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France and Germany

The following extract from a manifesto of the French Socialist Party published in the "Populaire" of July 1943 and stating their attitude to the German problem showed that the French Socialists at least had not become submerged in nationalistic feelings and had, in spite of all they had suffered, remained true to the spirit of international Socialism.

"The German Problem

On the subject of the German problem the Socialist Party specially emphasises the ideological nature of the present war and will never agree to a peace of revenge being inflicted on the German people who have been oppressed by Hitler and the Nazis.

It is, however, a fact that the influence of Prussianism has aroused amongst a considerable number of Germans a taste and admiration for the use of force. Democratic education has always been very inadequate in Germany. Nazism - for the emergence of which the Western Powers bear a large share of the responsibility - has produced a generation of young monsters who must be re-educated.

Germany must be made to feel the reality of victory of the democracies; she must be made to realise that aggression does not pay.

The German military machine must be destroyed; we must support the people's revolution and see to it that a solution is found for the agricultural problem, that the power of heavy industry is destroyed, that the property of the Junkers is socialised, etc. All this must be carried out without interfering with the unity of Germany whose existence cannot be denied, whilst at the same time a federal regime must be established which will prevent the nomination of Prussia. Finally, there must be a control of the political institutions and political education.

These reforms, however, can only be effected in a world where the Socialist influence is predominant. They can only be successfully carried out with the close and fraternal collaboration of the German democrats.

Furthermore, the suppression of the German military machine should be the first step towards a real and general limitation of armaments. The necessary encroachment on German sovereignty can only be viewed with equanimity if all the other nations also admit important limitations to their own authority."

This policy of the French Socialist has been reaffirmed once more by a declaration made by Daniel Mayer **[1]**, the general secretary of the French Socialist Party at a Party Congress held in liberated France at the beginning of last

week and reprinted in the "Populaire". His statement runs as follows:

"After Hitler has been beaten, all the organisations of the Nazis must be eradicated from top to bottom. Germany must be decentralised by every possible means including force if necessary, and the Junker class and the power of heavy industry must be once and for all destroyed. There must also be a control of the educational system. But after these measures have been carried out we must extend our hands in friendship towards the German people and the anti-Nazi revolutionaries, and not create the conditions which might lead to the emergence of another Hitler."

The French Socialists have further shown their recognition of the community of their aims with those of German Socialists by publishing the statement on foreign policy of the Union of German Socialist Organisations in Great Britain in the April issue of "Populaire". The statement which we reproduce below is introduced with these lines:

"Towards the United States of the World. The international policy of the German Socialists"

The statement printed below on the international policy of the German Socialists was issued by the 'Union of German Socialist Organisations of Great Britain'. You will realise with great joy from this document the identity of aims which exist between ourselves and our comrades for the establishment of the 'Free States of the World'."

Then follows the full text of the statement:

1. As international socialists we aim at an international order that will eliminate the causes of armed conflict.

The international labour movement and the other democratic movements, above all the peasants and the intelligentsia, are in our opinion the decisive forces for the achievement of this aim.

We desire the closest co-operation of the organised workers on all lands in a new international organisation, with the task of working out a common policy for the socialist labour movement and putting it into practise.

2. We advocate a federation of all the peoples of Europe, because full national sovereignty is no longer compatible with the economic and political condition of Europe.

It is a vital interest of German democrats and socialists, and indeed of the democrats and socialists of all Europe, that the peace of Europe should be given a stable foundation through the co-operation of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and the United States of America. A free and united Europe can only develop in friendly co-operation with all these powers, not by leaning to one or the other side only.

Federations which only comprise groups of nations we regard as a guarantee of peace only if they are integrated in and subordinated to an international organisation.

3. The first objective of the post-war international policy of German socialists must be to integrate a democratic Germany into this international order.

It is essential for the success of such a policy that the principles of the Atlantic Charter should be applied to a democratic Germany in their full extent.

We German socialists recognise the need for real guarantees of security felt by the nations attacked and oppressed by the national-socialist and fascist aggressors. At the same time, we are convinced that all technical guarantees of peace can only have lasting effect if they form part of a truly international system of security. This system must combine a strong executive capable of holding down aggressors with far reaching powers of arbitration for the peaceful solution of conflicts. Such a system will also guarantee the peace and security of a democratic Germany.

The first contribution of a democratic Germany to such a system will be its immediate military disarmament.

We are convinced that it is not enough to destroy the German military machine. We are determined to break the strongholds of the social power of the economic and political forces behind German militarism by the expropriation of Germany's war industries and the big landed estates and by the democratic rebuilding of the administration from the lowest unite upward.

We recognise it as a duty of honour for the coming free Germany to help with all her strength in the reparation of the injustices inflicted on other peoples by Hitlerite Germany and in the rebuilding of Europe.

It will be one of our main tasks to create the moral and mental conditions for the pursuit of a consistent policy of peace and understanding by the new German democracy by a thorough-going reform of German education.

Lasting success in winning the German people for such a policy will largely depend on whether they are given a chance to follow their own initiative in shaping their internal political, social and cultural life.

