

# The Crisis in German Communism

Two days before the German Reichstag elections forty thousand Fascist storm troops, preceded by two hundred armed "auxiliary police" in Nazi uniform, marched through the streets of central and western Berlin. They were greeted by most of the Schupo (German police) with the Fascist salute. It was effective election propaganda, but more than that, it was an attempt to put force behind the Fascist claim that they are the "masters of Berlin". To the extent that one can speak of weight of election figures, the claim appeared to have been confirmed two days later; though the real contest is yet to come. The streets of Berlin will undoubtedly witness some serious aspects of this contest.

Out in the West End the brown-shirted paraders were greeted by Fascist flags from practically every window. In that section of the big and petty bourgeoisie they could return the greetings to their friends, not excluding the rich Jews. But in Berlin North, the working class section which includes Wedding, on that very same day the whole section was isolated by a strong police cord and every house ransacked while the terror and the arrests were mounting. To have horny hands is sure grounds for suspicion and almost proof of guilt.

Such is now the normal procedure of expressions of everyday life not only in Berlin but throughout Germany. The contest for final and complete assertion of power is on and increasing in intensity even though, compared to what is to come, this is mere guerrilla warfare.

### The False Outlook of the Stalinists

The election results expressed a serious setback to the revolutionary vanguard. Not even the screaming and empty boasts of victory made by the Moscow Pravda can hide that fact nor does this in the least change the reaction to these results within the disorganized ranks of the practically annihilated vanguard. The setback weighs heavy upon them. During these years of growing Fascist danger the Stalinist leadership of the official Communist party tried to combat Fascism and social democracy as two sections of the same camp—Fascism and social Fascism. That was the official policy of the Stalinized Comintern.

At the eleventh Comintern plenum held in April 1931, that is after the German Reichstag elections of September 1930 in which the Fascists recorded their first great forward sweep, Thaelmann, reporting on the German situation, said:

"After September 14, after the sensational successes of the National Socialists, its supporters throughout Germany nourished great expectations. We did not at that time permit ourselves to be misled by the panicky sentiment which partly existed within the whole working class and at any rate within social democracy. That there were even within our own ranks certain comrades who not only signaled but also overestimated the great danger of this development of Fascism, that is known to most comrades. But we (Thaelmann and fellow bureaucrats—A. S.) declare soberly and serenely that September 14 was in many respects Hitler's best day which will be followed not by better days but by worse."

Thaelmann in his report recognized that the social democratic workers have a different ideology of civil war from that of the Fascists, and that he proceeded to state the essence of the Stalinist view as follows:

"On the other hand we will witness that the Social Democrats will succeed also in Germany, as they are now already in a measure succeeding, to form terror groups for the civil war from their mass supporters, which will surely in the future fight side by side with the Fascists against us on the other side of the barricade."

Up until the very last moment, that is to the actual establishment of the Hitler government, on January 30 of this year, the Stalinists maintained that the main attacks must be concentrated upon the "social Fascists". What are the results of this policy?

The actual results are that the criminally false policy of the incompetent party leaders has so far saved the social democratic bureaucracy. As a party, the S. P. held its own in the elections. The votes cast for a workers party in Germany indicate conscious support for its policies. According to this there are today seven million workers still under social democratic influence and following the social democratic leaders. Perhaps one may reduce the number by about one million, allowing that many for various functionaries, trade union, co-operative and what is left of social democratic local governmental officials. Its former petty bourgeois support in general has already gone to Hitler. This leaves nevertheless the conscious support of six million workers, the solid section of the proletariat, workers engaged in industry, in the main employed workers with the tools of production in their hands. That is yet a formidable strength.

The social democratic bureaucracy has been saved because it was not at all put to the test in action before the eyes of these six million workers. They can now continue to prate about opposition to Fascism and sabotage action. Would it not have been far better to put them to the test and inevitable exposure so as to be recognized in their true light in front of these six million workers? Is it not now clear that a real Communist pressure for a united front

### Alternatives in the Decisive Class Battles

In its genuine sense with social democracy, would not only have united the working class but would also have forced the hands of this treacherous bureaucracy? But it is precisely the fatally wrong policy pursued of centering the attacks against "social Fascism" instead of a united front with social democracy which has permitted the Fascist hordes to terrorize the working class in the streets, to sweep the elections and to sit in the government claiming the imposing support of seventeen million votes to be used as a preparation for the final coup d'Etat. This is the catastrophic record of the policies pursued by the Stalinist leadership to date.

