

# Impressions of Fascist Germany

When I arrived in Berlin during the middle of May I went directly to the home of my good comrade S. On my previous visit in February he had invited me to come next time to stay at his house. Now I found a police seal on the door and somehow it helped me to make up my mind very quickly, to get out of the house and make no inquiries. I knew then that both comrade S. and his wife were in the clutches of the Fascists. The vision of the savage beatings with steel rods always applied to Communist prisoners sent a cold shiver down my spine.

Raid upon workers homes were still going on; no less dramatically but more "ordinariness". Formerly the groans of the victims could be heard on the outside. Now all sounds were muffled. But the terror was still used by the Nazis to show the possible doubters who was the master. It also provided an outlet for the acrimonious hatred deliberately fostered and tempered to a white heat in every Storm Trooper. Swift and thoroughness had now been added to improve the earlier dramatic staging. These had become specific features of the process of German Fascism taking over power and consolidating its gains.

What a difference in the picture now presented from that of my first visit in February! Then there was an atmosphere as if before a big battle in which the opposing forces had not yet come to grips, had not yet really measured strength. A disquieting anxiety prevailed, a painful uncertainty as to what the next step would be. It was in the air, it was everywhere. Could it be possible? Were the Fascists really going to be victorious? Apparently there was yet time to stop the onrushing horde. But time was precious. And then, in May, it had been settled, virtually without a battle. The important features of the "Third Reich" were visible and even the Nazis were surprised at the ease of their victory.

Most typical of the German scene now was the artificially drummed up enthusiasm flowing over into spectacularly staged demonstrations. "Celebrating the National Uprising" became the general title covering them all, but almost any occasion could be used for a demonstration; and, besides, they served admirably to feed illusions to the Nazi plebeian following. Hoisting the rehabilitated imperial colors with the Swastika on public buildings meant the careful setting of the stage for a demonstration. Sometimes, in the rush, the Storm Troopers would forget about the national colors and the Swastika would go up alone; but the "enthusiastic" demonstrators did not seem to notice the difference. When the new nationalist reactionary spirit demanded a change of street names from their former obnoxious Marxian, or even mere republican coloration, as for example changing Platz der Republik to Adolph Hitler Platz, or the rechristening of such streets as Erseberger Strasse, Karl Marx Strasse, Bebel Strasse, Eberts Allee, etc., a demonstration with the solemnity of a religious ritual would be staged. Similarly at the enunciation of a new program of worthless promises or the installation of new officials under the "Gleichschaltung". Even the burning of Marxian books had to have its festival setting in which would be sacrificed to the devouring flames the literary treasures not only of the German working class movement but also that which gave expression to the country's progress in science and culture.

The greatest demonstrations, from the point of view of numbers, were those on May Day which was converted into a Nazi day of labor. In a certain sense these Nazi May Day demonstrations became a test of strength of the regime. To the workers, with socialist and trade union tradition of long standing, it meant adding insult to injury. For they could not escape it. For still their attendance was made compulsory. Berlin on that day therefore found the bulk of its proletariat marching dejectedly with their feet bowed in agony. In the Ruhr territory on the other hand, I was told, that in most cases they sent stories about along the marching ranks which in a jocular fashion told about the size of the potatoes this year; showing the clenched fist to indicate size ("Red Front" salute).

May 2 witnessed the final and complete taking over of the trade unions by the Nazis, including their well stocked treasuries, and the arrest of practically every trade union official, from the top down. Outstanding among them were Lelpart and Grassmann. Both had particularly distinguished themselves by their abject servility. Now the official report of the arrests gave them special mention saying laconically: "transferred to a hos-

## An Eye-witness Account of Conditions in Hitler's Regime

Of course, this was all done in typical Nazi fashion with appropriate proclamations about "the furthering of the interests of national elevation" and the protection of the united people against the "Marxist Bonzen". In reality it was no further important step in the Fascist process of "Gleichschaltung". Evidently they had reason to consider the strength of their regime as having fully stood the test; that at least was the verdict of Goebbels at a huge Berlin meeting of his party functionaries held a couple of weeks later. He presented what he called the recent major political achievements, enumerating for special emphasis four different events. First there were in the field of foreign affairs the demand at Geneva for German arms equality and Hitler's speech on foreign policy. At home there were the May Day demonstrations and the capture of the trade unions. Incidentally this also gives a picture of the National Socialist party political methods; the method of constantly keeping the followers intoxicated with the spirit of marching from victory to victory. All that was lacking was some ceremonial self-criticism. But that is not yet in the faculty of the Nazi.

