

FIRST OF AUGUST!

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most favorable to it, the Communist Party gained in all only fifty thousand votes. This terrible debacle is a direct and immediate payment for the ruinous policy of the Comintern upon the question of the Anglo-Russian Committee — the central question of the policy of the Comintern in England for the past few years.

The recent elections in England revealed an unquestionable leftward movement of the mass of the workers. But this leftward movement, i. e., a breaking away of millions of workers from the bourgeoisie, has at the given stage a clearly reformist-pacifist character — and that sharply emphasized, moreover, by the defeat of the British Communist Party. It is hard to imagine a more cruel joke than that perpetrated by the Comintern upon British Communism. For several years they have compelled the British Communist Party to ride on Purcell's running board, and hold a revolutionary wreath on the head of Cook. The Moscow leadership remained for a whole year in union with the unqualified strike breakers of the General Council. Politically the Communist Party in these circumstances did not exist. The revolutionary minority of the trade unions remained intellectually helpless, and the Comintern with its entire policy helped Thomas and Purcell shatter, discourage and absorb this minority. After all this, the British Party received an order to accomplish an immediate turn about of 180 degrees. As a result it could only find out that the working class simply does not know it as an independent revolutionary party.

GERMANY AND CHINA

The German Communist Party, incomparably stronger than the other parties, has also a more serious tradition and more militant cadres. But in 1928 the German working class had only begun to emerge from the paralysis with which its vast majority was afflicted after the catastrophe of 1923. Giving nine million votes to the social democracy, the German workers explicitly declared that they wish again to try their luck on the peaceful road of reform.

In China the Communist Party now numbers three or four thousand members, and not that hundred thousand which was so light-mindedly claimed at the Sixth Congress by the bureaucrats of the Comintern. But this little Party is in a state of still further disintegration. The leadership of Stalin, combining Opportunism with adventurism, has wrecked the Chinese revolution for years, and with it the young Chinese Communist Party. When the Central Committee of the French Party promises that on the First of August the proletarian battalions will march in Shanghai as in Paris, this prophecy can only be classed as cheap rhetoric. Alas, everything goes to show that battalions will not march either in Shanghai or in Paris. The French Communist Party, like its pale shadow the Unity Confederation of Labor, has by no means increased its influence of late years. There is not the slightest hope that the First of August will prove any more revolutionary in France than the First of May. Semard and Monmousseau undertake everything and promise everything in order to do nothing.

Or perhaps the outcome of the Belgian elections give grounds to hope for a demonstration of the workers of Brussels and Antwerp at the summons of the Jacuemette?

We will not stop to mention the other parties of the Comintern. They all reveal exactly the same features: decline of influence, weakening of organization, ideological splitting up, a decrease of confidence of the masses in the appeals of the Party.

The Czecho-Slovak Party was considered one of the most powerful sections of the Comintern. But its first attempt last year to designate a "Red Day" uncovered an alarming stagnant reformism in the Party, poisoned with the spirit of Smeral and those like him. As a result of the sheer command from the top to become revolutionary in 24 hours, the Czecho-Slovak Party simply began to crumble away.

FALSE ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION

They told us during the period of the Sixth Congress that the situation in Germany is placing revolution on the order of the day. Thalmann clearly announced: "The situation is becoming more revolutionary every day." But that judgment was false to the roots. In a letter sent by comrade Trotsky to the Sixth Congress in the name of the Opposition ("And What next?") the official estimate of the situation was analyzed in complete detail, and an accurate warning was issued a year ago against the ruinous adventurist conclusions which that estimate would entail. The Opposition does not deny the symptoms of a leftward movement of the German working masses. On the contrary for us also this "leftward movement" found an unqualified expression at the time of the recent elections to the Reichstag. But the whole question is as to the present stage of this leftward movement. We have had in Germany a simultaneous growth of the Social Democracy and the Communist Party. That has undoubtedly meant an ebbing of broad circles of the workers away from the bourgeois parties. But the principle current still flows in the channel of the Social Democracy. In these circumstances it is intolerably light-minded to say that "the situation is becoming more revolutionary." The social democracy is not a part of revolution. Hermann Mueller and Zoergel reminded the whole world of that on the First of May.

