

Where Is Thaelmann Leading the German Party?

By KURT LANDAU

BERLIN—

On September 14 1930. the German working class suffered a serious defeat, whose lessons must be soberly drawn.

At the elections in May 1928, 9,150,000 votes were given to the Socialists and 3,263,000 to the Communists out of a total vote of 30,000,000; altogether 12,413,000 votes were given for Communism and reformism. It is clear that the millions of workers who follow reformism do not do it because of Noske and Scheidemann, but in spite of them, for they have not yet grasped the bourgeois character of the S.P.G., the reactionary character of reformism.

Altogether, the C. P. G. and S. P. G. received 40.4 percent of the voters in the elections.

On September 14, 1930, the number of votes cast rose from 30,700,000 to 34,942,854. The C. P. G. got 4,587,807 votes, the S. P. G. only 8,572,000; together, it is about 13,150,000 votes out of the total of 35,000,000, which is only 37.5 percent, that is, a decline of 3 percent, or expressed in numbers, about one million votes! The question as to who benefitted by this decline is the decisive question we pose, for it signals the most serious dangers, it shows just the thing that the C.P.G. leadership as well as the S.P.G. conceals: That Fascism succeeded to penetrate into the proletariat.

Our Party gained about 1,300,000 votes. Since the electorate was larger, and the total number of votes rose about 15 percent, then about 500,000 votes must be taken off the 1,300,000 which are to be reckoned to the increased participation in the election. The actual increase of the Party then amounts to 800,000 votes.

The S.P.G., compared to 1928, lost 600,000 votes, that is about the same amount as the increase of the C.P.G. Did our Party then collect the loss of the S. P. G.? That is just what is not the case in large measure!

Out of the 30,700,000 votes in 1928, the S.P.G. got 9,100,000. To remain relatively as strong, it would have had to get about 15 percent more votes—in view of the increased electorate of 3,500,000—or, in round numbers 1,400,000. Its total loss therefore amounts to 2,000,000 votes, it having declined from 29.8 percent of the total to 24.7 percent. Out of these 2,000,000, the C.P.G. got only 800,000. Sixty percent, that is 1,200,000, fell to Fascism! This may be drastically demonstrated in a series of instances. In Berlin, for instance, the S.P.G. lost 38,100 votes in the Friedrichshagen, Kreuzberg, Tiergarten, Schoenberg districts—despite the increased electorate—and the C.P.G. gained 29,250 votes in the same districts. About 10,000 votes, and new voters at that, were lost to the Fascists. In the country as a whole, this inroad of the Fascists into the workers' camp comes to light even more plainly. In the Breslau election district, for example, the S.P.G. lost more than 50,000 votes compared with 1928, the C.P.G. gained 40,000; 10,000 votes, plus the increased voting, that is, about 50,000 votes, went to Fascism, which swung from 9,262 to—259,225 and became the second largest party. In the proletarian section of Merseburg, the S.P.G. held fairly to its 1928 position. The C.P.G. won more than 40,000 votes through the increased voting, but the Fascists rose from 40,693 to 243,896, and pulled to themselves the share of the S.P.G. in the increased voting, that is, proletarian votes. In the North Westphalian election district, the Fascists rose from 12,118 to 161,723. The S.P.G. lost about 30,000 votes as against 1928, which the C.P.G. absorbed. The increase in votes came to the good of the Fascists exclusively.

An exact analysis of the election results confirms the fact that Fascism won far more than 1,000,000 proletarian votes which it cornered for itself and did not take from the reservoir of the bourgeois parties.

That the Fascists have become the heirs to the bourgeois parties requires no special evidence, that is demonstrable immediately by the figures themselves. The German National Party, which split up a few months ago, lost about one million votes, after counting off what was taken by the People's Conservatives Christian Nationals, etc. The German People's Party lost more than a million as against 19.8. These 2,000,000, plus the 15 percent increase in votes, which corresponds to almost another million, fell to the Fascists.

To this must be added about a million votes they took away from the bourgeois—"splinter" parties, then the 1,250,000 proletarian votes gained, and the 800,000 which the Fascists got in 1928. These are the factors that make up—according to an approximate and schematic survey—the election figure of the Fascists (6,401,210). The Fascists became the strongest bourgeois party—as we foresaw it. Besides them, there is only one other bourgeois party the Center (Catholics) that remained stable and with a gain of 500,000 votes and 7 mandates retained its share of the increased electoral figure.

In East Prussia (235,463), the Fascists became the strongest party in the election districts of Breslau, Liegnitz, Magdeburg, Merseburg, Thuringia, Schleswig-Holstein, Weser-Ems, East Hanover, Emswick, Hessen-Naussau, Cologne, Aachen, Coblenz-Trier, Palatinate, Dresden, Bautzen, Chemnitz-Zwickau, Baden, Hessen-Darstadt, Hamburg and Mecklenburg, that is, in far more than half the election districts, they became the second strongest party. They outstripped the C.P.G. (135,210) in Hamburg with 144,584 votes, the same in Chemnitz-Zwickau, etc.

It is the greatest self-deception to believe that the 4,500,000 Communist votes are already won for the revolutionary class struggle. To educate them to this—there lies one of the principal tasks of our Party. Today a large part of our electorate is composed of the despairing and discontented and there are doubtless hundreds of thousands among them who, gained in a purely parliamentary election campaign, expect an immediate improvement of their condition from the simple electoral success of the C.P.G.

The S.P.G. suffered a heavy reversal. But it would be wrong to speak of its "annihilating defeat" (see *Rote Fahne*) or to contend that it is "the beginning of the end" of the S.P.G. (Brandler's *Arbeiterpolitik*.)

