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The Tragedy of the German Proletariat

By Leon Trotsky

The most powerful proletariat of Europe, by its place in production, its social weight, the strength of its organizations, has manifested no resistance since the arrival of Hitler to power and the violent attacks against the workers' organizations. This is the fact on which one must base all future strategic calculations.

It would be patently stupid to believe that the subsequent evolution of Germany will go the Italian road; that Hitler will strengthen his domination step by step without serious resistance; that German Fascism will enjoy long years of domination. No, the further fate of National Socialism will have to be drawn from the analysis of the German and international conditions, and not from purely historical analogies. But this much is already evident: If, from September 1930 onwards, we demanded of the Communist International a short range policy in Germany, it is now necessary to work out a long range policy. Before the decisive battle is possible, the proletarian vanguard will have to reorient itself, that is to say, it will have to understand what has happened, distribute the responsibilities for the great historical defeat, trace out the new road, and in this manner regain confidence in itself.

The criminal role of the social democracy requires no commentary: the Communist International was created fourteen years ago

precisely in order to snatch the proletariat from the demoralizing influence of the social democracy. If it has not succeeded up to the present time, if the German proletariat found itself impotent, disarmed and paralyzed at the moment of the greatest historical test, the direct and immediate blame falls upon the leadership of the post-Leninist Comintern. There is the first conclusion that must immediately be drawn.

Under the perfidious blows of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Left Opposition maintained to the very end its fidelity to the official party. The Bolshevik-Leninists now share the fate of all the other Communist organizations: the militants of our cadres are arrested, our publications forbidden, our literature confiscated. Hitler even hurried to suspend the *Bulletin of the Opposition* appearing in the Russian language. But if, together with the whole proletarian vanguard, the Bolshevik-Leninists bear the consequences of the first serious victory of Fascism, they cannot and will not bear even a shadow of the responsibility for the official policy of the Comintern.

Since 1923, that is, since the beginning of the struggle against the Left Opposition, the Stalinist leadership, even if indirectly, assumed the social democracy with all its strength to derail to be futile, to enable the German proletariat: it halted, it curbed the

workers when the conditions dictated a courageous revolutionary offensive; it proclaimed the approach of the revolutionary situation when it had already passed it by; it worked up agreements with petty bourgeois phrasemongers and windbags; it limped impotently at the tail of the social democracy under cover of the policy of the united front; it proclaimed the "third period" and the struggle for the conquest of the streets under conditions of a political ebb and weakness of the Communist party; it replaced the serious struggle by leaps, adventures or parades; it isolated the Communists from the mass trade unions; it identified the social democracy with Fascism and rejected the united front with the mass workers' organizations in face of the aggressive bands of the National Socialists; it sabotaged the slightest initiative for the united front for local defense, at the same time it systematically deceived the workers as to the real relationship of forces, distorted the facts, passed off friends as enemies and enemies as friends—and drew the noose tighter and tighter around the neck of the party, not permitting it to breathe freely any longer, nor to speak, nor to think.

Out of the vast literature devoted

to the question of Fascism it is enough to refer to the speech of Thaelmann, official leader of the German Communist Party, who, at the Plenum of the Executive of the Comintern in April 1931, denounced the "pessimists", that is, those who knew how to foresee, in the following terms: "We have not allowed the moods of panic to rout us.... We have soberly and firmly established the fact that September 14, 1930 was in a certain sense Hitler's best day, and that afterwards will come not better days but worse. This evaluation which we have given to the development of the party is confirmed by the events.... Today, the Fascists have no more grounds for laughing." Referring to the creation by the social democracy of defense groups, Thaelmann demonstrated in the same speech that these groups differ in no respect from the shock troops of the National Socialists and that both of them are preparing in parallel formation to annihilate Communism.

Today, Thaelmann is arrested. Faced by the triumphant reaction, the Bolshevik-Leninists are in the same ranks as Thaelmann. But the policy of Thaelmann is the policy of Stalin, that is, the official policy of the Comintern. It is precisely this policy which is

the cause of the complete demoralization of the party at the moment of danger, when the leaders lose their heads, when the party members, disaccustomed from thinking, fall prostrate, when the principal historic positions are surrendered without a fight. A false political theory bears within itself its own punishment. The strength and the obstinacy of the apparatus only augment the dimensions of the catastrophe.

