

IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR

Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

The Half-Turn in the German Party

Although the special edition of the Rote Fahne of Monday, April 25, 1932 confined itself merely to publishing Sunday's election results, and similarly the Tuesday number of the R. F. also recorded in a leading article only the bare results without commenting on their meaning, the official Communist press has received the task of setting down the unpleasant, the defeats and their scope. This has been done in the "Welt am Abend" of April 15 which we cite in the following:

"If we compare yesterday's Landtag elections in Prussia with the last Landtag elections in 1928, it appears that the Communists have won nearly 600,000 votes. The Social Democrats have lost approximately 800,000 votes while the Socialist Labor Party (the S. A. P.) could scrape painfully together about 80,000 votes (and not one mandate). The bourgeois parties from the State Party to the German Peoples' Party are nearly wiped out. The German Nationalists have suffered the loss of more than half their votes, over 1.2 millions; yet it is clear that they have emerged from their retrograde movement. The Centrists won around half a million votes. The National Socialists have gathered practically their entire mass following in the period since 1928 as the comparison indicates. They have become by far the strongest party.

"If we compare yesterday's Landtag elections with the last parliamentary elections (of Sept. 1930) the picture appears even more unfavorable for the workers' movement. The Communists lost more than 300,000 votes. So also did the Social Democrats. These more than 600,000 Communist and social democratic votes must have gone principally to the Nazis. Let this be clearly stated not to discourage but to spur on to sharper struggle against the visible danger. Since the parliamentary elections the Centrists have won more than 800,000 votes, mainly from bourgeois-liberal circles. The so-called bourgeois parties of the middle as well as those of the right are in a dying state as developments since Sept. 1930 indicate even more strikingly than before. The German Nationalists have lost a total of 400,000 votes while they had previously already lost more than one million votes. Finally the National Socialists have doubled their vote since the last parliamentary elections.

"If, finally, we compare the results of the Prussian Landtag elections with those of the presidential election—a comparison which must be made with caution since the presidential election is of a different character—it immediately becomes clear for the proletarian movement that the Communists have partially regained the great losses suffered in the second presidential election, although they did not reach the first presidential vote, let alone surpass it.

"What the heart of the political and industrial life of Germany, Greater Berlin, decided in yesterday's elections, is of decisive importance. In this connection it must be set down that in Berlin also the Communists lost 90,000 votes since the parliamentary elections while the Social Democrats gained nearly 60,000."

Even the most malevolent bureaucrat would not suspect the "Welt am Abend" of "Trotskyist slanders". The facts revealed by the Prussian Landtag elections are really staggering. For instance, the Social Democrats have won back 60,000 in Berlin since 1930, which means since the time of the sharpest emergency decrees for which they are also fully responsible, while the K. P. D. has lost 90,000 votes. In Hamburg the Party lost nearly 50,000 votes as compared with 1931, the S. P. D. gained 12,000 votes. From first place in Berlin the Communist Party slid down to third. In the most important industrial centers we see a similar backsliding of Communist voters. Only in the South of Germany and especially in agrarian Bavaria, did the Party show gains. The Nazis emerged from the elections as the most powerful party and their vote indicates that the Fascist tide is far from being stemmed.

It should be clear now to every party comrade to what a pass the Party has been brought by the leadership of Thaelmann-Remmele-Neumann. Through the events of the recent weeks and months the criticism of the Left Opposition has received vindication and confirmation such as could not possibly have been looked for so quickly and so extensively. The critical, decisive phase of the struggle is reached as we predicted in the last issue of the P. R. Within the Party the dissatisfaction of its members has assumed such an extent and character that the leadership is forced to a more or less radical turn. This turn stands on the order of the day. That this is clear to the C. C. is indicated by the appeal of the C. C. and the R. G. O. "to all German workers" published on the first page of the R. F. of April 26th.

The turn stands on the order of the day, yet, it is already in process. The most important thing is however, what changes is the Party capable of bringing about! Never before has a political action of such significance to the Party as well as to the Comintern, been taken without a clear statement by the E. C. C. I. as to its position. Such a statement has not appeared altho the R. F. of April 27th published a leading editorial from the Pravda which must be

taken as reflecting the official views of decisive Comintern circles.

