

Discussion on the German Defeat

The article appearing below is a second contribution to the discussion on the problems of the German situation after the victory of Fascism. The views expressed are those of the writer.—Ed.

I. The victory of Fascism in Germany is now an irrefutable fact. The defeat of the German proletariat means, of course, an indubitable set back to the revolutionary re-organization of society. To minimize the Fascist victory is to open wide the gateway to subsequent disasters. But there is no less danger in overestimating it. Fascism is victorious but its victory is not final. Its triumph was gained in Germany over a demoralized proletariat. It won because the workers were demoralized by the betrayal of the party of social democracy and the party of Stalinism in Germany. To draw erroneous political conclusions from this betrayal—to blame the workers—is to lead to further demoralization, despair and catastrophe on the international scale.

The "amazing thing" about the experience in Germany is that Hitler was able to come to power legally, i. e., that Hitler's assumption of the state power did not provoke elemental resistance on the part of the workers. The worshippers of the elemental are aghast at this discrepancy between the dynamic background and the inertia of the proletarian mass. The proletariat of Germany, they sigh, is the "best organized working-class in the world" and yet despite its strength and organization, the Fascists literally slid into power without any resistance. Nothing approaching such passivity can be cited from past history. There are no analogies that seem to apply. The incentive to set them in motion seems to obtain, and yet the masses do not budge. Their lives are at stake and yet the workers remain docile, indifferent or stupefied. Learnedly, facts and figures are being culled to prove that the masses did act spontaneously in the past. Why, the same workers openly resisted the very same Fascists even before Hitler assumed power. Still more perplexing is the fact that even at the beginning of its historical journey the proletariat evinced unmistakable initiative. At their weakest, the workers tended "instinctively" to organize themselves, rising up spontaneously, throwing up their own leaders, and at times acting despite their leaders when the latter tried to stem their elemental urge. But now, almost on the brink of their historic goal, the workers seem paralyzed. Once Fascism assumes power, they permit it to crack their skulls and destroy their organizations. There are a number of revolutionists who are at present voicing privately their indignation, if not disgust with the workers of Germany and their "psychology". The German workers, they say, are after all Germans and like all Germans they have been drilled and organized to the point of becoming automatons, ready to go-step no matter who commands. It is a shameful fact that today in America there are Marxists who produce such psychology to account for the passivity of the German workers. In order to explain the situation in Germany, they find it unnecessary to dig into the tragic historical course of the working class in Germany; the role of their parties explains nothing; the treachery of social democracy and the supplementary treacherous policies of the official German Communist Party explain nothing. Psychology explains everything—"the racial psychosis" fully accounts for everything, not only in Germany but in America also. Why are the American workers so inert? Are they not imbued with the psychology of rugged individualism and not the psychology of hay-foot, straw-foot? Answer—"They suffer from the racial American psychosis". Our rugged individualists, if they happen to be American workers are also provincial and hence "terribly backward". Clearly, the American workers—all workers—are to blame if they do not know how or why to fight; clearly, the workers and only the workers are to blame for failing to learn what their psychopathic leaders cannot teach them.

But according to our fetishists of the elemental, the American, just like the German worker is supposed to fight anyway, no matter what he knows and what he doesn't. Why aren't the American workers responding elementally like the American petty-bourgeoisie, the farmers, who are in open revolt? The farmers are seething, militantly they try to force their demands

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Concurrently, we must strengthen our unemployed work. Demand for social insurance, as well as all other related unemployed demands and activities must be constantly held in the foreground. We must particularly develop united front action among the various unemployed organizations in the field on every possible occasion.

