

## What has Fascism Given to the German Masses?

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### The Fascist Dictatorship and the Urban Petty-Bourgeoisie

Before and during the fascist seizure of power the urban petty-bourgeoisie in Germany was in a state of violent excitement. It formed the commanding staff of the brown storm troops (S.A.) and of the black special detachments (S.S.). It was the backbone of the storm troops and it raided and destroyed the editorial offices and printing works of the Communist Party, the offices and other buildings of the Communist and other revolutionary organisations, and the offices and other buildings of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. It arrested and beat up revolutionary workers, gave the addresses of Communist workers to the police, denounced those who read the Communist press to the authorities, etc. In the towns it formed the mass basis of the fascist dictatorship.

What was the cause of this state of violent excitement? The fascists were very clever in their approach to these small traders, small business men, government pensioners, clerical employees, officials, ex-officers and ex-non-commissioned officers, professional men, unemployed technicians, engineers and students who had suffered increasingly throughout the course of the economic crisis and whose hope for work and well-being had gradually disappeared. The fascists paid much attention to these elements in their written and spoken agitation and propaganda, and particularly in their wireless propaganda work.

In their programme, which they promised to carry into effect without alteration immediately they came to power, the fascists made the petty-bourgeoisie a **host of seductive promises**. The following are extracts from the programme of the fascists, published before the latter came into power:

"We demand the creation and maintenance of a healthy and prosperous middle class; the immediate communalisation of the big department stores and the letting out of space in these stores to small tradesmen at low rents; first consideration to be given to the small tradesmen in all orders placed by the State, the provincial authorities and the municipalities."

(Programme of the National Socialist Party of Germany. Point 16.)

In the interests of the small tradesmen the National Socialists also demanded the abolition of the co-operatives.

In order to make the lower middle classes believe that these promises would really be fulfilled the fascists founded a "**Fighting League of the Trading Middle Classes**," as one of the supplementary organisations of the National Socialist Party.

What happened in reality after the fascists had come to power in Germany?

As is known, the fascists have not closed down the **big department stores**, and have therefore naturally not let them out to the small tradesmen. But the fascists have gone even further: they have granted a government subsidy of 14 million marks to the **Tietz concern**, which has huge department stores in all the big German towns. The big American concern **Woolworths** has its branches all over Germany. In 1932 it invested 6.4 million dollars and in 1933 7.9 million dollars. In 1932 Woolworths had 70 branches in Germany, and in 1933, the first year of Hitler's rule, this figure increased to 84.

The Government, the provincial authorities and the municipalities continue to give their orders to **Krupp, Siemens** and the other big capitalist firms and not to the small tradesmen, as the fascists promised.

It is true that the fascists seized the **workers' co-operatives** and the monies invested by the workers and their families in these co-operatives, but not in order to destroy the co-operatives as promised. The fascists put their own creatures at the head, and

the co-operatives continued to exist under commissarial leadership. On July 5, 1933, the fascist leader Ley announced:

"It is categorically prohibited for anyone to proceed against the co-operatives or their representatives. Any member of the National Socialist Party doing so or taking part in any such action will be expelled from the party."

And, finally on August 8, 1933, the same Ley, the leader of the "**German Labour Front**," declared the "**Fighting League of the Trading Middle Classes**" to be dissolved, on the ground that it had "fulfilled its tasks." The fascists were compelled to take this step because since they came to power thousands and thousands of small tradesmen, etc., have gone bankrupt, and the indignation and dissatisfaction in the ranks of the lower middle classes is rapidly growing.

The competition amongst the trading lower middle classes is increasing. A proof of this is the fact that under fascism the number of street hawkers has risen to 400,000, the majority of whom lead a miserable existence.

Before they obtained power the fascists promised to abolish various taxes which burdened in particular the broad masses, such as the new poll tax, known as the "**Nigger Tax**," the turnover and consumer taxes, the trading tax, the dwelling-house tax, the drink tax, the bachelor tax, etc. The fascists also promised to lower the light and water rates and the insurance rates, etc.

Were any of these promises carried out?

