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# The First Phase of the European Revolution

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With remarkable conformity, the Trotskyist organizations throughout the world, despite their enforced wartime isolation, have elaborated a common political line predicated on a world revolutionary upsurge as the consequence and end product of World War II. They based this on a number of deductions derived from the internal laws of development of decaying capitalism in economic, political, social and politico-psychological fields. These conceptions simultaneously constituted the fundamental planks of the program of the Fourth International and the very reason for its existence. To juxtapose them with events as the latter have actually unfolded becomes a major task for the whole movement.

## Why Was the War Bound to Terminate in a Revolutionary Upsurge ?

The line of reasoning followed by us may be summarized in essence as follows : In the long run the imperialist war aggravates all the contradictions of the capitalist regime. An ever increasing burden of privations becomes imposed upon the masses. At the same time the potential of revolutionary energy of the proletariat becomes renewed. Finally, in a number of countries, the war leads to the weakening or even complete collapse of the respective state apparatus, enabling the working class to press the class struggle to its most advanced stage, namely : that of dual power. With a complete breakdown of the imperialist equilibrium, the combination of all these factors provides favorable conditions for extending the revolutionary struggles on a European and even world scale.

Translated into concrete terms, in relation to the concrete European conditions, this means : The burden of war would become more and more unbearable to the masses on the old Continent. Their will to struggle, which dropped to its lowest level in 1939-40, would begin to rise and manifest itself at an ever swifter tempo.

The old state apparatus in various countries fell apart ignominiously in the course of the German conquest. What remained of them proved physically incapable of restraining the movement of the masses. Between the European proletariat and the revolutionary upsurge there arose the steel dam of the Nazi military and police machine. The weakening and crumbling of this machine would determine the outbreak of a series of insurrectionary revolutionary movements. The unleashing of the German revolution would unify these movements, invest them with a European amplitude, coordinate them generally, and give the organs of dual power, arising in the process, the opportunity to become strong enough to resist the pressure of English and American imperialism over a quite long period of time. In its turn this period would be especially favorable for a rapid growth of the sections of the Fourth International.

## Were These Perspectives Confirmed ?

A brief survey of events that unfolded in Europe since the latter part of 1943, already permits us by itself to determine to what extent these perspectives have been confirmed and wherein they have proved inaccurate. No one will deny that European economy has been completely exhausted as a consequence of the terrible war waste and havoc. One

year following the termination of the war, the output of Europe's heavy industry is below one-half of its pre-war production. Nor will any one deny that the intolerable living conditions imposed by the war upon the masses have led to a renewal of their fighting potential. A study of the graphs of strike-struggles (which often begin at zero, as is the case in most countries that were already fascist by 1939) shows a sudden rise in all countries of Europe as early as 1943. By comparison with the pre-war period, this curve rises sharply and in 1945 attains a level surpassing everywhere, except in France, the last upsurge of 1936. (Moreover, this strike curve rises upwards on the world scale, as does the entire revolutionary upsurge. But we do not intend to dwell here on this aspect of the problem.)

Numerous mass actions took place under full-scale Nazi occupation, while the Gestapo apparatus was still powerful. These actions include four general strikes in Greece and Italy, the movement against the (labor) draft in France, the conquest of Yugoslavia by the victorious partisans, a series of general strikes and the establishment of factory councils at Liege, Belgium. All of these are in marked contrast with the general passivity of the proletariat in 1939-40, and demonstrate at the same time that actually involved here is a *revolutionary* upsurge and not merely a series of economic movements similar to those that convulsed the victor countries after World War I. As we shall presently show, in many countries these events likewise terminated in the creation of organs of dual power, even if only in embryonic forms.

Consequently, the difference between the perspectives of the Fourth International and the revolutionary actions of the masses must be sought for in their *lack of scope, lack of simultaneity* and *lack of coordination*. We have witnessed a revolutionary wave on a European scale but at a much slower tempo and much more irregular than we expected. And, most important of all, the absence of the German revolution appears to render questionable one of our central predictions.