In increasing measure the Fascist bands roam the streets exercising themselves, training themselves for the big battles in assassinations upon the workers. One look at a Nazi storm troop reveals its make-up. Speaking in a political sense it is the rag tag and bob tail of society. Their appearance is in general that of roaming bandits. Its ranks contain primarily petty bourgeois elements to a large extent recruited from the decimated section, those impoverished by the inflation and the crises. The slum proletariat which go to make up part of its ranks is generally recruited from those who as a regular part of their lives are down on the lowest step of the social ladder, and the shady elements. But it recruits also other more or less demoralized proletarian elements. For example in Germany of today there are about two to three million workers who have been unemployed so long that they have lost practically all semblance of unemployment insurance. A frightful demoralization results. These elements divide mainly between the C. P. and the Fascists, the most conscious going to the former.

### Fascist-Stahlhelm Unity Aims at Working Class Destruction

A goodly portion of these elements are attracted by the socialistically colored demagoguery of the Fascist movement. However as it nears the pinnacle of power the movement changes its program and its whole structure likewise undergoes a change. The petty bourgeois elements begin to recede toward the background and the movement assumes its real role of championing and defending the big bourgeoisie—the last defenders of the capitalist system. This change is already in the making in Germany. The Stahlhelm on the other hand makes quite a different impression, not less reactionary but still different. They represent the old

Prussian soldier type. They love to cover themselves with the decorations of war days, especially the iron cross. When they meet they click their heels and salute in the stiffest military fashion. In composition the Stahlhelm is made up of bourgeois, petty bourgeois and of the more solid layers especially from the rural towns, and even workers from the Prussian landed estates. At its inception it was for the republic and democratic. Today its ideology is reactionary. In the recent elections it had a common ticket with the German nationalists. Jointly they express the political organization of the von Papen-Hugenburg-Seldte section of the Hartzburg united front. The differentiation between this section and its bigger and much more turbulently violent half-brother, the Nazi, is still to come. And it may have some serious reverberations.

The common goal of destruction of the working class movement found them easily united. To the reactionary bourgeoisie the brown hordes promised something which it had never enjoyed before—complete security against strikes. They embody its hopes of doing away with the hated and troublesome working class demands. Their raging fury worked up on high and heavy promises, is therefore unheavily first of all and most directly against the Communists. But the aim is much broader, as the social democrats show, yes, even going beyond to any section suspected of being allies to the working class parties. The broad aim is, of course, necessary if the Fascists are to realize their hope of conquest. But within it, also the dangers of complications for the reactionary camp. Because of this it will surely yet have to make its retreats. Thus in more ways than one are the possibilities of difficulties in the Fascist path apt to become breathing spells for the proletariat, openings under the heavy attacks which it can utilize the better to gather its forces.

### Workers Possess Remarkable Collectivity and Organizational Discipline

Meanwhile this heavy pall hangs over the working class, weighing upon it like an alp. The burden is carried in silence. But it is a grim silence foreshadowing serious events. It is something unnatural to witness German workers looking at a swaggering Fascist storm troop with eyes which express recognition of the enemy and then speaking their thoughts to one another in a careful whisper not destined for outside ears. No semblance of freedom of expression exists. For a long time all working class meetings and demonstration of any kind are totally prohibited. The same is the fate of the press, social democratic practically as well as the Communist.

## Some Fundamental Aspects of the Present Crisis in Germany

In the last issue of *Die Weltbuehne* (the radical bourgeois Berlin periodical) to reach here, Hellmuth von Gerlach, the well-known pacifist, who has since been reported under arrest and subject to the tortures of the Fascist police, quotes the following conversation between a Nazi leader and a prominent French journalist:

Nazi: "We know quite well that Germany needs fifteen years to come to power again economically and fifteen more in order to be in shape as a military power."  
Frenchman: "But the corridor?"  
Nazi: "The question of the corridor can be solved of itself, without war. It won't take long before Russia cracks. Then we leave the Poles the Ukraine as far as Odessa and we, in turn, get the Corridor and Danzig." (*Weltbuehne*, February 28.)

