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France

Regeneration of the Workers' Movement

From its first beginnings the resistance movement in France has been led by the workers. But the movement as a whole has confined itself in the main to the ideological and political struggle against Hitler and the Vichyites. This decision was a wise one. For during the period of collapse in France, Hitler and Vichy were so powerful that it would have been futile for the resistance movement to set itself political aims other than those immediately connected with the struggle against its chief enemies.

But times have changed. As the prospects of a fascist victory recede the problem becomes more urgent: What is to happen to France after the collapse of Hitler and Vichy? It is a matter of course that with regard to the solution of this problem there should be considerable differences of opinion between the various groups which to-day constitute the resistance movement. It is amazing, however, to what an extent the non-party underground journals have accepted socialist plans for reconstruction. This is the case, for instance, with papers like "Libération", "Combat", "Le Franc-Tireur". And it shows that the influence of the socialists and trade unionists extends beyond the circle of the socialist parties and trade unions. But at the same time it is understandable - and the publications of the underground French press make this point quite clear - that socialist and trade unionists should have special aims which they discuss amongst themselves, and which are not necessarily those of the French resistance movement. In view of the strong moral and political position held by the French workers within the resistance movement it is especially to be welcomed that socialists and trade unionists have already stated their own aims, for this increases the chance of these aims being accepted later on by the great majority in the resistance movement.

To illustrate this development we publish to-day, among other things, two contributions from French underground journals - the "Populaire" and the "M.O.F." **[1]**, the journal of the Mouvement Ouvrier Français (French Workers Movement). Below we give the editorial of the first issue of the "M.O.F." which was published at the beginning of June.

M.O.F.

"M.O.F.": This title indicates the character and sphere of action of this journal.

M.O.F. is of necessity an instrument of resistance. It is opposed to the invader. It is opposed to the Vichy Quislings **[2]**. To explain this is scarcely more necessary than to state it.

The deportation of hundreds of thousands of French workers in Germany, the starvation wages, the plundering of our food reserves have convinced those French

workers who were not already opposed to the Nazi ideology that collaboration with the invader was out of the question.

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The policy of hypocritical social paternalism, the system of spying and informing, the subservience of Vichy to the German demands - all this is repugnant to the French character. And being often directed especially against the working class it ensures that the French workers, in spite of the many appeals by the treacherous Marshal, will never be "His Friends".

The M.O.F. being formed by trade unionists who have remained loyal to their traditions cannot take any other attitude.

It will thus continue resistance within the framework of the existing movements in which our friends must be more active than ever.

But the M.O.F. will make its own contribution to the common fight against the invader and his servitors.

And by its efforts to-day it will prepare for the morrow.

The simple formula: 'I am in opposition' is vague and ambiguous and therefore bound to bring disappointment.

Liberated France will be faced with a number of problems which already existed before the war and will have to be solved. Four years of persecution, humiliation and misery have intensified these problems and make their solution more urgent.

For the French workers must make it clear to-day how these problems are to be solved. They must also insist upon their right to complete freedom of action for the future.

By the fact that in the same resistance movement people whose social interests conflict are working in close co-operation means that friction is considerably reduced. But this working contact cannot completely eliminate the conflicts which arise from the social system.

The French worker - yesterday, to-day and to-morrow - resents being forced into the condition of a proletarian, even by an employer who is fighting in the resistance movement.

He cannot permit people to take office who will serve the interests of big business and social reaction.

Even if these people are to-day against the invader.

No Peyroutons **[3]**, that goes without saying. But no 'Ersatz' Peyroutons either.

A united and active working class can and must take the greatest possible advantage of the social upheaval which will come at the end of this war.

No one made it a condition of the French employers' participation in the resistance movement that they should repeat their action of August 4th and solemnly renounce all their privileges.

Nor should anyone expect the working class to sacrifice their aims.

Our intention is clear:

Wholehearted and unreserved collaboration in the resistance movement. There to express the will of the French workers and to safeguard their complete liberty of action for the future.

Resistance to the invader must be united and free from egoism.

For loyal co-operation absolute frankness is essential."

