

IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR

Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

For a Turn in the Policy of the C. P. G.

BERLIN, GERMANY
"The attitude of a political party toward its mistakes is the most important and surest criterion of the sincerity of the party and the actual fulfillment of its duties to its class and to the working masses. To acknowledge a mistake openly, to lay bare its causes, to analyze through the circumstances which brought it about, soundly to test the means for the eradication of mistakes—these are the characteristics of a sincere party, this means to fulfill its duties, to train and teach the class and then also the masses". (Lenin, Works, Vol. 25, page 243.)

About 36.6 million votes were cast in the run-off elections. From this number Hindenburg received in round figures 19,350,000, the absolute majority, Hitler, 13,417,000 and Thaelmann 3,706,000. Hindenburg succeeded in winning about 800,000 votes as against the first election, Hitler about 2,080,000 while Thaelmann lost 1,276,000 votes. The 2.5 million voters who voted in the first election for Duestenberg went over in the run-off election mostly to Hitler.

De Rote Fahne of March 15th wrote immediately after the elections of March 13th that "the five million Thaelmann voters of March 13th are the most class-conscious, revolutionary determined part of the proletariat." The whole party press considered the votes cast for Thaelmann "as a clear avowal of revolutionary class struggle". Doubtless, a great number of votes lost by Thaelmann in the run-off elections are to be found among the abstainers. The results of the election in a series of proletarian districts, however, give a terrifying picture of the confusion created by the Stalin-Thaelmann leadership in the Communist ranks of Germany. In Red Wedding, Berlin, Hindenburg received 98,398 (during the first elections 96,843), Hitler 49,618 (35,851 and Duestenberg 12,274). Thaelmann 77,755 (90,093). Similar changes from Thaelmann to Hitler occurred also in Neukoelln, Friedrichshain and Spandau, where at least 1,000 Communist voters gave their votes in the run-off elections to Hitler. Such is the picture in Berlin. In the country it stands out even in bolder relief. In the voting district of Leipzig, Duestenberg received on March 13th 36,000 votes, Thaelmann lost 23,000, Hitler won 59,000. In the district of Dresden-Bautzen: Duestenberg had 77,500 votes, Hindenburg won 15,000, Hitler 92,000, Thaelmann lost 38,000. In the district Chemnitz-Zwickau: Duestenberg had 35,000, Hindenburg won 35,000, Hitler 70,000, Thaelmann lost 30,000 votes. Similar and more striking results are to be observed in Mannheim, Frankfurt O. M., Hesse and other districts.

Die Rote Fahne cannot deny the fact of the swinging over of Communist voters to Hitler. It was forced to admit it in the issue of April 12th where it states that "the attempt of the Hitler and Hindenburg parties to break through the Communist front was repelled. . . . Only a very small number allowed itself to be misled into casting its votes for one or the other of the bourgeois candidates". What do these words mean? They mean nothing else but that in a time especially favorable for a Communist advance, a Communist party states with satisfaction that its class enemy, which is doomed by history to disappearance, has not succeeded in breaking through the Communist front and that—nevertheless, where it did succeed—the whole question was only of a small number of Communist hangers-on. This the bankrupt party bureaucracy writes at a time when the Communist Party of Germany could day in and day out have made inroads into the reformist and petty-bourgeois camp.

How could matters go so far, however, that Communist voters give their votes to Hindenburg and even to Hitler? Were the party comrades in the shops and employment exchanges then really fully armed against the theory of the "lesser evil" of the S. P. G.? They rejoined the S. P. G. workers as being for Hindenburg and therefore also for the reaction. This was correct. But this argument could not carry that weight since the leadership of Thaelmann plunged the party into the policy of "referendums" together with the Nazis. The S. P. G. workers replied to them: Well, if you, Communists, carried through together with Hitler the referendum in Prussia against Severing-Braun and are now pursuing the same policy in Saxony and Oldenburg, why can't we come out against Hitler with Severing-Braun? If for you Hitler is the "lesser evil" then Hindenburg can be the same for us!