**All the taxes in question have remained in force**, and the fascist government ruthlessly compels the payment of these taxes. Compared with 1932 the workers, peasants and petty-bourgeoisie paid a monthly average of 21.3 million marks more on the turnover and consumer tax in 1933, although the volume of small trade had decreased. **Krupp, Thyssen** and the other big capitalists, on the other hand, were let down lightly by the fascists. They were freed from the payment of their share of the unemployment insurance contributions and their income tax rates were lowered. Although in 1933 dividends rose considerably, the bourgeoisie paid a monthly average of 19.2 million marks less in income tax than in 1932.

In January, 1934, the Finance Ministry issued an order for tax collection, pointing out that **any reduction of taxes did not come into question for the moment**. The same order cautiously gives the following instruction:

"Tax officials, bankruptcy officials and brokers' officials may not wear the honourable uniform of the storm troops nor the Swastika badge whilst fulfilling their duties."

As though the unfortunate taxpayer did not know without the brokers' man with the Swastika in his buttonhole that the taxes are imposed and their payment obtained by the fascist government!

The fascists also promised to "**break the interest slavery**" of the small debtors, to nationalise the banks, to stop all government subsidies to the big capitalists, to provide the trading lower middle classes with cheap credit, etc., etc. Such promises were broadcast on the wireless, in the press, at meetings, in leaflets and in the so-called "**immediate programme**."

The "**Immediate Programme**" declares: "**We demand that the banks, currency and the credit system should be nationalise as Bismark nationalised the railways and the postal services, etc., half a century ago.**"

Naturally, once they came to power the fascists did nothing whatever to "**break the interest slavery**" of the small debtors, or even to ameliorate it. In the middle of 1933 the fascist government appointed a commission to inquire into the activity of the banks. After this commission had concluded its "**inquiries**," the President of the Reichbank, Dr. Schacht, declared:

"**The commission has come to the almost unanimous conclusion that it is unable to recommend the nationalisation of the banks.**"

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At the same time, the "Angriff," the personal organ of Goebbels, declared:

"With regard to the financial system, the banks and the stock exchanges, only such measures will be taken as will not interfere with the function of these institutions as the blood vessels of the economic system."

The Minister for Economics, Schmitt, declared with greater energy:—

"It is high time that an end was put to all theoretical discussions about the compulsory lowering of the rate of interest, and all such chatter."

And, finally, Schacht pacified the bankers when he declared at a conference of bankers on February 22, 1934:—

"I am in the agreeable situation of being able to assure you that the government has not the slightest intention of resorting to any violent measures."

Naturally, not a hair of the bankers and millionaires in Germany was touched. On the contrary, the richest and most powerful financial magnates are the leaders of the "Supreme Economic Council" and are guiding Germany along "Non-capitalist paths." The urban petty-bourgeoisie is learning to its cost what fascism's form of "socialism" really is. In January, 1934, 40 per cent. more bills of exchange were protested than in January, 1933. These bills were chiefly given by small and middle firms, by small merchants and tradesmen.

Before they came to power the fascists promised to cut down the wages of the high officials and to use the sums thereby saved to employ unemployed workers and dismissed officials, etc.

In reality the fascist officials who are now holding the jobs of the social democrats, democrats, Catholics, German nationalists and Jews whom they have displaced continue to draw the old salaries. Subordinate fascist leaders draw a salary of about 5,700 marks a month. How much do the higher fascist leaders and officials pocket?

The lower middle classes have also not been given the promised positions. The fascists had a certain number of positions at their disposal after they had driven out the social democrats and the supporters of the Catholic Centre and the democrats from the State, and municipal apparatus, but the number of unemployed petty-bourgeois, clerical employees, officials, ex-officers and others was tremendous. The free positions were given by the fascists for the most part to their own prominent supporters.

There are six million officials and employees of the State and the municipalities, etc., in Germany, and 42 per cent. of them were unemployed when the fascists came to power.

The bourgeoisie wants a further reduction of clerical wages, and obediently the fascists carry out its instructions.

The lower middle classes were deeply impressed by the promise of the fascists to win back Germany's pre-war position of power and influence, but this promise has also not been fulfilled, although they are being bled white in order to pay for armaments and to subsidise the big capitalists.

No matter from what angle one regards the situation, the conclusion must be the same: the fascist dictatorship in Germany has given the urban middle classes nothing whatever.

#### THE FASCIST REGIME AND THE WORKING CLASS

The fascists promised the workers in the factories that after fascism came to power they would be freed from the yoke of capitalism and from the party, trade union and co-operative leader-parasites, and that their wages would be increased.

