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Problems of the European Revolution

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When the German repressive apparatus crumbled and the masses of the different European countries plunged violently onto the political arena, the bourgeoisie found itself in a very perilous situation. Its old coercive apparatus no longer existed. Only the embryonic parts remained. The Fascist organizations had been swept away. Those elements who in one way or another, were compromised with Fascism – the generals, the police, high functionaries, industrialists, bankers, politicians – trembled not only for their social position, but for their lives. The old, traditional bourgeois parties had disappeared or were in a state of complete decomposition. Clearly, under these conditions, the initial position of the bourgeoisie had to be a defensive one.

The bourgeoisie held two important trumps in its drive, first to canalize, then to halt and smash the initiative of the masses : The Anglo-American military forces and the opportunist leaders of the proletariat, the Stalinists and Reformists. By employing now one, now the other, the bourgeoisie attempted to win, and temporarily reestablish "order" on the political scene.

The first immediate goal of the bourgeoisie was to "return to tranquility." To achieve this it was necessary that the masses leave the streets and return to their homes. The proclamation of a state of siege does not suffice by itself. It was also necessary that the leaders of the movement, primarily the Stalinist leaders, more and more call on the masses to establish "order." The proofs of this have been complete. Without the leaders of the FTP in France, without the *Front de L'Indepence* in Belgium, without the *Force de L'Interieur* in Holland, without the leaders of the *Comite de Liberation Nationale* in Italy, the bourgeoisie could not possibly have achieved a temporary stability but would have had to face civil war everywhere.

Once this ephemeral stabilization was achieved, the bourgeoisie attempted before all else to reconstruct its own apparatus of repression. Clearly inadequate at first, this apparatus had to be supported at all critical moments by the imperialist armies. Two months after the "liberation," the troops of General Erskine "protected" Pierlot against the "Resistance" in Belgium. Three months after the "liberation," the troops of Scobie tried to crush the ELAS in Greece. Almost six months after the "liberation" of Italy, the Anglo-American military administration built an impassable *cordon sanitaire* between the revolutionary centers of Lombardy and the rest of the country, going so far as to arrest the Vice-President of the Council, Nenni, who was "guilty" of having made a political speech. But while the bourgeoisie actively worked to reconstruct its own State apparatus, the country had to be "governed." The working class offensive had brought to the forefront the leaders of the old workers' parties. These leaders were ready to do everything possible to keep the movement within "reasonable" limits. As for the bourgeoisie, it could impose its will, at the moment, only through the opportunist leaders. The relationship of forces was still too unfavorable for them to govern directly. Moreover they first had to find the men and suitable political organizations to whom they could entrust the power. In order to successfully replace them at a later stage, it was necessary to first discredit the leaders of the left by giving them the responsibility of power at a time when the most unpopular measures had to be taken. That is why, over the heads of the masses, the day after the "liberation," coalition governments were formed everywhere, except in Greece, resting primarily on the representatives of the opportunist parties and the "Resistance," and solidly surrounded by direct representatives of the bourgeoisie.

Were these government "democratic" ? They certainly were in this sense, that their existence depended upon the support of the mass organizations, primarily the worker's organizations. But they were not democratic in the "classical" sense of the word, that is to say, they governed neither through "constitutional" rules nor through the machinery of universal suffrage.

In fact, at the time that the governmental coalitions were constituted on the morrow of the "liberation," the bourgeoisie accorded the masses extraordinarily few "democratic concessions." Elections were delayed for many months in all countries. They took place only after the first revolutionary phase had been "liquidated" : In France after 13 months, in Czechoslovakia after 14 months, in Belgium and Holland after 17, in Italy 24 months after the "liberation" of the Capitol. Nor is it accidental that the only "liberated" countries which had quick elections, Hungary, Austria, and Denmark were those in which the independent activity of the masses was least evident. Insofar as representative organs existed at the beginning, they were either completely (France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Balkan countries) or partially (Holland, Denmark, Norway) appointed administratively from above. Only

Belgium retained its old elected parliament "purged" of Fascists and minus the members who were deported to Germany ; a real "rump" parliament, which was not dissolved until the beginning of 1946. In all countries, the bourgeoisie energetically and successfully opposed the feeble attempts to "democratize" and "purge" the police and army. It must of course also be acknowledged that the opportunist representatives of the masses never demanded any radical measures to carry out the purge. Generally, they limited themselves to demanding more "severity" from the bourgeois tribunals and investigators, and the introduction of "new" Resistance elements into the personnel of the State apparatus. It was just a plain quarrel concerning methods, with both partners having as their aim the strengthening of the bourgeois apparatus. The bourgeoisie preferred, however, to install men of whom it was sure, and from its point of view, it was right.

