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The German Opposition and the War.

By Klaus Menn.

I am going to discuss the attitude and the varied reactions of the German anti-Nazi opposition in exile. As to the foes of the Nazi régime inside Germany, the situation is completely different. The men and women who risk their lives to fight Hitlerism, within the Reich, think and act under special psychological and practical laws. While they have to face the real dangers and must do the actual job of preparing the revolution, we, the political exiles, have the crucial task of clarifying the situation theoretically, thus creating the moral and intellectual basis for a German Democracy to come.

The People's Front - the broad, comprehensive concentration of all anti-Fascist forces - has never been a political reality with the German exiles, ^{although} it was, for six years, keenly wished for and propagated by the Communists and by many independent intellectuals. It is hard if not impossible to make any positive statement about the relative or absolute strength of the different factions. We may assume that the four most significant groups are the Nationalists, represented by men like Dr. Hermann Rauschning and Otto Strasser; the ^{or} Catholics, represented by Spiecker and Treviranus - while Dr. Brüning still prefers to remain in the background - ; the Social Democrats with Rudolf Breitscheid and Friedrich Stampfer, and finally the Communists. Most of the noted writers and intellectuals don't belong to any of these parties; some of them, however, are more or less openly in connection with one group or another.

For a while there existed a certain limited conformity of opinions among the different factions. During the Spanish Civil War the whole of the political German exiles, including the liberal Catholics, urgently wanted a Loyalist victory. And when it came to ^{the} crisis of Czecho-Slovakia, all of us, without any exception, felt sympathy with the Czech people, and bitterly disapproved of the ruthless manner in which they were sacrificed and betrayed, In spite of such transient agreements, however, the Social Democratic and Catholic party leaders, together with certain liberals and conservatives, refused to collaborate with any adherents of the Kremlin. Now, of course, since Hitler and Stalin have seemingly made friends, those traditional foes of the People's Front exclaim, with a sort of embittered triumph: 'We are not surprised as we realized from the beginning that Stalin was at least as bad as Hitler, and that his followers used the sacred notion of democracy as a propaganda trick, for their own bloody aims.'



The Communists, on the other hand, reply with equal contempt: 'The policy of the People's Front was doomed to fail, since it was stubbornly sabotaged by the capitalists, including the so-called Social Democrats - just as the Soviet conception of collective security was betrayed by the so-called democracies.' It is impossible to deny that both of these versions contain certain portions of truth, and that both of them are one-sided. The situation is most complex. There are many questions involved, and many different ways of answering them.

The position of the German Communists, at this historical moment, is particularly delicate, even tragic. They want Hitler to fall but they don't want the Allies to win, as it is Stalin's final victory and triumph they wish for. They assume that Stalin actually keeps on being an "anti-fascist", and that he still is Hitler's most dangerous enemy - while Chamberlain, according to this somewhat surprising theory, does not really dislike the Nazis, and is ~~actually~~ preparing the "crusade" against the Soviets. ~~Most of the German Communists are convinced that Britain eventually will accept a fascist or semi-fascist Germany as an ally against Soviet Russia.~~ The idea that the Hitler-Stalin alliance may last, and that the Führer himself sooner or later might establish some sort of national bolshevism, must horrify and confuse those unhappy comrades. For they flatly deny that there ever could be a State which would be socialistic and, at the same time, nationalistic, immoral, and ²despotic. ~~Their obstinate over-estimation of the purely economic angle - the most dangerous feature of the Marxian tradition - is the actual source of most of their mistakes.~~ They are apparently unable to grasp the simple truth that a clash between Stalin and Hitler, even if it eventually occurs, would mean nothing but another struggle between two greedy dictators - an event without moral significance.

