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Leon Trotsky

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# LEON TROTSKY

## The Turn in the Communist International and the German Situation



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# The Turn in the Communist International and the German Situation



## 1. The Sources of the Latest Turn.

**T**ACTICAL turns, even wide ones, are absolutely unavoidable in our epoch. They are necessitated by the abrupt turns of the objective situation (the lack of stable international relations; sharp and irregular fluctuations of conjuncture; sharp reflections of the economic fluctuations in politics; the impulsiveness of the masses under the influence of the feeling of helplessness, etc. etc.). Attentive watchfulness over the changes in the objective situation is now far more important and at the same time an immeasurably more difficult task than prior to the war, in the epoch of the "organic" development of capitalism. The leadership of the Party now finds itself in the position of a chauffeur who drives his automobile on a mountain, over the sharp zig-zags of the road. An untimely turn, incorrectly applied

speed, threaten the passengers and the car with the greatest danger, if not with destruction.

The leadership of the Communist International has given us examples in recent years of very abrupt turns. The latest of them we observe these last months. What has called forth the turns of the Communist International since the death of Lenin? The changes in the objective situation? No. It can be said with confidence: beginning with 1923, there was not a single tactical turn made in time by the Comintern under the influence of correctly estimated changes in the objective conditions. On the contrary: every turn was the result of the unbearable sharpening of the contradictions between the line of the Comintern and the objective situation. We are witnessing the very same thing this time, too.

The Ninth Plenum of the E. C. C. I., the Sixth Congress, and particularly the Tenth Plenum, adopted a course towards an abrupt and direct revolutionary rise (the "third period"), which was absolutely excluded at the time by the objective situation existing after the greatest defeats in England and China, the weakening of the Communist Parties throughout the world, and particularly under the condition of a commercial and industrial ascent which embraced a series of the most important capitalist countries. The tactical turn in the Communist International beginning with February 1928, was therefore directly contrary to the actual turn of the historic road. From these contradictions arose: the tendencies of adventurism, the further isolation of the Parties from the masses, the weakening of the organizations, etc. Only after all these phenomena had clearly assumed a menacing character did the leadership of the Comintern make a new turn in February 1930, backward from, and to the

Right of, the tactics of the "third period".

It is the irony of fate, unmerciful to all *chvoostism*\*, that the new tactical turn in the Comintern coincided chronologically with the new turn in the objective conditions. An international crisis of unprecedented acuteness undoubtedly opens perspectives for the radicalization of the masses and social convulsions. Precisely under such circumstances, a turn to the Left could and should have been made, that is, to adopt a bold speed on the path of revolutionary rise. This would have been absolutely correct and necessary if, in the last three years, the leadership of the Comintern had utilized as it should have the period of economic revival and the revolutionary ebb to strengthen the positions of the Party in the mass organizations, above all in the trade unions. Under such circumstances, the chauffeur could and should have shifted his gears in 1930 from second into third speed, or at least prepared for such a change in the nearest future. In reality the directly opposite process took place. So as not to go over the cliff, the chauffeur had to change from the prematurely adopted speed to the second, and to slow down the pace. When? Under circumstances which, with the correct strategical line, would have made necessary its acceleration. Such is the crying contradiction between the tactical necessity and strategical perspective, a contradiction in which, by the logic of the mistakes of their leadership, the Communist Parties find themselves in a number of countries.

We see this contradiction most strikingly and dangerously now in Germany, where the last

\*Literally, "tail-ism" that is, the theory or practise of following at the tail of events.

elections revealed an exceptionally peculiar relation of forces, resulting not only from the two periods of Germany's post-war stabilization, but also from the three periods of the Comintern's mistakes.

## 2. The Parliamentary Victory of the Communist Party in the Light of the Revolutionary Tasks.

The official press of the Comintern is now depicting the results of the German elections as a prodigious victory of Communism, which places on the order of the day the slogan of a Soviet Germany. The bureaucratic optimists do not want to reflect upon the meaning of the relation of forces which is disclosed by the election statistics. They examine the figure of the Communist votes gained independently of the revolutionary tasks created by the situation and the obstacles it sets up. The Communist Party received around 4,600,000 votes as against 3,300,000 in 1928. From the viewpoint of "normal" parliamentary mechanics, the gain of 1,300,000 votes is considerable even if we take into consideration the rise in the total number of voters. But the gain of the Party pales completely beside the leap of Fascism from 800,000 to 6,400,000 votes. Of no less important significance for evaluating the elections is the fact that the social democracy, in spite of substantial losses, retained its basic cadres and still received a considerably greater number of workers' votes than the Communist Party.