The paltriness of the "democratic" concessions was especially evident, on the morrow of the "liberation," in the domain of Justice. In almost all the countries, the new governments retained most of the laws and ordinances promulgated under the German occupation. The state of siege implies a severe repression, often of a two-fold character, military and civilian – as in Italy, Belgium, Poland and the Balkan countries. The machinery of Justice, which alone had remained intact in the hands of the ruling classes of most countries retained more than ever its "sacrosanct" character. The device of bourgeois justice *Noli me tangere* (Touch me not), was applied almost everywhere with success. The overwhelming majority of the judges who served under the German occupation, remained in office. This accounted for the scandal in Belgium such as the acquittal of many "economic collaborators," and in France such as the Petain trial. The Fascist leaders were treated with circumspection and brought to trial only after many months. In Norway, Quisling was tried 6 months after "Liberation." In Holland, Mussert after 10 months. In Belgium, Robert Poulet and in France, Pierre Laval, after 12 months. Only the action of the Italian partisans and the pressure of the Soviet bureaucracy in the Balkan countries, produced a slightly more "expeditious" justice ; but this was of a fundamentally different social character.

Do we have to conclude from this that we have witnessed the formation of Bonapartist governments in the majority of European countries ? This would be an erroneous conclusion at this stage, with regards to all countries, even Greece. The essential factor which shows that we are not confronted with Bonapartist governments, is the *absence of a stable element* of power. For it is precisely on such institutions, the army, the police, the State apparatus, that a Bonapartist figure can rest in order to elevate himself above the classes which balance one another. The absence of a stable coercive apparatus, and above all the workers' offensive, are the factors which forced the bourgeoisie to permit the temporary existence of coalition governments with the opportunist leaders.

The nature of the political regimes, which issued from the "liberation" was thus a *compromise*, a result of two forces : the offensive of the masses canalized and broken by the opportunist leaders, and the authoritarian will of the bourgeoisie. The desire of the bourgeoisie for unshared power was determined by the whole economic, political and social situation : The extreme instability of the regime, the necessity for a restoration of capital through super-exploitation of the workers. This has been clearly demonstrated everywhere – in North Africa, in Southern Italy, in Rumania and Hungary, before the entry, of the Red Army, to be exact. It will become evident again when the bourgeoisie attempts to impose its own policies, after the liquidation of the first revolutionary stage.

As we described above, the masses who pushed to the fore the opportunist leaders – Reformists and Stalinists – had no clear consciousness or socialist perspective. They enthusiastically accepted the formulations of their demands in the new strange jargon, semi-democratic, semi-Jacobin, which constituted, as Etienne Fajou elegantly stated, "the humble contribution of the French Communist Party to Marxist-Leninist doctrine." (!) At the basis of this acceptance was a mistake. It was this mistake which is merely the expression of the desertion of the opportunist leaders from the camp of the working class to that of the bourgeoisie, that permitted the Stalinist leaders, in the last analysis, to liquidate the first stage of the revolutionary wave.