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## Dual Power During First Stage

Dual power reached its ripest expression in Italy. Workers' councils were created and even a workers' and soldiers' council was set up at Milan as early as the initial phase of the Italian revolution, July 1943. Next, "inner committees" were constituted in the factories, and innumerable "National Liberation Committees" sprang up in cities and villages from one end of the peninsula to the other. During the winter of 1943-44, the arming of the Italian partisans assumed mass proportions. Finally, toward the end of April 1945, a genuine insurrection occurred which ended in the seizure of all factories in Northern Italy by workers' committees, the establishment of complete control of social life by the partisans, the organization of revolutionary tribunals of justice and the exercise of all political functions by "National Liberation Committees" (cf. London **Economist**, May-June 1945). The bourgeois **Times** correspondent, who grasped the character of these events better than did certain disillusioned radicals, called this a "social revolution."

In Czechoslovakia much the same things took place during the revolution of May 1945. Likewise present here were the four principal elements of dual power, namely : workers' councils in control of factories, workers' militia, committees of liberation functioning as sovereign political organs, and people's tribunals. A bourgeois journalist (London **Economist**), who describes the situation quite graphically, adds to this picture the cogent observation that the "central government" wielded actually no power at all and that the workers had themselves expropriated all the factories.

In France, the uprising in Paris brought about a fairly extensive arming of the masses, along with occupations of a number of factories and the establishment of committees in most of them. The same phenomena occurred in several southern French cities (Lyons, Limoges, Toulouse, Perigueux), marked by this special feature, that in a number of places some of the organs among these elements of dual power, continued, despite their embryonic character, to function for many months.

In Greece the partisan movement, directed politically by the EAM, was in control of large areas even before the "liberation." "Dual power" existed here in the literal sense of the term. Alongside the "official" Greek Government at Cairo with its military formations and the vestiges of its executive and judiciary powers, in Greece proper there functioned committees, militias and people's tribunals elected by the masses. During the open civil war in December 1944 even these parallel (bourgeois) bodies were suppressed in many quarters of Athens and other zones under EAM control, and all the power in certain spheres (above all in the judiciary sphere) passed into the hands of popular elected bodies.

In Yugoslavia the partisan movement assumed from the outset characteristics similar to the movement of the Greek partisans ; and there, too, the transition was made to the building of popular organs of power in all spheres. Subsequently, however, it was completely channelized by the CP and its auxiliary organizations. We lack sufficient information to determine to what extent the spontaneous initiative of the masses has continued to play a role since that time.

In Poland the approach of the Red Army unleashed a revolutionary movement among the workers as well as the peasants. The former occupied the factories, the latter seized the land. Moreover, the workers established complete control over production.

Finally, in Belgium, dual power, properly speaking, existed only in the military sphere, where it led to the events of November 1944. But the factory committees at Liege represented potential organs of power on the day after the "liberation," and the initiative evinced by the masses in arresting "collaborationists" ("*inciviques*") in May-June 1945 was likewise a manifestation of independent mass intervention into spheres, which under "normal" conditions, are reserved exclusively for initiative and action by organs of the bourgeois state.

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## Was Dual Power Actually Involved ?

The *proletarian* character of the first revolutionary wave in Europe has been contested by various sides. It has been above all denied that the organs wherein it found its expression were genuine organs of dual power. Both the rightist as well as the leftist wings of the International have identified these new political formations as new forms of old organisms, i.e., organisms of the bourgeois state ! Some have even gone so far as to identify the military organizations created spontaneously in the course of the struggle of the masses with ... the imperialist armies ! Finally, others for whom an analysis of events is simply a pretext for denouncing the "diabolical hand" of Stalin and of "Russian imperialism," have been able to discern in these manifestations of the revolutionary struggle of the masses only "machinations of Quisling organizations in the service of Russian imperialism," as opposed to "Quisling organizations in the service of Anglo-American imperialism."

The arguments which aim to contest the *revolutionary* and *proletarian* character of the organs of power created in struggle during the Hitlerite occupation, may be summed up as follows :

1) The "committees" in their various forms were not elected bodies but were set up on a proportional basis according to the strength of the different political parties. 2) These "committees" included many petty-bourgeois elements and even bourgeois politicians. 3) These "committees" and these "militias" were subsidized by imperialism and/or by the Soviet bureaucracy.

These three arguments are familiar to us. They comprise the arguments employed by the ultra-lefts during the Spanish revolution in order to deny the civil-war character of events and to view them solely as a "preparatory stage

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of the imperialist war." But these same arguments, at least the first two, are also to be found among those used by the POUM (a centrist Spanish party), in its attempts to polemize against Trotsky's criticisms.

