

MARIA REESE ACCUSES! An Indictment of the Stalinists by a Leader of the German C.P.

(Editorial Note: Unser Wort, central organ of the International Communist Party of Germany, publishes in its last issue a sensational letter sent by Maria Reese, leading comrade of the German Communist Party, to the Central Executive Committee of the C. P. G. and the E. C. I. We reprint below the statement of comrade Reese and the biographical commentary of Unser Wort.)

Comrade Maria Reese was one of the best known and most beloved mass speakers of the Communist Party of Germany. All her speeches used to be overheard. She distinguished herself from the other C. P. G. speakers, by leaving aside all the empty phrases and meaningless gestures and, instead of that, seriously and objectively pointing against the policy of the social democracy. In 1922, comrade Reese, at that time a member of the Reichstag, came over to the C. P. G. from the S. P. G., after realizing that the policy of the S. P. G. could not lead to socialism but rather to fascist rule. Her action aroused a great deal of attention among the working class at that time and was utilized by the C. P. G. in a big campaign against the social democracy. After the German catastrophe, when she saw that the C. P. G. had collapsed in Germany and that aid for the German proletariat could be expected only through international solidarity, comrade Reese went abroad to work for the vanquished German working class and against the fascist dictatorship. Comrade Reese was persecuted for her activity by the police in Denmark and expelled from Sweden.

The fact that such a comrade as Maria Reese, who because of her sense of responsibility before the working class went over to the C. P. G. from the S. P. G., today makes a break with the Stalinist bureaucracy—this constitutes a heavy blow for Stalinism and a signal for the German proletariat. We are firmly convinced that the most decisive sections of the membership of the C. P. G. will go the same way as comrade Reese. All the frenzied shouting, all the lies and calumniation of the bankrupt C.P.G. and Comintern bureaucracy cannot impede this development.—Unser Wort.)

For months I have been making repeated attempts to clarify my political differences with the party and the leadership of the Comintern (I. L. D.) by means of oral and written discussion. These attempts were of no avail. My letters to Moscow have been concealed for the most part, confiscated or simply not transmitted. My discipline, which forced me to remain silent before outsiders on the internal differences, was utilized in order to slander and isolate me.

Our last discussion, in which my political accusations were not taken up, has convinced me that I cannot take back my written accusations of September 25. On the contrary, for the clarification of the matter, I must add to them and emphasize the fact that it is a matter of fundamental political questions now appearing in your Committee-Politics, which is nothing else but a consistent extension of your catastrophic policy before Hitler's seizure of power. In it is expressed a typically petty bourgeois lack of conscience in the power and mass struggle of the proletariat, which is even increased by your absurd to the point of despising the mass movement, linked up as it is with phrases and with a philistine overstatement of the liberal bourgeoisie, which in your view is to be substituted for the search of class struggles and for the defeated Communist party.

HOW YOU FOUGHT AGAINST A MARXIST POLICY?

After your shameful defeat in Germany (before which you had disappeared into illegality, in order to preserve your precious leadership of the working class for the time after the defeat, leaving us, the army of rank and file soldiers, without a command), your Committee-Politics has now completely divorced you from the mass movement, with which you, as representatives of the bureaucratic party machine, have long ago lost all contact. Through your sectarian policy of the last few years you have failed to bring about a mass movement in Germany or internationally. On the contrary, despite the revolutionization of the masses, you have weakened yourselves. In despair, you are now seeking succor in the arms of the lords and countesses, just as the social democrats did—with Bruening and Hindenburg....

Your opportunism is so incurable that you no longer can conceive that I am fighting against the Committee-Politics, in principle. That is why you have told your bourgeois "comrades-in-arms" that I insult them, because I have opposed your putting them up as the standard bearers of anti-fascism, through which you deceive the working class. In one "common front" with them you have sabotaged my work for the Red Aid and for the defeated German working class. When Fascism advances in these countries, it meets with no resistance from your bourgeois

"comrades-in-arms". But it is your policy that has prevented a proletarian mass movement from being created, that movement which alone can offer the necessary resistance, as I have so often and so repeatedly stressed by verbal and written protests....

I do not intend to return to the Soviet Union in order to sacrifice my revolutionary work for a life in a material care, Moscow—i. e., the Comintern, not the workers—is officially convinced of the correctness of your policy because of foreign-policy considerations to which it is sacrificing the world proletariat, although it recognizes you and despises you as the unmovable bankrupts you are; and Moscow is asked to have you continue your "leadership" over the revolutionary labor movement of Germany from the conference tables in Paris, while you tell the German working class that you are at the front. Thus you permit yourselves very easily to send out "brave" and provocative orders, to which later on the title of the proletariat is sacrificed. Thus, with Muenzenberg's unmovable committee behind you, you can very easily play at revolution.