Meanwhile, if we should ask ourselves, What combination of international and domestic circumstances could be capable of turning the working

class towards Communism with greater velocity? we could not find an example of more favorable circumstances for such a turn than the situation in present-day Germany: Young's noose, the economic crisis, the disintegration of the rulers, the crisis of parliamentarism, the terrific self-exposure of the social democracy in power. From the viewpoint of these concrete historical circumstances, the specific gravity of the German Communist Party in the social life of the country, in spite of the gain of 1,300,000 votes, remains proportionately small.

The weakness of the positions of Communism, inextricably bound up with the policy and régime of the Comintern, is revealed more clearly if we compare the present social weight of the Communist Party with those concrete and unpostponable tasks which the present historical circumstances put before it.

It is true that the Communist Party itself did not expect such a gain. But this proves that under the blows of mistakes and defeats, the leadership of the Communist Parties has become disaccustomed from big aims and perspectives. If yesterday it underestimated its own possibilities, then today it once more underestimates the difficulties. In this way, one danger is multiplied by another.

In the meantime, the first characteristic of a real revolutionary Party—is to be able to look reality in the face.

### 3. The Vacillations of the Big Bourgeoisie.

With every turn of the historic road, with every social crisis, we must over and over again ex-



amine the question of the mutual relations of the three classes in modern society: the big bourgeoisie, led by finance capital; the petty bourgeoisie, vacillating between the basic camps; and finally, the proletariat.

The big bourgeoisie, making up a negligible part of the nation, cannot hold power without the support of the petty bourgeoisie of the city and the village, that is, of the remnants of the old, and the masses of the new, middle classes. In the present epoch, this support acquires two basic forms politically antagonistic to each other, but historically supplementary: social democracy and Fascism. In the person of the social democracy, the petty bourgeoisie, which follows finance capital, leads behind it millions of workers.

The *big German bourgeoisie* is vacillating at present; it is split up. Its disagreements are exhausted by the question: Which of the two methods of cure for the social crisis shall be applied at present? The social democratic therapy repels one part of the big bourgeoisie with the indefiniteness of its results, and with the danger of too great levies (taxes, social legislation, wages). The surgical intervention of Fascism seems to the other part to be uncalled for by the situation and too risky. In other words, the finance bourgeoisie as a whole vacillates in the evaluation of the situation, not seeing sufficient basis as yet for the proclamation of an offensive of its own "third period", when the social democracy is unconditionally replaced by Fascism, when, generally speaking, it undergoes a general annihilation for its services rendered. The vacillations of the big bourgeoisie—with a weakening of its basic parties—between the social democracy and Fascism are an extraordinarily clear symptom of a pre-rev-

olutionary situation. With the approach of the real revolutionary situation, these vacillations, it is understood, will come to an end immediately.

#### 4. The Petty Bourgeoisie and Fascism.

In order that the social crisis may bring about the proletarian revolution, it is necessary that, besides other conditions, a decisive shift of the petty bourgeois classes occurs in the direction of the proletariat. This gives the proletariat a chance to put itself at the head of the nation as its leader.

The last election revealed—and this is where its principal symptomatic significance lies—a shift in the opposite direction. Under the blow of the crisis, the petty bourgeoisie swung, not in the direction of the proletarian revolution, but in the direction of the most extreme imperialist reaction, pulling behind it considerable sections of the proletariat.

The gigantic growth of national-socialism is an expression of two factors: a deep social crisis, throwing the petty bourgeois masses off balance, and the lack of a revolutionary Party that would be regarded by the masses of the people as an acknowledged revolutionary leader. If the Communist Party is the *Party of revolutionary hope*, then Fascism, as a mass movement, is the *party of counter-revolutionary despair*. When revolutionary hope embraces the whole proletarian mass, it inevitably pulls behind it on the road of revolution considerable and growing sections of the petty bourgeoisie. Precisely in the sphere, the election revealed the

opposite picture: counter-revolutionary despair embraced the petty bourgeois mass with such a force that it drew behind it many sections of the proletariat.