"There is no fundamental difference," the POUM leaders said, "between the Central Committee of the Militias and the Catalan Generalidad, because the Central Committee of the Militias is not 'elected,' either ; and it likewise contains petty-bourgeois elements."

Further,

Trotsky attempts to compare the relations between the Soviets and the Provisional Government in Russia during the Revolution with the relations between the Central Committee of the Militias and the Generalidad in Catalonia in 1936. This is another instance of Trotsky's insistence on applying Russian schemes everywhere.

As a matter of fact, all these theories, those of the centrists and sectarians alike, prove that these gentlemen are congenitally incapable of seeing the rain even when the rain-drops are dropping on their noses.

The true character of the organs of power issuing from the first revolutionary wave is clearly apparent from their *origin* and from their position *vis-à-vis* the organs of the bourgeois state. Each of them arose as the result of *independent initiative* by the working class and the petty-bourgeois masses, or, at all events, of their vanguard. *Among the ranks*, the spontaneous character was everywhere clearly revealed in elections of leaders, not only in factory committees but also in the basic military formations, and "liberation committees" in villages, neighborhoods, etc.

The fact that the leading bodies were frequently *appointed* and set up in accordance with the proportional strength of the various political parties simply reflects the *conciliatorist character* of the *leadership* of the movement : of the Stalinist and reformist leadership whose desire was to restrict, if not liquidate altogether, dual power as such. This is hardly a novelty. Throughout the entire past history of revolutionary struggles, these same tendencies have pursued the self-same policy and arrived at the self-same results. Re-read the chapter in Trotsky's **History of the Russian Revolution** dealing with the first Executive Committee of the Soviets in Petrograd and you will find in it an account of the intrusion of many adventuristic and petty-bourgeois elements ; you will learn, too, that it *was not elected, properly speaking*, by lower Soviets, either. A study of the composition of the first Council of Workers and Soldiers in Berlin shows that genuine fascists succeeded in worming their way into it (for example, the case of Colin Ross). A study of the known mechanisms of the transfer of power in the Russian Revolution, in the German and Spanish revolutions, discloses exactly the same forms of reaction as became manifest during the initial phase of the Italian, Greek and Czechoslovak revolutions. Compare the "profound" idea of the German centrist Hilferding "to integrate the Soviets into the Weimar Constitution" with the identical tactic of the Stalinists in France, Belgium, Italy and Greece to "integrate the formations of partisans into the official Army," and you will once again encounter the same political physiognomy in conditions that are fundamentally identical.

Finally, the true dual power character of the popular organs issuing from the first revolutionary wave, emerges clearly from the attitude of Anglo-American imperialism, the Soviet bureaucracy and the "national" bourgeoisie toward them. No sooner had the German occupation troops disappeared from the scene, no sooner did the traditional bourgeois organs of power make their appearance, leaning heavily upon the English and American imperialist armies, than the bourgeoisie unleashed a persistent and implacable struggle to liquidate the organs of power created by the masses. If involved were really "rival bourgeois" organs, why did it prove impossible to "integrate" them into the mechanism of "bourgeois order" ? Can other instances be cited where the rivalry between different "bourgeois clans" provoked a civil war such as took place in Greece ? The type of reasoning that begins by denying the duality of power and hence the social revolutionary character of the events we have witnessed in Europe from July 1943 to July 1945, ends up in practice by abandoning class criteria in analyzing the historical process. The fury with which the bourgeoisie attacked and annihilated the organs of power arising from the "resistance movement," employing in accordance with the

existing relationship of forces, the most diverse methods – from "provisional" recognition up to open white terror – cannot be explained, in the last analysis, except by the *class character* of these organs, embryos of the proletarian organs of power, embryonic Soviets and workers' militias !

# The Peculiarities of the First Revolutionary Wave

Nevertheless, a comparison of 1943-45 events with those of 1917-19 discloses instantly important differences between the first revolutionary wave following World War I and the first revolutionary wave following World War II.

In the first place, during 1917-19 the revolutionary movement properly speaking was limited to Eastern and Central Europe. In Western Europe, what took place was the sharpening of the economic struggles of the proletariat. But this time, bourgeois power tottered throughout Europe.

