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THREEPENCE

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DISCUSSION ARTICLE

DEMOCRATIC DEMANDS IN ITALY

Italian Fascism, which had been the herald of reaction and a widely imitated model, proved to be one of the weakest links in the imperialist chain. A year ago it collapsed, and its collapse is as much an admonition to reaction as its apparition had been a warning to revolution: it reveals to Hitler and all his satellites throughout Europe their future.

After Mussolini's regime simply broke like a rotten apple, Italy entered an epoch of revolutionary instability. The Italian revolution is still in its very first steps, but it will grow, fight, learn and conquer. Nobody has any illusion about the solidity of the present regime. Tomorrow this instability will be that of all Europe. After the fall of the dictatorships the political vacuum will be temporarily filled by makeshift regimes, incapable not only of solving but even of squarely facing any fundamental problem of the European peoples. The toiling masses will gather their forces and enter into the arena. The speed of the revolutionary development will depend on many factors that cannot be analyzed here and now.

Thus the problems of the present Italian situation must be carefully

studied, first because they are tremendously important in themselves, and, second, because the Italian revolution is only the beginning and, in a sense, the rehearsal of the coming European revolution.

THE REPUBLIC!

The central problem of Italian political life has been, until now, the existence of the monarchy. The discussions on that point have thrown a bright light on the servility, the corruption and the ignominy of all the Italian official parties, including the Stalinists. The King was Mussolini's accomplice for twenty years. Before leaving the United States for Italy, the self-styled liberal Count Sforza wrote: "It may be that a fraction of the Italians is still for the Monarchy, but after so many shameful acts and treasons this could be so only for reasons of expediency." However, it soon appeared that the "reasons of expediency" were strong enough to be respected, even by Sforza himself. We then witnessed the most repulsive political farce, whose players were some wrecks left by liberalism like Croce or Sforza himself, the Stalinists and the various democratic and social-democratic parties. Behind the stage, the King and his son, the reactionary upper-crust of Italian society, Churchill and

the Allied diplomacy were rejoicing at such an extraordinary spectacle.

Croce, the philosopher of compromise, explained that he was "against the king as a person, and not against the monarchic institution." It has always been the dream of the craven liberals to keep the monarchy and to have only "good" kings. The Stalinist messenger boy Palmori Togliatti (Ercoli), arriving from Moscow, declared that he was "against the king as an institution, and not as a person," having probably been impressed by the remarkable and generous personality of the king!

A shameful compromise was attained when the Crown Prince was made Lieutenant-General of the Realm. A few revolver shots symbolically showed the veneration and love of the Italian people for this puppet of Churchill, the Pope, Stalin and Roosevelt.

The monarchy remains the rallying centre of reaction: the ultra-reactionaries of the "Blue party", the Church and Churchill, who is so pre-occupied by the safety of the Mediterranean. Any new development of the Italian revolution will inevitably raise the question of the existence of that focus of intrigues against the people.

To all the horse-trading among the monarchists, the ambulating corpses of liberalism and the Stalino-royalists,

the revolutionary party must answer with the cry: Immediate proclamation of the republic! Arrest of the king, the Crown prince and all of the royal family: Immediate confiscation of all the royal properties for the benefit of the people!

The party that during the present weeks would untiringly diffuse these slogans among the large masses would infallibly draw their attention and thus prepare their ears to receive more advanced slogans. At a further stage it would enjoy the authority of having foreseen the march of the development and of having been with the masses in their most elementary struggles. The benefit would be tremendous.

The slogan of the republic is imposed all the more by the present situation, since the official workers' parties have rallied to the monarchy. The slogan is not only directed against the present regime and the Allies, but is also a sharp weapon against the coalitionists.

To throw some light on this problem we have to try to determine at which stage of the Italian revolution we are now. For this purpose historical parallels and examples are useful, even indispensable. Provided we are cautious enough not to forget the differences, they may furnish us with convenient landmarks.

During twenty years Fascism had gradually lost its petty-bourgeois "mass" following, and had become a dried-up Bonapartist regime, resting mainly on the police apparatus. Thus Mussolini's removal was to be almost as painless as the dismissal of another Bonapartist ruler, Primo de Rivera, in January 1930, Rivera was succeeded by General Berenguer. The first result of the shift was the breaking up of the censorship, political discussions sprang up, and the problem around which they centred was the existence of the monarchy. A year passed, during which the bourgeois democrats poured grandiloquent phrases, the students demonstrated and the workers fought against the police. On February 1931 Berenguer resigned, two months later Alfonso had to flee and the republic was proclaimed. The Spanish revolution was going toward new heights.

If we are to follow the Spanish revolutionary calendar, we must say that the present regime of the Lieutenant-General corresponds to the Berenguer interlude.

The differences between the two situations are important and obvious. There is now a World War, in which Italy is participating, being occupied by both camps. Foreign

troops will be on Italian soil for quite some time. On the other side, a general European revolution is coming, to which the fate of the Italian revolution will be most closely connected. However, at the present stage, the historical parallel clearly shows the correctness of the slogan of the republic.

OTHER DEMOCRATIC SLOGANS

The demand of the Constituent Assembly is destined to play an important role during a whole period of the development of the Italian revolution. The revolutionary party cannot fail to inscribe in its program the slogan of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage for all men and women from the age of 18. However, it is difficult to state exactly at the present time and place, the practical conditions of the use of this slogan in daily agitation. Italy is still divided into two parts by a military front, and, while the slogan retains all of its propaganda value, a call for immediate elections may be out of the question. On the other hand, the problem of the Constituent Assembly is tied to the question of the monarchy: it is not inconceivable, that tomorrow the Lieutenant-General of the Realm may call for elections, but truncated elections, with restricted electoral lists, with a Chamber checked by an upper House composed of Senators indirectly elected, or even appointed by the Crown. In such a case the slogan of the hour may very well be the boycott of the elections.

While immediate agitation for the Constituent Assembly may be delayed by the division of the country in two parts through a military front, the revolutionary party can and must immediately raise the slogan of the election of all officials by the people. The Allies speak of a "purge" of Fascists from the Italian administration. They complain about the innumerable difficulties of such an operation, are looking for a definition of the word "Fascist," etc., etc. When finally they come to oust half a dozen Fascist rascals from their well-paid sinecures, they are as boastful as if they had repeated Hercules' feat of cleaning the Augean stables. What hypocrisy! A more efficient and less expensive administration could be immediately provided by popular elections of all officials in the villages, towns and cities.

Any program of democratic demands includes the right of assembly, freedom of speech, a free press, freedom of association, especially regarding trade unions, etc. The revolutionary party must not only untiringly campaign

for these rights, but arouse the people around each concrete issue in which democratic rights are involved.

The privileges of the Catholic church raises burning problems in Italy. The *New York Times* recently published a picture from "liberated" Italy representing a class in an Italian school, where a Catholic priest was pouring his black obscurantism into the heads of unfortunate children. The *Times* implied that this was one of the blessings brought back to Italy by the Anglo-American "liberators". However, that was a hypocritical lie. One of the first moves of Fascism after its coming to power had been to bring the crucifix back to the schools and institute compulsory religious teaching in the primary schools. The atheist Mussolini knew as well as the protestant Roosevelt the value of the Catholic church for social conservatism. To the hypocritical "freedom of religion" of the Allies, the revolutionary party must oppose the demand of immediate separation of the Church and the state, confiscation of the Church properties for the benefit of the people.

The German occupation of Europe has brought about throughout the whole continent, even in the large countries of Western Europe where this question seemed resolved forever, a burning national problem. Only light-minded "democrats" can imagine that this problem will disappear with the defeat of German imperialism. The national problem is here to stay permanently in a decaying Europe. Many signs point out, even to those who do not want to see them, that the Anglo-American "liberators" are rapidly transforming themselves into invaders. The most elementary democratic slogans are up not only against the Crown and its helpers, the liberal wrecks and the Stalinist neo-royalists, but also against the paternalistic despotism of the Allies, which prohibits all political life, except the reactionary one. Thus the slogans of republic of constituent assembly, of free elections, etc., have a directly anti-imperialist character. The revolutionary party must add to them: "Hands off Italian politics! Let the Italian people speak!"