Having surrendered to the enemy everything that could be surrendered in such a short space of time, the Stalinists are trying to rectify the past by means of convulsive acts which only increasingly clarify the whole chain of crimes committed by them. Now that the press of the Communist party is stifled, that the apparatus is destroyed, that the bloody pennant of Fascism waves with impunity over the Karl Liebknecht House, the Executive Committee of the Comintern is starting out on the road of the united front not only from below but also from above. The new zigzag, sharper than all that preceded it, has not, however, been effected under the impulsion of the Executive itself; the Stalinist bureaucracy has abandoned the initiative to the Second International. The latter has succeeded

in taking hold of the weapon of the united front, of which it has been in mortal dread up to now. To the extent that it is possible to speak of political advantages under the conditions of a panicky retreat, they are to be found exclusively on the side of reformism. Forced to reply to a direct question, the Stalinist bureaucracy chose the worst way: it does not reject an entente of the two Internationals, but neither does it accept it; it plays hide and seek. It has come to such a lack of self-confidence, to such degradation, that it no longer dares to show itself to the world proletariat face to face with the leaders of the Second International, the branded agents of the bourgeoisie, the electors of Hindenburg who blazed the trail of Fascism.

In a special appeal of the Executive of All Countries, the Stalinists do not say a word about social-Fascism as the main enemy. They no longer speak about the great discovery of their leader: "The social democracy and Fascism are not antipodes but twins." They no longer insist on saying that the struggle against Fascism demands as a preliminary the defeat of the social democracy. They do not breathe a word about the inadmissibility of the united front from above. On the contrary, they carefully enumerate those cases in the past where the Stalinist bureaucracy, unexpectedly for the work-

ers and for itself, found itself forced to improvise proposals for the united front to the reformist summits. Thus do artificial, false and charlatanesque theories founder in the fury of the historical tempest.

"Taking into account the peculiarities of each country" and of the impossibility, which allegedly flows from them, of organizing the united front on an international scale (the struggle against "exceptionalism", that is, the theory of the Right wingers on national peculiarities, is suddenly forgotten), the Stalinist bureaucracy recommends to the national Communist parties to address proposals for a united front to the "Central Committees of the social democratic parties". Only yesterday this was proclaimed a capitulation to social-Fascism! Thus do all the great lessons of Stalinism for the last four years fly under the table into the wastebasket. This is a whole political system reduced to dust.

Matters do not rest there: having declared for the moment the impossibility of the conditions for a united front on the international arena, the Executive immediately forgets it and no more than twenty lines further on it formulates the conditions under which the united front is admissible and acceptable in all countries, in spite of the difference in national conditions. The retreat before Fascism is followed by a panic-stricken re-

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What of Rakovsky?

Stalin is still silent. No news from Christian Rakovsky. The embassies keep still. In spite of the numerous news items that have appeared in the press, the wreckers of the German revolution refuse to let go of their secret. IF THEY HAVE ASSASSINATED RAKOVSKY, THEY DO NOT DARE TO SAY SO. IF HE IS STILL ALIVE, THEY ARE AFRAID TO ADMIT IT. This fact alone gives the measure of their panic, their fear of the action of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

Let us speak frankly—By what right do the Stalinists complain that the Hitler embassy refuses to give out news of the fate of Thaelmann, WHEN THEY REFUSE TO SAY WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO CHRISTIAN RAKOVSKY? YES, in the name of what revolutionary conception?

Let us develop our campaign. THE CENTRISTS WILL HAVE TO ANSWER FOR THEIR PAST. RAISE THE QUESTION OF RAKOVSKY AT EVERY MEETING!

