

The Third International in Germany and Italy*

By G. ZINOVIEV

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...The first great event that took place after the II. Congress was the Congress at Halle. This, undoubtedly was a turning point in the history of the European labor movement. On the eve of the Halle Congress there was in Germany a communist party consisting of 50,000 members. After the Congress at Halle 450,000 persons sharing the views of the communist party joined the latter. You will agree that a curious situation is created when nearly half a million join a party of 50,000, and of course it would be too much to expect that such a unification could be painless and immediate. It was natural to expect a certain measure of that wavering and retreat that existed in the Independent Party from whom we took a half of its membership. Halle represented a European arena in which we opposed our views against the views of opportunism, presented in their most complete and perfect form by the Right Wing of the Independents. This Right Wing is crude, narrow menshevism, but also to a certain extent, refined "scientific" opportunism. This was a decisive battle, before the whole of Europe, between our ideas and the ideas of the old and bespattered opportunism of Kautsky and Hilferding. There is not the slightest doubt that we were the victors in this battle. This was admitted not only by our friends, but also by our enemies, who by their wails, complaints, and wild raving, proved that at Halle they had suffered an intellectual defeat.

What will be the further development of this party of a half a million members created very largely by the efforts of the Executive Committee of the Communist International? As was to be expected, things did not go quite smoothly, and at the present moment there is something in the nature of a crisis in Germany. I have been asked at this Conference why it is that five members of the Executive Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany, including such a person like Clara Zetkin, have resigned. The reason is as follows. You will see from further reports that the Italian question has become very acute. This Italian question however, does not only affect Italy. You will see later that our conflict with a certain section of the Italian socialists is really an international conflict. In Italy there is a struggle between the Communists and the Centrists headed by Seratti and his group. The Centrists in Italy consider themselves Communists, but as a matter of fact they have one foot in the camp of the "Centre." At the moment when the Italian question became acute, a certain wavering in this direction began in the German Party which had only just recovered from this sickness. It is understandable, of course, that when a certain ferment commences in a party, or when a party experiences again former crises, when new groupings are observed, in the beginning at all events, numbers of people casually

join the party who afterwards fall away. We know from our own experience that there have been groups of members who, at the beginning of a crisis, for reasons more or less casual, were found in the camp in which they should not have been. Later on, when the position had become clear these comrades took their place in the camp to which they belonged by ideas, by temperament and their past work. A similar thing has happened with Clara Zetkin. Quite recently she was in Russia. We found ourselves in complete solidarity with her in almost all questions. We gave her a mandate to represent the E. C. of the Communist International at the highly important Congress at Tours. She carried out her mission brilliantly. When a certain grouping to the right was observed within the Central Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany, she, I am sure, for quite accidental reasons, and not for long, was found in the camp which certainly tomorrow or the day after she will abandon. Her place undoubtedly, is in the camp of the Left wing of the German Communist Party, which stands completely on the platform of the Communist International. However regrettable the fact that Clara Zetkin has left the Central Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany may be, we are convinced that this is a minor and passing episode in her life. With regard to the other member who resigned from membership of the Central Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany, he has shown by his past that at such a moment he would incline to the Right. I speak of Paul Levi, who came to the front in recent years, after the bourgeoisie had rid themselves of the heads of the German Communist Party. We know from the history of Germany how far-sighted the plundering policy of the bourgeoisie sometimes is. Of course we as Marxists know that the role of an individual in history is not decisive when it is a question of a movement of many millions. But from the example of the German Communist Party we see what decisive importance there was in the fact that the bourgeoisie assassinated its leaders. Comrade Levi had to take the helm of the Party when it was broken, when it suffered defeat in the first January revolt. He made his political career in combatting the "Left" elements who indeed made and still make many mistakes, but among whom there are many workers loyal to the revolution. He was all the time inclined to lead the German Communist Party to the Right. We had differences with Comrade Levi at the Second Congress of the Communist International, but knowing how few educated leaders remained in the German Communist Party, all of us, and particularly comrade Radek who knew the German conditions better than any of us, endeavored to support comrade Levi, to assist him in his struggle with his opponents. But the more we did so, the more we became convinced that he was inclined towards opportunism. And now there is not the slightest doubt among us that an intellectual struggle against this comrade is essential. Those of us like comrade Radek, who for reasons of his close-

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ness to the German labor movement, more than anybody endeavored to postpone the break with Levi, in the interests of the working class party in Germany, now think otherwise. On this question there is complete solidarity among us. The matter cannot be postponed any further, and comrade Radek was the first to commence this intellectual struggle against Levi in Germany itself.

Events developed in the following way: Recently a joint Conference of the Executive and delegates of the United Communist Party of Germany took place at which were raised the questions of the Italian event, the relations to the Left elements in Germany and to the Communist International. On this, as you know, a certain division took place. I am glad to say that this Conference re-elected a Central Committee, elected Left elements at its head, and did not waver. There is every reason to suppose that the wavering which we observed at the present moment in Germany is only on the surface. There is not the slightest doubt that when this question is placed for discussion before the broad masses, they will, by an overwhelming majority, decide for the irreconcilable policy of the Communist International. The question of the relation to the German Communist Labor Party figured very prominently. This is a comparatively small party which split off from the Spartacist League after the January defeats, and part of which subsequently rejoined the ranks of the Communist Party. One section, however, well organized, remained a separate party. It is a very small party. Its programme is extremely confused. It is strongly influenced by syndicalist and anarchist ideas, but among its members, nevertheless, there are undoubtedly, as all comrades admit, several thousands of workers who are intensely loyal to the idea of proletarian revolution, and who split off from the old party precisely because of its opportunist wing. Under such conditions the E. C. of the Communist International considered it necessary in spite of its partly syndicalist temperament, to do everything possible not to lose this small but nevertheless revolutionary element. Our attitude towards the revolutionary anarchist elements on the world arena, should be different from that adopted in Soviet Russia. It should be the attitude that we adopted in 1917 when we more than once fought against the bourgeoisie, against Kerensky and against the Mensheviks together with definite sections of the Anarchists and Syndicalists. At that time it was a question of fighting against the bourgeoisie, and we had something to unite us. Everyone of us who participated in the revolution will remember the many cases when we had to conclude certain agreements with Syndicalist and Anarchist elements. Parts of these subsequently joined our ranks. Many of them occupy responsible positions in the Soviet Republic and have assimilated themselves with the proletarian revolution. Of course, after the conquest of political power by the proletariat when the destructive and disorganizing elements of syndicalism and anarchism became hostile, we had to change our attitude towards them. But on the international arena where we are on the eve of a proletarian revolution, we are compelled by the experience of the Russian revolution to advise our comrades to be more tolerant particularly with working class groups and labor organizations which do not yet completely understand our tactics and still

suffer from the confusion arising from the crisis experienced by the international movement in connection with the war. This was our policy at the Second Congress of the Communist International, and adapting it to German conditions, we admitted the German Communist Labor Party which sympathizes with us, into the International with a consultative vote. This, to some extent, rendered the position in the United Communist Party of Germany more acute. Comrade Levi and his group who took up the struggle precisely with these elements regarded this falling into sin of the Communist International as support to these elements as against himself. This led to the position as it now exists. At the ensuing Congress we hope to put the question bluntly. It is clear that such a situation where one country is represented by two parties, cannot drag on for long. But we will do all that is possible to transfer the healthier elements of the Communist Labor Party of Germany into the United Communist Party. I think that our policy will remain correct. The wavering which was revealed on the surface will not in the slightest degree induce us to change our attitude towards these elements.

British Communists Meet

The newly formed Communist party which united the several revolutionary organizations in Great Britain held a national convention on April 23 and 24 at Manchester. A constitution was adopted which declared that the objective of the party was "the establishment of a Communist Republic of a socially and economically equal people. It works for the total abolition of the present system of wage slavery through a social revolution, and holds this to be pre-eminently the task of its existence. It seeks by Education to win the adhesion of the masses to Communism and by Agitation to spur the workers on towards the Social Revolution."

The convention expressed loyal support to the striking coal miners and condemned the leaders of the Triple Alliance who were responsible for the debacle of that great organization during the crisis. The expulsion of Robert Williams, Secretary of the Transport Workers' Federation, from the party by the temporary central committee for his part in the withdrawal of the Triple Alliance support to the struggling miners was approved by the delegates. Arthur MacManus was re-elected chairman of the party for the ensuing year.

With the left wing of the Independent Labor Party joining the Communists, the only element still out of the united movement is the Socialist Labor Party which bases its refusal to join on the ground of the application of the Communist Party for membership in the Labor Party. The fact that such membership was refused by the Labor Party does not matter. The hard-shelled S. L. P., although prepared to join the Third International, is not willing to forget its ancient animosity toward the Labor Party. In this attitude it resembles its mother party, the American S. L. P. in its attitude toward the A. F. of L. The Third International approved the policy of the British Communist Party to join the Labor Party. The S. L. P. is more revolutionary than the Third International. The British S. L. P. has still the symptoms of what Lenin aptly termed "Infantile Disorders of Left-Wing Communism."

"Hardly any of us know what it is to be properly educated, and hardly any what it is to be in constant general good health."—H. G. Wells. Under capitalism.

"Moderate" politicians never err on the side of moderation. Look at the world which they have made.