It is generally known how the fascists have freed the German workers from the yoke of capitalism.

Instead of freeing the workers from the highly-paid officials who battered on their organisations, the fascists disbanded the organisations and seized the funds which the workers had accumulated with their pennies in the course of decades. At the same time the fascists created new "worker" organisations and new parasitic officials were placed at their head, and these new parasites receive even higher salaries than the old ones out of the "voluntary" and compulsory contributions of the workers.

As far as the wage question is concerned, the fascists are undoubtedly paying much attention to it as promised, but their efforts are in the contrary direction.

We give here the official figures published in the "Deutsche Volkswirt" No. 38 of this year, which show the reduction of wages which has taken place, despite the fact that the figures given are as favourable as possible:—

	Wages in Milliards.	No. of Workers Employed. In Millions.	Average Wages per Quarter. per Worker.
3rd Quarter, 1933 ...	6.83	13.7	498.50 Mks.
4th Quarter, 1933 ...	6.77	13.8	490.50 "
1st Quarter, 1934 ...	6.80	14.1	482.00 "

During the course of six months wages have fallen by an average of 16.5 marks, making a total of 230,250,000 marks, whilst at the same time taxation, the insurance contributions and the prices for the staple articles of everyday use have risen, as have also the "voluntary" contributions of the workers for the various fascist organisations and campaigns.

From 1929 to 1932 the number of workers in Germany who earned over 36 marks a week fell by almost 50 per cent. In 1929 it was 38 per cent. and in 1932 it was 20 per cent. In the same period the number of workers who earned less than 24 marks a week (from 6 to 24 marks) rose from 45 to 60 per cent. During the first nine months of the fascist dictatorship the number of these workers again increased considerably, whilst the group earning 36 marks a week and over declined still further.

It is unnecessary to point out that all these "benefits of fascism" are displeasing to the workers and clerical workers of Germany. The workers have expressed their feelings clearly and unmistakably in the various strikes which have taken place against further wage cuts and in the elections to the "confidential councils" in the factories.

In their efforts to find a way out of the blind alley into which their policy has driven them the fascists have now issued a law according to which all workers of both sexes under 25 years of age are to lose their jobs to make way for unemployed workers above that age with families to support. The fascists hope to break the resistance of the industrial working class by sending unemployed fathers of families into the factories, workers whose wages will be regulated not by tariff agreements, but by each employer at will, and by removing the "unruly" revolutionary youth from the factories.

The fascists have already begun to put this law into operation and clear out all workers under 25 years of age from the factories. In July the Senate of the Free Town of Hamburg advised all its employees under 25 years of age to leave their jobs and go for a year into the "voluntary" labour service organisation for rural work. The Senate also called upon private undertakings to follow its example.

Before they came to power the fascists organised a number of soup kitchens for the unemployed in various towns. They also took many thoughtless unemployed young workers into their barracks, fed and clothed them in uniforms. These young unemployed workers were then misused by the fascists to carry out raids and attacks on their fellow workers. The storm troops were filled up with such elements. Immediately they came to power the fascists increased the weekly unemployment rate by two marks, and prior to the elections of March 5 they distributed flour and fat amongst the unemployed. In this way they won the support of the non-class-conscious sections of the unemployed workers.

However, it was not long before the fascists showed their real features. They steadily worked for the abolition of the unemployment insurance scheme, and to a great extent, two-thirds perhaps, they have already succeeded.

The "German Labour Front" has already drafted a new law which will completely abolish the unemployment insurance scheme. Compulsory labour service is to be introduced for all those workers still drawing any sort of unemployment support. These workers must work hard for their support. Another aim is to send the unemployed workers out of the towns altogether.

The fascist dictatorship in Germany has brought the following "benefits" to all workers and clerical employees:—

(1) A considerable worsening of the conditions regulating the health insurance scheme, the unemployment insurance scheme, the accident, maternal and child welfare, the old age pension and orphan support schemes;

(2) The increase of the contributions of the workers and clerical employees for all forms of social insurance, and the decrease or the total abolition of the contributions formerly payable by the employers;

(3) A law abolishing the tariff agreements, the eight-hour day and the factory councils;

(4) Laws abolishing the right to organise, the right to hold

meetings, the right of free speech and the freedom of the press, etc.;

(5) The establishment of concentration camps in which revolutionary workers are maltreated, tortured and often "shot whilst attempting to escape"; and

(6) A law establishing special "people's courts" and other courts to punish with hard labour and death all attempts to expose the crimes of fascism.

