

What's Happening In Germany

By Wm. Z. Foster

THE great task now being performed by the German working masses is the breaking of fetters placed upon them by the yellow Social-Democratic Party in its 50 years of leadership. Or, to use another figure, they are hacking at the last dike protecting the capitalist system, the pseudo-revolutionary organization of Kautsky, Crispian, Noske, and Ebert. Once this is cut through, and the cutting is now far advanced, a great flood of proletarian revolution will be loosed and the final assault upon German capitalism will begin.

In the past 10 years the Social-Democratic Party and its closely related trade unions have given a whole series of demonstrations of their pro-capitalistic character and utter inability to protect the interests of the working class. They have completely betrayed the masses into the hands of the exploiters and have ruined themselves in the process. The capitalists, having used them to their hearts' content, have now cast them aside like squeezed out lemons.

The Great War Betrayal

Before the war the Social-Democrats of Germany made a great parade of their anti-war spirit. Time after time tremendous demonstrations were held on the streets and in the parks of German cities to protest against war, in which hundreds of thousands of Party members and trade unionists held up their hands or carried banners to show their opposition to the organized slaughter of workers on behalf of imperialistic capitalists. In the various national and international conventions the Social-Democrats followed out the same policy. In high voice they declared that they were willing to use "every method within their power" to prevent war, even though they did skillfully avoid endorsing the proposition of the declaration of an international general strike by the workers simultaneously with the declaration of war by the capitalist governments.

But when the great war crisis came in August, 1914, they turned tail upon all their fine revolutionary protestations. They lined up solidly behind the imperial government. They flatly repudiated the proposition of a general strike on an international scale by the workers and committed their fate along with that of the capitalists of Germany. They acted as recruiting sergeants de luxe for the Kaiser. They swept millions of German workers into the bloody slaughter. They broke the international solidarity of the working

class and made all effective opposition to the war impossible. Nor were their political brethren of the other countries long in following suit. All through the terrific struggle the German Socialists lent themselves to every measure calculated to defend German capitalism from the working class and from the rival capitalists of other countries. For this gigantic work of Judas, their Party and unions were petted and pampered and the leaders flattered with attentions from the capitalists.

Betraying the Revolution

When at last, in November, 1918, the German working class, goaded on to desperation by the defeat in the war, rose up en masse and overthrew the government, took charge of the army and navy and otherwise placed themselves in control of society, the Social-Democratic Party remained on hand to continue its work of betrayal. The Socialist leaders had no faith that the workers, then controlling the country through their Soviets, could organize society anew upon a revolutionary basis. They could not conceive of a social order independent of capitalist control. So they proceeded to sell out the revolution and to turn society back to its erstwhile masters.

This betrayal, the worst that working class history with all its record of false and treasonable leadership can show, was carried out deliberately and systematically. The first great move in the process was when the trade union representatives, under the leadership of Karl Legien, sat down with the industrial representatives, headed by Hugo Stinnes, right in the midst of the November revolution, and drafted a trade union agreement which practically established the terms upon which the revolution was to be killed. In return for permitting the capitalists to rob the German workers, the trade unions were granted the right to organize in all the industries, the establishment of the universal eight hour day, the organization of shop committees, and other industrial and political reforms. For this mess of pottage the Socialists bartered away the German revolution. With their Eberts, Scheidemanns, and Noskes they proceeded to turn back to the capitalists the government, the army, the navy, the industries and everything else of value that the workers had gained in the November revolution. And when the Communists, led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, dared to protest, they were shot down in thousands. For this further treacherous betrayal of the German workers,

the Socialist leaders, political and industrial, were taken to the very bosom of the capitalists. The former flattered themselves that the fortune of their movement was made.

Faced by a most desperate situation, German capitalism could not rest content with the record of treason to working class interests so far made by the Social-Democrats. Though the latter acted as bell-wethers to entice the masses into the world war butchery, it was not enough. Nor was their sell-out of the 1918 revolution sufficient. Further treason was demanded of them. The next great task of the Social-Democrats was to hold the masses inactive while capitalism struggled to gain its footing under the operation of the Versailles treaty, and they went willingly to their destructive work. It mattered not what the complexion of the government was, nor what the make-up of the ruling bloc of parties, the Social-Democrats could always be depended to use their power to the utmost to crush back the rising revolt of the workers and to hold the situation secure for the capitalists. Their power was tremendous. At the Leipzig trade union congress, the leader Leipart declared that no German government could last 24 hours without the sanction of the trade unions. This was true, but, unfortunately, the great power of the Socialist movement was not used in behalf of the workers but in defense of the capitalist system.