Meaning of Anti-Nazi Struggle

When the masses pursued the Nazi regime and its representatives in the occupied countries with an implacable hatred, they expressed thereby their hatred of their super-exploiters who had destroyed their organizations, deported them, and persecuted them with their Gestapo. But the Stalinists and reformists tried to convert this hatred into a hatred for the *Boche*. If they opposed some capitalists, it was not as capitalists but as "collaborators." On the morrow

of the "Liberation" they did their utmost to divert the working class from its real tasks. *This meant saddling the majority of the workers with the tasks formulated by the "Resistance" movements*, that is ... supporting the imperialist war of their own bourgeoisie against Germany. It was on this pretext that they urged the working class in France and Belgium to permit the "integration" of the partisans into the bourgeois army. This "integration" led to their dissolution, pure and simple, and the replacement of "Resistance officers" by reactionary officers, many of whom were compromised with Fascism. The internal logic of this betrayal led the Stalinist leaders, as partners in the campaign against the "anti-patriotic attitude" of the bourgeoisie, not only to subordinate themselves to the State of this same bourgeoisie, and their integration into the imperialist war, but also to submit to actual "collaborationist" Generals.

When the masses spoke of "political democracy," they had in mind a regime opposed entirely to the bourgeois regime, a regime in which an election would designate not only the parliamentary figures, but also the officers, judges, functionaries, and even those in charge of food control. But in the name of this same "democracy," the Stalinists and Reformists imposed on the masses "consultative assemblies" appointed by the bourgeois state, "irremovable" judges who had served under the Nazis, corrupt functionaries completely devoted to the bourgeoisie. Thus, far from counterposing to the "dictatorship of the proletariat" the classical "bourgeois democracy," as did the Social Democracy after the First World War, the opportunist leaders counterposed to the democracy as understood by the masses, (a democracy closely resembling proletarian democracy) an authoritarian and thoroughly rotten "democracy" which surrounded itself with Fascist police, which refused to prepare elections, and which suppressed newspapers, meetings and even workers' organizations.

When the masses spoke of "economic democracy," which in their opinion would complement "political democracy," they gave expression, in a confused but nonetheless real manner, to the fundamental tendencies of the proletariat to fight for the expropriation of the expropriators. For the masses "economic democracy" signified the expropriation of the capitalist who had worked for the Nazi war machine (in other words, the overwhelming majority of the big bourgeoisie), the nationalization of the banks and trusts without payment of generous indemnities to the capitalists, the setting up of equitable rationing under popular organization. For the opportunist leaders, "economic democracy" meant replacing a "bourgeois" minister with a "Communist" minister or a "Socialist" minister at the head of a department of rotten functionaries, the continuation of the black market, the payment of fat indemnities to the "poor" expropriated capitalists, and the formation of travesties of "management committees," whose aim was to increase production by means of super-exploitation of the workers. In accepting the responsibilities of bourgeois power, these specialists in the struggle against "the monied interests" were led logically to appoint bankers as directors of "nationalized" banks, to have the cost prices of the big industries controlled by agents of the industrialists, and to "fight" the trusts, while embracing their most direct representatives.

The "democratic illusions" of the masses which are a very tangible reality – a product of Fascist domination and the weakness of the revolutionary parties – thus, by their nature, do not clash, but on the contrary, fundamentally conform, to the Socialist aspirations of the workers which arise from their social position and experience and to which they can only give a confused expression. To invoke these illusions in order to excuse the abandonment of the revolutionary transitional slogans demonstrates an inability to grasp the *complexity* of the state of mind of the masses. Furthermore, it means excusing in practice the treacherous policies of the opportunist parties and strengthening their hold on the masses. We must repeat emphatically : The "democratic illusions" of the masses do not constitute in any way a brake on revolutionary action nor do they furnish an explanation for the setback of the first stage. The factors responsible were : The voluntary and conscious abandonment of the whole anti-capitalist program by the opportunist leaders ; the cynical manner in which they deceived the masses, counting on the confusion of the workers and their meagre education.

Once the opportunist leaders were included in the top spheres of the governmental apparatus, once the masses left the streets, and the basis was laid for the reconstitution of a new coercive apparatus, the bourgeoisie attempted to realize its next goals : The liquidation of the centers of dual power, and of the independent armed forces of the masses. The rhythm and degree of success of this liquidation varied greatly from country to country. They were, in the last analysis, in inverse proportion to the pressure exerted by the workers.

In general, the bourgeoisie attempted to drive the "opportunist leaders" to complete capitulation. As spokesmen for the bourgeoisie before the masses, these leaders, in turn, attempted, to persuade the masses to voluntarily abandon what they had won. Moreover, the degree of the masses' docility before the opportunist leaders, determined exactly their degree of docility before the bourgeoisie. Other factors, of course, played a role. The interests of the Soviet bureaucracy produced "more leftist" attitudes on the part of the Stalinist leaders in some countries than in others.