In 1917-19 the revolutionary upsurge *started* with the most important explosions in the largest revolutionary centers : there was the victory of the Russian Revolution, there were the successive ups and downs of the German revolution in 1918-23. This time Russia completely defaulted as an arena of revolutionary struggles, while the German proletariat has been able to play only a secondary role.

Following World War I, the graph of revolutionary struggle was characterized at the outset by a brief and precipitate rise, which attained its peak by the spring of 1919, and was followed by a sharp and continuous decline, interrupted only by a new and very brief upswing in 1923.

This time the graph of revolutionary struggle begins with a slow and hesitant rise, interrupted by many oscillations or partial retreats, but *its general tendency is upwards*. The importance of this fact is obvious. While the post-World-War-I movement suffered at the very beginning from the burden of initial defeats, above all in Germany, the present movement, on the contrary, suffers from the fact that at no time as yet have the full forces of the proletariat been thrown into battle. The defeats, therefore, are transient and relative in character, do not jeopardize the subsequent development of events, and can be neutralized by the passage of the struggle to a more advanced stage.

This important difference does not derive solely from the limited potential of the first wave (the absence of the Russian and the German proletariat from the struggle). It derives equally and especially from the whole past of the labor movement. The proletariat that rushed headlong into revolutionary struggle in 1918 had no previous experience with decisive defeats. Temporarily demoralized by the reformist betrayal of 1914, the proletariat found the necessary initial conditions for unleashing mass struggles in the development of the objective situation (the weakening of the bourgeois state apparatus, the worsening of living conditions, etc.). It engaged in these struggles with a well-defined *socialist consciousness* and with a lack of revolutionary experience (which weighed heavily upon the unfolding revolutionary upsurge of 1918-23).

Its struggles in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, the Baltic countries and Italy assumed the form of struggles for *socialism* ; the attraction of the Russian Revolution played a preeminent role in these struggles. The reformist leaders themselves had to take the socialist enthusiasm of the masses into account. The internal "discussion" in the labor movement, although it terminated in overt anti-communist terror, took on the following form : How shall we build socialism ? Is it desirable to begin immediately ? A superficial reading of the newspapers of that day suffices to show that this method of thinking imbued the masses themselves.

On the other hand, the lack of experience in revolutionary struggles led to a continual groping for methods of action on the part of the masses and on the part of the Communist leaders who had assimilated the "lessons of October" very inadequately. It was only on rare occasions and toward the end of painful breaking-points, that the mass movement was able to assume the most mature forms of dual power.

After the second imperialist world war, the European proletariat had behind it a long succession of crushing defeats. The younger generations no longer received a socialist education. The older generations were poisoned with a paralyzing skepticism regarding revolutionary possibilities. The mass organizations, Stalinist and reformist, who rode the crest of the first revolutionary wave, did everything in their power to eradicate the vestiges of socialist consciousness, to extinguish the sparks of resolute revolutionary will. The word "socialism" found its way only rarely into the press, discussions and even speeches. The masses became only rarely and in a completely disconnected way *conscious* of the objectively anti-capitalist and revolutionary character of their struggle.

## The Proletariat Fills Up "The Void"

But while the masses found themselves on a lower level of *consciousness* as compared with 1918, they had, on the other hand, attained to a higher level of *experience*. "The thread, cut by the war and by fascism, is taken up by the masses at the point where they had dropped it." The most advanced forms of past struggles no longer constitute the end, but become the starting point for mass actions in the present period. This became most obviously apparent in Italy where the struggle started with the formation of Soviets and Soldiers' Councils, and with arming – forms which the struggle was unable to assume or which it assumed only sporadically in the course of four years' revolutionary battles after the first world war. This is likewise demonstrated by the fact that under the pressure of objective conditions there disappeared as if by enchantment the profound inability to comprehend the problem of arming, which constituted in the past one of the principle deterrents to the revolutionary struggle in Western Europe.

