

Fourth International

American Labor After the Taft-Hartley Act

By the Editors



LEON TROTSKY
1879-1940

LEON TROTSKY—

The Man and His Work

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Recent Developments in Austria

By BINDER

Although Austria's wealth is insignificant, since nothing is plentiful except for the salt in Salzburg and the water of the Danube, Austria's geographic position—it is a link with the Balkans on the one side and Central and Western Europe on the other—places it in a position of great political importance. Austria may become either a channel or a barrier for the revolutionary wave from the East and the West.

The mass working class party of Austria, the Social Democrats, played an important role in the Second International. This party provided some of Social Democracy's outstanding theoreticians: Otto Bauer, Victor Adler and Max Adler, and created a theoretical school of its own, Austro-Marxism. "Red Vienna" became the model of reformist achievement.

In 1933, one of the best organized Social Democratic parties capitulated to a handful of fascist gangsters. The party rank and file felt in their bones the great strength of the party and were looking forward to a showdown with the fascists. After a series of provocations, the rank and file became fed up with the policy of retreat and several hundred members of the Social Democratic Schutzbund struck back when the fascist Heimwehr tried to disarm them. This was the spark that set off the heroic fight in February 1934.

The working class of Austria felt very clearly that they had not been defeated in straight class fight, but that they had been betrayed by their own party leadership. They knew that not even one-tenth of the energy of the working class had been mobilized to defeat fascism and establish a socialist regime. Only this explains why the working class did not fall into apathy, as usually happens after a heavy defeat, but instead drew the conclusion that it was not the strength of reaction, but the weakness of their own party that was responsible for the defeat. A wholesale flight from reformism followed. Entire districts of Social Democrats joined the Communist Party, which in their minds, was the sole revolutionary alternative to reformism.

The mass flight in 1934 from the Social Democracy to the Communist Party was, in the minds of the masses, a step from reformism to revolution. By then the Third International had already entered its People's Front period; but this line was difficult to apply to Austria. Hitler was supposed to be the only working class enemy, but the Austrian working class was suffering under the terror of their own fascist regime. For the Austrian C.P. refugees in Paris it was of course very easy to follow the People's Front policy. They sent an invitation to the Social Democrats in Paris to participate in a Dollfuss memorial meeting. But in Austria it was not so easy. It was this treacherous People's Front policy that made it possible for the left Social Democratic party, the *Revolutionaere Sozialisten*, (R.S.)

under the leadership of Otto Bauer, to make headway. The People's Front line of the C.P. laid the foundation for nationalistic propaganda that surpassed even the worst excesses of the Second International.

With the outbreak of the war the Stalinists fostered an Austrian nationalism comparable only to Ehrenburgism. There was nobody they were not prepared to join with in the fight against "the Germans." (In England the Stalinist cover organizations, the Austrian Center, was run by Austrian Stalinists and Royalists.) The only thing lacking was an anthem such as "Osterreich, Osterreich uber alles."

When the war reached its climax, the Stalinists already had less influence in Austria than the R.S. A resistance movement called '05' developed in the course of the war, which represented all the "democratic" forces: R.S., C.P., Catholics, (today the People's Party), Democratic Block (representatives of industry, finance and the free professions). The R.S. was unquestionably the strongest force. The R.S. resistance units based themselves on cells in factories, which inevitably gave a class character to their actions. To indicate the activity of the Austrian resistance, we shall quote from *London Information*, the official paper of the Austrian Socialist Democrats and R.S. in London:

"February 24, 1945: A demonstration of about 8,000 Viennese, (mostly women) in front of the Ankerbrotfabrik, (a large bakery). German troops fire into the crowd. Members of the Resistance return the fire. 41 demonstrators and 11 German soldiers were killed."

"January 27, 1945: Shooting in the street of D'Orsaygasse in Vienna, when a Resistance group was rounded up by the Gestapo. 17 men of the Gestapo and SS killed. 4 members of the Resistance killed and 3 missing."

With the progress of the war, the exploited people of Austria looked to the Red Army as their future liberator. A week before Stalin announced the "liberation" of Vienna on April 13, 1945, the Moscow radio broadcast: "Unlike the Germans in Germany, the Austrian population resisted the evacuation orders given by the Germans, remained on the spot, and hospitably met the Red Army as liberators of Austria from the Hitler yoke" (*Radio Moscow*, April 8, 1945). "Every report from Austria confirms that the people welcome the Red Army joyfully as liberators" (*Radio Moscow*, April 13, 1945).