Italy has a large peasant population, which Fascism has left in poverty and despair. The elaboration of a concrete program of political and economic reforms in the villages is an urgent task for the revolutionary party. The plans for an agrarian reform must take into account the economic structure of each province, show how the difficulties can be con-

quered, open a future to the Italian rural landless worker and small farmer.

Does this enumeration of democratic slogans mean that, at the present stage of the revolution, they are to be used exclusively? Not in the least. We do not establish fixed barriers between democratic, transitory and socialist slogans. All and every democratic slogan is integrated in our perspective of total subversion of society. We do not limit ourselves to them. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine what a transitory and socialist program for Italy should be at the present time. But there is no opposition between such a program and democratic demands; on the contrary, there is a constant and free communication between them.

It is undoubtedly the duty of the revolutionary party to popularize the idea of soviets now (perhaps under a name which would be more appropriate to Italian revolutionary tradition). The opportunity for building soviets may even appear in a not too distant future. But soviets do not fall from the sky fully conscious of their role as organs of state power. Their origins are very modest: a strike committee, a factory committee, a committee of defence against fascist gangs, a committee for control of prices, an electoral committee, etc. In the fulfillment of their limited task they run against obstacles that impel them to undertake larger tasks. A revolutionary period is characterized precisely by the fact that the solution of the smallest problem involves the fate of the whole society. The opposition: either the constituent assembly or the soviets, is a completely artificial one at the present time. It has some reality only at a heightened stage of the struggle—in fact, at its conclusion. If soviets appear in the near future in Italy, it will be by mobilizing the masses on the basis of democratic slogans. Soviets may arise as electoral committees, with the purpose of organizing the elections for the constituent assembly, of establishing electoral lists, etc. Even in these humble functions they will meet the resistance of the bourgeois administrative apparatus and be gradually compelled to realize their power and their future role. If they arise under another form, as factory committees for instance—and that is possible in the industrial cities—their evolution will be quite similar. The formula should not be: either constituent assembly or the soviets, but: through the struggle for a constituent assembly and other demands build soviets and raise their political consciousness.

Democratic demands are the bridge that take the masses as they are now and lead them to the socialist program.

REPLY TO POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

No doubt, any proposal of systematic and resolute use of democratic slogans, imposed by the whole situation, will provoke here and there ultra-left reactions. We can well imagine that most of the arguments will not be new and, as our movement has had the opportunity to refute them a hundred times, we can safely wait until they are presented again. However, two or three possible arguments may be examined here and now, for they will help us to clarify our position.

A way of opposing the use of democratic demands may be as follows: the Italian masses are hungry and desperate. They do not care about the republic, the king or the Crown prince; they want bread, etc. This way of putting the problem strongly smells of anarchism. Such a dissociation of the political and the economic (or social) tasks is utterly false. True, in Italy we are now going toward a social revolution. There is no question about that. But this does not mean that the political problems disappear from the stage. Quite the contrary. They will arise, one after the other, small and large, more and more imperatively demanding a solution.

Even if we admit that at the present time the vanguard of the workers clearly sees that a republic can bring nothing to them, unless it is a workers' and peasants' government—and it has not been proved at all that we are at that stage yet!—behind this vanguard there are the less advanced workers, the rural workers, the peasants, the small people of the cities, without whose devotion and help the revolution is impossible, who now place their hopes for a better future in a republic, in an assembly freely elected by them. All economic and social problems find their concentrated expression in the political field, and the main question in that field is, at the present time: monarchy or republic?

Another possible argument against the present use of democratic slogans may be formulated in this way: such a use would be all right if the Fourth International now had in Italy a big party capable of setting in motion large masses, but unfortunately this is not the case. Therefore the problem is quite different; it is at the present time the building of a strong revolutionary party, and for that pur-

pose any program of democratic demands is useless. The premises of this reasoning are correct, but the conclusion—false. It is true indeed that the building of a revolutionary party in Italy is still ahead of us, and that victory is inconceivable without forging such a party. But this task cannot be fulfilled outside of the daily struggle of the masses in a hothouse, as it were. This problem has been discussed in Europe quite often, especially in France and Belgium, at the time when the political situation was already in a state of pre-revolutionary fluency and the organizations of the Fourth International still very weak. Trotsky and the executive body of the Fourth International always resolutely opposed the tendencies that wanted to resist our groups to strictly propagandistic programs and slogans, until the day when we would have assembled a large party and come like Minerva out of the head of Jupiter.

One result of these polemics was the adoption in 1931 by the French section of the Fourth International of a program of action (published in English in the *October* 1942 Fourth International), the careful study of which is a duty for every revolutionary who wants to play a role in the coming European revolution.

Finally, there is an argument I want to refute here, although not without hesitation, for it is quite vulgar: Here it is: How can you write anything about such questions here in New York, three thousand miles away from Italy? These questions have to be left to the Italian revolutionaries. After all, these are not principled and strategic questions, but tactical details, depending upon the mood of the masses, and are to be left to those who are in direct contact with the masses.

True, every slogan we may put forward abroad has, to a certain extent, a tentative character. We have, however much historical experience to help us. Our movement has closely studied the successive stages of quite a few revolutions, their natural history, as it were. The slogans proposed in this article do not represent anything new, and the historical evidence for their application to the present Italian situation is so great that the burden of the proof rests on the eventual opponent: it is he who would have to prove why they should not be used.

To speak of democratic demands as mere tactical questions not worth bothering about from afar may be dangerous: with the best of strategy a party can go to its doom because of wrong tactics. And it is incorrect too. It is true to say, in a sense, that each

of the democratic demands has in itself no principled character, for we can change from one to another according to circumstances. But we cannot say the same about the use of democratic demands in general: it belongs to our strategy of revolution.

THE DANGER OF ULTRA-LEFTISM

The war has stirred up a tremendous wave of reaction. The official workers organizations have not been the last to follow or even to propel this wave. The Stalinists have been, in words and in deeds, at the point of reaction. The remnants of the Second International, slightly shocked by such brazenness, follow them as best they can.

In such conditions one may well say: "The main danger is opportunism. Why bother now about ultra-leftism?" Such a way of putting the question would be utterly wrong. The danger of opportunism is tremendous, indeed, but it is precisely why the danger of sectarianism should not be ignored, but carefully watched. Opportunism does not eliminate ultra-leftism, but, on the contrary, engenders it. Ultra-leftism is only the other face of opportunism, its shadow, an infantile reaction to it, and, in a sense, the punishment the working class has to pay for it.

The putrefaction of the Second International during the last war brought about many an ultra-left tendency. The German organization

of Luxemburg and Liebknecht was impregnated with ultra-leftism and broke its head precisely because of that ailment; in France opportunism blended with ultra-leftism in grandiloquent phrases etc, etc. Lenin had to write a special pamphlet against the infantile sickness of ultra-leftism.

At the end of the present war and in the coming revolutionary upheaval we may expect the same occurrence, probably with much greater intensity. A new generation of young revolutionaries will appear, which will not have accumulated much experience. In many countries, especially Italy, they have grown up under illegality, without much opportunity to study the lessons of the past. The crimes of the bourgeois order have been so atrocious, the servility of the official workers parties so repulsive that many impatient reactions may be expected. Moreover, Europe has known four years of sabotage and terrorism and these cannot fail to leave traces of adventurism in the policy of many a good revolutionary workers party.

Under the blows of experience ultra-leftism had been forced during the twenty years between the two wars to abandon many of its original positions. But the point to which it clung most obstinately was its opposition to the use of democratic and transitory slogans. Our movement had to conduct a long fight precisely on that problem. A warning is not useless now.

One of the first political documents to come out of Italy, the manifesto of

the Italian Trotskyists contained quite a few confused and erroneous parts, which have already been examined in our press. But a very negative aspect of the document was its abstractness, its remoteness from Italian political life and, consequently, its incapacity to put forward a program of action tied up with the needs of the Italian masses.