Direct provocations on the part of the bourgeoisie or the imperialists also influenced events, as in Greece. But in a general way, the liquidation of the centers of dual power was accomplished smoothly, without armed clashes, wherever the will to struggle had been decisively broken by the opportunist leaders. It was thus that Thorez succeeded in having the patriotic militias dissolved in France and that Togliatti achieved the dissolution of the partisans in Italy. In Belgium, the dissolution of the partisans, prepared and made possible by the combined action of the SP and CP, provoked at the last moment, the "November days" of 1944. In Greece the attempt to disarm the ELAS provoked civil war, despite the capitulation of the Stalinist leaders, who were forced by the masses to momentarily halt their retreat. Thus, the Stalinists hoped to preserve their control of the mass movement.

Even more characteristic is the way in which the opportunist leaders helped the bourgeoisie liquidate workers' attempts at expropriation. Admitting at first the *fait accompli* of the expropriations, the Stalinist and Reformist leaders tried to undermine the workers' committees who controlled and, in fact, managed these factories. This they accomplished by sending in government commissars, who under their disguises, were really "Trojan horses" of the capitalist State introduced into the bastions of a new workers' order. Soon the Stalinists and Reformists discovered that these factories ought to be "given to the nation," that is to say "nationalized." Employing all types of economic, political and military pressure, the Stalinist leaders eliminated workers' control ; then wiped out workers' management ; finally complete control and management of the enterprises was vested again in the bourgeois state. All this was finally consummated by the payment of handsome "compensation" to the former proprietors. In this way the opportunist leaders transformed real expropriations by the workers into financial operations profitable to certain capitalist groups. That is what happened in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and in several regions of Germany. We must observe, however, that this process has not yet been completed everywhere. Thus, workers' control still exists, from many points of view, in Czechoslovakia, and even, in a certain sense, in Italy.

The other independent actions of the masses, principally in the domain of justice and the organization of rationing, were liquidated even more rapidly by the combined forces of imperialism, the native bourgeoisie, and the opportunist leaders. Only in isolated localities did the popular committees and revolutionary tribunals survive for a certain period. On the other hand, it is interesting to observe, that subsequent actions of the masses have often seen a reappearance of these types of organizations.

With the liquidation of the centers of dual power the Reformist and Stalinist leaders accomplished their principal tasks for the bourgeoisie. While they exhorted the workers to remain within the limits of "constitutional legality," the bourgeoisie speeded the reconstruction of its state apparatus and the regroupment of its political forces. Its economic objectives, however, still remained to be achieved. The Reformist leaders ostentatiously offered their good services in this field as well. They, and only they, were capable of imposing on the workers the slogan "Produce first," which when translated into more precise language read : "Work more and earn less." But the bourgeoisie preferred to have its avowed agents impose its policies and remained full of distrust of the Stalinist leaders, who are agents of the Soviet bureaucracy. The bourgeoisie was forced by the objective situation to move rapidly to completely subjugate the workers' movement ; it could no longer tolerate even the meagre vestiges of workers' democracy which existed because of the mass organizations. It understood moreover that it could not impose an outright reactionary government until the relationship of class forces changed decisively in its favor. It therefore began, by feeling the ground, in order to determine to what extent it was still in need of its "working class" agents. Six months after the "liberation" the situation drastically changed in the majority of the countries. In France, the extraordinary growth of the military budget, together with the formation of a secret police in the personal service of de Gaulle, provided a rather stable axis in opposition to the masses. The latter returned to "order" and only rare outbursts of struggle occurred on a purely economic plane. While the bourgeoisie regrouped its forces around de Gaulle, the working class was paralyzed by the policy of "Production first." In Belgium a similar regroupment took place around King Leopold III. We must note, however, that a powerful strike wave brought about a prolongation of the September events, and it was through this that the will of the proletariat to struggle, blocked by the capitulatory policies of the political and trade union leadership, expressed itself. In Italy, the bourgeoisie succeeded in breaking the backbone of the independent organs of the masses. It carried through a rapid political regroupment and concentrated on preserving the monarchy and postponing the election of the Constituent Assembly. In Greece the bourgeoisie once again held the reigns of power in its hands, and, in organized fashion, launched the white terror. It profited from the temporary effects of the workers' defeat of January 1945, and the presence of imperialist troops, in order to prepare fraudulent elections and a plebiscite to reestablish the monarchy.

