

The Only Road

Bonapartism and Fascism

An Analysis of the Present Moment in the German Situation

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run Hitler will be a submissive instrument of their domination. Yet this is bound up with convulsions, with the risk of a long and weary civil war and great expenses. To be sure, Fascism, as the Italian example shows, leads in the end to a militarist-bureaucratic dictatorship of the Bonapartist type. But for that it requires a number of years even in the event of a complete victory: a longer span of years in Germany than in Italy. It is clear that the possessing classes would prefer a more economical path, that is, the path of Schleicher and not of Hitler, not to speak of the fact that Schleicher himself prefers it that way.

The fact that the source of existence of the Pape government consists in the neutralization of the irreconcilable camps, in no way signifies, of course, that the forces of the revolutionary proletariat and of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie weigh equally on the scale of history. The whole question shifts here onto the field of politics. Through the mechanics of the "Iron Front" the social democracy paralyzes the proletariat. With the policy of brainless ultimatum the Stalinist bureaucracy blocks the revolutionary way out for the workers. With a correct leadership of the proletariat, Fascism would be exterminated without difficulty and not a chink could remain open for Bonapartism. Unfortunately that is not the situation. The paralyzed strength of the proletariat has assumed the deceptive form of a "strength" of the Bonapartist clique. Therein lies the political formula of the present day.

WHAT PAPEN REPRESENTS
The Pape government represents the imperialist cutting point of great historical forces. Its independent weight is next to nil. Therefore it could do nothing but take fright at its own goal, and grow dizzy from the voids arising on all sides of it. By this and only by this is to be explained that in the deeds of the government up to now there have been two parts of cowardice to each part of audacity. With Prussia, that is, the social democracy, the government played a sure game: it knew that these gentlemen would offer no resistance. But after it had dissolved the Reichstag, it summoned new elections and did not dare to postpone them. After proclaiming the state of martial law, it hastened to explain: it is only in order to facilitate the capitulation without a struggle of the social democratic leaders.

However, isn't there a Reichswehr? We are not inclined to forget it. Engels designated the state of the armed detachments of people with material auxiliaries in the form of prisons, etc. With respect to the present governmental power, it can even be said that the Reichswehr alone really exists. But the Reichswehr in no way represents a submissive and guaranteed instrument in the hands of that group of people at whose

head stands Papen. In reality, the government is rather a sort of political commission of the Reichswehr. But with all its preponderance over the government, the Reichswehr can nevertheless lay no claim to any independent political role. A hundred thousand soldiers, no matter how fused and steered they may be (which still requires testing), are incapable of commanding a nation of sixty-five millions, torn by the profoundest social antagonisms. The Reichswehr represents only one element in the interplay of forces, and not the decisive one.

In its fashion, the new Reichswehr does not reflect baldly the political situation in the country which has led to the Bonapartist experiment. The parliament without a majority, with irreconcilable wings, offers an obvious and irrefutable argument in favor of dictatorship. Once more the confines of democracy emerge in all their obviousness. Where it is a question of the foundations of society itself, it is not parliamentary arithmetic that decides. What decides is the struggle.

PROSPECTS FOR TOMORROW
We shall not undertake to counsel from afar what road the attempts at forming a government will take in the next days. Our hypotheses would come tardily in any case, and besides, it is not the possible transitional forms and combinations which decide the question. A bloc of the Right wing with the Center would signify the "legalization" of the seizure of power by the National-Socialists, that is, the most suitable cloak for the Fascist coup d'Etat. What relationships would develop in the early days between Hitler, Schleicher and the Center leaders, is more important for them than it is for the German people. Politically, all the conceivable combinations with Hitler signify the dissolution of bureaucracy, courts, police and army into Fascism.

If it is assumed that the Center will not agree to a coalition, in which it would have to pay with a majority upon its own workers for the role of a brake in Hitler's locomotive, then in this case only the unconcealed extra-parliamentary road remains. A combination without the Center would more easily and speedily insure the predominance of the National-Socialists. If the latter do not immediately unite with Papen and at the same time do not pass over to the immediate assault, then the Bonapartist character of the government will have to emerge more sharply: von Schleicher would have his "hundred days" . . . without the preceding Napoleonic years.

Hundred days—no, we are figuring far too generously. The Reichswehr does not decide. Schleicher does not suffice. The extra-parliamentary dictatorship of the Junkers and the magnates of financial capital can be stood firmly on its feet only by the method of a wearisome and relentless civil war. Will Hitler be able to fulfill this task? That depends not only upon the evil will of Fascism, but also upon the revolutionary will of the proletariat.