One week after the "liberation," Renner arrived in Vienna with the consent of the Red Army. He described the situation as follows: "I found in Vienna the foundation of a new democratic city government already laid, and the only task remaining was the establishment of a central government for the whole country. All progress since then achieved is due to the concrete

action by the democratic parties." (*London Times*, August 6, 1945).

Concerning the period between the breakdown of the Nazi defense in Vienna and its occupation by the Red Army, Leonid Pyervomaisky, in a dispatch to *Pravda*, gives the following picture:

The events of the last days have confirmed the reports that the population of Vienna actively resisted the German occupants who wanted to evacuate the population to Germany, to transfer the factories and to transform Vienna itself into a fortress—that is, to condemn her to certain destruction. But the Austrians do not want to resist the Red Army. They greet us with joyful cordiality. Flags are flying in the streets. At street crossings Austrian patriots are on traffic duty with rifles, which they have captured from the Germans. (*London Information*, April 22, 1945).

Renner's reference to "the foundation of a new democratic city government already laid," and the *Pravda* dispatch constitute evidence that the workers of Vienna immediately snatched the initiative from the Nazis in order to establish their own city administration. The Red Army used Renner to curb the initiative of the Viennese, and to put the administration into the hands of a government of National Unity (3 Social Democrats, 3 People's Party, 2 Communist Party, and 2 "non-Party").

The Communist Party

The wholesale looting, raping and removal of industrial plants did not contribute to the popularity of the Red Army. It was the Red Army's victory occupation of Austria that led to the rebirth of Austro-Marxism. "The Red Army has defeated the Austrian Communist Party," they now say in Vienna.

The Austrian Communist Party had all possible means at its disposal to become a mass party. The Communist shop stewards had more rations for their workers than the Social Democratic shop stewards. They had priority in housing for their party headquarters, plenty of money, etc. But all this was not decisive. What proved decisive was the attitude toward the occupation armies, and to the reconstruction of the country.

The *Sozialistische Partei* (Socialist Party) has been reconstituted by the reunited Austrian Social Democrats who had split in 1934 into the R.S. (Otto Bauer) and the old right wing Social Democrats. This party was the only alternative that the workers saw to the Communist Party.

As already indicated, the C.P. had two tasks to fulfill: First, to defend and justify the Red

Army unconditionally; and secondly, to promote Stalin's policy of "National Unity."

The *Propeller Kommunisten* (this is the name the Viennese give to the Communists who were flown from Moscow to Vienna) were well prepared for the tasks ahead. Thus, "Propeller Kommunist," Erwin Zucker, known on the Moscow radio as Franz Schilling, "answered" the complaints of the Viennese that the Red Army was denuding the country, in the following manner: "It is the old story of the boy who shows his frost-bitten hands on a cold winter's day and says: 'Serves my father right that my fingers are frozen; why did he not buy me any gloves?' Is it not exactly the same thing if people, instead of pulling on their socks and working, prefer rather to count the cattle which are being delivered to the Russians, and get impatient if the fat allocation sometimes has to be postponed a few days?" (*London Information*, August 1, 1945).

To grasp the cynicism of this speech, we have only to cite a report on living conditions in Austria. "Too weak to work—workers in the big Berndorf engineering works are collapsing at their machines and are no longer capable of carrying out their heavy work, a delegation from Lower Austria told the Provincial Government." (*London Information*, November 15, 1945.)

It was on the basis of this betrayal that the S.P. has been able to pose with considerable success as the only socialist alternative to the C.P. In their propaganda the S.P. leans completely on the pre-1934 tradition. A socialist poster in Vienna reads: "*Wir haben Wien schon gemacht. Wohnbauten. Fursorge. Mistabfuhr.*" ("We have made Vienna beautiful. Houses, Social Welfare, Garbage Collecting.") All the S.P. periphery organizations have been revived. The party pledges itself to pursue a social and economic policy: heavy taxation of the rich, social welfare, houses, education. It is significant that the leading personnel of today were leaders before 1934. All of them remained in Austria over the last twelve years, in contradistinction to the whole C.P. leadership, which has returned after twelve years in Moscow.

The S.P. leadership promises to rebuild Austria without the "use of violence." Since only the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system can free the tremendous energy of the masses for the rebuilding of Austria and Europe, and since the S.P. has pledged itself not to "use violence," there is no other course for the S.P. leadership than to crawl before the big capitalist countries. Despite the fact that the S.P. is being used as the tool of Western imperialism, the majority of the S.P. membership believes in socialism as the only alternative to rotting capitalism. This finds its reflection in some of the articles and speeches of leading Social Democrats.