"I mean that the National Socialist movement is to become the State", Goebbels said at this meeting. "In this the old guard possess an unquestioned privilege", he added amid the thunderous applause of the horde. A little later the party decided that the original hundred thousand members were to be provided with jobs immediately. Surely one could then better understand the reasons for the campaign to freeze out all so-called non-Aryans from their economic and professional positions. One of the very attentive observers of political developments in Germany at that time said to me: "On the day of the Jewish boycott the Storm Troopers had been whipped up to such a frenzy that a mere signal could have turned the whole affair into all the horrors of a Bartholomew's Night." The anti-Jewish campaign was gruesome in all its revolting details. But it was essentially a by-product of the real aim, namely, to cow the working class with a reign of terror.

It was difficult to imagine the German working class cowed or in abject submission. But a look at the Berlin North district soon convinced me that it was so. I stopped one day to read one of the Ullstein papers displayed for passersby. Beside me were two women. Their poor but neat appearance told they were from the working class quarters. Both had their attention attracted to an article dealing with the trial of the Altona Communists

and the demand for the death penalty. Their eyes met in silence. It was a mutual dreadfully frightened expression. At that moment two trucks loaded to the bumpers with Nazi Storm Troopers approached. Their "heilmufe" spilt the air. The women hurried away. That excessively charged atmosphere made one feel uncomfortable. A couple of weeks later I learned that the supreme penalty had been imposed upon four of the Altona prisoners. When receiving the verdict, the leader of the group, Luettker declared: "The death penalty is the highest honor to a revolutionist."

In February the Fascists were only beginning their expansion, reaching out for every position within the state apparatus, cutting the ground from underneath their opponents while, at the same time, also moving by way of head-on collision. But the advance was still chaotic. The streets swarmed with the Nazi ruffians, moving in detachments in the process of taking possession, but not yet entirely sure of themselves. Members of the Steelhelmets would meet, click their heels and salute in the stiff, Prussian military fashion, causing a jealous animosity among the Storm Troopers. Here and there could still be seen groups of uniformed Reichsbannermen; but they were much more uncertain. The workers everywhere carried the expressions of bewilderment and fearful anticipations.

Did the German workers fall in the decisive hour because they were not ready to resist the Fascist ad-

vanee? No, that would not be the conclusion of the attentive observer. For that there were too many examples of actual readiness. There were the instances of general strikes in the free city of Lubeck and in the city of Stassfurt protesting against the Nazi murders. In both cases all wheels were brought to a standstill. For anti-Fascist demonstrations would turn out oftentimes hundreds of thousands eagerly awaiting a decisive leadership. In Hamburg, at the time when Nazi Storm Troopers began to occupy trade union headquarters, thousands of workers gathered in front of their building; ready to defend it. But the officials on the inside who were more frightened at this mass demonstration and anyway suspected a Communist plot, beseeched and enjoined their members to stay at home.

One incident of workers' bravery I observed personally, although I arrived only as the smoke cleared away. It was at Neukoelln where I came one evening when Storm Troopers had made a raid on a restaurant frequented by Communists. I got near enough to see some brown shirts who lay sprawled on the street being picked up by their brethren. The workers had given a good account of themselves. But that was only one of the isolated, desperate efforts to fight off the mortal enemy. A centralized direction to these efforts, a firm policy, or a serious attempt to unite the working class was not at hand. The parties in which the German workers, through their tradition of organization discipline, had placed their confidence, failed. In that lies the real explanation of the ease of the Fascist victory.