The absence of the subjective factor, the extreme weakness of the revolutionary party, of course, enabled the Stalinist and reformist leaders to deepen this contradiction between the ripe experience of the workers and their debilitated socialist consciousness. To the aspirations of the masses, who were transgressing the framework of bourgeois society, they opposed "limited" objectives which they themselves ascribed to the struggle ("the liberation of the territory," "the rebirth of the country," the "democratization" of the regime). In this way the Stalinist and reformist leaders tried to bring the masses back to more "suitable" forms of struggle ... or to persuade them that it was not necessary to struggle at all !

Nevertheless, and this is the *principal* factor, this malignant influence of the counter-revolutionary leadership of the proletariat could operate basically, could prove decisive and widespread only to the extent that the *events* themselves came to their aid. After analyzing the *forms* of the struggle of the masses, their origin and social character, we return here to our starting point, namely : *their lack of scope and coordination*. It is precisely this factor that permitted, in the last analysis, the ensemble of counter-revolutionary interventions (by Anglo-American imperialism, the "national" bourgeoisie, the Soviet bureaucracy, the treacherous "workers" leadership) to attain a high degree of effectiveness. To understand how this operated, we must seek the *starting* point of the mass uprisings.

This starting point is easy to determine. In practice it coincides almost everywhere with the *interval* between the departure (or breakdown) of the German military machine and the arrival and firm intrenchment of the Anglo-American military machine. His interval leaves a "void" in the administration of "men and things" – a void which the masses show a tendency to fill up automatically by *constituting their own organs*.

The spread of several days between the German collapse in Czechoslovakia and Italy and the establishment of a

central bourgeois power, permitted the constitution of a more solid system of dual power. In Paris a spread of 24 hours permitted the creation of a nucleus of dual power. And it is by no means accidental that the autonomous organs of the masses were maintained longest in those regions that the Allied army "by-passed" during operations in August-September 1944. That is how Churchill understood the problem when he declared on December 8, 1944 :

I drew his (President Roosevelt's) attention to the fact that if there were a long interval between the departure of the German authorities from the city (Athens) and the time that an organized government could be established it was very likely that the EAM and the *extremist* communists would try to take possession of the city ...

Involved here is not an accidental peculiarity of events, but one of the most fundamental tendencies inherent in decaying capitalist society. With implacable logic, the proletariat, *independently of its state of consciousness*, is compelled by objective conditions to try anew to take the leadership of society into its own hands. The entire history of the last 30 years is only the outcome of these desperate attempts of the working class to rise to the level of its historic mission, attempts rendered desperate because they were doomed to failure in the absence of an adequate revolutionary leadership. And what could be more natural than that this fundamental tendency should first manifest itself under especially favorable conditions, where a well-established bourgeois power is absent ?

On the other hand, it was unavoidable for each of these interludes to occur at *different* times in different countries. It was easy to foresee that in the complete absence of a well-established international proletarian leadership, and in the absence of even serious national leaderships, the uprisings would be isolated and fragmentary in character, which would, in turn, facilitate the tasks of the counter-revolution in its various guises. To raise the movement to a general level, and on a European scale, it was necessary to have a generalizing element. We understood long before the events that this generalizing factor could be provided only by the German revolution. It is therefore the absence of the German revolution that constitutes the *basic* cause for the sporadic way in which dual power made its appearance in Europe and for its being suppressed far more rapidly than we had expected.

## The Legend of the Complete Passivity of the German Proletariat

The absence of the German revolution was the principal reason why the situation developed differently from our perspectives. It therefore merits a careful analysis in the light of *facts* and not of schemas set up beforehand by this or that tendency in the International.

It is first of all necessary to pose the problem *exactly*. It is astonishing, to say the least, that all those who have taken a position on this question admittedly take as their starting point an opinion *which does not stand up when confronted by facts*. It is the opinion that the German proletariat "passively" stood by while the Nazi apparatus collapsed. This is not exactly true. At present it is impossible for us to draw up the final balance sheet of the partial actions of the proletariat. But what we do know suffices to destroy once and for all the legend of the total "prostration" of the German proletariat, supposedly "drained" of its "class-consciousness" by the 12 years of fascist dictatorship. We know that in the Russian zone of Germany *"and elsewhere,"* as the London **Economist** reports (March 23, 1946), *"the collapse of Nazism was followed by demonstrations of a socially revolutionary spirit. Workers seized factories and settled accounts with Nazi or Nazified management. The same sort of thing happened in the Ruhr."*

We know that with the approach of the Red Army, the agricultural workers of Mecklenburg seized the land they had wanted for centuries. We know that at the same time the workers of Saxony hoisted red flags over their factories and elected genuine Soviets. (One of our Belgian Trotskyists took part in one of the factory committees created when the Russian troops entered Dresden. Included on this committee were several Left Communists opposed to Stalinism.)