This solution of the Nazi fetish is, of course, rather oversimplified. In their calculations, the German reactionaries, intoxicated with their recent and rather easy successes, are counting without their host—the international working class. The latter on the other hand has not as yet, by far, said its last word. But it is necessary to face the situation clearly, to look eye to eye with the facts. And the facts point to a shifting of the specific gravity of the world political situation from Germany where world reaction has been able to put a feather into its cap, to Soviet Russia, which is from all indications, the next butt of its attack. The defense of the Soviet Union as the fortress of the world revolution stands first on the order of the day for the international proletarian movement. A genuine defense of the world revolution and its Soviet fortress requires a re-counting and an evaluation of the set-back already suffered in Germany.

### The Warning of the Opposition

When the International Left Opposition first sounded the alarm over the Hitler danger and raised the implications it had for the USSR and the progress of the world revolution, the Stalinists accused us of a counter-revolutionary design to draw the attentions of the workers away from the threat of Japanese invasion in the East. In doing this, the shining lights of bureaucratic Centrism only exposed their own lack of foresight, their own poverty of fundamental international perspective and orientation. Blinded by their "practicality", by their empiricism, these pretenders to Communist leadership only see a danger when they come up square against it. So it has been with the Hitler danger, to which they are only now, two years after the Bolshevik-Leninists

warned against it, waking up. The Left Opposition foresaw the danger in its time thanks to its internationalist orientation, the guiding line for which is furnished by the Marxist conception of the permanent revolution. Only that conception, viewing the class struggle as an international phenomenon and its revolutionary solution as a solution to be realized decisively only on a world scale, provides the foresight that is necessary in coping with the problems posed for the Communists in the present epoch. The Stalinist conception of "socialism in one country", repudiating, as it does, the fundamental ideas of Marxism, of necessity leads to blind groping, to the bungling of the strategic problems posed, to the perpetration of crimes against the revolution, to the heaping up of defeats for the proletariat.

The breath-taking events of the last few weeks and months in Germany are a case in point. The Fascist reaction is almost without obstruction consolidating its power and preparing for its next steps in the East. These blows are struck in the face not of an unorganized proletariat, but of the best organized working class in the whole capitalist world. Germany possesses not only the strongest social democracy in the world, but the strongest Communist party—outside of the USSR—as well. In accounting for the events that have transpired, in analyzing the set-back that has been suffered, it is therefore indispensable and of the greatest import to probe the basic policies of these two tremendous forces, the policies which failed to stand the test and the leadership that failed to stand the test. The basic policies of the social democracy have long been those of treachery to the working class and the betrayal they achieved in helping Hitler to power was all the less surprising because it merely complemented their treacheries of 1914 and 1918. The key to a successful resistance of the Fascist danger naturally rested with the Communists and their ability to win the majority of the working class from the social democrats and for revolutionary struggle. That involved, above all, the highly important and concrete question of the application of the Leninist united front tactic. But in evaluating the events, it is once more necessary to give a complete characterization of the social democracy, especially insofar as it has a bearing also upon an understanding of the Stalinist role in the situation.

The German social democracy started out on its road of working class betrayal by substituting for

### The Left Opposition organ Die Permanente Revolution has been banned until the end of May.

There have been no mass demonstrations in Berlin since the mighty Reichsbanner meeting in the Lustgarten on Sunday, February 19. It was estimated well above 150,000. The Reichsbanner troops formed a solid gigantic square in the center. But they listened to their just elected leader Karl Holtermann proclaim in the empty phrase previously coined by the Stalinist Remer: "We come after Hitler". Then the demonstration dispersed. Such an event leaves a distinct impression of gigantic forces at hand but not being utilized.