How is this to be explained? In the past, we have observed (Italy, Germany) a sharp strengthening of Fascism, victorious or at least threatening, as a result of a spent or missed revolutionary situation, at the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis in which the proletarian vanguard revealed its inability to put itself at the head of the nation and change the fate of all its classes, the petty bourgeoisie included. This is precisely what gave Fascism its peculiar strength in Italy. But at present, the problem in Germany does not arise at the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis but only at its approach. From this, the leading Party officials, optimists ex-officio, draw the conclusion that Fascism, having come "too late", is doomed to inevitable and speedy defeat (ROTE FAHNE). These people do not want to learn anything. Fascism comes "too late" in relation to old revolutionary crises. But it appears sufficiently early—at the dawn—in relation to the new revolutionary crisis. The fact that it gained the possibility to take up such a powerful starting position *on the eve* of a revolutionary period and not at its conclusion, is not the weak side of Fascism but the weak side of Communism. The petty bourgeoisie does not wait—as a consequence of new disappointments in the ability of the Party to improve its fate—it bases itself upon the experiences of the past, it remembers the lesson of 1923, the capricious leaps of the ultra-Left course of Maslow-Thälmann, the opportunist impotence of the same Thälmann, the clatter of the "third period", etc. Finally—and this is the most import-

ant—its lack of faith in the proletarian revolution is nourished by the lack of faith in the Communist Party on the part of millions of social democratic workers. The petty bourgeoisie, even when completely thrown off the conservative road by circumstances, can turn to the social revolution only when the sympathies of the majority of the working class are for the social revolution. Precisely this most important condition is still lacking in Germany, and not by accident.

The programmatic declaration of the German Communist Party before the elections was completely and exclusively devoted to Fascism as the main enemy. Nevertheless, Fascism came out the victor, gathering not only millions of semi-proletarian elements, but also many hundreds of thousands of industrial workers. This is an expression of the fact that in spite of the parliamentary victory of the Communist Party, the proletarian revolution as a whole suffered a serious defeat in this election, it is understood, of a preliminary, warning, and not decisive character. It can become decisive and will inevitably become decisive, if the Communist Party is unable to evaluate its partial parliamentary victory in connection with this "preliminary" character of the defeat of the revolution as a whole, and draw from this all the necessary conclusions.

*Fascism in Germany has become a real danger*, as an acute expression of the helpless position of the bourgeois régime, the conservative rôle of the social democracy in this régime, and the accumulated powerlessness of the Communist Party to abolish it. Whoever denies this is either blind or a braggart.

In 1923, Brandler, in spite of all our warnings, monstrously exaggerated the forces of Fascism.

From the wrong evaluation of the relationship of forces grew a hesitating, evasive, defensive, cowardly policy. This destroyed the revolution. Such events do not pass without leaving traces in the consciousness of all the classes of the nation. The overestimation of Fascism by the Communist leadership created one of the conditions for its further strengthening. The contrary mistake, this very underestimation of Fascism by the present leadership of the Communist Party, may lead the revolution to a more severe crash for many years to come.

The danger acquires particular acuteness in connection with the question of the *tempo* of development, which does not depend upon us alone. The malarial character of the political curve revealed by the election speaks for the fact that the tempo of development of the national crisis may turn out to be very speedy. In other words, the course of events in the very near future may resurrect in Germany, on a new historical plane, the old tragic contradiction between the maturity of a revolutionary situation, on the one hand, and the weakness and strategical impotence of the revolutionary Party on the other. This must be said clearly, openly, and above all, in time.

##### 5. The Communist Party and the Working Class.

It would be a monstrous mistake to console oneself with the fact, for instance, that the Bolshevik Party in April 1917, after the arrival of Lenin, when the Party first began to prepare for the seizure of power, had less than 80,000 members and led behind itself, even in Petrograd, not more than

a third of the workers and a far smaller part of the soldiers. The situation in Russia was altogether different. The revolutionary Parties came out of the underground only in March, after an almost three year interruption of even that strangled political life which existed prior to the war. The working class during the war renewed itself approximately forty percent. The overwhelming mass of the proletariat did not know the Bolsheviks, had not even heard of them. The voting for the Mensheviks and S. R.'s in March-June was simply an expression of the first hesitating steps after the awakening. In this voting there was not even a shadow of disappointment with the Bolsheviks or accumulated lack of faith in them, which may result from the mistakes of the Party, checked up by the experience of the masses. On the contrary. Every day of revolutionary experience in 1917 pushed the masses away from the conciliators and to the side of the Bolsheviks. From this followed the stormy, inexorable growth of the ranks of the Party, and particularly of its influence.