"The results of the Prussian Landtag election permit clear recognition of the peculiar situation in which Germany now finds itself, and how in the face of the extremely sharp industrial crisis the Social Democrats have succeeded in drawing away the attention of the masses from direct open struggle against capitalism and directing it to the peace of Versailles, the national yoke weighing down Germany and using this for the strengthening of their dictatorship. Herein lies the peculiarity of present political developments in Germany as clearly indicated in the last elections." (From Pravda—the Editor).

"The portrayal of the situation is correct. Only we permit ourselves to point out that the diverting action of the German bourgeoisie was assisted by the "national and social liberation program" of the K. P. D. for which the E. C. C. I. is also answerable. It would be correct now, since the consequences are ready to one's hand to grasp, to finally wind up this "liberation-program" Wide of the mark! After Pravda records further on what the K. P. D. did not do altogether "understand" how to carry out, it recommends:

"The Communist Party will draw the conclusion from this election that with all its power it must improve its work for mass struggle against the capitalist offensive, against the fascist assaults, for the unfolding of its program of social and national liberation of the German people."

One need not be surprised if the catastrophic policy become even more coarse, as in the following paragraph which the R. F. actually underscores heavily shows!

"There is no occasion to believe that the present retardation of the growth of the revolutionary forces of the German proletariat will last very long. The whole situation shows that a new turn of the broad masses to the Communist Party is possible very quickly. The Communists must summon forth all their power to hasten this turn." (From Pravda).

So: not the Party but rather the masses must make a turn!!! The sole logic that comes forth from such comprehension, since accordingly the K. P. D. should hold fast to its previous "line". But the height of confusion is reached by the Pravda in the following lines:

"Further the danger becomes stronger that the German fascists will seek to fortify their election success by force in order to throw aside the obstacles to a quick, open dictatorship. In the struggle against the carrying through of Fascist dictatorship the Communist Party of Germany does not identify indeed the National Socialists with the Social Democrats, although the latter as well as the former, even if with different methods, bring about Fascist dictatorship. The Communist Party makes use of these differences that exist between these two organizations of the bourgeoisie, even if their differences of opinion are small and do not spring from decisive differences in nature."

The line of the E. C. C. I.—a divergence of opinion with that of the Pravda is unthinkable—is therefore, the "national and social liberation program" is to stand fast and wait for a turn of the masses. And, as the last citation informs us, the "Theory of social-Fascism" is right, but in the struggle against the carrying through of the Fascist dictatorship one cannot consider as identical social democrats and Nazis, although both bring about the Fascist dictatorship. Higher than this they cannot go! That a correct change is to be made by the E. C. C. I. need not be awaited going by the lead of the Pravda.

The complete change that the situation demands will be undertaken only under the pressure of the masses of party members. Under the pressure of events and party moods, the C. C. of the K. P. D. has already taken some steps, they, however, are only the initial ones, others must follow.

In its appeal of April 26th the C. C. makes the statement: "We are ready to join for a common struggle with every organization of the workers that is actually willing to fight against reductions in wages and the dole. Well said: ready to join with every organization for a common struggle, so it goes today. Only a few weeks previously Muenzenberg reviled this idea of comrade Trotsky and the Left Opposition as being counter-revolutionary-fascistic. Today the R. F.

is forced (editorial of April 26th) to write:

"The main thing now is to assemble all the class forces of the proletariat and the working masses in the red united front and again go into an offensive against the capitalist dictatorship and defeat Fascism."

"We publish today at the head of our newspaper the appeal of the C. C. and the R. G. O.-Committee in which the party and the R. G. O. express their willingness to join with all lower union functionaries and shop-committee-members, with all organizations which wish to fight honestly against reduction in wages, to carry through common measures for the struggle for workers' demands in the shops.

