
EUROPE speaks

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[Seite: - 1 -]

The following article on European Federation is reproduced from "St. Galler Volksstimme" [1], a paper of the Swiss Social Democratic Party.

European Federation

"Exchange Telegraph" [2] recently reported that the British Labour Party had invited the socialist parties of other countries to state their attitude to the problems of the International. The answer of the Swiss Social Democratic Party is of special interest: for our country had been spared the horrors of war and oppression and our working class movement had time and opportunity to discuss the post-war problems. The workers of other countries will expect constructive ideas to come from Switzerland - and from Sweden for that matter - as they were so far completely absorbed by the exigencies of the struggle for national liberation.

It is therefore important that a well thought-out and balanced answer is given by the working-class movement of our country. And if it is true that Switzerland has offered Resistance during five and a half years our answer must distinguish itself by its resistance to opportunism and to the disastrous trends of our time. The following is an attempt to show what this means by discussing one problem, the problem of the European Federation. It is one problem amongst many others on which the British Labour Party wishes to receive information; it is, however, of decisive importance for Switzerland, for Europe, and indeed, for the whole world, and has hitherto received hardly any attention.

In Europe at present there are two zones; In the one zone the war is being fought and the towns and villages are falling to rack and ruin. In the other, the liberated one, hunger rages and kills the people. The misery of Europe grows daily. It is just the magnitude of this misery which should make us discuss the European cause more seriously, and to defend it more passionately than has been done hitherto.

It is not the imperialist and capitalist Europe which decent people want to defend to-day. The Europe which has oppressed and exploited far-away continents and peoples is doomed and will - so we hope - never rise again; we socialists had never anything to do with it and always detested it. The fact cannot be denied that the relatively high standard of living of the European peoples was based upon colonial exploitation; this, however, cannot be blamed onto the European workers who in their homelands were leading the struggle which is the task of the proletariat of all countries and all continents: the struggle for social liberation. As far as we can decide the future of Europe we want to stress, however, that our standard of living should not be built upon the exploitation of other continents.

The kind of Europe which we want to recommend to the British Labour Party and the whole world is "Another Europe", a Europe with a

wealth of nations and civilisations; with centuries of intellectual and artistic co-operation; the Europe of the French Revolution and the Rights of Man. It is a Europe into which a country like Switzerland fits in; for we are a small democracy without any economic wealth, but rich as regards the capacity of our people to co-operate in the social and intellectual sphere. Switzerland can therefore not permanently adapt itself to a Europe which is ruled on the totalitarian pattern, nor to a Europe which pursues a policy of colonial exploitation; a country like ours can only live on a continent where the rights of the peoples are respected and protected by law: on a continent organised as a federal community.

European Federation means the community of European peoples within the framework of international law, their co-operation in the economic and social sphere, unification of their foreign policy and respect for the independence and integrity of every member-State. A European Federation cannot simply follow the pattern of the United States of North America, which have fused into one national unit to a much greater extent than would be the case with the peoples of Europe. But like in North America wars between the nations should be banned from our continent through the abolition of standing national armies.

It is too daring to proclaim the idea of a European Federation at a juncture when Europe seems to be drowned in the horrors of Germany's crimes? This question affects us all, not only the Germans; for the horrors that have happened are the guilt of the whole of Europe. It cannot be made good by giving up the European cause, but only by eliminating the sources which have generated it; by doing away with this disastrous nationalism which has proved again and again to be the first step towards bestiality, and with capitalism which shrinks from no crime if it promises profits. The eradication of these destructive forces will be one of the tasks of a European Federation. The demoniac forces which Prussia-Germany could unleash will be held under control if the German people are forced to accept the rule of law and morality and are educated to respect it. A European Federation offers the only possibility for atoning for the colonial crimes of the European countries and for the horrors and mass murders of the Third Reich; it is at the same time the only possibility to save Europe.