Coincident with the return "to order" and the temporary check of the mass offensive came an attempt on the part of

the bourgeoisie to "feel the pulse of the potential resistance of the workers," to determine to what degree the relationship of forces had been changed in the capitalists' favor. Generally, these attempts of the bourgeois counter-offensive were checked. Almost everywhere, the resistance of the workers still proved too powerful. The bourgeoisie was forced to continue to govern through its "working class" agents.

In France, General de Gaulle, after having succeeded in combining the "democratic" elections with a personal plebiscite, appeared as the most clearly defined Bonapartist figure on the European political scene. He systematically snubbed the Constituent Assembly, imposed his will on the Parliament, the parties and the country, and attempted to completely check all independent legislative action with his executive power – an essential characteristic of Bonapartism. But the opposition proved too powerful an obstacle to his authoritarian purposes, and he retreated for the time being.

In Belgium, the bourgeoisie seriously attempted, through the Royal Crisis provocation, to impose an authoritarian regime on the working class. Here too, it was forced to retreat for the moment. The Reformists and Stalinists remained in power; the Royal question was postponed. In Italy, the liberal party succeeded in provoking a governmental crisis by opposing Nenni's purge measures, feeble though they were. At the same time a veritable neo-fascist terror was started against the workers' parties. However, the Gasperi government was only slightly to the right of the Parri government. The municipal elections gave more than 50 per cent of the votes to the workers' parties and the question of the monarchy was postponed. The counter-offensive had not realized its principal objectives.

In Austria and Hungary, the bourgeoisie profited by the demoralization which resulted from the pillaging of the Soviet bureaucracy, and won electoral successes. But the pressure of the Kremlin bureaucracy as well as the economic difficulties, forced it to proceed prudently and to tolerate the presence of the opportunist leaders in the government. In Rumania, the bourgeoisie grouped about King Michael, addressed a direct appeal to American imperialism for help against the pressure of the Kremlin bureaucracy. In Poland, Mikolajczik took the offensive all along the line and demanded full power. Finally in Czechoslovakia, the bourgeoisie succeeded in imposing State control over industry and reestablishing the authority of the central government. But it had to continue to tolerate both the factory committees, which still exercise an actual control over production, and "committees of liberation" which disputed the authority of the "official" organs. Only in Greece, the bourgeoisie appeared to have won a political victory, even though a temporary one.

If we seek to establish the course of events from the "liberation" until the present time, we get the following picture: First a brief revolutionary outburst, sporadic and uncoordinated, creating centers of dual power, and prolonged in general by a series of economic actions. Then a progressive checking of the workers' offensive coinciding with the establishment of coalitions resting on the opportunist workers' parties. The attempt of the bourgeoisie to further this setback of the workers' offensive by excluding the opportunist leaders from power and imposing authoritarian governments fails in its turn. The first stage ends, so to speak, in a stalemate.

This stalemate is only apparent, because *potentially*, the working class remains stronger, and capable of again rising in actions of a much wider scope than those of the first stage. Still we must not forget that the bourgeoisie has not only regained its confidence, hope and initiative, but that we have witnessed in a period of months, a complete reversal of relationships, from many points of view. The Stalinists, who appeared as veritable saviors to the bourgeoisie the day after the "liberation," are today violently attacked in the rightist press. One sees a reappearance not only of the outworn formulas: "communist danger" and "the Russian menace." But precisely to the degree that the "communist menace" actually *decreases* – in other words the pressure and initiative of the masses – outrages, violence, and neo-fascist bands reorganized by the bourgeois camp *reappear*. In France, during the governmental crisis following the resignation of de Gaulle, officers of the Leclerc army broke into a socialist meeting and wounded the old leader Bracke. In Belgium, during the Royal crisis, several attempts were made to bomb the Communist Party's headquarters. In Italy a systematic terror was organized against the working class parties, culminating in March, when a mob, described by the bourgeois press as "veterans" set fire, in Naples, to the headquarters of the CP, SP and to the hiring halls.