In this way the party bureaucracy has robbed the party comrades of the possibility of convincing the S. P. G. workers. The theory of the "lesser evil" can celebrate victory due to the help rendered by the Thaelmann leadership.

How could Hitler obtain Communist votes? One must not forget for a moment that the majority of the party members consist now of new members recruited between the years 1930-31-32. These youthful elements naturally lacked Marxian training and Marxian traditions. It was the duty of the Communist party to supplement what was lacking through struggle and training. This could not happen because the policy of the party, particularly during these years, is a whole chain of back-sliding

from the Marxian line. How were the new members trained? On the basis of the people's revolution, on the basis of programs for national and social liberation, on the basis that the S. P. G. is now the main enemy, on the basis of "policy, the trade-unions" (R. T. U. O. levy), on the basis of common referendums with the Nazis, on a rejection of the United Front with the S. P. G. and other worker's organizations. Is it any wonder then that a number of the youthful strata of the proletariat so trained should, out of despair over the failures of the party, give its votes to the class enemy in order to "cut the knot faster"? Are the party members of Magdeburg to blame who declared in a party conference that they had voted for Hitler in order to hasten the decisions, since Remmele had stated "after the Fascists, we come"? Their action is a product of the criminal policy which the present party leadership pursues. Not they are to blame but rather those very Stalinist theoreticians who confuse the Communist ranks. Is it not frightful when the Vorwaerts, the organ of the party of organized betrayal of the interests of the proletariat, dares to write on the 11th of March of the "counter-revolutionary" Trotskyists supply the S. P. G. leaders with arguments but solely and alone the present Thaelmann leadership.

The Fascist danger is great but the proletariat is not yet beaten. The recent demonstrations in the country, and especially in Berlin, show an upsurge of the Berlin proletariat not witnessed in many years. The Communist demonstration as well as that of the "Iron Front" filled the Lustgarten and the neighboring streets. Contrarywise, the demonstration of the Nazis was very small. That means that the proletariat is absolutely clear that the decision between them and the Fascists will be carried out into the streets. Significant of the demonstration of the "Iron Front" was the fact that

the S. P. G. speakers were applauded only when they spoke of the extra-parliamentary struggle against Fascism. Their speeches on the republic and the Weimar constitution were listened to in silence by the demonstrators. The fact that the Reichsbanner workers no longer, as formerly, withdraw before the Fascists but instead, actually defend themselves against them, shows that they are prepared against the will of their leaders to fight on the streets.

These heartening tidings the Thaelmann leadership does not know how to use. Instead of the constant prattling that Severing is a "social Fascist" and of writing in several passages of the editorial in the Rote Fahne of April 7th that "Severing cannot prohibit the S. A. (Fascist Storm Divisions)" it is the task of the party to use Severing's "actions" for the purposes of the revolution. The fact that the Fascists are ready to go so far as to poison the water-supply in the proletarian quarters by means of aniline dyes in order to come to power—as the documents from Wiesbaden testify should have served as the occasion for the party to carry through a decisive turn in the united front question. Here the possibility was given for the approach to the S. P. G. and to the trade-unions for the purpose of establishing the "class front of the proletariat". What a tremendous impression—just imagine—would this united march of the Berlin proletariat have made on the bourgeois and the Fascist. Such an outpouring would have filled three Lustgartens—a million Berlin workers on the streets.

And now in the Prussian elections it is not a question of normal parliamentary elections. Much more is involved! The policy of legalism of the Fascists is to come to a definite conclusion with this. They are still afraid of an open conflict with the working class although the workers are not yet fused into a united front. The conquest of the state apparatus in Prussia by legal means is to serve them as the necessary condition

for the successful outcome of their extra-parliamentary struggle for power. It is not the task of the Communists to support the Braun-Severing Government against the Fascists, that is clear. Still less is it the task of the Communists to support the Fascists, to make easier their road to power. The problem of the party now is to place itself in the forefront of the struggle against Fascism.