The situation in Germany has at its root a different character, in this respect as well as in others. The German Communist Party did not come upon the scene yesterday, nor the day before. In 1923, it had behind it, openly or in a semi-concealed form, the majority of the working class. In 1924, on the ebbing wave, it received 3,600,000 votes, a greater percentage of the working class than at present. This means that those workers who remained with the social democracy, as well as those who voted this time for the National Socialists, did so not out of simple ignorance, not because they awakened only yesterday, not because they have as yet had no chance to know what the Communist Party

is, but because they have *no faith*, on the basis of their own experience in the recent years.

Let us not forget that in February 1928, the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern gave the signal for an intensified, extraordinary, irreconcilable struggle against "social Fascism." The German social democracy was in power almost all this time, revealing to the masses at every step its criminal and shameful rôle. And all this was supplemented by an enormous economic crisis. It would be difficult to invent circumstances more favorable for the weakening of the social democracy. Nevertheless, it retained its basic positions. How is this striking fact to be explained? Only by the fact that the leadership of the Communist Party, by its whole policy, assisted the social democracy supporting it from the Left.

This does not at all mean that by voting for the social democracy, five to six million working men and women expressed their full and unlimited confidence in it. The social democratic workers should not be considered blind. They are not at all so naïve about their own leaders, but they do not see a different way out for themselves in the given situation. Of course, we are not speaking of the labor aristocracy and bureaucracy, but of the rank and file workers. The policy of the Communist Party does not inspire them with confidence, not because the Communist Party is a revolutionary Party but because they do not believe in its ability to gain a revolutionary victory, and do not wish to risk their heads in vain. Voting reluctantly for the social democracy, these workers do not express confidence in it, but for that they express their lack of confidence in the Communist Party. This is where the great difference lies between the pre-

sent position of the German Communists and the position of the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917.

But by this alone, the difficulties are not exhausted: Inside the Communist Party itself, and particularly in the circle of its supporters and the workers voting for it, is a great reserve of vague lack of faith in the leadership of the Party. From this grows what is called the "disparity" between the general influence of the Party and its numerical strength, and particularly with its rôle in the trade unions—in Germany such a disparity undoubtedly exists. The official explanation of the disparity is that the Party has not been able to "strengthen" its influence organizationally. Here the mass is looked upon as purely passive material, which enters or does not enter the Party, depending exclusively upon whether the secretary can grab every worker by the throat. The bureaucrat does not understand that workers have their own mind, their experience, their will, and their active or passive policy toward the Party. The worker votes for the Party—for its banner, for the October revolution, for his own future revolution. But by refusing to join the Communist Party or to follow it in the trade union struggle, he says that he has no faith in its daily policy. The "disparity" is consequently, in the final analysis, an expression of the lack of confidence of the masses in the present leadership of the Communist International. And this lack of confidence, created and strengthened by mistakes, defeats, fictions and direct deception of the masses from 1923 to 1930, is one of the greatest hindrances on the road to the victory of the proletarian revolution.

Without an internal confidence in itself, the Party will not conquer the class. Not to conquer



the proletariat means not to break the petty bourgeois masses away from Fascism. One is inextricably bound up with the other.

## 6. Back to the "Second" Period or Once More Towards the "Third"?

If we were to use the official terminology of Centrism, we would formulate the problem in the following form: The leadership of the Comintern foisted the tactic of the "third period" upon the national sections, that is, the tactic of an immediate revolutionary upsurge at a time (1928) when the features of the "second period" were most clearly visible, that is, the stabilization of the bourgeoisie and the ebb and decline of the revolution. The turn from this, which came in 1930, meant a rejection of the tactic of the "third period" in favor of the tactic of the "second period". In the meantime, this turn made its way through the bureaucratic apparatus at a moment when the most important symptoms began at any rate in Germany, to signalize plainly the real approach of a "third period." Does the need for a new tactical turn flow from all this—in the direction of the recently abandoned tactic of the "third period"?

