

# Some Lessons from Germany

by Herbert Zam

An event of tremendous importance to the entire working class, and especially to the Communists has just taken place in Germany. The Social-democratic Party, the backbone of international Social-democracy, has split and a new party, the Socialist Workers Party (Sozialistische Arbeiter Partei), has been organized. This new party has the support of thousands of workers who, having become convinced that Social-democratic party is betraying the interests of the working class, are groping for a new path. Naturally, the new party does not represent the solution which these workers are seeking, for only a complete break with reformism in all its forms and the acceptance of the basic principles of Communism will enable them to conduct a consistent struggle against the capitalist system.

It is, of course, no accident that such a development takes place at the present time. The burdens under which the German workers, and the workers in other countries as well,

are suffering as a result of the crisis are terrific. But finance imperialism is maintaining a firm grip and is making no concessions. The most elementary rights of the workers are being constantly threatened by the onward sweep of Fascism. Social-democracy, instead of fighting against the shifting of the burdens of the crisis to the backs of the workers, has supported every move of the imperialists in this direction. Social-democracy is supporting all the "emergency decrees" of the present government; it is maintaining the Bruening government in power and is thereby consolidating the virtual dictatorship of Hindenburg-Bruening; instead of mobilizing the masses in the struggle against Fascism, it is capitulating to it, preparing the ground for it. In indignation at this base betrayal, thousands of workers are deserting the Social-democrats.

The present is therefore a moment ripe for the advance of Communism. Why has the Communist Party been

unable to capitalize on the discontent of the Social-democratic masses? Why has it been unable to win any substantial sections to Communism? The answer lies in the ultra-left, sectarian line of the Communist Party, and, in particular, in its false attitude to the Social-democratic Party and to the Social-democratic workers.

Let us recall Lenin's words to the German Communists on a very similar development a little more than ten years ago on the question of the Independent Socialist Party, (I.S.P.) Pointing out how the Bolsheviki were able, thru correct policies, to win away the majority of the workers from Menshevism, Lenin then continues:

"Why in Germany did a wholly similar movement of the workers from right to left first strengthen, not the Communists, but the intermediate party of the 'Independents,' altho this party never had any political ideas of its own but only wavered between the Scheidemanns and the Communists? Obviously one of the causes was the erroneous tactics of the German Communists, who must fearlessly and honestly admit this mistake and learn to correct it. This mistake consisted in rejecting participation in the reactionary, bourgeois parliament and in the reactionary trade unions; it consisted in the multitudinous manifestations of that 'left' infantile sickness which has now cropped out on the surface, and the quicker it did so the better, for the more beneficial to the organism will be the cures (see Lenin's *Leftism*, chapter VIII).

We see here that with the exception of the remark on parliamentarism, this criticism by Lenin applies to the official Communist policy today in toto. In fact, other and equally serious errors are to be noted in place of the anti-parliamentarism of that time. We see the rejection of the united front, which Lenin proposed as one of the main weapons to win the workers away from traitorous Social-democracy. We see the insane, dangerous conception of "social-fascism," which leads to the abandonment of all efforts to win the workers following the Socialists. We see flirtations with sections of the Fascist movement and the capitulation to theories of "national liberation" in order to endeavor to win Fascist followers. Instead of seeking for recruits in the camp of Social-democracy, the Communist Party is seeking recruits in the camp of the Fascists. The result is that while a Scheringer is recruited to the Party, thousands of workers are ignored and the danger is created where these workers might be led back to the camp of Social-democracy.

The events in Germany must be a warning to Communists the world over. If the Communist movement is to make progress on an international scale, it will have to adopt such tactics as will enable it to win the millions of workers who follow Social-democracy. In many countries, as, for example, Austria, Belgium, Holland, the Communist Party is insignificantly small compared with Social-democracy. The problem of building the Communist Party is intimately bound up with the problem of breaking large sections of workers away from Social-democracy. That further splits in the Social-Democratic Parties are possible has been demonstrated by the recent German events.

Social-democracy still controls almost everywhere the most important workers organizations, the trade unions, the cooperatives, the free-thinkers and sports movements, the fraternal and cultural societies. The struggle against Social-democracy must be conducted especially inside these organizations. Under no circumstances will anything be gained by leaving them, for then Social-democracy will have undisputed sway in them. Social-democracy still influences directly thousands of workers who grew up since the war and who are not personally acquainted with the betrayals of that period or to whom they are no longer sharp issues. The Communists must expose Social-democracy not only on the basis of these historical betrayals but on the basis of the day-to-day betrayals by Social-democracy of the day-to-day interests of the workers. This can be done especially by the proper utilization of the tactics of the united front, which have been abandoned by the Communist Parties and by the leadership of the Communist International.

The surest way to avoid in other countries a repetition of the German events is to apply the correct tactics in the mass activities of the Communist Parties, which must be accompanied by a re-unification of the Communist movement and the re-establishment of internal Party democracy. It is hardly likely that workers with experience in political activity will join a Party from which they might be expelled the next day because of some minor or major differences on tactics; or in which they would not have the right to express their opinions freely and to discuss problems. The disunity in the Communist movement and the absence of internal Party democracy have acted as a barrier between leftward moving Socialist workers and the Communist Party. This barrier must be removed if the Party is to advance in the future.