We have to understand correctly what a growth of the social democracy means in the present circumstances. After the experience of the war and the defeat of German militarism, after the revolutionary uprising and defeats of the proletariat, a new generation of

all processes are rapidly carried through, this schooling will not last for decades like the pre-war school of the social democracy, but most likely only a few years. But it is just this period that the German, yes, and the whole European working class is going through. The appearance of an independent Brandler faction is a small incidental symptom of this same process. The passing of the workers from the bourgeoisie to the social democracy testifies to a leftward movement of the masses. But this leftward movement has still a purely pacifist, reformist and nationalist character. The further fate of this process depends upon a whole series of domestic and international causes, and to a considerable degree upon our own policy, upon our ability to understand the essence of the process, upon our skill in distinguishing its successive stages.

The reformist leftward movement will begin to be replaced by a revolutionary one from that moment when the masses begin in a continually increasing flood to pass from the social democracy to the Communist Parties. But that has not yet happened. Individual, episodic manifestations do not matter. It is necessary to take the process as a whole. When Thalmann, following Stalin and other leaders of the Comintern, said in July 1928 that "the situation is becoming more revolutionary every day," he only revealed a complete incapacity to understand the dialectic of the process which is taking place in the working class.

The German Communist Party received at last year's elections 3,200,000 votes. After the defeat of 1923, that is, after the collapse of Brandlerism, and after the monstrous mistakes of the ultra-lefts of 1924 and 1925, such a result was in the highest degree significant and promising. But it was not by any means a symptom of a revolutionary situation. Nine million are weighing upon these 3,200,000. This was made clear at the time of the Armored Cruiser Campaign, which completely refuted Thalmann's selling-talk about the situation becoming "more revolutionary every day."

A NEW GROWTH OF REFORMISM

The working masses, and above all the new generation, are now passing through an accelerated repetition of the course of reformism. That is the fundamental fact. From this it by no means follows, of course, that we must soften our attitude toward the social democracy, or the right opposition, (Bucharin, Brandler and Co.). But our own tactical tasks ought to flow first of all from a correct understanding of what is taking place. The May Day celebration of 1929 could not jump out of its political setting. It could not help the Communist Party become stronger in the course of 24 hours than it actually was. May Day could be only an episode in the process of an as yet pacifist and reformist "leftward movement" of the masses. The attempt to jump over the sky in 24 hours strictly according to the calendar, flowed from a false estimate of the processes taking place in the mass, and inevitably led to a defeat, in which there was an indubitable element of adventurism. The opportunists always make gains on the miscalculations of revolutionary adventurism. In this case the social democrats made these gains and in part also the Brandlerites who represent the tidiest, most honest and freshest edition of "revolutionary" social democracy. They are using the debacle of revolutionary adventurism in order to discredit revolutionary methods in general.

There cannot be any doubt that the May Day celebration set back the German Communist Party. This does not mean of course that it set the Party back forever, or even for a long time. The unexampled crime perpetrated by the Social Democracy will be gradually assimilated into the consciousness of the working mass and will help them make the transition to Communism. There can be no doubt of that — upon one single condition: a fairly correct policy of the Communist Party itself.

If you approach the situation from this point of view it is necessary first of all to ask the question: What is now needed by the Berlin workers and the German workers and all other workers? A repetition of May Day or a learning of the lesson of May Day? The answer is already contained in the question. A repetition is unthinkable and not to be permitted. A repetition would be a bare, senseless adventure. What we want is a learning of the lessons, a correct estimation of what happened. What we want is a correct political line.

"RED DAY" CONDEMNED TO FAILURE

We have said that May Day cannot artificially raise itself above the political level of the movement. Still less can an artificial piling up of "red days" bureaucratically designated in advance according to the calendar, do this. Moreover the Comintern is making an attempt to take a First of August revenge for the First of May. It is possible to say even now, and it is necessary to say it in the hearing of all: The First of August "Red Day" is condemned in advance to failure. In addition to that: What was valuable in the First of May (the self-sacrifice of a part of the proletarian vanguard) will be reduced to a minimum on the First of August. And what was bad on the First of May (the elements of adventurism) will be raised to a higher power.

In the Autumn of 1923, when mental life in the Comintern was not yet entirely choked, there was an international polemic in the leading Communist organs as to whether or not it is possible to set the date for an insurrection in advance. Basing themselves upon the whole experience of revolutions the Marxists demonstrated that it is not only possible but necessary. Following Stalin and Zinoviev, Brandler and Maslov laughed at the idea of setting the date for an insurrection, thereby showing that upon

a situation is, the more necessary it is for the proletarian vanguard to have a clear and definite plan of action. The leadership of the Party ought to stand firmly at the helm with its eyes forward. One of the fundamental moments of leadership in such circumstances is the practical preparation, of an insurrection. And since an insurrection, like all human affairs, develops in time, the leadership must designate in good season the date of an insurrection. It stands to reason that with a change in the circumstances the date may be changed — as it was changed in Petrograd in 1917. But that leadership which cannot understand the significance of the time factor, which merely swims with the current, gurgling and blowing bubbles is condemned to ruin. A revolutionary situation demands a revolutionary calendar.

