

[Seite: - 1 -]

France

French Socialists' Proposals for the Solution of Post-War Problems

A few months ago, whilst still carrying on the underground fight against Hitler and Pétain, the French Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.) made detailed proposals for the solution of a number of important post-war problems. In the introduction to this statement, the party executive pointed out that no satisfactory solution of the post-war problems was possible unless the German problem was dealt with in the right way and unless a new international organisation of the peoples was set up.

The following are some only of the proposals put forward by the French Socialists; those dealing with the creation of a new Europe we shall publish later:

International Congress

"The French Socialist Underground Party desires that an international congress of all socialist parties, both legal and clandestine and including the representatives of allied and enemy countries, should be held to discuss the questions of international organisation to guarantee peace.

Frontier Questions

At the present moment it is more difficult to make concrete proposals as to the problem of frontiers in Central and Eastern Europe than on any of the other post-war problems. We shall therefore only make two short comments on this subject:

1) A just and lasting solution will be possible only to the extent that the conception of frontiers gradually loses its present significance by the integration of the nations into an international community. Differences in language, religion and culture must be respected without splitting up Europe into a vast number of completely independent States, often hostile to one another, burdened with customs barriers and lacking economic unity, incapable therefore in their isolation of leading a stable existence. A striking example of this was the Danube basin in the period after the war 1914-18. The only solution is therefore the creation of large federations of republics which would preserve their autonomy in certain spheres (language, education, etc.).

2) The principles of the Atlantic Charter must not be sacrificed on the pretext of giving territorial compensation to certain countries at the expense of the defeated nations. It may be that in certain cases it will be necessary to resort to the policy of transferring populations carried out so brutally by National-Socialist Germany. But such transfers must never be allowed to affect large masses of the population and cause great misery.

Treatment of Germany

Hitler will be defeated. When he has disappeared from the scene what will the victors do with Germany? They will find themselves face to face with problems which cannot be satisfactorily solved within the existing framework of Europe, based on complete national sovereignty.

On the one hand the universal feeling of embitterment and, unfortunately, of hatred and the desire for revenge which Hitler has aroused throughout the world, demands that this time Germany should be prevented once and for all from plunging the world into another terrible conflict. People will refuse to distinguish between the tyrant who has made people into fanatics and those who have ruthlessly served their tyrant. They will protest that the peace will be only a misleading and murderous farce if the world is not once and for all protected against any future outbreak of 'German barbarianism'. All this is both natural and just. But history has shown to what such natural and justified demands most often lead under the present system of national sovereignty. A policy of dismemberment, annexation, repression and exaction of tribute from Germany will certainly be advocated. And the most loud-voiced among its advocates will without doubt be the 'collaborators' of to-day.

On the other hand if those who bear the responsibility for securing peace have the courage to stop and reflect and to recall the lessons of the past, they will realise what prospects for the future would be offered by such a policy based on the use and abuse of power. One does not quell hatred by hatred, nor violence by violence alone. One cannot with impunity destroy a whole people, a language, a tradition, a whole historical past. The abuse of power creates the desire for revenge, which time does not obliterate. And sooner or later, history offers unexpected opportunities for revenge.

There is only one measure which will solve this problem and render Germany harmless within the framework of a peaceful and stable Europe. The incorporation of the German nation into an international community which is sufficiently powerful to re-educate them, to discipline them and if necessary, to control them.

In so far as the problem of Germany can be separated from that of an international organisation we have the following more detailed proposals to make:

1) The expropriation of the Junkers and the breaking up of the large landed properties. The expropriation of the big magnates of heavy industry and the putting of German war industries under international control, the prohibition of certain products and the orientation of German industry to new types of production.

2) A federation of German republics grouping together those who have most in common and allowing the greatest possible autonomy, but subject to certain laws applying to all of them, for example in the spheres of education and social reforms.

3) A radical reform of the teaching of history and citizenship - which should be in conformity with educational programmes in the other European countries, worked out and supervised by an International Board of Education. The exchange of European university students which would give them a knowledge of other countries and promote understanding between the nations of Europe.

The two last points require further elucidation:

We are of the opinion with regard to the first point that a federation of autonomous German republics with a common economy would offer a double advantage. On the one hand this might provide the nucleus for the future United States of Europe, and on the other hand each of the member States would retain its national individuality.

There would be no question of favouring separatist tendencies

[Seite im Original:] - 3-

or of giving special treatment to some republics at the expense of others, less manageable ones. Our aim is only to reconcile the regional aspirations of the Germans with their equally strong desire for unity. Thus a Federation of States would be created, which was the aim of the revolutionaries of 1848 and which, had it been achieved at that time, would probably have prevented its unification by force under the leadership of Prussia and of Bismarck [1]. The policy of Germany within Europe would then doubtless have been completely different from what it has been during the last century.

Economic and financial help should be made dependent on loyal adherence to certain international laws aiming at the consolidation of the republican regime, such as the introduction of social legislation, participation of the workers in the organisation of industry and the development of trade unionism, etc., and educational reforms.

The second point is also very important. A nation can only become really democratic if democracy becomes deeply embedded in the national consciousness. Furthermore, our civilisation can no longer be solely a national civilisation, it must become a European civilisation; every citizen must feel himself at the same time a citizen of his own country and a citizen of Europe, by learning to know and defend the common values of Europe as a whole.