Is the idea of a European Federation in contradiction with the idea of a world organisation of peace? No, for the world organisation needs the European Federation if Europe is really to take its place within its framework. This lesson could be learned from the experience of the League of Nations. A Europe split up in sovereign nations means nothing in a League of Nations, it is but the pawn of the big Powers. United, our continent could be a healthy organisation on a level with the Russian, British and American empires and could bring its own good elements to the foreground.

To state this indicates that a European Federation must come about without Russia and Great Britain, although they are so near to our continent and our indebtedness to them is great. Europe's links to the world should not be destroyed; but this truth should be complemented by another: Europe must be able to develop its forces independently, it must liberate itself as quickly as possible from the Anglo-Saxon and Russian "Spheres of Interest", created in the course of this war, and must attain to an autonomous life. If this necessity is not realised and accepted - unfortunately, everything indicates that it will not - Europe will most probably become the object of colonial exploitation and will remain a constant source of international danger. The impoverishment of our continent, the decimation of its population, the lowering of the standard of living of its working

"pacification" of our continent through the Anglo-Saxon and Russian empires. I do not want to be misunderstood: Of course, Germany must first be occupied after the war, reparations must be paid and reconstruction work carried out. But all this will only have sense if it ultimately serves to create a democratic and federal order in Europe. If the aim is once more to create a Europe torn between its different nationalities, the "pacification policy" of the victorious Empires will ultimately be nothing but a repetition of the notoriously disastrous "Balance of Power" policy in Europe; and Russia will show that she knows again how to utilise this policy for her own ends.

To propagate European Federation does not mean to advocate a German demand. The dangerous elements amongst the Germans would be held down by a European Federation, only what used to be called "The Other Germany" would be given free rein. It is not a French demand either, although France, owing to her special qualifications as a European force, will play a leading part within a European Federation. European Federation is not the demand of this or that country. It is a socialist demand. Not only because it will lead to the democratic unification of a continent which has for centuries been tortured by senseless wars, but also because it will pave the way for a lawful order in the world by adding the fourth link to the "Big Three": Europe, united on a democratic basis. The fifth link will then be the Far East under the leadership of China. Thus an international order can develop which will decrease the possibility of future wars; if, furthermore, right prevails in the economic sphere too, which means that a socialist economy will supercede capitalism, we might well say that modern Socialism has made its contribution towards a new order of things. We can only wish that it will make this contribution and will not be deterred by opportunistic considerations from stating the simple truth!

The following Open Letter to C. Huysmans^[3], the President of the Labour and Socialist International was written by a German Socialist who, both inside Germany and abroad, took an active part in the underground struggle against the Hitler Regime. The letter was published in no. 3 of the Belgian journal "Les Cahiers Socialistes".

Open Letter to Camille Huysmans

"I know that the old representatives of the socialist peoples of the enemy countries are asking to be admitted on an equal footing to join our work in the international sphere. I know that they have already found some sympathetic souls who are inclined to help them in their attempt to make accept on their face value their promises to produce some deeds. Let us tell them: Show us first your deeds and then come back with some proofs. Nobody will then be more enthusiastic than we to receive them."

C. Huysmans in a message to the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool.

In taking up in an Open Letter the message sent by you, comrade Huysmans, to the Labour Party Conference in your capacity as President of the Socialist International, I want at the same time to address myself to many of you socialist compatriots who share the views expressed in your message.

I do not speak as an old representative of the socialist party of an enemy country, in my case Germany, but as one of the many German socialists who during twelve years of illegal struggle and exile have tried to keep the flag of socialism flying in the midst of the most terrifying political battle field of the world. Hitler's terror regime has deprived me of my home and my citizenship, has taken my mother as a hostage and thrown her in a concentration camp, has murdered my best friends or driven them to suicide behind prison walls. But what I have experienced is simply the fate of thousands of German socialists.