But this certainly does not mean that it is sufficient for Thalmann, Stalin, Manuilsky or Semard to pick up the calendar and put a red blot on the First of August in order to turn that day into a revolutionary event. Such an approach combines the most ruinous features of bureaucratism and adventurism. In those countries and those parties, where pure bureaucratism is uppermost — and these are the majority — the First of August will in all probability end in a comical fiasco like the Vincennes demonstration of Semard-Monmousseau. In those countries where the elements of adventurism are uppermost, the First of August may end in a tragedy which this time — in contrast to May Day — will be wholly, absolutely and irremediably to the advantage of the enemy.

IRRESPONSIBLE SLOGANS

The summons of the Western European Bureau of the Comintern issued in Berlin on the 8th of May, although we are accustomed to much, shock us with its light-mindedness, garrulousness, braggadocio and disgusting irresponsibility. "Into the streets, proletarians!" "Down with Imperialist war!" "Appropriate the political and military-technical experience of the struggle of the Berlin proletariat!" "Learn the fighting methods of the police!" "Make secure your ability to manoeuvre!" "Unite your support of the Berlin proletariat with the daily demand of the broadest proletarian masses!" "Down with imperialistic war!" "Into the streets, proletarians!"

In other words the European Communist Parties are given a strictly dated task: In the course of three months (May to August) to unite themselves with the broadest masses of the workers (no more and no less), learn the art of manoeuvring, acquire the fighting methods of the police, appropriate the political and military-technical experience of a struggle and go into the streets against... the imperialist war. It is really difficult to imagine a more pitiful document, testifying to the fact that the consecutive blows of the governmental apparatus of the skull of the Comintern have succeeded in producing an ominous stupidity. And now this headless leadership, armed with the above cited ideas and slogans, warns the bourgeoisie of all Europe that it intends on the First of August to lead the workers into the streets "fully armed with military-technical methods!" Could it be possible to play more shamelessly with the lives of the proletarian vanguard and the honor of the Comintern than these contemptible epigones are playing with Stalin at their head.

The tasks and duties of the Bolshevik-Leninist flow very clearly from the whole situation. We represent at present in the workers' movement a small minority — and this for the same reasons that the bourgeoisie are strong, the social democracy has grown, the right wing of the Comintern is consolidating, and Centrism holds the apparatus in its hand. The task of the Marxian minority is to analyze, estimate, foresee, warn against dangers and indicate the road.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

What is to be done immediately? The first thing is to correct what is already done. It is necessary to call off the August First Demonstration.

But this will do injury to the prestige of the Comintern and its national sections? Indubitably. A crude political mistake cannot pass without affecting the authority of the Comintern. But the injury will be less if you call off the demonstration in time, than if you stubbornly persist in the mistake, converting the demonstration in the one case into an unworthy comedy, and in the other into a guerilla battle between small revolutionary troops and the police.

The recent Congress of the German Communist Party seems to attempt to dissent from the summons of the Western European Bureau in the direction of common sense. But instead of clearly and firmly rejecting it, the manifesto of the Congress is content to smear over and dissolve in water the military technical slogans of the Comintern. That is the worst course to take, for it combines all the disadvantages of a retreat with all the dangers of adventurism.

It is necessary to call off the demonstration. The Opposition ought to use all its strength to accomplish that. We should be able to knock on the doors of all the organizations of the party, behind whose back the demonstration was announced. We must appeal to the advanced elements of the trade unions. We must spare no effort to explain the error and the danger of this new invention. We must explain to Communist and revolutionary workers in general that the first requisite for a militant mass demonstration at the summons of the Party is an influence of the Party on the masses, gained from day to day by a clear, farsighted and correct policy. The present policy of the Comintern is undermining and destroying the influence won by the October Revolution, and in the period of the first four Congresses of the Comintern. We must change the policy at bottom. We must begin by calling off the August First Demonstration.

The Opposition will under no conditions permit itself to be cut off from the masses and above all