The dictation of the Comintern has made the C. P. G. defenseless, because it eliminated the democratic influence of the workers in the matter of policy and leadership of the party and because it thereby prevented a selective leadership, whoever thinks independently, fails a victim to slander campaigns. But when a situation came, at which Moscow left you without a command, you "great" leaders remained headless and helpless. That workers' democracy which could have kept you informed about their strength and their mood of struggles; which would have enabled even you Moscow parrots to lead in such a fatal hour—you yourselves cast it aside disdainfully. You did not even begin to imagine that you could learn from the simple worker, that the worker himself gathered so many new experiences in the course of the ever sharper class struggle from which you not only could have but should have learned in order to evaluate them for the purpose of the organized struggle. For more than a year and a half there was not a single meeting of the Comintern for mass work to which I belonged, although I protested at least fifty times in writing and by word of mouth, because I desired the organizational construction of the united front and not only beautiful congresses, from which the workers were turned back empty-handed, because there was lacking a sensible way of building up of the united front. The experiences of the workers were not utilized for practical purposes. When they did break through the bonds of the bureaucratic brace in which they were held by S. P. G. and C. P. G., spontaneously as was the case in Brunswick, where they united, then they were once again rapidly scattered because the organizational medium was lacking. Only the press still boasted, long after the event, of the great united front success which the apparatus attributed to itself. Moscow had to be shown how well the work was being done.

THE OPPORTUNIST COMMITTEE-POLITICS.

I have been fighting against your Committee-Politics, because it is a crime against the working class and has nothing whatever to do with revolutionary class struggle. It is the politics of the despairing, of the defeated, of those who have lost all belief in the power of the working class. It is only an extension of the Muenzenbergian congress-comedies, at which telegrams of felicitation from Heinrich Mann or Einstein are supposed to take the place of the united front which is never achieved.

Nahelem, in his childish enthusiasm for the "struggles" of the good burghers in the democratic countries against the foreign fascisms, only keeps on looking for all kinds of sensations—and that is in fact what all the Committee-Communists are doing. They forgot completely that all these things are mere bonfires that will only leave behind them a filthy heap of ashes which the revolutionary movement of the masses—the one you are obstructing in its development by your Committee-Politics—will only have to sweep away.

An Unbearable Contrast

The eminent activity of Muenzenberg, Heckert and Co. follows reports, lying correspondence, hollow and sham congresses intended to throw dust into the eyes, could not appear to Maria Reese as an unbearable contrast to the inner events in Germany. Maria Reese's letter can have any influence on the Comintern only if the Comintern

demanded a discussion on what occurred to the Communists persecuted

Red Aid is almost without any means for its tremendous tasks. Particularly now it would have been easy to build it up and to create the means for genuine support of it. You have consciously obstructed this and the West European Comintern parties have gone along with you.

I came from Moscow in order to bring the Red Aid to the Comintern-treasury you have seen to it that not a single meeting was organized for this purpose for me. No method was too filthy for you to defame me among your clique. You succeeded in turning the Comintern apparatus against me in no time. Muenzenberg's agent, Katz, followed in my trail with the money collected for the sabotage anti-fascists, in order to sabotage my work and make it impossible.

THE INGLORIOUS CAPITULATION BEFORE HITLER.

How can you dare race me as leaders, after I have learned to know your real worth in all your wretchedness, following Hitler's seizure of power? I had to pose political perspectives before the workers at the mass meeting, but you remained deaf and dumb at Hitler's assumption of power and we did not know the least about any of your plans. I could never have believed you so irresponsible that you would surrender the working class without any defensive plan, after posing for years as its leaders and after your manifold promises to lead it in struggle.

Even if the prerequisites for a revolution were not at hand, because the social democratic leaders rejected struggle in principle and because our party had failed to win over the majority of the working class by its sectarian attitude in the question of the united front, you had no right to leave the revolutionary army in the ditch without a defensive plan. I was disappointed, like all the revolutionary workers that I met. "The party does not trust us sufficiently," "it is at least necessary to know where we stand," "we can't just simply allow ourselves to be slaughtered off," "an order must come for the whole Reich," etc., the workers said. It was not revolution, but defense that the workers were thinking about and they believed that in that the social democratic workers could be pulled along and thus make a revolution possible.

The certainty that the struggle was inevitable instigated them to sacrifice their last pennies for the preparation of the resistance. You did not prevent them, although you never did have struggle in mind, as little perhaps as Braun and Severing. Now the workers must let themselves be arrested, repressed, tortured and thrown into the concentration camps, withering away one by one, due to your headlessness and helplessness.