The Socialist Party in France plans for national and international reconstruction

The June issue of the "Populaire" (the party organ of the French socialist party) makes suggestions for a common programme for the French resistance movements. They state that almost the whole of French public opinion favours a provisional government under the leadership of de Gaulle. On the morrow of

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liberation he is the only man who is capable of forming a government representing French unity, until the people are able to give free expression to their wishes. Such a government should be composed of men from the pre-war political movements chosen on account of their integrity, together with new men who have come into the forefront in the course of the day to day struggle in the resistance movements. This would provide a guarantee that the old principles would be respected and at the same time it would ensure the rejuvenation of political life which the people are demanding. There should also be set up a provisional advisory council (assemblée provisoire de contrôle) which might consist of delegates from the resistance organisations, delegates from the parties who have taken part in the underground struggle, members of parliament who did not vote in favour of the Vichy government on the 10th July, 1940, and delegates from the departments, as soon as these are liberated by the Allied armies.

They declare that the Socialist party consider it absolutely essential that France should be represented at all the international negotiations which will decide the fate of Europe and the world. The task of the provisional government will be to restore the sovereignty of the nation and to continue with the work of revolutionary reform and cleansing of public life started by the resistance movements. Although the government will be provisional it will have to decide on a definite policy to deal with the problems in both the economic and international sphere, and its decisions will be binding for the future. In the social and economic sphere it would be dangerous to postpone taking decisions until the election of the constituent assembly has taken place. The big industrial monopolies, all public services, the banks, and the insurance companies, must immediately be taken over by the government. In many cases this process will be facilitated by the transference to the French government of all the property requisitioned by the enemy during the occupation. French economy must be freed from the bureaucratic and repressive totalitarianism introduced by the Vichy regime. The organisation of economic life must be for the public interest and not to produce profits for the capitalists. This common effort to solve as quickly as possible the immense problems involved in the reconstruction of industrial, agricultural, and commercial life, can only be carried out if the workers are allowed to participate directly in the decisions which are taken. The class struggle will not be eliminated by hypocritical paternalism or by an all-pervasive state dominance. The recurrence of the pre-war economic crises

must be prevented by a strict limitation of profits, by organising production according to the needs of the people as a whole, by guaranteeing an equitable distribution of wealth through the development of public works and a policy of price control.

In the international sphere these political, social, and economic measures must be adapted to conform to the needs of an international community which should be a United States of the World. This United States of the World must have real economic and political power, and must be in fact a super-national authority.

With regard to the German problem the Socialist party completely reject the idea of a vindictive peace directed against the German people who have been oppressed by the Nazis. But on the other hand they realise that Nazism, for whose development the Western powers bear a large share of responsibility, has produced a generation of young monsters who must be reeducated. Germany must feel the consequences of the victory of the democracies and must be made to realise that aggression does not pay. The German

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military machine must be destroyed, support must be given to the peoples' revolution. The power of the heavy industries must be taken away, the estates of the Junkers must be socialised, but all this must be effected without dividing up Germany, whose unity cannot be denied. A federal regime in Germany must be set up to prevent the domination of the Prussian spirit and there must be a control of their political institutions and of their public education. These reforms can only be carried out in a world where Socialist influence is predominant and with the close and friendly cooperation of German democrats. The destruction of the German military machine must be the first step towards the general reduction of armaments. The necessary restrictions of German sovereignty are likely to cause difficulties which can only be overcome if the other countries are also ready to accept far-reaching limitations to their own sovereignty.

The idea of dividing up Europe amongst two or three big powers must be rejected. All the nations, even the most powerful, must give up a large part of their sovereignty. So far as the U.S.S.R. is concerned, the socialist party considers that no international community is possible without her collaboration on a basis of equality, loyalty and mutual confidence. They welcome the dissolution of the Comintern and regard it as being the first step towards the achievement of such collaboration. The socialist party would like to see the reconstitution of the Labour and Socialist International.

The "Populaire" also publishes a resolution adopted unanimously by the recently constituted National Council of Resistance. This resolution expresses the hope that in the very near future France will be able to play her part in the war of liberation. For the achievement of this aim, France must at the earliest possible moment have a strong and united government to organise and direct affairs. The Council considers that the creation of a mere executive committee, especially if it had a dual leadership would not prove adequate to deal with the exigencies of the war or to fulfil the great tasks it would be called upon to carry out. The only possible solution for France is the creation of a real government which though provisional in character would repudiate once and for all, officially and by its actions, the Vichy dictatorship, its supporters, its symbols and everything connected with it. France desires that this government should be entrusted to General de Gaulle, and expresses the earnest hope that General Giraud will assume the command of the renascent French Army.