On February 27, the social democrats of Berlin had engaged the "Sportpalast" for a commemoration of the fiftieth year of the death of Karl Marx. The commemoration speech was made by Friedrich Stampfer, the editor in chief of the Vorwaerts. But he had no more than commenced saying: "To be a Marxist requires a great knowledge, whereas to be an anti-Marxist one does not need to know anything", than the police found sufficient grounds to call a halt. The meeting was broken up. Moreover, it is now reported as a common opinion in capitalist political circles that even the new elected Reichstag opens in the Potsdamer garrison church there will be admission for neither Communist nor social democratic deputies.

In Germany the highly developed technology has been accompanied by a thoroughgoing industrial discipline. In turn this has produced deep-rooted working class organizations and possessed the workers with a remarkable quality of collectivity and organizational discipline. The highly socialized production has produced in the German working masses its high degree of social consciousness and of class consciousness as an inevitable result of a social system based upon class divisions. The German workers live practically the whole of their social lives within workers' organizations, in the political, economic and social spheres. They have their own workers political parties, trade unions, consumers co-operatives, workers sports organizations (Friends of workers, football, anglers, etc.), workers freethinker associations, esperanto or chess players clubs; they come together in the huge people's houses, existing in every city, in workers' movies and theatres and so forth. The German workers are born into organizational institutions and mostly receive their burial from them also. Broadly speaking, that is, excluding the C. P. and its auxiliaries, all these organizations are distinctly of a social democratic ideology and under social democratic leadership. As usual the Social party bureaucracy permits a wide latitude of opinion within these organizations, so long as its own direction and control is not seriously threatened.

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(To be continued)

—ARNE SWABECK.

# World Economic Situation Today

(Continued from last issue)

The factors which presided at the birth of the crisis may be resumed as follows: overproduction, the excessively high level of prices, and the inflation of credit. When production will be reduced to the point where it does not suffice any more even for the reduced consumption, so that the world stocks of raw materials begin to be drawn out; when prices will be reduced to the point where many producers will have to go out of production, on the one hand, while a certain amount of buying is encouraged by the low level on the other; and when the deflation of credit and the release of liquid capital has lowered the basic level of interest rates to the point where hungry capitalists will be more and more tempted by speculative affairs, then we have the economic framework within which a recovery can take place, provided the bourgeoisie is politically in position to assert its interests as against the other classes of society.

But, if these economic and political conditions render an upturn possible, they are not sufficient of themselves to produce such an upturn. For this, the capitalists must find the means of re-establishing their profits and restoring the circulation of capital, for under capitalism the making of profits and their realization in the accumulation of capital determine economic activity or inactivity. Under the conditions of crisis, profit is to be found in unblocking the circulation of capital by reducing production, and in the super-exploitation of the proletariat by all methods—wage cuts, higher hours, speeding up. It is only when the capitalist again begins to find his profit in increasing production that he recovers in industrial and commercial activity begins again.

Now capitalist statistics are not kept with a view to facilitating Marxian economic research. The data are insufficient for even an approximate estimate of the rate of surplus value, and even the rate of profit can be estimated only on the basis of very incomplete and delayed data. The law of uneven development plays an important role there—the figures for France, for instance, are in general published much later than those of other large countries, while America has no official statistics at all on unemployment. Different figures arrive with different delays, ranging from 24 hours to two months, and often are not comparable among themselves.

For these reasons we have to be guided by rather summary and incomplete indications. But they will suffice to give us the broad lines of the present world developments.

### Perspective for Coming Period

As early as August of last year, in studying these questions at Prinkipo with comrade Trotsky, we

### How It Stands Today and Its Next Perspectives

called the attention of our comrades to the following facts: that the prices of commodities, after an unprecedented decline, had begun to rise; that industrial production in certain lines, such as steel, was no longer sufficient even to maintain fixed capital; that interest rates had reached such a low point that speculation was beginning to take hold of the market; and that in general the most important pre-conditions for an ultimate recovery were beginning to be outlined.