The May Day appeal of the Social Democrats reads: "(We must) . . . again resume the struggle for the realization of socialism with all the fervor and devotion of which we are capable." This appeal ends by expressing "the feeling of profound solidarity with the working people of

all lands and all nations" (*London Information*, July 15, 1945).

Renner, who it must be remembered, is the representative of the right wing, stated in his address to the Socialist conference on October 26, 1945: "Today socialism is no longer the matter of a country. Today it is the one really effective program in the whole world. We have entered the epoch of the realization of socialism.

. . . We are not over-aged. Socialism is young, socialism is only now coming into its own. . . . Ours is the watchword: 'No more wars!'" This part of the speech was intended for the internal consumption of the young revolutionary elements in the party.

The developing left wing is cause for alarm among the Social Democratic leadership and the capitalist class.

International Notes

The 2nd International

Zurich—The conference of 19 European "socialist" parties which met here in June took up: 1) consideration of the splits in various parties (Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, etc.); 2) conflicts reflecting the division of Europe into Western and Eastern blocs; 3) The failure of the reconstituted German Social Democratic party to be admitted as a full participant, which resulted mainly from the opposition of the parties in the Eastern bloc (Poland, Hungary, etc.) who are under Soviet occupation; 4) Failure to agree on any form of reconstituting the Second International, due mainly to the opposition of the British Labor Party, which merely wants to utilize the other "socialist" parties for its foreign policy in the London government, but doesn't wish to be "compromised" before its own capitalists by too much "internationalism."

In a speech pleading for admission, the German leader Schumacher declared that, while he can conceive of Europe being in the Soviet orbit and cannot see a "socialist" Europe without Russian participation, his party can never cooperate with the German "communists." This gesture to the Eastern bloc proved of no avail. A motion by the French and Belgian parties to reconstitute the Second International was referred to a commission for "examination." On a motion from the British Labor Party, a commission was set up to maintain relations with the German party, after the latter had failed to obtain admission by one vote. The Italian party of Nenni was recognized, while that of Sarragat was excluded from the conference. All other splits were referred to commissions for study.

The Second International is one political ghost that is not due to be resurrected.

Italy

As a result of the present government crisis in Italy we will probably have a new party in the cabinet; the PSLI (the Socialist Party of Italian workers), which was born out of the recent split in the old Socialist Party (PSIUP). What is this party, how and by what forces was it formed and what role can it play on the Italian political scene?

At last year's convention of the PSIUP, in Florence, it was already clear that the corridor compromise between the different tendencies to "save the unity of the party" could not last very

long. Five months ago, at the eve of the Rome convention, there were three solidly organized factions, each with its own newspaper or magazine, and each determined to fight. The "fusionists," led by Nenni and Basso, were partisans of close collaboration with the Stalinists. The "Critica Sociale" faction, led by Sarragat and Simonini, and supported by the entire old reformist crowd, Modigliani, Balabanov and D'Aragona, represents in Italy the ultra-reformist tendency similar to that of the British Laborite leaders and the French Blums. Finally, the "Inizeativa Socialista" faction led by young Matteotti and Zagari, and including practically the entire Socialist Youth, represents an extremely confused and ineffective "left wing." Even before the opening of that Convention, it was clear that there was no possibility of the three factions continuing to live in one party. However, the split did not take place on the basis of clear political positions but rather on organizational questions, and on the question of a united action pact and fusion with the Stalinist Party.

The fact that the split did not have a more precise political character partially explains why we find the "right" and "left" wings of the old party gathered in the new PSLI. On the other hand the absence of a leadership with clear and precise political aims—particularly concerning the problems of the construction of a revolutionary party—has led to the formation of a hybrid party, where the actual political leadership has from the beginning, and to an ever increasing extent, been in the hands of the reformist tendency which is richer in cadres, experience and financial means.

Born under these conditions, the primary activity of the PSLI has been the struggle against "communism." This struggle has been a confused one due to the fact that the rightists carry it out in a fundamentally anti-communist fashion, while the Youth use an anti-Stalinist line. The PSLI, being outside the Gasperi government, as it was reorganized after the old S.P. split, and after the voyage to the U.S. of the Democratic-Christian leaders, was able to increase its influence thanks to its violent opposition to the incapacity of the tri-partite government. It is evident, however, that the reason for existence of the PSLI lies in its struggle against Communism in general. This is true despite the presence in its ranks of the leftist youth—a presence which is becoming ever less capable of hiding the reformist character of Sarragat's party.

The PSLI has not yet held a Convention and