"Les informations Sociales" [4]

This is the title of a new underground journal published by comrades prominent in the French resistance movement. Its sub-title indicates its character as an "Information Bulletin for active trade unionists and the future cadres of Liberated France" (Bulletin d'Information a l'usage des Militants syndicalistes et des futurs cadres sociaux de la France Liberée). This new bulletin contains reports on the most important events inside the working class movement and publicises facts on social progress in the Anglo-Saxon countries. It discusses plan for post-war reconstruction and reports on the resistance movement in France. The first issue was published at the end of July 1943. From this journal we are reproducing two contributions. Impressions of a Swiss traveller in France and a note on Bertin, the director of René Belin's paper "Au Travail".

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"A Swiss traveller who gave his impressions of his journey in France stated first that the France of the official newspapers, posters, propaganda centres, labour exchanges, etc. is an artificial France. France is quite different from what one might gather from the Vichy propaganda. Everywhere the Swiss traveller saw a 'general fatigue, apathy ... an amorphous and soulless routine' and this is not France either.

The real France is underground France:

'The France of Vichy-propaganda is non-existent; yet one feels that East of our frontier something solid and great exists which overwhelms you by its mysterious power and its prodigious reality: The France which a careful observer is compelled to acknowledge.

When one has the opportunity of speaking to any of these young people who in their thousands - despite official denials - face hunger, cold and isolation in the Alps, in the Dauphine and the Cevennes to escape deportation to Germany; when one holds in one's hands those underground papers, "Combat", "Libération", "Franc-Tireur", etc. ... when one gets in touch with some of those - 10% of the population - who without identity cards, without ration books risk their lives to help those who shoulder the main burden; when one listens, at the peril of losing one's liberty, in a cellar or an attic with a French family to the jammed and forbidden broadcasts one gets a new vision of eternal France.

Without being biased in any way, but merely by using one's eyes, one discovers that there is now a new and real France; the France which has lived through the ages and has once more found itself.

And one leaves France with two pictures in one's mind: the one is a ruined country which is disintegrating, the other: a new nation which thunders its discontent and its hopes."

No Chance For Renegades

The following information is published by the "Press Bulletin of Fighting France" in France. It should interest Bertin:

"A number of trade unionists who have been collaborationists now realise that they have barked up the wrong tree and are now trying to save their skins. Bertin, for instance, having done his best to divide the workers and deliver them into slavery, has now ceased all his propaganda for forced labour and is even trying to bring about the

release of trade unionists and socialists earlier denounced by him and his friends.

Bertin and people of his like are wasting their time. It is too late! "

Germany

Political Warfare

This description of the mood of the German people which we have just received corroborates information already received from other quarters; but in addition it puts its finger on some typical weaknesses of Allied propaganda and political warfare. The gravity of these weaknesses and their effect on the length of the war and the building up of peace has unfortunately not yet been realised:

Still all in the Same Boat

"The propaganda slogan which the Nazis have constantly used for years that all Germans are in the same boat has a tremendous effect. It means that the Allies regard all Germans, without distinction, as criminals and will treat them accordingly.

` Enslavement of German workers'; ` Deportation of German Children to foreign countries'; ` Complete carving up of Germany into small

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and insignificant sections'; ` Enormous reparations'; ` Permanent occupation of Germany and government by foreign Gauleiters'; these slogans express the fears of the German people. These fears diminish the willingness of the German people to welcome Germany's defeat and to help to bring it about."

B.B.C.

Our friends have sent us a detailed criticism of the B.B.C. broadcasts to Germany; this criticism is mainly concerned with the B.B.C.'s German Workers' Programme:

"We regret very much that the broadcasts for workers have become so short. We would often welcome more concrete instructions for the workers in Germany; for the resistance work of the German workers. These instructions should be given in a similar way to those already given to the foreign workers. Of course, an intelligent German worker can apply the instructions given to foreign workers to his own case - this is probably what the B.B.C. expects. But it does not fully satisfy the German workers who desire to be recognised as partners in the resistance movement.

Information about social and political progress in the Allied countries is extremely important. To put parts or the whole of the Beveridge [5] plan into practice would be an excellent weapon against Nazi propaganda. So would, of course, progress in the treatment of Indians and the Negroes in the U.S.A. It is desirable, too, that plans for the peace settlement should be broadcast in as much detail as possible; German workers are most interested to know to what extent the Allies will allow all nations with peaceloving governments to participate in peaceful reconstruction. The resolution on Germany which the Labour Party Conference passed was grist to Goebbels' mills. The same applies to the statement of the Wardlaw Milne [6] group on the treatment of Germany. Such statements were a great disappointment and a setback to the efforts of all opponents of the Nazis.