We no longer constitute a party in the sense that we have an organisation - Nazi terror has not only decimated but has massacred our organisations. What we are concerned with therefore is not that the Socialist International should recognise the exiled parts of the old party apparatus as an organisation. But there are tens of thousands of German socialists, who have sacrificed all, even their lives. - If we are asked for an account of our deeds then we survivors must raise our voices rather on behalf of our fallen comrades than on our own - and what we are concerned with there is the moral recognition by socialists of all countries that we have fulfilled our socialist duty.

It seems that you, Comrade Huysmans, want to deny us, German socialists, this moral recognition in speaking of "their attempt to make us accept on their face value their promises to produce some deeds".

There is no need for us to behave like political forgers by giving promises instead of presenting facts. The account of our deeds in the fight against Hitler has been written with blood and tears. Up to 1936 ten thousand German men and women were murdered or driven to suicide as enemies of Hitler. Up to 1936 Hitler's terror regime has sentenced two hundred fifty thousand German men and women to a total of six hundred thousand years imprisonment for political reasons, not including concentration camps and detention. In view of this shameful capitulation of the bourgeoisie to Hitler and of the fact that the large scale persecution of the Jews did not start until later, these figures represent almost exclusively the "Marxist" victims of Hitlerism, and to a considerable extent members of the very party to whom you, Comrade Huysmans, want to deny the right to be represented in the Socialist International.

True, the social Democratic and the Communist Party are not completely free from blame for the victory of fascism in Germany. But their mistakes were based upon the same ideological and political fallacies as those of the other reformist and Stalinist parties in many democratic countries. For their mistakes the German socialists have atoned through unparalleled sacrifices. And in spite of the threat to freedom and life, in spite of the terror which has savagely decimated the ranks of those who worked illegally against the regime, thousands stood up again and again to risk their lives in the work for socialism and internationalism.

In the course of this fight we did not get, however, the international support which would be justified by its importance as a fight for the fate of Europe. We German socialists have therefore the right to demand that responsibility should be apportioned justly.

The fact that large sections of the international bourgeoisie favoured Hitlerism as a bulwark against a social revolution was in keeping with their class interest; the fact, however, that a considerable number of socialists in the democratic countries, blindly or voluntarily, gave Hitler moral and political support, must not be forgotten when anti-

Hitler actions are under discussion. In the British Labour Party it was not only the "right-winger"

[Seite: - 5 -]

George Lansbury [4], a former president of the party, who after a visit to Berchtesgaden described Hitler as one of our greatest contemporaries and a man devoid of any political ambition, but also the "left winger" Sir Stafford Cripps [5] stated in a speech at Stockport that a victory of Hitler would be fatal only for the British capitalists. At the same time the Swedish Social Democratic Party stated in its theoretical journal that in case of war Swedish deliveries of iron ore to Hitler could, if necessary, be protected against the Western Powers by Sweden's navy. Henrik de Man [6], then vice-president of the Belgian Labour Party, demanded the exclusion from the Socialist International of the representatives of the socialist parties from fascist countries, on the grounds that our hatred of Hitler would disturb a peaceful understanding with Nazism. (Is it not really paradox that the socialist emigrants and the illegal fighters inside Germany were first discredited in the eyes of many socialists in other countries because they had shown too many proofs of anti-fascist activity, while to-day they are charged with having shown too few!)

But how could we, in the years before the outbreak of war, have increased our influence upon the masses of the German people, how could we have won the race between war and revolution when democratic neighbours denied us every effective support, even in some cases rendered our fight so difficult that we had to carry on our anti-Hitler activities like conspirators, even in the democratic countries where we had found a refuge. Our socialist papers were prohibited and we were expelled from democratic countries - in some of which socialists held the posts of cabinet ministers - because of illegal activities on the frontiers of the Third Reich.

Some of us went with forged passports into Hitler-Germany to rebuild our clandestine organisations which had been smashed up by Hitler's terror apparatus. We experienced the growing disappointment of our comrades in Germany, from year to year, as they felt their efforts were in vain: "What can we, helpless workers, do against the totalitarian State if the whole of Europe has let us down?"