So much for the fruits of fascism as far as the working class is concerned.

### THE SITUATION OF THE PEASANTRY

Prior to the elections in March, 1933, the fascists ordered the limitation of the import of agricultural products. The customs duties on such imports were increased in many cases as much as 500 per cent. These measures applied in particular to articles of mass consumption such as chilled meat from the Argentine, butter, fat, etc. These measures, which benefited chiefly the big landowners and rich peasants and to a certain extent the middle peasants, were taken with a view to winning the votes of the peasants at the elections.

With the same end in view the fascists proclaimed a moratorium for agricultural debts until October, 1933. A section of the bourgeoisie, and particularly bank capital, was opposed to the moratorium, but it was carried through for the moment for political considerations.

These measures assisted the fascists to consolidate their positions in the rural areas. However, the banks placed the fascists under strong pressure and pointed out that even those peasants and others who were in a position to liquidate their debts were not doing so. From the beginning it was clear that the government would be unable to purchase the support of the peasants for good with a system of limiting agricultural imports. These attempts led to an artificial expansion of the prices of agricultural commodities whilst at the same time the wages of the workers and the clerical employees in the towns were being cut down. On the other hand, the prohibitive customs duties imposed by the German government produced reprisals on the part of the governments abroad interested in the German import market for agricultural commodities. And finally, the rapid rise in the price of foodstuffs caused discontent amongst the urban petty-bourgeoisie, which was the chief prop of the fascists.

Under fascist rule the prices for agricultural commodities in Germany have considerably increased. The price index for all agricultural commodities in January, 1933, before the fascists came to power, was 80.75. By the end of December, 1933, the index had risen to 93.4, or by 12.65 per cent., whereby the prices for individual articles of mass consumption had increased by much more. For instance, grain prices in Germany were three times as high as world market levels. At the beginning of 1933 five kilos of potatoes in Berlin cost 1.18 marks. By November of the same year the price had risen to 1.58 marks. In the same period the price of margarine rose by 50 per cent. and the price of pork by 48 per cent.

The high prices for agricultural commodities led to a narrowing of the home market. According to fascist figures the index of production in 1933 jumped by 25 per cent., and, again according to their figures, 2.7 millions of workers and clerical employees were re-introduced into the process of production. In truth no more than 806,000 workers and clerical employees were re-introduced into the process of production, but even this much lower figure should have resulted in an increase of consumption. However, again according to official figures, retail trade in the period from February, 1933, to February, 1934, declined by 6 per cent.

It is generally known that Germany was accustomed to import large quantities of grain from abroad. In the first year of fascist rule these imports were almost completely stopped. Measured by the normal level of consumption in Germany, this fact should have produced a considerable shortage of grain, but in point of fact Germany's supplies of rye and wheat were 547,000 tons in 1927 and 2,200,000 tons in August, 1934. In order to maintain the high grain prices the government ordered the limitation of production. In view of this year's drought the measures of the fascists in this direction have proved of great disadvantage to the German people, and it is estimated that this year's harvest will be 23 per cent. lower than last year's. Despite the increase in prices the income of agriculture has fallen.

The small and middle peasants are compelled to sell their grain, potatoes and other products in autumn when the prices are lower than in spring. The home market is not in a position to absorb the

huge quantities of agricultural products and Germany is not in a position to export them.

In order to maintain under such circumstances the high prices from which the landowners and rich peasants profit, the fascists have laid down the quotas of each product for each peasant farm to be sold at the fixed minimum prices. The peasants are compelled to sell their products through the agricultural co-operatives which are controlled by the landowners and rich peasants. These co-operatives sell their agricultural commodities in the towns at prices which are greatly in excess of the prices they pay to the peasants. The peasants themselves may not bring their products to the market.

Germany always imported cattle fodder. However, the fascists have closed Germany's frontiers to the import of fodder, so that the poor and middle peasants are compelled to purchase their fodder at high prices from the rich landowners.