We use these designations so as to make the posing of this problem more accessible to those circles whose minds are clogged up by the methodology and terminology of the Centrist bureaucracy. But we have no intention whatever to adopt this terminology, which conceals a combination of Stalinist bureaucratism and Bucharinist metaphysics. We reject the apocalyptic presentation of the "third" period as the final one: How many periods

there will be before the victory of the proletariat is a question of the relation of forces and the changes in the situation; all this can be tested only through action. We reject the very essence of this strategic schematicism with its numbered periods; there is no abstract tactic established in advance for the "second" and the "third" periods. It is understood that we cannot achieve victory and the seizure of power without an armed uprising. But how shall we reach this uprising? By what methods? And at what tempo shall we mobilize the masses? This depends not only upon the objective situation in general, but in the first place, upon the state in which the arrival of the social crisis in the country finds the proletariat, upon the relation between the Party and the class, the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie, etc. The state of the proletariat at the threshold of the "third period" depends in its turn upon the tactic the Party applied in the period preceding it.

The normal, natural change of tactics, with the present turn of the situation in Germany, should have been the *acceleration of tempo, the sharpening of slogans and methods of struggle*. This tactical turn would have been normal and natural only if the tempo and slogans of struggle of yesterday had corresponded to the conditions of the preceding period. But this never occurred. The sharp discordance of the ultra-Left policy and the stabilized situation is precisely the reason for the tactical turn. What has resulted is that at the moment when the new turn of the objective situation, along with the unfavorable general regrouping of the political forces, brought Communism a big gain of votes, the Party turns out to be strategically and tactically more disorientated,

entangled, and off the track than ever before.

To make clearer the contradiction fallen into by the German Communist Party, like most of the other sections of the Comintern, only far deeper than the rest of them, let us take the simplest comparison. In order to jump over a barrier, a preliminary running start is necessary. The higher the barrier, the more important it is to start the run on time, not too late and not too early, in order to approach the obstruction with the necessary reserve of strength. Beginning with February 1928, and especially since July 1929, however, the German Communist Party did nothing but take the running start. It is no wonder that the Party began to lose its wind and drag its feet. The Comintern finally gave the command: "Single quick time!" But no sooner had the winded Party started to change to a more normal step, than before it began to appear not an imaginary but an actual barrier, which might require a revolutionary jump.

Will there be enough distance for taking the run? Shall the turn be rejected and changed to a counter-turn? These are the tactical and strategic questions which appear before the German Party in all their acuteness.

In order that the leading cadres of the Party should be able to find a correct reply to these questions they must have the chance to judge the closest section of the road in connection with the strategy of the past years and its consequences, as revealed in this election. If, in opposition to this, the bureaucracy should succeed, by cries of victory, to drown the voice of political self-criticism, this would inevitably lead the proletariat to a catastrophe more terrible than that of 1923.

## 7. The Possible Variations of the Further Development.

A revolutionary situation, confronting the proletariat with the immediate problem of seizing power, is made up of objective and subjective elements, each bound with the other, and to a large extent, conditioning each other. But this mutual dependence is relative. The law of uneven development applies fully also to the factors of a revolutionary situation. An insufficient development of one of them may produce a condition in which the revolutionary situation either does not come to an explosion and spends itself, or coming to an explosion, ends in defeat for the revolutionary working class. What is the situation in Germany in this respect?

1. A deep national crisis (economy, international situation) is unquestionably at hand. There appears to be no way out along the normal road of the bourgeois parliamentary régime.

2. The political crisis of the ruling class and its system of government is absolutely indubitable. This is not a parliamentary crisis, but a crisis of class rule.

3. The revolutionary class, however, is still deeply split by internal contradictions. The strengthening of the revolutionary Party at the expense of the reformists is as yet at its inception, and has been proceeding thus far at a tempo which is far from corresponding with the depth of the crisis.

4. The petty bourgeoisie, at the very beginning of the crisis, has already assumed a position antagonistic to the *present system* of capitalist rule, but at the same time mortally hostile to the

proletarian revolution.

In other words: there are at hand the basic objective conditions for a proletarian revolution; there is one of its political conditions (the state of the ruling class); the other political condition (the state of the proletariat) has first begun to change in the direction of revolution, and because of the heritage of the past, cannot change rapidly; finally, the third political condition (the state of the petty bourgeoisie) is not directed towards the proletarian revolution but towards a bourgeois counter-revolution. The change of this last condition into a favorable one cannot be accomplished without radical changes in the proletariat itself, that is, without the political liquidation of the social democracy.