This perspective was reinforced by the beginning of the wave of workers' resistance in England, later in Germany, where it was accompanied by a beginning of re-employment of laid-off workers. Comrade Trotsky had proven as far back as the Third Congress of the C. I. in 1921, in an economic situation which in certain ways resembled the present one, that a recovery under certain conditions would result in reinforcing the militancy and aggressiveness of the workers. He polemicalized against those who believed that the perspectives of working class action depended on the uninterrupted intensification of the crisis, and that a recovery would weaken the fighting spirit of the proletariat. He showed that while, in fact, a long period of capitalist stabilization, such as that before the war, there could no longer be a question of such a stabilization within the general crisis of capitalism, but rather only of a partial and temporary recovery. As all well know, the events fully confirmed him. In America, for instance, the great railway shop strike of 1922 came after the turn in the crisis toward recovery was no longer doubtful.

We have continued to study the later developments of the situation. In September and in October, we reported that the first uncertain signs of an ultimate recovery, in the fluid and intangible realm of stock exchange speculation and in the commodities markets, had been consolidated for the time being without making further headway, between the high points of August and the lows of June, but that only a little progress could be seen in the tangible domains of industrial production and in trade.

There is nothing surprising in this. We must not expect the recovery to be uniform and homogeneous, any more than the crisis which preceded it or the period of stabilization before that. The law of uneven development is fully manifested here: uneven development as among various countries, and as among different branches of economic life. In America, for instance, in 1929, industrial production began to fall after the month

of June, but the solemn warning of the world crash was given only by the break on the New York Stock Exchange in October. On the other hand, industrial production in France continued to increase until the month of June, 1930. We must therefore expect still more striking disparities, even apparent contradictions, in the course of the development of the world crisis.

What conclusions do we then draw from an examination of the available statistics? 1. For several months now, the world crisis, instead of continuing to grow sharper, seems to have stabilized itself at a level fairly close to the lowest point attained so far.

2. The political and economic pre-conditions for a recovery exist. It is therefore not excluded that the present temporary breathing-spell may develop to the point of becoming a real recovery, that is, the crisis may then be transformed into a depression.

3. On the other hand, in view of the intensity of the crisis, the political as well as the economic convulsions in the world capitalist system (rise of Hitler), and the progress of internal contradictions within the general crisis of post-war capitalism, it is unlikely that such a recovery could be followed by a prolonged period of stabilization, not to speak of prosperity. On the contrary, it is rather probable that the unsolved and unsolvable contradictions will be aggravated by the efforts of each country to draw the maximum of profit from the recovery, under conditions where the bourgeois slogan of "international collaboration" has become more ridiculous and lying than ever.

4. The class struggle could in all probability take on even greater sharpness under such conditions, and the radicalization of the masses, based on a stronger strategic situation for the worker whose labor would again be in demand, could be extended, beginning with more effective resistance in the field of economic struggles, up to the most advanced political demands.

### The Reformist Theory and the Stalinists

That the reformists should vacillate, between the hope of a near future of social peace and the fear that the crisis will never finish, is not only to be expected. Their theoreticians have deformed the Marxian analysis of the crisis to the point of assimilating it to the "American" doctrine that the capitalist, in his own well-understood self-interest, should pay higher wages in order to increase the purchasing power of the worker. That is the logical consequence of the theory of social collaboration, in which the worker disappears as the creator of surplus value and appears as a simple consumer. Under these conditions, according to the social democrats, if the capitalist out of sheer meanness continues to reduce wages instead of increasing them during the crisis, eventually will never end.

But that the official Communist parties should use such a line of reasoning, when they say that only a bourgeois optimist can foresee the "end of the crisis", because the reductions in wages continue the crisis, that is a cause for surprise. For obviously, the reductions in wages serve to re-establish the profit of the capitalist, which is the moving power of economy under a capitalist regime. For this reason Varga, in the *Imperialism* is compelled, first to deny obstinately that there are any symptoms of an ultimate recovery, second to admit the existence of a "stagnation at approximately the present level", of "the ultimate attainment of the bottom of the crisis", of the "bottom of the crisis" itself.