— ARNE SWABECK

# Stalin Reassures Hitler on Trotsky's 'Return'

Two or three weeks ago, the official Soviet news agency, TASS, denied the rumor that Trotsky is returning to the USSR. The solemn and categorical tone of this denial gave cause to believe that the Kremlin was pursuing some important political aim. But not in the field of internal politics, for neither the denial nor the newspaper rumor against which it was directed, was published in the U. S. S. R. The denial was intended fully and exclusively for foreign consumption.

The sense of this denial will be recalled that about two years ago Trotsky wrote on the necessity of preparing the Red Army for a struggle against National Socialism. This article, not even mentioned in the U. S. S. R., found in its time a loud echo in the National-Socialist press. We know with what demonstrative friendliness the Stalinist bureaucracy received Hitler's coming to power. "Izvestia" wrote: "The public opinion of the Soviet Union has never entertained any

plans, directed against the present current in Germany". These words signified nothing short of a demonstrative disassociation from Trotsky. Can there be any doubt that the article in *Izvestia* was written after a corresponding diplomatic inquiry from Berlin and that it had as its purpose to convince Hitler that Moscow holds unswervingly to the doctrine of socialism in one country?

At the time TASS published abroad the categorical statement that Trotsky "will not return" to the U. S. S. R., the Berlin paper, *Vossische Zeitung*, directed an official inquiry to Trotsky through its Constantinople correspondent as to whether he is really returning to Russia. The very fact of the inquiry seems unexpected and at the same time very significant, especially if the fact is taken into consideration that the *Vossische Zeitung* is now completely in the hands of the Nazis. Hitler simply ordered the former liberal paper, through its former liberal correspondent, to check up on the newspaper rumor of the coming return of Trotsky to Moscow and of the corresponding

# The Overflow of the Cuban Revolt

The Cuban revolt to oust Gerardo Machado, has been successful. So general was the opposition to the "butcher" that Ambassador Welles, who was attempting to eliminate Machado peacefully, was not given time to bring his "mediation" to the hoped-for conclusion.

The disaffection of the army was the last straw necessary to swing the scales against the dictator proving that the Cuban generals still recognize the master's voice. American imperialism, after many months of bargaining with anti-Machadist elements, had at last spoken clearly and the army shifted its allegiance.

There is every indication that the rank and file of the army would have mutinied en-masse against their officers and supported the already nation-wide general strike of the workers and petty-bourgeoisie, if their superiors had not come forward in support of the revolt at the time they did.

All the decisive forces were against the perpetuation of Machado's Porrista regime. The workers and peasants together with the urban middle classes were the first to take up the struggle openly, American imperialism during the whole period since last February had given signs of its intention to peacefully replace Machado before a mass uprising that might carry the change too far, could get under way. On July 1st, the imperialist representative, U. S. Ambassador Sumner Welles, commenced his negotiations for that end, with the frank cooperation of almost all of the bourgeois opposition elements. The masses however,

## Continued Strikes, Riots Burst Bounds Set by New Deal Diplomacy

understanding in a confused and general way that some maneuver was afoot, took the offensive under the leadership of Communist and radical petty-bourgeois elements. The general strike proclaimed in the first days of August, received the wholehearted support of the Cuban working class, and was also utilized by the bourgeois oppositionists inasmuch as it was directed against the Machado regime. Wall Street's "mediation" move had failed, and now the only way to check the mass revolt was to be found in going along with it. The army caught between two fires both of which were directed against the government, joined the movement at the eleventh hour, and in the interests of Wall Street thus assuring the downfall of the dictator before the insurgent masses should get entirely out of control. Machado gone, Dr. Cespedes was hurriedly sworn in as provisional president and has already at this writing commenced to bring repressive measures to bear in order to check the mass movement, which barely commences to show the first signs of abatement.