We have, thus, a deeply contradictory situation. Some of its factors put the proletarian revolution on the order of the day: others, however, exclude the possibility of its victory in the next period, that is, without a previous deep change in the political relation of forces.

Theoretically, several variations of the further development of the present situation in Germany can be considered, depending upon objective factors, the policy of the class enemies included, as well as the conduct of the Communist Party itself. Let us note schematically four possible variations of development.

1. The Communist Party, frightened by its own strategy of the "third period", moves ahead gropingly, with extreme caution, avoiding risky steps, and—without giving battle, misses a revolutionary situation. This would mean a repetition of the policy of Brandler in 1921-1923, only changed in form. Reflecting the pressure of the

social democracy, the Brandlerists and semi-Brandlerists, outside the Party as well as inside of it, will drive in this direction.

2. Under the influence of the election success, the Party, on the contrary, makes a new sharp turn to the Left, in the direction of a direct struggle for power, and being a Party of the active minority, suffers a catastrophic defeat. Driving in this direction are: Fascism; the clamorous, senseless agitation of the apparatus which does not weigh anything, which does not enlighten, but stupefies; the despair and impatience of a part of the working class, particularly the unemployed youth.

3. It is further possible that the leadership, rejecting nothing, will attempt empirically to find a middle course between the dangers of the first two variations, and in this connection, will commit a series of new mistakes and, in general, will so slowly eliminate the lack of confidence of the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses, that by that time the objective conditions will have changed in a direction unfavorable for a revolution, giving way to a new period of stabilization. It is chiefly in this eclectic direction, combining *chvostism* in general with adventurism in particular, that the Moscow Stalinist top is pushing the German Party, fearing to take a clear position and preparing an alibi for itself beforehand, that is, the possibility to throw responsibility over to the "executors"—at the Right or at the Left, depending upon the results. This policy, with which we are familiar enough, sacrifices the international-historical interests of the proletariat to the interests of the "prestige" of the bureaucratic top, Intimations of such a course are already given in PRAVDA of September 16.

4. Finally, the most propitious, or more correctly, the only propitious variation: the German Party, through the efforts of its best and most conscious elements, takes a careful survey of the whole present contradictory situation. By a correct, audacious and flexible policy, the Party, on the basis of the present situation, still succeeds to unite the majority of the proletariat and to secure a change of front of the semi-proletarian and most oppressed petty bourgeois masses. The proletarian vanguard, as the leader of the nation of the toiling and oppressed, comes to victory. To help the Party change its policy towards this course is the task of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Left Opposition).

It would be fruitless to guess which of these variations has more chances to happen in the next period. Such questions are not decided by guesses but by struggle.

One of its necessary elements is an irreconcilable ideological struggle against the Centrist leadership of the Comintern. From Moscow, the signal has already been given for a policy of bureaucratic prestige which covers up the mistakes of yesterday and prepares tomorrow's by the false cries about the new triumph of the line. Monstrously exaggerating the victory of the Party, monstrously underestimating the difficulties, interpreting even the success of Fascism as a positive factor for the proletarian revolution, PRAVDA nevertheless explains briefly: "The successes of the Party should not make us dizzy." The treacherous policy of the Stalinist leadership is true to itself even here. The analysis of the situation is given in the spirit of uncritical ultra-Leftism. In this way the Party is consciously pushed on the road of adventurism.

At the same time, Stalin prepares his alibi in advance with the aid of the ritualistic phrase about "dizziness". It is precisely this policy, short-sighted, unscrupulous, that may ruin the German revolution.

## 8. Where is the Way Out?

We have given above, without any glossing over or embellishment, an analysis of the difficulties and dangers which are related fully to the political and subjective sphere, which grew primarily out of the mistakes and crimes of the epigone leadership, and which now definitely threaten to demolish a new revolutionary situation developing before our very eyes. The officials will either close their eyes to our analysis or else they will replenish their stock of slander. But it is not a matter of hopeless officials; it concerns the fate of the German proletariat. In the Party, as well as in the apparatus, there are not a few people who observe and think, and who will be compelled tomorrow by sharp circumstances to think with doubled intensity. It is to them we direct our analysis and our conclusions.

Every critical situation has great sources of indefiniteness. Moods, views and forces, hostile and friendly, are formed in the very process of the crisis. They cannot be foreseen mathematically. They must be measured in the process of the struggle, through struggle and on the basis of these living measurements, necessary corrections must be made in the policy.