Betrayal Upon Betrayal

German capitalism, struggling against French imperialism, demanded that the German workers accept a lower standard of living, which it brought about by a wholesale depreciation of the currency. The Social-Democrats agreed and made no effective resistance. Capitalism then demanded more production and insisted upon the abolition of the eight hour day, the last remaining conquest of the November revolution. Even to this the Social-Democrats consented, although they covered their shame with camouflage. And finally when the workers, driven to desperation, at the close of the Ruhr adventure, rose in revolt, once again the Social-Democrats were on hand to demoralize and defeat them. When the left-Socialists and Communists set up their united front government in Saxony, the right-Social Democrats allowed it to be violently overthrown. Under the pretense of the danger of an attack from reactionaries on the right, they voted to abolish all constitutional guarantees and to make dictators of the Fascists Gessler and Von Seeckt. They applauded and lent their support when the latter suppressed the Communist Party and drove it underground. Their record of treason is complete. They have made every concession of working class interests de-

manded of them in their effort to maintain capitalism upon a working basis.

Bitter, indeed, has been the price paid by the German working masses for their faith and confidence in the Social-Democrats. Conditions in Germany beggar description. Not only have the workers been balked in their efforts to establish a new society, but they have been thrown into the deepest abyss of poverty and despair. Germany, once one of the most prosperous countries in the world, has been reduced to a state of chronic starvation and misery. Industry is completely paralyzed. In November there were 5,000,000 workers totally unemployed and 6,000,000 working part time. For want of proper food and clothing the whole working class is degenerating. Tuberculosis has increased 300% and a wave of suicide is sweeping the country, great numbers considering death as the only exit from their misery.

Unions Wrecked by Leaders

Along with the ruin of the workers' standards of living has gone a complete smashup of their unions. In the revolutionary period following the war, the German trade unions took on a tremendous growth, running up to the grand total of almost 13,000,000 members. Never in the history of the labor movement has the working class of any country developed such an enormous organization. Properly handled, this terrific force could have easily been the means, in cooperation with the political organizations, to overthrow capitalism. But the Social-Democrats never dared to use the full strength of the great movement. They frittered away its power and followed out a constant policy of repression and retreat. The consequence is that the movement is now demoralized and broken up. The treasonable policies of the Social-Democrats, aided by the great industrial depression, have ruined the once splendid movement.

Disgusted and disheartened by the hopeless policies of their leaders, the German workers have been streaming out of the unions in millions. Especially strong has this exodus been since the betrayal of the left-Socialist-Communist government of Saxony. Exact figures are not available to show the precise amount of the defection, but it is estimated that at least 6,000,000 workers have deserted the trade unions in the last five months. In Berlin, out of a former membership of 168,000 in the local Metal Workers' Union, 130,000 have quit—and these are among the most advanced and best disciplined workers in the whole German labor movement. Financially the unions are bankrupt, even as they are bankrupt in leadership. There are no funds on hand for strikes or

insurance. Educational work has been abandoned, and many of the unions have called off their congresses, being unable to finance them. At least five-sixths of all paid trade union officials have been laid off, with the result that the normal business of the organizations has been thrown into a chaotic state. Even the official organ of the German Federation of Trade Unions, the *Korrespondenzblatt*, has been abandoned. The great German trade union movement, once such a promising weapon for the workers in the class struggle, now lies practically in ruins, grace to the yellow, petty bourgeois policies of the Social-Democrats.

Together with the destruction of the industrial movement has gone the break-up of the old political organization and the sinking of its prestige to zero. Formerly, when they were being hard pressed by the revolutionary proletariat, the capitalists lavished favors and honors upon the Social-Democrats. They were glad to accept their proffered policy of class collaboration, as exemplified by the infamous *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*. But now, when the employers, with the active assistance of the Socialist leaders, have manouvered themselves into power and have succeeded in wrecking the workers' organizations and discipline, they are now repudiating the Socialists. The latter have nothing further that the capitalists want. They have sucked the working class dry for the benefit of the exploiters. And as a reward, they and their beloved *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* are being shown the door. The prestige of the old Social-Democracy is irretrievably ruined. It will be smashed as sure as fate in the coming general elections for the Reichstag. The leaders of the organization foresee this. Already Ebert, the arch-traitor, has announced that he will resign after the May elections. And well he may, for his job of treason to the working class is complete. Under the guidance of him and others of his kind, the old German movement during the past ten years has been led from one defeat to another and finally brought to the present tremendous smash-up. Never in the history of the world's working class has there been developed such a complete bankruptcy of a movement as that of the German Social-Democracy.

Building the Movement Anew

As the yellow reformist Social-Democracy has pursued its policy of treason to the real interests of the working class, thereby gradually alienating from itself the support of the best elements amongst the German workers, the Communist movement has gone ahead expanding its organization and steadily winning the leadership of the masses. This growth of the Communist movement at the expense of the old Social-Democratic

organization, has taken place on both the political and industrial fields. So rapid and far-reaching is it that the supremacy of the old organization as the leader of the working class has been practically overthrown. What we are witnessing in Germany is the transference of the movement from a reformist to a revolutionary basis. This fundamental change is of inestimable importance to the world's labor movement. It portends the opening of the final struggle against German capitalism.