The ~~attitude and the~~ dubious tactics, however, of varied experienced red-baiters among German exiles, make it very hard for the Communists

to change their own attitude and to admit their errors. There are in our ranks certain liberals, conservatives, and former communists, who loathe Stalin and his followers even more intensely than they could possibly hate the Nazis. The most active and most hysterical one among them is Herr Leopold Schwarzschild, editor of the weekly "Das Neue Tage-Buch" (Paris/Amsterdam.) He happens to be a highly gifted political journalist; the most able one, perhaps, the German opposition possesses. His talent and his morals, however, are on the verge of being ruined by his recent anti-socialistic obsession. He has abused Lion Feuchtwanger as a crook and Heinrich Mann as a crooked half-wit, since both have admitted themselves as adherents of the People's Front. He is ridden by the idée fixe that anyone who considers anything in Soviet Russia as not so bad, must be bribed by the Kremlin with heaps of gold. I myself was denounced in an anonymous article, published by "Das Neue Tage-Buch", *(as an "old Soviet agent.")* Even the Nazis have never dared to pronounce so fantastic a charge against me. In serious times, however, even jokes and absurd escapades may have serious consequences. Therefore I considered it necessary to compose a detailed reply, explaining that I am not and never have been a Soviet agent, in any sense of the word, either directly or indirectly, either consciously or subconsciously.

All this, of course, may sound like a "storm in a tea cup." The minor incident, however, shows how far those among my fellow-exiles, who seem to be possessed by the anti-red mania, are willing to go. Since they don't hesitate to defame persons like myself, whose reputation happens to be fairly solid, what can the others expect who are more helpless or more exposed? In fact, our hysterical liberals keep on slandering people and organizations, deliberately deepening the abyss which already exists between the varied anti-Nazi groups. The Association of German-American Writers, for instance, was denounced as a "gang of Soviet agents", by "Das Neue Tage-Buch" and a Social Democratic paper.

The Association actually includes most of the German anti-Nazi writers living now in this country; men like Martin Gumpert, Ferdinand Bruckner, Professor Tillich, and Heinrich Eduard Jacob. The Bavarian author Oscar Maria Graf is the President, Thomas Mann the honorary president, Bruno Frank the president of the Californian branch, Curt Riess - correspondent of the "Paris Soir" - secretary general. To pretend that all of these liberals really were tools of Kremlin politics, is an absurdity, and certainly a very sordid thing to do. Denouncements of this kind, however, have still more serious consequences in France. The position of the German refugees in Paris - which anyway is not an easy one, as circumstances are - has become tragically confused through the mean intrigues among the exiles themselves. One can hardly blame nervous and ~~perplexed~~ suspicious Frenchmen that they imprison Germans or Austrians, if the compatriots of those aliens insinuate they may be paid or voluntary agents of the Kremlin or the Wilhelmstrasse.

~~By the Communists, who used to represent the active vanguard of the German exiles, are becoming, once more, the parias. They undeniably are themselves responsible - or at least partly responsible - for so unfortunate a development. Now can they expect to be treated as friends and allies of the Democracies, since they apparently approve of Stalin's anti-democratic aggressiveness.~~

The disunion of the different anti-Fascist groups and parties led to the final collapse of the Weimar Republic. Must this sinister tragedy be repeated, once more?... The other day, I received a fairly stimulating and instructive paper, entitled "Inside Nazi Germany"; published by the Friends of the German People's Front in London. On its ~~for~~ front page I found the following remarks:

"According to Press reports a 'German National Council' has recently been formed at Zurich. Neither its program nor its representatives have anything in common with the German democratic movement. This Council is led by two former Nazis, Dr. H. Rauschning and Dr. Otto Strasser, and has neither influence nor connection with the democratic, anti-Nazi opposition..."

and why are those Friends of the German People's Front in London so definitely against the author " of "The Revolution of Nihilism", and against the active leader of the anti-Nazi Black Front? Do they dislike them merely because of their being "former Nazis"? But this is exactly what several influential German Communists are. Or are Rauschning and Strasser unpopular with the radicals because they are considered as being not progressive, not socialistic enough? No; what the Communists hold against those two men is, surprisingly enough, above all their "lack of patriotism." For, in the opinion of the Friends of the People's Front, "Anyone who agrees to a dismemberment of Germany... has failed to learn anything from history."