Lenin demanded of a Communist party the re-examination of its policies, the open acknowledgment of its mistakes. This must take place now, re-examination of the whole policy of recent years, acknowledgment before the working class of mistakes made. Turn towards the S. P. G. workers and trade-unions, scrap the national-Bolshevik theories,—a united front with the S. P. G. and the free trade unions. It must not happen as lately in Hamburg that the Reichsbanner workers attacked by Fascists refused the aid of Communists with the words: "You are exactly like the Fascists". Stop all referendums together with the Fascists. This makes the gulf between the S. P. G. and C. P. G. workers only greater.

The comrades of Charlottenburg-Berlin have voted in four of the party units with 85 votes to 15, against the theory of "social Fascism". This is a tremendous step forward in view of the conditions within the party. All worker Communists must follow this example. Tear into tatters the "general line" of the policy of defeat put forward by the party bureaucracy! Demand internal party democracy! Set everything into motion for a turn in the party policy! Demand the extra-ordinary party congress! Without a thorough reform of the party no victory over Fascism, no struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat is possible. Only in the way of Lenin—an open change of policy before the whole class, by taking into account the currents among the masses, by pushing them forward with a correct policy—only in this way is the victory of the proletariat conceivable.

—PERMANENTE REVOLUTION
(April 15, 1932)

GERMAN SKETCHES

While the editorials of the Permanente Revolution permit the foreign comrades to get a good view of the fundamental lines of development in Germany, we should like to supplement them with the following few character sketches, so as to lend concreteness to the picture.

Minister of the Interior Groener

The most typical and the most prominent representative of the present method of domination of the German bourgeoisie is undoubtedly this Suabian general who conceals beneath his demonstrative mufli the good old Prussian warrior heart. The head of the government, the Catholic Bruening, remains in the background, in line with the very best Jesuit traditions. It is preferable for them to have the General act as the symbol of the successes, and in the last analysis, of the failures of the regime of emergency decrees. The German bourgeoisie—which is still attempting to veer in its course between Fascism and democracy and is therefore forced, as never before, to conduct a policy of negotiations, of betrayals, of masked brutality—could not have found a better representative than this imperial general who was elastic enough, on the day of the collapse of the Empire, to save himself through an immediate and determined collaboration with the people whom he only yesterday had called traitors to the country, with the actual traitors to their class, with Ebert, Scheidemann and Co.

The policy which General and Minister of the Interior Groener carried out in the 14 days that intervened between the first and second ballots of the presidential elections, permits one to get a good grasp of the present as well as of the future orientation of the German bourgeoisie. In these weeks there took place the "sensational exposures" of Severing regarding the putschist plans of the Nazis, Groener, who is still in power—today, perhaps together with the social democrats and tomorrow most certainly, together with the Nazis is doing everything to discredit and to cow his faithful social democrats. Coolly smiling, he declared that these plans had also been

made known to him, but that they had not particularly excited him. He negotiated with the Nazis in their complaints against Severing, although he has always very glibly referred to them as people guilty of high treason. He openly handed a rebuff to the representative of Severing before the state court. He negotiated with the Brunswick Nazi government and has, without being in any way contradicted, assured them of his accord with their policy. He did not take the slightest measures against the so-called crown prince, who according to ancient Hohenzollern custom, broke his "word of honor" regarding his non-participation in politics and who openly participated with adventures have left him, for the elect the feeble means which his very intense

Only after Groener had been praised a short few weeks ago as a hearth of democracy by the social democrats and only after he had undertaken all these measures to strengthen Hitler and to weaken the social democracy, when he had already been able to get the results of the second ballot—for Groener is a very cautious gentleman—only then did he proceed to "prohibit" Hitler's private army, the Storm Divisions (S. A. Sturm Abteilungen).