Above all it would have fatal consequences for Germany's internal development if conditions were imposed which would cause lasting mass unemployment and prevent an effective policy of social security.

4. Even after the Hitler dictatorship has been overthrown, we shall have to fight against strong reactionary forces at home for this international policy. We hope that the confidence and the active support of the international labour movement and of the forces of peace and progress in all nations will be with us in this struggle.

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With the liberation of France the aim which united French-men belonging to different political parties together with Resistance organisations has been achieved and the problems of the future political and social structure of France have now come into the foreground. In an article in the February issue of the 'Populaire' which we are reproducing below, the question of how to retain this unity for the further aim of the reconstruction of France is discussed by the Socialist Party. The suggestion made by some members of the Resistance organisation to dissolve the old parties and form a single united party incorporating the Resistance movements is examined and refuted and arguments are brought forward to justify the continued existence of an independent Socialist Party and of the party system generally.

"Will a Unification of Parties be Possible?"

'A people's party' ... , `a workers' party' ..., `a third party' ..., `a new party' ..., `a centre party'

Hardly a week passes by without some active members of the Resistance organisations raising the question of an eventual fusion between their organisations and ours. With certain variations they more or less speak in the following tones: `There must be a reformation of political principles. The parliamentary system and public life as it existed before 1940 must not be re-introduced. [There] were too many parties and they all proved a failure. The same applies to the individuals: you had in your ranks many men who proved traitors and were morally unsound. The future certainly lies with socialism but not in the form you represent it. You are too [many] men of the past and party men. We, on the other hand, are new men, fresh recruits to political life. We should come to an agreement to build up something completely new, another movement which will both unify all the parties and develop a better world.'

What a mass of reproaches in a few words! We are supposed to be the `men of the past'?

They are wrong: We are the men of the future. We foresaw already yesterday what would take place, we suggested solutions which were not listened to and which if they had been applied, would have prevented the catastrophe which befell us (see our 1919 programme, our plans for European reconstruction, the conferences of our International, our opposition to the fatal policy of the `Bloc National' of 1919 and 1924, our conception of general disarmament to take place simultaneously and under control, in general terms all the solutions which will have to be resorted to to-morrow after twenty-five years of delay).

The responsibility of the parties? It may, in the eyes of certain people, appear very great. But what of the responsibility of those who on their own admission did not take any interest in public affairs? Is it any less?

These few lines have the sole aim of making clear that in the debate on the subject of the parties of to-morrow it is impossible to put us in the position of the accused.

Let us avoid the myth of the `Single Party'!

Let us answer our questioners on a basis of complete equal-

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ty.

They wish to reform the French political traditions, to avoid the repetition of the mistakes which we were the first to recognise and which, in any case were not due to the nature of the institutions but to the bad use that certain people made of them. Let us also right away try to avoid using vague terms. There is sometimes talk of a `Single Party'. Let us make it quite clear at once that this can never come into question. Both the most recent statements of our organisation and the lessons of history provide us with sufficient proof: the `Single Party' is one of the characteristics of dictatorship and one of their favourite weapons, a democracy cannot live without the free interplay of the different political organisations. All that comes into question here is therefore a sort of concentration or cartelisation of the parties.

We are in agreement that their number should be restricted so that those remaining can undergo a similar process of reforms as we did: Discard a considerable part of their former members and rejuvenate their ranks in bringing in new blood, men who came into politics via the Resistance movements.

The unification and the fusion of those groups who hold similar opinions is certainly one of the most desirable reforms which we hope will take place under the new regime. But the stability of the parties depends upon the degree of their homogeneity. A party which is to survive any length of time must be based on a community of aims and a common faith in the ideal which it claims to serve. A fusion which is only superficial, which consists solely in the unification and the concentration of administrative and propaganda machinery would produce no real cohesion and provide no far-reaching possibilities for progressive and constructive work.

A party made up of superficial supporters of an immediate programme and not of people sincerely attached to a given doctrine, is faced with the alternative either of breaking up at the first attempt at action or of remaining in a state of inertia or opposition which will be sterile because it is unconstructive.

The Need for a Doctrine

Let us imagine a new party created out of all kinds of elements in the fire and enthusiasm of the Resistance movement. It would have to confirm in the broad daylight of legality, in a public congress, the doctrine and the programme which would have to be decided upon to-day. For this purpose it is absolutely essential that its members have a community of interests over and above battles fought in common or memories which in any case will soon fade in the background.

Agreed to-day on the aim of driving out the invader, are we also of the same opinion as to the nature of this enemy which we are fighting in common and with equal intensity? Is he not for some the eternal enemy Germany, for others simply the enemy of Soviet Russia, whilst for us the enemy is Hitler and Prussian militarism. Will the men of the Resistance movements be in agreement to-morrow on the aim of carrying out the social reforms which are necessary?

But even assuming they are in agreement with us about these

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reforms will they share with us a conception of public life based on our traditions and our revolutionary past?