—L. TROTSKY.
Prinkipo, August 2, 1932.

READ AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE MILITANT

A Letter to the Workers of Zurich

Trotsky Replies to a Calumny of the Social Democrats

In the night of the 15th of June, violent encounters took place in Zurich between the workers and the police. I learned of these events from the cables of the bourgeois press agencies, which were, consequently, very tendentious and hostile to the workers. But even without knowing the details, it is not very difficult to get a general idea of the character of these events. Encounters between workers, especially striking workers or the jobless, and the police are abundant in the whole history of capitalism. The present terrible crisis which is revealing all the rottenness of the capitalist system is stretching the nervous tension of the bourgeoisie to the extreme and is driving it to make use of the police and the army at the slightest alarm. On the other hand, the very indignation of the workers against the bourgeoisie is growing and is seeking a way out. No matter what political tendency was heading the strike and the demonstration at Zurich, the character of the bloody encounter is one and the same. Capitalism has reduced the workers to starvation, to misery, to despair. Capitalism is throwing them out into the streets. Capitalism is beating them down by armed force. The lackeys of the capitalist press calumniate the workers and the capitalist judges condemn the "leaders" to jail if the bullets of capitalism do not fell them beforehand.

This was the simple and obvious explanation I gave, far from Zurich, to the events of June 15 and 16. Today, on June 25, I have received from friends a leaflet issued by the "Socialist Party of Zurich" entitled "Settling Accounts with the Communists." In this document, which is running the municipality in that town, attempts to vindicate itself of all responsibility for the repression against the strikers and the demonstrators. According to this document, the fault of the conflict is incumbent not upon capitalism but upon Communism. In defense of its actions against the Zurich workers, the social democracy writes:

"Lenin and Trotsky, in similar situations, were severe against all the ultra-Left syndicalists of the anarchist tendency. They pitilessly crushed in blood all the putschists."

This leaflet has instigated me to address myself by means of the present letter to the Zurich workers. It is the aim of the present letter to denounce this calumny. Lenin and myself have more than one been the objects of calumny. You doubtless know that we were even accused of being in the service of the German general staff. Nevertheless I have never known a more mendacious and a baser calumny than the one cast on us by the leaflet of the Zurich social democracy.

The whole life of Lenin was dedicated to the overthrow of bourgeois society, of its state, its privileges, its laws, its justice, its police, its prisons and its army. How then can anyone employ the name of Lenin to justify the reprisals of the bourgeoisie against the workers. I also protest against the utilization of

the minutes the following extract from my reply:

"The honorable general has remarked that our government rests on force and employs violence against all those who profess adverse ideas which are stigmatized as counter-revolutionary. The honorable general is absolutely correct when he says that our government rests on force. Up to the present, history has not known any other type of government. As long as society will be composed of classes engaged in struggle, the state will inevitably be an arm of compulsion, and will make use of a coercive apparatus. . . . That, in our actions, which astonishes and outrages the governments of other countries—is the fact that we arrest not the strikers but the capitalists who lock out the workers, the fact that we do not shoot down the peasants who demand the land but arrest the land-gentry and the officers who attempted to shoot down the peasants."

The leaders of the Zurich democracy have not gone any further than General Hoffman in so far as they speak of violence without defining the class which employs this violence. And for good cause: the social democracy cannot pose this question openly and honestly, since its leaders themselves serve the capitalist regime. In the petty local questions, the secondary ones, for example—the municipal questions, the social democracy attempts to bargain with capitalism for the workers, in order to maintain its authority among them. But wherever it is a matter of the fundamental interest of the capitalist order and of private property, the very foundations of the social democracy, in Switzerland, in Germany, in Austria, in France and in the entire world, invariably takes the side of the exploiters. It has once more demonstrated this in a striking fashion by the June events in Zurich.