We must not nurture too many illusions over this "prohibition". It took place days after the Nazis had been informed about everything, that is, after they had safely been able to bring everything that was of any value for them in this military apparatus—underground. Since their party apparatus can continue to function legally, the proscription has not weakened the Nazis in the least, as the increased terroristic acts against persons, buildings, meetings within the last few days indisputably prove. Aside from this, the act of Groener has once more given them the halo of the only honest fighters against the present system in the eyes of many among the unemployed and in this manner, they have received considerable aid for their campaign in the Prussian elections. On the other hand, it has enabled Hitler to rid himself of the organizational influence of dissatisfied and unreliable elements who were concentrated precisely in these Storm Divisions. It may also be assumed that the proscription will disappear shortly after the Prussian elections.

The S. P. G. has likewise been strengthened considerably in its election campaign through this act, especially in so far as the C. P. G. is concerned. But the S. P. has paid dearly enough for this advantage. The real price they have paid is not yet known, but we can already hear today that it will "voluntarily" dissolve its Reichsbanner. The Austrian game with "general disarmament" is being repeated. While the Fascists will within a short time be in a position to reconstruct their armed divisions, the reformist organizations will stand at the end of this whole comedy, disorganized and with empty hands.

These are the undisputed and lasting results of the apparently contradictory, glamorous policy of Groener, treacherous in every respect against all parties involved.
Berlin, April 17, 1932

—BAUER.

Other sketches will appear in the forthcoming issues of The Militant.

Nine Years of the Struggle of the Left Opposition

The German Revolution of 1923 and the «Lessons of October»

A sharp dividing line marks off the period of the growth and progress of its decline and opportunist degeneration under the regime of Stalin-Zinoviev-Bucharin. This line is drawn by the revolutionary events in Germany towards the end of 1923 and the disputes that arose in the Russian party and the International around the lessons to be drawn from them. Just as the Bolshevik party grew steel-hard in the study of the 1905 revolution and the refutation of the Menshevik conception of its nature and problems, so Bolshevism today can be strengthened only in the study—not merely of the successful October revolution of 1917, but also of the defeated revolutions in Germany of 1923 and in China of 1925-1927. It is to an appraisal of the missed revolution in 1923 that comrade Trotsky devoted himself in his famous work "The Lessons of October".

The German Situation in 1923

The autumn of 1923 found Germany confronted with a revolutionary situation of the highest order. The country was passing through a violent crisis, greatly accentuated by the French occupation of the Ruhr which threatened to give Europe the acute war aspect that the Versailles Treaty was supposed to have ended. Not only were the masses of the workers expressing their mood by flocking to the standard of the Communist party—which was then reaching—but even the petty bourgeois, disintegrating, declassed and impoverished was being rallied in great numbers to the organizing center of the revolution. The nationalists and Fascists had by no means lost their energy and power which they enjoy at the present moment, for example, and the main bulwark of the capitalist regime, the social democracy, was experiencing a process of disintegration and dislocation to the left.

Every day brought increasing difficulties for the bourgeoisie desperately seeking for a way out of its crisis. Every day brought new accretions of strength to the Communists. The wide-spread network of factory councils was in the hands of the revolutionists. Every important factory had its militant "proletarische Hundertschaften", the well-knit nucleus for tomorrow's Red Guard. In Saxony and Thuringia, coalition governments had been formed by the "Left" social democrats and the Communists which, despite the radically false policies pursued in them by the Communist ministers, gave an index of the tremendous strength commanded by the party. So ripe was the situation that, as Trotsky says, "it became quite clear that the German bourgeoisie could extricate itself from this 'inextricable' position only if the Communist party did not understand at the right time that the position of the bourgeoisie was 'inextricable' and did not draw the necessary revolutionary conclusions."