Communist Forces Growing

The political reorganization of the German working class is developing under two forms, the building of a new party outside of the Social-Democracy, the Communist Party, and the honeycombing of the old organization from within by the left-Socialists. Ever since the November, 1918, revolution the German Communist Party, tracing its origin back to the old Spartacus Bund, headed by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, has been constantly growing. Its influence amongst the masses is already tremendous and is rapidly increasing. It controls the factory councils in at least 2,000 cities and towns. It was powerful enough to take the lead in the great movement which culminated in the general strike that forced the resignation of the Cuno government. Only the bitter opposition of the old Social-Democratic bureaucracy, political and industrial, prevented it from seizing control of the working masses in a great revolutionary effort to overthrow capitalism during the upheaval following the Ruhr debacle.

Although the most vital phase of the political reorganization of the German workers is that part of the movement crystallizing in the Communist Party, an important phase is the revolt developing inside of the old organization. This is so extensive as to threaten the disruption of the whole movement. The left-Socialists are making tremendous inroads upon the forces formerly dominated by the rights. The core of their movement is the old Independents who split away from the right-wing in 1916 and formed a separate party of their own, but who reaffiliated with them in 1922. Immediately this amalgamation took place, the lefts found themselves in violent conflict with the rights over many questions. The fight has raged constantly ever since, with the lefts making rapid progress towards winning over the masses in the party. At the recent congresses in Saxony, Thuringia, the Rhine province, Westphalia, Pomerania, Silesia, the Ruhr, Berlin, and other places, they overwhelmingly defeated the right-wing. At the present time probably four-fifths of the party rank and file are following their lead.

The Communists look askance at this left movement within the old Social-Democracy. From

bitter experience they have learned its unreliability. The left-Socialists are led by such men as Crispian and Levy. These are typical "word-revolutionists." They indulge in the most violent criticism of the right-wing policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, but, in practice, they have only the same thing to offer. Always in the crisis, when the choice is between compromising with the right or fighting side by side with the left, they always chose the former. They betrayed the workers in the famous March action in 1921, and they broke up the left-Socialist-Communist united front government recently in Saxony when pressure was put upon them from the right, thereby doing incalculable injury to the revolutionary movement. The seizure of the control over the masses in the Social-Democratic Party by the left-Socialist leaders would mean the inauguration of a new period of betrayal. The Communists are warning the workers of this eventuality and are insisting that they affiliate with an organization that has the courage not only to face the real problem but to take the necessary drastic steps to solve it.

The Revolt in the Unions

Side by side with the uprising against the domination of the yellow-Socialists over the workers' political organization, is proceeding a profound revolt against their control of the trade unions. This revolt against Social-Democracy on the industrial field is likewise under the leadership of the Communist Party. Already it is far progressed. Great numbers of local organizations have been won over from the old control. At the recent congresses of the Metal Workers and Textile Workers' Unions, the left-wing demonstrated clearly that the mass of the rank and file stood in support of them and in opposition to the bureaucracy.

The first substantial crystallization of the trade union revolt took place on Nov. 25-26, 1923, in Weimar. At that time 273 delegates gathered to represent 350 local bodies in a general conference to consider ways and means to save the fast disintegrating trade unions. This conference, which promises to have big consequences in the near future, outlined a whole program to rejuvenate the German labor movement. The essence of this was to abandon the fatal Social-Democratic policy of class collaboration, which has led the trade unions to their present debacle, and to adopt a policy of militant class struggle leading straight to an open clash with the bourgeoisie for social rulership. An important part of the program adopted provided for the reorganization of the whole trade union movement upon the basis of industrial unionism. The proposed industrial unions would be one each for the following indus-

tries: metal, mining, communication and transport, building, textile and clothing, food and amusements, printing, leather, wood, chemicals, land and forest, health, and state and municipal workers. The conference demanded a special congress be called of all the trade unions to consider the proposed fundamental changes in policies, structures, and management of the unions. It elected a committee to confer with the heads of the unions to arrange such a congress. This committee was rebuffed by the bureaucrats. Now the revolutionaries in the unions are popularizing the idea of a general congress and will probably call one, on their own responsibility, in the near future. Great numbers of unions, of all shades of political opinion, have expressed their determination to participate. Such a congress would undoubtedly result in a veritable upheaval throughout the whole trade union movement.