"While we are in sharpest struggle against the government of Braun-Severing, against the policy of emergency measures dictatorship and their clearing

Trotsky and Brandler; or Lovestone and Principles

Under the heading "That Gibraltar of Principle!", the current number of the Workers Age drops another stink-bomb in its recently revived campaign against "Trotskyism" in general and comrade Trotsky in particular. After a lengthy period of silence about the Opposition, the last half a dozen numbers of the Lovestone sheet have devoted not a few columns to an abrupt renewal of the campaign in which they must be acknowledged as specialists, as people trained for just that kind of activity. The reason for this "turn", which puzzled so many people for a while, has of course now become quite clear. The campaign coincided with the negotiations they were conducting for a return to the bosom of Stalinism, and was manifestly calculated to impress upon the party leaders the fact that, at least when it comes to calculating the Left Opposition and pegging mud at it, the Lovestonites take second place behind nobody. With the zeal of a Lovovico before the doubting Borgia—"Have I not stabbed men from behind? And poisoned water in the fountains? And mixed fatal drugs in wine-horns? Let me but try, excellent lord!"—our Lovestonites have been engaged in proving their skill at the game of "anti-Trotskyism" to their prospective Comintern bosses.

An Expert on "Principle"

The latest Right wing effusion deals with comrade Trotsky, the Brandlerites and principle. Lovestone is expert on all three matters, especially on the last-named, for few people in the Comintern have juggled more successfully with the word than he. In his latest piece, he sets about, in the interests of truth, to reveal that "nothing is more threadbare, nothing is more fraudulent than the mantle of stern principle with which L. D. Trotsky loves to clothe himself! . . . What has happened to this unbending pillar of political rectitude? Even Stachel can learn from him in political trickery, unprincipledness and intrigue."

The basis for this delicate piece of vilification is a number of "facts" which Lovestone presents in defense of Brandler and Co. to "prove" that Trotsky created a "legend" about them and attacked them only after he had failed to win them for his faction by offering them various bribes—promises to whitewash the Brandlerites for their conduct in the German October (1923). Since the creation of myths has played such a prominent part in the struggle to discredit and crush the Left Opposition, it is worth our while to expose this new myth.

Lovestone, who knows better, now pretends that only "after the rejection of these overtures by Brandler, Trotsky made a right-about-face and began a venomous attack upon him and his political associates. It was at this time that he originated the notorious 'October legend'."

In other words, Lovestone, who is simply trying to present Trotsky as he, Lovestone, would have acted under the circumstances, accuses him of having invented his criticism of Brandler not on the basis of Brandler's actual position during the German events but only after Trotsky had failed to make a factionally ally of him. Unfortunately for this legend, incontrovertible evidence exists as to what comrade Trotsky's position actually was before the catastrophic results of Brandler's policy (that is, of Zinoviev's and Stalin's policy as well) were fully clear. In the "Material on the Conference of the Russian Communist Party, January 1924," it says:

the road for Hitler, we Communists stand as mortal enemies of Hitler fascism. We will do everything with the help of proletarian class forces in order to block its way to government power, in order to break its terror and through a new red advance of the working class to give it a decisive blow".

These are only the first steps on the way which the Left Opposition advocated for a long time. Until now we have only words, only appeals. Real actions must follow. The K. P. D. must have a revolutionary prospective. It was defeated only because it had none. The problems of the day must be posed concretely. "We must force on the social-democracy the bloc against fascism". This is the lesson from the Prussian election.

We greet every step on the road to a Leninist united front policy and urge all party members to turn the half-measures of the C. C. into complete ones. Party members demand that words and appeals be followed by real actions. —PERMANENTE REVOLUTION.

The Conference of the Spanish Opposition

The National Conference of the Spanish Left Opposition was recently held at Madrid. Comrades from all parts of the country were represented, reporting organizational and ideological progress in every locality. Theses for future work were adopted and preparations made to expand the activities of the Spanish section of the Left Opposition. Among these, the renewed publication of El Soviet, the weekly organ, is being planned at Barcelona. A detailed report of the conference is forthcoming. The article below is a message from comrade Andres Nin, one of the leaders of the Spanish Left Opposition.

