

International Information Bulletin

Published by the Socialist Workers Party

116 University Place, New York 3, N. Y.

VOLUME I — No. 1

SEPTEMBER, 1946



PRICE 35 CENTS

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brainstorm in the manner of . . . Marcoux. Have they really understood the significance of their position on the referendum question? Will the party once more be placed before a fait accompli without receiving an explanation of the opportunistic political turn of the leadership? I fear it will turn out that way.

Now, the meaning of our answer in the referendum must be clear to us all: our position on the referendum means, above all, two things: first, we have become conscious of the reality of a setback of the working class, of a premeditated bourgeois offensive, of the necessity for a united front; second, we place our struggle *also* in the arena of bourgeois democracy, of parliamentarism.

1. It is useless to insist on this point. Let us simply repeat a thousand times the necessity of developing a united front policy every time that the possibility is offered us on a concrete and precise basis, starting with events that are tied to this problem. In a case like the referendum, the problem of the united front is posed: to offer a united front in referendum battle (explaining elsewhere why we do not like this arena of struggle), gives us the possibility of making united front propositions on other important points (food, wages, control. . .) and of being heard then by the rank and file militants of the CP and SP.

2. The facts show more clearly every day the correctness of the "minority" position in its evaluation of the role of bourgeois democracy at this time, and particularly of parliamentarism. If parliamentarism still plays an important role today, it is, evidently, as a result of the low level of

revolutionary consciousness of the masses, of their confidence in the big workers' parties. We must draw the consequences of this observation: a) it is necessary to criticize the constitution on the plane of democracy in general before criticizing it on the plane of its social character; b) there is a possibility of voting yes in the referendum, because of the necessity for the united front, without betraying the programmatic basis of the Fourth International. It is evident that if we were faced with large masses in revolt, building their councils, abandoning in action their confidence in bourgeois parliamentarism, we would not pose the question of defending a constitution which establishes bourgeois parliamentarism.

The question of the united front can be posed in the question of the referendum because the fact of voting for a bourgeois democratic constitution does not constitute, in the present situation, a betrayal of our program, but offers the possibility of a necessary compromise in order to keep ourselves from being cut off from the great mass of workers. From this we must draw all the conclusions. Our widest and most dynamic possible participation in the electoral campaign is the first and most important one. Our defense of the slogan of the workers' united front throughout the campaign, justified by our position in the referendum, constitutes the second, no less important. As for the third, it concerns the party: the necessity of denouncing a leadership whose political and organizational incapacity now reaches its height, one week before the electoral campaign.

April 30, 1946.

Report on Germany and Austria

This article and the following article are summaries of reports made to the International Secretariat by Comrades X. and T., members of the IS, after trips to various sections.

Germany

The situation in Germany, a quick trip by an IS representative in late April indicated, is still not very encouraging. As stated in recent EEC and IEC documents, the atomization of the proletarian organizations by Nazism, the effects of material destruction and the absence of the most militant age-sector of German manhood in Allied and Stalinist prison-camps — these factors have produced until now a considerable degree of apathy among the German proletariat. Material destruction, it should be remembered, is not merely architectural, but inevitably requires the German worker and urban petty-bourgeois to employ all his free time in the mere mechanics of living (search for food, clothing, lodging, authorizations, papers, etc.). Within the workers' parties and the trade unions, there is widespread rank-and-file sentiment that they are pawns in a struggle between the two world power-blocs and that the ideological struggles of their organizations, as well as their struggles for immediate demands, reflect less the needs of the German workers than the manoeuvres of the Anglo-American imperialists and the Kremlin bureaucracy. Sentiment for the withdrawal of all occupying troops (including, and in some cases especially, the Red Army) is widespread but not violent. The degree of militancy varies widely, and in general terms may be said to be in direct proportion to the

percentage of proletarians in the local population, and to the degree of material destruction with its attendant suffering — the highest point being the Ruhr, where both these factors reach their maximum.

The market is practically non-existent, with such a gulf between controlled prices and free or black market prices that there is essentially no connection between them (as in say France or Italy), so that there are two almost totally separate economic sectors: on the one side the food-dole, in which prices are nominal and the use of money almost a mere ceremony, and, on the other, a very sparse black market at such astronomical prices that a worker cannot even think of it. What small trade there is, is largely by direct barter, a baby-carriage for a camera, a bicycle for a divan, without any money being used. As a result of this special situation, workers' struggles are less for small increases in money wages than for larger rations, better food distribution, etc. Another result is a disinclination to work among those (including workers) who have from any savings-source the relatively small sums of money needed to buy the minimum rations for several months. The occupation authorities counter with a system of work cards without which rations will be unobtainable, and lacking which, anyone who is caught will be sent to forced labor. Despite the Allies' widespread use of Nazis in the government and

police force, open or covert resistance to the occupying imperialisms so far appears to arise generally more from ex-Nazis than from the German workers, though individual and isolated actions of considerable militancy have occurred in industrial and port areas, notably Hamburg.

