

On the Verge of Revolution

By MAX SHACHTMAN

The German workers, led by the Communist Party and Young Communist League of Germany, now stand on the very doorstep of revolution, of overthrowing the capitalist government and instituting the German Soviet republic by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The German Communists are in this advantageous position because of two outstanding facts. The first is the terrible misery of the working class and the impoverishment of the so-called middle, professional and intellectual classes; the second is the correct application of the united front policy by the Communists themselves.

The government of Germany is breaking down and splitting apart like the hulk of a rotten ship. Individual states successfully defy the central government at Berlin. Separatist movements flourish; reaction and fascism snicker at the attempts of the chancellor to hold them in check. The collapse in finances is amazing. From April 1 to August 31 of this year the income (in millions of marks) was 17,498,144 while the expenditures were 1,237,574,896, the income thus covering only one and one-half per cent of the expenditures. The growth of indebtedness during that same period was from 7,204,064,000,000 to 1,196,294,527,000,000 marks. Further: during July the total revenues of the government were 50,000,000 gold marks, obtained thru no less than fifty-six varieties of taxes. And the significant part of this fact is that more than three-quarters of this sum was raised either wholly or in part from the working class!

Now, the Germans are ready to capitulate to the French in the Ruhr, providing not for any alleviation of the distress of the workers, but for a profitable division of the industries between Loucheur of the French Comité des Forges and Stinnes of the big German industrialists. The working class has lost complete faith in the ability of any bourgeois government to help them in their hour of starvation. The only roads that were left open to them were Communism or Fascism.

The latter's hold on the German workers was shown to be weak by the swift and ridiculous failure of Luden-dorff and Hitler to organize a successful uprising against the "regular" governments of either Bavaria or Berlin. The uprising was immediately suppressed, the ringleaders were captured and the movement fizzled out.

The road lies open to the Communist revolution. The tactics of the German Communists have proved to be a complete victory and vindication of the policy of the united front.

The German Communists have got the most possible results and benefits out of the united front in that country. Thru their wise tactics they got the rank and file of the Social-Democratic party to force their leaders into a united front in the provinces (states) of Saxony and Thuringia. In both these states, the Communists and Socialists formed a united government, into the cabinet of which both factions entered. There, the Communists showed the masses of workers that they were the only party which was ready at all times to fight for the elementary needs of the masses. They put the Socialists in the position of either forsaking the interests of the capitalists or those of the workers. The Socialists, true to their traitorous role, chose to leave the workers in the lurch. Part of the Social-Democratic party, angered and disgusted by the tactics of their leaders, formed a left wing. Many more joined the Communist party outright.

The logical conclusion of the united front is the detachment of the masses from the leadership of the right wingers, and adhesion to the Communists. This has been achieved in Germany and the Communists have nothing more to gain from that policy. There is, in fact, much to be lost. Should the Communists again appeal to the treacherous Socialists to join them in the defense of working class interests, it would only serve to continue in the minds of the workers the illusion that the Socialists are capable and willing to go along with the workers. This is not true either of the right or left wing of the Social-Democratic party.

There is but one more step to be taken by the German Communists before they call upon the workers to

overthrow the capitalist government by force of arms and number and form a Soviet state. That step is the counting of noses. No working class revolution can be successfully carried out unless the majority of the workers are on the side of the Communists, the only force which is willing to go thru with and lead the revolution. Practically, the majority of the German workers are today on the side of the Communists. But this must be made a certainty before any call to action is issued. Tens of thousands of workers are streaming into the ranks of the Communists. The largest trade union in the world, the Metal Workers, is under the overwhelming influence of the Communists and would have been in their hands had not the yellow Socialist leaders manoeuvred the last convention delegate allotment to favor themselves. The same with the textile workers, the railway workers and dozens of others. The pauperized white collar slaves, professional men, intellectuals and students are coming over to the Communists. The Communists have but to make sure of a definite majority, and the moment for decisive and final action will have been reached!