They must therefore here and now make a clear statement as to the kind of economic, social and political life they wish for, before arbitrarily fixing the number and the scope of the parties of to-morrow. For what is the purpose of creating a large party torn with internal quarrels and carrying inside it the germs of continuous splits? It would only be harmful to the national interests because French political life would be brought to a standstill while awaiting its decisions and because these decisions would be marred by weakness.

Yet another objection comes into our mind: the Resistance movements were created in the ardour of the first actions, relying on chance contacts and personal friends. There is no unity amongst their members, except in their desire to drive out the invader and in the case of most of them to fight against the Vichy regime. The average opinion varies

from one Departement to another according to the local leaders. And we know what an unpleasant surprise it was for the active fighters of a movement in the south to read certain articles which appeared in their central organ. It is quite likely therefore that there will be, if not a complete divorce at least some division between leaders and the rank and file (or between the members in different districts) in certain Resistance movements when they change over from direct action and start to do some political thinking.

Three Political Currents of Opinion

The same cannot be said of the parties. These have a community of thought, a framework, recollections of the past, a tradition and above all a doctrine.

Three big political currents of opinion are emerging from the Resistance movements: Communist, Christian Democrat and Socialist.

All three have introduced internal reforms and got rid of their respective traitors; they have had their martyrs, their victims, their heroes. But each of the three has their own special method of action. Each speaks in their own particular language and each of them have their own leaders to whom they remain attached, just as they have their own special principles and demands.

If political groupings are going to take place it will certainly be amongst these organisations.

As far as we are concerned, we have learned a great deal. We have got to know Christians in the Resistance movements whom yesterday we were attacking and who seem to us to be not only real patriots but even revolutionaries possessing undeniable courage and loyalty, and what will prove of even more value, a moral standard beyond reproach.

Let us state the position quite clearly: on the sole condition of secularisation (by this we mean the neutrality and not sectarianism) of the State, education and social welfare we think that it would be quite possible for us to work together with these men in the same political organisation. They in their turn must have learnt that our pseudo `materialism'

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is not so `sordid' after all, that we hold spiritual and moral values in high esteem and though we wanted to secure bread for the workers, Jaurès [2] did not forget to add the roses.

In so far as the Communist Party is concerned we have always believed in the historical inescapable necessity for unity. We are anxious despite temporary controversies not to prevent the realisation of this great hope. We have made up our minds never to say or do anything or allow anything to be said or done which could be harmful to the preservation of this unity. But this does not depend on us alone. We can therefore only hope to-day that the external circumstances and our good-will will bring about its realisation.

Further Difficulties

For the Socialist Party to have possession of the government or as it was called

before the war of the power, has no particular attraction in itself and is only a means of putting into effect the most important parts of their Programme.

They do not wish at any time to lose their revolutionary and international character, without which they would not be Socialists.

We have seen now that the difficulties in the way of a concentration of parties are numerous, but we have only emphasised them with the object of helping to find a solution to this problem: What then are the effective and useful steps which can be undertaken to-day in this direction?

Only publicly and under legal conditions once again can the exchange of views and useful discussions between delegates mandated by their organisations have any lasting value. For the time being it seems to us that we can only prepare the ground for the future by converting people to a state of mind in which they would be willing to accept such close collaboration and by creating the suitable atmosphere for an agreement. On the other hand, there should be no attacks against the men or methods of action of other organisations and there must be a will to return to sincere ways of thinking and expression and a respect for promises given; secondly the support of certain proposals such as the united programme of the French Resistance movements which we put forward before the whole of the National Council of Resistance. It was our intention that this programme should be a kind of ministerial declaration coming from France which, by stating in precise terms what would be the immediate actions of the provisional government presided by de Gaulle would prolong the existence of the union of the parties and movements and at the same time furnish a proof to the world that the French National Committee of Liberation has the whole country, which has regained unity, behind it."

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - *Daniel Mayer (1909-1996), französischer sozialistischer Politiker, SFIO (seit 1927) und Redakteur der sozialistischen Tageszeitung „Le Populaire“, Gründer der sozialistischen Widerstandsgruppe „Comité d'Action Socialiste“ (Januar 1941), Beteiligung an der Gründung der vereinigten Widerstandsbewegung CNR, des „Conseil National de la Résistance“ (1943), Generalsekretär der SFIO (1946), Parlamentsabgeordneter (1945-1958), Arbeits- und Sozialminister (1946-1947, 1947-1949), Zerwürfnis mit der SFIO wegen seiner Ablehnung des EVG-Vertrages (1952), Präsident der Liga für Menschenrechte (ab 1958).*
- 2 - *Jéan Jaurès (1859-1914), französischer Sozialist, Philosoph und Historiker, Professor der Philosophie in Toulouse (ab 1883), linksrepublikanischer Abgeordneter im französischen Parlament (1885-1914), Gründer der Zeitung „L'Humanité“ (1902), Präsident der Vereinigung sozialistischer Gruppen in der „Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière“ (SFIO), als Pazifist Gegner des Ersten Weltkriegs und Anhänger einer deutsch-französischen Verständigung, Ermordung (1914).*