Once unleashed, following the first reports of the "butcher's" flight, the fury of the populace was uncontrollable. The National Palace was sacked as were also the private homes of many of Machado's personal supporters and those of all his cabinet ministers. The offices of "El Heraldo de Cuba" Machadist daily were wrecked and the presses demolished. Many workers and soldiers under the leadership of members of the "ABC", systematically hunted down and slew those who had most distinguished themselves as murderers and torturers of enemies of the old regime. The police were either neutralized or jammed to interfere. Colonel Antonio Jimenez, chief of the "porra", Machado's extra-legal strong arm force, infamous for its prosecution of revolutionary workers and students, was among the first to encounter the wrath of the enraged populace. Jose Magrnat, who was sent to Mexico by Machado in January 1929 to assassinate comrade Julio Antonio Mella, did not even have time to scurry for his hole like the proverbial rat. In all, a score or more of Machado's "business" have been killed. If the "butcher" himself escaped it was only due to his superior alacrity and better protection.

The deposed tyrant, now in refuge at Nassau in the Bahama Islands, may yet meet the fate of his cohorts. Meanwhile, he does not intend to suffer any unnecessary personal inconvenience, as is evidenced by the large sums of money mounting into millions of dollars, that have in recent years been de-

posited by him in foreign banks, doubtless in anticipation of such a contingency.

American imperialism will now be able to consolidate its forces in Cuba. A "new deal" for Cuba is already being spoken of quite openly, and the sending of four American warships to Havana is not so much an episode of it as symptomatic of the spirit of this "New Deal". Attempts will be made to smooth over the differences and contradictions of imperialism and native capitalism at the expense of the workers. This new situation will open broad perspectives of struggle for the Cuban workers, as no possible arrangement under capitalism can solve the contradictions of Cuba's economy except at the expense of the workers.

The new situation is pregnant with great possibilities for the Communist party and the proletariat. But in order to fulfill its role, our party must analyze realistically all the factors in the situation. The present mass movement raised by the general strike, must be utilized to the limit in order to better entrench our party among the masses, democratic demands must be raised and consistently fought for in order to gain every possible advantage from the period of confusion that is bound to ensue, and which the "concentration" government of de Cespedes, even with Wall Street's direct and complete support, cannot entirely eliminate.

Hundreds of exiles and political prisoners are returning to Cuba from their places of exile abroad, and from the detention colony on Isla de Pinos. Among these in addition to Communists are also many petty bourgeois aspirants for political jobs. Among these latter, a jockeying for power, hardly intended to calm matters, is bound to take place. All indications point to a period of internal struggles among the diverse sectors of the bourgeois and imperialist camps. If an attempt at a democratic regime is made, it can only be temporary as the continued crisis is not such as to permit of democratic forms. Some form of bourgeois dictatorship under imperialist tutelage is inevitable. The only road out of Cuba's permanent economic crisis is that of the proletarian revolution. But if this is to be seriously considered the Cuban Communists must lay aside their opportunist slogan of an "anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution". This slogan can only lead the proletarian vanguard deeper into the slough of nationalism. —R. N.

## STALINISTS REFUSE L. O. REPRESENTATIVE RIGHT TO SPEAK

Youngstown, Ohio—About three hundred workers attended the August First Anti-War demonstration of the Communist party here. Representatives from the Unemployed Councils, Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union, the International Labor Defense, and John Marshall, Communist candidate for governor, spoke. But a representative of the local Unemployed Federation was not given the platform in spite of the fact that it had endorsed the demonstration and had a request of the C. P. through H. Mack several days ago that one of its Executive members be permitted to speak specifically on the local Federation. Perhaps the fact that the speaker it had proposed was H. Newby of the Left Opposition had something to do with the Stalinists' "inability" to spare five minutes of its program for other than official C. P. speakers. —N.

At the 7th congress of the Russian Communist Party, in March 1918, during the discussion of the party program, Lenin carried on a decisive struggle against Bukharin, who considered that parliamentarism is done for, once and for all, that it is historically "exhausted". "We must..." Lenin retorted, "write a new program of the Soviet power, without renouncing the use of bourgeois parliamentarism. To believe that we will not be thrown back, is Utopia... after every setback, if class forces inimical to us should push us to this old position, we shall proceed to what has been conquered by experience—to the Soviet power..."

Lenin objected to a doctrinaire anti-parliamentarism with regard to a country which had already gained the Soviet regime; We must not tie our hands beforehand, he taught Bukharin, for we may be pushed back to the once abandoned positions. In Germany there has not been and there is no proletarian dictatorship, but there is a dictatorship of Fascism; Germany has been thrown back even from bourgeois democracy. Under these conditions, to renounce beforehand the use of democratic slogans and of bourgeois parliamentarism means to clear the field for a social democracy of a new formation. Prinkipo, July 14, 1933.