Formerly many poor and middle peasants used to hire themselves out to the rich peasants in the busy period in order to earn enough to make ends meet on their own farms. This is impossible now because the fascists are driving great masses of unemployed workers on to the land. The unemployed workers in the labour service camps are also working for the big landowners and rich peasants almost for nothing—only for their food.

During the crisis years Germany's agricultural labourers, who number about 2.5 millions, suffered severely, but to-day their situation has become much worse, for they have been deprived of the right to draw unemployment support and they are unable to obtain any work.

The moratorium for agricultural debts which was introduced by the Bruening government and extended by the fascists to October, 1933, and then to April 1, 1934, was in fact rendered inoperative for the great majority of the peasants. At the moment peasant farms are again being auctioned for the non-payment of debts and taxation, with the exception of "entailed" farms, that is to say, the farms of the rich peasants. The banks have obtained their wish.

There are 5,143,000 peasant farms in Germany of which three million consist of less than two hectares of land. Before they came to power the fascists promised that these midget farms should receive additional land. The fascists have not only failed to carry out this promise, but in many districts they are putting many small and middle farms out of existence and incorporating them into the "entailed" farms, that is to say, in the property of the rich peasants.

Before they came to power the fascists promised a large-scale colonisation of small peasants on new State lands in East Prussia. In this connection they conducted a huge campaign of agitation and propaganda. In 1933 4,000 such peasant farms were colonised. This year the number is to be 8,000. In this connection it must be pointed out that in 1932, that is to say, before the fascists came to power, 10,000 peasant farms were colonised. The fascists in their work of colonisation took care to see that the colonists were the sons of rich peasants and not poor peasants.

The measures of the fascists, all taken in the interests of a small section of the landowners and rich peasants, have alienated the sympathies of the majority of the working agricultural population of Germany. In their efforts to create support for themselves in the rural areas the fascists decreed the law entailing certain farms, numbering from 500,000 to a million and ranging in size from 7.5 to 125 hectares. With regard to all these farms the right of succession belongs exclusively to the eldest son. Any partitioning of such farms is prohibited. Such farms may also not be sold. The State takes over the debts burdening such farms and gives them various advantages. These "entailed" farms represent about 19 per cent. of the total number of the peasant farms of Germany, and they will embrace about 54 per cent. of the total tilled area. This fascist measure has considerably accelerated the process of class differentiation in the villages. All members of a family living on one of the entailed farms, with the exception of the eldest son, are compelled to leave the farm and seek a livelihood elsewhere, a process making for the impoverishment of the peasantry.

Even at its present stage the policy of the fascists towards the peasants is beginning to produce protests. According to the reports of the fascist newspapers the peasants in East Prussia unanimously voted for the fascists at the elections on March, 1933, but the protests against the policy of fascism have already begun in this district. On June 11, 1933, a peasant conference took

place in **Koenigsberg** and despatched a telegram to the government protesting sharply against the failure of the fascists to carry out their promises and calling for the immediate distribution of the land of the rich peasants and landowners amongst the other peasants. On July 31, 1933, thousands of peasants demonstrated on the streets of Koenigsberg, and members of the fascist storm troops in uniform accompanied by workers marched at the head of the procession. Not a few of the demonstrating peasants ended up in concentration camps.

The conference of agricultural co-operatives in **Pomerania** also sent a telegram of protest to the government condemning the policy of the fascists in agriculture. Similar protests have come in from **Thuringia, Central Germany, Mecklenburg** and other districts. In **Schleswig-Holstein** the fascist authorities have arrested hundreds of peasants for no other reason than that the

arrested men reminded the fascist authorities of the promises made by the fascists before they came to power.

The failure of the harvest this year in Germany hits the masses of the peasants with its chief force. The lack of cattle fodder will lead to mass slaughtering of cattle by the poor and middle peasants who were compelled to purchase fodder even in years of good harvests. To-day the price of cattle fodder has gone up prohibitively. The slaughter of the cattle means the end of the poorer farms. The regulation of the grain and bread prices by the government also adversely affects the situation of the mass of the peasants. Even the central organ of the fascists, the **Voelkischer Beobachter**, wrote on July 17 that **the peasant was shouldering the whole burden of the harvest failure.**

That is the reward of the fascists for the peasants who assisted them in the establishment of the fascist dictatorship.