

# Lore and the Comintern

By Moissaye J. Olgin

## FIRST ARTICLE.

The Moscow Decision—Accusations Against Comrade Lore—The Serrati Case—Serrati and Paul Levi.

In the theses of the Comintern on the American situation and the tasks of the Communist Party in America, there is contained the following paragraph:

"The Executive Committee of the Communist International calls the attention of the C. E. C. also to the dangerous tendencies signalized by the articles of Comrade Lore and some of his followers who, in their estimation of the problems of the Communist International, in their estimation of the labor government of England and of the events in Germany, are manifesting remnants of views of the Two-and-a-Half International. The C. E. C. must carry on an ideological campaign against such a tendency."

As one of those present at the discussions of the Executive Committee of the C. I. on the American question, the writer deems it his duty to give an account of the circumstances wherein the decision concerning Comrade Lore was adopted and of the meaning of that decision.

At the meetings of the E. C. C. I., where the American problem was discussed, there were three delegates from the U. S. representing three different points of view on the American situation. The members of the Executive Committee also held varying shades of opinion concerning the American party. But while the discussion was extended and very animated, while the clash of tendencies was at times quite sharp, especially among the American delegates, there was unanimity in the attitude towards the tendency which makes itself manifest in the writings of Comrade Lore. After more than three weeks' discussion, the American commission appointed by the Executive Committee of the Communist International adopted as a general basis for its decisions the memorandum on the American situation and the outline of the party's activities in the future, which were presented by Comrade Foster. (There was only one section in Comrade Foster's memorandum with which the commission disagreed).

Paragraph 18 of Comrade Foster's outline read:

"The right wing and opportunist tendencies of the Lore-Volkszeitung group shall be censured and corrected by the Comintern."

One of the other two delegates practically withdrew his own memorandum in favor of Comrade Foster's (with the above exception), and as to the third delegate who was fundamentally opposed to Comrade Foster's memorandum and outline of activities he was pleased by the paragraph which proposed the censuring of Comrade Lore.

After mature deliberation, the American commission framed, and the Executive Committee of the Communist International adopted, a policy and a plan of work for our party. The theses on the American situation were adopted by the Executive Committee unanimously. The censuring of Comrade Lore and the declaration of the necessity to carry on an ideological campaign against the tendency represented by Comrade Lore is, thus, a unanimous decision of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The decision was adopted before the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, but having been present at the sessions of the congress and believing I understood the spirit of the overwhelming majority of the congress delegates, the writer is quite certain that, as far as Comrade Lore is concerned, the congress, the highest governing body of the Communist International, would have fully agreed with the Executive Committee.

What, then, were the points of accusation against Comrade Lore? Let it be understood from the very start that the E. C. C. I. did not under estimate Comrade Lore as a Communist worker, as a man devoted to the class

struggle of the proletariat and as a comrade of long standing in the labor movement. Had the E. C. C. doubted his Communism, he would not have been tolerated in the international. But the Executive Committee said, there is a certain brand of Communism, a certain tendency in the Communist movement which is known as opportunist or centrist, a tendency which, while accepting the program and the tactical line of the Communist International, has not yet relinquished from its mind the image of another organization where discipline is less exacting, the revolutionary lines are less tightly drawn and the fight against the socialist reformers is less severe. This tendency is in a constant covert or overt opposition to the Communist International; it is suspicious of the decisions and policies of the Communist International; it chafes under the rule of international discipline, and it expects evil from what it terms the "lack of responsibility" on the part of "Moscow." To put it in brief: This tendency is against the Bolshevik character of the C. I. Such tendency, the Executive Committee said, is expressed:

- a. In Comrade Lore's support of Serrati against the Comintern;
- b. In Comrade Lore's support of Paul Levi against the Comintern;
- c. In Comrade Lore's siding with what he understood to be the Trotsky policy against the majority of the Russian Communist Party in the discussion of last year;
- d. In Comrade Lore's attitude towards the German revolution in the fall of 1923;
- e. In Comrade Lore's estimation of what the Communist International was and what, in his opinion, it should not have been in the first five years of its existence.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International took the position that if the same general tendency manifests itself in the writings of the same comrade in the course of four or more years under varying circumstances, if the comrade only seems to be waiting for an opportunity to express his opinion in opposition to the stand of the Communist International and if he persists in his opinions, never repudiating what he had erroneously defended before, then this comrade must certainly be termed a centrist. The Executive Committee, further maintains that the writings of a comrade form a good basis for judging his basic position. "Why should we not judge on the basis of articles, quotations and resolutions?"