VICTOR SERGE ARRESTED

Victor-Serge has just been arrested in Leningrad. Once again, the Stalinist police is acting in the dark. It has been impossible for us up to now to obtain definite information as to his fate, nor the reasons for his arrest. Back in 1928 Victor-Serge was arrested, shortly after his expulsion from the party as an Oppositionist. After two months he was released, under the pressure of the campaign which was carried on at the time. Again we must rise up, demand an accounting, help our comrades who struggle in the vanguard against those who are preparing the ruin of the October Revolution.

RIAZANOV AND SMIRNOV ARE DEAD

N. Riazanov has just died in deportation, at Saratov, to which the vengeance of Stalin has exiled him. This Bolshevik, this Marxian scientist, underwent the fate of all the intransigent Communists who struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. He died at his post, as a faithful disciple of Marx and of Engels, in the service of whose ideas he had spent his life. Stalin did everything to shorten his life, for his purpose remains the same: TO DESTROY THE BOLSHEVIKS PHYSICALLY. After trying to defile Riazanov by implicating him in the "Menshevik trial", Stalin banished him under police constraint, chased him out of the Marx-Engels Institute which he had entirely organized and created. And Riazanov died in deportation, while Messrs. Ruzin and Co. have again become free engineers at Magnitogorsk.

V. Smirnov, former leader of the old group of "Decists" (democratic centrists), who was close to the Opposition in the years 1926-1927, has also just died in exile.

And how many other revolutionary workers, how many of ours, are falling today, when more than ever their firmness, their experience are indispensable to the revolution.

A tenacious and persevering activity in support of our imprisoned and deported comrades is needed. We are at present considering the formation of a Relief Committee, about which we shall say more later.

Defend the Class War Fighters

SNEEVLIET UNDER ARREST

Comrade Sneeveliet, president of the NAS of Holland (revolutionary trade union organization), remains in prison, accused of conspiracy for the manifesto signed by him, appealing to the Dutch sailors to show their solidarity with the mutineers of The Seven Provinces. The Centrists have not mentioned this arrest in any one of their publications! The workers of Amsterdam have held enthusiastic demonstrations for his release. We declare our complete solidarity with the revolutionary action of comrade Sneeveliet and all those Communists hit by the terror for their support of the rebellious Indonesians.

for weeks, held incommunicado with no reason given for their incarceration. We must also ask our comrades to recall that the Stalinists did not hesitate to call these and other of our comrades—counter-revolutionists. Speak up in your ILD branch and demand their immediate release. The ILD must be a genuine class defense organization and not a sectarian body for the defense of supporters of the official regime of Stalinism.

INDO-CHINA

For the Sending of a Workers Delegation!

The International Red Aid has slowly awakened to the case of the thousands of Indo-Chinese victims of French imperialism. But of course, they slander the imprisoned Left Opposition militants. That does not prevent the bureaucrats from being forced to accept in its entirety our slogan, send a workers delegation to Indo-China.

SPAIN

Not a word from the IRA on Nin and Lacroix

The International Red Aid continues to maintain a shameful silence on the fate of our Spanish comrades, among whom are Nin and Lacroix, persecuted for inciting the military to disobedience. The readers of the Militant will remember the vicious way in which these comrades were arrested by the "socialist" police and how they were,

Hitler and the Red Army

America has reproduced European capitalism on a grandiose scale, but it has reproduced European socialism only on an insignificant scale. American social democracy has never been anything but a caricature of European social democracy. This "law of uneven development" has also retained all its force so far as Stalinism is concerned. The CPUSA is weaker than any of the European parties yet the Stalinist bureaucracy in America carries out all the zigzags and all the mistakes with a fabulous exaggeration.

A year and a half ago, the Stalinists thought that an attack on the USSR by Japan was a matter of days, and on this "prognosis", dictated by the bourgeois press, they tried to base their whole policy. We on the contrary declared that, as long as it had not assimilated Manchuria, the danger of an attack by Japan was absolutely unlikely. The American Stalinists accused us in this connection of being in the service of the Japanese general staff. In general, these gentlemen draw their arguments from sewers and drain-pipes.

We declared furthermore that the danger of a Fascist victory in Germany—a danger for the world revolution and above all for the Soviet Union—was more real and more imminent than the danger of Japanese intervention. The European Stalinists shouted that we were "panic-stricken". The American Stalinists, more impudently, declared that we were consciously aiming to distract the attention of the world proletariat from the imminent danger in the East to the Soviet Union. The events brought their verification.