I believed—and many of the functionaries with me—that you had some particular, illegal defense apparatus of which we were in

ignorance, one which would inform us about what to do when the Fascists drew back for the final blow. You were always so boastful, but that was only for show at the mass meetings, in the papers, at the convention parades and even in the sessions of parliament. There you gloated over the fear that your wild, but never seriously meant, speeches aroused in the philistines.

And because you did not take yourselves seriously, you poor mawkish of history, therefore you also did not take Fascism seriously, so the workers knew that Fascism had to be taken seriously. If the party had had a democratic control over the apparatus, and if the latter had not been omnipotent with regard to the working masses and servile with regard to the Comintern, then such vain show-offs like yourselves would not have been in the leaderships of the party.

I tried in vain, after the entry of Hitler into the government, to find a leading comrade and to find out what sort of a perspective these suddenly silenced leaders actually had. For I had to appear before the working class. But not a one among you could be reached. We were surrendered just like this, the workers and all of us who were not in the apparatus. Your whole preparation for illegality consisted in securing the continuity of payments of salaries to the apparatus people, the safe-keeping of machinery, etc. It was only thus that Hitler could wreck the whole party with the stroke of his pen. The Comintern had set fire to the Reichstag, without having to mobilize his whole army.

A victory and a defeat without a struggle. Only one lie, that it was we who had set fire to the Reichstag, sufficed to unmask all your boasts and qualities of leadership and to make the German working class defenseless, to leave it as a mass without leadership.

The social democratic leaders... to be sure! If you had taken your own words seriously, you would have known that they could not fight. But you all set your "optimistic" hopes upon them, didn't you? Then why didn't you ever say: "We can only fight, if the social democrats will fight, beginning?" According to Heckert's apologies, that would be the natural conclusion. But I am mainly complaining that you did not even prepare the defensive and that in the hour of danger you took refuge in the bushes without as much as a word, that you surrendered the workers who waited defensively for your command.

After several of us, astonished that nothing had happened; that nothing had been done for the defensive—although you knew about the plans of the Fascists; that at 10 o'clock on the morning after the night of the fire no leaflet had appeared as a reply to the accusation; that no action of resistance had been begun—after we then, without guidance and in the face of an unresisted destruction of the party, did undertake something on our own initiative to come to the aid of the deserted proletariat, what do you do? You can only help insults on us and from your safe hiding-places, you call us undisciplined and headless. If you had had your heads on your shoulders before, then those who remained faced with responsibility to the working class and sharing

its fate, would not have had to become "headless". You had reconciled yourselves beforehand to the heavy fate that was to befall the working class.

But we, who did not previously bear ourselves with that ostentatious, bureaucratic swagger, behind which is concealed most often great egoism; we who know that the workers want to fight but not to be sacrificed uselessly; we who saw the whole pitifulness of the disappointed masses and could not, would not wait any longer for your commands because by then we could not imagine in our dreams that you poor bankrupts would still deign to play the role of leaders again—we acted. It was not out of headlessness or in flight that I left for Denmark. I could have also gone into hiding like yourselves and I could have looked on, like you, in silence, while the working class bled defenselessly.

THE REICHSTAG FIRE AND THE SITUATION OF COM. TORGIER. I saw that you had not prepared anything and that for the moment the only aid that could be furnished was the mobilization of the international proletariat, and caricature of why we did not set fire to the Reichstag. I was in the Reichstag on February 27 and I can explain why comrade Torgier is innocent. As a result of your headlessness and helplessness after Hitler's entry into the government, due to your catastrophic failure, as a result of despair for the fate of the working class and conscious of his innocence, he wanted to take the step toward a neutral individual action so as to prevent the worst. You, least of all, have any right to make a political complaint against him. It was because of your irresponsibility that he was chained and despite your coalition of lords and countesses he will be condemned although innocent, if the international proletariat does not prevent it.

to say that of me, pfui...." And then he concluded: "One would think that he'd know something". And now comrade Torgier is actually going through all this. Do you think that your defenseless surrender of the working class has had no effect on comrade Torgier, has left no trace on him? Why didn't you heroes tell this to the workers beforehand? Why did you say that the Bruening dictatorship was open Fascism? Why did you, in saying that, prevent the workers from struggling? Why doesn't Heckert and why don't you speak of these and other sins? Do you believe that the German workers have forgotten this?

And when I met a comrade from the C. E. C. on the day of the fire and asked her for the perspective of the party, she said the same thing. So you did know what was going on, and yet you did not prepare any defensive—only defensive quarters for yourselves!