In many places, the S.P.G. showed itself to be relatively able to offer resistance, as in Saxony, where it gained 120,000 votes in comparison to the Landtag elections in June, in South Germany, etc. The foundations of the S.P.G. were not shattered by the heavy reversal.

Just as wrong is the hope that Fascism will break up of itself, of its internal contradictions. When the *Rote Fahne* writes on September 15: "Yesterday was Herr Hitler's 'greatest day,' but the so-called election victory of the National Socialists is the beginning of their end," then this is an all too cheap consolation which is only exceeded by the sagacious prophecy on September 16: "September 14 was the high point of the National Socialist movement in Germany. What comes after can only be decline and ebb."

Whether that is how things will turn out, or Fascism will succeed in taking over the political power in the state, will not depend upon the prophecies of the *Rote Fahne*, but upon the policy that our Party adopts in the class struggle. The hopes placed upon the self-disintegration of Fascism is as deceptive as it is reformist, for it overlooks the decisive factor in political development: the policy of the revolutionary party.

We warned against illusions when the Party leadership declared the splitting away of the petty-bourgeois group of ideologists around Otto Strasser to be the be-

ginning of the collapse of Fascism. We came out against the naive idea that Frick's participation in the Thuringian government would by itself rapidly expose Fascism. Such hopes and illusions are unworthy of a Communist.

The general crisis of capitalism is being accentuated in Germany by the Young Plan. It was the most ruinous mistake of our Party leadership that it did not understand in the summer of 1929 to develop a genuine revolutionary mass movement against the Young Plan. In our appeal to the Saxony elections, we wrote (June 1930):

"The Party leadership does not recognize that the central aim of the class struggle in Germany is the organization of mass resistance to the Young Plan; to the extent that the masses of Germany enter this struggle, they overcome their illusion and recognize from their own experiences that there is no other way of eliminating this intolerable slave pact than the revolutionary way: the overthrow of capitalism itself."

This failure of the Party permitted Fascism to organize a mass movement against the Young Plan as a counter-revolutionary, chauvinistic action, with the aim of leading the masses in this way for an active imperialistic war policy for the new German imperialism. When the Party leadership—after Fascism had already begun its victorious march through Germany—recognized this ruinous negligence, it leaped to the opposite extreme, as its nationalistic programmatic declaration shows: it entangled itself in nationalistic phrases and high-sounding promises.

The struggle against the Young Plan and in the final analysis against Versailles, can only be conducted by the collaboration of the international proletariat. The Thaelmanns, who in 1929 "forgot" to fight against the Young Plan, and now roar hysterically and nationalistically against it when they see the growth of Fascism as a result of this "forgetting", are no less guilty than the Stalins, Molotovs, and Manuilskys, who have shown themselves incompetent to see the problems of the international class struggle at all, and to organize the joint struggle of the German, French, English and Polish Communists, of the whole Comintern, against the Young Plan.

Our Party has strengthened its influence in the working class in spite of the destructive mistakes of the leadership. The elemental discontentment of the workers with the brutal dictatorship regime, the general capitalist process of dissolution which is taking place before our very eyes, the hatred against the treasonable policy of reformism, brought us new masses. But that Fascism succeeded to grow at an incomparably swifter tempo—and not least of all among the proletarian youth—must be an alarm signal for our Party.

Only when the Party executes a genuinely serious turn, will it be in a position to repel the Fascist wave, to lead the masses forward in bitter mass actions, to put the proletarian, revolutionary, solution of the crisis on the order of the day.

Thaelmann—that is not a person, but a personification of the political regime in our Party: vacillating, reeling from illusion to illusion, fulminating phrases for the masses, impotent in the struggle against the capitalist offensive and Fascism, powerful and self-conscious within the Party when it is necessary to trample serious

proletarian criticism under the iron heel of the apparatus. This political and inner-Party regime is now getting drunk on the election success. The intoxication is brief, the awakening inevitable. It will soon be seen how far the power of action of the Party exists in the coming strike struggles, in the struggle for the jobless, in the struggle against Fascism.

To call a halt to the stormy Fascist tide, to repulse it, requires: Swiftest consolidation of the ideological foundation of the Party, which is being destroyed by national-Bolshevik phrases and theories on "social-fascism." The Party must adjust its internationalist, class front every Party member must recognize that we must win the social democratic worker in tenacious struggle in order to erect together with him the class front.

All illusions must be given up, things must be seen as they are in all their seriousness. It is not yet too late. The social democratic workers are beginning to think. The threatening Fascist danger is strengthening the urge to unity in the working class. A correct Leninist policy must lead to united revolutionary fighting front between the C.P.G. and S.P.G. workers. A correct policy, that is, one that understands precisely now how to burst the contradiction, by means of the united front tactic, between the social democratic workers who want to fight and the counter-revolutionary leaders.

The election victory will enormously increase the impact of Fascism. In the factories, on the streets, its hordes will advance against the proletarian mass organizations. The more it shows itself to be incapable of fighting for work or bread for the deceived masses, the more it will drive them forward against the class conscious workers. In the blood of the proletarian vanguard it seeks to benumb the hunger of the backward sections of the proletariat.

The most decisive weapon in the struggle of the working class is the revolutionary party. The mistakes of our leadership will be paid for by the working class with just as many victims as the betrayal of the reformists.

The responsibility that lies upon us is growing. Our struggle has not become lighter, but heavier. We exerted our efforts to assist the Party to success. The cadres of the Left Opposition who worked in every part of Germany side by side with the Party comrades, have every reason to be joyous at the success attained by our Party. But they renounce hymns of victory, they see the threatening dangers, and they will have to increase their efforts tenfold in order to help the Party, which has not yet grasped the whole import of the situation, to fulfill its duty, to organize the proletarian revolution in Germany.

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