For a year and a half, the "imminent" Japanese aggression has failed to take place (obviously this does not mean that the danger of Japanese intervention does not exist in general). During this time, Hitler has come to power and, with a few blows, has defeated the principal ally of the USSR, the German Communist Party, weakened in advance by the lies and the falsity of Stalinism.

A year and a half ago, we wrote that the Red Army, in its principal mass, ought to turn its face to the West to have the possibility of smashing Fascism before it can destroy the German proletariat and unite with European and world imperialism. In answer to this, the American Stalinists, the most stupid and impudent of all, declared that we wanted to drag the USSR into a war, interrupt its economic upbuilding and assure the victory of imperialism. The old fable says that nothing is so dangerous as an ignorant friend. To appeal for military actions against Japan while there was not and could not be an immediate danger in that direction, meant to distract attention from the real danger of Fascism. Obviously the Stalinists carried out this task,

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Stalinists Beat Up Oppositionists

On Sunday, April 2, a group of members of the Spartacus Youth Club went to distribute *Young Spartacus and the Militant* to the New York District membership meeting of the YCL held at Stuyvesant Casino. Our comrades waited until the intermission period, and as the YCLers came out, we started to give out copies of our papers. We had distributed some two dozen copies when a couple of the "leaders" came down and began to tell us that we were not to be allowed to distribute here. We tried to discuss in a comradely manner, asking them what valid reason there could be for attempting to prohibit this. The best way to understand the viewpoint of any organization is to read and study what they propose. This was and is the only way in which a young Communist can hope to combat the ideologies which are alien to the interests of the working class—by analyzing them.

Several of them, however, whom we have met before, of the fanciful type, refused to discuss with us at all. "We have instructions to prevent any distribution," one of them stated, "and if you continue you will suffer the consequences!" Meanwhile a "strong arm" squad had been organized upstairs by the bureaucrats in the membership meeting and they now came hurrying down the stairs. We had been pushed away from the entrance and now without any warning they began to rip the papers from our arms. Working themselves into a fury, the young specimens of Stalinist argumentation launched into an attack upon our comrades. Outnumbered many times and with papers under our

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New Organ of German Left

The first issue of the new paper of the German section of the International Left Opposition has just been received here. It is called *Unser Wort*, and is published in Prague. Hitler has apparently not been told that this is a counter-revolutionary organization, and has therefore banned the former publication of the German Left Opposition, *Die Permanente Revolution* until May 31, without any prospect that it will be permitted to resume.

It will be recalled that according to the Stalinist press, the German section of the Left Opposition capitulated to the official party and was liquidated shortly before Hitler took power.

The new paper is the best proof of the vitality of the Opposition in Germany. It contains an analysis of the perspectives of Communism under the present regime in Germany, letters from German workers, and comrade Trotsky's "Talk with a Social Democratic Worker".

In accordance with the decisions of the International Conference of the Left Opposition, all members' have been asked to contribute a day's pay for the specific purpose of helping the German section. This money should be raised as quickly as possible so that it can be transmitted at once, in view of the vital and urgent needs of the German Opposition and the enormous tasks which now face it.

Kincaid Miners Trial Starts

Taylorville, Ill.—The trial of the 22 Kincaid miners, charged with murder, is under way in the Christian County Circuit Court. Its sessions occur with a packed hall of miners from all parts of the Illinois coal fields. The first two up for trial, whom the Peabody coal company intends to burn in the electric chair are Emil Dupire, coal miner and Mattozzo, chief of police in Kincaid and supporter of the P. M. A.

The trial so far clearly reveals the frame-up evidence given by the Peabody Coal Company and the danger of conviction due to the legalistic position taken by the officials of the P. M. A. conducting the case. All strategic advantage points are in the hands of the Peabody Coal Company. The P. M. A. officials do not seem to realize the significance of this.