The Factional Struggle

The shifting of the basis of the German labor movement from a policy of reformism to one of revolutionary struggle, which is the process now going on, is marked by an exceedingly bitter struggle between the factions. The reactionary right-wing bureaucrats, although they have shown by many years of mismanagement and failure their total inability to lead the workers, are desperately resisting the efforts to deprive them of that leadership. Consequently the whole movement is torn with strife. Against the Communists, whether upon the political or industrial field, the Socialists stop at nothing. They did not hesitate to cooperate with Von Seeckt in driving the Communist Party underground and in confiscating its property, suppressing its newspapers, etc. The Socialists are especially anxious to cripple the Communists politically at this time as the Reichstag elections are coming along and they dread the power of the Communist Party in the electoral struggle. But the disgraceful cooperation with Von Seeckt has failed to accomplish the end they wanted. The Communist Party is more active than ever, even though reduced to the status of an illegal organization. An illustration of this is the fact that in Berlin the illegal Communist papers have a greater circulation than the *Vorwärts*, official organ of the Social-Democratic Party.

On the industrial field, the resistance is no less bitter. The bureaucrats refuse to give up their positions even though the left-wing scores great majorities against them. They are carrying on an expulsion policy, driving hundreds and thousands of militants out of the organizations. Their program is to split up the movement and to save what they can from the rising tide of revolution-

ary revolt. The National Committee of the German Federation of Trade Unions have outlawed all the organizations that participated in the Weimar conference. They intend to fight to the last ditch regardless of the fate of the movement as a whole. Faced by such desperate resistance, the left-wing militants are confronted with the problem of whether they shall continue the struggle inside of the organizations or rally the tremendous number of sympathizing elements into a new movement. So far the determination is to continue the policy of working inside of the unions, the method by which the Communists secured their present strong grip upon the trade union masses. But a continuation and intensification of the resistance of the Social-Democrats to the expressed will of the majority, coupled with their expulsion policy, may easily provoke a great split in the trade union movement. Such a split in fact is almost certain.

Only slightly less ruthless are the Social-Democrats in their opposition against the left-Socialists within their own ranks. They are expelling them in many quarters upon flimsy pretexts and are arbitrarily removing them from office and from editorship of the papers. They are disregarding left-wing majority votes in the various congresses, much the same as they are doing in

the trade unions. The consequence is much bad blood and a tense situation all through the organization. Forces are making everywhere to produce a split. This will probably develop at the coming Social-Democratic Party Convention. It will be far more disastrous to the old organization than was the split in 1916, especially if the Social-Democrats are defeated in the approaching elections to the Reichstag.

At the outbreak of the world war, the German workers were deeply permeated with the thought that they would achieve their emancipation through reformist methods. It has taken a whole series of terrible experiences to drive this notion out of their heads, and to convince them that the only way to the new society is by a policy of revolutionary struggle. But these experiences have been had, and the lessons have been learned, at least by the most intelligent and progressive of the workers. What is going on now is the registering of this new understanding. It is being accomplished with travail and strife, which is threatening to break up much of the organization already achieved. But whatever the cost, the change will and must be made. The German workers are through with the fatal policy of class collaboration. They are now embarking upon the road of revolution.

The Miners Must Fight

By J. W. Johnstone

ALL over the country the miners are voting on the acceptance or rejection of the Jacksonville agreement, which extends the present agreement for three years. Official propaganda is busy predicting peace and plenty for the mine workers if they accept the three-year contract. Lewis is boasting of what a great achievement he has won without a fight; and at the same time the employers seem equally pleased. The truth of the matter is, as every intelligent miner knows, that when Lewis and the employers agree that a settlement is good, it is sure to turn out very bad for the men in the mines. This settlement is no exception. It was agreed upon between Lewis and the coal companies even before the Convention, and the trip to Jacksonville was merely to put up a sham-battle, away from where the rank and file could peek into the room where Lewis and his committee were fraternizing with the employers.

It is already apparent how the referendum will be put across by the officialdom. In addition to their control of the ballot counting, they have tried to prevent all gatherings which might have

discussed the agreement from more than a local viewpoint, for fear of a movement getting under way to defeat the settlement. Thus the Illinois District Convention, scheduled for March 4th, was postponed until late in May. The reason given out was that Frank Farrington has been ill, and unable to prepare for the Convention. The real reason was that postponement helped to put across the Jacksonville double-cross without discussion on a convention floor.

The agreement is all in favor of the coal operators. Not a word has been said about the 6-hour day, although the shortening of the work-day is the most burning issue before the coal miners as a step to relieve unemployment. Division of work, a question that means bread and butter to the miners, played no part in the Jacksonville love-feast. Nationalization of the mines, increase in wages, the shorter day—all things that the miners have been demanding for years—were not even discussed by the officers of the union.

The miners in Illinois are already learning what the three year agreement means. Union mines are to be shut down, production thrown to non-union