

## Module 04: The End of Optimism? The Great Depression in Europe

### Evidence 18: "Developments in Germany," *The Militant*, February 1, 1930

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#### Document

The German working class is now going through a far severer period of economic and moral depression than even the most pessimistic tables of statisticians can describe. It takes an insight into the conditions of the average proletarian family to establish this. Vegetable-butter (margarine) is found everywhere at the workingman's table instead of butter. The diet is entirely devoid of eggs. Only the most meager portions of meat find their way to the worker's stomach. Malt coffee has displaced bean coffee, and so on without end. In short, the working class diet consists in large measure of what was termed during the war and inflation periods ersatzlebenmitte (substitute products). . .

There are more than 3,000,000 unemployed in the Reich, more than half a million in Berlin alone. There is hardly a family in proletarian Berlin that hasn't its stempelbruder (on the dole). Unemployment insurance, of which the "social" state, Germany, so proudly boasts as against the unsocial U.S., is hardly enough to keep its recipient alive. The result is that the unemployed fill the "welfare offices" and "aid societies" day and day and are forced to degrade themselves to virtual beggars. The moral effects can be imagined. . .

The entire German economic system of the immediate future will live in the shadow of the recent Wall Street crash. . . . In German politics, the situation finds a mirror and a barometer. The coalition government is nearing the end of its string. Its prospective collapse is on the order of the day. The national "Right" is in a deep crisis. Those elements backed by heavy industry . . . are breaking away from the irreconcilable Rights around Hugenburg and Hitler and are going in for a policy of supporting the status quo of the republic, because "It is developing in a direction towards us." Even Hitler is willing to "listen to reason." . .

The Communist Party of Germany is thus facing a very serious but

promising state of conditions. . . It is no exaggeration to say that a considerable majority of the Berlin proletariat is behind the Party and places all its confidence in it. Whether the party will be able to hold this mass and increase it depends entirely upon how much sanity it will apply in its tactics in the trade unions and towards the increasingly disillusioned workers who still follow the Socialist Party while discontent within the reformist organization is growing, while rebellion against the treacherous leadership is brewing. . .

The campaign of terror which the authorities and the bourgeois press have been conducting for some time against the [Communist] part and the militant sections of the class is taking on ever greater proportions. Falsification, slander, and provocation fill the air. The revolutionary masses are increasingly aroused to counteract violently to this terror, and the party functionaries sweat blood to keep the people in check at demonstrations and public meetings. The party's effort to connect the active discontent of the unemployed with the solidarity actions of the workers in the factories is to be applauded. But here too it will not do to restrict oneself to phrases alone. . .

Source:

S. Gordon, "Developments in Germany," *The Militant* (1 Feb 1930), 5.