We know that local civil wars broke out almost everywhere, between the SS on one side and the Volksturm or the Wehrmacht on the other. We know that as early as 1943, an attempted uprising was crushed at Hamburg. And finally, and most important of all, we know that the moment the Nazi apparatus collapsed, the imperialist armies and the army of the Soviet bureaucracy installed a far more stable and no less harsh police apparatus in all the sections of the country. Under these conditions, it would be truly shameful to label the courageous attitude of the German proletariat as "universal passivity."

On the other hand, it is obvious that there did not take place more or less *general* actions. To explain this fact we are offered two categories of argumentation. The absence of the German revolution may be deduced from *subjective* factors, i.e., from the complete absence of workers' organizations, the consequences of 12 years of fascist dictatorship, the "decomposition of the class-consciousness" of the proletariat. On the other hand, one can find at the bottom of the absence of this revolution essentially *objective* factors. We shall first take up the second category of argumentation, in order subsequently to prove that the first category rests on erroneous arguments.

## The Objective Causes For the Absence of the German Revolution

Among the many *objective premises* for the unleashing of a revolutionary upsurge at the end of the imperialist war are : the aggravation of social contradictions (concentration of the proletariat, decline in its share of the distribution of national income, etc.), increasing misery and devastation as a direct consequence of the war itself, decomposition of "morale" in the rear and at the front, decomposition of the military, police and state apparatus, etc. These premises do not arise suddenly, but are the product of a whole process, influenced by many factors. The reciprocal action of these factors results in an ever *increasing* discontent, decomposing morale *more and more*, and *increasingly* rousing the masses against the war and against the regime. The masses grope for the adversary ; their hatred finds expression in innumerable incidents ; they test out the power of resistance of the apparatus, and through a series of molecular experiences pass to the concentration of all their energy upon the immediate task – the overthrow of the regime and the termination of the war.

Those who have followed, month after month, the state of mind of the German army and the German proletariat are able to state that such processes unfolded in exactly this way in Germany, starting with the defeat at Stalingrad and up to the Italian revolution and the Allied landing in Normandy. The rapid spread of revolutionary ideas, the eager acceptance of these ideas by soldiers and workers, the appearance of an illegal German workers' press, the rapid multiplying of little protest movements, and strikes in the factories (*greves perlée*), mainly over the factory eating places – these characterize precisely the state of mind which by and large corresponds to that which reigned in Russia in 1916 and Italy in 1942.

To undergo transformation into a more extensive movement, these multiple isolated movements of discontent require the presence of a supplementary factor : the weakening of the repressive apparatus. *But this weakening did not occur at the moment when the conditions were most favorable for a general revolutionary movement.* The great majority of the German army, on the European coasts and in the interior of the continent, remained undefeated. The bombings failed to disorganize appreciably administrative life. The Nazi Party retained the levers of control firmly in its hands. The Gestapo remained at the apex of its power, even though overwhelmed by the extension of its "work."

But from this moment on, that is to say, from the moment when the state of mind of the masses become "ripest" for revolutionary action, a moment which we may fix towards the latter part of 1943, the process became abruptly transformed into its opposite. All the factors which had up to this breaking-point *favoured* the ripening of the objective premises of the revolution henceforth began to produce their *decomposition* instead. Up to a certain point the bombings tended to awaken the masses from their apathy, to tear them out of the narrow circle of personal

preoccupations, to provide a living demonstration of the *political* character which is at the bottom of their troubles, and drive home the need of applying a political solution to them. But from the breaking-point on, the bombings tended to demoralize the masses, tear them away from social life, plunge them into the most abject physical and psychological degradation, dissolve them into hysterical multitudes of isolated individuals, struggling solely to survive. The same thing applies to the tension produced by the military developments and defeats. Having given rise up to a certain point to discontent and to a will to react, the same factors produced apathy and inert stupefaction after the turning point. We could provide similar sketches for the other factors which at the beginning serve to accelerate the process of disintegration of National Unity, only to end in disintegrating not only the imperialist state but the social life and cohesion of the masses.