If we are at all successful in dealing with the tasks that present themselves to us with such clearness, when the mass disillusionment sets in the vanguard will be recompensed by added strength and power. The Left Opposition wing can rally to its banner new valuable revolutionary forces by demonstrating that it is capable of understanding the new turn of events and applying correct Marxian tactics.—JOSEPH S. GIGANTI

upon the state, they mobilize—and the workers...? "They are still too backward," replies our revolutionary thinker. Small wonder that with such Marxists abroad one finds the most sanguine perspectives of the conjuncture in the American revolutionary press. The big bourgeoisie is prepared for riot, for spontaneous mass outbursts; it has put all its state machinery in order to meet the gravest eventualities, even to the extent of preparing the Army to take over the railroads, if and when necessary. The ruling gang is alarmed by the lull below, fearful that the longer the masses remain dormant the sharper and more violent may prove the explosion. But the revolutionists are busy manufacturing alibis, maintaining their prestige, and screening their own bewilderment.

Is the big bourgeoisie of America merely hysterical from an acute attack of "crisis psychosis"? Not quite. Though somewhat distended in panic, its eyes see clearly nevertheless. For one thing the big bourgeoisie sees danger on the part of the petty bourgeoisie which as a class responds the quickest and easiest to the elemental in accordance with its subordination to bourgeois ideology which is propagated and instilled in all individuals in society by the bourgeoisie.

L.O. Holds Successful Meeting in N.Y.

Upwards of 500 workers came to the Irving Plaza Hall to listen to the report of comrade Max Shachtman on the fate of the second and third Internationals. An enthusiastic atmosphere was manifest throughout the entire proceedings of the meeting. Workers never before seen at Opposition meetings were in evidence through every part of the hall. Besides these there were scores of Party members and sympathizers. Lovestones, Socialists and every other shade of working class political opinion present. The questions upmost in the minds of the most developed elements in the working class movement—is there a chance for the revival of the International Socialist movement? Will there be a resurgent movement within the ranks of the Communist International after the Hitler victory in Germany?—these questions and others of a similar nature were posed by the speaker of the evening and developed and elucidated in a manner as to rouse in the minds of the workers present a serious and critical approach to the problems confronting all revolutionists at the present time.

Following the collection, the floor

was thrown open for questions and discussion. Dozens of questions followed: Does the speaker have the temerity to say that the Communist Party is liquidated in Germany when the Communists there are painting slogans on working class houses? Why were the Italian workers defeated when they had such great leaders to guide them as Lenin and Trotsky? What is the direction of the Left Socialist groupings, S. A. P., I. L. P., etc? Why didn't the Left Opposition make a determined struggle against Fascism in action?

Quite a number of the questions revolved around the problem of a new International. To these comrade Shachtman replied that there was now a serious discussion going on in the ranks of the International Left Opposition and that as soon as a full and thorough discussion had been concluded and a policy democratically determined the L. O. would make its standpoint clear to the entire working class. It was after midnight when the speaker concluded with the questions, so it was quite apparent that discussion could not unfortunately be had. The meeting concluded with the singing of the Internationale.

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—JOHN G. WRIGHT.

Prepare Youth Day for War Fight

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tion to its regular anti-militarist propaganda.

Today the heavy clouds of war looms over the entire world. The threat of Japanese imperialism to the Soviet Union, its robber war and conquests in China, the consolidation of German Fascism, the conflicts between the imperialist nations, England vs. the United States, Japan vs. the U. S., Germany vs. France, Austria vs. Germany, and so on, brood an impending massacre. The capitalist nations are reaching an economic and political impasse. It is becoming more and more difficult for them to settle their problems peacefully.

France is armed to the teeth. Japan, England and the United States have been and are increasing their naval forces. Roosevelt is preparing the psychology of the American workers for a war situation. His national labor boards closely resemble those organized during the last war. Through the Civil Conservation Camps, the American bosses represented by Roosevelt's government are preparing a reserve of several hundred thousand young workers for the new imperialist slaughter.

...To counteract this process of militarization of the youth, little effective work is being done. The Stalinist Communist party and Young Communist League gives over to the Barbusse, Sinclair and Dreiser the leadership of the struggle against war. In the trade unions, which are essential for war or anti-war purposes the Left wing is insignificant.