As late as February 27, Florin said helplessly when I met him in the Reichstag, where he had come for the aid to comrade Torgier on the matter of postponing some trial: "If the workers won't fight....etc." That was always the answer. But since when do leaders wait for commands from their soldiers? At the same time he also told me to retain my living quarters, perhaps we would remain quiet like in 1923. You were so helpless and headless that you were left without any perspective when the cable from Moscow failed to arrive. But the attitude of Moscow in that decisive situation shows what a catastrophe can overtake the working class, when the revolutionary movement of a country lacks independent leadership.

Full of anger, disgust and despair at so much irresponsibility and at the quiet getaway of the leadership, comrade Torgier wandered, conscious of his innocence, into the Fascist prison, driven by a sense of responsibility to the working class, whom he wanted to aid with his individual action. Comrade Torgier can defend the Communist party against the stupid provocation charge of burning the Reichstag, but he cannot defend the Communist party leadership before the working class. And that is the reason why you are letting loose a hinterland discussion about him which is quite worthy of your attitude before the fire—you who are vainglorious in the Comintern and make the work of other comrades impossible, finally throw it altogether as "great rumors", because... that might turn out to be competition to the Muenzenberg Committee-treasury in the interests of the Red Aid and because it might be of aid to the German anti-fascists instead of Muenzenberg and yourselves.

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The so-called political line is a colorful mishmash of ultra-Left adventurism and opportunism. Has it ever occurred to you that because of your catastrophic failure the Communist parties all over the world have suffered a loss of confidence among the masses? Don't you follow any election results? If such preposterous political bankrupts do not of their own will leave the arena of history, then it is time that the wrath of the workers should sweep them away. They must no longer pay any attention to them, but proceed to the creation of party forces independent of Moscow's Comintern and to the building up of a new Communist party and International which will not tolerate any omnipotent apparatus sitting enthroned above it, cut loose from the working class, but will on the other hand institute a democratic control of the workers over the apparatus and its employees.

Only thus will the working class be able to carry out its historic mission as the liberator of humanity. That will be difficult, but it is the only road, because the hope to renovate the Comintern parties no longer exists, since—after the frightful defeat in Germany, which was a defeat for the whole world proletariat—the bankrupt leadership with its disastrous policy are not compelled to abdicate. With such a leadership the revolutionary movement will only be carried to its grave for the benefit of a paid apparatus that has nothing whatever in common with the living, Bolshevik struggle.

I spurn the fleshpots of Moscow and material maintenance by your apparatus, as long I can do anything useful for the liberation of the proletariat. If you had been so great in the organization of the revolution as you are in intriguing and in political impotence, Germany would never have known Fascism.

Amsterdam, Oct. 26, 1933.

—L. TROTSKY.

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Maria Reese and the Comintern

In her open letter, published by the newspaper Unser Wort, Maria Reese spoke the harsh and bitter truth about the party to which she belonged until very recently. The German agency of the Comintern bureaucracy understood nothing, foresaw nothing, prepared nothing. Revolutionary work it replaced by hollow phrases and boastfulness. It fooled the workers and the party year in and year out. The Central Committee fooled even its own apparatus. People who occupied responsible posts in the party like Torgier, head of the parliamentary fraction, or Maria Reese herself, deputy of the Reichstag, believed honestly to the last moment that the Central Committee had its plans, that it had prepared the necessary fighting forces, that the Comintern knew whether it was leading the German workers. With Hitler's coming to power and especially with the burning of the Reichstag by Goering's agents, the revolutionary illusions of the best elements of the party fell into dust. The Central Committee left the party to the mercy of fate without leadership, without slogans, even without explanations. Another such treachery on the part of the leaders is unknown in the history of the revolutionary struggle. It is not hard to imagine the dark despair of the betrayed masses and the frightful helplessness of the party apparatus.

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You answered my protests finally by forbidding me to work, because I had said something against Muenzenberg and you succeeded in getting Moscow to recall me. And you infamous bankrupts really imagined that such a command could seal my lips. Before your latest self-exposure, before your catastrophic collapse in Germany I would have taken a party order from you and carried it out. But not after that.

How can you dare race me as leaders, after I have learned to know your real worth in all your wretchedness, following Hitler's seizure of power? I had to pose political perspectives before the workers at the mass meeting, but you remained deaf and dumb at Hitler's assumption of power and we did not know the least about any of your plans. I could never have believed you so irresponsible that you would surrender the working class without any defensive plan, after posing for years as its leaders and after your manifold promises to lead it in struggle.

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