This is the answer to the question which is often put to us in sheer ignorance of the real conditions of our fight: Why have you German socialists not succeeded in organising a large-scale resistance movement against Hitler as was done in Belgium and above all in France? If, in 1935, the democratic governments of Europe had put at the disposal of German political emigrants all the technical and financial resources which during four years of war they put at the disposal of the political emigrants of the Allied countries, perhaps we might have been spared the horrors of this terrible war.

True, Hitler's successes were conditioned by other causes than the lack of support for anti-Hitler Germans by the European democracies. But these causes were essentially different from those which you, Comrade Huysmans, described, when you called the fascist terror-system the product of a "country whose spirit and soul are rotten from top to bottom", and thus a specifically German phenomenon.

German socialists agree with you, Comrade Huysmans: To-day the German people is poisoned and we shall have to eliminate the poison through a long and painful process. If the socialists of all countries want to prevent the German people from becoming a corpse, if they want to accelerate the process of healing, they must grant us the moral

and political support which many of them denied us when we in Germany were fighting our losing battle for socialism.

We do not demand this for the sake of Germany, nor for our own sake either - although the danger of the battle has for us not ceased with the overthrow of Hitler: many of us are still to fall in the course of this battle, killed by the bullets of fanatical fascists. In face of this danger there is no help for us but the conviction of the ethical necessity of our actions and the belief in the eventual victory of our socialist ideas. We ask the socialists of all countries to give their recognition to our fight in the past and their confidence and comradeship for the future for the sake of Europe, of the world: to tear down at long last the barricades of hatred and to turn the horrors of war between nations into a struggle of all nations against the horrors of war.

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - „*St. Galler Volksstimme*“, Zeitung der schweizerischen Sozialdemokratischen Partei (SPS).
- 2 - „*Exchange Telegraph*“ = Extel, britische Nachrichtenagentur in London.
- 3 - *Camille Huysmans* (1871-1968), belgischer sozialistischer Politiker, Sekretär der II. Internationale (1905-1922), Präsident der SAI (1940), Exil in Großbritannien (1940-1944), nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg belgischer Ministerpräsident (1946-1947), Minister für Bildung (1947-1949).
- 4 - *George Lansbury* (1859-1940), britischer Journalist und Politiker (Labour Party), Mitglied des Parlaments (1910-1912, 1922-1940), Mitbegründer und Herausgeber des *Daily Herald* (1912), Oppositionsführer (1931-1935), Pazifist, Treffen mit Hitler und Mussolini im Vorfeld des Zweiten Weltkrieges.
- 5 - *Stafford Cripps* (1889-1952), britischer Politiker (Labour Party), Parteiausschluss wegen seines Eintreten für eine Volksfront (1939), britischer Botschafter in der Sowjetunion (1940-1942), Mitglied des Kriegskabinetts (Minister für Flugzeugkonstruktion: 1942-1945), Wiederaufnahme in die Labour Party (1945), Handelsminister (1945-1947), Wirtschaftsminister und Schatzkanzler (1947-1950).
- 6 - *Henrik (auch Henry) de Man* (1885-1953), belgischer sozialistischer Politiker und Theoretiker, Professor für Sozialpsychologie in Frankfurt (ab 1922), danach in Brüssel (ab 1933), mehrfach Minister (1935-1940), Vorsitzender der Belgischen Arbeiterpartei (1938-1940), unter deutscher Besatzung Annäherung an das NS-Regime (mit einer sozialpsychologisch-ethischen Interpretation löste er sich vom Sozialismus, aus einer autoritär-demokratischen Sichtweise erklärte er das NS-Regimes für vorbildlich), Exil in der Schweiz (1944-1953), nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wegen seiner Haltung unter deutscher Besatzung Verurteilung in Abwesenheit zu 20 Jahren Gefängnis (obwohl die deutschen Besatzer ihn ziemlich schnell kaltgestellt hatten).