—L. TROTSKY.

# Leon Trotsky on the Question of Fascism and Democratic Slogans

(Continued from Page 1)

Why Fascism in Germany is called upon to play a role entirely opposite to that which it played in Italy, remains incomprehensible. Because "Germany is not Italy"? Victorious Fascism is in reality not a locomotive of history but its gigantic brake. Just as the policy of the social democracy prepared the triumph of Hitler, so the regime of National Socialism inevitably leads to the warming-up of democratic illusions.

## 3. Can the Social-Democracy Regenerate Itself?

German comrades testify that the social democratic workers and even many of the social democratic bureaucrats are "disillusioned" with democracy. We must extract all we can out of the critical moods of the reformist workers, in the interests of their revolutionary education. But at the same time the extent of the reformists' "disillusionment" must be clearly understood. The social democratic high priests scold democracy so as to justify themselves. Unwilling to admit that they showed themselves as contemptible cowards, incapable of fighting for the democracy which they created and for their soft berths in it, these gentlemen shift the blame from themselves to the intangible democracy. As we see, this radicalism is not only cheap but also spurious through and through! Let the bourgeoisie only beckon these "disillusioned" ones with its little finger and they will run on all fours to a new coalition with it. It is true, in the mass of social-democratic workers a real disgust with the betrayals and mirages of democracy is being born. But to what extent? The greater half of the seven to eight million social democratic voters is in a state of the greatest confusion, glum passivity, and capitulation to the victors. At the same time, a new generation will be forming under the heel of Fascism, a generation to which the Weimar constitution will be an historic legend. What line then will the political crystallization within the working class follow? This depends upon many conditions, among them, of course, also upon our policy.

Historically the direct replacement of the Fascist regime by a workers' state is not excluded. But for the realization of this possibility it is necessary that a powerful, illegal Communist party form itself in the process of struggle against Fascism, under the leadership of which the proletariat could seize power. However, it must be said that a creation of a revolutionary party of this sort in illegality, is not very probable, at any rate it is not assured by anything in advance. The discontentment, indignation, fermentation of the masses will, from a certain moment onward, grow much faster than the illegal formation of the party vanguard. And every lack of clarity in the consciousness of the masses will inevitably help democracy.

This does not at all mean, that after the fall of Fascism, Germany will again have to go through a long school of parliamentarism. Fascism will not eradicate the past capable of changing the past structure of the nation. It would be the greatest mistake to expect a new lengthy democratic epoch in the development of Germany. But in the revolutionary awakening of the masses, democratic slogans will inevitably constitute the first chapter. Even if the further progress of the struggle should in general not permit, even for one day, the regeneration of a democratic state—and this is very possible—the struggle itself cannot develop to the circumvention of democratic slogans! A revolutionary party that would attempt to jump over this stage, would break its neck.

4. The randlerites improve on Stalinists.

The confusion in the question of democratic slogans, has revealed itself most profoundly in the programmatic theses of the opportunist group of Brandler-Thalheimer on the question of the struggle against Fascism. The Communist party, the theses read, "should underline the manifestations of discontentment of all (!) classes against the Fascist dictatorship". (Gegen den Strom, page 7, the word "all" is underlined in the original). At the same time, the theses insistently warn: "The partial slogan can not be of a bourgeois-democratic nature." Between these two statements, each of which is erroneous, there is an irreconcilable contradiction. In the first place, the formula of the unification of the discontentment of "all classes" sounds absolutely incredible. The Russian Marxists did at one time abuse such a formulation in the struggle against czarism. Out of this abuse grew out the Menshevik conception of the revolution, later on adopted by Stalin for China. But in Russia, at least, it was a question of the collision of the bourgeois nation with the privileged monarchy. In what sense can one speak, in a bourgeois nation, of the struggle of "all classes" against Fascism, which is the tool of the big bourgeoisie against the proletariat? It would be instructive to see how Thalheimer, the manufacturer of theoretic vulgarities, would unite the discontentment of Hugenberg, and he is also discontented,—with the discontentment of an unemployed worker. How else can one unite a movement of "all classes" if not by putting oneself on the basis of bourgeois democracy? Verily, a classic combination of opportunism with an ultra-radicalism in words!