Once again we have proof of the shallowness of those who claim that the "violence of the bourgeoisie" is "provoked" by the "violence of the proletariat." It is precisely the *absence* of any immediate and decisive action by the proletariat, at a time when it has all the possibilities for such action, which *permits* the bourgeoisie to recover and to reply to the hesitation and cowardice of the opportunist leaders with its own organized terror.

What are the causes of the temporary halt of the workers' offensive? Can we really speak of a "temporary halt," or is it actually a question of an entire "new epoch" during which the political and social life of different European countries

will remain more or less "stabilized." This is what we have to examine to determine our perspectives for the next period. Let us compare the present check of the workers' offensive with the analogous setbacks which were experienced after 1918. After the First World War, the revolutionary movement, with the exception of Germany and Bulgaria, passed its high point in 1921, ebbed with some episodic flows, and reached final stability in 1923. In **The New Stage**, Trotsky described the causes as follows : (1) The workers' defeats which marked the apogee of the revolutionary wave, reenforced the state apparatus and the confidence of the bourgeoisie, and exhausted the revolutionary energies of the proletariat. (2) Above all, the relative economic prosperity following the war, halted by a brief crisis in 1920-21 *at a moment when the revolutionary wave had already begun to ebb*, intensified the ebb and culminated in economic stabilization from 1923 on.

The Economic Picture

We do not have to make a profound study of the present economic situation in Europe to note that, with the exception of Belgium, in no country can the temporary halt of the mass movement be explained by a temporary economic stabilization. Nor can it be explained by a prolonged war prosperity, which existed nowhere on the continent. On the contrary, in every country, the complete stagnation of the economy, constitutes the *principal source* of the bourgeoisie's difficulties, just as the disparity between the rise of prices and freezing of wages constitutes everywhere, at this moment, the most important stimulant to workers' action. If one takes into account that the economic index of production in January 1946 compared to 1938 stands 60 per cent for Holland, 50 per cent for France, 35 per cent for Greece, 30 per cent for Yugoslavia ; that heavy industry in Czechoslovakia is actually working 15 per cent of capacity, and that in Italy there are nearly 4 million unemployed, then one realizes how superficial are the explanations that a slight economic improvement led the workers to abstain temporarily from struggle.

On the other hand, there is no question of a defeat having broken the revolutionary spirit and will of the working class to struggle. It is highly significant, in this connection, that in Greece, the only country where the working class suffered defeat by arms, and where the bourgeoisie won a complete political victory, we see a new wave of powerful economic struggles which seem to be a prelude to a new stage of revolutionary struggle. And this is entirely logical if we consider : (1) that the proletariat has not employed its full strength anywhere in general battle ; (2) that the relation of forces between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie remains fundamentally in the former's favor ; (3) that the bourgeoisie is not yet able to reestablish the country's economy even to a limited degree.

Under these circumstances, any analogy with 1923 can only create confusion. The setback of the mass movement cannot be considered definitive. We have witnessed only the arrest of the first stage, which will be followed by a second. The working class is impelled toward this second stage by the whole objective situation, economic as well as political. Its outbreak will be determined by the workers' capacity to consciously push aside its opportunist leadership, above all the Stalinists.

In the first wave of workers' struggles, the masses entered the conflict full of confidence in the Stalinist leaders, who appeared at their head on the political as well as the trade union field. It was precisely this confidence of the masses in their opportunist leaders which constituted the principal brake on the struggles during the first stage, and the principal reason for their setback. Sent home on the orders of their leaders, the masses must soon have realized that the whole "liberation" signified for them only a stabilization of their misery. The reaction was very complex : First a profound disillusionment with Stalinism ; but also a demoralization which expressed itself in a growing distrust of all workers' parties, a strengthening of syndicalist tendencies, often however outside of the official unions ; and a growing skepticism in the possibilities of struggle. And yet, as always in the history of the workers' movement, when such moods appear in the workers' ranks in the low point of a disastrous economic situation, with an impotent, politically feeble bourgeoisie and the rising pressure of the world working class and colonial peoples – such moods appear not as precursors of prostration, but on the contrary, as precursors of a new and powerful wave of spontaneous struggles.