But there are breakers ahead. The course of a workers' revolution to Communism is not over a calm lagoon, but over a tumultuous sea, beset by enemy craft, hidden mines, storms from the outside and dissensions from within. The capitalist countries which surround Germany will not look on without taking adverse action, just as they did when the Russian workers shed their chains in 1917. France, England, Italy and the other countries will intervene, whether by sending troops of their own or of their vassals, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Balkan countries, whether by subsidizing counter-revolutionaries in Germany or enforcing a blockade against Soviet Germany.

Yet, these dangers must not be overestimated—nor overlooked. In spite of the cunning agitation being carried on in England for a cordon of battleships to be sent into the North and Baltic seas, the chances of intervention are decreased by the recent gains of the Labor Party and the resultant fall of the pound sterling; and it is a commonly accepted belief that in a month or so MacDonald, leader of the Laborites, will be called upon by King George to form a cabinet. Poland, which would be the first country considered by France as a tool for intervention into a Soviet Germany, is going thru a sharp political, financial and industrial crisis and has quite a bit of its own troubles. Besides, should Poland attempt to stop the sending of material help to Germany from Russia, she will have more on her hands than she bargained for. Czechoslovakia has a huge and powerful Communist party which would take stringent measures against any counter-revolutionary attempt by its government. Bulgaria is seething with an approaching revolt of the workers and peasants which will be even more formidable than the first one because of the prestige and influence which the Communist party is gaining among the workers and particularly among the peasants, in spite of its first defeat.

America comes next in line and concerns us the most. The industrial lords and financiers of this country are already aware of Germany's condition and they are frantically in search of some means of rescuing a brother capitalist nation from the approaching "calamity" of working class rule. Morgan has already proposed a billion dollar loan to the bankrupt German government. Coolidge wisely refused to have the United States government loan the money because the budget bureau's estimate on receipts and expenditures shows that where the balance on hand in the treasury at the end of the fiscal year of 1924 is \$270,939,145, at the end of the fiscal year of 1924 it will be only \$34 more, that is, \$270,939,179; and so he suggests that the loan be swung by private finance. Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, is suggesting the creation of a foreign commercial credit for food supplies for Germany (letter to Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr., of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs) in an effort to give temporary—he admits that it can be only temporary—relief to the German state. Samuel

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Gompers, evil angel of the American Federation of Labor, sensing the impending doom of his German brother bureaucrats, is agitating for the collection of money to be sent to the leaders of the German trade unions for distribution to the workers in an attempt to bribe them with a decent meal and get them to depart from their rising revolutionary feelings. Committees for similar collections are springing up all over the country, the one in Chicago having as its prominent sponsor Charles Piaz, of the war time Emergency Fleet Corporation, and Julius Rosenwald, of the anti-union, slave-driving Sears, Roebuck Co.

Against all these efforts to forestall a working class revolution in Germany, the class-conscious workers of the entire world will launch their counter attack. We will send relief, but working class relief such as we sent to Soviet Russia. We will collect money for the hungering German masses to be distributed thru the International Workers' Relief Committee (American representative, the Friends of Soviet Russia and Workers' Germany), which is already doing wonderful work in feeding masses of German workers. We will agitate in this country for the success of the German workers and against any form of intervention by this government or those that own it, the capitalists and bankers.

The German capitalist state is breaking down. The government and the capitalists are unable to finance the usual margin of imports. The mark is floating around somewhere in the seventh heaven and as a result the distribution of supplies from the farms to the cities has stopped, leaving the workers without food. Unemployment is widespread and the people are unable to buy food even though it were obtainable. Senator La Follette, recently returned from Germany, paints a black picture of the thousands of children and adults dying every day from lack of food. The dairy products, milk, cream and fats, so necessary for the lives of children, are never seen. For the first six months of the year 1922 slaughtered for food, the figures not including those killed on farms—and conditions grow worse hourly.

Unable to stand their inhuman conditions any longer, the German workers, the old and especially the young, are being forced to take the next step in the evolution of human society. They are about to cast capitalism on the dunghill of history and build for themselves a society of human beings. They are moving slowly towards that desirable goal. Led by the tried and trusted leaders of the workers the world over, the communists, they are about to make the first move in that direction, the creation of the Soviet Republic of Germany, the ally and sister of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics!