

[Excerpts from] FASCISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION

A Study of the economics and Politics of the Extreme Stages of Capitalism in Decay

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[full text at:

<https://revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/DuttFascismandSocRev.pdf>]

Week One Reading

INTRODUCTION

A very sharp issue confronts present society.

Events move with great speed. The traditional forms of thought still cling to the remnants of past periods.

The victory and advance of Fascism over an extending area has come as a brutal shock to millions. Yet Fascism is no sudden growth. For a decade and a half the whole post-war social development has been incubating Fascism.

To all those who have hitherto accepted as unquestioned the existing social forms and their continuity, and above all to those who have looked to the possibility of peaceful progressive advance within those existing social forms, and who have dismissed the revolutionary outlook as the fantasy of a minority, Fascism, and more especially the victory of Fascism in an advanced industrial country such as Germany, has come as a brutal shock. It may yet prove a salutary shock, if it can open their eyes to the real issues of our period.

With every year, and with every month, that the long overdue social revolution in Western Europe and America, for which the world war of 1914 already gave the signal—that is, the ending of the private ownership of the means of production which inevitably produces the increasing contradictions, anarchy, destruction and barbarism of the present day—is delayed, denied and

postponed, the world situation grows more desperate, and the whole future of society is brought into question.

The world war of 1914, the opening of the world socialist revolution in 1917, the partial revolutions and civil struggles succeeding the war, the post-war chaos, the world economic crisis since 1929, and now the victory and advance of Fascism and approach to a second world war—these are the successive warnings of the real issues of the present stage.

Fascism has already been the subject of an enormous discussion and literature over twelve years, and above all over the past two years. Yet the treatment of Fascism has hardly yet brought out its full significance.

On the one side, Fascism has been widely treated as simply the expression of brutality and violence, of militarism and suppression, of national and racial egoism, of the revolt against culture, against the old slogans of liberty, equality and brotherhood.

On the other side, Fascism has been treated as the expression of national rebirth, of the emergence of youth, of the end of decadent liberalism and intellectualism, of the advance to a balanced and organised social order.

In order to get closer to the true character of Fascism, it is necessary to go deeper, to see Fascism in relation to the whole character of modern social development, of which Fascism is an expression and reflection, and above all to get down to the basic movement and driving forces of economy and technique' of which the social and political forms, including Fascism, are only the reflection.

Such an examination will reveal beyond dispute that the modern development of technique and productive powers has reached a point at which the existing capitalist forms are more and more incompatible with the further development of production and utilisation of technique. There is war between them, increasingly violent and open since 1914, and entering into a new and extreme stage in the world economic crisis and its outcome. One must end the other. Either the advance of the productive forces must end capitalism. Or the maintenance of capitalism must end the advance of production and technique and begin a reverse movement. In fact the delay of the revolution has meant that the reverse movement has already begun throughout the world outside the Soviet Union.

Only two paths are therefore open before present society.

One is to endeavour to strangle the powers of production, to arrest development, to destroy material and human forces, to fetter international exchange, to check science and invention, to crush the development of ideas and thought, and to concentrate on the Organisation of limited, self-sufficient, non-progressive hierarchic societies in a state of mutual war—in short, to force

back society to a more primitive stage in order to maintain the existing class domination. This is the path of Fascism, the path to which the bourgeoisie in all modern countries where it rules is increasingly turning, the path of human decay.

The other alternative is to organise the new productive forces as social forces, as the common wealth of the entire existing society for the rapid and enormous raising of the material basis of society, the destruction of poverty, ignorance and disease and of class and national separations, the unlimited carrying forward of science and culture, and the Organisation of the world communist society in which all human beings will for the first time be able to reach full stature and play their part in the collective development of the future humanity. This is the path of Communism, the path to which the working masses who are the living representatives of the productive forces and whose victory over capitalist class domination can alone achieve the realisation of this path, are increasingly turning; the path which modern science and productive development makes both possible and necessary, and which opens up undreamt-of possibilities for the future development of the human race.

Which of these alternatives will conquer? This is the sharp question confronting human society to-day.

Revolutionary Marxism is confident that, because the productive forces are on the side of Communism, Communism will conquer; that the victory of Communism, which is expressed in the victory of the proletariat, is ultimately inevitable as the sole possible final outcome of the existing contradictions; that the nightmare of the other alternative, of the "Dark Ages" whose creeping shadow begins already to haunt the imagination of current thinkers, will yet be defeated, will be defeated by the organised forces of international Communism.

But this inevitability is not independent of the human factor. On the contrary, it can only be realised through the human factor. Hence the urgency of the fight against Fascism, and for the victory of the proletariat, on which the whole future of human society depends. The time grows shorter; the sands are running through the glass.

To many, the alternative of Fascism or Communism is no welcome alternative, and they would prefer to deny it and to regard both as rival, and in their view even parallel, forms of extremism. They dream of a third alternative which shall be neither, and shall realise a peaceful harmonious progress without class struggle, through the forms of capitalist "democracy," "planned capitalism," etc.

This dream of a third alternative is in fact illusory. On the one side, it is the echo of the conceptions of a past period, of the period of liberal capitalism, which was already perishing with the advent of imperialism, and which cannot be revived when the conditions that gave rise to it have passed away, in the stage of the extreme decay of capitalism and of the extreme intensification of the class struggle. Even the caricature of democratic forms which is still

precariously maintained in the imperialist states of Western Europe and America is increasingly supplemented and displaced by more and more open dictatorial and repressive methods (increase of executive powers, diminution of the role of Parliament, growth of emergency powers, extension of police action and violence, restriction of the rights of speech and meeting, restriction of the right to strike, violent suppression of demonstrations and strikes, combined with the typical methods of social demagoguery of the millionaire Press, stampede elections, etc.). The trend of capitalism in all countries towards fascist forms is unmistakable, and is wider than the question of a Mussolini or a Hitler.

On the other side, the dream of a “planned capitalism” is already an unconscious groping after Fascism without facing its logical implications. For in practice the endeavour to realise the self-contradictory aim of a “planned capitalism” can only be pursued along the path of Fascism, of repression of the productive forces and of the working class.

Thus the myth of a third alternative is in fact no alternative, but in reality a part of the advance towards Fascism.

Fascism is not inevitable. Fascism is not a necessary stage of capitalist development through which all countries must pass. The social revolution can forestall Fascism, as it has done in Russia. But if the social revolution is delayed, then Fascism becomes inevitable.

Fascism can be fought. Fascism can be fought and defeated. But Fascism can only be fought and defeated if it is fought without illusions and with clear understanding of the issues. The causes of Fascism lie deep-rooted in existing society. Capitalism in its decay breeds Fascism. Capitalist democracy in decay breeds Fascism. The only final guarantee against Fascism, the only final wiping out of the causes of Fascism, is the victory of the proletarian dictatorship.

Fascism offers no solution of a possible stable social organisation to replace the existing society in dissolution. On the contrary, Fascism carries forward all the contradictions of existing class society, because Fascism is only a form, a means of capitalist class rule in conditions of extreme decay. Not only that, but Fascism carries forward the contradictions of existing class society to their most extreme point, when the contradictions are laid bare in open civil war and the organisation of the entire capitalist state upon the basis of permanent civil war. Fascism is thus society at war within itself. On this basis, Fascism, so far from being a solution of existing social problems, represents their extreme intensification to the point of final disruption. The only final outcome can be the victory of Communism, because Communism alone contains within itself the solution of the contradictions.

But in the interim period of struggle and transition, if it is prolonged, if Fascism succeeds for a period in organising its basis of civil war and violent reactionary dictatorship, an enormous consequent destruction of material wealth, of human lives and of culture, can take place, and

increasingly threatens. Therein is the desperate urgency of the fight, not only for the ultimately inevitable victory of Communism, but for the rapid victory of Communism.

The urgency of the present issues needs no emphasis. All sense the gathering storms. A host of issues, of war, of armaments, of Fascism, of the economic chaos, are taken up. But none of these issues can be taken in abstraction. It is necessary to see them in relation to the whole social development, to the basic issue underlying all these forms, the issue of the rule of the bourgeoisie or of the proletariat, of capitalism or socialism, on which the future of the human race depends.

Present society is ripe, is rotten-ripe for the social revolution. Delay does not mean pacific waiting on the issue. The dialectic of reality knows no standing still. Delay means ever-extending destruction, decay, barbarism. The words of Lenin on the eve of October apply with gathering force to the present world situation: "Delay means death."

May, 1934.

R. P. D.

CHAPTER I - TECHNIQUE AND REVOLUTION

[Summary: As capitalism spirals further into the insoluble contradiction of its monopoly stage, stagnation and decay become that much more apparent. Dutt details more recent examples of the capitalist market deliberately retarding technical progress, and illustrates how the more wealthy and advanced capitalist nations can no longer utilize the more modern methods of production (which "mak[e] possible the most extensive and rapid production with the minimum of labour"); meanwhile, these same technologies become more prevalent within the Soviet Union. Likewise, mass unemployment spreads further throughout the capitalist world, along with significantly lowered living standards for the masses, while the inverse becomes true for the Soviet nations.

It is in these self-destructive factors—the "social decay" that capitalism naturally leads to—that Dutt finds the roots of Fascism.]

Capital can no longer utilise the productive forces. Capital can no longer utilise the full labour-power of the productive population. Monopoly capitalism is more and more visibly choking the whole Organisation of production and exchange.

[...]

Two alternatives, and only two, confront existing society at the present stage of development of the productive forces and of social organisation. One is to throttle the development of the productive forces in order to save class-society, to destroy material wealth, to destroy millions of "superfluous" human beings in the slow rot of starvation and the quick furnace of war, to crush

down the working-class movement with limitless violence, to arrest the development of science and culture and education and technique, to revert to more primitive forms of limited, isolated societies, and thus to save for a while the rule of the possessing classes at the expense of a return to barbarism and spreading decay. This is the path which finds its most complete and organised expression in Fascism.

The other is to organise the productive forces for the whole society by abolishing the class ownership of the means of production, and building up the classless communist society which can alone utilise and organise the modern productive forces. This is the path of Communism, of the revolutionary working class. [...]

CHAPTER II - THE END OF STABILISATION

[Summary: *Following the end of WWI, capitalism attains a brief period of stabilisation due to (1) the defeat of the world socialist revolution; (2) the use of social democracy as a means to appease the working class and quell the building revolutionary spirit; (3) the strength of American capitalism, which had not been severely harmed by the war and which had not yet reached into a further stage of decay. Social democracy, in particular, proves to be an effective means for producing reformist propaganda amongst the working class, in masking the class conflict, and in disorganizing the revolutionary movement. When that period of stability comes to an end, the working class is left unprepared for the crisis ahead.*]

CHAPTER III - THE NEW ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

A well-known statement of Lenin in 1920 with reference to the post-war crisis gave warning against the illusion that there is "absolutely no way out" for capitalism; on the contrary, "there are no absolutely hopeless situations."

The meaning of this statement is often misunderstood, because it is commonly quoted out of its context. Lenin was in fact giving warning against "two widespread errors": first, the error of the "bourgeois economists," who fail to see the basic character of the crisis and regard it as a temporary "unsettlement"; and second, the error of the passive revolutionists, who expect an automatic collapse of capitalism. Against the latter he pointed out that the "proof" of the collapse of capitalism can only be, not any abstract logical demonstration, but the successful action of the proletariat in overthrowing it. Until then, capitalism remains in power, drags on somehow, finds its own "way out" each time, no matter what disturbances it passes through. In other words, capitalism does not escape from the general crisis into which it has fallen since 1914, and which is inevitable in the present stage of conflict between the forces of production and the existing relations of capitalist property ownership; it only passes from one stage of crisis to another; there is no question of a temporary "unsettlement." But capitalism does not finally fall until the

proletariat overthrows it. This is the dialectic of the general crisis of capitalism which Lenin was concerned to demonstrate.

The subsequent fourteen years have abundantly confirmed the truth of this analysis. On the one hand, so long as the proletariat is not ready and strong enough, capitalism remains in power; on the other hand, capitalism does not recover from its mortal sickness. It passes from one stage of crisis only to fall into a new stage. At each stage, if the proletariat is not yet ready to deal the death-blow, there remains a capitalist "way out" which prevails. But the capitalist "way out" is no harmonious solution, no simple restoration of order to a temporary "unsettlement." The capitalist "way out" is at each stage a way of increasing destruction, of mass-starvation, of violence, of war, of decay. This is the lesson of the two decades since the outbreak of the war. And this is the character of the present stage of the economics and politics of capitalism resulting from the world economic crisis, and carrying to an extreme point the whole development of imperialist decay.

Destruction in place of construction; restricted production in place of increased production; closed "national" (i.e., imperialist) economic blocs in place of the formal objective of international interdependence; social and political repression in place of liberalism—these are the characteristic watchwords of capitalism in the present period.

[Summary: In the first section of this chapter, Dutt looks into the increasingly prevalent tendency to destroy commodities for economic purposes. While the tendency itself is nothing new for capitalism, Dutt considers three outstanding characteristics of the modern stage of capitalist policy: (i) "the gigantic scale of destruction, conducted over entire principal world areas of production, and calculated in relation to world stocks"; (ii) "the direct government Organisation and subsiding of such destruction and restriction of production by all the leading imperialist governments"; (iii) "the extension of destruction, not only to the destruction of existing stocks of commodities, but to the destruction of the productive forces, the ploughing up of crops and sown areas, the artificial limitation of production, the dismantling of machinery, as well as holding unused the labour power of millions of workers."

In the second section, Dutt details a growing cultural distrust of new technology, which Dutt attributes to capitalist propaganda, driven by the need to limit production.]

3. The Revolt against Science.

The more and more conscious reactionary role of modern capitalism, and the growing ideological revolt against the machine and sense of antagonism to the development of technique, necessarily expresses itself on a wide front in the entire ideological field. A transformation in the dominant trends of capitalist ideology becomes more and more conspicuous. This transformation

expresses itself in the growing revolt against science, against reason, against cultural development, against all the traditional philosophical liberal conceptions which were characteristic of ascendant capitalism; in favour of religion, idealistic illusions, denial of the validity of science, mysticism, spiritualism, multiplying forms of superstition, cults of the primitive, cults of violence, racial charlatanry ("blood" and "Aryan" nonsense) and all forms of obscurantism.

This tendency was already visible from the outset of the imperialist epoch, and especially before the war. It has enormously increased in the post-war period.

The relationship between science and the bourgeoisie has never in fact been an easy one. Only in the first revolutionary period of the bourgeoisie (in seventeenth-century England or in later eighteenth-century France) has there been real enthusiasm. In the nineteenth century, with the bourgeoisie in power, although the enormous profits to be won from the results of science led to universal official recognition, laudations and a somewhat stingy financial support, the suspicion was always present that the development of the scientific outlook might undermine the social foundations. Hence the gigantic battles of the nineteenth century over each advance of science. The leaders of nineteenth-century bourgeois science were still warriors in the midst of a widely hostile social camp. Education was still in general jealously guarded on pre-scientific lines and under clerical control.

But what is conspicuous about the present period is that the offensive against science is to-day led, no longer merely by the professional reactionaries and clericalists, but above all by the majority of the more prominent, officially recognised and highly placed leaders of bourgeois science. The main bulk of the officially distinguished, be-knighted and decorated scientists of the bourgeoisie have openly joined the clerical camp. They proclaim with wearisome iteration the reconciliation of science and religion, the overthrow for the thousandth time of the errors of materialism, the limitations of scientific knowledge, and the supremacy of the "higher" aspects of life which cannot be approached along scientific lines. In a spate of lectures, essays, treatises and books, whose popular, vulgarising and often grossly unscientific character betrays their propagandist aim, they endeavour to utilise each new advance of research and discovery, not in order therefrom to reach a more scientific understanding of reality, but in order to throw doubt on the whole basis of science, and on this ground to proclaim the vindication of the particular tribal gods of their locality.

These utterances, still further vulgarised, are broadcast a millionfold by all the machinery of capitalist publicity as the "last word of science." In this way, at the same time as for technical and for strategical purposes science has to be more and more widely employed in practice, a basically reactionary and even anti-scientific outlook is endeavoured to be pumped into all the capitalist-controlled forms of "popular culture."

[Summary: Dutt considers recent attempts by leaders of bourgeois science to (i) proclaim Darwin's anti-religious theories obsolete; (ii) attempt to reconcile Darwinism with the religious concepts that he fought; and (iii) promote the idea of a dominant spiritual (anti-materialist) belief amongst the scientific community.]

We are not here concerned with the philosophical or theoretical significance of this transformation. What for present purposes is the social significance and role of this development.

The general fact of this avowed transformation of outlook of the majority of outstanding official representatives of bourgeois science, the loudly heralded movement against "materialism" and "the limitations of science," towards "idealism" and religion, is familiar ground. How far this alleged movement of opinion is really true of the best bourgeois scientists, or of the mass of younger working rank-and-file scientists, is less important than the fact that the dominant official influences both in the bourgeois scientific world, and in general bourgeois discussion, actively support, foster, patronise, encourage and in every possible way advertise and press forward this trend.

What is not equally clear to all is the direct connection of this ideological trend with the whole process of capitalism in decay. It is at once its reflection, and helps to carry it forward. The revolt against science, which bourgeois society to-day encourages in the ideological sphere, at the same time as it utilises science in practice, is not only the expression of a dying and doomed social class; it is an essential part of the campaign of reaction. This is the basis which helps to prepare the ground for all the quackeries and charlatanries, of chauvinism, racial theories, anti-semitism, Aryan grandmothers, mystic swastikas, divine missions, strong-man saviours, and all the rest of the nonsense through which alone capitalism to-day can try to maintain its hold a little longer. All this nonsense may appear on a cool view, when some particularly wild ebullition of a Hitler or a Goebbels about blood and the joy of the dagger and the Germanic man and the primeval forest, is produced, as highly irrational and even insane. But in fact it is as completely rational and calculated, for the present purposes of capitalism, as a machine-gun or a Zinoviev Letter election. There is method in the madness. For capitalism can no longer present any rational defence, any progressive role, any ideal whatever to reach the masses of the population. Therefore it can only endeavour to save itself on a wave of obscurantism, holding out fantastic symbols and painted substitutes for ideals in order to cover the reality of the universally bated moneybags. Fascism is the final reduction of this process to a completely worked out technique.

In unity with this revolt against science goes the general cultural reaction, the revolt against culture, the revolt against education, the cutting down of education in all capitalist countries, the

increasing reactionary discipline and militarisation in the universities and schools, and-the final and complete symbol of the culminating stage revealed by Fascism-the burning of the books.¹

4. The Revolt against "Democracy" and Parliament.

This economic, social and ideological process finds also its political reflection. From the outset of the imperialist era liberalism and parliamentarism has in fact been on the wane. Parliamentary democracy was essentially the form through which the rising bourgeoisie carried through its struggle against feudalism and against old privileged forms, carrying the working class in their wake in this struggle. On this basis was built up liberalism in its heyday in the nineteenth century. The workers were drawn in the tow of bourgeois liberal politics. It was the achievement of Marxism to cut through this bondage. In Britain, where the capitalist world monopoly gave the bourgeoisie superior resources and the possibility to create a privileged section of a minority of the workers, Marxism made the slowest progress, and liberal-labour politics survived longest.

As the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie began to replace the old struggle against the pre-bourgeois forms, a political shifting followed. The old Liberal Parties began to wane before Social Democracy; the bourgeoisie increasingly coalesced with the remnants of the older (monarchist, militarist, landowning) forces. Nevertheless, parliamentary democracy remained as the most useful basis of the bourgeoisie for the deception of the masses and holding in of the class struggle, so long as this means of restraining the workers was adequate.

To-day, when the intensification of the class struggle can no longer be held in by these forms, the bourgeoisie increasingly turns its back on parliamentary democracy in favour of more direct and open forms of coercion and the authoritarian state. This is a measure of the weakening of the bourgeoisie.

¹ A sidelight from another angle of the anti-intellectual movement of capitalism in decline is afforded by the following extract from the technical journal, *The Illustrated Carpenter and Builder*:

"Nowadays admission to many factories depends on passing 'intelligence tests.' These tests are not always designed to select the most intelligent of applicants; for in a certain Continental factory the management admit that they use intelligence tests to eliminate the alert and intelligent among the applicants, because the work is so sub- divided and mechanised that its monotony has the effect of turning intelligent workers into Communists."

It is a striking indication of the social and cultural decay inherent in the final stages of capitalism, when elaborate scientific methods begin to be used, no longer to promote, but to eliminate intelligence from among the workers, because intelligent workers become Communists.

The era of imperialism, of centralised monopoly capitalism, already increasingly made the parliamentary democratic forms a caricature. While in appearance the extension of the suffrage was increasing "democracy," in reality the governing role was being directly removed from parliament and concentrated in the executive, into the Cabinet, and from the Cabinet into the Inner Cabinet, and even into extra-parliamentary forms (Committee of Imperial Defence, etc.) wholly removed from "democracy," (so the preparation of the war of 1914: compare the statement of the Conservative, Lord Hugh Cecil, that the war was decided "not by the House of Commons or by the electorate, but by the concurrence of Ministers and ExMinisters," letter to the *Times*, April 29, 190.) Corresponding to the realities of monopoly capitalism, the routine of government was in fact in the hands of an increasingly strengthened and centralised bureaucracy; effective power and the decision of policy lay with the handful of leaders of finance-capital; while the puppet-show of parliament, responsible Ministers, elections and nominally opposing parties, became increasingly recognised as a decorative appendage of the Constitution for purposes of window-dressing. This was equally conspicuous in the "democracies" of the United States, France and Britain.

Nevertheless, Liberalism enjoyed one last blooming in the earlier or pre-war period of imperialism—but in the new form of Liberal imperialism with its deceptive programme of "social reform." The super-profits of imperialism provided the means in the imperialist countries to endeavour to buy off the revolt of the advancing workers with a show of meagre concessions to a minority. Bismarck had already shown the way to utilise "social reform" legislation, alongside coercion, in order to endeavour to stem the advance of Socialism. On the basis of imperialist exploitation was built up the short-lived twentieth century renaissance of Social Reform Liberalism of the Lloyd George era, which tried to stem the rising tide of working-class revolt with a loudly advertised show of concessions and concern for the "condition of the people," and with noisy campaigns of denunciation of the landlords and the aristocracy, while the real aims of imperialism and war-preparation were pressed forward, and all the forces of the State were employed against the militant working-class struggle.

The Social Democratic and Labour Parties after the war tried to carry forward the role of Social Reform Liberal Imperialism, but under basically changed conditions—in a far more advanced stage of the class struggle, and in the midst of the crisis and decline of capitalism. Therefore they could not attain any corresponding measure of success; the appeal they could make to the masses on behalf of parliamentary reformism no longer evoked enthusiasm; the reforms they could achieve were limited by the economic crisis, the weakening national finances, and the weight of the war-debts they had to carry; the repressive and coercive measures they had to exercise against the class struggle were far heavier.

But even the limited measure of social reform concessions began to break down and dwindle under the pressure of the economic crisis. With the rising colonial revolts, the basis of

imperialism began to weaken. The stream of super-profits diminished; the conflict of the rival monopolist capitalisms became more intense. Thus a reverse movement set in, no longer to the extension of social concessions, but on the contrary to the cutting down and withdrawal of concessions already granted. This process received its powerful demonstration in the history and fall of the Second Labour Government and the crisis of 1931.

From this point the class struggle is forced increasingly into the open, bursting through the thin cover of liberal and parliamentary democratic illusions. Even Social Democracy is forced to speak of the "collapse of reformism" and the "end of social reform," and the consequent inevitability of a "frontal" attack on capital (so the general propaganda line of the Leicester Labour Party Conference in 1932), at the same time as it merges in practice still more completely into alliance with monopoly capitalism and repression of the workers (the "Public Corporations" line, etc.). The confrontation of the working class and capitalism can no longer be covered by liberal and reformist pretences of improving conditions under capitalism.

From this point the demand becomes increasingly strong from the representatives of capitalism for the throwing aside or modification of the old parliamentary democratic forms, which no longer serve their purpose, and the establishment of open and strengthened forms of repression and dictatorship. The revolt against "democracy" and "parliament," which was already marked in bourgeois circles before the war, but was still confined in direct expression to the narrower reactionary circles, now become general in all current expression. [Summary: *Dutt cites numerous bourgeois figures who demand "a holiday of parliaments," "a world dictator," and for a country to "be managed as a great business was managed; Dutt also cites parallels in the Press and amongst parliamentarians.*]. The Social Democratic and Labour Parties, moving parallel with capitalism, undergo a similar transformation of outlook, and begin to speak increasingly of the "limitations of parliament" and the necessity of strengthening "discipline" and "authority" in the State ("Neo-Socialism" in France, the Socialist League propaganda in England; see also Laski's *Democracy in Crisis*, 1933, and Vandervelde's *L'Alternative*, 1933, for the weakening of the old abstract-democratic assumptions).

The practice of modern capitalism moves increasingly away from parliamentary-democratic forms to strengthened and more open coercion and class-dictatorship. This applies not only to the directly Fascist states, but also to the diminishing number of imperialist states which still remain nominally "democratic." The Roosevelt emergency powers, and the National Government in Britain, represent stages and phases of a process of transformation, corresponding in some respects to the Brüning stage in Germany. Modern legislation increases the powers of the executive, of the bureaucracy and of the police, and more and more restricts the limits of the legal working-class movement, of the right of meeting and association, and of the right to strike. This process of the "transformation of democracy" in the Western imperialist countries, and preparation of the ground for Fascism, is further examined in a later chapter.

The stream against parliamentary democracy is rising on all sides, although this does not mean that capitalism has yet exhausted its uses. But the real issue is commonly confused by the vulgar propagandist treatment that the attack on "democracy" is a parallel attack of Communism and Fascism. On the contrary. The critique of Communism or Marxism against capitalist democracy is not that it is "too democratic," but that it is "not democratic enough," that it is in reality only a deceitful cover for capitalist dictatorship, and that real democracy for the workers can only be achieved when the proletarian dictatorship breaks the power of the capitalist class. The movement of modern capitalism, on the other hand, against parliamentary democracy is a movement to strengthen repression of the working class and establish the open and violent dictatorship of monopoly capital. The reality of this issue between oligarchic dictatorship and working-class freedom breaks through the old illusory trappings of parliamentary democracy.

5. "National Self-Sufficiency."

A no less strongly marked expression of the modern tendencies of capitalism is the movement towards so-called "national self-sufficiency," "autarchy," "national planning," "isolationism," etc. This tendency has come most strongly to the front since the world economic crisis, and the breakdown of the World Economic Conference revealed its strength. This development is the logical working out of imperialist decay.

Of this tendency as the dominant tendency in the latest phase of world politics the League of Nations economic expert, Sir Arthur Salter, wrote in his standard work *Recovery* in 1931:

World trade may be restricted to small dimensions, through every country excluding imports of everything which (at whatever expense) it can make or produce at home. Along this line of development, America might withdraw within herself, arresting and almost abandoning her foreign investments, sacrificing her export trade, and cultivating an isolated self-sufficiency on the lower level of prosperity which this would necessitate. As the world closed against her, Great Britain might be forced to supplement such preferential trade with the Dominions and India as may be practicable, with a policy of exploiting and closing in her non-self-governing Empire from the rest of the world, against all the traditions and principles of her history. This line of development would mean loss to every country, impoverishment to countries like Switzerland which have no similar resources, and an organisation of the world into separate units and groups which would soon be dangerous and ultimately fatal to world peace. It is along this path that the world is now proceeding.

(Sir Arthur Salter, *Recovery*, pp. 192-3.)

This description, although faithfully reflecting one side of the tendency, and to some extent indicating the possible outcome, is not a fully correct description of the actual process. For, while the propaganda speaks in terms of internal self sufficiency, the reality of the policy remains the fight of the imperialist powers, on the basis of this strengthened internal organisation, *for the world market*.

In fact, the movement towards the closed monopolist area is not in itself new, but is inherent in the whole development of imperialism, whose essential character is the denial and ending of free trade. What is new is only the extreme intensity with which this monopolist policy is now pursued, and the complexity of the weapons which are now brought into play for its realisation.

Not only the old tariff weapons, which are now brought to unheard of heights, but a host of new weapons—surtaxes variable at a moment's notice, quotas, embargoes, exchange restrictions, currency control, complex trade alliances, State subsidies, and direct State economic control—are now brought into play by the imperialist giants in their ever more desperate conflict for closed markets, for privileged areas of exploitation, and for control of the sources of raw materials.

The intensified conflict of the imperialist Powers for the shrinking world market makes this development to new and ever fiercer weapons of economic warfare, and essentially reactionary choking of the channels of free world trade, not merely some foolish and mistaken policy of particular statesmen, but the *inevitable* development and working out of the inner laws of imperialism. In vain the theoretical economic experts of the League of Nations throw up their hands in distress and deplore the universal “loss” and “impoverishment” caused by such politics; in vain the international conferences of economic experts, as at Geneva in 1927, pass unanimous resolutions condemning the destructive barbarism of such intensified economic warfare and calling for its reversal. The reality moves in the opposite direction to the resolutions. For there is no world capitalism as a whole to adopt the “enlightened” policies so patiently and incessantly held out by the economic theorists and would-be reformers of capitalism.[...] There is only the conflict of the rival imperialist powers; and in the conditions of this conflict the statesmen and leaders of finance-capital, however much they may regret the cost and the losses involved, see no alternative to the policies they find themselves compelled to pursue if they are not to go under. In the words of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the eve of the World Economic Conference, explaining the necessity of maintaining economic warfare:

Much as all of us regretted the economic warfare which had arisen between us and other countries, we must maintain that warfare as long as it was the other countries which had taken the aggressive. (Neville Chamberlain in the House of Commons, June 2, 1933.)

“We must maintain that warfare;” the fault lies with “the other countries.” This is the keynote of all the imperialist powers.

The most important expression of this transformation of policy in the present period was the passing of British Imperialism in 1932 from the old free-trade basis to a general tariff and the policy of the closed Empire. The long survival of free trade in Britain reflected the remnants of the old commercial and financial world domination. The Chamberlain propaganda in the beginning of the imperialist era, and the strongly reinforced Empire Economic Unity propaganda after the war showed the pressing forward of the new forces. As late as 1926 the Bankers' Manifesto issued in that year still called for a general movement towards lower tariffs and free trade. The Bankers' Manifesto of 1930, signed by all the most important financial leaders, marked the decisive turn, and the end of the last remains of the old era, with its declaration:

The immediate step for securing and extending the market for British goods lies in reciprocal trade agreements between the nations constituting the British Empire.

As a condition of securing these agreements, Great Britain must retain her open market for all Empire products, while being prepared to impose duties on all imports from all other countries.

The Ottawa Conference of 1932 showed the attempt to carry out this policy. Although in relation to the Dominions heavy concessions from Britain have only won small and doubtful gains, in relation to India and the Crown Colonies the policy is being pressed forward at full strength. The subsequent elaborate trading negotiations for exclusive agreements, the agricultural quota arrangements, and the use of the currency weapon to endeavour to organise a "sterling bloc," all mark the development of the new system.

Attempts are frequently made to present the new phase of intensified monopolist conflict in idealist form under cover of the slogans of "national planning," "national self-sufficiency," etc., or to compare it with the entirely opposite process of socialist construction of the Soviet Five-Year Plan. The manifest economic breakdown of the capitalist anarchy, contrasted with the simultaneous gigantic advance of the Soviet Five-Year Plan, led to an outburst of talk of "planning" in the capitalist world. A World Planning Congress was held at Amsterdam in 1931. A myriad abortive schemes for Five-Year Plans, Ten-Year Plans and Twenty-Year Plans were put forward in the capitalist countries. The Trades Union Congress in 1931, true to its line of alliance with capitalism and worship of "organised capitalism," adopted a resolution which declared:

This Congress welcomes the present tendency towards a planned and regulated economy in our national life.

(Belfast Trades Union Congress resolution, 1931.)

Needless to say, this description of the real process which is taking place is a complete deception. The conditions of private ownership of the means of production, and of production for profit, negate the elementary conditions for any real scientific economic planning, which requires a single ownership of the means of production and the Organisation of production for use. The reality which is described under the euphemism of "a planned and regulated economy in our national life" is intensified monopolist Organisation in a given imperialist area (not national area) for the purposes of sharpened world imperialist conflict and increased exploitation of the workers.

The complete passing over of the previous progressive elements in capitalism to the new reactionary policies is illustrated by the conversion of the former leading Liberal economic theorist, Keynes, in his articles on "National Self-Sufficiency" (*New Statesman and Nation*, July 8 and 15, 1933). Keynes writes:

I was brought up, like most Englishmen, to respect Free Trade not only as an economic doctrine which a rational and instructed person could not doubt but almost as a part of the moral law. I regarded departures from it as being at the same time an imbecility and an outrage. I thought England's unshakable Free Trade convictions, maintained for nearly a hundred years, to be both the explanation before man and the justification before heaven of her economic supremacy. As lately as 1923 I was writing that Free Trade was based on fundamental truths "which, stated with their due qualifications, no one can dispute who is capable of understanding the meaning of words."

Looking again to-day at the statements of these fundamental truths which I then gave, I do not find myself disputing them. Yet the orientation of my mind is changed; and I share this change of mind with many others.

He then sets out the drawbacks of which he has become aware in the working out of the system of international capitalism, and reaches the conclusion:

I sympathise therefore with those who would minimise, rather than those who would maximise economic entanglements between nations. . . . I am inclined to the belief that, after the transition is accomplished, a greater measure of national self-sufficiency and economic isolation between countries than existed in 1914 may tend to serve the cause of peace rather than otherwise.

More fully, he declares:

We wish to be as free as we can make ourselves from the interferences from the outside world. . . . Ideas, knowledge, art, hospitality, travel-these are the things which should of

their nature be international. But let goods be homespun whenever it is reasonably and conveniently possible, and above all let finance be primarily national.

It will be seen that the outlook of Keynes has begun to approximate to that of Hitler. This is a valuable measure of capitalism in decay. The reality behind the phraseology of a Keynes or other capitalist "national planners" must not be misunderstood. The belated discovery by Keynes of the naive, subjective and uncritical assumptions on which the old traditional "economic science" of the bourgeoisie, especially in its centre in England, was always based, does not here concern us. Marx long ago in the middle nineteenth century—before, not after the event—laid bare the local, temporary and insular character of the free trade economic theory as only the reflection of the historically caused British capitalist supremacy; and showed also how this phase would necessarily pass, how British capitalist supremacy would disappear, and with it the accompanying free trade theory, and liberal free trade capitalism would pass into monopolist capitalism and the period of decay. However, the empiricist can only learn from the behind-side of history; only the impact of the event compels the bourgeois professors of economics to begin to grope for the source of their errors. Keynes, the faithful believer in the divine ordainment of free trade and British economic supremacy until 1923, in 1933 announces his disillusionment with the pride of a pioneer.

What is important, however, is that this disillusionment or "change of mind" which he "shares with many others" is only the reflection of the change of capitalism, which he translates into universal conclusions in exactly the same subjective and uncritical way as the old free trade theory which he now condemns. For in fact, the issue is no longer between international free trade capitalism and monopolist capitalism in its modern forms. That issue has long been settled in practice. At the present time history has placed on the order of the day a different issue, of which he is unaware. The daring "advance" which he believes himself to have made in his thought, with his conversion from old liberal fetishes to "national self-sufficiency," leaves him in reality still well in the rear of events as the faithful servitor of the ruling class; he has simply passed from being the servitor of one phase of capitalism to becoming the servitor of the next.

In reality, "national self-sufficiency" is only the ideal cover for the modern forms of monopolist capitalism, extreme intensification of antagonisms, and advance to Fascism and war. Just as the imperialist blocs cover their predatory wars for the spoils of the world under cover of the slogan of "national defence," so they seek increasingly to-day to cover their monopolist economic Organisation and warfare under cover of the slogan of "national self-sufficiency." It is this advance to war which is the essential significance concealed behind the slogan of "national self-sufficiency."

6. War as the Final "Solution."

The culmination and final working out of all the new policies of capitalism under the stress of the world crisis is the advance to the second world war.

The effects of the world economic crisis enormously intensified all existing international antagonisms. The “pacific” “internationalist” language of the stabilisation period (Locarno, Briand-Stresemann, Kellogg Pact) gives place to increasingly open national-chauvinist language and policies. International conference after international conference breaks down. Even such limited success as attends the measures of internal reorganisation, of strengthening and tightening up of monopolist economy and aggressive power, within each imperialism, only leads to the intensification of world antagonisms. There is a renewed and ever more feverish pressing forward of armaments on all sides, and of industries connected with armaments. The World Disarmament Conference breaks down. Japan and Germany withdraw from the League of Nations. The issue of “disarmament” passes into the issue of “re-armament.” Alliances and counter alliances are actively built up on every side. The Naval Limitation Treaty passes into the melting-pot.

Alongside the limited “revival” of world production in 1933 and 1934--and, indeed, as an important element in this “revival”--the armaments industries leapt forward; their shares and profits rapidly rose. According to the calculations of the German Institute of Economic Research (Institut für Konjunkturforschung), the proportions of world armaments expenditure and of world production, on the basis of 1928 as 100, showed the following significant picture:

Armaments	Expenditure	World production
1913	64	54
1929	104	104
1930	106	87
1932	107	56

The war budgets of the principal countries for 1934 showed a sharp net increase: of Germany by £ 17 millions, of the United States by £ 16 millions, of France by £ 10 millions (together with a special internal loan for armaments of £ 40 millions), of Japan by £ 9 millions, of Britain by £ 5 millions (together with a supplementary air programme of £ 20 millions over five years).

The gathering expectation of the close approach of war finds increasingly frequent expression in the speeches of the statesmen of all countries. Typical was Mussolini's "War To-Day" declaration in his speech to the officers at the Italian army manoeuvres in August, 1934:

War is in the air and might break out at any moment. We must prepare, not for a war for to-morrow, but for a war of to-day.

In July, 1934, Marshal Petain declared in his speech to the Reserve Officers' Conference at St. Malo that the next war would break out like a "lightning flash." Baldwin, in advocating the new British air programme in the House of Commons in July, 1934, reported a greater sense of uneasiness, of malaise, in Europe than we have hitherto experienced. Churchill in the same debate declared:

The situation was serious and grave. Europe was moving ever more rapidly into a tightly drawn net. Almost all nations were arming, and every one felt that the danger they dreaded most of all was drawing nearer.

The propaganda of war spreads. War begins to be presented as the heroic alternative, the last hope, the "way out" from the unending nightmare of economic crisis, misery and unemployment. Fascism, the most complete expression of modern capitalism, glorifies war. The filthy sophism "War means Work" begins to be circulated by the poison agencies of imperialism, and filters down to the masses. As Carlyle, in whom many antecedents of Fascism can be traced, wrote in his Sartor Resartus: "The lower people everywhere desire war. Not so unwisely; there is then a demand for lower people—to be shot." It is a measure of the stage reached by capitalist civilisation that to-day, before the leading capitalist countries--other than Japan--are yet directly involved in war, while there are still nominally conditions of peace, it is possible for such an argument to be seriously presented and widely repeated and actually discussed, that murder is the only way to provide men and women with work and livelihood.

All to-day see the ever more visible approach of war. Rising alarm is expressed in many quarters of bourgeois opinion who see the ruin and destruction of the entire existing society involved in the menace of renewed world war. But these sections of anti-war opinion see only the question of war in isolation, and concentrate their efforts on capitalist "machinery" to avoid war, without realising that such machinery of imperialism can only function as machinery to organise the future war in the name of "ideal" symbols. Bourgeois pacifism, attached to the official League of Nations, and preaching passivity and non-resistance to the masses, becomes an indispensable part of the war-preparations of imperialism, and as such officially recognised and encouraged by all the warmaking statesmen of imperialism. All the statesmen of imperialism, Roosevelt and MacDonald, Henderson and PaulBoncour, Mussolini and Hitler, are to-day "pacifists" in their public utterances--and in their governmental roles actively press forward the building of armaments and the preparation of imperialist war.

War is only the continuation and working out of the crisis of capitalism and of the present policies of capitalism. It is inseparable from these, and cannot be treated in isolation. All the policies of capitalist reorganisation, all the policies of Fascism, can only hasten the advance to war. This is equally true of the line of a Roosevelt, a MacDonald or a Hitler. War is no sudden eruption of a new factor from outside, a vaguely future menace to be exorcised by special

machinery, but is already in essence implicit in the existing factors, in the existing driving forces and policies of capitalism. All the existing policies of capitalism are policies of eversharpening war: of ever more formidably organised imperialist blocs; of tariff-war, of gold-war, of currency-war; of war with every possible economic, diplomatic and political weapon. It is no far step from these to the final stage of armed war. All the existing policies of capitalism are more and more dominantly policies of destruction. The capitalists are to-day the destructive force in human society. All their most typical modern policy, from super-tariffs and debt-enslavement of whole states to burning foodstuffs and devastating cotton plantations, from dismantling plant and machinery to throwing millions of skilled and able workers on the scrap-heap of starvation, is a policy of destruction of human effort and labour, strangling of production, destruction of life. War is only a continuation of this policy. It is no far step from spending millions of pounds to buy up machinery in order to destroy it, to spending millions to produce guns and warships and munitions to be blown up into the air. It is no far step from condemning millions of human beings to the death-in-life of unemployment as "superfluous," to the final solution of disposing of their lives and bodies by bomb and gas and chemical, for the greater profit of whatever group of capitalists can gain most in the redivision of the world by the holocaust. But this does not mean that war, any more than Fascism, presents the final "solution" of the crisis of capitalism. On the contrary. War, like Fascism, is to-day the outcome of the intensified contradictions of capitalist society in decay; but neither solve those contradictions. On the contrary, both bring out those contradictions to the most extreme point, organise upon their basis, and lay bare the deep disintegration of existing society, both internally and internationally, to the point of destruction. The crisis extends and develops through these forms to yet greater intensity, and thereby only reveals the more sharply that the sole final solution lies in the social revolution.

CHAPTER IV - WHAT IS FASCISM?

In the first three chapters of this book attention has been deliberately concentrated on the developing tendencies of modern capitalist society as a whole since the war, in place of limiting attention to the distinctively "Fascist" countries – Italy, Germany, etc.

Such a survey has revealed how close is the parallel which can be traced in every field, economic, political and ideological, between the increasingly dominant tendencies of theory and practice of all modern capitalism since the war and the professedly peculiar theory and practice of Fascism.

Fascism, in fact, is no peculiar, independent doctrine and system arising in opposition to existing capitalist society. Fascism, on the contrary, is the most complete and consistent working out, in

certain conditions of extreme decay, of the most typical tendencies and policies of modern capitalism.

What are these characteristics which are common, subject to a difference in degree, to all modern capitalism and to Fascism? The most outstanding of these characteristics may be summarised as follows:

- I. The basic aim of the maintenance of capitalism in the face of the revolution which the advance of productive technique and of class antagonisms threatens.
2. The consequent intensification of the capitalist dictatorship.
3. The limitation and repression of the independent working-class movement, and building up of a system of organised class co-operation.
4. The revolt against, and increasing supersession of, parliamentary democracy.
5. The extending State monopolist organisation of industry and finance.
6. The closer concentration of each imperialist bloc into a single economic-political unit.
7. The advance to war as the necessary accompaniment of the increasing imperialist antagonisms.

All these characteristics are typical, in greater or lesser degree, of all modern capitalist states, no less than of the specifically Fascist states.

In this wider sense it is possible to speak of the development towards Fascism of all modern capitalist states. The examples of the Roosevelt and Brüning regimes offer particular illustrations of near-Fascist or pre-Fascist stages of development towards complete Fascism within the shell of the old forms. Nor is it necessarily the case that the development to Fascism takes the same form in detail in each country.

The sum-total of the policies of modern capitalism provide already in essence and in germ the sum-total of the policies of Fascism. But they are not yet complete Fascism. The completed Fascist dictatorship is still only so far realised over a limited area. What is the specific character of complete Fascism? The specific character of complete Fascism lies in the means adopted towards the realisation of these policies, in the new *social and political mechanism* built up for their realisation.

This is the specific or narrower significance of Fascism in the sense of the Fascist movements or the completed Fascist dictatorships as realised in Italy, Germany and other countries. Fascism in this specific or narrower sense is marked by definite familiar characteristics: in the case of the

Fascist movements, by the characteristics of terrorism, extra-legal fighting formations, anti-parliamentarism, national and social demagoguery, etc.; in the case of the completed Fascist dictatorships, by the suppression of all other parties and organisations, and in particular the violent suppression of all independent working-class organisation, the reign of terror, the “totalitarian” state, etc.

It is to this specific sense of Fascism, that is to say, to fully complete Fascism, that we now need to come.

1. The Class-Content of Fascism.

What, then, is Fascism in this specific or narrower sense?

The definitions of Fascism abound, and are marked by the greatest diversity and even contradictory character, despite the identity of the concrete reality which it is attempted to describe.

Fascism, in the view of the Fascists themselves, is a spiritual reality. It is described by them in terms of ideology. It represents the principle of “duty,” of “order,” of “authority,” of “the State,” of “the nation,” of “history,” etc.

Mussolini finds the essence of Fascism in the conception of the “State”:

“The foundation of Fascism is the conception of the State, its character, its duty and its aim. Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative....Whoever says Fascism implies the State.”

(Mussolini’s article on “Fascism” in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1932, published in English under the title “The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism,” 1933.)

We further learn that “Fascism believes in holiness and in heroism”; “the Fascist conceives of life as duty and struggle and conquest, life which should be high and full, lived for oneself, but above all for others”; “Fascism combats the whole complex system of democratic ideology”; “Fascism believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace”; “the Fascist State is an embodied will to power”; “the Fascist State is not indifferent to the fact of religion”; “for Fascism the growth of Empire is an essential manifestation of virility”; “Fascism denies the materialist conception of happiness as a possibility”--and similar profound, and hardly very original philosophisings in an endless string, the ordinary stock-in-trade of all Conservatism.

[Dutt draws similar quotes from Luigi Villari, Mosley, and The Imperial Fascist League....]

It is manifest that all this verbiage is very little use to bring out the real essential character of Fascism.

In the first place, all these abstract general conceptions which are paraded as the peculiar outlook of Fascism have no distinctive character whatever, but are common to a thousand schools of bourgeois political philosophy, which are not yet Fascist, and in particular to all national-conservative schools. The generalisations of “duty of co-operation,” “duty towards others... life as duty and struggle,” “a high conception of citizenship,” “the State above classes,” “the common interest before self” (motto of the German National Socialist Programme), are the dreary commonplaces of all bourgeois politicians and petty moralisers to cover the realities of class domination and class-exploitation. The professedly distinctive philosophy of the idealisation of the State as an “absolute end” transcending all individuals and sections is only the vulgarisation of the whole school of Hegel and his successors, constituting the foundation of the dominant school of bourgeois political philosophy. In all these conceptions there is not a trace of original or distinctive thought.

In the second place, it is in fact incorrect to look for an explanation of Fascism in terms of a particular theory, in ideological terms. Fascism, as its leaders are frequently fond of insisting, developed as a movement in practice without a theory (“In the now distant March of 1919,” says Mussolini in his encyclopaedia article, “since the creation of the Fascist Revolutionary Party, which took place in the January of 1915, I had no specific doctrinal attitude in my mind”), and only later endeavoured to invent a theory in order to justify its existence. Fascism, in fact, developed as a movement in practice, in the conditions of threatening proletarian revolution, as a counter-revolutionary mass movement supported by the bourgeoisie, employing weapons of mixed social demagoguery and terrorism to defeat the revolution and build up a strengthened capitalist state dictatorship; and only later endeavoured to adorn and rationalise this process with a “theory.” It is in this actual historical process that the reality of Fascism must be found, and not in the secondary derivative attempts *post festum* at adornment with a theory.

No less unsatisfactory are the attempted anti-Fascist interpretations of Fascism in terms of ideology or abstract political conceptions. The conventional anti-Fascist ideological interpretations of Fascism see in Fascism only the principle of “dictatorship” or “violence.” This approach, which is the hallmark of the liberal and social democratic schools of thought in relation to Fascism, sees Fascism as the parallel extreme to Communism, both being counterposed to bourgeois “democracy.” Fascism is defined as “Dictatorship from the Right” in contrast to Communism as “Dictatorship from the Left” (this line is characteristically expressed in the Labour Party Manifesto of March 1933, on “Democracy versus Dictatorship” in explanation of the Labour refusal of the united working-class front against Fascism).

It is evident that this definition of Fascism is equally useless as an explanation of the real essential character of Fascism.

“Dictatorships from the Right” have existed and can exist in hundreds of forms without in any sense constituting Fascism. Tsarism was a “Dictatorship from the Right.” But Tsarism was not

Fascism. The White Guard dictatorships immediately after the war for crushing the revolution were “Dictatorships from the Right.” But these White Guard dictatorships were not yet Fascism, and only subsequently began to develop Fascist characteristics as they began to try to organise a more permanent basis (subsequent evolution in Hungary and Finland). Fascism may be in fact a reactionary dictatorship. But not every reactionary dictatorship is Fascism. The specific character of Fascism has still to be defined.

Wherein, then, lies the specific character of Fascism?

The specific character of Fascism cannot be defined in terms of abstract ideology or political first principles.

The specific character of Fascism can only be defined by laying bare its class-basis, the system of class-relations within which it develops and functions, and the class-role which it performs. Only so can Fascism be seen in its concrete reality, corresponding to a given historical stage of capitalist development and decay.

As soon, however, as we endeavour to come to the class analysis of Fascism we find ourselves confronted with a diametrical opposition of two viewpoints.

In the one viewpoint Fascism is presented as an independent movement of the middle class or petit-bourgeoisie in opposition to both the proletariat and to large-scale capital.

In the other viewpoint Fascism is presented as a weapon of finance-capital, utilising the support of the middle class, of the slum proletariat and of demoralised working-class elements against the organised working class, but throughout acting as the instrument and effective representative of the interests of finance-capital.

Only when we have cleared this opposition, and what lies behind it, can we finally come to the real definition of Fascism.

2. Middle-Class Revolution or Dictatorship of Finance-Capital?

Fascism is commonly presented as a “middle-class” (i.e., petit-bourgeois) movement.

There is an obvious measure of truth in this in the sense that Fascism in its inception commonly originates from middle-class (petit-bourgeois) elements, directs a great deal of its appeal to the middle class, to small business and the professional classes against the organised working class and the trusts and big finance, draws a great part of its composition, and especially its leadership, from the middle class, and is soaked through with the ideology of the middle class, of the petit-bourgeoisie under conditions of crisis. So far, there is common agreement as to the obvious facts.

But Fascism is also often presented as a middle-class movement in the sense of an independent movement of the middle class, as a “third party” independent of capital or labour, in opposition to both the organised working class and large-scale capital. The Fascist dictatorship is accordingly presented as a “conquest of power” by the middle class in opposition to both the organised working class and to the previous domination of finance-capital.

This conception is common in liberal and social democratic treatment of Fascism. [...] Brailsford, the leading theorist of English Social Democracy, writes:

“If the Marxist conception of history be sound, somewhere surely on the surface of this stricken planet the increasing misery of the workers should have produced some aggressive stirring. That is nowhere the case.

There is, however, an aggressive class which has made in one great industrial country its revolutionary stroke. The German Nazis are emphatically the party of the small middle class....

This class rose and captured the machinery of the State, because it was “miserable” and desperate. It shrank in terror from the menace of large-scale commerce”

(H. N. Brailsford, “No Hands Wanted,” New Clarion, July 8, 1933.)

[....]

The Socialist Review in January 1929 published an article entitled “The Third Nation,” arguing that “the assumption at the root of all Communist theory” of a basic division between the capitalists and the proletariat as the decisive issue of modern society was false:

“Apart from the capitalists and the proletariat-and between them - there is a third class. Here, then, is the fundamental question for Marxists: Does this class exhibit the characteristics of a subject class, about to make a bid for supremacy?

A possible answer is that, in one country – Italy – they have already emerged as a revolutionary class. The Fascist revolution was essentially a revolution of the third class.”

[....]

This separation of Fascism from the bourgeois dictatorship reaches its extreme point in the official Labour Party and Trades Union Congress organ, the Daily Herald, which, on May 2, 1933, after the full demonstration of the real character of Hitlerism in practice, still looked hopefully towards it to carry out some form of “socialist” programme against big capital:

“The “National-Socialists,” it is essential to remember, call themselves “Socialist” as well as “National.” Their “Socialism” is not the Socialism of the Labour Party, or that of any recognised Socialist Party in other countries.

But in many ways it is a creed that is anathema to the big landlords, the big industrialists and the big financiers.

And the Nazi leaders are bound to go forward with the “Socialist” side of their programme.” (Daily Herald editorial on “Hitler’s May Day,” May 2, 1933.)

Thus Fascism in the view of the Labour Party is almost a wing of Socialism, a rather unorthodox variety of Socialism, but “anathema to the big landlords, the big industrialists and the big financiers” (who, curiously enough, maintained it in funds and finally placed it in power). The same day that this article appeared in the British Labour and trade union organ, this party whose creed was “anathema to the big landlords, the big industrialists and the big financiers” seized and closed down the workers’ trade unions in Germany.

It is evident that this view of Fascism as a petit-bourgeois revolution against the big bourgeoisie is incorrect in fact, and dangerous in the extreme to any serious understanding of the real character of Fascism and of the fight against it.

That it is incorrect in fact is manifest from the most elementary survey of the actual history, development, basis and practice of Fascism. The open and avowed supporters of Fascism in every country are the representatives of big capital, the Thyssens, Krupps, Monds, Deterdings and Owen Youngs.

Fascism, although in the early stages making a show of vague and patently disingenuous anti-capitalist propaganda to attract mass-support, is from the outset fostered, nourished, maintained and subsidised by the big bourgeoisie, by the big landlords, financiers and industrialists.²

Further, Fascism is only enabled to grow, and is saved from being wiped out in the early stages by the working-class movement, solely through the direct protection of the bourgeois dictatorship. Fascism is able to count on the assistance of the greater part of the State forces, of the higher army staffs, of the police authorities, and of the lawcourts and magistracy, who exert

² [...]The financial backing of Hitler by big industry was already laid bare in the Hitler-Ludendorff trial of 1924 and in the Bavarian Diet Investigation Committee. “In later years the list of the alleged financial patrons of the National Socialist Movement became extremely long. Factory owners, managers, general counsel (syndici) were as thick as they might be on the subscription list of the Republican National Committee in the United States” (Mowrer, p. 144). Foreign supporters were stated to include Deterding, Kreuger and Ford.[...]

all their force to crush working-class opposition, while treating Fascist illegality with open connivance (banning of the Red Front alongside permission of the Storm Troops).[...]

Finally, has Fascism “conquered power” from the bourgeois state dictatorship? Fascism has never “conquered power” in any country. In every case Fascism has been placed in power from above by the bourgeois dictatorship. In Italy Fascism was placed in power by the King, who refused to sign the decree of martial law against it, and invited Mussolini to power; Mussolini’s legendary “March on Rome” took place in a Wagon-Lit sleeping-car. In Germany Fascism was placed in power by the President, at a time when it was heavily sinking in support in the country, as shown by the elections.

The bourgeoisie, in fact, has in practice passed power from one hand to the other, and called it a “revolution,” while the only reality has been the intensified oppression of the working class.

After the establishment of the full Fascist dictatorship, the policy has been still more openly and completely, despite a show of a few gestures of assistance to small capital, the most unlimited and ruthless policy of monopolist capital, with the whole machinery of Fascism mercilessly turned against those of its former supporters who have been innocent enough to expect some anti-capitalist action and called for a “second revolution.”[...]

Fascism, in short, is a movement of mixed elements, dominantly petit-bourgeois, but also slum-proletarian and demoralised working class, financed and directed by finance-capital, by the big industrialists, landlords and financiers, to defeat the working-class revolution and smash the working-class organisations.

3. The Middle Class and the Proletariat.

This question of the role of the middle class or petit-bourgeoisie, in relation to the working class and to the big bourgeoisie, is so important for the whole dynamic of present capitalist society and the social revolution, that it deserves fuller clearing.

The controversy over the role of the middle class, or many and varied intermediate strata between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (small business men, small and middle peasantry, handicraftsmen, independent workers, small rentiers, liberal professions, technical, managerial and commercial employees) is no new one. In the nineteenth century Marx had dealt very fully with the economic and political situation and tendencies of these elements. He had shown how these middle elements were increasingly ground between the advance of large capital and of the proletariat, with growing numbers from their ranks falling into proletarian or semi-proletarian conditions; he had shown their vacillating and unstable political role, now siding with the bourgeoisie and now with the proletariat, torn between their bourgeois prejudices, traditions and aspirations, and the actual process of ruination and proletarianisation at work among them; and he

had shown how the proletariat should win the alliance of the lower strata of the peasantry and urban petit-bourgeoisie under its leadership in order to conquer power.

In the beginning of the imperialist era the question of the middle class was anew raised sharply to the forefront by Bernstein and the Revisionists in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. The Revisionists challenged Marx's teaching of the increasing proletarianisation of the middle strata and consequent increasing sharpness of the issue between capitalism and the proletariat. On the contrary, they argued that the middle class was growing, and pointed to the figures of income returns, property returns and shareholding, to prove the growth of the middle class. On this basis they denied Marx's revolutionary teaching, saw instead the increasing harmony of classes and democratisation of capital, and looked to the gradual peaceful advance towards socialism through capitalist reorganisation, social reform and State intervention.

What the Revisionists really represented, as is now abundantly clear, was the growth of the "new middle class" of salaried employees of capitalism. In fact the process predicted by Marx was abundantly realised through the course of the nineteenth century. The concentration of capital went forward at an increasing pace. Large-scale capital pressed small-scale capital to the wall. The former small owners and independent workers became, as Marx said, "overseers and underlings." In this way a "new middle class" came more and more to the front, based on the increasing disappearance of the old independent small owners. This new middle class resembled the old in its two-faced position and outlook, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and its dreams of occupying an "independent" position above the class struggle; but it was already dependent for its livelihood on employment under large capital, and no longer primarily on its own property. Thus the development of this new middle class was in fact a stage in the process of proletarianisation, in the increasing divorce of the ever-widening mass of the population from an independent property basis; and its lower strata began to draw closer to the proletariat and to the proletarian movement (beginnings of "middleclass" trade unionism, recruiting to social democracy). The distinctive outlook of this new middle class was typically expressed in England by Fabianism and the leadership of the Independent Labour Party.

Against the Revisionists, the Marxists were easily able to show, not only that the development of this new middle class increasingly replacing the old was in reality a phase of the process of proletarianisation, but that further economic development was in turn affecting the position of this new middle class, and creating a crisis in its ranks and a new stage of proletarianisation. The overstocking of the professional market, the turning out from the universities and technical schools of increasing numbers beyond the possibilities of employment, and the cutting down of personnel through the further concentration of businesses, was already before the war creating a more and more sharp crisis of the new middle class.

This crisis of the middle class (both old and new) has been carried enormously forward in the post-war period. The operations of finance-capital-inflation, currency and exchange manipulations, share-juggling, monopoly prices and heavy taxation-have played havoc with small savings and investments, and with the old stability of middle-class incomes. At the same time unemployment and redundancy in all the professions has reached desperate heights.

“Throughout the Continent,” wrote Keynes in his *Treatise on Monetary Reform* (p. 16), “pre-war savings of the middle class, so far as they were invested in bonds, mortgages or bank deposits, have been largely or entirely wiped out.” The German property valuation returns showed that the number of those owning from thirty to fifty thousand marks worth of property (£1,500 to £2,500) fell from over 500,000 in 1913 to 216,000 in 1925; owners of from fifty to a hundred thousand marks (£2,500 to £5,000) fell from nearly 400,000 in 1913 to 136,000 in 1925. Although, despite the disillusionment of the wiping out of their savings by inflation, the middle class began hopefully to save anew after stabilisation, the total of savings rapidly began to fall after the economic crisis, and is now threatened anew by the new wave of world inflation. In Britain, a marked decline in small savings is noticeable in the post-war period even before the world economic crisis. Thus while in 1909-13 the Post Office Savings Bank accounts registered a net increase of £12 million, in 1923-7 they registered a net decrease of £17 million, as well as a net decrease of government securities standing to their holders’ credit by £18 million, or a total decline of £35 million; Trustee Savings’ Banks showed a net decline of £12 million; after allowing against this, the net increase in National Savings Certificates in the same period by £14 million, there is still left a total loss in these main forms of small savings between 1923-7 of £33 million (Economist, February 23, 1929).

If the impoverishment of the small middle class alongside the enrichment of monopoly capital is thus a characteristic feature of the post-war period, even more so is the increasingly desperate situation of overcrowding in the professions. The world economic crisis brought this situation to an extreme point.

In Germany, it was reported that of 8,000 graduates from the technical colleges and universities in 1931-2, only 1,000 found employment in their professions. According to a statement issued by the Prussian Minister of Education, of 22,000 teachers who completed their training in 1931-2, only 990 found posts. “Engineers have become mere wage-earners; while of the technical school engineering graduates only one in five found any job at all” (H. H. Tiltman, *Slump*, 1932, p. 75).

R. Schairer in *Die Akademische Berufsnot*, 1932, reported that 45,000 graduated students were unemployed, and that this figure, it was estimated, would, in the absence of remedial measures, reach 105,000 by 1935. Here we can see a large part of the social basis for the desperate armies of Fascism.

The impoverished and desperate middle class is driven from its former philistine slumbers into political activity. But this political activity takes on a new character. Whereas the Bernsteinian

dreams had seen in the middle class a stabilising and harmonising factor in the social structure, wedded to liberalism and social reform, and smoothing over the antagonism of classes, the new dispossessed and ruined middle-class elements break out as an extremely unstable, violent force potentially revolutionary or, alternately, ultra-reactionary, without dear social basis or consciousness, but recklessly seeking any line of immediate action, which may offer a hope of immediate relief (relief from debts, State aid to small businesses, smashing the large stores, etc.) or the prospect of jobs (the new bureaucracy, mercenary fighting forces, displacement of Jews, war).

In what direction, however, can these middle-class elements turn their political activity? They can in practice only line up in the service of either finance-capital or of the proletariat. The myth of their “independent” role, of the “third party,” is still endeavoured to be hung before them. The Liberal Yellow Book, characteristically enough, endeavoured to make much of “the third party in industry” as the force of the future. But these dreams are soon shattered by reality. For the ownership of the means of production is decisive, and to this the middle class can never aspire. Either finance-capital, owning the means of production, can seek to make the middle class its auxiliary, giving a measure of employment, if diminishingly in production, then at any rate increasingly in the tasks of violent coercion of the working class (fascist militia, police-officer class, fascist bureaucracy). Or the proletariat, socialising the means of production, can at last give full scope to all the useful trained and technical abilities within the middle class in the gigantic tasks of social reconstruction. These are the only two alternatives before the middle class. The first is the line of Fascism. The second is the line of Communism.

The true interests of the majority of the middle class, of all the lower strata of the middle class, lie with the proletariat, with the line of Communism. Finance-capital is the enemy and exploiter of both sections. The line of Fascism of service with finance-capital against the working class, means in fact no solution for the economic crisis of the middle class; alongside privileges and rewards for a handful, it means intensified servitude, oppression and spoliation of the majority of the middle class at the hands of the great trusts and banks.

Where the working-class movement is strong, follows a revolutionary line, and is able to stand out as the political leader of the fight of all oppressed sections against large capital, there the mass of the petit-bourgeoisie is swept in the wake of the working class. This was the general situation in the post-war revolutionary wave of 1919-20. During this time Fascism could win no hold.

But where the working-class movement fails to realise its revolutionary role, follows the leadership of Reformism and thus surrenders to large capital, and even appears to enter into collaboration with it, there the discontented petit-bourgeois elements and declassed proletarian elements begin to look elsewhere for their leadership. On this basis Fascism is able to win its

hold. In the name of demagogic slogans against large capital and exploiting their grievances, these elements are drawn in practice into the service of large capital.

4. The Definition of Fascism.

Fascism is often spoken of as a consequence of Communism. "Reaction of the 'Left,'" declared the Labour Manifesto on "Democracy and Dictatorship" in 1933, "is displaced by triumphant reaction of the 'Right.'" With strikingly similar identity of outlook to the Labour Party, the Conservative leader, Baldwin, also declared: "Fascism is begotten of Communism out of civil discord. Whenever you get Communism and civil discord, you get Fascism" (House of Commons, November 23, 1933).

This picture is a fully misleading picture. Undoubtedly, the parallel advance of the forces of revolution and counterrevolution represents in fact the two sides of the single process of the break-up of capitalism; the continuous interaction of the opposing forces of revolution and counter-revolution was long ago described by Marx. But the inference attempted to be drawn from this that, if the working class follows the line of Communism, then Fascism will triumph, is the direct opposite of historical experience. The reality shows the exact contrary.

Where the majority of the working class has followed the line of Reformism (Germany, Italy, etc.), there at a certain stage Fascism invariably grows and conquers.

What is the character of that stage? That stage arises when the breakdown of the old capitalist institutions and the advance of working-class movement has reached a point at which the working class should advance to the seizure of power, but when the working class is held in by reformist leadership.

In that case, owing to the failure of decisive working-class leadership to rally all discontented strata, the discredited old regime is able to draw to its support under specious quasi-revolutionary slogans all the wavering elements, petit-bourgeoisie, backward workers, etc., and on the very basis of the crisis and discontent which should have given allies to the revolution, build up the forces of reaction in the form of Fascism. The continued hesitation and retreat of the reformist working-class leadership at each point (policy of the "lesser evil") encourages the growth of Fascism. On this basis Fascism is able finally to step in and seize the reins, not through its own strength, but through the failure of working-class leadership. The collapse of bourgeois democracy is succeeded, not by the advance to proletarian democracy, but by the regression to fascist dictatorship.³

³ Reference may be made to the present writer's suggested definition of the conditions of the advance to Fascism, written in 1925:

We are now in a position to reach our general definition of the character of Fascism, the conditions of its development and its class- rule. This definition has received its most complete scientific expression in the Programme of the Communist International in 1928:

“Under certain special historical conditions the progress of the bourgeois, imperialist, reactionary offensive assumes the form of Fascism.

These conditions are: instability of capitalist relationships; the existence of considerable declassed social elements, the pauperisation of broad strata of the urban petit-bourgeoisie and of the intelligentsia; discontent among the rural petit-bourgeoisie, and, finally, the constant menace of mass proletarian action. In order to stabilise and perpetuate its rule the bourgeoisie is compelled to an increasing degree to abandon the parliamentary system in favour of the fascist system, which is independent of inter-party arrangements and combinations.

The Fascist system is a system of direct dictatorship, ideologically masked by the “national idea” and representation of the “professions” (in reality, representation of the various groups of the ruling class). It is a system that resorts to a peculiar form of social demagoguery (anti-Semitism, occasional sorties against usurer’s capital and gestures of impatience with the parliamentary “talking shop”) in order to utilise the discontent of the petit-bourgeois, the intellectual and other strata of society; and to corruption through the building up of a compact and well-paid hierarchy of Fascist units, a party apparatus and a bureaucracy. At the same time, Fascism strives to permeate the working class by recruiting the most backward strata of the workers to its ranks, by playing upon their discontent, by taking advantage of the inaction of Social Democracy, etc.

The principal aim of Fascism is to destroy the revolutionary labour vanguard, i.e., the Communist sections and leading units of the proletariat. The combination of social demagoguery, corruption and active White terror, in conjunction with extreme imperialist aggression in the sphere of foreign politics, are the characteristic features of Fascism. In periods of acute crisis for the bourgeoisie, Fascism resorts to anti-capitalist phraseology, but, after it has established itself at the helm of State, it casts aside its anti-capitalist rattle, and discloses itself as a terrorist dictatorship of big capital.”

“Fascism arises where a powerful working-class movement reaches a stage of growth which inevitably raises revolutionary issues, but is held in from decisive action by reformist leadership.... Fascism is the child of Reformism” (Labour Monthly, July 1925).

The subsequent events in Germany have abundantly illustrated the truth of this.

Alongside of this may be placed the parallel analysis of Fascism in the Resolution on the International Situation of the same Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928:

“The characteristic feature of Fascism is that, as a consequence of the shock suffered by the capitalist economic system and of special objective and subjective circumstances, the bourgeoisie--in order to hinder the development of the revolution--utilises the discontent of the petty and middle, urban and rural bourgeoisie and even of certain strata of the declassed proletariat, for the purpose of creating a reactionary mass movement.

Fascism resorts to methods of open violence in order to break the power of the labour organisations and those of the peasant poor, and to proceed to capture power.

After capturing power, Fascism strives to establish political and organisational unity among all the governing classes of capitalist society (the bankers, the big industrialists and the agrarians), and to establish their undivided, open and consistent dictatorship. It places at the disposal of the governing classes armed forces specially trained for civil war, and establishes a new type of State, openly based on violence, coercion and corruption, not only of the petit-bourgeois strata, but even of certain elements of the working class (office employees, ex-reformist leaders who have become government officials, trade union officials and officials of the Fascist Party, and also poor peasants and declassed proletarians recruited into the Fascist militia).”

The further characteristics of Fascism indicated in the above analysis, both in respect of its advance to power, and of its programme and practice after power, it will now be necessary to examine.

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Week One Questions:

1. Dutt differentiates fascism from other forms of right-wing dictatorship. How is fascism different? Why might it be important to differentiate fascism from other forms of right wing dictatorship or this analysis of it? Does it matter?
2. According to Dutt, fascism is not something separate and different from capitalism, but a later stage of its development following a period of extreme crisis. Dutt also states that capitalism can still carry the qualities seen in fascism before becoming fully fascistic.

How do fully fascistic states differ from decaying capitalist states moving towards fascism? What is America today, per Dutt's analysis? Why?

3. Does America's hegemonic, unipolar rule change the application of Dutt's theory to today at all? If so, how? If not, why? And if America is not yet fully fascist, how might its position as a unipolar power change both its operations as a fully fascistic state? What would this look like for the larger global order? If America is fully fascistic, how does the current unipolar order tie into this?

4. What signs do we see of the anti-productive, anti-modernist, anti-scientific, anti-democratic, national self-sufficient, or pro-war fascistic (albeit not necessarily indicative of completely fascist governance) characteristics Dutt details in modern day capitalism? (in America but also in other capitalist countries as well)

5. How does Lenin's earlier analysis of bourgeois democracy fit in with Dutt's analysis of fascism's anti-parliamentarianism and anti-democratic features? What is our role, as socialist, on this matter? How might this inform our work?

6. What role does the middle class play in the rise of fascism, and why? Do we see parallels in capitalism today? Is this a sign of a trajectory towards fascism?

7. Has this book made you re-think more recent events in America and capitalism across the world? How would you interpret Trump and the January 6th uprising? Does a change in (or sustained) analysis affect your approach to your political work?

Week Two Reading

[Summary: *In Chapters 5-7, Dutt details the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany, and Austria, the specific conditions of each, how these fascist movements were funded by finance-capital and placed into power, and the ways in which social democracy assisted in this process.*]

CHAPTER VIII - SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND FASCISM

It is evident from the previous survey of the historical development of Fascism in Italy, Germany and Austria that the role of Social Democracy is of decisive importance in the development to Fascism. The understanding of these two closely-related phenomena of the post-war period, of modern Social Democracy and of Fascism, is of key importance for the whole understanding of post-war capitalist politics. The whole question, however, is ringed round with controversy, and

requires very careful further analysis, if the real issues of Fascism, and the conditions of the growth of Fascism are to be understood.

It should be explained that the term “Social Democracy” is here used only to cover the post-war phenomenon, the post 1914 Social Democratic Parties which subsequently united to form the post-war Second International or “Labour and Socialist International” in 1923. Although the tendencies of opportunist parliamentary corruption and absorption into the capitalist State were already strong and growing before the war throughout the imperialist epoch, even while the nominal programme of international revolutionary Marxism remained, and were increasingly fought by the revolutionary wing within these parties since the beginning of the twentieth century, it was only the decisive test of the imperialist war in 1914 that brought these tendencies to their full working out and openly revealed these parties as having passed over to capitalism. The direct passing over in this way since 1914 of large organisations of the working-class movement in all the imperialist countries, and especially of the parliamentary and trade union leadership, to open unity with capitalism and with the capitalist State, is a big historical fact; and the subsequent evolution of these parties since the war has played a large role, in the early years in the defeating of the working-class revolution, and in the sequent years in the growth of Fascism.

This latter role was already showing itself in very marked preliminary forms in those secondary states where White dictatorships were established, in Hungary, Finland, Bulgaria etc. In the period of the reconstruction and partial stabilisation of capitalism with the aid of Social Democracy, and still more since the development of the world economic crisis and the shattering of the basis of capitalist reconstruction, this character has become increasingly marked throughout Social Democracy. A process of “fascisation” in a whole variety of forms and stages, as well as of playing directly into the hands of Fascism, can be traced.

Nevertheless, although many disillusioned Social Democrats, especially after the glaring example of Germany and the consequent crisis throughout the Second International, are increasingly coming to recognise the role Social Democracy has in practice played in the development of Fascism, yet the Communist analysis of “Social Fascism” as the more and more dominant character of Social Democracy in the latest period, and constituting the parallel basis with Fascism for the maintenance of the rule of finance-capital to-day, has often aroused indignant resentment and much misunderstanding.

It is therefore necessary to examine more fully the “twin” character of Social Democracy and Fascism as the bases of support of capitalism in the present period.

1. The Capitalist View of Social Democracy and Fascism.

It will be most useful to begin the examination of this question with a consideration of the view of modern finance-capital on the roles of Social Democracy and Fascism.

The view of finance-capital is to be found expressed with exemplary clearness in the Deutsche Führerbriefe already referred to, or confidential bulletin of the Federation of German Industry during the critical year 1932. These “Führerbriefe” or “Letters to Leaders” constitute a “Political-economic private correspondence,” originally issued for confidential circulation to the heads of finance-capital, organised in the Federation of German Industry. Nos. 72 and 75 of September 16 and 20, 1932, contained a study of “The Social Reconsolidation of Capitalism,” which is a revealing expression of the outlook of the dominant financial groups.

The writer sets out from the basic viewpoint that the maintenance of capitalist rule depends on the splitting of the working class:

“The necessary condition for any social reconsolidation of bourgeois rule possible in Germany after the war is the splitting of the workers’ movement. Any united workers’ movement springing up from below must be revolutionary, and this rule would not be able to hold out against it for long, not even with the means of military power.”

The main danger is thus the united working-class front: against this even military force could not long prevail. Capitalism accordingly requires a social basis outside its own ranks and splitting the working class. This has been provided in the post-war period by Social Democracy.

“The problem of consolidating the bourgeois regime in post-war Germany is generally determined by the fact that the leading bourgeoisie, who have control of the national economy, have become too small in order to uphold their rule alone. They require for this rule, if they do not wish to rely on the extremely dangerous weapon of purely military force, an alliance with strata which do not belong to them socially, but which render them the indispensable service of anchoring their rule in the people, and thereby being the actual and final bearers of this rule. This last or “outermost bearer” of bourgeois rule was, in the first period of post-war consolidation, Social Democracy.”

So far the analysis is simple. Social Democracy had provided the basis for the maintenance of capitalist rule and splitting the working class. But what has made it possible for Social Democracy to split the working class? What is the social basis of Social Democracy? Here the analysis of the spokesman of finance-capital comes very close to Lenin’s analysis of the causes of the split in the working class in imperialist countries. The writer finds the basis of Social Democracy, and of its splitting of the working class, in the privileged conditions, based on social legislation and concessions, of a favoured, organised section of the working class:

“In the first reconstruction era of the bourgeois post-war regime, in the era from 1923-4 to 1929-30, the split in the working class was founded on the achievements in regard to wages and social policy into which Social Democracy capitalised the revolutionary upsurge.

Thanks to its social character as being originally a workers' party, Social Democracy brought into the system of reconstruction at that time, in addition to its purely political force, something more valuable and enduring, namely the organised working class, and while paralysing their revolutionary energy chained them fast to the bourgeois State.[...]"

On this basis the main body of the organised working class was "chained fast to the bourgeois State" through Social Democracy and the trade unions, while Communism was kept outside as by a "sluice mechanism":

"These (the achievements in regard to wages and social policy) functioned as a sort of sluice mechanism through which, in a falling labour market, the employed and firmly organised part of the working class enjoyed a graduated, but nevertheless considerable advantage compared with the unemployed and fluctuating mass of the lower categories, and were relatively protected against the full effects of unemployment and the general critical situation on their standard of living.[...]"

This system worked well enough until the world economic crisis began to destroy the basis of stabilisation. The economic crisis compelled capitalism to wipe out the "achievements" of wages and social policy, and thereby to undermine the basis of Social Democracy. But this raised the danger of the working-class forces passing to Communism. Therefore it was necessary to find a new instrument for splitting the workers—National Socialism:

"The process of the transition which we are undergoing at present, because the economic crisis necessarily destroys these achievements, passes through the stage of acute danger that, with the disappearance of these achievements, the mechanism of disrupting the working class which is based upon these achievements will cease to operate, with the result that the working class will begin to turn in the direction of Communism and the bourgeois rule will be faced with the necessity of setting up a military dictatorship. This stage would mark the beginning of the phase of the incurable sickness of bourgeois rule. As the old sluice mechanism can no longer be sufficiently restored, the only possible means of saving bourgeois rule from this abyss is to effect the splitting of the working class and its tying to the State apparatus by other and more direct means. Herein lie the positive possibilities and the tasks of National Socialism."

The new conditions mean, however, a change of the form of state. The tying of the organised working class to the State through Social Democracy requires the parliamentary mechanism; conversely, the liberal parliamentary constitution can only be acceptable for monopoly capitalism provided Social Democracy successfully controls and splits the working class. If capitalism is compelled to destroy the basis of Social Democracy, then it is equally compelled to transform the parliamentary constitution into a non-parliamentary "restricted" (i.e., Fascist) constitution.

“The tying of the trade union bureaucracy to Social Democracy stands and falls with parliamentarism. The possibility of a liberal social constitution of monopoly capitalism is determined by the existence of an automatic mechanism which disrupts the working class. A bourgeois regime based on a liberal bourgeois constitution must not only be parliamentary; it must rely for support on Social Democracy and allow Social Democracy adequate achievements. A bourgeois regime which destroys these achievements must sacrifice Social Democracy and parliamentarism, must create a substitute for Social Democracy, and must go over to a restricted social constitution.”

The solution of the problem of the maintenance of capitalism in crisis the writer accordingly finds in National Socialism and the establishment of a “restricted” or Fascist regime. The writer finds in the role of National Socialism in the present period a remarkable parallel, in his view, to the role of Social Democracy in the preceding period.

“The parallelism is indeed really striking. The then Social Democracy (from 1918 to 1930) and present-day National Socialism both perform similar functions in that they both were the gravediggers of the preceding system, and then, instead of leading the masses to the revolution proclaimed by them, led them to the new formation of bourgeois rule. The comparison which has often been drawn between Ebert and Hitler is also valid in this respect.

Both appeal to the anti-capitalist yearning for emancipation; both promise a new “social” or “national” Commonwealth.”

From this the final conclusion is drawn:

“The parallelism itself shows that National Socialism has taken over from Social Democracy the task of providing the mass support for the rule of the bourgeoisie in Germany.”

Such is the exposition of the private thought of the finance-capitalist oligarchy on the role of its two instruments, Social Democracy and Fascism. We have so far reproduced this exposition without criticism, because it has independent value as an authoritative statement, all the clearer through not having been written for public consumption, of the real viewpoint of finance-capital. It is a valuable political document which may be recommended for the study of disciples both of Social Democracy and of Fascism. It will be noted that this remarkably candid and clear-headed statement of the real case for Fascism, as seen by its actual paymasters and controllers, shares none of the mystical, national, racial, “corporative,” chauvinist nonsense with which Fascism is presented for public consumption, but is thoroughly rational and hard-headed. To this it will be important to return in considering the so-called “theory” of Fascism.

The actual analysis, however, although a useful starting point of discussion on the question of Social Democracy and of Fascism, requires in certain respects criticism. The writer sees correctly the mechanics of capitalist post-war rule on the basis of Social Democracy. But he writes as if Fascism “has taken over from Social Democracy the task of providing the mass support for the rule of the bourgeoisie.” Yesterday Social Democracy performed this role; to-day it is Fascism; each has its period. Social Democracy and Fascism are thus seen as performing an essentially identical role, only in differing periods, and under different conditions, and therefore with differing methods and forms of state constitution. This is, however, too simple, and is not correct. Both exist together; and each performs a distinctive role, supplementing one another. Fascism bases itself primarily, for its social basis, on the miscellaneous petit-bourgeois strata, the peasantry, the declassed elements and backward workers. Social Democracy bases itself on the upper strata of the industrial workers. The bourgeoisie builds its rule on the support of both, bringing now one, now the other, to the forefront, and utilising both for its support. Fascism never becomes the main basis of the bourgeoisie (although it may become its main and sole governmental instrument when the crisis requires the coercion of all the workers, and the hold of Social Democracy is in danger of weakening), because Fascism never wins the main body of the industrial workers with traditions of organisation—the sole power that can overthrow capitalism. Here the role of Social Democracy remains of decisive importance, even after the establishment of the Fascist dictatorship. This is seen with obvious clearness in those countries, e.g., Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Spain under De Rivera, etc., where Social Democracy is tolerated under a Fascist dictatorship. But it is also true in those countries of fully completed Fascist dictatorship – Germany, Italy – where Social Democracy as an organisation is formally suppressed and the trade unions absorbed into the Fascist front. Only so far as Social Democratic influence, ideology and traditions still dominate the industrial workers, disorganising the revolutionary fight, preventing the united front and mass struggle, only so long can the rule of capitalism be maintained, even in its Fascist forms. In these countries also, if the Fascist dictatorship weakens, Social Democracy stands ready to come to the rescue of capitalism.

The distinction of Social Democracy and Fascism is no less important to understand than the parallelism.

Both are instruments of the rule of monopoly capital. Both fight the working-class revolution. Both weaken and disrupt the class organisations of the workers. But their methods differ.⁴

Fascism shatters the class organisations of the workers from without, opposing their whole basis, and putting forward an alternative “national” ideology.

⁴ Left Social Democrats often say of Communism: “Our aims are the same; we differ only in our methods.” It would be more correct to say of Social-Democracy and Fascism: “Their aims are the same (the saving of capitalism from the working-class revolution); they differ only in their methods.”

Social Democracy undermines the class organisations of the workers from within, building on the basis of the previous independent movement and “Marxist” ideology, which still holds the workers’ traditions and discipline, in order more effectively to carry through the policy of capital and smash all militant struggle.

Fascism accordingly requires for its full realisation the “totalitarian” terroristic class-State.

Social Democracy controls the workers most favourably and successfully in the liberal-parliamentary class-State, utilising its own “internal” methods of discipline, and occasional State coercion, for the suppression of all militant struggle.

Fascism operates primarily by coercion alongside of deception.

Social Democracy operates primarily by deception, alongside of coercion.

It is this combined relationship of difference in method and parallelism in basic aim and role that underlies Stalin’s definition, given already in 1924 (“Main Factors of the Present International Situation,” Communist International, English edition 1924, No. 6), that “Social Democracy objectively represents the moderate wing of Fascism.”

2. The Germs of Fascism in Social Democracy.

Fascism not only historically draws its origin in large part from Social Democracy in the sense that many of its principal leaders spring from Social Democracy: Mussolini, former editor of the Italian Socialist central organ *Avanti*; Pilsudski, former leader of the Polish Socialist Party; Mosley, former Minister of the second MacDonald Labour Government.

Fascism also draws its ideology mainly from the lines already worked out by Social Democracy.

[...]The Fascist writers seek to trace their spiritual ancestry from three main sources: Mazzini (the old liberal democrat would turn in his grave), Proudhon and Sorel. But this is mere myth-making. Fascism is essentially a product of the post-war general crisis of capitalism, and has no spiritual ancestry. Fascism is in practice an abortion consequent on the miscarriage of the proletarian social revolution.

It is from 1914, when Social Democracy directly abandoned Marxism and internationalism, that the characteristic trends of ideology akin to Fascism begin. A study of the principal extreme expressions of the war-socialists, especially of Lensch, Parvus and Cunow in Germany, Hervé in France, or Blatchford in England, would reveal many striking resemblances with subsequent Fascism. “In this world war,” wrote Lensch in 1916, “Germany completes its revolution” (the typical use of “revolution” to cover the most extreme monopolist dictatorship and chauvinism); “at the head of the German Revolution stands Bethmann-Hollweg.” Cunow declared that Social Democracy must adapt itself to imperialism and throw overboard the remains of liberal-

democratic ideology about “the right of nations to political independence.” “England in the war” wrote the war-socialist Hänisch “represents the reactionary, and Germany the revolutionary principle.” All these illustrate the use of “revolutionary” phrases and denunciation of obsolete “liberal-democratic” superstitions to cover in practice complete subservience to monopolist capitalism and chauvinism. Denial of internationalism, advocacy of class unity or the “sacred truce,” and service of the capitalist State in the name of “socialist” or “revolutionary” phrases – these are the common starting-point of modern Social Democracy since 1914, and, in a more developed form, of Fascism.

But it is in the post-war period that the ideology of Social Democracy becomes the real breeding-ground for Fascism. Social Democracy emerged from the war with two clearly marked characteristics: first, close unification of each party with its own “national,” i.e., imperialist State, and denial of any save the most formal “letter-box” internationalism; second, class-cooperation, in the forms of coalition ministerialism and trade union collaboration, to help to build up capitalist prosperity as the necessary condition of working-class prosperity. It will be seen that these basic principles are already close to the basic principles of “National Socialism.”

Social Democracy after the war was faced with two tasks: first to defeat the working-class revolution; second, to help to reconstruct the shattered structure of capitalism. The first brought the Social Democratic leadership into close alliance with the reactionary, militarist and White Guard circles, and trained it in undertaking governmental responsibility in shooting down the militant workers. The second task of capitalist reconstruction, after the period of direct civil war was closed, required ever closer collaboration of Social Democracy and the trade unions with monopoly capitalism.

This collaboration of Social Democracy with capitalism in the period of reconstruction and stabilisation required the development of a corresponding new ideology. The war-time ideology of the “national danger” and the necessity of unity against “the common enemy” could no longer serve in peace time. In the period of reconstruction and stabilisation, a new theoretical basis had to be developed. The collapse of capitalism, it was argued, was not in the interest of the working class; the working class required a prospering capitalism as the basis of the advance to socialism; “it is useless to socialise misery,” as Kautsky declared, pointing to the “economic ruin” of Russia as the warning of the consequence of the alternative path. Capitalism had not yet exhausted its development; it had still before it the advance to a new flourishing era of “organised capitalism”; this was the path to socialism. The task of the workers was to help to rebuild capitalism, increase production, and help to develop the new rationalised “organised capitalism,” with increasing participation economically through the trade unions (“economic democracy,” Mondism) and politically through Social Democracy in the Government; this was the true path of advance as against the “catastrophic” policies of Communism. In the period of stabilisation, rationalisation and the short-lived boom of 1927-9 this new ideology of Social Democracy reached its highest development.

Marxism began to be more or less openly thrown overboard, especially by the trade union leadership, even though it remained formally on the programme. The leading German trade union theorist, Tarnov, came out openly at the Breslau Congress of the German Trade Union Federation:

“Marxism as a leading ideology of the working-class movement has outlived itself. But as a real great mass movement cannot exist without a corresponding ideology, therefore we, the leaders of the trade unions, must create a new ideology.”

The essence of the “new ideology” was in fact the very old pre-Marxist (originally Liberal, later Fabian and finally Fascist) theory of the identity of interests of the working class and capitalism. As another leading theorist of the German trade unions declared:

“One must not lose sight of the fact that the working class is a part of the capitalist system, the downfall of which system is its own downfall; and therefore the great historical duty of the working class is to obtain by means of the regulation of its place in that system the improvement of the whole social structure, which is again equivalent to the betterment of its own social situation.”

[....]

Social Democracy and the trade unions under its leadership thus become, in the Social Democratic theory, constituent parts of modern capitalist organisation and of the capitalist State (the Webbs had in fact fully worked out this theory long before the war; and this theory is the underlying thread of their History of Trade Unionism, as indeed of all their work). “Social Democracy to-day,” affirmed Hilferding at the Kiel Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in 1927, “is an indispensable element of the State.” “Without the trade unions,” wrote Citrine, “industry under modern conditions could not function effectively” (W. M. Citrine, “Trade Unionism-the Bulwark against Chaos,” Reynolds’ News, September 4, 1932).

Every development of organisation and strengthening of monopoly capitalism and its dictatorship is thus hailed as the advance of “Socialism.” Characteristic of this is the Labour Party’s advocacy of the “public corporation” (i.e., State-protected capitalist trust, with guaranteed dividends for the shareholders) as the form of modern socialism--exemplified by the London Passenger Transport Act, which was introduced by a Labour Government and carried through by a Conservative Government, and hailed by the Labour Party as a triumph of “Socialism.” On this the conservative Times declared:

“The principal objections which have been raised may be grouped under three main heads--namely that the Bill is a “Socialist” measure; that it creates a dangerous monopoly; and that it will raise the cost of transport. None of these criticisms will really bear very prolonged examination. It is true that the Bill in its original form was produced by a

Socialist Government, and that the then Minister of Transport, Mr. Morrison, nearly succeeded in damning it forever by claiming it as a triumph of Socialism. But where in fact does the Socialism come in? On what point of principle will the new transport undertaking differ from the Central Electricity Board or from Imperial Communications Company, both of which were created by a Conservative Government? Like them indeed it is a statutory monopoly, and therefore subject to a certain degree of public control; but it is privately, not publicly owned.” (Times editorial, “The London Traffic Bill,” December 1, 1932.)

It is obvious that the “public corporation” of the Labour Party and Social Democracy bears close analogies in principle to the Fascist “corporation” as the system of organisation for industry.

On this basis Social Democracy upholds the modern developments of monopolist capitalism as already the advent of “Socialism.” As the German Social Democratic leader, Dittmann, declared at the Magdeburg Congress of the Social Democratic Party:

“We are no longer living under capitalism; we are living in the transition period to socialism, economically, politically, socially....

In Germany we have ten times as many socialist achievements to defend as they have in Russia.”

The world economic crisis dealt a heavy blow to this ideology. But Social Democracy adapted itself to the crisis by an extension of its theories. It was now necessary, it declared, to “save” capitalism from the menace of chaos and proletarian revolution. The Leipzig Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in 1931 gave out the watchword: “We must be the physicians of ailing capitalism.”

[....]

Through the whole of this line and propaganda it is evident that Social Democracy was in practice preparing and smoothing the way for Fascism and for the conceptions of Fascism. And indeed even after the victory of Fascism Leipart, the leader of German trade unionism, directly used the same line of argument to prove that the trade unions could be accepted by Fascism as subservient instruments of the Fascist dictatorship.[...]

This was the official declaration of German trade unionism in March 1933, offering its alliance to the Fascist dictatorship. It was received with expressions of pain and indignation in the non-German Social Democratic Press as a “shameful capitulation.” Yet the line expressed is exactly identical with the line of argument on the question of trade unionism and the State, employed by a Citrine in Britain, a Green in the United States, or a Jouhaux in France.

With this may be compared Mussolini's suggestion in 1921 of a possible alliance of reformist Social Democracy and Fascism:

“In the field of social legislation and of improvement in the standard of life of the working classes, the Socialists may find unexpected allies within Fascism. The salvation of the country may be assured, -not by the suppression of the antithesis between Fascism and Socialism, but by their reconciliation within Parliament. A collaboration with the Socialists is quite possible, especially at a later stage, after the clarification of ideas and tendencies, under which the Socialist Party at this moment labours, is ended. It is evident that the co-existence of Intransigent and Reformist Socialists in the same party will in the course of time become impossible. Either revolution or reform resulting from participation in the responsibilities of power.” (Mussolini, *Popolo d'Italia*, May 22, 1921.)

The course of events rendered this direct alliance unnecessary; but Mussolini subsequently took the reformist trade union leaders, D'Aragona and his colleagues, into his service.

Social Democracy thus prepared the way ideologically for Fascism: first, by the abandonment or corruption of Marxism; second, by the denial of internationalism and attaching of the workers to the service of “their own” imperialist State; third by the war on Communism and the proletarian revolution; fourth, by the distortion of “Socialism” or the use of vaguely “socialist” phrases (“the new social order,” the “commonwealth,” “industry as a public service,” etc.) to cover monopolist capitalism; fifth, by the advocacy of class-collaboration and the unification of the working-class organisations with the capitalist State. All this provides the ideological basis and groundwork of Fascism, which represents the final stage of the policy of the complete absorption of the working class, bound hand and foot, into capitalism and the capitalist State. This whole propaganda and line of Social Democracy confused, weakened and battered down the class-conscious socialist outlook of those workers who were under its influence, prevented the spread of revolutionary Marxist understanding, fostered semi-Fascist conceptions of nationalism, imperialism and class collaboration, and thus left the masses an easy prey to Fascism.

3. How Social Democracy Assists Fascism to Power.

In the historical examination of the Italian, German and Austrian examples in the previous two chapters we have seen in practice how Social Democracy assists Fascism to power. It is therefore only necessary now to summarise these results of what historical experience has demonstrated.

First, Social Democracy disorganises the proletariat and the proletarian struggle. The Social Democratic and trade union leadership act as an agency of the employers and of the ruling class within the working-class ranks, preaching defeatism and opposition to struggle, and, where the outbreak of working-class struggle becomes inevitable, directly disrupting the struggle from within.

This is most clearly seen in the role of Social Democracy in strikes. A conspicuous example of this process, in view of the subsequent revelations, was afforded by the great munitions strike in Germany in January 1918, which nearly brought Germany out of the war and into unity with the Russian Revolution. The Social Democratic leaders, Ebert, Braun and Scheidemann, by decision of their Executive, took over the direction of the strike, even calling on the workers to disobey mobilisation orders. Yet their object in coming on the strike committee, as declared by them many years later, was to strangle the strike. In 1924 Ebert brought a libel suit against the charge of treason for having led the strike of January 1918. In this trial he made known that the Executive had passed a secret resolution instructing them to take over the leadership of the strike in order to bring it to an end.[...]

Exactly the same process was conducted by the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress General Council leadership in the British General Strike of 1926, which was only called, according to MacDonald (Socialist Review, June 1926), because “if no general strike had been declared industry would have been almost as much paralysed by unauthorised strikes.” J. H. Thomas explained subsequently in the capitalist journal Answers, that, although opposed to the strike, he “did not resign because I felt certain that I could do far more good by staying in than by going out.” The object of the leadership, he explained to the House of Commons on May 13, 1926, was to prevent the struggle “getting out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control.” The Conservative Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, analysing the causes of the defeat of the General Strike, put forward as the main cause that “the responsible trade-union leaders retained their hold upon the trade unions, and took the constitutional course of admitting the general strike was illegal and called it off” (Joynson Hicks, letter to the Twickenham Conservative Association, August 14, 1926).

The same process was demonstrated in Italy over the occupation of the factories, where the reformist leadership achieved what all the Government forces had to confess themselves unable to achieve--the restoration of the factories to capitalism.

But this direct strike-breaking (examples of which on a greater or lesser scale are familiar every year and almost every month to the workers in every country) is only the plainest and simplest expression of a universal process of disorganisation and disruption of the working-class front, preaching of confidence in capitalism, close alliances with the class enemy, and war on the militant workers.

It is only after conspicuous and repeated disruption of the working-class front after this fashion by Social Democracy from within, and consequent weakening and discouragement of the workers, that the way is opened for Fascism to advance.

The betrayal of the General Strike was followed by Mondism – a first step towards Fascism, and welcomed as such by the Italian Fascist Press (it may be noted that Mond openly declared his sympathy for Fascism).

The surrender of the factories in Italy was followed immediately by the Fascist offensive, opening at Bologna and going continuously forward to the establishment of the Fascist State in 1922.

The second Labour Government's assistance to the offensive against the workers was followed by the landslide of the National Government vote of 1931 and the first beginnings of a serious Fascist movement in Britain.

The Social Democratic support of the Brüning dictatorship and hunger-offensive was immediately followed by the sweeping advance of Fascism in Germany.

This is the principal way in which Social Democracy assists the advance of Fascism to power – by disorganising the working-class front, by breaking strikes, by denunciation of the class struggle, by preaching legalism and trust in capitalism, by expulsion of all militant elements and splitting of the trade unions and working-class organisations.

The war on Communism is placed in the forefront by Social Democracy. The German example has shown to what lengths of direct alliance with the militarist and White Guards Social Democracy will go in order to crush the revolutionary workers.⁵ But the slogan of the war on Communism is the slogan of Fascism. Social Democracy and Fascism offer, in effect, rival services to the bourgeoisie for the slaying of Communism.

With the further development of the post-war period Social Democracy helps forward the advance towards Fascism more and more positively by assisting the strengthening of the capitalist mechanism and of the capitalist dictatorship. Social Democracy assists to carry through the economic measures for the strengthening of capitalist monopoly (rationalisation, etc.); it supports all the Brüning and Roosevelt types of intensified capitalist dictatorship, and itself helps to introduce and operate measures of intensified dictatorship. This was signally shown by the second Labour Government of 1929-31, with its Coal Mines Act and London Traffic Bill, its imposition of textile wage cuts by arbitration awards, its arrest and sentencing of hundreds of workers under the Trade Union Act, and its lathi-rule and imprisonment of sixty thousand in India. In the same way Severing as Minister of the Interior shot down the workers' May Day demonstrations in Berlin in 1929. Similarly, the Prussian Social Democratic Government actually boasted in its own defence, when removed by von Papen, that it "had caused more deaths on the Left than on the Right":

⁵ Compare the statement of the first British Labour Prime Minister, Mac Donald, over the forged Zinoviev letter in 1924:

"Who is it that has stood against Bolshevism? Liberals have contributed nothing, Tories nothing.... All the work has been done by Labour Leaders and Labour Party leaders."

“The Prussian Government is in a position with police-statistics to prove that police interference has caused more deaths on the Left than on the Right, and that police measures have caused more wounds on the Left than on the Right.”

(Braun-Severing Memorandum to Hindenburg, protesting against deposition: B. Z. am Mittag, July 19, 1932.)

In the final stage, as the Fascist movement advances closer to direct power, Social Democracy gives its final and decisive assistance by opposing and banning the united working-class front against Fascism—the sole means to prevent Fascism coming to power and concentrating hopes in illusory legal defences, the ballot, “democracy,” moderate bourgeois governments and finally even the support of pre-Fascist and near-Fascist dictatorships (Brüning, Dollfuss) as the “lesser evil.”

It is the Social Democratic Minister Severing that bans and dissolves the Red Front, while permitting the Storm Troops.

It is Social Democracy that refuses the repeated urgent appeals of Communism for the united front during the critical year of 1932 and the first quarter of 1933.

This line makes inevitable the victory of Fascism.

4. The Question of the Split in the Working Class.

The crucial importance of the united working-class fight against Fascism is seen by all to-day, especially after the German example of the disastrous consequences of disruption.

Nevertheless, in spite of the German example, Social Democracy continues to refuse and oppose the united front in all countries. At the same time, alongside this direct refusal of the united front, the cause of the split in the working class is often attempted to be misrepresented by Social Democracy as due to Communism and the Communist International, which are accused of dividing the working-class forces.

It is therefore necessary to give further consideration to this all-important question of the split in the working class and its causes.

The analysis of the split in the working class as due to Communism and the Communist International is both historically and in current practice incorrect.

The split in the working class dates from 1914—before the Communist International existed. It was caused by the dominant official leadership of the Social Democratic Parties abandoning their pledges and obligations before the International, directly contravening the principles on which their parties were built, and passing to unity with capitalism. The split took formal shape when

this leadership expelled those deputies who voted against the war credits, in accordance with their international obligations, and the sections who supported them. All this took place already during the war, before the Communist International existed. To argue that the responsibility for the split rests with the revolutionaries is to argue that Liebknecht should have voted the war credits.

The split deepened as the issue of the imperialist war developed into the issue of the working-class revolution or the support of the White Guards in shooting down the workers' revolution. The Mensheviks united with the Tsarists and foreign imperialism to take up arms against the workers' rule; the German Social Democratic leaders armed the counterrevolutionary officers' corps to shoot down the revolutionary workers. The breach of 1914 had widened to civil war, with Social Democracy on the capitalist side of the barricades. An unbridgeable barrier was created—as unbridgeable as the division of the classes. All this process of 1914-19 had already developed, revealing to the full the fact of the division of the working class, owing to the existence of an imperialist wing in the working-class camp, before the revolutionary sections finally organised the Communist International in 1919. To regard the Communist International as the cause of the split is to mistake the effect for the cause.

Lenin gave the call for the formation of the Communist International already in the autumn of 1914, only after and because the majority Social Democratic leadership had destroyed the old Second International, trampled international socialism under foot, and openly united with capitalism. There was no other way to continue the struggle for international socialism.

It is obvious that the responsibility of the split lies wholly with those sections that abandoned the party programme and united with capitalism, and not with those sections that stood by the party programme and continued to fight capitalism. This responsibility, begun in 1914, carried forward through the civil wars of 1917-21, continues in the issues of to-day. It is the unity of the Social Democratic leadership with capitalism that inevitably splits the working class and is the cause of the split. This is the root of the question of the split.

But given this split of the working-class organisations, which can only be finally overcome by the re-union of the mass of the workers (through the experience of the struggle, through ideological controversy, through conviction by their own experience) on the basis of the class struggle against capitalism, that is, finally on the basis of Communism, the immediate urgent question becomes that of the present common fight against the capitalist and Fascist offensive. It is evident that in this situation the need is for all workers and working-class organisations, whatever their political outlook, to combine in a common front for the immediate fight on the maximum possible agreed basis of fight. This is the meaning of the united front, for which the Communist International has consistently striven since 1921.

But it is here that Social Democracy, after causing the original split, perpetuates and deepens the split of the working class by opposing the united front, expelling all sections that support it, and even wrecking the working-class organisations to maintain its domination.

This is shown with conspicuous clearness in the decisively important question of the trade unions. The Communist line is for a single united trade union Organisation, embracing all workers, independent of their political views, within which the revolutionary workers conduct propaganda for their viewpoint or proposals, according to the principles of trade union democracy. Social Democracy rejects this viewpoint, and seeks to make membership of a trade union, or active membership (delegate positions, official positions) dependent on holding reformist views, on subscribing to the Labour Party programme, etc. To achieve this purpose the Social Democratic trade union leadership habitually expels, not only individual trade unionists (often outstanding militants with long records in the struggle and elected at the top of the polls by their fellow members) but whole sections and organisations and even majorities, if these express a revolutionary viewpoint, in order to maintain the domination of Social Democracy.

It is evident that this system of Social Democracy in the unions means the smashing of the unions as the united organisations of the workers. Reference is often made by Social Democrats to the existence of “Red Unions” as evidence of the role of Communism in splitting the trade union movement. But it is not realised by many who hear these charges in good faith that the Red Unions, in the countries with a divided trade union movement, have developed historically as the consequence of the Social Democratic policy of expulsions and denial of trade union democracy. The case of the Scottish Mineworkers is the classic example of this process in Britain, where the majority of the members of the union constitutionally elected a new executive and officials with an overwhelming revolutionary majority, but the old reformist executive and officials refused to vacate office, and proceeded to expel one of the two largest districts, the Fife district; after exhausting every constitutional effort for unity, the revolutionary majority were thus compelled to form the United Mineworkers of Scotland. Similarly in France the C.G.T.U. or Unitary Confederation of Labour (revolutionary) only came into existence at the end of 1921 after the revolutionary trade unionists had won a constitutional majority in the old Confederation of Labour, and the old reformist leadership had met this majority by a series of expulsions to convert it into a minority; the Congress constituting the C.G.T.U. was actually attended by a majority (1,564) of the unions belonging to the old C.G.T. The responsibility for the split rests with the reformists.

The aim of Social Democracy in thus splitting the trade unions in order to maintain its domination was stated with extreme clearness by the General Council’s spokesman at the Trades Union Congress of 1926, in defending the ban of the General Council on Trades Councils affiliating to the Minority Movement:

“If the Council had agreed to this affiliation, within a short time the Minority Movement would become the majority.”

(A. Conley, General Council, at the Bournemouth Trades Union Congress, 1926: Daily Herald report, Sept. 8, 1926.)

It was thus to prevent the revolutionary minority becoming the majority by constitutional means of propaganda and persuasion that the reformist leadership adopted the ruinous policy of wrecking the unions. The lengths to which they were prepared to go in this policy were declared by the President of the Miners' Federation at the Swansea Trades Union Congress in 1928: “Talk about wrecking the movement, I would rather have 50 honest men than 500 imitations; and if we have to disject the movement to the very ground, I am prepared to do it.” That is to say, the reformist leadership is prepared “to disject the movement to the very ground,” reducing the membership to one-tenth and expelling nine-tenths, rather than accept the verdict of a revolutionary majority. This throws an important light on the Labour or Social Democratic conception of “democracy,” the principle of which is often held forward as a reason for opposing the united front.[...] Similarly, the Trades Union Congress delegate to the American Federation of Labour in 1927, Sherwood, of the General and Municipal Workers, speaking at the Los Angeles Convention, said:

“Branches of our organisation in London, over 15,000 strong, refused to comply with the instructions of our General Council. Well, Mr. President, we simply smashed the branches.... We had on our General Council two men who represented great areas in our country, but they were going to Minority meetings, and we said, “Sign a declaration or get out.” Well, they had to get out.”

The illustrations here drawn deliberately from British trade unionism, where the process developed latest and most slowly, could be paralleled in very much stronger form in the other European countries and in the United States. In Germany, in particular, where the revolutionary movement was strongest, the Social Democratic policy of wrecking the unions by wholesale expulsions to maintain control was carried to extreme lengths, and played a large part in the disruption of the working class and opening the way to the victory of Fascism. This is the parallel to the general policy of the refusal of the united front.

There remains the question whether Communism in Germany, as is sometimes urged by critics, over-emphasised the policy of the “united front from below,” that is, the appeal to the lower organisations, of Social Democracy and the trade unions and to the organised and unorganised workers generally to combine in the single front against Fascism, and only in the last two years, since April 1932, and more especially since the expulsion of the Braun-Severing Government in July 1932, developed alongside of this the policy of “the united front from above,” that is, the direct party-to-party appeal. The criticism of this line is based on a lack of understanding of the conditions. The policy of the united front from above, alongside the united front from below, has

never been ruled out in principle by the Communist International, and has been repeatedly applied, when suitable occasion offered; but regard has had to be taken to the conditions in differing periods and situations. When Severing as Social Democratic Minister of the Interior was shooting down the workers' May Day demonstrations in 1929, to have appealed to the Social Democratic Party leadership for a united front against the attack on the workers would have been worse than meaningless. So soon as the expulsion of the Braun-Severing Government by von Papen offered an occasion, the Communist Party immediately made its proposal for a united front directly to the Executives of the Social Democratic Party and of the General Trade Union Federation. The refusal of the united front by these bodies sealed the victory of Fascism.

5. The Adaptation of Social Democracy to Fascism.

As capitalism develops to more and more Fascist forms, Social Democracy, which is the shadow of capitalism, necessarily goes through a corresponding process of adaptation. This process of "fascisation" of Social Democracy shows itself in the increasing support of open forms of dictatorship (Brüning, Emergency Powers, Ordinance rule in India), the use of armed violence against the workers, not only in civil war as in the early post-war years, but against unarmed workers in conditions of peace (Berlin in 1929, India under the Second Labour Government), and the increasing suppression of democracy within the working-class organisations.

With the complete victory of the Fascist dictatorship, this process of adaptation does not come to an end, but on the contrary reaches even more extreme forms.

Already since the war a whole series of examples of direct alliance of Social Democracy with White Governments of counter-revolutionary terror against the working class have shown themselves in country after country, and have continued to-day into Fascist forms.

In Hungary under the White Terror Social Democracy entered into a written Treaty of Alliance with the White Government. This Treaty was signed on December 22, 1921, between the Prime Minister, Bethlen, and the Social Democratic Party, affiliated section of the Second International. By the terms of this Treaty it was laid down that

"The Social Democratic Party will consider the general interests of the nation as of equal importance to the interests of the working class."

In respect of foreign policy the Hungarian Social Democratic Party

"will carry on an active propaganda on behalf of Hungary, among the leaders of the foreign Social Democratic Parties, with the foreign governments, etc., and for this purpose will co-operate with the Hungarian Foreign Ministry... will adopt the Magyar standpoint... before all, in its organ Nepszava adopt an impartial attitude and loyally express in this paper the collaboration with bourgeois society."

In respect of home policy the Social Democratic Party will “co-operate with the bourgeois classes in the economic sphere,” prevent strikes, conduct “no republican propaganda” and “shall not extend its agitation among the agricultural workers.” [...]The Treaty concluded with the pledge:

“The delegates of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party declare that they agree to the wishes expressed by the Prime Minister both with regard to foreign and home policy, and give assurance of fulfilment on their part. They nominate on their part a delegate who maintains contact with the Foreign Ministry.”

In return for this Treaty, Social Democracy was to be officially protected by the White Government, while Communism was ruthlessly suppressed. When the terms of this Treaty became known three years later, and a scandal was raised, compelling even a Commission of Enquiry in the Second International[...] (the Commission of Enquiry, under Kautsky in 1925, ended in a complete whitewashing verdict, recognising the “good faith” of the Hungarian Social Democrats, and accepting their assurance that the Treaty would not be continued further), the Hungarian semi-governmental organ, the Neues Pester Journal commented in its issue of January 1, 1925:

“The Treaty does not contain anything which every Socialist Party of the world – if we disregard the Third International – would not have recognised, or at least realised by its practical attitude.... The Treaty has been fully observed, and both parties have honestly fulfilled its provisions.”

The bourgeois organ is correct. The Bethlen-Social Democratic Treaty is only peculiar in that it sets down in writing the practice of all Labour and Social Democratic Parties, whatever their formal programme. The underlying principles of Fascism and its “Labour Front” are thus in many respects anticipated by Social Democracy.

Bulgaria afforded a further example of the same process. The elections of 1923 had resulted in a vote of 437,000 for the militant Peasants’ Party under Stambulsky, 252,000 for the Communist Party, 219,000 for the Bourgeois Bloc, and 40,000 for the Social Democrats. The Stambulsky Government was carrying through a programme of agrarian reforms, the impeachment and trial of the former war-ministers, and other measures unpopular with the reaction. The reactionary parties in June, 1923, carried through a military coup d’état, engineered by army officers, overthrew the Peasant Party’s Government by force and murdered the Prime Minister, Stambulsky. On this basis was set up the White Terror regime of the butcher, Tsankov, under whom, according to the statement of Vandervelde, Chairman of the Second International, 16,000 Bulgarian workers and peasants were murdered in eighteen months (Humanité, May 18, 1925). In this Tsankov Government of White Terror the Social Democratic Party, affiliated section of the Second International, was officially represented; its Minister, Kasassov, sat alongside the representatives of the Fascist “Officers’ League” and of the bourgeois parties.

In Poland in 1926 the Pilsudski coup d'état, overthrowing parliamentary democracy, and establishing a type of Fascist dictatorship, was carried out with the support of the Polish Socialist Party, section of the Second International; its representative, Moraszevski, sat in Pilsudski's Government.

In Spain the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship gave its protection to the Spanish Socialist Party and the reformist General Union of Labour, while suppressing the revolutionary workers' movement, and even, while throwing the revolutionary leaders into prison, appointed the reformist leader, Caballero, as a Privy Councillor.

In Italy D'Aragona and the reformist leaders of the General Confederation of Labour entered into the service of Mussolini and declared the Confederation dissolved in 1926.

In Austria the Dollfuss dictatorship was built up step by step with the passive support of Social Democracy as the "lesser evil" in relation to the Nazis; in the beginning of 1934 the Social Democratic Party was making a direct offer of alliance to Dollfuss at the same time as the Government offensive was turning on its organisations, and Press; and even when the workers finally rose in their heroic struggle, it was against express orders of the Party, which on the very eve of the struggle was sending urgent messages for submission and expressing readiness to Dollfuss to accept an emergency dictatorship and a form of Corporate State.

In Czecho-Slovakia the Social Democratic Party participated in the Coalition Government of all the bourgeois parties, which in 1933 was suppressing the Communist Press and preparing the conditions of intensified dictatorship.

In Japan the following situation was complacently reported in the British Labour organ Forward on March 20, 1930, under the title "Labour in Japan," with reference to the elections:

"One's impression is that the proletarian parties have been given a much fairer field than before. It is true that since the last election there have been two great police round-ups of the so-called dangerous thinkers. This might be urged to have had a weakening effect, but the opposite is more probably the case. Those that remain have been given as it were an official cachet. By inference they are certified free from Communism. There is no longer that bogey to frighten away possible supporters."

The "official cachet" to Social Democracy from an extreme reactionary militarist Government, which is savagely suppressing Communism with tens of thousands of arrests, is regarded with high favour by the British Labour organ as a most fortunate advantage. A short time after, in the spring of 1932, the leadership of this Japanese Social Democratic Party, headed by the Secretary, Akamatsu, and half the Executive Committee openly moved over and transformed themselves into an avowedly Fascist "National Socialist Party."

Social Democracy has thus throughout the world shown itself ready to adapt itself and enter into alliance with every counterrevolutionary, White Terrorist and Fascist Government, even entering directly into such Governments. Where Social Democracy has not been accepted into such open alliance, but has been forced under the carrying out its role of disruption of the working class under the form of opposition, this has not been for lack of trying on the part of the Social Democratic leadership, who have invariably exhausted every manoeuvre to endeavour to be admitted to the favoured circle under the protection of Fascism.

The signal example of the latter process has been Germany. The significance of the German experience has been dealt with in the previous chapter.

If German Fascism rejected the offers and pleadings of Social Democracy for an open alliance, it was because German Fascism had no confidence in the existence of any form of workers' Organisation, however servile the leadership, save under its direct control, because it had no confidence in the power of a permitted Social Democracy to maintain control of the workers, because it was determined to hold all apparatus positions for itself and permit no other forms of organization. The role of the remnants of Social Democracy thus becomes in practice, under the completed Fascist dictatorship, to continue its disruption of the working-class front in new forms, to carry forward its fight against the united front and against Communism, to confuse the revolutionary struggle with the deceitful aim of Weimar democracy which made possible the victory of Fascism, and to stand ready, in the event of the weakening of the Fascist dictatorship and the advance of the working-class offensive, to come to the rescue of capitalism and save the capitalist State, as in 1918, against the working-class revolution. In this way Social Democracy remains, even under the completed Fascist dictatorship, the main basis of support of the bourgeoisie in the working class.

The collapse of German Social Democracy created a crisis in the Second International. Numbers of workers who had followed its leadership began to have their eyes opened to the realities of the struggle, and to move towards increasing sympathy with Communism and towards the line of the united front. But the effect of the crisis on the leading strata was to hasten the process of "fascisation." The slogan was given out to rally on the basis of "democracy," that is, on the basis of the existing capitalist State. Therefore the line was proclaimed to combat still more fiercely the united working-class front, to strengthen the authority of the State, if necessary, in "emergency" forms, to unite with the "moderate" elements of the bourgeoisie, forming left blocs and coalition governments to save the State, and even to support the war-propaganda of the bourgeoisie in the name of "democracy." The Left Cartel policy in France, the toleration of Dollfuss in Austria, the coalition policy in Czecho-Slovakia, the support of Roosevelt by the reformist leadership in Britain and America, illustrated this line. An increasingly influential school developed which openly drew the "lessons" of Fascism as the need to concentrate more on a "national," as opposed to an international, basis, to abandon the conception of the working-class conquest of power and direct the appeal increasingly to the petit-bourgeoisie, and to seek to

build a “strong, authoritarian State” in the conditions of crisis. These conceptions were openly expressed by “Neo-Socialism” in France. A variant of a similar tendency was revealed by the Socialist League wing of the Labour Party leadership, which also came forward with proposals for an intensified dictatorship within the capitalist State. It is evident that this whole line of propaganda in practice chimes in with and assists the increasing development of capitalism in all modern states towards fascist forms.

Social Democracy—modern post-1914 Social Democracy—takes its starting-point and origin in the conception of co-operation with capitalism and with the capitalist State. This line is presented as the line of safe and peaceful, harmonious, “democratic” advance towards Socialism, as opposed to the dangers and destruction of the path of violent revolution. The whole experience of 1914-1933 has demonstrated with inescapable clearness that this line leads, not to Socialism, nor to peaceful progress, nor even to the maintenance of democratic forms in the most limited sense, but to unexampled violence against the working class and strengthening of the capitalist dictatorship and, in the final culmination, to the victory of Fascism, of imperialist war and of all the forces of destruction, against which only the proletarian revolution can avail to save the world. This is the lesson of the episode of “Social Democracy” (correctly, Social Imperialism or Social Fascism) in working-class history, an episode which is beginning to draw to its close.

[Summary: Chapter 9 tackles the question of what the theory (if it actually has one) and practice of fascism is, or claims to be. Dutt argues that, for all of the nonsense and absurdity of its surface ideology, it is actually driven in a very clear headed and methodical manner to achieve its true purpose, which is to sustain the old capitalist order in periods of extreme crisis and weakening. “The reality of Fascism is the violent attempt of decaying capitalism to defeat the proletarian revolution and forcibly arrest the growing contradictions of its whole development. All the rest is decoration and stage-play, whether conscious or unconscious, to cover and make presentable or attractive this basic reactionary aim, which cannot be openly stated without defeating its purpose.” Because capitalism cannot defend itself on rational grounds, particularly in this period of extreme crisis, fascism (capitalism’s new form) turns to demagogy and “play[s] on the hopes and the fears, the emotions and the ignorance of the poor and the suffering for the benefit of the rich and the powerful.” While fascism presents itself as something new, that of the corporate state, the corporate state is merely the cover under which capitalism disguises itself. Under the corporate state, class exploitation continues under the guise of unity; capitalists continue to own the means of production; the State intervenes for the sake of private property; corporations define themselves according to joint committees between employer representatives and those of the workers, but the worker representatives are only those selected by the Fascist State; the corporate state perpetually dedicates itself to war. Dutt also describes some of the inherent contradictions of international fascism due to fascism’s drive for national

self-sufficiency; fascist alliances are only temporary due to momentary short-term goals and lead back to war. Dutt closes Chapter 9 with a focus on the intensified exploitation of women under fascism, as, under a further stage of social decay, women are driven out of the work industry and restricted to a strictly domestic role.]

[Chapter 10 describes the essence of fascism as the organization of social decay: rather than allowing the resolution of social contradictions under capitalism to be worked out, which would result in a move towards socialism, fascism attempts to violently suppress this process; consequently, causes society to stop developing and strangles all hope for progress: (i) fascism attempts to stop the class struggle, not through the abolition of class, but rather through the permanent subjugation of the exploited; (ii) in order to restrict the contradictions of capitalism, it must inhibit its own productive forces; (iii) fascism seeks to suppress the contradictions of international capitalist development (between the single unified world market/international specialization of production and the competing monopolist groups/state complexes) by halting international development and trade.]

[In Chapter 11, Dutt draws on observations of growing fascist tendencies within Western Europe and the United States.]

CHAPTER XII - FASCISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION

What is the future of Fascism? What is the future of the fight against Fascism?

Fascism is a historical phenomenon, arising in a concrete historical situation. It is useless to discuss abstractly as in a schoolroom alternative social forms of "Fascism," "Democracy," "Dictatorship," etc., without regard to the actual situation and general line of capitalism in the present period.

Fascism is the outcome of modern capitalism in crisis, of capitalism passing into the period of the proletarian revolution, when it can no longer maintain its power by the old means, but is compelled to resort to ever more violent methods for the suppression of all working-class Organisation, and also for the attempted authoritarian economic unification and Organisation of its own anarchy, in a last desperate effort to maintain its existence and master the contradictions that are rending it.

More specifically, Fascism is the consequence of the delay of the proletarian revolution in Western and Central Europe in the post-war period, when the whole objective situation calls for the proletarian revolution as the only final solution and ever more visibly raises the issue of the struggle for power, but when the working-class movement is not yet strong enough and ready owing to being disorganised and paralysed by reformism, and thus lets the initiative pass to

capitalism. "Fascism," as Klara Zetkin declared in 1923, "is the punishment of the proletariat for failing to carry on the revolution begun in Russia." Fascism is the abortion consequent on a miscarriage of the proletarian revolution. But Fascism cannot solve the contradictions or prevent the collapse of capitalism. On the contrary, Fascism carries the contradictions, both within the capitalist world, and between the two worlds since 1917, the capitalist world and the socialist world, to the highest point; Fascism brings an extreme intensification of the class struggle and of the process of revolutionisation.

Fascist tendencies are not peculiar to the countries of completed Fascist dictatorship, to Germany, Austria and Italy, or to Poland, Hungary, etc. Fascist tendencies are common in greater or less degree to all modern capitalism, including Western Europe and America, wherever the process of decay and the advance of the class struggle have reached a certain point, and advance in proportion as working-class resistance is paralysed or weakened by reformism.

1. The Dialectics of Fascism and Revolution.

The victory of Fascism in Central Europe, and the advance of Fascist tendencies in Western Europe and America, in 1933-4, represents the highest point yet reached by the Counter-Revolution since the war. But this victory of the Counter-Revolution does not represent the growing strength of capitalism. On the contrary, it is the direct result of the extreme aggravation of the world crisis and of the instability of capitalism, of the shattering of Versailles and all the peace settlements, of the growth of social contradictions and mass discontent, bursting all peaceful and legal forms: that is to say, of the very advance of all the forces which finally make for the victory of the proletarian revolution, since the proletarian revolution alone can solve these contradictions, which Fascism can only intensify.

Capitalism can no longer maintain its power by the old means. The crisis is driving the whole political situation at an accelerating pace. All social and international contradictions are brought to a new and greater sharpness by the successive developments of the crisis of capitalism. All strata of the population are affected by the crisis. The bourgeois regime is driven to ever more desperate expedients to prolong for a while longer its lease of life.

For the decade and a half since the war the bourgeoisie has maintained its power mainly on the basis of Social Democracy as the governing instrument to hold in the workers and prevent the working-class revolution. In return for disciplining the workers and preaching myths about "democracy" and the "peaceful path to Socialism," Social Democracy has been given ministerial posts, patronage and pickings. This process of being drawn into the capitalist machine has been held up to the workers as evidence of the gradual, peaceful conquest of "power" by the working class. How much this "power" was worth, when it came to the test, or rather, where the real power lay, has been abundantly shown by the event in Germany, Austria and elsewhere.

But this system, or particular mechanism of capitalist rule in the post-war crisis, is not eternal--as the Labour leaders, on the flood-tide of Mondism and successive Labour Governments, have fondly hoped. The crisis drives to sharper political issues, to intensified class struggle, to the need of new forms of capitalist rule, to rapid and desperate emergency measures. The basis of widening social reforms and concessions, hastily granted in the post-war period to stave off revolution, and constituting the mechanism of Social Democratic influence and ascendancy in the working class in the Western Imperialist countries, breaks down under the strain of the economic crisis, and gives place to the withdrawal and cutting down of social reforms and increasing attacks upon the workers. With this process a new alignment of political forces develops.

On the one hand, the hold of Social Democracy upon the workers begins to weaken, as shown in its declining numbers, its increasing use of Social Fascist disciplinary measures and violence, and in the growth of Communist influence. In the face of this growing revolutionisation of the workers, the bourgeoisie hastens to act, while there is yet time, before Communism has yet won its visibly approaching majority position in the working class, while the disorganisation of the workers by Social Democracy can still prevent successful resistance, and brings into play the dangerous hazard of Fascism to smash the advance of the working class.

On the other hand, the working class, tied to capitalism by the reformist leadership inherited from the preceding period, is paralysed from being able to play its decisive role as political leader in the developing crisis and draw all the discontented strata of the population under its leadership for the overthrow of capitalism. On the contrary, since there is no standing still, the exact reverse process takes place in the early stages. As the crisis develops, the working class under reformist leadership appears to grow, not stronger, but weaker. The policy of coalition with capitalism has steadily demoralised and sapped the strength of the old working-class organisations, brought membership lower and lower every year to the lowest point since the war, and destroyed the confidence of the workers in their Organisation and leadership. The class struggle goes forward, but in disorganised forms, since the new fighting leadership has not yet won the majority of the working class, and has to fight simultaneously the forces of capitalism and the throttling stranglehold of the reformist machine. In consequence, the working-class forces are weakened and divided at the very moment of the heaviest capitalist attack, not because of the militant workers who remain true to the class struggle, but because of the alliance of the reformist machine with capitalism. This weakening of the workers' forces in the face of the Fascist attack is the price of the path of bourgeois "democracy," of Social Democracy.

At the same time as the organised working-class forces are thus temporarily weakened, the way is opened for alternative forces, which could otherwise play only a subordinate part, to come to the front. The mixed intermediate strata or so-called middle classes, who can play no independent political role, but can only act in practice as the ally of either the working class or capital, come to the front, in proportion as the active role of the working class is weakened. They

are sharply affected by the crisis and by all the operations of finance-capital. Their lower strata are the natural ally of the working class in the war on finance-capital. But they see from their point of view the modern parliamentary state as a coalition of Big Capital (“international financiers”) and Labour bosses, with themselves left out, and feel themselves squeezed by ever-increasing taxation for the benefit of big business and the system of social services to the workers, that is, the system of social reformism. Nor can the reformist Labour propaganda, which dare not touch the roots of finance-capital, expose to them the real reasons of their plight, or give them the revolutionary lead for which they are groping, to mobilise them against their real enemy. Thus they become easy prey for the demagogic propaganda of finance-capital to give them a sham “revolutionary” lead, exploiting to the full the weaknesses and corruption of Labourism or Social Democracy, and organise them as a counter-force against the working class, in contradiction to their own interests. Capital is able for the first time to organise, no longer a mere mercenary army for its support, but a mass movement, built on disgust with Reformism, built out of those intermediate strata and unstable, discontented, disillusioned, working-class elements, against the organised working class. From the ruins and discredit of Reformism Fascism springs.

The old liberal parliamentary-democratic method of maintaining bourgeois rule on a basis of social reforms increasingly breaks down before the realities of the crisis and the sharpening of the class struggle. On all sides the bankruptcy of the old social, economic and political system becomes recognised, and the demand for a complete change of the social system replaces the old cry for reforms. Capitalism has to meet this new situation in which its whole regime begins to be questioned and denounced, no longer only by the few, but by the overwhelming majority of the population, and the call for “socialism” and “revolution” sounds on all sides. An extreme example of this process is revealed in Germany on the eve of Fascism, where in the elections of the summer of 1932 no less than 74 per cent. of the voters gave their votes for parties proclaiming the aim of “socialism,” and all the parties which declared their support of capitalism could not win more than a quarter of the electors. In this situation capitalism is only able to save its power for one further lease by the final desperate expedient of staging a sham “revolution” with the nominal aim of “socialism,” but in fact designed to maintain its power—the “National Socialist Revolution” or Fascism. The poison, from the point of view of capitalism, of the “revolutionary” and “socialist” propaganda which can to-day alone win a mass hearing, is skilfully rendered harmless by the antidote of the “national” idea.

Thus the final mask of this ultimate masquerade of capitalism staging a “socialist” “revolution” to maintain its power becomes the old “national” label. What is the significance of this? Does it mean that the “national” appeal is in fact stronger to the masses than the socialist? Not at all. The Nationalist Party in Germany, on the basis of the pure “national” appeal, could only win two million votes, where, by the skilful addition of “socialism,” the “National Socialist” Party could win thirteen millions. But the “national” label becomes the final device for distorting and defeating the meaning of socialism, when the defence of capitalism can no longer be openly

proclaimed. The whole drive of the present situation, as all are increasingly compelled to recognise, is towards the necessity and inevitability of collective social organisation, that is, towards socialism. The “national” principle, on the other hand, represents in reality the rule of a given capitalist grouping, in opposition to other capitalist groupings. *But the “national” principle is falsely presented to appear as the expression of the collective, social principle against private egoism, individualism, capitalism.* In this way the historical movement towards collective social organisation, when it becomes too strong to be any longer directly resisted, is attempted to be distorted from its common, human basis into an exclusive group-assertive basis, which becomes in fact the cover for the maintenance of the rule of the capital class. This is the significance of “National Socialism” or Fascism.

But what is the historical outcome of this process? The advance to Fascism as the final defence means the destruction of legality, not by the revolutionaries, but by the bourgeoisie, and the laying bare to all of the class struggle as a direct conflict of force. In order to hold off the revolution, the bourgeoisie is compelled to play at revolution, and to seek to “outbid the revolution.” They are compelled to preach to the masses contempt for peace and legality, which were formerly their best protection. To prevent the working-class revolution, they are compelled to stage their masquerade revolution, and even to dub it a “socialist revolution.” The junkers, barons and industrial magnates, in order to maintain their power, are compelled to place themselves at the head of bandit hordes with cries of “Down with Interest-Capital!” “Down with Unearned Income!” “Nationalisation of the Trusts!” “Nationalisation of the Banks!” “Socialisation of all enterprises ripe for socialisation!” etc. The modern Black Hundreds have to proclaim themselves “socialists” and enemies of “capitalism” in order to win a hearing and save capitalism. Such is the measure of the strength of capitalism revealed in the temporary victory of the Fascist Counter-Revolution.

It is manifest that we have here not a strengthening, but in reality and in the final outcome, an extreme weakening of capitalism. The further examination of the development of the fight against Fascism will reveal the inevitable final working out of the dialectics of this process.

2. The Fight Against Fascism.

What, then, of the future of the fight against Fascism?

Fascism, it is evident from the above analysis, develops out of the decay of bourgeois democracy and reformism in the conditions of the capitalist crisis. Indeed, Fascism develops in the first place in and through the forms of bourgeois democracy, step by step strengthening the state coercive apparatus and emergency powers and restricting the rights of the workers, in proportion as the workers’ resistance is paralysed by reformism and trust in constitutionalism; and only when the ground has been thus fully prepared within the shell of “democracy,” and the workers’ forces disorganised to the maximum, only then the final blow is struck and the complete and open Fascist dictatorship is established. Germany and Austria are the outstanding examples of

this process, where all the preliminary stages for the victory of Fascism were carried through by a Brüning or a Dollfuss in the name of the defence of “the constitution” and with the support of the Social Democratic leadership on this basis.

In consequence, the fight against Fascism cannot be conducted on the basis of trusting to bourgeois “democracy” as the defence against Fascism. To do this means to invite and to guarantee the victory of Fascism. The fight against Fascism can only be conducted on the basis of the united class fight of the workers (leading all the exploited strata) against all the attacks of finance-capital, whether these attacks are conducted through nominal “democratic” forms or through open Fascist forms. The stronger the fight of the workers in the early stages, within the still nominally maintained “democratic” forms, the less easy becomes the advance of the bourgeoisie to the further stages, to the open Fascist forms. Hence the importance of the united working-class front. The strength of the working-class fight is also decisive for winning the wavering petit-bourgeois sections.

The bourgeois democrats and reformists argue that Fascism is the consequence of Communism. “The fear of the dictatorship of the working class has evoked the iron dictatorship of Capitalism and Nationalism. Reaction on the ‘Right’ has bred reaction on the ‘Left.’ Reaction of the ‘Left’ is displaced by triumphant reaction of the ‘Right’ “ (Labour Manifesto on “Democracy versus Dictatorship,” March 1933). From this they draw the conclusion, expressed in many Labour speeches: “To defeat Fascism, root out Communism.” This line is expressed in the abstract slogan “Democracy versus Dictatorship,” presented without reference to class-relations: that is, in practice, defence of the existing capitalist state (with its increasing Fascist tendencies) against the working-class revolution, under cover of the plea of defence against the Fascist danger.

This line of the Labour Party is also the line of the big bourgeoisie in its present propaganda. Thus the Conservative leader, Baldwin, declared in a speech at Glasgow on June 24, 1932.

“In Europe you find these Communistic methods were tried in Italy. What was the result? Something very near civil war, when the Right beat the Left, and you got a dictatorship, not of the Left, but of the Right....

I say that a dictatorship of no kind will we have in this country, either of the Right or of the Left, at any time.”

What is important here is not the glaring travesty of the actual facts: namely, that in Italy the Communists were in a minority, that the Reformist Socialists in Italy were defeated, not because they adopted Communist methods, but because they specifically refused to adopt Communist methods, because they refused to seize power in 1920 when by the admission of all it was theirs for the taking, because they clung to passive parliamentary and industrial strike tactics, and therefore Fascism conquered; and that, finally, the only country where the working class has adopted Communist methods, the Soviet Union, is the only country where Fascism has not been

able to show its face. All this has been long demonstrated by history; and the Conservative-plus-Labour propagandists are only hoping to play on the ignorance of their hearers when they thus endeavour to conceal the real facts. But what is here important is the exact unity, even to a literal identity of phrasing, revealed between the line of the Labour Party and the line of the Conservative Party, that is, of the ruling party of the bourgeoisie. This identity should already awaken the alertness of any working-class supporter of the Labour Party to the fact that the line here expressed represents no defence of working-class interests or real fight against Fascism.

The whole dialectics of revolution and counter-revolution, of vital importance for the understanding of the present period, lies concealed and distorted behind this treatment. The conception of Communism as the cause of Fascism is as shallow in understanding of the real working of social forces as it is illusory in fact. The growth of the working-class revolution (Communism), and the growth of violent capitalist repression, are in reality both equally the consequence and outcome and expression of the growing crisis and break-up of capitalism. They develop as parallel parts of the single process of the gathering revolutionary crisis. To find in one symptom the cause of the other symptom is worthy of the shallowest quack. In fact the example of Austria, where the Communist Party was still very weak and where Social Democracy boasted of the completeness of its control of the working class, has shown how little the bourgeoisie has need of the pretext of Communism to advance to the Fascist dictatorship.

“Before the war,” declared Lenin (speech to the All-Russian Conference of the Bolshevik Party in May 1917), “England was the freest country in the world. There was freedom in England because there was no revolutionary movement there.” Does this mean that the masses in pre-war England were fortunate because they had no revolutionary movement? On the contrary. The formal “freedom” was only the mirror, the counterpart, of the real subjection. The “freedom” was conditional on the masses accepting passively their servitude and looking only for the crumbs of reforms. But so soon as the workers begin to stir against their servitude and to fight consciously for their liberation, the “freedom” rapidly disappears and gives place to the whip. And that is the meaning of Fascism. Fascism marks the extreme intensification of the capitalist dictatorship and offensive against the working class; but it marks thereby at the same time the growth of capitalist contradictions and the growth of the revolutionary awakening of the working class.

If to-day in England and the other Western countries the traditional “freedoms” are being steadily eaten into and cut down, if police expenditure is trebled since the war and the police are being centralised and militarised, if freedom of agitation and assembly and demonstration is being more and more cut away, if the trade union machine on top is absorbed into unity with capitalism and the State, and the price of criticism of Labour leaders is assessed at seven thousand pounds by the capitalist courts, all this is only a measure of the awakening of the working class. The awakening of the working class pricks the myth of “freedom” and lays bare the lash of the despot. The degree of violence, the degree of coercion and restriction of rights, the variation of methods between open complete Fascism and partial developing forms of Fascism beneath a

decaying “democratic” cover, corresponds to the degree of development of the working class and of the relations of the class struggle. When the British and French labour leaders boast of the supposed immunity of their countries from Fascism (actually, slower development of Fascism), they are only paying tribute to the backwardness of their own movements. But this backwardness is rapidly disappearing.

Does this mean that, so long as the forms of bourgeois democracy remain, bourgeois democracy provides the best defence of the workers against Fascism? On the contrary. The workers fight, and need to fight, tenaciously for every democratic right of organisation and of agitation within the existing regime; but they cannot afford for one moment to be blind to the fact that bourgeois democracy is only a cover for the capitalist dictatorship, and that within its forms the advance to Fascism is steadily pushed forward.

Bourgeois democracy breeds Fascism. Fascism grows organically out of bourgeois democracy. At what point did Dollfuss, “champion of democracy in Europe,” become Dollfuss, champion of Fascism? The process developed through such a series of stages that up to the very last Social Democracy was offering alliance to Dollfuss to “save the constitution,” at the same time as Dollfuss was proclaiming the complete principles of Fascism and preparing to turn his guns upon the workers. The more the workers place their trust in legalism, in constitutionalism, in bourgeois democracy, the more they make sacrifices to save the existing regime as the “lesser evil” against the menace of Fascism, the heavier become the capitalist attacks and the more rapid the advance to Fascism. To preach confidence in legalism, in constitutionalism, in bourgeois democracy, that is, in the capitalist state, means to invite and to guarantee the victory of Fascism. That is the lesson of Germany and of Austria. And this is the reality which blows to smithereens the deceitful and disastrous slogan of “Democracy versus Dictatorship.”

Yet in face of the deadly lessons of Germany and of Austria the British Labour Party leadership and Social Democracy in Western Europe are to-day repeating to the last detail the fatal line of German Social Democracy. All that German Social Democracy and the German trade unions preached and practised, the British Labour Party and the British trade unions are preaching and practising to-day. *How then can they expect the same policy to lead to a different outcome?* They preach up and down the country in favour of democracy and constitutionalism and legality. So did German Social Democracy. They denounce Communism; they refuse the united front; they expel all militant workers; they set up a network of discipline to maintain the safety of their organisations for capitalism. So did German Social Democracy. They are faithful pillars of capitalism and of imperialism. So was German Social Democracy. *They are treading the same road. Only the action of the workers, learning the lessons in time, refusing to follow their teaching, breaking their bans and building up the common front against capitalism, can change the outcome.*

[Summary: *Dutt quotes further German and British Social Democrat reformists on their inability to offer a substantial plan to handle the rise of fascism*]

The very heart of reformism is here laid bare. Capitalism is all-powerful. The workers are powerless against it. The workers must only hope to get what capitalism permits them through the legal forms capitalism permits. Let us cling to what capitalism may grant us through the forms of “democracy” (which were in fact only won by violent struggle) and “hope to God” that, if we are docile, capitalism may not strike us further. Such is the voice of the beaten, trembling slave, which expresses itself as the philosophy of reformism.

Does, then, the advance of Fascism mean the end of all things, that there is no hope for the working-class movement, that there is no hope for the victory of socialism? On the contrary. The poet, William Morris, in his imaginative picture already quoted of the path of the socialist revolution in England (in the chapter “How the Change Came,” of *News from Nowhere*), describes how the Government proclaimed martial law and appointed a well-known general who with modern artillery carried through a terrible massacre of thousands of unarmed workers. The following dialogue then ensues between the narrator and his informant, old Hammond:

“I wondered that he should have got so elated about a mere massacre, and I said:

‘How fearful! And I suppose that this massacre put an end to the whole revolution for that time?’

‘No, no,’ cried old Hammond, ‘it began it.... That massacre began the civil war.’”

“*It began the civil war.*” It destroyed the myths and illusions of legality and passive slavery, and laid bare the civil war which, once began, could only finally end with the victory of the masses. And that above all is the significance of Fascism. The old poet is a hundred times right against the trembling modern reformists, who solemnly declare that modern artillery and technique have made revolution impossible. Once the myths and illusions of legality and pacifism have fallen, once the united mass of the workers enter into the struggle, with the scales fallen from their eyes, there is no question of the ultimate outcome. The exploiters know this well; hence their anxiety to build up the final rampart of a national-fascist ideology of deception in the masses, alongside the direct violence and coercion; and hence also the importance, on the workers’ side, of carrying through the ideological-political fight of exposure against Fascism alongside the direct preparation of the mass struggle and final armed struggle.

[...]

How much more will the final outcome of the struggle be certain, when the whole working class will fight as a united force under revolutionary leadership, when Fascism will be weakened and disorganised by its own internal contradictions and by the fiasco of its regime and of its

promises, and when disillusionment and discontent and rising sympathy with their fighting working-class brothers will spread through the lower Fascist ranks. Tsarism also fell despite all its machinery of repression. Far more certainly and rapidly will the card-castles of the modern Fascist dictatorships fall, when the time comes.

The laying bare of the civil war at the root of class-society, the explosion of all the illusions of peace and legality – that is, above all, the historical role of Fascism. Fascism attempts to organise society on the basis of permanent civil war, no longer merely with the old state forces, police and military, of repression, but with permanent special armed legions of class-war to hold down the workers. That fact is the most complete expression of the final bankruptcy of capitalism and of the certainty of its collapse. The eyes of all are being opened to the realities of class society and to the real character of the war confronting the working class. The necessity of the workers' dictatorship as the sole means to crush the counter-revolution is becoming understood. The crisis within the post-war Second International since Fascism in Germany is only the expression of this process. As we enter more and more directly into a period of revolutionary conditions, when the working-class movement can only be carried forward by revolutionary methods and under illegal conditions or go under, the will-o'-the-wisp lights of so-called "democratic socialism," that is, of "socialism by permission of the bourgeoisie," inevitably go into eclipse and leave the workers in the bog; only the clear light of revolutionary socialism burns stronger than ever and shows the path forward. The issue becomes more and more clearly no longer even in appearance a question of two tendencies, of two paths for the working-class struggle; in the sight of all, the Communist International alone leads the working-class struggle.

In this situation even the Second International is compelled hypocritically to recognise the necessity of "revolutionary" methods and the "error" of its past policies. German Social Democracy in its latest Executive Manifesto of January 1934, proclaims the "error" of its path in 1918:

"The political transformation of 1918 ended up in a counter-revolutionary development.... The Social Democratic Party... took over control of the State without opposition, sharing it as a matter of course with the bourgeois parties, the old bureaucracy and even with the reorganised military forces. *That it should have taken over the old machinery of government virtually unchanged was the great historical error committed by a German Labour Movement which had lost its sense of direction during the war.*"

("The Battle of Revolutionary Socialism and its Objective": Manifesto of the Executive of the German Social Democratic Party, published in the Karlsbad Neuer Vorwärts, January 28, 1934.)

"The great historical error." Fifteen years ago the centre of controversy of the Second and Third Internationals, expressed in the controversy of Kautsky and Lenin, turned precisely on this point, when Lenin, with Marx, declared that it was necessary for the workers' revolution, not to take over, but to smash the existing capitalist state machine and establish its own dictatorship instead,

and the Second International denied this. Now fifteen years too late, after the harm is done, after the German working class is reduced to the uttermost limit of subjection by their methods, the Second International blandly proclaims that its policy was an “error”--and then proceeds again in fact to recommend the path of bourgeois democracy, “the new Organisation of the State on the basis of freedom by the convening of a National Assembly elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage.” Once again, despite all the attempts to make a show of a great “change of heart,” this is in reality the old Weimar path. But the German workers have had their experience of the Weimar path and its outcome and have no intention to repeat it.

Similarly, the Second International in its Paris Resolution of August 1933, on “The Strategy and Tactics of the International Labour Movement during the Period of Fascist Reaction,” admits the necessity of “revolutionary struggle” *after* Fascism:

“Where the bourgeoisie has renounced democracy in order to throw itself into the arms of Fascism and has deprived the working class of the democratic means of struggle, the only means of emancipation left is that of the revolutionary struggle....

In the countries in which Fascism has prevailed, the dictatorship can only be overthrown by a revolution of the people. When they have gained their victory over Fascism, the revolutionary forces will not confine themselves to breaking its power; they will destroy the great capitalist and landowning forces which are its economic foundation.”

By this declaration the whole line of the 1918 Revolution, of Weimar democracy, is implicitly condemned. In the controversy of those days between Kautsky and Lenin, between the line that the revolutionary working class in the moment of victorious overthrow of the old regime must confine itself to setting up “pure” democracy and then await a majority in the Constituent Assembly or Parliament before proceeding further, and the line that the revolutionary working class in the moment of victory must at once use its power, without waiting for parliamentary majorities, to overthrow capitalism, the Second International is now compelled, fifteen years late, in a half-hidden unclear fashion, to admit that Lenin was right. The revolutionary working class, it is now declared, in the moment of overthrow of the old regime must at once, without waiting for Constituent Assemblies or parliamentary majorities, proceed to “destroy the great capitalist and landowning forces.” Excellent. If this were seriously meant, it would mean the workers’ dictatorship. But in fact this phrase—thrown in as a sop because in relation to Germany to-day it would be impossible openly to advocate the return to the completely exposed Weimar democracy—is used as a fine-sounding phrase without any attempt to face what it practically involves, and is made completely meaningless by the rest of the resolution. Further-notable precaution—it is to be applied only to countries where Fascism has already conquered.

What, therefore, does this line mean in practice? First, the working class must let itself be bull-dozed by Democracy, paralysed and divided by reformism, smashed and butchered by Fascism. Then, when their forces have been thus heavily broken up and weakened, when

Fascism has completely organised and established without resistance its apparatus of armed pretorian guards over the disarmed workers, then the workers are graciously permitted by the Second International to carry through the socialist revolution (though if there were the slightest signs appearing of their succeeding in this, these gentlemen, as the Karlsbad Manifesto of German Social Democracy has made clear, would be the first to hurry forward to wave again the banner of “pure democracy” and thus endeavour again to save the bourgeoisie as in 1918). But where “democracy” still exists, the workers must still tread the fatal path of “pure democracy,” abstaining from any revolutionary initiative, until Fascism has conquered them. Such are the final confusions and contortions of the leadership of the Second International in the present epoch. It is abundantly clear that Social Democracy by this line is in fact only disorganising the working-class fight against Fascism, and thus in practice still fulfils its role, also in the countries of open Fascist dictatorship, of the support of the bourgeoisie in the working class.

Against this line the revolutionary working class line of communism declares: The workers’ dictatorship is the *only alternative* to the capitalist dictatorship, which at present is increasingly passing from the older “democratic” to Fascist forms. The workers’ dictatorship is the *only guarantee* against the victory of Fascism, against the victory of the capitalist counter-revolution and the unlimited subjection of the working class. The path of bourgeois democracy ends in Fascism. The battle for the workers’ dictatorship must be fought, not merely after Fascism, but *before* Fascism, as the sole means to prevent Fascism. Social Democracy says: First Fascism, then Revolution. But Communism says: *Revolution before Fascism, and preventing Fascism. Fascism is not inevitable.* Fascism only becomes inevitable if the working class follows the line of reformism, of trust in the capitalist state, of refusal of the united front, and thus lets itself be struck down by the class enemy. But if the working class follows the line of the united front, of the rising mass struggle, of the building of its Communist Party and fighting mass Organisation to the final victory of the revolution and establishment of the workers’ dictatorship, then the working class can defeat and crush Fascism and pass straight to the socialist order with no costly and shameful Fascist interlude. This is the path to defeat Fascism.

Equally in those countries where the Fascist dictatorship has won the temporary upper hand, the only path forward and object of the workers’ struggle requires to be, no longer the restoration of the old illusory “democracy” which only prepared the way for Fascism, but the workers’ dictatorship and the establishment of the Soviet regime. The German working-class revolution is not defeated, despite the temporary retreat of 1933 made inevitable by the whole role of Social Democracy. On the contrary, Germany is nearer to the final victory of the proletarian revolution than any country in the capitalist world. The fact that the German workers are going through the extremest hell of Fascism is the reflection of the fact, not that their movement is more backward, but that it is relatively more advanced and closer to the revolution.

The liberals and reformists see only the surface completeness of the Fascist victory. They can never understand the dialectical process. They see the immediate victory of Fascism. But they do

not see the negative side. They do not see the disintegration of all capitalist stability that that represents. They do not see that the very ferocity of the capitalist attack is the measure of the growing revolutionary advance. They do not see the significance of the crushing exposure of the line of reformism and laying bare of the real battle. They do not see that the Communist Party of Germany—with unbroken ranks and organisation, and over one hundred thousand members active under the most extreme terror, a record without parallel in working-class history—is in reality stronger than it has ever been, closer to the winning of the unquestioned leadership of the majority of the working class, closer to the victory of the proletarian revolution.

The mournful pessimists and faint-hearts who see a long period of Fascist dictatorship and unshaken reaction in front do not understand the whole character of the present period of the destruction of capitalist stability, a period in which rapid changes throughout the world and gigantic revolutionary struggles are before us.

The bourgeoisie dream through Fascism to exterminate Marxism, that is, to exterminate the independent working-class movement and the fight for Socialism. The attempt is not a new one. A hundred years ago “all the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise the spectre of Communism: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.” The collapse of 1848 was heralded as the collapse of Socialism. In the decade after the Commune, on the basis of thirty thousand corpses, Thiers boasted that “we have heard the last of Socialism.” In the following decade Bismarck set himself to stamp out Marxism in Germany with all the power of the most highly organised Prussian police and bureaucratic system, and after twelve years had to recognise that he had met his master. Down the long gallery of the years the ghosts of the past, Cavaignac and Gallifet, Thiers and Bismarck, Pobiedonostsev and Stolypin, Kornilov and Kolchak, the hangmen and butchers and jailers of bourgeois rule, may welcome with a spectral sneer the new accessions to their ranks, Hitler and Goering and Goebbels, taking their place alongside Horthy and Tsankov and Dyer and Chiang Kai-shek.

But the older attempts were against a still early and newly rising movement. To-day the attempt is against a powerful and developed movement on the eve of power. That it will fail like every previous attempt and end in ignominious collapse requires no demonstration.

“Wherever, in whatever shape, and under whatever conditions the class struggle obtains any consistency, it is but natural that members of our Association should stand in the foreground. The soil out of which it grows is modern society itself. It cannot be stamped out by any amount of carnage. To stamp it out, the Government would have to stamp out the despotism of capital over labour--the condition of their own parasitical existence.”

(Marx, *Civil War in France*.)

What is in question now is not the inevitable future collapse of Fascism. What matters now is the speed with which the international working class can gather its forces and drive back this offensive, before it has developed further, before it has developed to the point of world war and the direct attack on the Soviet Union, can prevent the enormous losses and sacrifices which a prolongation of this struggle will mean, and can rapidly transform the present situation into the revolutionary offensive.

The issues which are confronting the world at the present moment are heavy issues. Fascism in Germany lays bare to all where capitalist civilisation is inevitably developing, if the workers' revolution is delayed. Germany is not a backward country. Germany is the most advanced, highly organised capitalist country in the world, the last word, which shows to other countries the picture of their future development.

What is that picture of the future of capitalism thus revealed? Barbarism and the return of the Dark Ages; the systematic destruction of all science and culture; the enthronement of Catholic Christian, and even pre-Christian, obscurantism, racial persecution and torture systems; the return to a system of isolated, self-sufficient warring communities. This is the final working out of the most advanced capitalism, with the Pope conferring his blessing upon it and decorating the murderer Goering with his Gold Medal of the Holy Year.

Marx and Engels long ago pointed out the inevitable working out of capitalism in barbarism and decay, if the working-class revolution should fail to conquer in time. Stage by stage, through imperialism and its world orgies of brutality and destruction, through the slaughter of the world war, and to-day through Fascism, we are tasting the first beginnings of this alternative.

It is time to end this chapter of human history, before we have to tread this path still further, and to open the new one throughout the world which has already begun over one-sixth of the world. Only the working-class revolution can save humanity, can carry humanity forward, can organise the enormous powers of production that lie ready to hand.

The working-class movement in the first period after the war was not yet ready outside Russia for its world historic task. The organised working-class movement was still soaked with reformist and pacifist illusions, with opportunism and corruption in its upper strata. Fascism is not only the punishment of history for this weakness; *Fascism is the weapon of history for purging and burning out this weakness*. In the fires of Fascist terror and of the fight against Fascism the revolutionary working class is drawing close its ranks, steeled and hardened and clear-seeing, for the final struggle; and the revolutionary working class, thus steeled and strengthened, will rise to the height of its task, and win and save the world.

Whatever the black hells of suffering and destruction that have still to be passed through, we face the future with the certainty and confidence of approaching power, with contempt for the barbarous antics of the doomed and decaying parasite class enemy and its final misshapen

progeny of Fascism, with singing hearts and glowing confidence in the future. *“The last fight let us face. The Internationale unites the human race.”*

Week Two Questions:

1. According to Dutt, in order for the bourgeoisie to sustain their rule, they need to be able to draw upon both social democracy and fascism at different points and for different purposes; both must exist simultaneously to target different groups and with different means. Why are both needed? Why are their differing methods required? How do they work together in sustaining bourgeois rule?
2. Dutt claims that social democracy essentially planted the seeds for fascism in 1914, and then became “the real breeding ground for fascism” in the post-war period. What is Dutt’s argument? How does imperialism tie in with all this? Does his argument (and if so how) apply to social democratic, democratic socialist, or other reformist socialist or worker-union organizations today?
3. Critics of the Third Period generally frame it as a period of ultra-leftism, wherein the communist antagonisms against the social democrats precluded any possible alliance against the fascists, and thereby allowed fascists to seize power and commit numerous atrocities. Dutt presents an alternative perspective, one wherein the Social Democrats repeatedly rejected any alliance and were antagonistic towards the communists. Who do you believe was correct? Why? To what extent should we unite with social democrats on questions of democracy and defending workers’ political rights?
4. Dutt’s argument seems to imply that, with the ever-building tensions of global monopoly capitalism’s contradictions, either the global communist revolution will occur or all capitalist nations will decay further into fascist states. It would seem that neither of these have happened (*yet*—unless one were to adhere to the Fourth Reich Theory). How might we explain this? Does this compromise Dutt’s analysis? If so, how? And if not, how would we apply or build on it today?
5. How might this text affect our work operating under an organization like Democratic Socialists of America today? Can we still use this text while working under a democratic socialist organization? Should we view social democrats or democratic socialists as “social fascists?” If we are to not frame them this way, does his argument still hold? Does operating under a democratic socialist organization compromise our revolutionary work?
6. Dutt states: “The fight against Fascism cannot be conducted on the basis of trusting to bourgeois “democracy” as the defense against Fascism;” “Bourgeois democracy breeds

Fascism.” These quotes certainly bear relevance to some of what we see today. Does all electoral work contribute to the rise of fascism? Can there be a way in which it still serves the revolutionary purpose? Or is this reformism?

7. In the final chapter, Dutt states that the intensity of capitalist and fascist oppression reflects the intensity of the revolutionary movement that it attempts to suppress. What would this mean for our revolutionary movement at home today? What do we make of today’s American fascist counter-revolutionary movement? Does this claim apply for us? How so, or why not?