Can the strength of the conservative resistance of the social democratic workers be calculated



beforehand? It cannot. In the light of the events of the past year, this strength seems to be gigantic. But the truth is that what helped most of all to weld together social democracy was the wrong policy of the Communist Party, which found its highest generalization in the absurd theory of social Fascism. To measure the real resistance of the social democratic ranks, a different measuring instrument is required, that is, a correct Communist tactic. With this condition—and it is not a small condition—the degree of internal unity of the social democracy can be revealed in a comparatively brief period.

In a different form, what has been said above also applies to Fascism: It emanated, aside from the other conditions present, in the tremblings of the Zinoviev-Stalin strategy. What is its force for offensive? What is its stability? Has it reached its culminating point, as the optimists ex-officio assure us, or is it only on the first step of the ladder? This cannot be foretold mechanically. It can be determined only through action. Precisely in regard to Fascism, which is a razor in the hands of the class enemy, the wrong policy of the Comintern may produce fatal results in a brief period. On the other hand, a correct policy—not in such a short period, it is true—can undermine the positions of Fascism.

A revolutionary Party, at the time of a crisis in the régime, is much stronger in the extra-parliamentary mass struggles than within the framework of parliamentarism. Again, on only one condition: if it can correctly estimate the situation and connect in practise the living needs of the masses with the task of seizing power. Everything is now reduced to this. It would therefore be the greatest mistake to see in the present situation in

Germany only difficulties and dangers. No. The situation also reveals tremendous possibilities, providing it is clearly and thoroughly understood and correctly utilized.

What is needed for this?

1. A forced turn to the "Right" at a time when the circumstances turn "Leftward", demands a particularly attentive, scrupulous and capable viewing of the further changes of all the factors in the situation.

The abstract contrasting of the methods of the second and third periods must be immediately rejected. The situation must be taken as it is, with all its contradictions and the live dynamics of its development. We must keep vigilantly abreast of the real changes in the situation and influence it in the direction of its real development, and not to fit into the patterns of Molotov and Kuusinen.

To be orientated in the situation—is the most important and most difficult part of the task. By the bureaucratic methods, it cannot be solved at all. Statistics, important though they are by themselves, are insufficient for this purpose. It is necessary to sound the very deepest mass of the proletariat and the toilers in general. Not only must live and attractive slogans be advanced but we must trace the hold they get on the masses. This can be achieved only by an active Party which puts out tens of thousands of feelers everywhere, which gathers their testimony, considers all the questions and actively works out its collective viewpoint.

2. The question of the Party régime is inextricably bound up with this. People appointed by Moscow, independent of the confidence or lack of confidence of the Party, will not be able to

lead the masses in an assault upon capitalist society. The more artificial the present régime, the deeper will be its crisis in the days and hours of decision. Of all the "turns," the most important and urgent one applies to the Party régime. It is a question of life and death.

3. The change in the régime is the precondition for a change in the course, and together with it, its consequences. One is inconceivable without the other. The Party must break away from the atmosphere of deceit, reservations, silence over real calamities, the praising of spurious values—in a word, from the disastrous atmosphere of Stalinism, which is not created by ideological and political influence but by the crude, material dependence of the apparatus and the methods of commanding based upon it. One of the necessary conditions for the liberation of the Party from bureaucratic bondage is a general examination of the "general line" of the German leadership, beginning with 1923, and even with the March days of 1921. The Left Opposition, in a number of documents and theoretical works, has given its evaluation of all the stages of the unfortunate official policy of the Comintern. This criticism must become the property of the Party. To avoid it or to be silent about it will not be possible. The Party will not rise to the height of its great tasks if it does not freely evaluate its present in the light of its past.

If the Communist Party, in spite of the exceptionally favorable circumstances, has proved powerless seriously to shake the structure of the social democracy with the aid of the formula of "social Fascism," then real Fascism now threatens this structure, no longer with wordy formulæ of so-called radicalism, but with the chemical formulæ

of explosives. No matter how true it is that the social democracy by its whole policy prepared the blossoming of Fascism, it is no less true that Fascism comes forward as a deadly threat primarily to that same social democracy all of whose magnificence is inextricably bound with parliamentary-democratic-pacifist forms and methods of government.