We are now entering a historical epoch in which general propaganda is not enough. Liberals, reformists and all the admirers of bourgeois progress always hoped that Czarist Russia would gradually rise to the level of cultured and democratic Western Europe. Quite the contrary occurred. With the disintegration of capitalist civilisation, Western Europe has catastrophically sunk to the level of despotic Russia and even far below. Reformers and centrists used to view Bolshevism as a product of backward Russia, not good enough for enlightened Western socialism. But now all Europe has been made "good enough" for Bolshevism. History puts all the teachings of Bolshevism on the order of the day more imperatively than ever. And one of these lessons is Bolshevism's contempt for mere enlightening propaganda about the virtues of socialism, its ability to feel the aspirations of the masses, to seize upon the progressive side of these aspirations and on that point to drive a wedge that would detach the masses from their conservative parties and leaders. May that lesson be not forgotten now! July 9, 1944.

Manifesto of the Italian Trotskyists

EDITORIAL.

We reproduce below the Manifesto of resurgent Italian Trotskyism issued in Italy at the end of last year. This Manifesto was issued both in leaflet and in poster form, and had a wide circulation among the Italian workers in Southern Italy. According to reports reaching us it has made an impression on the best rank and file members of the Communist Party and Socialist Party. It aroused wide discussion among the delegates at the Trade Union Conference held at Bari earlier this year.

The document was on our editorial desk being prepared for the April issue

of "Workers' International News" when the Special Branch raided our offices in the days of the scare campaign and attack on our Party. The Manifesto was seized at that time and has only recently been returned to us.

The publication of this document is a clear demonstration that, despite 20 years of bestial Italian Fascism, the ideas and policies of socialist internationalism still live.

In its main fundamental premise the Manifesto is based upon and is in line with the ideas of the Fourth International. Unambiguously characterising the present war as an imperialist war and not a war between "fascism and democracy", the Manifesto con-

demns the traitorous Second and Third Internationals (the latter now formally disbanded) for their support of one side in the imperialist war. Its clear statement of revolutionary socialist principles will be welcomed by every worker who has an ounce of international class consciousness in him and who has not been poisoned by the Labour and Stalinist chauvinism.

On the important question of the role of the Soviet Union, however, the Manifesto equivocates, refraining from differentiating the progressive characteristics of the Soviet Union from Stalin's imperialist allies—Britain and America. This failure on the part of the authors of the Manifesto is a

indication of lack of clarity on the question of the Soviet Union and evades facing up to the policy of the Fourth International laid down in its Foundation Programme in 1938 and reiterated in its manifesto "War and the World Proletarian Revolution", 1940.

It is understandable that comrades who have lived illegally for so many years without contact with our international movement and its programmatic ideas, can be mistaken and unclear on this, as well as many other questions. The task of our international party and of our comrades in Italy is to "patiently explain" and thus aid the Italian comrades to clarify their position, maintaining a clear and hard stand on this issue as one of the fundamental pillars of the Fourth International. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have had contact with Trotsky's ideas and writings during this period, place at the disposal of the Italian comrades all the lessons that we learned during the last decade. Not least among these are the articles and letters of Trotsky devoted to exposing the false policy of Shachtman on the nature of the Soviet Union which was the prelude of Shachtman's break with the policies of the Fourth International on many other questions as well. Ideological clarity is the guarantee of a genuinely conscious role for our Italian comrades in the coming revolution. This clarification of the Russian Question must be carried out as one of the important tasks of the regroupment of the Italian revolutionary movement.

The latest reports received from Italy are that this ambiguous position revealed in the Manifesto is being cleared up and the policy of the Fourth International on this fundamental question is being adopted, as on others.

What appears to us from this distance to be a weakness in the Manifesto is that it fails to deal sufficiently with the occupation North and South and to raise with sufficient concreteness the transitional democratic slogans at this stage, as well as a criticism of the policies of the Socialist and Stalinist organisations.

It is not clear from the Manifesto or from the subsequent material of our Italian comrades what their precise attitude towards the Fourth International is; or what relations they propose to establish with its International Executive Committee. The Manifesto is headed: "Provisional National Centre for the Building of the International Communist Party (Fourth International)". This is ambiguous. It is necessary to influence the Italian comrades to adopt clear and formal decisions: for the adoption of the fundamental documents and

theses of the Fourth International; for a direct organisational affiliation as its Italian section.

Reports just reaching us state that on July 8th a fusion took place of the Bordigists (mentioned elsewhere in this issue) and the Trotskyists. Full details of the basis of this fusion will be made available to our readers as we get them.

PROVISIONAL NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE BUILDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY (FOURTH INTERNATIONAL)

**Workers of the World, unite under the
banner of the class struggle!**

To all workers:

Comrades, we come to you with this manifesto in order to acquaint you with our responsibility and our political position in relation to the war and to the direction of events that are now in course of ripening. Our task is to open to the proletariat the path of the socialist revolution, betrayed by the parties of the Second and Third Internationals, which have gone over to the camp of the imperialist war, and joined the "sacred union" in a repetition of 1914-1918.

And it is because of their policy that the working class of all countries are without revolutionary parties, while the war that has been unleashed continues to plunge the world into famine, chaos and bloodshed.

To present the causes and the aim of the present conflict as a struggle between democracy and fascism, as is done by the parties of the Second and Third Internationals, is a monstrous falsehood—a falsehood launched upon the world by the overwhelming greed of finance-capital in order to split the workers and the nations, throwing one against the other in a war which is being waged for imperialist aims and which cannot solve any of the problems of the world-crisis, but merely aggravate them.

The causes and aims of this war are altogether different from the ideological struggle between democracy and fascism. The present conflict, continuing that of 1914-18, is the most dramatic event in modern history, set within the framework of the whole epoch, determined by an insoluble crisis in the world economy of capitalism in the period of imperialist decay.

This is the conflict that characterises not only our epoch of the general crisis of capitalism, of imperialist war and civil war, but constitutes the culminating phase of the competition among the great powers for the world market. This war is the clash of two powers with clearly defined aims and with allies wrangling on one side, as on the other, prepared to take up sides

for their own interests and aims according to the unfolding of events.

The Anglo-Saxon powers, although pretending otherwise, and using democratic disguises, wage with all their colossal resources what is fundamentally an imperialist war in defence of their conquests and their economic supremacy which weighs alike upon the world market, the colonies, and maritime trade.

The Soviet Union, in the pact with the United Nations, continues to shed its blood for aims which are non-revolutionary but belong to Anglo-Saxon imperialism. The promise of a democratic peace, of economic well-being and liberty, made by the self-same democratic Anglo-Saxons and accepted by Stalin's government, is a fraud like that of 1914-18, and cannot constitute the aims of the proletariat of the Soviet Union or of any other country.

No matter what the democracy of tomorrow may be, it will only prepare the way for the reaction, if capitalism is not overthrown, it will always be the government of capitalists with the mailed fist in the velvet glove against the proletariat.

As for the promises of the Fascist powers of the Axis for economic reconstruction, with a hierarchy of states in Europe—those are not the aims of the proletariat. Against this second war, the proletariat has made its own well-defined class aims, opposed to all the imperialist powers. The transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary and civil war through the proletarian revolution and the building of a socialist economy—those are the true and only aims of all workers in this war.

The Second International, from 1914 onwards, has betrayed those aims. The Third International has followed suit in this war, after having organised and directed the defeat of the workers of Europe, dragging the world proletariat, including the Soviet Union, into a senseless war.

Workers! The struggle against the war must be waged without pause in order to impose a just peace by all the peoples.

Only by the intervention of the revolutionary force of the proletariat, shaking the home and military fronts, and by the victorious socialist revolution, will an end be put to the massacre of the imperialist war.

To achieve this task, a strong and disciplined Bolshevik-Leninist revolutionary party is necessary. Without a revolutionary policy and without a class party, the proletariat will only be crushed in this war by the treacherous policies of the Second and Third Internationals.