An added factor of great importance is the objective effect of the prolongation of the war upon Germany. There was the massive destruction of the urban centers ; the dispersion of the working population (at the time of capitulation most German cities did not contain 50 percent or even 30 percent of their normal population, thus the population of Berlin dropped to 1½ or 2 million inhabitants, Frankfurt to a little more than 250,000, etc.) ; there was the mobilization of the great majority of the working class into the army, the heterogeneous composition of the labor force in the plants (majority of foreigners, prisoners of war, women and petty-bourgeois elements).

Finally, to all this must be added the disastrous effects of imperialist and Stalinist propaganda which, while it did not "cement" the German working population to Hitler, as has been falsely claimed, did, however, actually place the German workers "between the frying pan and the fire" and left them with no perspectives save "terror without end."

To sum up, at the moment when most of the objective premises for the outbreak of a revolutionary movement had been produced by the course of the war, there remained one factor missing : the principal factor – the weakening of the repressive apparatus. When this weakening did actually occur, the other premises were no longer in process of ripening but in a state of decomposition, likewise a consequence of the development of the war. *The concentration of all the objective premises of a revolutionary movement attaining full maturity at a given moment* – a concentration which alone is capable of producing explosions, even in the *complete absence* of the subjective factor (the revolutionary party) – was therefore lacking in Germany.

## Italy and Germany : An Instructive Parallel

Do we mean to say that the specific *subjective* conditions – the product of 12 years of Nazi terror – were only of secondary importance ? Not at all. The subjective factor is not so decisive for the outbreak of the revolutionary movement (that is to say, the first phase of the revolution), as it is for the second phase, the conquest of power. But it can play an enormous role, that of accelerator and generalizer. It may replace a number of missing objective premises and enable the first insurrectionary movement to triumph even at a time when all the other premises are not at hand. There can be no doubt that the existence of a powerful revolutionary party in Germany would have, moreover, welded the German and foreign workers into a single bloc and would by this fact have permitted a more rapid and extensive development of the numerous strikes which broke out in almost all the big plants over the food issue. Even more important would have been the existence of a revolutionary organization, even a relatively small one, among the soldiers. Such an organization would have been able to draw the mass of the Wehrmacht into an insurrectionary movement at the moment of the July 2 attempted *coup d'état*. The subjective factor could have implanted a new vitality into the objective premises, and would have made a revolutionary movement possible, even after the breaking-point referred to above.

On the other hand, it is absolutely wrong to deduce the absence of the German revolution principally from the absence of the subjective factor. In fact, a comparison with Italy shows that even 20 years of Fascist rule, amid an even greater "disappearance" of "socialist traditions" together with absence of revolutionary organizations and even

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of illegal anti-fascist organizations on a national scale, do not suffice to prevent the outbreak of the revolutionary movement given the objective premises.

It is true that there are a number of differences between Germany and Italy, which are not without importance for understanding the different course of events in these two countries. The Nazi regime succeeded in completely destroying every oppositional center, even among the bourgeoisie. Mussolini's regime did not attain the same effectiveness of terror. The Nazi regime tightly controlled the entire military, police and administrative apparatus of the state. In Italy, on the other hand, the top cadres of the Army, the nobility, closely attached to the House of Savoy, and the top clergy, close to the Vatican, escaped to some degree from fascist control. In Germany the Nazi organizations by far surpassed in many fields the Italian organization (in the field of provisioning, education, propaganda, etc.) But all these are differences of a *quantitative* character and do not alter the essentially *identical* character of the situation in both countries : without any organizations of their own, the masses had to confront a regime of terror ! These differences might perhaps explain why the *coup d'etat* engineered by Badoglio succeeded while that of Stauffenberg collapsed. But it nowise explains why the Italian masses rose *months before Mussolini's fall* in gigantic strikes, while the German strike movement never passed the stage of isolated and sporadic actions.

The absence of the German revolution resulting from the progressive dissipation of its objective premises ; the sporadic, disparate and primitive character of the revolutionary movements in other European countries ; and despite this, the creation in many centers of nuclei of dual power, which were, however, liquidated quickly because of their isolated character – these are the characteristics of the first stage of the European revolution.

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