

In Socialist Germany

A Noted Author Discusses: Are Workers' Councils Needed?

Stefan Heym, noted author of "The Crusaders" and many other books, writes a regular column for the East Berlin newspaper "Berliner Zeitung". Here are some extracts from his column printed in that newspaper on November 25th:

By STEFAN HEYM

EVERY WORKER of any experience knows that you can get into a bad position in the class struggle if you let the enemy call the tune. Today on the other side (in West Germany (ed.) they are blowing extra hard on the propaganda trumpets at the moment. Despite all the noise it is our job to weigh up coolly what is to be done to further the cause of the working class, and together with it the cause of democracy, German unity and peace.

Naturally we have on our side people of good will, but with little courage, who say: For God's sake let us keep quiet. Don't let us stir up anything or change anything until things have settled down again. . . . But I suspect that these are the same people who mark time when things are quiet too.

You can also play into the enemy's hands by doing nothing. Isn't there a lot of pressure from the other side precisely so that we should become timid? It is precisely the class enemy who desires that we should not change those things which must be changed, nor improve those things which must be improved.

I think it is a good sign that the question of increasing workers' influence in their factories should have been brought up just at this time. This means that we are taking a step forward, that we are controlling the speed and the direction of developments.

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THERE is room for discussion as to whether we need special bodies—workers' committees—in the factories, or whether we ought not rather to try to give the big new tasks to the trade unions, and thus try to drive out of their heads the idea, that is all too generally accepted, that they are just a sort of glorified holiday booking agency.

The main thing, however, is that every single worker should see from daily experience that his factory is his own factory, and not just some sort of concern run by some anonymous agency.

A worker who regards his factory as his own, and who has a hand in deciding on the results of his work, will not only work with a much better will, but will also be prepared to defend his factory to the last ditch. . . .

What is true for the worker and his factory must also be true for the citizen with regard to his state. This brings me to another serious question: Have we done everything possible to wipe out the century-old feeling that the state is some far-removed, untouchable and often even frightening power? It will not help us much to proclaim over and over again that our state is a workers' and peasants' state, unless our citizens have the feeling, day in and day out, that they have their rights in this state which no-one can shake.

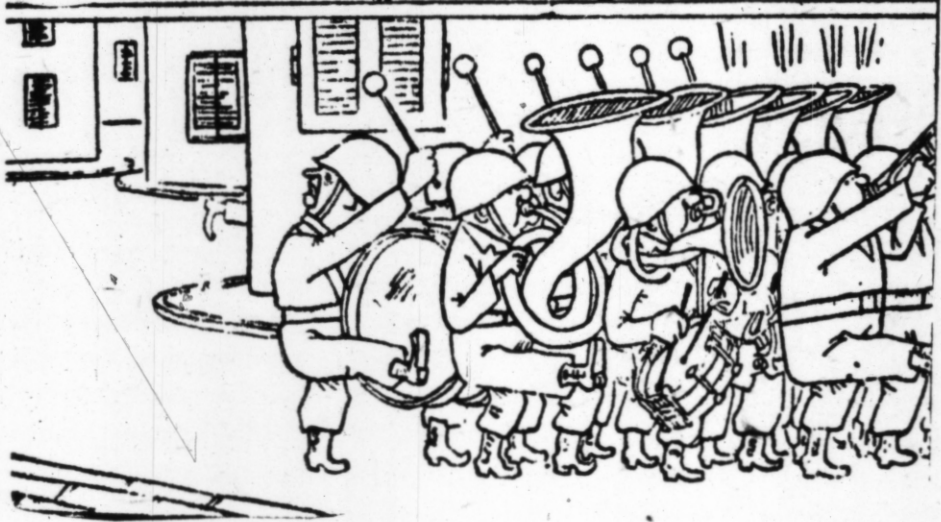
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THESE rights include the right to work, to recreation, to education in accordance with their abilities, to aid in sickness and need—in fact all those rights which have never been guaranteed by a capitalist state.

But another of these rights is that of protection against arbitrary acts on the part of the administration. I believe that we have thought too idealistically here for far too long. We have thought that our administrative officials could do no wrong, simply because they are

PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

(from "Wochenpost", East Berlin)



An East German comment on the call for creation of a new German army: "Then one man piped and many followed. Now many pipe and none follow".

officials of a workers' and peasants' state.

A worker is a decent fellow, we thought, and he will go on being a decent fellow even if he goes to work in the administration.

But he can make mistakes, and even more so because he, as a former worker, has a difficult time.

Has it not happened often enough that a decent worker changed for the worse when he got well set in a comfortable office chair?

And this has resulted in injustice, faulty decisions, the mechanical application of instructions, arbitrary actions both small and large, irritation and bitterness.

CP HEADS URGE FULL, FRANK

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certain considerations. We are convinced that the membership and leadership of our Party is capable of and will resolve many basic issues.

WE RECOGNIZE that this convention must strike out on a new course to initiate significant changes in our Party to correspond to changes in the world and our nation as well as to overcome long-standing and deep-seated weaknesses.

This Convention will not be the end but rather the beginning of a process of reinvigoration and strengthening of our organization. Of necessity we are mainly determining the main direction and route to travel. Only as we test our policies, tactics and new theoretical concepts in practice will we be able to fully judge their validity and develop them further.

Of necessity also we must limit our decisions to those matters that we have had time to discuss, to thoroughly review and to thrash out conclusively. Obviously the Convention must answer the main questions of line and organizational policy as

they are projected and being amended in the Draft Resolution and Draft Constitution.

Clearly many fundamental matters of theory and program will remain, even matters on which we have and may for some time continue to have widely divergent views. It is therefore important that we see the establishment of full inner-party democracy including the right to dissent as essential also to our ability after this Convention to continue discussing many questions while moving forward unitedly to implement the decisions of the Convention.

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YET WE WISH to achieve this in the frame-work of basic unity within the Party. Party unity is one of our big assets and should surely be sought with energy. It is timely to restate that we do not wish to proscribe the expression of opinion in this discussion. We want to read no one out of the Party for their views. We know by now that none of us had a monopoly on wisdom and none of us is immune to error. We should consider the motives of all comrades as honest and that we all share