International Youth Day belongs to the militant and class conscious young workers. To give it real meaning to enshrine it in the hearts of the American youth an orientation of international revolution is necessary. Only on such a basis can an effective struggle against militarism and war be conceived. Of the Left Opposition youth will dedicate itself to this and endeavor to carry on the tradition of the handful of bold young fighters who met at Berne.

—JOSEPH CARTER.

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Left Socialist Conference

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Communist groups though all of them still defend the basic line of Comintern policies which lead to the failure and disasters. These people still declare that what needs to be corrected is only the "third period" sectarian aspects of the Stalinist policies.

The resolution for the Brussels conference deals with Germany, declaring that the "victory of Fascism has shown to the whole world the bankruptcy of the Social Democratic and Communist parties." It condemns the coalition policy of the Social Democrats and their acceptance of the "lesser evil" theory. Both statements are entirely justified and correct. Yet the character of the conference cannot fully be judged in advance. As far as at least some of the initiators are concerned its prospects still stand between the camps of reformism and Communism. A first test will be afforded at the gathering now taking place and the prospects for the trend toward the Left Opposition gaining momentum must be said to be good.

The Issue Within the British L.L.P.

The attitude of the British L. L. P. to this conference is of interest. The right wing of its National Council has lined up against further co-operation with the Communist party. In turn the leaders of the latter label the L. L. P. leaders bag and baggage "counter-revolutionaries", "Fascists", "enemies of the Soviet Union", etc. The L. L. P. National Council, after many differences within it were revealed, finally decided that in regard to the conference resolution its view is: "That whilst both the Second and the Third Internationals bear a share of the responsibility (for Germany) the nature of the failure is different. The Social Democratic failure is due to its reformist and compromising policy. The Communists had correct revolutionary principles but applied them incorrectly."

In connection with these developments our British Left Opposition section appeals to the comrades of the Independent Labor Party "implore them to make clear their position, especially on the basic problems of the revolution. The lack of this formulation makes it possible in the L. L. P. to find today those who stand for immediate adhesion to the Communist party rubbing shoulders with those whose rightful place is in the labor party. The L. L. P. has not yet fully found its way to the Communist position. Consequently it has not yet fully made the break with Centrism."

The British Communist party is now campaigning for a "United Communist Party". The unity to be brought about by "the United Congress", and, we are told a "democratic" one. But this congress is to be on the basis of the Comintern program. That is the program adopted at the Sixth Congress, the program of "socialism in one country", which separated the workers from the mass of trade unionists, which evolved the fatal theory of "Social Fascism", and which is at the basis of the capitulation and defeat in Germany. Our British Left Oppositionists say to the L. L. P.:

"It is impossible to talk of unity on such terms. But the L. L. P. cannot exist on the mistakes of the C. I. For this reason it is all the more necessary to begin an exhaustive discussion which shall aim at facing up to the main problems posed by the present world situation and by the experience of the past in order to formulate your own viewpoint. And such a discussion would have profound effects, not only inside your own organization, but also inside the C. P. G. B. and would be the first step towards the real unity of the best revolutionary forces on the basis of ideological unity."

Temps and Stalin

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of repentance, as was done by Kamenev and Zinoviev... it would be impossible to accord him the permission to return to the USSR."

To every politically literate person it can only mean that Stalin, "absolutely competent source", formally obligated himself to the agent of French finance not to admit Trotsky to the USSR even if he should sign a letter of repentance. "However, the correspondent adds in passing, it is not at all in Trotsky's character to sign such letters."

Temps carefully circumvents the contradiction of why "it would be impossible to accord Trotsky the permission to return to the Soviet Union", even in case of repentance, if he has no program, no adherents and is foreign to the masses. The experienced correspondent kept political discipline and did not ask any embarrassing questions of the "absolutely competent source". The categorical obligation of Stalin: Let the French stock market not fear a rapprochement with Moscow: "Trotsky will in no case be admitted to the USSR", sufficed for him this time. Yesterday Stalin made this pledge to Hitler, today to the Comité des forges.

Once again: let the Stalinists consider well this remarkable document. This is not chatter of the yellow, tabloid press. Not in vain did Jores once say: Temps is the bourgeois turned newspaper."

