

The Communist Defeat in Czecho-Slovakia

By H. Lenorovics

The final results of the election in Czecho-Slovakia are as follows:

	1929	1925
League of Czech Fascist	71,947	0
German Nat'l Soc.	204,588	168,354
Czech Nat'l Democrats	359,825	321,006
Czech Agrarians	1,094,955	1,005,938
Czech People's (Clericals)	623,560	690,832
Czech Industrial Party	291,002	287,269
German Nat'l Party	188,875	240,910
German Agrarians	395,764	569,696
All-German Party	6,669	0
Hlinka (Slov. Clericals)	423,498	487,773
Juriga Party	5,406	0
Polish Jews	104,467	115,288
Hungarian Small Farmers	6,893	0
Czech Soc. Democrats	963,191	631,263
Czech Socialists	767,441	706,504
German Soc. Democrats	506,116	411,682
German Christian Soc.	348,096	314,438
Hungarian Christian Soc.	257,413	99,148
Communist Party	752,560	941,698

Total 7,372,266 6,991,799

The main tendencies are clear. Decrease of a part of the bourgeois parties, decrease of the Communist Party, increase in the reformist camps and the fascists. The social democracy as the leading section of the reformists grew at the expense of the Communists (chiefly among proletarian and petty bourgeois sections). The other reformist parties grew at the expense of the bourgeois parties. The gains of the fascists took place at the expense of the bourgeois camps and partly of the Communist Party.

With this, of course, only the most basic regroupings in the political camps of Czecho-Slovakia are expressed. But even out of that, the breaking off of the petty bourgeois sections from the regular bourgeois parties, in two directions is clear: To the reformists and to the fascists. In addition, we have the movement of the proletarians in the same two directions, but with the difference that these proletarian forces must largely be entered a loss for the Communist Party.

The Shift in Class Relations

The social explanation of the regroupings consists in the shifting of class relations. Under the pressure of finance capital, substantial sections of the petty bourgeoisie are proletarianized and the proletariat is set into motion. The masses set into motion become victims of reformist and fascist demagogy, these twin understrappers of the modern sharpened dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The normal bourgeois parties no longer avail the bourgeoisie, and in Czecho-Slovakia now it utilizes reformist demagogy. It can all the sooner do this because the Communist movement has no power of attraction for the masses. In spite of the appreciable losses of the bourgeois parties and the new increase in the electorate, the Communist Party has a loss of 189,138 votes to its account.

Parliamentary combinations naturally do not indicate very much. From all indications the parties to form the nucleus of the next government will be the Agrarian and Social Democratic, a so-called Red-Green coalition. Participation in the government will naturally bring the reformist camp to a difficult situation. Should the reformist wing decline because of an eventual strengthening of the Communist Party, the bourgeoisie is taking care of preparing the fascist wing. Since the existence of the Czecho-Slovakian Republic, the eleventh government is about to be formed, a sign of so-called "stabilization" in the imperialist epoch. The rule of the bourgeoisie is no light matter after the war, yet it surmounts the difficulties thanks to the incapability of the Communist leadership. The Czech social democracy was almost runs in 1925; today it has a gain of 50 percent to register. At the same time the other reformist parties grew. A brief summary:

	1929	1925
Czech So. Democracy	963,191	631,263
Czech Socialists	767,441	706,504
German Soc. Democracy	506,116	411,682

The growth of the Hungarian Christian Socialist, National, etc. In Slovakia shows how incapable the Communist Party is of leading the national minorities. The dissatisfied national minorities passed under bourgeois reformist leadership. The German minorities, in their disillusionment, went over partly to the fascists (Swastikas) and partly to the reformists.

The Czech Agrarians who advanced into Slovakia register a substantial gain (89,017) and are the strongest party in general. They have behind them, almost compactly, the Czech and many Slovakian peasants, including the village poor. The following parties also suffered losses: German Nationalists, German Agrarians,

Czech Clericals, the Hlinka party (Slovakian Autonomists and Clericals).

The Fascists Gain

As a new group, the Czech fascists came to the fore. The disillusioned national and religious voters were captured by reformist or fascist demagogy.

The class situation, according to production relationships, is such that, as against a few hundred thousand capitalists, many more than three million proletarians, almost a million small employees, about 800,000 village poor and poor farmers create a sphere of influence for the proletarian party. It is these data that throw a proper light on the election figure of the "really" mass Communist Party. Matters are far, far worse of course with the Party's ability to act. Yes, one cannot for a moment speak seriously of ability to act.

In spite of the favorable prerequisites for the growth of Communism, the Communist Party has lost 20 percent on the average. Considering the favorable objective prerequisites for vote increases, this twenty percent decrease is a very serious defeat. In the German sections there are some slight gains to register, but in the various provinces we have the following results: The decline in Bohemia, 16 percent; Maegren and Schleswig, 17 percent; Slovakia, 23 percent; Russian Carpathia, 47 percent. The various industrial centers give the following losses: Vicinity of Prague, 20 percent; Pilsen district, 15 percent; Brunn district, 25 percent; Mahrtsch-Ostrau, 8 percent; Tuernau district, 13 percent.

A still worse picture is shown in the decisive industrial cities of these districts: Prague, loss of 23 percent; Kladno, 37 percent; Pilsen, 37 percent; Mahrtsch-Ostrau, 35 percent; Pressburg, 31 percent; Kaschau, 35 percent. Everywhere the gains were made mainly by the socialists; in Prague and Pilsen by the fascists also, at the cost of the Party.