The struggle for the building of the International Communist Party and for a Fourth International is the basic

task of the vanguard of the proletariat—the indispensable preliminary to leading the workers towards the seizure of power, to the destruction of the bourgeois state, and the building of a socialist economy in Italy and the United States of Europe.

To the social-patriotic Committees of National Liberation and of the Sforzas, is as necessary to oppose class organs, councils of workers, peasants and soldiers. To the anti-fascist bourgeoisie's policy against a king, whether

also against a regency or not (a policy which can serve only to save the financiers, the industrialists, the higher clergy, the landowners, and capitalism itself), it is necessary to oppose a Constitution on the basis of freedom of press, of association, and of the right to strike, on the basis of higher wages, bread, work, liberty, land to the peasants, and other slogans, in order to prepare the revival of the proletariat, and to open the path to the socialist revolution in Italy and in the world.

DOWN WITH FASCISM, DOWN WITH CAPITALISM!

LONG LIVE THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE, UNITED WITH ALL THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD!

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAT OF ITALY!

LONG LIVE THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

For the Secretariat,
ROLANDO.

Bari, 15th December, 1943.

Letter on the Italian Revolution

Trotsky's Reply to Italian Revolutionists

Trotsky's letter was written in 1930 on the occasion of one of the most encouraging developments in the history of the International Left (Trotskyist) Opposition. Three leaders of the Italian Communist Party, **Blasco, Feroci and Santini**, issued a public declaration of political and organisational solidarity with the revolutionary struggle for Marxian internationalism which Trotsky had so long conducted. They established the group called the **New Italian Opposition** (in distinction from the "old" Italian Left Opposition led by **Amadeo Bordiga**). The Stalinists, of course, immediately expelled them from the Central Committee to which they belonged and from the party. Dear Comrades:

I have received your letter of May 5. Thanks very much for this study of Italian Communism in general and of the various tendencies within it in particular. It filled a great need for me and was most useful. It would be regrettable if your work were to be left in the form of an ordinary letter. With a few changes or abridgements, the letter could very well find a place in the pages of "La Lutte de Classes."*

If you do not mind, I will begin with a general political conclusion: I regard our mutual collaboration in the future as perfectly possible and even extremely desirable. None of us possesses or can possess pre-established political formulae that can serve for all the eventualities of life. But I believe that the method with which you seek to determine the necessary political formulae is the right one.

You ask my opinion concerning a whole series of grave problems. But

before attempting to reply to some of them, I should formulate a very important reservation. I have never been closely acquainted with Italian political life, for I spent only a very short time in Italy, I read Italian very poorly, and during my time in the Communist International I did not have the opportunity to dig deeper into an examination of Italian affairs.

You should know this fairly well yourselves, for how explain otherwise the fact that you undertook so detailed a work to bring me up to date on the pending questions?

It follows from the foregoing that my answers, in most cases, ought to have only an entirely "hypothetical" value. In no case can I consider the reflections that follow as definitive. It is quite possible and even probable that in examining this or that other problem I lose sight of certain highly important concrete circumstances of time and place. I will therefore await your objections, and supplementary and corrective information. Inasmuch as our method, as I hope, is common, it is in this way that we shall best arrive at the right solution.

"REPUBLICAN ASSEMBLY"

1. You remind me that I once criticised the formula, "Republican Assembly on the basis of Workers' and Peasants' Committees," a formula put forward formerly by the Italian Communist Party. You tell me that this formula had only an entirely episodic value and that at present it has been abandoned. I would like nevertheless to tell you why I consider this formula to be erroneous or at least ambiguous

as a political watchword. "Republican Assembly" constitutes quite obviously an organism of the bourgeois state.

What, however, are the "Workers' and Peasants' Committees"? It is obvious that they are some sort of equivalent of the workers' and peasants' Soviets. Then that's what should be said. For, class organs of the workers and poor peasants, whether you give them the name of soviets or committees, always constitute organisations of struggle against the bourgeois state, then become organs of insurrection, to be transformed finally, after the victory, into organs of the proletarian dictatorship. How, under these conditions, can a Republican Assembly—supreme organ of the bourgeois state—have as its "basis" organs of the proletarian state?

I should like to recall to you that in 1917, before October, **Zinoviev** and **Kamenev**, when they came out against an insurrection, advocated waiting for the Constituent Assembly to meet in order to create a "combined state" by means of a fusion between the Constituent Assembly and the workers' and peasants' soviets. In 1919, we saw **Hilferding** propose to inscribe the soviets in the Weimar Constitution. Like **Zinoviev** and **Kamenev**, **Hilferding** called this the "combined state." As a new type of petty bourgeois, he wanted, at the very point of the most abrupt historical turn, to "combine" a third type of state by wedding the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to the proletarian dictatorship under the constitutional sign.

The Italian formula expounded above seems to me to be a variant of this

petty-bourgeois tendency. Unless I have understood it in a wrong sense. But in that case it already has the incontestable defect of lending itself to dangerous misunderstandings. I profit by it to correct here a truly unpardonable error committed by the epigones in 1924: they had found in Lenin a passage saying that we might be led to wed the Constituent Assembly with the soviets. A passage saying the same thing may likewise be discovered in my writings. But what exactly was involved? We were posing the question of an insurrection that would transmit the power to the proletariat in the form of soviets. To the question of what, in that case, we would do with the Constituent Assembly, we replied: "We shall see; perhaps we shall combine it with the soviets." We understood by that the case where the Constituent Assembly, convoked under the soviet regime, would give a soviet majority. As this was not the case, the soviets dispersed the Constituent Assembly. In other words: the question was posed of whether it was possible to transform the Constituent Assembly and the soviets into organs of one and the same class, and not at all of "combining" a bourgeois Constituent Assembly with the proletarian soviets. In one case (with Lenin), it was a question of the formation of a proletarian state, of its structure, of its technique. In the other (with Zinoviev, Kamenev, Hilferding) it was a question of a constitutional combination of two states of enemy classes with a view to averting a proletarian insurrection that would have taken power.

SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THE ANTI-FASCIST REVOLUTION

2. The question we have just examined (the Republican Assembly) is intimately connected with another which you analyse in your letter, namely, what social character will the anti-fascist revolution acquire? You deny the possibility of a bourgeois revolution in Italy. You are perfectly right. History cannot turn backward a big number of pages, each of which is equivalent to half a decade. The Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party already tried once to duck the question by proclaiming that the revolution would be neither bourgeois, nor proletarian, but "popular". It is a simple repetition of what the Russian Populists said at the beginning of this century when they were asked what character the revolution against Czarism would acquire. And it is still this same answer that the Communist International gives today about China and India. It is quite simply a so-called revolutionary variant of the social-democratic theory of Otto Bauer and others, according to which the state can raise itself above the classes,

that is, be neither bourgeois nor proletarian. This theory is as pernicious for the proletariat as for the revolution. In China it transformed the proletariat into cannon-fodder of the bourgeois counter-revolution.

Every great revolution proves to be "popular" in the sense that it draws into its tracks the entire people. Both the Great French Revolution and the October Revolution were absolutely popular. Nevertheless, the first was bourgeois because it instituted individual property, whereas the second was proletarian because it abolished this same individual property. Only a few petty bourgeois revolutionists, hopelessly backward, can still dream of a revolution that would be neither bourgeois nor proletarian, but "popular" (that is, petty bourgeois).

Now, in the imperialist period, the petty bourgeoisie is not only incapable of leading a revolution, but even of taking a determined part in it. In this way the formula of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" henceforth constitutes a simple screen for a petty bourgeois conception of a "transitional" revolution and a "transitional" state, that is, of a revolution and a state that can not only take place in Italy but not even in backward India. A revolutionist who has not taken a point-blank and clear position on the question of the proletarian and peasant democratic dictatorship, is doomed to fall into error after error. As to the problem of the anti-fascist revolution, the Italian question, more than any other, is intimately linked to the fundamental problems of world communism, that is, of the so-called theory of the permanent revolution.

THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD IN ITALY

3. Following the above comes the question of the "transitional" period in Italy. At the very outset it is necessary to establish very clearly: transition from what to what? Period of transition from the bourgeois (or "popular") revolution to the proletarian revolution—is one thing. Period of transition from the fascist dictatorship to the proletarian dictatorship—is another. If the first conception is envisaged, the question of the bourgeois revolution is posed in the first place, and it is then a question of establishing the role of the proletariat in it, only after which will the question of the transitional period toward a proletarian revolution be posed. If the second conception is envisaged, the question is then posed of a series of battles, disturbances, upsets in the situation, abrupt turns, constituting in their ensemble the different stages of the proletarian revolution. These stages may be many in number. But in no case can they contain within

them a bourgeois revolution or its mysterious abortion: the "popular" revolution.

Does this mean that Italy cannot, for a certain time, again become a parliamentary state or become a "democratic republic"? I consider—in perfect agreement with you, I think—that this eventuality is not excluded. But when it will not be the fruit of a bourgeois revolution, but the preterminal foetus of an insufficiently matured and premature proletarian revolution. In case of a profound revolutionary crisis and of mass battles in the course of which the proletarian vanguard will not have been in a position to take power, it may be that the bourgeoisie will reconstruct its power on "democratic" bases. Can it be said, for example, that the present German Republic constitutes a conquest of the bourgeois revolution? Such an assertion would be absurd. There was, in Germany, in 1918-19, a proletarian revolution which, deprived of leadership, was deceived, betrayed and crushed. But the bourgeois counter-revolution nevertheless found itself obliged to adapt itself to the circumstances resulting from this crushing of the proletarian revolution, which resulted in the constitution of a republic in the "democratic" parliamentary form. Is the same—or about the same—eventuality excluded from Italy? No, it is not excluded. The enthronement of fascism was the result of the incompleteness of the proletarian revolution in 1920. Only a new proletarian revolution can overturn fascism. If it should not be destined to triumph this time either (weakness of the Communist Party, manoeuvres and betrayals of the social democrats, the Freemasons, the Catholics), the "transitional" state that the bourgeois counter-revolution would then be forced to set up on the ruins of its power in a fascist form, could be nothing else than a parliamentary and democratic state.

For, what in the long run is the aim of the anti-fascist Concentration? Foreseeing the fall of the fascist state by an uprising of the proletariat and, in general, of all the oppressed masses, the Concentration is preparing to arrest this movement, to paralyse it, and to thwart it of its conquest "in order to pass off the victory of the renovated counter-revolution for a so-called victory of a democratic bourgeois revolution." If this dialectic of the living social forces is lost sight of for a single moment, the risk is run of getting inextricably entangled and of swerving off the right road. I believe there cannot be the slightest misunderstanding between us on this score.

DEMOCRATIC AND TRANSITIONAL SLOGANS

4. But does this mean that we communists reject "a priori" all demo-

cratic watchwords, all transitional or preparatory slogans, keeping ourselves rigidly to the "proletarian dictatorship" alone? That would be displaying a sterile, doctrinaire sectarianism. We do not believe for a single moment that a simple revolutionary leap suffices to cross what separates the fascist regime from the proletarian dictatorship. In no wise do we deny the transitional phase with its transitional demands, including the demands of democracy. But it is precisely with the aid of these transitional slogans, which are always the starting point on the road to proletarian dictatorship, that the communist vanguard will have to win the whole working class and that the latter will have to unite around itself all the oppressed masses of the nation. And here I do not exclude even the eventuality of a constituent assembly which, in certain circumstances, could be imprecisely, by the process of the revolutionary awakening of the oppressed masses. To be sure, on the historical scale and over the period of a number of years, the destiny of Italy will incontestably be reduced to the following alternative: **fascism or communism.** But to claim that the concept of this alternative has already now penetrated the consciousness of the oppressed classes of the people would be pure fantasy and would amount to considering as already settled the most gigantic problem the solving of which wholly confronts an as yet feeble Communist Party. If the revolutionary crisis were to break out, for example, in the course of the next months to come (under the impulsion of the economic crisis, on the one side, and under the revolutionary influence coming from Spain, on the other), the broad toiling masses, workers as well as peasants, would certainly follow up their economic demands with democratic slogans (such as freedom of assembly, of press, of trade union organisation, democratic representation in Parliament and in the municipalities). Does this mean that the Communist Party should reject these demands? On the contrary. It will have to stamp them with the most audacious and most categorical aspect possible. For the proletarian dictatorship cannot be "imposed" upon the popular masses. It can be realised only by carrying on the battle—the battle in full—for all the transitional demands, requirements and needs of the masses, and at the very head of the masses.

It should be recalled here that Bolshevism did not at all arrive in power with the aid of the abstract watchword of the proletarian dictatorship. We fought for the constituent assembly much more boldly than all the other parties. We said to the peasants: "You demand the equalitarian enjoyment of the land. And for that, you

must support the workers." As to the war, we said further to the peasants: "Our communist aim is to war against all the oppressors. But you have not gotten to the point of seeing so far. You are in a hurry to escape from the imperialistic war. Nobody but us, Bolsheviks, will help you do this." I do not deal here with the question of what exactly should be the central slogans of the transitional epoch in Italy in this year 1930. To determine them, and to establish the timely succession, it would be necessary to know the internal life of Italy much better than I know it, and it would be necessary to be in much closer contact with its toiling masses. And here, in addition to a good method, it is necessary to know the art of having the ear of the masses. Therefore, I want to point out here only the commonplaces of the transitional demands in the struggle of communism against fascism and against bourgeois society in general.

DEMOCRATIC CHARLATANISM

5. However, while holding to this or that democratic slogan, we must take good care to fight relentlessly against all forms of democratic charlatanism. The "Democratic Republic of the workers," watchword of the Italian Social-Democracy, is a sample of this low-grade charlatanism. A republic of the workers can only be a proletarian class state. The democratic republic is only a masked form of the bourgeois state. The mixture of the two is only a petty bourgeois illusion of the social-democratic masses below (workers, peasants) and an impudent falsehood of the social-democrats at the top (of all the Turatis, Modiglianis and I don't know who else). And on this occasion, I repeat, if I opposed and still oppose the formula of "National Assembly on the basis of Workers' and Peasants' Committees," it is precisely because this formula comes too close to the slogan of the "Democratic Republic of the Workers" put forth by the social-democrats, and could be very pernicious for us in our struggle against the social democracy.

FASCISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

6. The assertion made by the official leadership (of the Communist Party) that the social democracy allegedly no longer exists in Italy, is nothing but a consoling theory of bureaucratic optimists who wish to see acquired advantages at the point where the question still is one of heavy tasks to accomplish. Fascism has not liquidated the social democracy **but has, on the contrary, preserved it.** In the eyes of the masses it does not bear the responsibility for the regime, of which it has itself fallen victim in part. It is in this way that it acquires new sympathies and holds on to the old.

And a moment will come when the social democracy will coin money out of the blood of Matteotti just as ancient Rome did with the blood of Christ. And it is therefore not excluded that in the first period of the revolutionary crisis, the leadership should find itself mainly concentrated in the hands of the social democracy. If substantial masses are immediately drawn into the movement, and if the Communist Party keeps on the right road, it may well be that the social democracy, in a brief space of time, is soon reduced to zero. But that would be a task to accomplish and not a conquest to realise. It is impossible to leap over this problem; you must know how to solve it. Here I recall that Zinoviev, and after him Manuilsky and other Kuusinens, had already declared on two or three occasions that the German social democracy also no longer existed in fact.

In 1925, the Communist International, in its declaration to the French party written by the light hand of Lozovsky, had likewise decreed that the French Social-Democratic Party had definitely left the scene. The left opposition always spoke up energetically against this light-minded judgment. Only downright fools or traitors can want to have the proletarian vanguard of Italy believe that the Italian social democracy could no longer play the role that the German social democracy had in the revolution of 1918.