Hitler & the Prospects of War

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the appraisal of the internal as well as the foreign policy of National-Socialism.

The guiding philosophical and historical ideas in the declaration are truly pitiful in their pretentious mediocrity. The idea proclaimed by Hitler of the necessity of re-adopting the state frontiers of Europe to the frontiers of its races, is one of those reactionary utopies with which the National-Socialist program is studded. Present-day Europe is decomposing economically and culturally not because its national frontiers are imperfect, but because the old continent is cut up in every direction by customs prison walls, separated by the disorder of the monetary systems, that is, systems of inflation, and crushed by the militarism which Europe requires to insure its dismemberment and its decadence. A shifting of the internal frontiers by a few dozens or hundreds of miles in one direction or another, would, without changing much of anything, involve a number of human victims exceeding the population of the disputed zone.

The assurances given by the National-Socialists that they renounce "Germanization" do not signify that they renounce conquests: one of the central and most persistent ideas in their program is the occupation of vast territories in "the East", so that a strong German peasantry may be established there. It is not by accident that the pacifist declaration, having suddenly and unexpectedly left the ground of the "ideal" separation of the races, warns in a half-threatening tone that the source of future conflicts may arise out of the "overpopulation of Europe, primarily of Germany: the East. And when, lamenting the injustice of the German-Polish frontier, he declared that one could without difficulty find "in the East" the solution capable of satisfying alike the "claims of Poland" and the "legitimate rights of Germany", he simply had in mind the annexation of Soviet territories. The renunciation of Germanization signifies, in this connection, the principle of the privileged position of the Germanic "race" as the seigniorial caste in the occupied territories. The Nazis are against assimilation but not against extermination. They prefer the extermination of the conquered "inferior" peoples to their Germanization. For the time being fortunately, it is only a matter of hypothetical conquests.

When Hitler asserts with indignation that the great German people has been transformed into a second class nation, and that this conflicts with the interests of international solidarity and the principle of equal rights for all peoples, this idea rings false from these lips: the whole historical philosophy of National-Socialism proceeds from the allegedly organic inequality of nations and the right of the "superior" races to trample upon and to exterminate the "inferior" races. Taken as a whole, the Hitler program for the reconstruction of Europe is a reactionary-utopian medley of racial mysticism and national cannibalism. It is not hard to submit it to an annihilating criticism. However, it is not the beginning of the realization of this program that is on the order of the day of the Fascist dictatorship, but the re-establishment of the military power of Germany, without which it is impossible to talk of any program whatsoever. It is only from this standpoint that the declaration offers any interest.

Hitler's program is the program of German capitalism, the most dynamic and the most aggressive of all, and which is at the same time bound hand and foot by the results of the defeat. It is this combination of potential strength and actual weakness that predetermines the exceedingly explosive character of the aims of National-Socialism as well as the extreme prudence of the most immediate steps towards the attainment of these aims. One can speak today of loosening and gradually untying the knots, but not of cutting them asunder.

Any revision of the treaties, especially of the system of armaments, would signify a change in the present relationship of forces: Germany would have to grow stronger, France weaker. Outside of this, the very question of revision has no meaning for Germany. On the other hand, it is quite clear that the rulers of France will accept no changes that would weaken its position to the benefit of Germany.

That is why the Nazis regard as illusory and fantastic any policy calculated upon an improvement of the international position of Germany by way of an agreement with France. It is from this conviction which, as will be seen further on, runs through all the political activity of Hitler, that flows the inevitability of a new conflict between Germany and France. But not today, nor yet tomorrow. It is precisely this "correction" with regard to time that Hitler makes in his declaration and, in this sense, it is not a mere "deception". When Goering set fire to the Reichstag, he risked nothing but the heads of his agents. The premeditated firing of Europe is a more ticklish enterprise. In its present state, Germany cannot make war. It is disarmed. This is no phrase, it is a fact. Bespectacled students and unemployed with a swastika band are no sub-

stitute for the Hohenzollern army. To be sure, here and there Hitler can partially violate the obligations dealing with armaments. But he will not resolve upon any open measure on a large scale which would involve him in a direct and flagrant conflict with the prescription of Versailles. Only some "fortunate" circumstances, in the form of complications between the heavily armed states of Europe, could permit National-Socialism, in the very next period, to execute a panther's leap, its "March 5th" in foreign policy. But in their absence, Hitler will be forced to confine himself to grand diplomatic combinations abroad and to petty military contraband at home.