The whole discussion of a future "dismemberment" or division of the Reich is a striking symptom of the unfortunate confusion in our ranks. ~~For there scarcely exists any correspondence of opinions between the varied~~ ^{factions} ~~if it comes to the delicate question of the future construction and the future state of Germany.~~ Not a single one of the party leaders, to be sure, has ever pronounced in public that a partition of the Reich would be advisable or tolerable. The assertion that Rauschning or Strasser, both being rather nationalistic, ever made such a statement, certainly is untrue. Some ~~liberal or conservative~~ ^{individual} authors, however, have urgently recommended the total disarmament and the division of the Reich, after Hitler's fall, as the only reasonable solution. Emil Ludwig, for instance - an independent writer who does not represent any party - seems to be possessed by the idea that no European peace could be permanent as long as the Reich exists. The Austrian poet and novelist Franz Werfel declared that there was indeed something like a "better Germany", namely Austria and Catholic Bavaria. Prussia, therefore, should be isolated, while Vienna has to become the cultural and political center of a "European Germany" to come.

There are many shades of different ideas, hopes and convictions. The Trotzkyists, who still have their own paper by the name of "Unser Wort", are not interested in anything but in the world revolution. Herr Schwarzschild expressed his opinion, already before the war started, that what Germany really needs was an occupation army which would stay in Berlin for quite a while, and would finally "educate" our nation. (Thus he preached in an article, entitled "The Day After...", which was published in his own magazine.)/- The Social Democrats positively are for the maintenance of Greater Germany, as the conception of an Austro-German Anschluss always represented an essential element of their political tradition. The leader of the Austrian party, Otto Bauer, who recently died in exile, ^{used to} favour the union between Austria and the German Republic. His spiritual successor, ~~Julius Deutsch~~, the general Julius Deutsch who has been active in the Spanish Civil War, faithfully follows his pattern. In his paper, "Der Sozialistische Kampf", he bitterly attacks all those who keep on propagating an independant Austria, for instance the Austrian monarchists. ~~there are rumors that Prince Stahrenberg tries to act as a mediator between the conservative and socialistic elements~~ On the other hand there exists, paradoxically enough, a certain agreement between the German Communists and the Austrian monarchists, as both groups think Austria should again be separated from the Reich. In other respects a partial understanding between ~~the~~ Communists and Social Democrats is noticeable. For they agree at least upon one matter; that Germany, after Hitler's fall, must remain un-divided, independant, and fully armed. ^{Friedrich} Otto Stampfer, editor of the Social Democratic paper in Paris "Der Neue Vorwärts", has announced that we need, above all, a "people's army", and as to the Communists they apparently share this wishdream.

It is remarkable how patriotic the German radicals have become. The same Marxists who used to ridicule and to attack in exaggerated

terms the very notion of nationalism, now have seemingly changed into ardent patriots. You might get the impression, while you keep listening to them, that the actual responsibility for the Nazi horrors entirely lies with the British. I frequently have to remind radical German friends

of the minor fact that Hitler, after all, still resides in Berchtesgaden not in Downing Street. *and that it was the Reichswehr not the British army which invaded Poland.* To over-emphasize ~~the existence of the~~ *Poland.*

~~"Other Germany" (which, incidentally, exists) and the innocence of the~~ German people, is almost as dangerous a mistake as the other one of identifying Hitler with the German nation. ~~The Other Germany exists; but if it would be somewhat stronger and more courageous, there should have been at least an attempt of the people to get rid of Hitler, and there would not be any war.~~

The German Communists complain that the French government refuses to collaborate with any German exiles but with the most reactionary ones. The radical German periodicals in Paris are banned, while any utterance coming from Otto Strasser, Dr. Rauschning, the Kaiser in Doorn, or some Habsburg prince, ^{is} respectfully ~~has~~ quoted in the daily papers. The present rulers of France ^{desire} ~~actually want~~, according to the German comrades, a future Germany that would be reactionary and at once completely powerless. There may be a germ of truth in these bitter statements; many facts, ^{prove} however, ~~never mentioned by the Communists~~ - how one-sided and distorted they really are. Let alone the question of whether men like Rauschning and Strasser actually deserve the designation of "reactionaries." Just a few days ago, a leading German Communist told me that Mr. Rauschning in the bottom of his heart was an adherent of Hermann Göring. Incidentally I read in the next morning's paper that Rauschning had exposed Göring in the most radical way, by telling, or rather by confirming, the amazing story of the Reichstag fire in which the Field Marshal has played so sinister and central a rôle. As to Otto Strasser, he left the Nazi party ~~for~~ ^{because} he felt Hitler not to be socialistic enough. His last book deals with a man