But it can be affirmed that the social democracy will not succeed once more in betraying and surrendering the Italian proletariat as it did one time already in 1920. These illusions and these traps are ended! Too many times in the course of its history has the proletariat been deceived first by liberalism and then by the social democracy.

What is more, we cannot lose sight of the fact that since 1920, ten full years have elapsed, and eight years since the advent of fascism. The children who were ten and twelve years old in 1920-22, and who have seen in these years what the work of the fascists was, now constitute the new generation of workers and peasants who will fight heroically against fascism but who, on the other hand, will lack political experience. The communists will come into contact with the real masses only during the revolution itself and, in the best of cases, they will need months to reach the point of demolishing and overturning the social democracy, which, I repeat, fascism has not liquidated but has, on the contrary, preserved.

To conclude, a few words on an important question of fact, on which there cannot be two different opinions in our circle. Should or can the Left

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The Coming German Revolution

By TED GRANT

THE GERMAN REVOLUTION AND THE FUTURE

The entry of Allied troops into Germany marks the beginning of the end for German imperialism and for the Nazis. The complete collapse of the Hitler regime cannot be long delayed. In four years the swing of the pendulum has brought German imperialism from the attainment of its dream of European domination to the position of imminent dismemberment and powerlessness. There have been few changes in the history of warfare and of the relations between the nations so graphic and so speedy. But in them is reflected the instability of relations between the nations and the social contradictions within the nations themselves.

In 1940, Trotsky wrote commenting on Hitler's victories:

"The political map has been reshaped with equal speed in no other epoch save that of the Napoleonic wars. At that time it was a question of outlived feudal states which had to give way before the bourgeois national state. Today it is a question of outlived bourgeois states which must give way before the Socialist Federation of the peoples."

For from Hitler's defeats refuting, they serve to confirm the idea here expressed. It is the contradictions of world capitalism and the extension of

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Communists deliberately resign from the party itself? There cannot even be any question about it. Save for rare exceptions—and they were mistakes—none of us ever did that. But I do not have a clear idea of the degree or the means by which the Italian comrades can hold on to this or that post inside the party in the present circumstances. I can say nothing concrete on this point, except that not one of us can allow a comrade to accommodate himself to a false or equivocal political position in the eyes of the party or the masses with a view to avoiding expulsion.

I shake your hand.

Yours,

LEON TROTSKY.

May 14, 1930.

the war to a world, rather than a European arena, (which these contradictions made inevitable), which have led to Hitler's undoing on the military field. Moreover, there is a profound significance in the fact that the heart of Hitler's Wehrmacht was torn out on the plains of the Ukraine and the banks of the Volga. In however distorted a form, it was a reflection of the superiority of the coming new society of socialism over decaying capitalism. This in itself is an indication of the decline and decay of the bourgeois system.

But in conquering Europe, and in his attempts to hold it down, Hitler had undermined completely the social basis which capitalism possessed. In so doing, the Nazis have left a legacy to the "victors", a legacy of social storms and convulsions never before attained in the rich history of the Old Continent which once dominated all others.

In articles reflecting the bourgeois disquiet, the "Economist" has pointed out that the middle class in France and other occupied countries has been reduced to a fraction of what it was, as the result of the Nazi demand for factory workers, the ruin occasioned by the war, general dislocation, lack of supplies except for war industry, bombing, etc. In the rural areas, though on a smaller scale, the same process has taken place. This, coupled with the tremendous psychological shock occasioned by the events of the war, the collaboration of the bourgeoisie of the defeated countries with the invaders, has undermined the former habitual acceptance of bourgeois domination over the nation. Not alone the working class, but the **peasant and petty-bourgeois masses** inevitably will seek revolutionary solutions to the unbearable agony to which they have been brought by the capitalist regime: The harsh school through which they are going, will teach the masses rapidly. All the political trends and tendencies will come up for judgment as to their capacity to deliver the goods.

The crisis of the bourgeois regime is far more profound than it was in 1918. The shocks involved with the collapse of Fascism in Italy are but the shadow of coming events.

NO STABLE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY CAPITALIST ARMIES IN EUROPE

It is a fact which has escaped attention in the working class press, but a factor of profound importance, that **in all Europe there is not a single stable bourgeois army**, which will be left after the destruction of the German army. A startling fact upon which "revolutionary" pessimists could well ponder! The French army has vanished, and the army assembled at Algiers would hardly fulfil the purpose. The Italian army and those of the Low Countries have been dissolved. Poland's pitiful emigre army, though selected and organized for the purpose, could hardly fill the bill. In the Balkans, the armies of Greece and Yugoslavia have been smashed and those of Rumania and Bulgaria which have managed formally to retain their form, are already in a shaky condition. If we include the British as a European army, it is composed dominantly of workers whose ranks are so imbued with an anti-capitalist and even socialist consciousness, that it would be impossible to use it for a protracted period for punitive or repressive purposes. Once Hitler has vanished, in the consciousness of this fine proletarian material, the reason for their presence in Europe will have disappeared as well.

There remains of the bourgeois armies, only the extra European forces of American imperialism. Politically they are extremely backward. And it is on this backwardness that world imperialism is relying to save the situation in Europe. But the Achilles heel of the American colossus lies in the fact that this mass of soldiery is completely lacking in a cohesive ideology. Most of the American soldiers are indifferent to the propaganda of American imperialism on the aims of the war. Those who are at all politically conscious desire the liquidation of Fascism—but **all are unanimous in a desire to "go home."** Those who have been affected by the reactionary propaganda, tend to direct their animosity against the Japanese rather than against the Germans. Once Hitler has disappeared, in an atmosphere of universal hostility; the American army too will rapidly become demoralised if used against any section of the European workers. Their desire to return to the States will be-

come transformed into political opposition to the ruling class.

Meanwhile, the bureaucrats in control of the Red Army are more terrified even than those in control of the imperialist armies at the possibility lodged in a mingling of the Red Army soldiers with the workers and peasants of Germany. They have endeavoured by every means in their power to create a wall of hatred between them. Preparations have been made to use the Red Army to crush completely any tendency in the direction of Socialist Revolution on the part of the German working class. But immediately the masses in Germany move in the direction of uprising and reprisals against the Nazis and the German ruling class, in Soviet occupied areas it will have a profound effect on the workers and peasants comprising the Red Army. It will tend to rekindle the flame of the October Revolution. Thus as a stable and sure base for capitalist counter revolution and occupation, the Red Army would be even more unstable than any other.

This is the background on which events in Germany will develop—a background of revolutionary disturbances and convulsions throughout Europe.

IDEOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR ALLIED REPRESSION IN EUROPE

Inside Germany all the conditions have matured for social explosions. Revolution is inevitable. If it is assumed that the Allies should succeed in occupying Germany before the revolution breaks out, this could only temporarily delay the denouement. Inevitably, an upsurge would develop uniting the mass of the people behind the working class in its struggle for emancipation from social and national enslavement. Taking a leaf out of Hitler's book, the Allies intend imposing a regime on Germany similar to that imposed by the Nazis on France and other countries they have overrun. They can only do this by the use of the same methods of terror, tortures and reprisals by means of which the Gestapo and the S.S. maintained their short-lived and precarious occupation of the countries overrun. The Allies will achieve even less success in their endeavours to hold down the population of Germany.

In their endeavour to prepare the way psychologically for their reprisals and executions, as a means of terrorising the masses in Germany into submission, the Allies have in recent weeks begun a sustained campaign of hatred and vilification against the German people as a whole. The myth that the Nazis and the German people are one and the same thing, and that all Germans are by innate nature "Huns", "war-loving", "brutal", "fascist beasts", "murderers", etc., without

the slightest spark of human decency, is being systematically propagated. The undoubted atrocities which the depraved elements of the S.S. and the Nazis have perpetrated against the peoples of Europe, serve as the ostensible excuse for the legend that the whole of the German nation is responsible. It is conveniently forgotten by the gentry manufacturing this hatred, that the S.S. learned its sadism in action against the worker-socialists, communists and trade unionists in Germany itself. And that this savagery had begun even prior to Hitler's coming to power. They wish the masses to overlook the delight with which they regarded Hitler's oppression of the German masses, and the approval with which it was regarded by the democratic statesmen, as a safeguard against socialist revolution. But in both cases they are remaining true to their aims. Behind the support for Hitler, as behind the attack on the German masses as "poisoned Hitlerites", lies the same class motive: fear of the socialist revolution.