II

In the central organ of the Party, *Rude Pravo* of October 30, one of the authoritative Party leaders, under the pseudonym "t. m.", takes up the election results. He promises Bolshevik frankness (it is funny to hear the word "Bolshevik frankness" from the mouths of these people who pass over a six year crisis of the Comintern in silence) and says straight out what is now seen by every child, that the Communist Party suffered a defeat. But what follows is

anything but frank Bolshevik speech. It is contended that the votes in 1923 were given for a Left social democracy, whereas the present vote is meant for a revolutionary political line. It is true that the Communist Party has social democratic features, but the vote in 1925 was not only received by this Left social democracy but through the effects of the heroic Russian Revolution in Czecho-Slovakia. The present vote is also a limited remnant of these effects.

A Stalinist "Mass Party"

And the author of this article resumes: "The elections showed that we are a mass Party in the best sense of the word." We Communists always believed that the ability to action is the characteristic of a Bolshevik mass party in the best sense of the word, and here all at once the 752,000 votes are supposed to show that we are a mass party in the best sense of the word.

Absolutely, the vote of the Party sank 20 percent. The Bolshevik frank article declares only 14.2 percent. On the order of the day, according to the same article, is the winning of the majority of the working class. (Just imagine: on one hand the almost four million workers, on the other, 752,560 parliamentary votes and the ideologically disrupted Party incapable of action.)

But then the well-informed author of the article says: "The growth of the social democracy and the simultaneous growth of Communist influence is an international phenomenon and to a certain extent necessary: Radicalization does not proceed in a straight line..."

Since when is the growth of Communism an international phenomenon? Hasn't "t. m." even read the reports of the Tenth Plenum? Since when is the growth of the social democracy "necessary to a certain extent" in the epoch of imperialism, of revolutions and wars? Yes, and why doesn't a leader of the C. P. C. say what the reasons are for the international growth of the social democracy? and its continued growth? Not to speak of the fact that this growth was never openly acknowledged, but so to speak smuggled into the minds of the Party. Why? in order to stupefy the Party so that it does not ask about the reasons, about the defeats, about the false course of the Comintern on an international scale that was approved at the Sixth Congress.

Investigating the reasons for the defeat, the article says: "Up to last year (?) the Czecho-Slovakian section of the C. I. was

a Left social democracy with a thin veneer of Communist phrases. The cancer of opportunism gnawed its apparatus through to the bone. The Party was (?) completely rotted and that revealed itself by the growth of class antagonisms in the third period of the post-war development of capitalism."

Good, but where was the leadership of the C. I. all this time? Why did it allow the poor C. P. C. to be gnawed to the bone by opportunism and rot away? Why did it approve its political line at the Fourth Congress (1927), for example? Doesn't the author of the article know that he is actually exhibiting the C. I. in a wretched light? Didn't Gottwald, Gutmann and others hold responsible positions in the Jilek Central Committee? Where were they then?

"The Party Masses Are to Blame"

Who then is to blame? The Party leadership answers: The Party organization, because it is not at the head of the radicalized masses. The leadership of the Party, it is true, places itself at the head, but by jumping over the lower Party apparatus which consists in part of saboteurs, traitors and do-nothings.

That is how leaders of the Party speak of the worker functionaries. They acclaim themselves and call the worker functionaries "traitors" and "saboteurs".

Now the meaning of the so-called self-criticism becomes understandable. This new invention is now to be tested in the C. P. C.; Without infringing upon the leadership, to start out on the basis of self-criticism against the Party apparatus.

Where the Fault Lies

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to ascribe all the blame to the Gottwald-Fried leadership. The present leadership has a heavy opportunist heritage. The final reason for the catastrophic defeats is the false, opportunist course in the C. I. that has lasted for six years. Back in 1925 the elections were only success in appearance, a standstill in reality. The present defeat in the election is the sharp verdict on the policy of Gottwald, Fried, Jilek, Smeral and the leadership of the C. I.

The Communist International and the Parties proceed from a false estimation of forces, therefore the false policy, false slogans, mistakes, failures, crises. The main Parties are willing to acknowledge the great reasons are that neither the C. I. nor the defeats and weakening of the C. I.

Why? So as to conceal the fact that these defeats were incurred by the opportunist course of the leadership of the C. I., that the foundations of the proletarian revolution in Europe and China were not extended. Thence the growth of reformism, the strengthening of the bourgeoisie, the opportunism in the C. I., the driving away of the Left Opposition (Trotsky and his comrades.)

Stalin and Bucharin bear the main blame, Smeral and Jilek are accessories in the offense. Gottwald and Fried are also accomplices because at the Congresses they silently approve this policy of defeats of the C. I. This bureaucratic transgression is bearing its fruit in the present policy of the C. P. C.

The cause of the workers needs clarity. An end must be made to the tragi-comedy of the Centrists. It is time to uncover the reasons for the decline of Communism, to acknowledge the defeats on an international scale, to evaluate forces correctly, to install a real proletarian leadership. The first prerequisite is the recall of comrade Trotsky to Soviet Russia, and in the Communist International, the readmission of all the Left Communists into the Party. National and international congress must take place with the participation of the Left Opposition, which will give the Parties ideological clarity and Marxist direction.

Prague, November 5, 1929.

Comrades who have extra copies of old numbers of the Daily Worker or the International Press Correspondence are urgently requested to send them to the office of the Militant. Our files were complete at one time until they were taken by the second story men of the central Committee. We are in great need of these old numbers for reference purposes and any responses will be appreciated.

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