformism, its search for a radical solution—all these causes should have led primarily to an enormous growth of the Communist movement, providing there was a correct strategy of our Party.

But that is just what is not the case,

either so far as numbers are concerned, or ardor, activity and impetus of our Party.

The Weakness of Communist Leadership--the Strength of Fascism

In the days that Fascism utilized to prepare a mighty advance, the period of the coalition government, in this period the Central Committee of our Party did not see the growth of Fascism at all, but intoxicated itself with its own, slowly crumbling strength. On January 21, 1930, the *Rote Fahne* proclaimed:

"The German proletariat is marching to the attack with the slogan: Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"

Ten days later, on February 1, the full weakness of the Party showed itself, which did not prevent the *Rote Fahne* from pathetically proclaiming:

"That is how things stand: Everything the Communists want to do, they do."

This reckless self-intoxication, combined with the block-headed theory of "social-fascism", crippled the Party. It has now already sunk into oblivion that only a short time ago the beginning of Fascist rule was announced with the words:

"The gorged priests, the cursed secretaries and functionaries of the social fascist Party apparatus want civil war and a blood bath that will surpass all the previous misdeeds of Noske and Zoerglebel. This is no longer the preparation, but rather the beginning of Fascist rule in Germany, erected with the bloody hands of the social democratic party" (*Rote Fahne*, January 15, 1930.)

It is hardly possible to imagine a more insane disregard for the difference between Fascism and reformism.

Insofar as Fascism was noticed at all by the Party leadership, the struggle was exhausted in the slogan: "Beat the Fascists wherever you meet them!" or in the memorable proclamation: "We want a revolutionary state power that lets no Fascist live..." (*Rote Fahne*, January 28, 1930.)

How was Fascism not to grow when the revolutionary Party is beaten over the head like this by its leadership!

When Fascism proceeded more and more to combine the propaganda for its "third empire" with refined, demagogic slogans, to build up its nucleus system in the factories, the Party leadership sought to beat Fascism by "Bolshevizing" the Fascist "leader cult"; and when the *Voelkische Beobachter* wrote of the "great leader Hitler", the *Rote Fahne* replied with the "greater leader Thaelmann". Is it to be wondered at that Fascism could become, unhindered, a mass movement?

Differentiation within Fascism

The possibility for a counter-offensive by the Party against Fascism is favorable right now, since a noticeable differentiation is now proceeding in the camp of Fascism. The influx of great masses from the bourgeois camp has had a strong effect on the tactics of Fascism. Hundreds of thousands of bourgeois voters, former adherents to the German National and the German People's Party who turned to Fascism, are not satisfied with the outlook for the "national revolution", with the promises of the coming "third empire", but demand immediate measures in their interest, above all customs policy, tax and similar advantages.

Under the pressure of these sections, Hitler has for the time being decided in favor of the bloc with the other bourgeois parties and for participation in the government. Against this new line, viewed by Hitler as a transitional stage until the Fascist mass movement is sufficiently strengthened—above all among the proletariat—to accomplish the overthrow, the Berlin Fascists (Strasser group) have launched an assault. The Berlin Fascists know the mood of the Berlin workers, 50 percent of whom—by vote—are in the camp of the C.P.G. (see the communal elections of November 27, 1929). They rightly fear that the Fascist government policy as proposed for Saxony by Hitler and Goebbels and already applied in Thuringia, will drive away the proletarian masses.

Besides these tactical differences, which are of the greatest significance in the Fascist struggle for the workers, there are still others.

The orientation in foreign politics, for

instance. While Hitler demands foreign political support of Italy and England, the Berlin Fascists stand on the line of Graf Reventlow of 1923, that is, support of Russia.

These differences have now led to a split of the National Socialists (Fascists); the relatively small Berlin group around Dr. Strasser has now formed the "Kampfgemeinschaft revolutionaerer Nationalsozialisten" which sees its task in the absorption of the elements dissatisfied with the bourgeois bloc policy of Fascism, and in maintaining Fascism through more radical "socialist" and "anti-capitalist" phrases.

A «1923» Upside Down

Up to now the Fascists have timidly avoided placing themselves openly on the side of the employer in labor struggles. The sharpening of the class struggle in Germany will render this maneuvering of Fascism very difficult. Precisely now when it has become a mass movement, which also possesses positions in the factories, Fascism will have to take a concrete position in the labor struggles that are breaking out. The "creative" capital of the Rhine-Wesphalian industrial lords, which the Fascists even recognize in theory and contrast with bank capital, although the interweaving of industrial and bank capital into modern finance capital is well known to them—this "national" capital is now arming for decisive battles against the proletariat. Will the money-bags of Fascism, the lords of the Rhine and the Ruhr, the wealthy manufacturers and industrial kings, allow themselves the luxury of abandoning political support to their Fascist mercenaries? All signs indicate that the National Socialists will assume the role in these struggles of battering ram against the free trade unions. They will endeavor to transform the deep dissatisfaction of the workers with the bureaucracy into an assault upon the trade unions in general.