Comrade Zinoviev said in his concluding speech at the Fifth Congress, "Theses, quotations and articles exist just for the purpose that on their basis—of course, not on this alone—we may judge." As nearly everyone of the comrades in the Executive Committee reads German fluently, it was possible for the Executive Committee to get first-hand information on the nature of Comrade Lore's writings and on the general character of the Volkszeitung, so that the decision cannot be attributed to "lack of information" on the part of Moscow, as is often claimed by C. I. opponents.

In order that those American comrades who do not remember the cases of Serrati, Paul Levi, etc., may clearly understand the Lore issue, it will be well to recall those startling moments in the history of our Communist International.

The keynote to Comrade Lore's attitude was struck as early as September 29, 1920, in a Volkszeitung editorial entitled: "Let us not allow non-essentials to make us forget the basic problem." In this article which is directed against Hillquit, Comrade Lore writes:

"We also think (like Hillquit) that Comrade Zinoviev should here and there be more careful (grossere Diskretion ausuben) especially in his instructions to foreign sister parties. And we also agree with Hillquit that it does not belong to the prime necessities to designate everyone who differs from us in opinions as a traitor."

In these casual remarks is contained the nucleus, or, rather, two nuclei, of what the C. I. considers centrism:

a dissatisfaction with the iron-clad discipline of the C. I., and a lenient attitude towards social-reformists. This nucleus developed into a consistent Volkszeitung policy in relation to Serrati.

Serrati was a leader of the Italian socialist party which had joined the Communist International at its very inception. The Italian socialist party consisted of three wings: (1) the Turati-Modigliani group of a purely social-democratic nature (against "Maximalism," against "destructive policies," for work in parliaments, local communal bodies and economic organization in order to organize socialist society); (2) the Bordiga-Bombacci-Terracini-Graziadei group of Communists who unequivocally accepted the 21 points (i. e. conditions on which a party may join the C. I. as adopted at the Second Congress), who stood for straight revolutionary work, if need be illegally, also among the army and navy, and who demanded a clean split with the Turati-Modigliani mensheviks; (3) the Serrati-Baratono group which, while ostensibly accepting the program of the C. I. and its policies, refused to split with Turati and his followers.

Serrati had been a delegate to the Second Congress of the Communist International and a member of its praesidium. The Second Congress had passed a resolution requesting the Italian socialist party to convene an extraordinary congress to split with the reformists, in order that the Italian party might become a real Communist Party, that is to say, capable of leading the workers in a revolutionary struggle.

Serrati refused to comply with the express wish of the Communist International Congress. Serrati committed a flagrant breach of Communist discipline, the more conspicuous by virtue of the prominent position he occupied in the party as leader and editor of the Avanti.

The international and the Italian situation must be remembered as the background of the Serrati crisis. The world in general was full of explosives. The revolutionary tide was running high all over Europe. The Communist International had just come into existence as a leader of the world revolutionary movement. The Second Congress was practically the first real international congress of Communist Parties. The Second Congress had to draw not only ideological but also organizational lines between Communists and reformists. Only with the adoption of the 21 points could the revolutionary wing of the working class be organized as Communist parties.

The urgent historic necessity of Communist leadership became glaringly evident with the treason of the Italian reformists in the September, 1920, revolutionary movement of the Italian workers. This great movement practically paralyzed the capitalist state. Prime Minister Giolitti afterwards confessed that the country had been at the mercy of the striking working masses who had occupied many hundreds of factories, mines, landed estates. The movement was frustrated and a reign of fascism made possible by the treason of the reformist leaders of the General Confederation of Labor, who did everything in their power to prevent the proletariat from seizing power ("The General Confederation of Labor in which I had full confidence," said later the capitalist premier, "showed that it deserved it.") The masses were betrayed to capitalist hangmen by the reformists of the Turati-Modigliani faction.