There can be no doubt that at the crucial moment, the leaders of the social democracy and a thin layer of labor aristocrats will prefer the triumph of Fascism to the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. It is precisely the approach of such a choice that creates exceptional difficulties for the social democratic leaders among their own workers. The policy of a united front of the workers against Fascism flows from this situation. It opens up tremendous possibilities to the Communist Party. A condition for success, however, is the rejection of the theory and practise of "social Fascism," the harm of which becomes a positive menace under the present circumstances.

The social crisis will inevitably produce deep cleavages within the social democracy. The radicalization of the masses will affect the social democrats. We will inevitably have to make agreements with the various social democratic organizations and factions against Fascism, putting definite conditions to the leaders, in this connection, before the eyes of the masses. Only frightened opportunists, yesterday's allies of Purcell and Cook, of Chiang Kai-Shek and Wang Chin Wei, can bind themselves beforehand by formal obligations against such agreements. We must return from the empty official's phrase about the united front to the policy of the united front as it was formulated by Lenin

and always applied by the Bolsheviks in 1917.

5. The problem of unemployment is one of the most important elements of the political crisis. The struggle against capitalist rationalization and for the seven hour working day remains entirely on the order of the day. But only the slogan of an extensive, planned collaboration with the Soviet Union can raise this struggle to the height of the revolutionary tasks. In the programmatic declaration for the election, the Central Committee of the German Party states that *after achieving power* the Communists will establish economic collaboration with the Soviet Union. There is no doubt of this. But a historical perspective cannot be set up against the political tasks of the day. The workers, and the unemployed in the first place, must be mobilized right now under the slogan of extensive economic collaboration with the Soviet republic. The State Planning Commission of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics should work out a plan of economic collaboration with the participation of the German Communists and trade unionists, which, using the present unemployment as its point of departure, is developed into an all-sided collaboration embracing all the basic branches of economy. The problem does not lie in promising to reconstruct economy after the seizure of power; it lies in seizing power. The problem is not to promise the collaboration of Soviet Germany with the U. S. S. R., but to win the working masses for this collaboration today, connecting it closely with the crisis and unemployment, and developing it further on in a gigantic plan for the socialist reconstruction of both countries.

6. The political crisis in Germany brings into question the Versailles régime in Europe. The

Central Committee of the German Communist Party declares that, having taken power, the German proletariat will liquidate the Versailles documents. Is that all? The abolition of the Versailles Treaty as the highest achievement of the proletarian revolution! What is to be put in its place? There is not a word about this. Such a negative way of putting the question brings the Party close to the National Socialists [Fascists]. The *Soviet United States of Europe*—that is the only correct slogan which points the way out of the dismemberment of Europe, which threatens not only Germany but the whole continent with complete economic and cultural decline.

The slogan of the proletarian unification of Europe is at the same time a very important weapon in the struggle against the abomination of Fascist chauvinism, the baiting of France, and so forth. The most incorrect, the most dangerous policy is that of passive adaptation to the enemy by painting oneself to look like him. The slogans of national madness must be opposed by the slogans of international liberation. For this, the Party must be purged of national socialism, the principal element of which is the theory of socialism in one country.

We have examined the question of the tactical turn in the Communist International exclusively in the light of the German situation because, in the first place, the German crisis now puts the German Communist Party once more in the center of attention of the world proletarian vanguard, and because in the light of this crisis all the problems are brought out in sharpest relief. It would not be difficult, however, to show that what has been said here also holds good, to one degree or another,

for other countries.

In France, all the forms of class struggle after the war bear an immeasurably less sharp and less decisive character than they do in Germany. But the general tendencies of development are the same, not to speak of the direct dependence of the fate of France upon the fate of Germany. At any rate, the turns of the Communist International have a universal character. The French Communist Party, which was declared by Molotov back in 1928 to be the first candidate for power, has conducted an absolutely suicidal policy in the last two years. It especially overlooked the economic crisis. The tactical turn was proclaimed in France at the very moment when the crisis began to take the place of the industrial revival. In this way, the same contradictions, difficulties and tasks about which we speak in reference to Germany, are on the order of the day in France as well.

The turn in the C. I., combined with the turn in the situation, puts new and exceptionally important tasks before the Left Communist Opposition. Its forces are not big. But every current grows together with the growth of its tasks. To understand them clearly is to possess one of the most important guarantees of victory.

*Prinkipo, September 26, 1930.*