All this is the purest "third period", this time rebaptized "end of the partial stabilization of capitalism". Already after three and a half years of crisis it seems fair enough to say that the partial stabilization is over. There is nothing to be surprised at therefore in the fact that the theoreticians of the C. P. of Germany, in their monthly paper *Die Internationale*, have begun to speak of a "fourth period". For this they were soundly scolded in an issue of the *Imperialist* last year, as being "in appearance very radical, but having for its actual result a weakening of the work of the Communist parties". And the "third period", then, not to speak of the "end of capitalist stabilization"? The Stalinists prefer to keep to the fallacious perspectives of the radicalization of the masses through the crisis without taking into account the historical experience and even that of the recent past.

But it is not only a question of criticizing; we must prepare ourselves, theoretically and practically, to take our place in the revival of the militant spirit of the working class, forecasting as clearly as possible the turns in the objective situation, and adapting our strategy and our tactics to it. The slogans for which the International Left Opposition has been struggling for years—workers' control of production, credits and economic collaboration with the Soviet Union, the Soviet United States of Europe—seen in these perspectives, acquire the greatest importance for the revolutionary movement of the world proletariat.

—B. J. FIELD.

## Left Wing Criticizes Provisions of New Illinois Mine Contract

(Continued from page 1)

equally as true that a union of the working class will ALWAYS face similar conditions and the united front of the bosses, the state and the labor fakery. The question is: will the two year contract, with no essential difference from the Lewis contract, strengthen or weaken the PMA in the struggle against the operators, the state and the Lewis machine? Our opinion is that the present contract will weaken rather than strengthen the union in the struggle. This is the opinion of the Left wing in the PMA.

### The Right Wing Wants "Peace"

The unions came into existence through mass pressure and mass struggles and can only grow through such struggles. The growing Right wing in the union want less mass struggles and long contracts and the respect of the "best people" in the mining towns. The Left wing want "peace", but the Left wing knows that you can only have "peace" if you are strong enough to maintain the union and its conditions. It is the Left wing and the progressives who are carrying on the dangerous work in Franklin county, men whom the Stalinists call traitors.

We may ask the question: How much work will the PMA miners obtain this summer? Very little. In fact, a strike struggle for a better contract, rallying the UMWA miners throughout the nation behind this program will cut the ground from underneath the Lewis control and strengthen the PMA. The PMA is far stronger today than it was when first organized and a far greater influence. It has an excellent chance of win-

ning a better contract after such a fight than by compromising with no gains, before a fight. With such a strike struggle carried on during the coming period, on a national scale, the PMA union would be stronger in the fall than it is now. It is very doubtful if the PMA could be smashed in such a short period. Rather, the PMA would gain throughout the country. The miners are asked to sign a contract, not after a defeated strike, when compromise must be necessary, but before a strike, and when the summer slack period is approaching and most of the mines will be shut down. Trade union leaders must know how to compromise, but in America we need little warning along this line except to the hot headed ultra-Lefts. Above all we do not want compromise before a struggle, before the battle and when we have grown stronger.

—HUGO OEHLE.

### Chicago R.R. Conference

The Association of Railway Executives concluded a meeting at the Drake Hotel in Chicago that was attended by executives of fifty nine roads. They held a one-day closed session and elected R. V. Fletcher as general counsel of the association. None of the members would comment on the proceedings.

None of the plans but the Chicago Tribune says the following: "It was understood that four major issues dominated the discussions: plans of the Democratic administration for railroad relief; consolidations, mergers, and readjustments in the industry; reduction of passenger rates; revision of the wage scales."

What more need be told to the working class? They want government help for their bankrupt industries, mergers and reduced passenger rates to meet modern bus and air transportation and more wage cuts for the workers. This is the railway executives' method of reorganizing to find a way out of the crisis. It is the same method of reorganization used by the other exploiters.

The executives of the fifty-nine roads realize that the necessity of unity in fighting the depression so that they can shift the burden on the working class and small stock holders. The 21 crafts of the railway industry have not yet realized this need on their part. The workers in every terminal must establish railroad councils of representatives of the 21 crafts. They must follow the lead of the Minneapolis Railroad Council to fight the plans of the railroads.

(Another article on this question will follow in the next issue.)

—SAM GORDON.

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The responsibility of the Stalinists

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