## About The Theory Of "Cultural Compulsives"

# MARXISM AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

by Will Herberg

(Continued from last issue)

### Class-Bias and Truth

6. Another shortcoming in Calverton's analysis is his failure to make any distinction in regard to objective validity as between the class-bias ("cultural compulsive") of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. Both are pictured too much as having essentially the same truth-distorting effect upon science, altho in different directions.

It is true, science without a class-bias (or, class-outlook) is impossible in a class society. But not every class-bias has a truth-distorting effect. On the contrary, it seems to me that a certain class-bias is even necessary, under present conditions, for the attainment of truth in social science.

The truth-distorting effect of a class-bias is not something inherent in it but depends entirely upon its direction. It is natural that the ideologists of a conservative or reactionary class (such as the bourgeoisie today) should not be able to look truth in the face, since the truth is very unwelcome, threatening the ultimate annihilation of all they hold most sacred and inviolable. But it is equally natural, on the other hand, that the ideologists of an historically progressive class (such as the proletariat today) should not only be able, but even willing and anxious to look truth in the face, since the truth is only too welcome and promises the ultimate fulfilment of their most cherished class aspirations. Not only that. It also seems that the condition for being able to look truth in the face (in a class society) is the class-bias of the progressive class—since the futility of trying to be "above classes" is clear enough. The conclusion is: the class-bias of the bourgeoisie is a truth-distorting bias; the class-bias of the proletariat is a truth-inducing bias. Of course this does not mean that Marxists (who proceed from the class-bias of the proletariat) never make mistakes or are not very often misled by prejudice. They make these mistakes, they fall victim to prejudice, not only because of a necessarily incomplete knowledge of the facts and data of science but because they have mastered the class-outlook of the proletariat—Marxism—only incompletely. That is why Marxists continued to prize uncritically every single conclusion of Morgan even tho newly discovered facts pointed in other directions. A full grasp of Marxism would have led inevitably to an appreciation of the necessary historical limitations of classical anthropology and of its inevitable errors. Such an appreciation is making itself felt today precisely

because of the revival of Marxism since the Russian Revolution. It is furthermore clear that dialectical materialism, with its emphasis upon the concrete, upon the thing-in-itself, is naturally suspicious of any theory of unilateral evolution and leans pronouncedly in the direction of a multilateral hypothesis.

Further evidence of the close inner relation between the class-bias of the proletariat and the demands of objective truth is provided from another direction. It is certainly not without significance that those bourgeois scientists (especially in the field of social science) who are most fearless in the search for truth are precisely the most critical of current bourgeois prejudices and the most sympathetic to the outlook and aspirations of the proletariat.

7. Therefore, it seems to me that the weak points, or shortcomings, of Calverton's essay are the following:

- its failure to bring out sufficiently clearly the objective-historical difference in level between classical bourgeois and apologetic bourgeois science,
- its failure to point to a third (coming) stage in social science, the proletarian stage.
- its failure to make any distinction as to effect upon objective truth between the class-bias of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat.

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## The New Report on Lynching

Altho nothing very new is to be found in the report of the Southern Committee on the Study of Lynching, made public on November 9 by George Fort Milton, chairman of the commission and editor of the *Chattanooga News*, it is nevertheless very important, since it reiterates many already well known conclusions about lynching—a matter of significance, considering that the report emanated from 100% white Southern sources.

The report positively declares that several of the twenty-one Negroes lynched last year were definitely innocent of all crimes alleged against them, while many more were "probably" innocent. The charges against many of the Negroes lynched in the United States in recent years were "deliberately framed"; one was lynched for offending a political opponent, another to prevent him from appearing as a witness against a white man; another for demanding wages, etc. In the forty-one years ending 1929, only 23% of the Negroes lynched were even charged with offenses against white women, that hoary fraud under the cloak of which so many black men have been murdered. Nor has there been any "hesitation" on the part of courts to convict Negroes (it is characteristic of the brazen audacity of the white supremacy apologists, that such "hesitation" could even be alleged); on the contrary, the white courts of the South are ready, anxious and over-anxious to convict Negroes!

The lynch murders in the South are committed in full publicity, with a shameless disregard for so-called "law and order." Altho lynch mob leaders can be identified without difficulty, the report relates, "grand jury indictments are seldom brought against them." Indeed, most lynchings are committed not only with the connivance of the local authorities but with their direct participation and assistance.

The report treats the causes of lynching in a very shallow manner; the real roots of the matter it cannot touch. The two most important of its conclusions are: the rate of lynchings per 10,000 of Negro population is highest in sparsely settled areas, and that "there is a direct relation between lack of education, low economic status and prevalence of lynching." These conclusions are merely

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now shouted so loudly from the house-tops. God has placed in every country the means for plentiful existence for all He send into it. Let government place those means in the hands of the people, and there will be no poverty, no starvation. Shortly, they must go and do what Russia is doing.

put maintained its downward course. A slight seasonal improvement is looked for in the automobile industry in the coming weeks. There are no new decisive developments in the trend toward hoarding or the export of gold. The economic situation in France is becoming more serious daily. All in all, the general index has fallen somewhat lower this week.