Since the gentlemen of the social democratic leadership have taken advantage by referring to Lenin and to myself in casting off their guilt, I will say the following in conclusion: although I cannot judge the events in Zurich except through the accounts rendered by the bourgeois journals to which I can hardly accord more than ten percent of credence, I nevertheless declare in all sincerity, since the labor movement is involved, that all my sympathies are without the slightest reserve on the side of those who participated in the strike, who protested against the brutality of the police and who have fallen victims of the new attacks. No matter what the tactical views of the Zurich Communists may be, I will always be found on the same side of the barricade with them. Even if they have committed one mistake or another—I do not know of any—these are the mistakes of our class, these are the mistakes of the proletarian revolution which is raising its head against the capitalist yoke. In spite of all the "democratic" peacock-feathers with which the social democracy is covering itself up, it has acted and it is acting in the events of Zurich as the direct agent of the class enemy. The social

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The Theory of Permanent Revolution and American Imperialism

The Conflict Between Proletarian Internationalism and Stalinist National Reformism

The United States has held the dominating position in the world chain of capitalism ever since the world war. Prior to the world war American capitalism struggled to obtain this position. Now the American imperialists must wage a constant struggle to maintain and extend this power against the onslaughts of the other capitalist nations. This new position places greater responsibilities upon the United States in the maintenance of world capitalist conditions.

The contradiction between socialized production and capitalist appropriation, between production for a world market, and national boundaries, lie at the bottom of the contradiction between the international responsibilities and internal needs of the American imperialists. The international responsibilities of American capitalism can only be properly fulfilled on the basis of the solution of the internal needs. On the other hand, the American imperialists can only solve the internal difficulties confronting them on the basis of world capitalism.

The solution of this contradiction is not possible under the rule of the American capitalists or any other capitalists. At the bottom, it is the same contradiction which brought on the last world war and now has developed to greater proportions, endangering the proletariat of the world and the Soviet Union. The real solution of this problem can be had only on the basis of the proletarian world revolution.

The imperialist struggle for the redivision of the earth is the central problem of the American imperialists, to which a number of other problems are subordinated. But within this imperialist problem there is contained another contradiction of a more menacing character. Each delay in "solving" the question of the redivision of the earth enlarges the prospects of the extension of the October revolution, of the social revolution. On the other hand, each step toward the "solution" of the problem of the redivision of the earth sets into motion the forces of the social revolution. This clearly reveals the present stage of capitalism as the decay stage.

Although a solution for capitalism is not possible, a breathing spell for some imperialists by obtaining markets, by establishing Fascism in Germany, by smashing the Soviet Union is possible. A lease of life for capitalism depends as much upon the action or rather, inaction of the proletarian vanguard as it does upon the action of the leading imperialists.

much concerned with the world revolution as the Communists are, but for opposite reasons. Therefore, the intervention of the U. S. dollar, for economic or military purpose, to hold in check the October revolution has been a major task of the American Imperialists since 1917. The danger of the extension of the October revolution is a life and death matter for world capitalism and the United States representing the dominating factor. This compels Wall Street to proceed in a fashion altogether contrary to the lingering "isolationist" ideology of the 19th century.

The burning question of the capitalists is the opposite side of the burning problem of the proletariat. Our problem is the understanding and application of the theory of the Permanent Revolution. **Theirs—the defeat of the Permanent Revolution.**

The word permanent, like the word dialectic or imperialism or a whole series of other words are used in the political sense and not in the bourgeois dictionary sense. The theory of the permanent revolution has nothing in common with the old Bucharin concept, which on the basis of the October revolution, estimates that a mounting wave of revolutions, one right on top of the other, would sweep capitalism from the earth in one straight line. The theory of the Permanent Revolution does not consider as "permanent", the time element in the series of revolution. The theory of the Permanent Revolution considers the development of the revolution from country to country, in their interrelationship, regardless of ebbs and flows. **PERMANENT** until the class problems of the proletariat are **SOLVED**. Let us follow the process of the class struggle, explaining the meaning of the Permanent Revolution and its relation to American imperialism.

The most important Marxian concept today, repeated by Stalinism in dead form but not understood in living reality, is the Lenin formula, "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolution." In 1917, Lenin and Trotsky filled this formula with reality by applying the theory of the Permanent Revolution to the weakest link in the capitalist chain. Other weak links of the capitalist chain followed, in Italy, in Germany, in Hungary, in Finland, in Bulgaria, in Germany in 1923 and in China,

but all were drowned in the workers' blood. Weak links and favorable objective situations but—wrong policies.

The vanguard fighters already know the role social democracy played in these revolutions. It is the task of the Left Opposition to explain the role Stalinism played in these revolutions since 1923. History will look to Stalinism for an answer. And the question can only be answered upon the basis of the application of the theory of the Permanent Revolution. Stalinism as a bud and now as the flower of the reaction against October did not then, nor does it now, understand the theory of the Permanent Revolution. Stalinism has merely usurped the heritage of the October Revolution, which is the first fruit of the theory of the Permanent Revolution.