The tragic outcome of the German revolution of 1923 was due, however, precisely to the fact that the German party leadership, and more than that, the leadership of the Communist In-

ternational, did not understand what it should have, and by its capitulation without a struggle, enabled the German bourgeoisie to get that breathing space which, with subsequent aid from the United States in the form of the Dawes Plan, was the direct precursor of the so-called stabilization of Europe and the decline of the revolutionary wave.

In the face of its imperative tasks, with all the chances in its favor, when the moment came to strike the German party leadership simply quit the field of battle, permitted the armed intervention of the reactionary troops without offering resistance, and surrendered its positions without firing a shot. Only in Hamburg did heroic rear-guard street battles take place as a result of the failure of the Central Committee to arrive in time with the instructions changing the plan of battle previously arrived at.

How was it possible for such a situation to develop, with all the disastrous consequences which it subsequently entailed? The then leaders of the International, Zinoviev, Bucharin and Stalin, explained the whole thing away with a deceptive simplicity: Brandler and Thaelheimer, the heads of the German party, were to blame. The whole trouble lay, you see, in the fact that they had played a "parliamentary comedy" in the coalition government in Saxony and had failed to strike the decisive blow at the right time. But, added the Russian trinity, (and in this they were echoed by Brandler and Thaelheimer), the revolutionary situation is still ahead! A mistake has been made which we will easily and swiftly repair by putting the "Left" faction at the head of the party and removing Brandler and Thaelheimer. With a "Bolshevik" leadership and the revolutionary situation still at hand, the whole mistake will be made good and, incidentally, our wisdom and prestige will not only remain unimpaired but will be greatly enhanced in the minds of the party members.

In other words, the "art" of their leadership consisted exclusively of learning nothing from the events, of teaching nothing about their essential lessons, of finding a scapegoat upon whom the blame for the difficulties might be shifted, and of preserving intact the myth of bureaucratic infallibility.

The Russian Opposition, in the figure of comrade Trotsky, proceeded from an entirely different standpoint. It aimed at such an objective analysis of the events, as such an extraction of the lessons presented by the defeat, as would not only reveal who and what were at fault but would serve as a source of instruction to those Communist parties which still had before them the final struggle for the seizure of power. This aim was brilliantly achieved in "The Lessons of October".

The essence of this document lies in a masterful comparison of the problems confronting the Bolshevik party on the eve of its insurrection and how it solved them successfully and resolutely, with

the problems confronting the German and Bulgarian party leaders on the eve of their insurrections and how they failed to solve them with either resolution or success. An excellent summary of the key points in this work was made subsequently by comrade Trotsky himself.

"The ideas set out by me in the «Lessons of October» retain their full strength even now. Yes, even more, they receive confirmation over and over again after 1924.

"Among the numerous difficulties in a proletarian revolution there is a particular, definite, specific difficulty. It arises out of the position and tasks of revolutionary party leadership. Even the most revolutionary parties run the risk of confronting the events, slogan and measures of struggle of yesterday that are being sharply precipitated, with the new tasks and requirements. And there cannot, after all, be a sharper turn of events than that required by the armed uprising. It is right here that the danger also arises that the policy of the party leadership and the party in general does not correspond to the action of the class and the requirements of the situation. During a relatively tranquil course of political life, such a contradiction can be straightened out, even though with losses, yet without a catastrophe. It is precisely in a time of violent crisis, it is precisely in a time of lacking to eliminate this contradiction and to redress the front, so to speak, under fire. The periods of the highest accentuation of a revolutionary crisis are by their very nature always only brief. This contradiction between a revolutionary leadership (vacillations, a temporizing attitude despite the assault of the bourgeoisie) and the objective situation, can lead in the course of a few weeks and even days to a catastrophe and to a loss of what took years of work to prepare. . . .

"... (In Germany) the situation was ripe and the leadership lagged behind. By the time this contradiction was straightened out, the situation had already changed, the masses receded and the relationship of forces became fundamentally worse.