The food situation, which is quite as bad as reported in the bourgeois press and growing gravely worse with great rapidity, is the foremost thought in the minds of all Germans, particularly workers. When the food situation was serious without being desperate, it was a deterrent to the militancy of the workers; but as this situation gets worse, it provokes acts of desperation, as the recent (and continuing) mass attacks on food trains destined for the occupation forces demonstrate. It may be expected that hunger will now become a very important accelerating factor in radicalizing the masses and will bring about a revolutionary upsurge. If our German comrades are not to collapse from hunger, international solidarity food-packages must be organized immediately.

The slowness of regroupment and reactivation of the German proletariat generally, is reflected in the party's organizational situation. Defections were found among former comrades who were tired out or discouraged; some of them were disgusted with the behavior of the Red Army, others degenerated through their reformist collaboration with the "democratic" occupying powers. But in several centers strong groups were found which had held out despite all the horrors of Nazi repression and imperialist war. Although our leaflets and newspapers have been very well received wherever it was possible to distribute them, and although it may be said that our program is finding a response, it still is not possible, even a year after the collapse of Nazism, to speak of a strong and unified German section in Germany itself. The objective conditions are highly favorable to its rapid construction, but it would be unrealistic not to recognize that the work is still in its first stages. The extreme difficulties of travel within the zones and the practical impossibility of travel between zones, have kept the movement atomized and isolated. One of the most elementary tasks, which has now been started, is to create regular contacts among the groups in the seven or eight principal centers where they are organized on the local scale, and out of this to create, by convention and election, at least a provisional leadership on the spot which can centralize further development.

In all cities visited, the German comrades had, though without consultation among themselves or with the center, decided that the most practical organizational tactic for the present moment was that of an independent and illegal grouping, at least half of whose efforts in daily work should be concentrated upon fraction activity and recruiting within the Stalinist and reformist parties. This tactic, however, is to a considerable degree forced upon them by the illegality, and they are all highly aware of the need of legalizing the party. The practical possibilities of doing this vary from zone to zone, and the attempts to obtain legality entail sufficient risk of repression so that the consensus of the comrades is to continue the present organizational tactic until the membership has grown sufficiently to justify the risk of sending the necessary number of comrades out into

the open. If legality can be wrested from the authorities, however, our comrades are certain that the party would win very rapidly to itself important split-offs from the Stalinist and reformist memberships, disgusted with their parties' political lines. A second and less hurried visit in some six weeks' time, may, it is hoped, make serious progress toward resolving this question of legalization, which is undoubtedly a key one for the next immediate period, and continues to be studied both by the German comrades and at the center.

Tardiness of German exile comrades' return to Germany met very little sympathy among the comrades in the country itself, who heartily approved the pre-Conference decision that they return without further delay. Some even wished to set severely short time-limits.

The monthly newspaper, *Neuer Spartakus*, is being distributed, though with great difficulty because of its having to be printed outside Germany itself. It is hoped that plans made during the recent visit will permit transfer of the printing to within Germany in about four or five months. A modest programme of pamphlet publication is envisaged: some of the classic works of historical Marxism to be published legally within Germany, and, from without, first the Transitional Programme, and then an up-to-date edition of *Leninismus gegen Stalinismus*. Continuation and amplification of this badly needed publishing programme will depend to a considerable extent on the possibility of assembling funds from abroad. All our literature is everywhere extremely well received.

In summary, the next stage in Germany should be principally devoted to: the linking together of the present groups, with a view to a national congress which should discuss the political resolution issued from the Pre-Conference, prepare its own action programme for Germany, and elect a national leadership; increased diffusion of the press and badly needed literature, and the transfer of the editing and printing to inside Germany itself; aiding the immediate return of all emigre comrades; study of the best organizational tactics based on the experience of our German comrades, but with the ultimate goal of a *legal* mass party as soon as possible; the serious and regular organization of gravely needed food relief from foreign sections.

Though we are only at the beginning, there need be no grounds for pessimism: if the foundations are well laid in this next immediate period, the objective situation in Germany is such that very rapid and broad growth is highly probable. But these foundations must be rapidly and solidly laid.

Austria

Both the general and the party situation in Austria are for the moment far more advanced and encouraging than in Germany. Less material destruction and quicker return of prisoners have permitted restoration of relatively more normal functioning than in Germany, while the far more catastrophic food situation pushes the workers to protest or perish, and the Allied pretense of "liberation" rather than "occupation" permits slightly greater liberty of action.