What we find excellent are the short addresses of workers from British factories in which they explain why they are working so hard for the war industry although they are in favour of international cooperation and are friends of the German people."

Opposition

"The calling up of skilled workers has decreased output. Another reason for the drop in production is the physical and moral condition of the workers. They are badly fed, overworked and nervous, and on the whole fed-up and not interested in their work. - They work slower than they used to and accidents are comparatively frequent. They are certainly caused in part by sabotage. - During the black-out and air-raids alarms anti-Nazi-slogans are chalked on the walls and leaflets are distributed. It was reported that Goebbels was publicly shouted down during his recent visit to the Ruhr district.

But although antagonism to the regime has been the general attitude of the masses for some time the pressure of the Gestapo has remained most effective. Unless the army becomes demoralised - which presupposes it has suffered serious defeats - a revolutionary development is not to be expected. But once disintegration sets in, the floodgates will be opened. And then the foreign workers will prove to be what the Nazis always feared. Up to now, however, we have to admit that in spite of their will to resist they are an important factor in Germany's industrial and agricultural production. This should make those people think twice who still believe that all the nations oppressed by the Nazis are bravely resisting whilst only the German people are subservient.

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We have had a number of reports which tell of special efforts on the part of German workers to bring about a good and comradely relationship between themselves and foreign workers and prisoners of war."

Manpower

"Everywhere there is shortage of labour. The fact that wounded soldiers are hastily patched up and sent back to the front is one of the most striking indications of this. The systematic employment of young people for auxiliary war services has increased considerably."

Consumption Goods

"People who have not lost their property through bomb damage are almost unable to buy any consumption goods, - unless they do so on the Black Market which is still flourishing. The main reason for this is, of course, the shortage of labour and raw materials. An additional reason, however, is the fact that very often consumption goods are produced for 'export only'; in this way foreign currency is procured for financing the war. - This shortage of goods is one of the reasons why many people in districts which have not been affected by the air-raids refuse to take people from bombed areas."

Peace Feelers

"We are in a position to check up the facts about peace offensives which lately have increased in numbers. Some American business men have been approached by leading German industrialists, officers and Party-members with a view to finding out the

possibilities of a negotiated peace. What is even more interesting is the fact that a leading left-wing politician of the Weimar-Republic now living in a neutral country has been recently visited by some high German army officers for the same purpose. He refused to talk to them and showed them the door."

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - *„M.O.F.“, Journal des „Mouvement Ouvrier Français“, französische Untergrundzeitung.*
- 2 - *Vidkun Quisling (1887-1945), norwegischer Offizier und Politiker, Kriegsminister (1931-1933), Gründung der norwegischen faschistischen Partei „Nasjonal Samling“ (1933), Chef einer vom deutschen Reichkommissar J. Terboven abhängigen nationalen Regierung (1942-1945), Verurteilung wegen Hochverrats zum Tode (1945). Der Name Quisling wurde zum Synonym für einen Kollaborateur.*
- 3 - *Marcel Peyrouton (1887-1983), französischer Politiker, Generalresident von Tunesien (1933-1936, 1940), Generalresident von Marokko (1936), Innenminister (1940-1941), Generalgouverneur von Algerien (1943).*
- 4 - *„Les Informations Sociales. Bulletin d'Information a l'usage des Militants syndicalistes et des futurs cadres sociaux de la France Liberée“, eine der anfangs vier französischen Gewerkschaftszeitungen während der Résistancezeit, gegründet von französischen Untergrund-Gewerkschaftern.*
- 5 - *Baron William Henry Beveridge (1879-1963), britischer Nationalökonom und Politiker (Liberale Partei), Tätigkeit im Handelsamt, dort Einführung von Arbeitsämtern und Arbeitslosenversicherung (1908-1916), Direktor der London School of Economics (1919-1937), Denkschrift zur Sozialversicherung („Beveridge-Plan“, 1942), der Grundlage des britischen Gesundheitssystems wurde (1946).*
- 6 - *John Sydney Wardlaw-Milne (1879-1967), britischer Politiker, Mitglied des Parlaments (1922-1945), Vorsitzender des Komitees für Außenpolitik der Konservativen (1939-1945).*