Potential strength does not liberate from actual weakness. If the Germany of the Hohenzollerns set itself the task of "organizing Europe" in order thereafter to undertake a new partition of the world, present-day Germany, thrown far back to the rear by the defeat, is forced to set itself once more those tasks which Bismarck's Prussia solved long ago: the attainment of the European equilibrium as a stage in the unification of all the German lands would rebound against the West. The practical program of Hitler is today bounded by the European horizon. The problems of continents and of oceans are beyond his field of vision and can be of practical concern to him only in so far as they are interwoven

USSR Recognition A Class Question

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and particularly the unemployed workers around the slogan of recognition and financial support to the Soviet Union. This was the logical outcome of the theory of "Socialism in One Country", which divorces the progress of the revolution in the Soviet Union toward Socialism, from the interests of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the countries which are still dominated by capitalism. They have preferred to attempt to obtain recognition, not by the pressure of the masses, but by back-stage negotiations with the representatives of the capitalist class. Confronted with our slogans, they have denied that the proletariat would or could be mobilized around these demands, saying that the workers were too backward, that they would not understand, that it was a risky way of doing things, that it might arouse the antagonism of the bourgeoisie, that it might interfere with the cautious negotiations of the Soviet diplomats.

This policy of sacrificing the permanent and ultimate aims of the international working-class to the temporary and immediate ones of the Soviet State, is essentially opportunistic. It gains its immediate aims by retreating. How far this retreat will go we do not know. The American government has in past negotiations with the Soviet government asked for guarantees against the use of Soviet recognition to further revolutionary activity in the United States, and has even demanded the abolition of the Communist International. We may doubt that the retreat will go that far, but at what point will it stop? Will that point be fixed by the intransigence of the Stalinist diplomats or by the insolence of the American negotiators?

A correct revolutionary strategy cannot be based on the subordination or opposition of the international interests of the working class to the immediate interests of the first workers' state. With or without Stalinist leadership, the only sound policy remains: to pose the fight for recognition as a working-class demand joining the interests of the American workers with those of the Russian workers, to carry our demands in the course of struggle from recognition and long-term credits to steadily higher levels, forward to the demand for a joint plan of economic collaboration and as our ultimate goal, the international planning commission for world economy.

Uniting the Interests of the Soviet But now we are faced with the actual situation created by the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy. We must declare unequivocally—we are in favor of the recognition of the Soviet Union, because it strengthens the workers' state, however, is in the hands of Stalinism. For the present, the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy coincide with the immediate interests only of the Soviet State. The Left Opposition, on the other hand, always fights for the defense of the first workers' state as well as for the ultimate international revolutionary interests of the world proletariat. It is only the Stalinist apparatus that separates the two.

In defending the Soviet Union, we fight jointly with the present government, which is the Stalinist apparatus. When, and if, the interests of the apparatus or part of it conflict with those of the workers' state, as may occur in the event of intervention or a Thermidorian counter-revolutionary crisis, we defend the workers' state and call on the international proletariat to mobilize for its defense. Even then the immediate question of the recognition of the Soviet Union will be settled, therefore, the Left Opposition still poses as the task the mobilization of the revolutionary vanguard of the international working-class for the support of the next stage of the needs of the Soviet Union, for economic collaboration and for international defense.—B. J. FIELD.

with the internal problems of Europe. Hitler speaks exclusively in defensive terms: this corresponds entirely to the stage through which reascent German militarism must pass. If the military rule—the best defensive—is the offensive—the best preparation for the offensive—is to take care of the defensive—is no less correct. In this sense, Brookdorf-Kantsau, who had a taste for paradox, told me in Moscow: Si vis oclum para pacem.