John Hogan, Peabody attorney, has been drafted by the state attorney and is leading the prosecution. The jury consists of eleven farmers and one clerk—an ideal reactionary jury that can easily ignore all contradictory evidence and frame-up material. A far

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2nd Gillespie Meeting Conference Again Rejects New Federation Plan

Gillespie, Ill.—The April 2 conference of the Gillespie Trades and Labor Assembly adjourned, adopting a policy of coordinating the work of the Left wing inside the A. F. L. with the work of building new industrial unions from the unorganized workers. The conference adopted the name of "Progressive Trade Union Educational Committee". It was attended by 164 delegates, representing 26 organizations, with the Progressive Miners of America having 61 delegates, and the Unemployed Councils 30 delegates.

The rest of the delegates were from AFL locals and some independent unions and several TUUL groups. The workers' political organizations represented with fraternal delegates were the Communist League of America (Opposition), the Young Spartacus League and the Young Peoples Socialist League.

The highlights of the conference were the struggle between the delegates who wanted a new federation of labor and those who wanted an educational committee; by the fact that the Progressive Miners of America were the solid backbone of the conference, the heavy work on the floor for a correct policy carried on by a group of delegates around delegates Fraser and Steed of the Progressive Miners and the policies of the Left Opposition were vindicated 100 percent; and the action of the TUUL delegates and the Stalinists who had the largest caucus present, but had to trail behind the policies of the Left Opposition and the militant miners.

One thing can be said for the Stalinists. With their new turn they are doing far better than before, they are learning to work with other forces, they are learning how to retreat as well as advance but are still very clumsy and antagonized a considerable number of delegates and left a bad taste in the mouths of many delegates when the conference adjourned.

The report of the policy committee brought out the different tendencies at the conference and the main struggle of the day's proceedings. After reaffirming the policy of the previous conference Weber, for the policy committee, read three proposals introduced by delegate Fraser as follows:

Policy Committee Proposals
1. The response to the initiative of the Gillespie Trades and Labor Council, as indicated by this conference representation, shows that a sufficient basis for the creation

of a new federation of labor is lacking and therefore this conference definitely rejects this project.

2. Due to the limited and sectional character of this conference we cannot at the present time form a permanent organization. Such an organization of the Left and progressive forces on a national scale is a perspective to be aimed at. The three conferences at Gillespie have taken the initiative and prepared the ground for one that will eventually develop upon a broader national scale through cooperation of all Left wing and progressive forces.

3. The conference goes on record as recommending the program of January 29 session to the consideration of the workers who are struggling for the regeneration of the labor movement and its liberation from reactionary policies and leadership. This conference decides upon the continuation as a committee to keep in touch with sympathetic trade union bodies and will be ready to act jointly with them in the preparation of a broader conference on a national scale.

Around point one of these proposals the conference almost split. The "new federationists" were insistent, but finally the motion passed with an amendment by delegate Lore. The amendment said we continue as an organization to carry on work in the trade unions and independent unions. These delegates aimed their amendment to the tail of that organization,

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OPEN FORUM

The Tragedy of the German Proletariat

SHOULD A NEW COMMUNIST PARTY BE ORGANIZED IN GERMANY?

Speaker: MAX SHACHTMAN

International Workers School Hall 126 East 16th Street

Sunday, April 9, 1933, 8 P. M.

ADMISSION: 15 Cents
Auspices: N. Y. Branch, Communist League of America (Opposition)

ation of the tendencies within the Progressive Miners of America, the second article on the German situation by Sam Gordon, a reply to the second swindle of the Loveston group in attacking the stand of the Left Opposition on the German question, etc., etc. We have been forced also to omit from this number the continuation of comrade Trotsky's article which began in the last issue (A Talk with a Socialist Worker). The next issue will publish it in all likelihood, together with a new article by Trotsky on the threatening situation in Austria, which is gaining in significance every day.

Friday April 21, 1933 at 8 p. m. **SPRING DANCE & FESTIVAL** Jazz Orchestra - Songs - Other Features
IRVING PLAZA HALL 15 St. of Irving Pl. for the Benefit of 'THE MILITANT' Auspices: New York Branch Communist League of America (Opposition) and Protonagia Club.