When, in June of last year, we came together as the followers of the International Left Opposition in Spain, we constituted not more than a small group of militants ready to fight enthusiastically for the creation of a real Communist

movement in our country. The political stupidity of the official party, the irresponsibility of its leaders—typical products of Stalinism—which has caused so much ruin in the international revolutionary movement, had discredited even the idea itself of Communism in the eyes of the working masses. The Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, the birth of which is due principally to the profound mistakes of the party and the International, had transformed itself into an opportunist organization, typically petty bourgeois which constitutes a big obstacle, with its innate confusionism, to the development of a strong Communist movement in Catalonia. Finally, anarcho-syndicalism, thanks to the impotence and incapability of the Communist organization, had been able to exercise an enormous influence over the broad masses of the proletariat.

The Opposition had to start an extremely difficult fight on these three fronts. For this fight it was not equipped with more than a monthly theoretical magazine of a very small circulation and the ardent enthusiasm of the handful of Spanish Oppositionists. The organized group could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The material resources were very limited. The point of view of the Left Opposition was unknown to the big majority of the workers.

In spite of all this, the results obtained in the ten months of struggle have surpassed all our hopes. The National Conference, recently held in Madrid has shown the really surprising progress achieved in less than a year. The balance of the work achieved is highly encouraging. The Communist Left Opposition is no longer a nucleus of isolated militants as it was a year ago, but a real Communist movement, with branches in every part of the country, alive, active, combative, intimately attached to the working class and to its struggles. The danger of the Opposition becoming transformed into a circle of critics, into a sterile sect, into a ready refuge for the lazy, the cowards and the disillusioned has been victoriously overcome. The best, the most conscious, the most self-sacrificing fighting militants have joined our ranks. Today the Communist Left Opposition is really the vanguard of the vanguard of the Spanish proletariat.

The National Conference has given a program, a tactic and a structure to our movement. The Communist Left Opposition has clearly showed the way for the Spanish working class to follow and has constructed the basis upon which a big Communist movement will develop in our country.

The Communist Left Opposition has made a big step forward. Now more than ever before, we are firmly convinced that the road taken by us has been confirmed as correct and that only the Opposition is the heir to the traditions of revolutionary Marxism, the faithful executor of the work of the International of Lenin and Trotsky, capable of forging the weapon which the Spanish proletariat needs in order to obtain victory over the bourgeoisie: a big Communist party.

The progress achieved in the last ten months, in spite of our meagre material resources and with the enormous difficulties under which we have been fighting, is the surest guarantee of the success which the future has in store for us. But we do not know how much time is left to us by history in the exceptional circumstances in which we live today. We have not a moment to lose. We must redouble our efforts, intensify our propaganda and our organizational work, consecrate all our energy to the immense task we have started to solve in order to equip the proletariat with the weapons necessary for its triumph. —ANDRES NIN.

When did Lovestone change his mind about the need of combating Brandler as a Right winger? Why did Lovestone change his mind? Just when and why did he "establish connections with Brandler"? What explanation has he ever given for the change? We do not know and we confess to being little concerned. Lovestone, who worships principle and recoils from intrigue and trickery (as is well known), is the sort of politician who denounces "Trotskyism" as the "crassest expression of the Right wing" one day, as "ultra-Leftism" the next day, and as anything else you please the day after. Yesterday, Brandler was one of his favorite targets for the same vile slanders he now hurls at Trotsky; today, he has really given Brandler that white-washing which he dishonestly alleges that Trotsky was ready to give him; tomorrow, if he is called upon to do so, he will rediscovers that Brandler, after all, always was an agent of the bourgeoisie.

Just think of it; for years this man was the leader of the American party, and one of the leaders of the Comintern! —SHACHTMAN.

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There is no doubt that Trotsky made an effort, in 1924, to persuade Brandler of the falsity of his position not only in the October days, when the revolution was there and Brandler failed to see it, but of his position after the defeat, when Brandler did "see it" after it had already slipped into the past. But this was known before Lovestone's "revelations", and known without his base interpretations. In a letter published by Trotsky, dated June 12, 1929, he relates (not for the first time) that he "did not come to this annihilating conclusion at one stroke. I had rather hoped that