There are reasons for the one successful revolution and the many failures that followed. The determining factor in the problem was not the objective condition which was the most favorable, but the vanguard and its policies or lack of policies. The major defeats of the proletariat and the Communist vanguard commenced with the 1923 revolution in Germany. Up to that time the Russian revolution under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky was consolidating itself, the International was building a world party, and the workers were in motion against world capitalism. Upon the defeat of the 1923 revolution the American dollar propped up decay capitalism, and Stalinism replaced Marxism in the Communist International. The theory of socialism in one country replaced the theory of the Permanent Revolution, national reformism replaced internationalism.

The theory of the Permanent Revolution may be outlined in the following manner: "First, it embraces the problem of the transition of the democratic revolution into the socialist. This is really the historic origin of the theory. The conception of the permanent revolution was set up by the great Communists of the middle of the 19th century, by Marx and his adherents, in opposition to the democratic ideology which, as is known, presumed that all questions should be settled peacefully, in the reformist or evolutionary way, by the erection of the 'national' or democratic state. Marx regarded the bourgeois revolution as the

direct introduction to the proletarian revolution."

"The second aspect of the 'permanent' theory already characterizes the socialist revolution as such. For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle all social relations are transformed. The process necessarily retains a political character, that is, it develops through collisions of various groups of society in transformation. Outbreaks of Civil War and foreign wars alternate with periods of 'peaceful' reforms. Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and usages develop in complicated reciprocal action and do not allow society to reach an equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the social revolution as such."

"The international character of the social revolution which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, results from the state of economy and social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle, but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces, and the world scale of the class struggle. The social revolution begins on national grounds. But it cannot be completed on these grounds."

"In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably together with the growing successes. Remaining isolated, the proletarian state must finally become a victim of these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint, the national revolution is not a self-sufficient whole! It is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution presents a permanent process in spite of all fleeting rises and falls."

"What is the relation of American imperialism to this theory, or to be more exact, the continuation of the Russian revolution to the world revolution? The United States as the strongest link of world capitalism struggles to prevent the proletarian revolution from absorbing the world, no matter where the civil war breaks out. World capitalism, which includes American imperialism as the dynamic of the system of reaction, intervenes in every class struggle between the exploiters and exploited.

The weak links of the capitalist chain

must be smashed. The October revolution must be extended. The iron ring of the world capitalists, (with the backing of the American dollar) around the Soviet Union must be broken. The extension of the October revolution means to fight, not only the national bourgeoisie, but to fight world capitalism and particularly the economic pressure of American imperialism.

The break-down of capitalism, in the economic and political crisis stays the hands of world capitalism in their fight against the world proletariat and the revolutionary workers fighting the capitalists on the "weak link". The intervention of the imperialists in support of the capitalists of the "weak link" only becomes effective when the vanguard of the proletariat does not present a policy based on a Marxian revolutionary theory. In Russia with Lenin and Trotsky, the correct revolutionary theory and action held at bay the world capitalist intervention. But the non-Marxian revolutionary theory of Stalinism, for a series of revolutions, since 1923 did not enable the proletariat to hold in check the counter-offensive of the imperialists.

Only after the defeat of the German revolution in 1923 were the world imperialists successful in their intervention through the Dawes Plan and then the Young Plan. And likewise, in every other revolutionary situation, the world capitalists intervened at the start but were only successful to the degree that the policies of the vanguard deviated from Marxism, from the theory of the Permanent Revolution. Correct theory and correct action is no guarantee to victory but only through the Marxian policy and action can the proletarian gain power.

American imperialism in its "peace role" stands as the bulwark against the extension of the October revolution. We expect nothing else from America and fight accordingly. Today we have another problem. Stalinism is a new growth of revisionism, poisoning the Marxian stream with the theory of socialism in one country. A theory which stifles and checks the action of the Communist parties in the struggle to extend the October revolution.

To extend the October revolution, means to understand the relation of American imperialism to world capitalism and world economy. To extend the October revolution means to reject the Stalinist revisionist theory of socialism in one country and all that flows from it. To extend the October revolution means in the first place, to arm the vanguard with the Marxian theory of the Permanent Revolution.

*All quotations from L. D. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, New York, 1931.