To this end we consider it important to aim at a unified system of education throughout Europe based upon the common roots of its civilisation.

An education in citizenship and a teaching of history based upon such a community of ideas and values would certainly help towards the development of future generations more devoted to the maintenance of peace and European co-operation. ..."

* * *

The article below was written by André Philip, the French socialist leader, in the socialist paper "Populaire du Rhone" [2] of which he is the editor.

Socialism - Now.

"By the victory of the Allied armies the liberation of French soil is almost complete and we turn our minds to the political and social liberation which must follow the territorial liberation.

Let us for the moment leave aside the question of the political structure of our Fourth Republic and the constitutional and administrative reforms which have not matured yet but are indispensable for the safeguarding of civil liberties. I want first to devote my attention to the planning of economy by the nationalisation of the key industries.

Everyone is in agreement that the French economy of to-morrow must be a planned economy, that the reconstruction of the country must take place on the basis of a plan

which determines priorities in production. We shall not allow luxury cars to be produced when all efforts should be concentrated upon turning out lorries for food transport; we shall not allow beautiful villas to be built when the building trade should be busy erecting homes at a reasonable rent and open-air schools to restore the health of our youth and to abolish slums. Last but not least, the industrialisation requires the control of the use of raw materials and machine tools which necessitates the State monopoly of foreign trade to undertake new international negotiations.

Everyone is in agreement with these points, but this is not sufficient. Economy cannot be effectively planned unless the great

[Seite im Original:] - 4-

key industries, the banks, the insurance companies, transport, electricity, the chemical industries and the mines are controlled in the sole interest of the nation. For:

1. These industries represent a financial force so powerful that, if left in private hands, it will become more influential than the State and will be able to flout its directives.

2. These industries are of a character which excludes competition. They constitute a monopoly which if outside the control of the nation may lead to unrestrained exploitation of the consumer, without themselves incurring any risk because in case of bankruptcy they will be bolstered up ostensibly for the sake of the public; (we still remember the pre-war cases of Aeropostale [3], the Banque nationale des Credits [4] and the Transatlantique [5]). The State has always to bear such losses. In the absence of State planned economy economic plans are imposed by the trusts.

3. Finally, the nationalisation of the key industries is a corollary of political liberty; our experience in this respect has been too bitter ever to be forgotten. On three consecutive occasions - in 1924, 1932 and 1936 - the people had expressed its sovereign will. Each time, after an interval of two or three months during which they kept in the background, the banks restored to power the very people who had been just deprived of it by the popular vote. The same will happen again if the necessary precautions are not taken.

We shall therefore know better than to follow the advice of the reactionaries disguised as democrats who ask us, in the name of republican legality, not to declare our policy regarding nationalisation until the Constituent Assembly has met.

Of course, the Constituent Assembly, as the direct expression of the sovereignty of the people, will be the only body qualified to decide upon the final status of the nationalised enterprises, upon the question of compensation, upon the form of workers' participation in the management of industry etc. We must, however, start now to appoint government controllers not only to the enterprises whose proprietors collaborated with the enemy, but to all sections of industry which should belong to the nation. In this work, they will have the assistance of a consultative committee on which workers and technicians are represented - as was the case in the Berliet factory [6]. If this is not carried out throughout France and sanctioned by the nation, our liberation will once again be a mockery. If the financiers succeed in entrenching themselves before the elections for the National Constituent Assembly, these elections will be a farce from the very start, as the freedom of the electorate will no longer be complete.

France to-day is inspired by a tremendous hope. The long-awaited Revolution can be carried out under the guidance of the State and in an atmosphere of almost complete

unanimity. To disappoint the popular expectations would be a crime which we shall not commit and shall not allow others to commit."

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - *Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), deutscher Staatsmann, preußischer Ministerpräsident (1862), Reichskanzler (1871-1890).*
- 2 - *„Populaire du Rhone“, sozialistische französische Widerstandszeitung, wahrscheinlich eine Regionalausgabe von „Le Populaire“, nach „Europe speaks“ herausgegeben von André Philip, dem französischen Sozialistenführer.*
- 3 - *„Aeropostale“, früher „Compagnie générale aéropostale“, französische Flugzeuggesellschaft, gegründet von Pierre-Georges Latécoère (1919), bekannt als Luftpostzusteller, verband anfangs Frankreich hauptsächlich mit Südamerika, Zusammenschluss mit anderen Luftfahrtunternehmen zu „Air France“ (1933).*
- 4 - *„Banque Nationale des Credits“, 1913 gegründetes französisches Bankunternehmen, ab 1927 mit André Vincent als Präsidenten, nach Liquidation in der „Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie“ (BNCI) aufgegangen (1932).*
- 5 - *„Transatlantique“ = „Banque Transatlantique“, 1881 von Eugène Pereire gegründetes französisches Bankunternehmen, das laut „Europe speaks“ offenbar in Liquidation geriet.*
- 6 - *„Berliet factory“, 1902 von Markus Berliet in Montplaisir gegründete französische Automobilfabrik, Bankrott (1921), Wiederaufbau, ab 1939 ausschließlich Produktion von Lastkraftwagen und Belieferung der französischen Armee im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Übernahme durch die deutschen Besatzer (1942), Rückkehr in Familienbesitz (1949), nach dem 2. Weltkrieg zunächst Expansion, dann Übernahme durch den Citroen-Konzerns (1967), später von Renault (1978).*