From a somewhat similar angle can be explained the rabid chauvinism and race hatred preached by the Kremlin. The co-operation with Hitler in the Stalin-Hitler Pact, and now the frenzied and insane denunciation of everything German, in reality present the same symmetrical pattern: fear of the socialist revolution in Germany and its threat to the power and privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

On this question all the forces of the old society are united. Though of course, they intend to utilise the position to squeeze all they can out of the German masses in their own interests.

THE GERMAN PEOPLE UNDER THE NAZIS

Hitler, having come to power, crushed the working class with the aid of the middle class, then speedily turned on the deluded petty bourgeois. That was the significance of the June 30th purge of 1934. Having duped the middle class with demagogic phrases and propaganda against the combines, the Nazi dictatorship revealed itself as the ferocious agent of finance capital. If the middle class had been ruined in the "democratic" Weimar republic this was as nothing to the state to which they were reduced under the Nazis, crippling taxation and the wiping out of large sections of the middle class as a social grouping were speeded up beyond anything which had obtained in pre-Nazi Germany.

Incapable of solving the crisis of German capitalism the bloated Nazi bureaucracy had no course other than war. Nazism was revealed as the "chemically distilled essence of the pure culture of imperialism". But on this road, weakened German capitalism could only travel by forcing the masses in. But the pent-up energies of the

to tighten their belts even further. "Guns before butter" was the grim programme of the Nazis before the present war began.

In the six years between the Nazis coming to power and the invasion of Poland, the mass basis of the Nazis had largely disappeared. The mass of the working class never supported them. The middle class had become disillusioned. The victories of 1939-40 may have resulted in a temporary wave of chauvinism, but this was rapidly dissipated by the horrors of the war against the Soviet Union. One thing alone has paralysed the German masses from taking action against the hated regime, and that has been the fear of the consequences of Allied victory.

Neither in the East from the side of Stalin, nor in the West from the Allies, has any attractive alternative been offered to them. Indeed, the threats emanating from the Soviet Union have been even more frightening to the masses than from the Allied imperialists. Thus, Stalin has presented Goebbels with this "secret weapon" by means of which "national unity" in the Reich has been maintained.

But a "national unity" founded on fear of the consequences of defeat, and backed with the terror of the S.S. and the Gestapo, cannot be maintained indefinitely in the face of the mounting catastrophes suffered by the Nazi regime. The disintegration of the Nazi Reich proceeds apace. Germany is now almost the last of the Nazi-occupied countries. The tens and thousands of arrests of anyone who could be remotely suspected of opposition, and dangerous thoughts towards the regime, are an indication of this. More and more, as the masses become bitter and resentful, the Nazis are like conquerors in a foreign land. The newspapers report of Hamburg—Red Hamburg—that large numbers of the S.S. men have been found either knifed, or with their heads battered in—but with their weapons stolen. It is reported that S.S. and Gestapo men dare not move about in the large industrial cities of Germany at night singly—but go in pairs and groups—so many have been found dead, their fire-arms missing. Instructive episodes! They mirror the intensity of the hatred towards the regime which surely must be the greatest in history and—the thirst for revenge on the part of the German masses.

All the conditions for revolutionary upheaval are now present. It but requires some accident which will set the workers of one large industrial city in Germany into open collision with the Nazis, and all Germany will be plunged into the Revolution. It is similar to the situation in Italy before the fall of Mussolini, except that in Germany the masses are fearful of the Allies, if they gain the opportunity of marching

German Revolution must burst forth in a far more gigantic explosion than in the Italian peninsula.

SPLITS IN THE GERMAN RULING CLASS

The knowledge of the inevitability of defeat, and the pressure of the masses from below, has already led the German bourgeoisie to attempt to rid themselves of the mascot Hitler, now transformed into a millstone around their necks. This in itself, is a symptom of the revolutionary crisis in Germany. **As always, in history, the coming of the revolution is marked by irreparable fissures and antagonisms opening out within the ranks of the ruling class itself.** Under an open dictatorship, this always manifests itself in plots and conspiracies. The Generals' revolt, and the reports which indicate an Allied, or even entirely separate conspiracy on the part of certain groupings of industrialists, were manifestations of this process in Germany. But neither the Generals nor the industrialists were completely united on the need or the time to rid themselves of the Nazis. The same cause which propelled a desperate section forward momentarily paralysed and terrified other sections. Their attention was riveted on events in Italy where the removal of Mussolini provoked, instead of forestalling the revolutionary storm. The freshness of these events and the under-current of social antagonisms now rising openly to the surface, convinced them that the removal of Hitler if anything would provoke even worse consequences for their class.

Moreover, Hitler and his group of human scum, thugs and adventurers, had no intention of retiring from the scene to suit their paymasters, who no longer had any use for them. They did not intend to be cast aside, like the bourgeoisie toss away their worn-out mistresses. They too had observed the events in Italy and attempted to profit by the lesson. This hooligan gang had nothing to gain and would lose all by such a change—including also their lives. They had no particular regard for "Germany", whether bourgeois or any other Germany, except from the point of view of milking her. These gangsters have sown such a harvest of hatred and scorn that there is no way out for them—they act with the desperation of cornered rats. And the German bourgeoisie which only yesterday had luscious visions of exploiting all Europe, finds itself incapable of asserting immediate control in Germany—the forces they have raised from the depths of society have expropriated them politically, and attempt to act as an independent force threatening even the members of the bourgeoisie itself.

Thus it is revealed that in the dia-

lectics of class rule the pattern is not at all simple, but extremely complex.

ALLIED PLANS AFTER HITLER'S FALL

However, measures of terror cannot save Hitler. Even if by some miracle the Nazis could stave off military defeat for a time (and this is not entirely excluded by the relationship of forces), the inevitable collapse of the regime from internal explosions is drawing near. The desperation of the regime is but a reflection of the desperation of the masses. Firing squads, arrests, terror, concentration camps are all useless for a regime which has completely outlived itself. There is not a live thread in the whole structure left. Even the S.S. and the Gestapo have no faith in the future, and large numbers are seeking for a way to save themselves. In addition to which the war has compelled the breaking down of the S.S., which is no longer a carefully selected instrument of suppression, but has been diluted with large numbers of fresh elements and even foreign-mercenaries with an entirely different training and outlook to the old members. Even these latter cannot remain unaffected by the prevailing mood among the bulk of the population in Germany. Hitlerism is in its death agony. The piling up of contradictions has reached such a degree of intensity that it has gone far beyond the limits which any society can bear.

What will be the exact course of developments, it would be impossible to predict. All that can be laid down is the general course of events that will ensue. One of the factors which dictates the pathological campaign against the Germans by the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie, is their fear of the tradition of the German workers. Numerically the strongest sector of the European proletariat, **the German workers have a tradition of education on the ideas of Marxism which extends back for more than two generations.** Under the influence of the crisis, these ideas must inevitably be revived with tenfold strength, especially within the vanguard, now that the masses have gone through the hell of fascism. Hitler has drained the social reserves of German capitalism. The middle class—whittled down to a shadow of what it was before Hitler—or even before the war—can no longer provide a stable basis for reaction. On the contrary, the pendulum must inevitably swing in the opposite direction. The middle class, which drew behind it sections of the backward workers in its period of counter-revolutionary frenzy, will follow the lead of the workers in a new revolutionary upsurge.