whom one could hardly call a reactionary hero; with Thomas Masaryk. But if we even assume that both Strasser and Rauschning actually were hyper-conservatives; they are by no means the only ones whose writings are allowed to be published in France. The papers of the Social Democrats and varied other left or liberal groups are still admitted as well. Willi Münzenberg, ~~for instance~~, who used to be the most influential ^{German} Communist for many years, keeps on editing in Paris his political weekly by the name of "Die Zukunft." It is true that Münzenberg has definitely turned against the Communist party. He did not renounce, however, his socialistic convictions. He wrote in "Die Zukunft", on November 24, 1939: "

"With Hitler the most shameful period of German history reaches its end. After him, the only solution for the German people will be a social system that permits to overcome the horrible economic and cultural consequences of these gruesome years, and which cooperates, within a European Federation, in the peaceful solution of international problems; the system of a liberal and socialistic State."

There it is, the problem and the demand which is much more essential than the rather technical question of how to change or to maintain the frontiers of Germany. Many of us think that it is not of our business to demand from the Allies the division of Germany; nor should we announce our abhorrence of so remote a possibility. It depends on countless unpredictable circumstances whether or not such an incisive measure will be advisable and practicable. It depends, above all, on the spirit in which such a measure would be conceived and accomplished. Bismarck's Reich does not exist any longer; the Führer himself has destroyed it. The Greater Germany he ^{has} created, is not the same Reich the liberals of 1848 used to dream of. The "Other Germany", the German opposition could and ^{has} would accept even the division of this Greater Germany, provided that it will be carried out in the sense and spirit of European reconciliation, and with the admitted aim of preparing the necessary Federation of the European States.

There are many exiles, either organized in varied parties or independent, who feel - as I myself do - that the most immediate and most urgent task is to get rid of Hitler. He must be beaten. The allies must win the war. Instead of lamenting about an "unfair peace" which they might eventually dictate, we should do our best to create, among our own people, the psychological and political conditions that would enable the victors to make a decent and lasting arrangement.

What we need, and now more urgently so than ever before, is the collaboration and concentration of those good Germans who really deserve not a coalition of parties but a union of well-meaning people. The honorable names of good Europeans and good Democrats. This new and most timely conception of the People's Front excludes only two groups. There ^{will} ~~must~~ be ^{no} ~~any~~ room for those red-baiters who joyfully would accept any kind of government, after Hitler's fall, as long as it is solidly anti-socialistic. Men like Leopold Schwarzschild would apparently love to swear obedience to Fritz Thyssen, the houses of Hohenzollern and Habsburg, the Bank of England, and the general Brauchitsch, under the only condition that no Soviet ambassador will be admitted at Berlin. The patriotic Marxists, on the other hand, are longing for a powerful Reich, allied with a still more powerful Soviet Union. Their supreme wish-dream obviously is to see Germany ruled by a Berlin branch of the GPU which would work still more efficiently than even the Gestapo. Both solutions look pretty sinister and discouraging to the majority of the political German exiles.

The German people must find its way to the Federation of European States which we should help to prepare. In order to do so we must not fraternize with Asia nor with the most reactionary elements of Western Europe. We do not need any "new Metternich" as we did not have any Napoléon. Nor do we want any Napoléon since we did not have any revolution, but a bloody, dreary anarchy. What we need and want is real Democracy which guarantees order, freedom, social progress, and the

peaceful collaboration with all other nations. The essential topic of all of our discussions and speculations, hopes and preparations must be and must remain this delicate and inspiring notion of the coming European Democracy.