

Gregor Strasser, Big Hitlerite Rebel



HITLER WAS HARD HIT when Gregor Strasser, one of his ablest and oldest supporters, broke away from him. It happened in one of the fights between rival factions in the Hitlerite movement which followed losses sustained in the November Reichstag elections.

The crisis between Hitler and Strasser arose, explains the Berlin Socialist *Vorwaerts*, because of Hitler's failure to break into the "working-class front." The "working class," instead, this newspaper claims, broke into Hitler's front.

But now the gains of the Nazis in the Diet election on January 14 in the small State of Lippe-Detmold in northwestern Germany has revived their drooping spirits, it is said, and strengthened the "all-or-nothing" element in the party.

The little State of Lippe-Detmold, according to press cables, gave the National Socialists or Nazis 38,840 votes out of a total of 98,500, which is an increase of 5,800 over their poll in the Reichstag election. They obtained about 40 per cent. of the total vote.

This Nazi triumph brings Gregor Strasser again to the fore. He, according to some Berlin correspondents, was to be used as a chisel to split the Hitlerites by being taken into the Cabinet of Chancellor Lieut.-Gen. Kurt von Schleicher as Vice-Chancellor.

The Lippe election, however, has lowered his political stock, and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* avers that if Strasser were to accept the Chancellor's invitation he would be expelled from the National Socialist party.

At the same time, Captain Goering, the Reichstag Nazi whip, is quoted as having said in a political speech during the Lippe campaign that Strasser is really one of the most violent haters of von Schleicher, and that he once confided to Goering that the General is "almost the most inefficient man ever to sit in the Chancellor's chair."

WITH new interest attached to Gregor Strasser the Berlin independent Democratic *Berliner Tageblatt* gives a close-up picture of him:

"This peasant-like, heavy, broad-shouldered Gregor Strasser, with the 'lower' Bavarian rounded cranium, emphasized chin,

Gregor Strasser

and under lip, the man with stimulating eyes and impulsive ways, sprang from an old family of apothecaries long settled in his native place. He, too, was originally an apothecary, and he conducted his business for a long time with diligence.

"Then came the war in which he took part with distinction—a thing that can not be said by any means of every man in Hitler's immediate following.

"Gregor Strasser joined the Hitler movement very early in its history. During Hitler's first putsch, or revolutionary attempt, which was nipt in the bud on May 1, 1923, Strasser sought him out in a motor-truck, with some machine-guns and about 140-odd weapons. Strasser was halted by the police and arrived at Munich too late.

"Then it was that an affair involving a word of honor occurred, which Strasser later, in the Reichstag session of October 19, 1931, sought to dispose of with his famous remark: 'In dealing with this system. I know no word of honor!'

"Gregor Strasser has courage and, at any rate, whatever else may be urged against him, he is no hypocrite. He is rather prone to a massive and unequivocal sort of speech which corresponds to the temperament of the type of Bavarian which he happens to be. After the luckless November putsch and during Hitler's durance in jail, it was Strasser who kept the remnants of the party together."

Profound gratitude is due Strasser from Hitler, thinks this Berlin daily, because when Hitler was released from jail, there was at least a nucleus of his party left, so that its reconstruction "did not have to begin in a void." Gratitude was exprest on Hitler's part, it admits, for he made Strasser chief of his propaganda work, and we read:

"The rapid growth of the party in the following years is due mainly to the unexampled methods of Strasser in conducting the agitation for recruits—the fanatical obstinacy with which he hammered the party slogans into all heads, even those least endowed with comprehension, the cool calculation with which he built up the gigantic technical apparatus for the spread of the party creed, and the perfect ruthlessness with which every social class, every region of the country and every calling were permeated with seductive promises of good things to come even when those promises were often in mutual contradiction.

"There can be no doubt that Strasser's methods of conducting the party agitation were very much like those of the Bolsheviks."

THE latter fact, proceeds the *Berliner Tageblatt*, is due to the "Eastern slant" of Strasser's policy for the party of Hitler. This is said to be a contradiction of Hitler's own intent and purpose. Hitler seems to seek a rather unintelligible and vague Middle and Western European combination, including England, Italy, and Germany, but this newspaper points out:

"Strasser, on the other hand, seems to be clear in his own mind that the National Socialists or Nazis, if they attain power, can hold it only if they fulfil the aspirations of the majority of their followers—the newly proletarianized former middle-class masses.

"This means an anticapitalistic policy of which the logical conclusion would be a friendly, even if neutral, attitude toward Russia.

"At any rate, the capitalistic patrons of the Nazis are prone to declare that Gregor Strasser is the only man in the whole leadership of the party who can think clearly about economic relations and events, and with whom it is possible to talk coherently.

"Gregor Strasser has dreams—or so it is alleged—of being in the Government of the Nazis, once formed, the German Stalin or all-powerful general secretary of the party while Hitler fills the more decorative paternal seat of Kalinin in the Soviet republic."

STRASSER is hiding his time, adds this Berlin commentator, and feels he will be called back to the party to guide it in the Bolshevik direction. But to the Socialist Vienna *Arbeiter Zeitung*, such a remark is ridiculous, for it holds that:

"The backbone of the Nazi Fascist movement is the small business man, the small trader, the little individual in trade.

"In every country in every decisive stage of modern development this petty burger class of little people, once set in movement, must either subordinate itself to the proletarian working class or else return to the domination of capitalism.

"This is the deeper underlying meaning of the strife between Strasser and Hitler. At the critical hour the 'German Socialism' of the little man in revolt drops away from him and Hitler's 'tendency to capitalism' gains the upper hand. The shock troops of German Fascism rebel. The Brown Battalions mutiny.

"But Hitler, who holds the key to the strong-box, holds on to power. And he himself remains in the hands of those who put money into the strong-box—the capitalists."