Hitler is counting upon the support of Italy, and within certain limits, this is assured him—not so much because of the identity of internal regime (the purely German Third Reich is, as is known, a frankly Latin plagiarism), as because of the parallelism in—at least their negative—foreign aspirations. But with the Italian crutch alone, German imperialism will not rise to its feet. Only under the condition of support from England can Fascist Germany gain the necessary freedom of movement. Therefore no adventures, no declarations which smack of adventure! Hitler understands every blow against the West (a blow against the West would rebound against the West), would promptly bring closer together England and France, and would oblige Italy to the greatest reserve. Every imprudent, premature, risky act of revenge-politics would lead automatically to the isolation of Germany and, given its military impotence, to a new humiliating capitulation. The knots of the Versailles treaty would be drawn still tighter. An agreement with England demands a self-limitation. But Paris—and Paris is just what is involved—is well worth a mass. Just as the agreement with Hindenburg, through the medium of Papen, permitted Hitler to accomplish his coup d'état in the form of an interpretation of the Weimar Constitution, so an agreement with England, through the medium of Italy, is to permit Germany "legally" to ravage and to overthrow the Versailles treaty. It is within this framework that the declaration of May 17 must be viewed. Hitler's pacifism is not a fortuitous diplomatic improvisation, but a component part of a grand maneuver which is to change radically the relationship of forces in favor of Germany, and to lay the bases for the European and the world offensive of German imperialism.

However, this is but one part of Hitler's program and only the negative part: to refrain from premature attempts at revenge is in essence the continuation of the Stresemann policy; it does not suffice to guarantee the active support of England. The declaration of May 17 contains a clear indication on the other, the positive, side of the Nazi program: the struggle against Bolshevism. It is not a question of the organizations of the German proletariat but of the struggle against the Soviet Union. In close connection with the program of the drive towards the East (*Drang nach Osten*), Hitler takes upon himself the protection of European civilization, of the Christian religion, of the British colonies and other moral and material values, against Bolshevik barbarism. From this historic mission, precisely and primarily from this mission, he hopes to obtain for Germany the right to arm itself. Hitler is convinced that on the scales of Great Britain the danger of German Fascism to western Europe weighs less than the danger of the Bolshevik Soviets in the East. This evaluation constitutes the most important key to the whole foreign policy of Hitler.

The most important, but not the only one, The National-Socialist dictatorship will not only play upon the contradiction between the West and the East, but also upon all the antagonisms of western Europe: there is no lack of them. Placing a cross over the phantom of Austro-Hungary, Hitler pledges the special attention of Germany to the "young national states of Europe". He seeks auxiliary levers to re-establish the European equilibrium, proposing to the small and feeble states to rally around the vanquished and not the victor. Just as in its domestic policy, National-Socialism has assembled under its banner the ruined and the desperate, in order all the more surely to subject them to the interests of monopoly capital, so in his foreign policy Hitler will strive to create a united front of the vanquished and the injured in order all the more pitilessly to crush them in the future under the weight of German imperialism.

If Hitler has so eagerly accepted the English plan for armaments reduction, it is only because he counted in advance and with full certainty upon its failure. He did not need to take upon himself the odious role of the grave-digger of pacifist proposals: he prefers to leave that function to others. For the same reason, Hitler is not niggardly with his "warm thanks" to the American President for his declaration in favor of armaments reduction. The more broadly and extensively the program of disarmament is presented before the whole world, and the more inevitably it ends in a collapse, the more incontestable will be Germany's right to rearmament. No, Hitler is not preparing to overthrow Versailles by violence—for violence one must have power! But he is counting firmly upon the prospect that, after the failure of the British program which he "supports", England, together with Italy, will support with all their might the right of Germany to strengthen its defense.... against the East. Nothing but defense, and only against the East!

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—L. TROTSKY.