Here other historical analogies offer themselves : The German situation in 1920-21 (before the March days) and the Spanish situation in 1933-34 (before the February days). In both cases we had a revolutionary wave broken by the opportunist politics of the traditional workers' parties. We had a bourgeois counter-offensive which ran up against the unexpected resistance of the workers, and was unable to achieve its purposes. In both cases the disastrous

economic situation constituted the most powerful stimulant, and impelled the working class to action. The conjunctural defeats in no way incapacitated the workers but rather steeled their spirit for struggle. In both cases we see a new stage of revolutionary struggle of a special type : A stage which begins as a defensive in order to go over to the offensive. The offensive then fails because of the weakness of the revolutionary party, but becomes in its turn a transitional stage to the general revolutionary wave (1923 in Germany, 1936 in Spain). Historical analogies are always more or less limited. But we prefer these two to the one of "relative stabilization" to explain the present European situation.

In the moment of "liberation," the petty bourgeoisie followed in the wake of the proletariat which led the offensive. The Fascist spirit seemed dead. The Soviet Union and the Stalinist parties exercised a powerful attraction. The painful experience of the subjugation of the middle classes to the will of the trusts, a subjugation which in many cases signified their social death, caused most of the petty-bourgeois elements to incline towards acceptance of the socialist transformation of the economy. The "democratic" spirit triumphed in the middle classes in a new and constructive form. In fact, it was from them that the professional confusionists of the workers' movement got their "idea" of "complementing political democracy with economic democracy."

In drawing up the balance sheet of various electoral results spread over a period of a year to a year and a half since the "liberation," we notice fundamental changes in the attitude of the petty bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeois organizations "of the left," which came out of the Resistance movements and bore vague imprints of a "socialist" character, seem very dead. This is the case particularly for the UDE in Belgium, the VDSR and the MURF in France, the *Netherland Peoples Movement* in Holland. The remains of the *Action Party* in Italy are rejoining the ranks of the traditional workers' parties. Coinciding with the regroupment of the bourgeoisie into a political party, is the passage of the middle classes *en masse* to those parties which suddenly appear as the most powerful parties in their respective countries, (although the process is by no means an even one). Thus, the PSC in Belgium, the MRP in France, the Christian Democratic Party in Italy, the Peasant Party in Poland, the populist party in Bavaria and Austria, the party of small proprietors in Hungary, the populist party in Greece.

What in general characterizes these hybrid political formations, which we may call the "parties of the right-center" ? These parties constitute the half-way stations of the petty bourgeoisie. They reflect admirably the transitory stage of European political life. In certain of their ideological traits and through their "left" representatives, these parties attempt to continue the "Resistance," "progressive," and "democratic" spirit. But in other ideological traits (anti-communism, clerical conservatism etc.) and through their right wing, they find their natural continuity in genuine neo-fascist organizations : The extreme Leopoldists in Belgium, the extreme right wing of the PRL in France, the *Uomo Qualunque* movement in Italy, the "Chi" movement in Greece, the *Armja Krajowa* in Poland. The turn of the petty bourgeoisie to the right has been influenced, of course, by many conjunctural factors. In the countries occupied by the Red Army, Stalinism has discredited itself by its support of the pillaging of the Kremlin bureaucracy. In Italy, the same factors are reunited which gave birth to fascism 27 years ago. In Belgium the Royal question and the freezing of bank holdings played a big role. But in general, the shift of the petty bourgeoisie from the left-center to the right-center reflected the transference of the political initiative from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, by their repudiation, at least officially, of authoritarian methods of government ; by their ideological ties, which are not yet broken, with the Resistance movements, by their stress on "democracy" often counterposed to the "antidemocratic" measures of the workers' leaders – by all this, these parties demonstrate, at the same time, that the shift of the petty bourgeoisie to the camp of the bourgeoisie is not yet definitive. A new proletarian offensive will create a new regroupment of the middle classes. The parties of the right-center will disintegrate. From their left, numerous layers will again approach the working class. On their right, fascist organizations will be reconstituted and strengthened. From the moment that it acquires its own repressive apparatus again, and the economic and social conditions threaten the existence of its system, the big bourgeoisie will answer every action of the proletarian masses with merely larger and larger financial contributions to the neo-fascist "leaders." Their sole difficulty here will be one of choice ; for if we study attentively the political situation in the various European countries, we find already, on the political scene, not one, but several figures who are the potential Doriots, Mussolinis and Degrelles of tomorrow. In this sense the fascist danger already exists on the entire continent.