If in France, Italy and other countries, the workers have immediately taken to the road of mass expropriations, and arrests of the employers;

if there is the tendency to the setting up of Soviets and workers' committees; if the workers immediately begin to seize factories and to arm themselves in order to make themselves master of the situation once the pressure of the Nazi military machine was released—what will the position be in Germany? Inevitably in a situation of chaos and ruin, the masses will be impelled to settle accounts with the Nazis in the most ruthless fashion. Almost automatically on the morrow of a successful uprising against Hitler, the workers', soldiers' and peasants' committees would be compelled to attempt to assert control of Germany: the socialist revolution would pose itself as the sole solution.

An uprising on these lines has already been envisaged in the calculations of Anglo-American imperialism. Churchill's statement in parliament that the "Germans" could not escape responsibility for their crimes by turning to Communism was a warning in advance of the repression of the Allies in that event. But the consequences for Europe and the world of such a movement, would slip beyond the control of the imperialists. Revolutionary convulsions as far away as Asia and Africa would be felt among the already restless colonial slaves of the imperialists.

Accepting the worst variant in developments in the immediate future—that Hitler could succeed in holding down the population till the Allies march in and occupy the whole of Germany, and that the fall of Nazism takes place through its military debacles, what follows would be a different pattern to the one sketched above certainly! But how different? From the Nazis oppressing the German workers, the German workers would become oppressed not only socially but nationally as well, by the foreign conquerors.

And what can the bourgeoisie of Germany, or the Allies, offer any section of the German population? Under present conditions, the Allies as well as the German bourgeoisie regard the existence of a democratic regime as dangerous, because it could not be long lasting. Hence the programme of the German bourgeoisie cannot but be, to accept the position of a satellite of Anglo-American Imperialism—of Quislings.

The Allies intend to place themselves in the position formerly occupied by the Nazis, but hope to retain the present political relationships intact. Everything is to remain unchanged! With or without the Allies, the Nazi Party would disappear—and its existence would extremely embarrass the Allies at home. They still have to maintain the pretence of a war to exterminate Fascism and too open a revelation of their aims would provoke repercussions among their own work-

ing class. Consequently, a few hundreds of the Nazi tops would have to be removed as a gesture to satisfy the "mob". But as for the rest, **the Nazi bureaucracy and the Capitalists would remain as subordinate partners of the Imperialists.** The system of repression established by Hitler—except the racial discrimination against the Jews, the abolition of which would not cost the Allies anything, and would be an inexpensive gesture, would remain in operation with additional "improvements" such as the curfew. The pariah race would now be the Germans. That is the pattern of occupation as established by the military regulations on the first strip of territory in Germany, occupied by the Allies.

The bourgeoisie have noted with dread the experience of Fascism in Europe, but are unable to profit thereby. Hitler's rule, as that of Mussolini, depended on a number of factors, all of which have disappeared today. No regime can last without mass backing. This backing was given in the first period of the rule of fascism by the deluded middle class. Once they had become disillusioned it was only the inertia, apathy, and disappointment of the masses in the failure and incapacity of their own organisations, which prevented the dictators' overthrow. With the masses aroused by the events of the war, Mussolini was doomed, as is Hitler. Hitler endeavoured, by military force, to replace the shattered ranks of Mussolini's militia. He has found in North Italy that once overthrown, it was impossible to restate the fascists, though they tried hard enough. A totalitarian oppression is bad enough. **A foreign totalitarian repression is unbearable!**

But the Allied capitalist statesmen realise this only too well. They are expecting as desperate a resistance as the Nazis received in the lands they conquered. Hence there is a clear and cool calculation in the campaign pushed forward in the bourgeois press of Britain and America, **that the Nazis expecting inevitable defeat are preparing to go "underground".** The idea in itself does not bear examination. No more than in the case of Mussolini, could Hitler with what little support he still possesses, survive the military debacle. But the thoroughly roused German masses who have had to put up with unbearable repression, would not for long tolerate the repression of the Allies, especially as they witness the Allied fraternization with and protection of, the Nazi bureaucrats and capitalists. They would inevitably resist in the most desperate fashion the Allied oppression and exploitation. In order to kill any sympathy or support for such movements of opposition among the workers in the Allied countries, the Allied command are preparing to use Stalin's technique and label every such uprising, strike, protest or

demonstration, as **"underground Nazi" or "Nazi inspired".** Hence, their terror and fear of fraternization between the German workers and Allied armies; hence their adoption of the same technique as Hitler (who in turn had learned it from the repression of the Imperialists in the colonies in the occupied territories). The destruction of the little town of Wallendorf had the same deliberate aim as the destruction of Lidice and other towns by the Nazis: **To terrorise the population and create a gulf between them and the Allied soldiers.** But all such efforts in the long run will break down, on the disgust of the Allied soldiers at being used for such reprisals and punishments.

PREPARE FOR THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Meanwhile, in Germany itself under the claws of the Nazis a new generation of revolutionaries is being fashioned. A generation hard and unbreakable, tested and steeled in the fire of Nazi repression. The Allied ruling class directs its propaganda against the German youth. With good reason! Not at all because it is "corrupted" by the teachings of Nazism, but because of its striving towards revolutionary change. Again the example of Italy indicates how easily youth, which feels the burden of fascist repression and stifling of all initiative and independence, more than any other section of the population, assimilates rapidly revolutionary ideas and methods at the first opportunity. The reports which have trickled through show the strong opposition in Germany against Hitlerism even now among the youth. The working class and even the middle class student youth and schoolboys have provided groups of recruits to the anti-Nazi organisations.

For many reasons it is likely that the old workers' organisations, which so ignobly surrendered to Hitler, may not gain so firm a support even in the early stages of the revolution in Germany as in the other countries in Europe. Any attempt to co-operate with the Allied conquerors would immediately label them as traitors in the eyes of the masses. The Stalinist programme of Vansittartite repressions and reparations would speedily lose these gentry any support they might muster in Germany. From the ranks of the German workers will come some of the finest fighters for the Socialist revolution. In Germany what groups of Socialists, Communists and worker oppositionists existed and developed have been compelled to weigh up the situation and give a lead independently of the bureaucrats of Stalinism and the Social Democrats, by the very conditions of the unparalleled Nazi terror. In the factories the best militants have learned to appraise the situation care-

fully and thoroughly. Upon these revolutionary fighters, it will not be so easy to impose the policy of class collaboration. The thoughts of the German workers are bitter and they have been coloured by the excesses of the Nazis. Every worker must have cast longing glances at the lamp-posts when faced with some particularly irksome tyranny on the part of the Nazis or his bosses—he does not make much distinction between his employer or factory "fuhrer" and the Nazi regime.

But the fate of Germany obviously cannot be separated from the fate of Europe. The millions of foreign slaves that Hitler imported into Germany will play an important role in this respect. They have established secret and friendly relations with the German workers despite the strict Nazi prohibition against this. They will take back memories of the German workers' opposition to the regime and their fraternal class solidarity when they return to the countries from whence they came. The problem of the German revolution cannot be separated from the problem of the revolution in all Europe. The war has tied the fate of all the European countries together. Events in one will have immediate repercussions in all the others.

In this connection the events in Bulgaria when the Red Army marched in, mirror in miniature the possibilities lodged in the situation in the whole of Europe. Despite all, when the Red Army marched into Sofia the class not the national or racial instincts immediately exerted their supremacy. According to the report published in the "News Chronicle" (significantly the only paper which carried the news in Britain and even more significantly only in the early editions, as it was suppressed in the later issues) **the Red Army soldiers were fraternising with the civilian population, with the Bulgarian Army and with the German soldiers!** One ecstatic mass exchanging the Red Front salute!

As the British correspondent who witnessed these events, ingeniously remarked, **the Communist Party could have taken power without any possibility of opposition but did not seem to want to do so!** What an historical crime has been committed by the perfidious role of Stalinism!

However, the task is not to meditate on the role of Stalinism and reformism, but to prepare actively to combat them. The military battles in Europe are drawing to a close—the era of class battle will replace it.

If the Revolutionary Communists of Germany together with the Fourth International everywhere, can succeed in finding their way to the masses and building strong revolutionary parties, it is they who will determine the future—that of the Socialist United States of Europe.