Numerous actions for immediate demands have occurred in the factories, and the reformist and Stalinist parties and the trade-union bureaucracy find it hard to keep the militant

workers in line. In one notable case the supposed trump card of bringing Minister-President Figl to speak to a factory meeting boomeranged, since he was roundly booed.

There exist in Vienna two main groups claiming adherence to the Fourth International: the Karl Liebknecht Bund, formed in 1938 by unification of part of the Kampfbund with the Proletarian Revolutionaries, the Against the Stream Group, and the Proletarian Internationalists; and the other wing of the Kampfbund für Befreiung der Arbeiterklasse. The numerically larger KLB is particularly notable for its class composition: 80% industrial workers, 19% white-collar workers, and 1% petty-bourgeois. Investigation indicated that neither group was able to claim fundamental programmatic differences sufficient to justify separate existence, and that the continued separation results more from old divergences embittered at the time by sharp organizational and personal struggles than from any present principled political divergences. In view of this fact, immediate fusion negotiations were recommended, and it is to be hoped that within a brief time they will be completed, and the fused organization, with a large membership, will be recognized as the official Austrian section.

Organization is very efficient and strict, and suffers only from the lack of full-time professionals. The center has guaranteed the funds necessary, but there must still be solved the problem of the work certificates mentioned in the report on Germany, failing which the full-time comrade risks the danger of being seized and sent to forced labor on

a farm. Like their German comrades, the Austrians are for an independent party which however concentrates at least 30% of its membership and activity on fraction work in the SPO and KPO (Socialist Party and Communist Party); but also are deeply concerned with the problem of legalization, which is complicated not only by the improbability of authorization but also by a particularly grave GPU threat in Vienna yet which offers especially favorable opportunities of attracting mass split-offs from the SPO and the KPO. They envisage the tactic of eventually extruding from the party a legal "front" organization as soon as they have the necessary forces to put into it.

They are well supplied with basic Marxist literature, but badly need documents subsequent to 1938. The most immediate problem in Austria, which is expected on May 25th to begin a food regime of 230 calories daily instead of the present Viennese ration of 1275, is the practical one of saving these cadre elements from starving to death; and emergency measures have already been taken by the center, which must be strongly supported from abroad. For the next period, the most pressing Austrian problems, apart from food, are the successful unification of the two groups, and the drive for legalization, either of the party as such or of a "front" organization representing it. These questions are being studied by both the Austrian comrades themselves and the center, and it is hoped, after another visit in some six weeks' time, to be able to report progress on both.

May 17, 1946.

Report on Belgium, Holland and Scandinavia

Belgium

Since the February 1946 elections, the party has undergone a period of relative stagnation. This has been due in part to the poor showing made — due to the inexperience of its young cadres — in the electoral campaign, as well as to the general apathy of the Belgian working class in the first few months thereafter. As a result, the membership's attention has been turned inward and has resulted in considerable inner friction and tension, particularly in the Charleroi district, where a crisis in the leadership developed. No new elements have been recruited to any appreciable extent and the leading cadres have not been broadened.

In recent weeks, however, the strike wave spreading throughout the country has awakened the workers from their apathy and the party is beginning to feel the healthy impetus of it. Militants in leading capacities in the unions are approaching the party for aid and advice in the unfolding struggles. In the Center region, a well-known Trotskyist leader challenged the main Stalinist functionary for the post of secretary of the miners' union. The reformist Prime Minister, Van Acker, has publicly attacked the Trotskyists, charging them with "fomenting" the current strikes. All these developments clearly mark a break with the past period of apathy among the masses and stagnation for the party. New opportunities face the small and young party.

To fully take advantage of these opportunities, however, the Belgian PCI will have to give greater attention than ever before to the problem of cadres. The leadership

remains too restricted. The direction of the press, of the organizational and trade union activities, is confined to a few individuals. No broad teamwork has as yet been established. No systematic effort is being made to build up and educate a leading staff. Up to the present, the party's work — particularly in its propaganda aspect — has been characterized mainly by very good *individual* performance. What is necessary, if the PCI is to become transformed from a propaganda group into a genuine proletarian party, is the organization of its work as a *collective* effort.

To this end, the International will have to aid the party:

- 1) By organizational help in the form of frequent visits to assist in the work of the central committee;
- 2) By providing a liberal place for promising, young leading comrades in the international cadre school;
- 3) By working out, together with the Belgian leadership, of a plan to broaden the leading staff, to introduce new elements into the direction of the work, to train proletarians for leading positions, to departmentalize the work.

The regular appearance of *Lutte Ouvrière*, the establishment of an open headquarters in Brussels, the beginnings of work among the Flemish population — all these are acquisitions which mark progress and on which further advances can be based. Consolidation of these gains, a tightening up of the party structure, the serious application of the planning principle in the work, can help the party to take advantage of the new opportunities opening up, and to overcome the crisis of stagnation. A long and sustained effort