Should it come, however, to a conflict between the masses, who use and want to defend their trade unions as fighting organs and Fascism, then a revolutionary situation can arise rapidly and directly that requires all the maneuvering capacity and boldness of the revolutionary Party in order to drive this struggle forward to a decisive one between revolution and counter-revolution.

Such a perspective has nothing in common with the theory of the "revolutionary upsurge", which has been rising, as is known, "stormily and incessantly" since 1928, as the Manuilskys, Molotovs and Thaelmanns contend.

Such a perspective has nothing to do, either, with the superficial analogy with 1923, which is now the style of the Party, and which, as is known, led to regarding the Mueller government as the "Kerensky period".

If one wishes to compare the present development with 1923, then the present situation can be characterized as a 1923 upside down. If the determining feature of 1923 was the growth by leaps and bounds of the revolutionary forces if 1923 stood under the sign of an elementary upsurge of activity in the proletariat, of the assembling of the petty bourgeois masses for the day of the revolution—then 1930 is precisely the opposite. In 1923, Fascism collected behind the back of the mounting revolution; yet the tempo of its development stood no comparison with that of the revolution.

If in 1930, despite the catastrophic mistakes in recent years, our Party has remained a class Party, when it apparently grows—that is a sign that the proletariat hopes and endeavors with all its power to fashion an effective weapon out of its Party. Upon the road the Party trods in this serious situation will depend the fate of the German proletariat in the next years. Out of a 1923 upside down, situations may arise in which the question of power is posed more sharply, concretely and lively than ever since 1923.

Hitler stands before the gates of the proletarian fortresses. His shop nuclei raise their heads in the factories. His agitators rove through the registry offices, his hands penetrate into the proletarian poverty quarters. The decisive struggle between Communism and Fascism is maturing. The aim of the struggle is now the reformist worker. Either our Party will succeed, by a change of its policy up to now to tear down the walls between Communist and reformist masses, to draw into the struggles the masses that still follow

reformism today, then, smashing the social democratic leadership, it will crush Fascism at the head of the working class. Or, the Party leadership will continue further with its policy of ultra-Leftist opportunism. Then Fascism will draw to itself large sections that still follow reformism today, neutralize and drive into passivity larger sections and bloodily crush the Communist vanguard in order, after this triumph, to forge the fetters around the whole working class.

Decisive struggles are approaching. The dangers with which the working class is confronted are enormous. But it is far from too late. Everything now depends on whether our Party becomes conscious of its tasks. In the struggles of the next period it can become the real leader of the masses. To become leader of the masses means not increasing its vote, but to win such confidence among the masses that the word of the Party in the masses finds the mightiest echo, that its call to strike, to demonstration, to revolutionary mass struggle is heeded by the proletariat.

What is needed is a return from the fights into the realms of adventurism. The Party has for years been made drunk with phrases and deception. It is time it awakened and regarded the abyss before which it stands.

We of the Left wing, howled at by a blind and incapable leadership as "Party enemies" and "renegades", we are the ones who are now manfully counteracting the internal collapse of the Party, who spring into the breach wherever the Party breaks down, who serve the Party in the manner that the leadership should serve it.

Just as in the war the small revolutionary groups around Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Mehring, just as Spartakus remained true to the banner of the proletarian revolution—so does the Left Opposition in a period when the Party leadership vacillates and breaks down. Only one thing distinguishes our time fundamentally from that of the war: The old workers' party collapsed on August 4, 1914. Spartakus had to unfurl again the bedraggled banners of the revolution, had to assemble the masses of the betrayed proletariat on a new foundation—against the Party of treason, of social imperialism, of war.

The banners of our Party are not bedraggled, our Party, burdened with heavy mistakes, violated by an incapable and conscienceless bureaucracy, has remained the Party of the working class, the Communist Party. It is our duty to guard the Party from collapse, to burn the rottenness out of it, to make the Party capable of fighting, of conquering.

That we must fulfill this duty as persecuted and hounded ones in part as expelled, that is one of those contradictions in the development of our Party in which its history is not poor.

Inseparably bound up with the Party, from whose proletarian core the ruling apparatus cannot tear us away, the Left wing continues to fight unswervingly to fashion a Party of Lenin out of the Party of Thaelmann.

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A Letter on Michael Gold

Dear Max:

The last issue, containing Trotsky's letter on the New Masses and Max Eastman's correspondence with its editors, created quite a stir. I've heard many of the boys condemn Gold's craven buckling to the Union Square priests; others stutter shame-faced apologies. As for Gold himself, I hope none of you fellows have any illusions about his position in the Party—if he is still a Party member. His mind is on higher things. He's the boy who wants to make good where, he imagines, it means something. He has his eye on Broadway, and he's working much harder on getting a play produced along the bright alley than he is even in slaughtering Trotskyism. You may have noticed the recurring motif in his work: He changed his name to GOLD. He wrote "120 MILLION". He wrote "Jews Without MONEY". It's one thing, apparently, to write about not having any; its another not to have much yourself. So when he gets through being a respectable and successful Broadway playwright under the benevolent aegis of the noble Kahn, he'll probably make his confused, liberal colleague, Barbusse look like a burnished Bolshevik. Speed the day!

Yours,

—R.