The calm before the storm – that is what characterizes the present moment in most European countries. The proletariat silently keeps an account of all the affronts and provocations of the class enemy. It takes note of the way it was cheated out of all it thought it gained by the "liberation." It understands that the policy of "Production first" has served only to produce additional profits for the trusts, while its standard of living is "frozen" at the lowest level. It

keeps an account of all the capitulations of its Stalinist "leaders" and does not consider itself under obligation to the trade union leaders who have done nothing but flee from the struggle. It is exhausted from the years of war and privation. It desires peace and tranquility and hesitates long before rising. However, explosive material accumulates everywhere. And the frail barriers which the enfeebled State power of the bourgeoisie and the diminished powers of persuasion of the opportunist leaders raise up against it will blow up like rotten kegs, once the fire flares up anywhere. In every country, the proletariat awaits a signal of hope and attack. It awaits proof that taking up the battle again will be worth the effort. A new revolutionary wave, in any country, will have immeasurable repercussions on the whole continent.

But more than that. When the first revolutionary wave began in Europe, in 1943-44, only the old world seemed once again to be in the advance of the world working class. The Far and Middle East appeared to be firmly under the domination of Japanese and British imperialism. American and British imperialism, resting in their own countries on an apparently firm "National Unity," were the principal mainstays of the tottering capitalisms of the "liberated" countries of Europe.

Now the situation has fundamentally changed. The Far East is the scene of uprisings of several colonial peoples ; and the collapse of the British Indian Empire is in visible preparation. Even in England, the radicalization of the masses, expressed at the present time, in the attempt to form a workers' government, will be powerfully stimulated by the economic and political crisis resulting from the Indian revolution. In the US the workers offensive has reached unprecedented proportions, and the progressive lowering of the morale of the armed forces renders their use as a large-scale counter-revolutionary force improbable, if not impossible. Instead of constituting the sole seat of the world revolution, the old world is only one among others, and not even one where the flames have leaped highest. But the exhilarating influence upon Europe's workers of the revolutionary struggles of other continents is not the only factor which makes the present situation more favorable to a general overturn than was the first stage. We can note much progress also from the subjective point of view. While it has not broken with Stalinism, the European proletariat has become much more suspicious of it, and more prepared to bypass it in action. While the revolutionary organizations are still exceedingly small, they have nevertheless the opportunity to strengthen themselves, increase their ties with the masses, and accumulate a precious experience. The disparity between their forces and their mission remains enormous. However, a new wave of mass struggles, a progressive disintegration of the large workers' parties, will radically transform the rate of growth of the revolutionary groups and change their arithmetical progression to one of geometric progression. Their international coherence will prove a factor of historic importance in the light of the perspective of a new revolutionary wave on a continental scale. Those who have crossed the European revolution off the calendar, because it did not conform to their own agenda, will learn, once again, the superiority of the Marxist method of analysis over petty-bourgeois impressionism.

Of course, no one can predict quick victories for the proletariat. Taking into account the weakness of the revolutionary parties, it is more than probable that the second stage of the revolutionary wave in Europe, while surpassing the first wave in scope and results, will also stop half-way. New conflicts, new retreats and new attacks will result. This sequence will prove even more favorable for the growth of the sections of the Fourth International. It *is* impossible to believe that this growth will be insufficient at the moment when all the most favorable conditions are again united for the overthrow of the decadent bourgeoisie, as in Germany in 1923. On this growth of the Fourth International hangs the future of humanity.

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