"The German defeat of 1923 naturally had many national peculiarities. But it already contained many typical features, also, which signified a general danger. This danger can be characterized as the crisis of the revolutionary leadership on the eve of the transition to armed uprising. The depths of a proletarian party are already by their very nature far less susceptible to bourgeois public opinion. Certain elements of the party leadership and the middle layers of the party will always unfailingly succumb in larger or smaller measure to the material and ideological terror of the bourgeoisie. Such a danger should not simply be rejected. To be sure there is no remedy against it suitable for all cases. Nevertheless the first step towards averting it—is to grasp its nature and its source. The unflinching appearance or development of Right groupings in all the Com-

munist parties in the 'pre-October' period is on the one hand a result of the greatest objective difficulties and dangers of this 'jump' but on the other hand the result of a furious assault of bourgeois public opinion. There also lies the whole import of the Right groupings. And that is just why irresolution and vacillations arise unfailingly in the Communist parties at the moment when it is most dangerous. With us, only a minority within the party leadership was seized by such vacillations in 1917, which were, however, overcome, thanks to the sharp energy of Lenin. In Germany, on the contrary, the leadership as a whole vacillated and that was carried over to the party and through it to the class. The revolutionary situation was thereby passed up. . . . All these were not of course the last crises of leadership in a decisive historical moment. To limit these inevitable crises to a minimum is one of the most important tasks of the Communist parties and the Comintern. This can be achieved only when the experiences of October 1917 and the political content of the Right Opposition inside our party at that time are grasped and contrasted with the experiences of the German party in 1923. Therein lies the purport of the «Lessons of October»."

The publication of this work at the beginning of 1924 aroused a terrific storm in the ranks of the Russian party bureaucracy. The vials of wrath of the last drop clique were poured out to the last drop upon Trotsky's head. What Zinoviev, Rykov, Stalin and Co. were concerned with was not so much the Marxian criticism to which Trotsky submitted the conduct of the German party leaders, but the fact that in drawing his striking analogy with the 1917 insurrection in Russia, Trotsky had revealed that vacillations and capitulatory tendencies similar to Brandler's had existed in the very highest spheres of the Bolshevik party.

The bureaucrat and the opportunist live from hand to mouth, and, just as they refuse to see or hear, they dislike to look backward, or to have their own pasts spoken of and analyzed. Add to this the fact that the cliques which was then busily engaged in usurping the control of the party was doing it by attempting to revise the truthful record of the October insurrection, and by unloading all responsibility for the German defeat, and you have the reasons for the furious assault which they promptly launched against Trotsky and the Opposition.

(To be continued)
—MAX SHACHTMAN.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

If you have one or more copies of the paper edition of the "Draft Program of the Communist International—A Criticism of Fundamentals" which you can spare, send it at once to Pioneer Publishers and we will reimburse you for it. We need twenty-five copies to make up the 100 for the bound volumes of all the pamphlets.

Stalin - Lovestone Parleys

(Continued from page 1)
the Russian party bloc? That would mean the end of Stalin? (This is what Lovestone told us. I don't know whether it is so, or not).

The C. I. man then told Lovestone to send a letter to the Polcom of the party making his proposition for unity. This letter was sent. Weinstein forwarded a copy of the letter to Moscow and negotiations were suspended for a while until the return of the party delegation then in Moscow.

When the delegation—Browder, Stachel and Wicks—returned, the negotiations were resumed. "Then," said Lovestone, "the party approached us for another conference time. Gitlow represented our group this time. The party representative was Stachel. Stachel assured Gitlow that "the whole trade union policy would be revised gradually".
Gitlow said the group stood on the basis of the letter sent to the party. Stachel said he would report the interview to the Polcom and that an answer would be forthcoming. Up to Tuesday night the answer had not been received.

(Comment on the above letters will be found on page 4)

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