The movement of the proletariat against the Fascist regime will acquire an ever greater mass character to the extent that the petty bourgeoisie becomes disappointed with Fascism, isolating the possessing summits and the government apparatus. The task of a proletarian party would consist in utilizing the weakening of the yoke on the part of the petty bourgeois reaction for the purpose of arousing the activity of the proletariat on to the road of the conquest of the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie.

It is true, the growth of the

discontentment of the intermediary strata and the growth of the resistance of the workers will create a crack in the bloc of the possessing classes and will spur their "left flank" to seek contact with the petty bourgeoisie. The task of the proletarian party with relation to the "liberal" flank of the possessors will consist, however, not in including them both in a bloc of "all classes" against Fascism, but on the contrary in immediately declaring a decisive struggle against it for influence on the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie.

Under what political slogans will this struggle take place? The dictatorship of Hitler grew directly out of the Weimar constitution. The representatives of the petty bourgeoisie have, with their own hands presented Hitler with the mandate for a dictatorship. If we should assume a very favorable and quick development of the Fascist crisis, then the demand for the convocation of the Reichstag with the inclusion of all the banished deputies, may, at a certain moment, unite the workers with the widest strata of the petty bourgeoisie. If the crisis should break out later and the memory of the Reichstag should have had time to obliterate itself, the slogan of new elections may acquire great popularity. It is sufficient that such a road is possible. To tie one's hands with relation to temporary democratic slogans which may be forced upon us by our petty bourgeois allies and by the backward strata of the proletariat itself, would be fatal doctrinarism.

Brandler-Thalheimer believe, however, that we should only advocate "democratic rights for the laboring masses": the right of assembly, trade unions, freedom of press, organization and strikes". In order to emphasize their radicalism more, they add: "these demands should be strictly (!) distinguished from bourgeois democratic demands of universal democratic rights". There is no person more wretched than the opportunist who takes the knife of ultra-radicalism between his teeth!

Freedom of assembly and the press only for the laboring masses is conceivable solely under the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, under the nationalization of buildings, printing establishments, etc. It is possible that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Germany will

also have to employ exceptional laws against exploiters: that depends upon the historic moment, upon international conditions, upon the relation of internal forces. But it is not at all excluded that, having conquered power, the workers of Germany will find themselves sufficiently powerful to allow freedom of assembly and the press also to the exploiters of yesterday, of course, in accordance with their actual political influence, and not with the extent of their treasury; the treasury will have been expropriated. Thus, even for the period of the dictatorship there is in principle no basis for limiting beforehand the freedom of assembly and the press only to the laboring masses. The proletariat may be forced to such a limitation; but this is not a question of principle. It is doubly absurd to advocate such a demand under the conditions of present day Germany, when freedom of the press and assembly exists for all but the proletariat. The arousing of the proletarian struggle against the Fascist inferno will take place, at least in the first stages, under the slogans: give also to us, workers, the right of assembly and the press. The Communists, of course, will at this stage also carry on a propaganda in favor of the Soviet regime but they will at the same time support every real mass movement under democratic slogans, and wherever possible will take the initiative in such a movement.

Between the regime of bourgeois democracy and the regime of proletarian democracy there is no third regime, "the democracy of the laboring masses". True, the Spanish republic calls itself "the republic of the laboring" even in the text of its constitution. But this is a formula of political charlatanism. The Brandlerian formula of democracy "only for the laboring", particularly in combination with the "unity of all classes", seems to be especially designed to confuse and mislead the revolutionary vanguard in the most important question: "When and to what extent to adapt ourselves to the movement of the petty bourgeoisie and the backward strata of the working masses, what concessions to make to them in the question of the tempo of the movement and the slogans on the order of the day, so as more successfully to rally the proletariat under the banner of its own revolutionary dictatorship?"

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