Even after this betrayal, Serrati refused to part ways with Turati and his comrades.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International repeatedly urged Serrati to purge the party of reformists. Serrati was adamant. While, he said at the Florence conference of his faction, "we are for the Third International and accept the 21 points of party centralism, we cannot sacrifice party unity," in other words, while nominally accepting the C. I. discipline, he openly broke it in practice.

Things came to a break at the Livorno congress, which opened on Dec. 29, 1920. Two days previous, a letter was sent by the E. C. C. I. to the Italian socialist party. The letter read in part: "Once more we deem it necessary to remind you, dear comrades, that the C. I. will have nothing to do with men belonging to the reformist group. We categorically declare to you that you have to choose between Serrati, D'Aragona and the Third International." At the Livorno congress, Serrati split the Italian socialist party, i. e. he split away from the Communists who were loyal to the C. I.

The Communist International was in an open conflict with Serrati over the elementary problem of Communist discipline. The Communists were agitated the world over. At that time Comrade Lore came out in defense of Serrati against the Communist International. An editorial in the Volkszeitung January 25, 1921, named "After Livorno," quotes the above letter of the Executive Committee, then proceeds:

"In this last letter to the Italian party, the Executive Committee of the Third International demands, as we see, the expulsion also of Serrati who played a leading role at the Second Congress of the Third International. If the Executive Committee was right in declaring that collaboration with members affiliated to the Amsterdam Trades Union International—which resolutely condemned the Bolsheviks at its London congress in September—was impossible; if it was perfectly justified in demanding the expulsion of Turati and D'Aragona, it put itself into the wrong by demanding the expulsion of Serrati. Serrati may be a hot-head and a bonehead, but nobody can dispute the fact that he is an honest revolutionary. Just as little can be disputed that he did enormous things for the labor movement. By throwing Serrati into one heap with Turati and Co. . . . one has injured the revolutionary movement needlessly and, without ground."

Comrade Lore thus declared that the C. I. was wrong, that Serrati was right and that his merits in the revolutionary movement were his justification.

It may not be out of place to recall what Lenin had to say about Serrati. In an article, "False Speeches on Freedom," published in the "Communist International," December, 1920, he wrote: "Serrati, Baratono, Zanaroni, Bacci, Jacomo, have already proven with absolute clearness and beyond any dispute that they are fundamentally wrong, that their political line (refusing to part ways with the reformists. M. J. O.) is basically wrong." "In such circumstances and at such a moment the (Italian) party will become a hundred times stronger, not weaker, if the mensheviks will leave it."

"Such a propaganda as is now being conducted by the Milano edition of the Avanti under Serrati's editorship, does not educate the workers for the revolution, on the contrary, it brings demoralization into their ranks."

"Do not speak of freedom and equality in general, Comrade Nobis (a Swiss left socialist, editor of the Zurich "Volksrecht." M. J. J.) and Comrade Serrati! Speak of freedom not to carry out the decisions of the Comintern concerning the unconditional duty to break with the opportunists and 'centrists' (who do not fail to undermine, do not fail to sabotage the proletarian dictatorship). Speak of equality of opportunists and centrists with Communists. Such freedom and such equality we cannot recognize for the Communist International."

At the Third Congress of the Communist International, in his speech on the Italian problem, July 28, 1921, Lenin was even more outspoken. Turning to Lazzari, Lenin said: "By such speeches as you and Serrati held here, the revolution is not being prepared, it is being disorganized." Later: "Serrati's policy was a misfortune for Italy."

All other leaders of the Comintern condemned the action of Serrati as destructive. The only international (Continued on page 8)

# Lore and the Comintern

---

(Continued from page 6)

ly known Communist who supported Serrati was Paul Levi of shameful memory, the man who later found a resting place in the arms of the German social-democrats. Comrade Lore called Paul Levi to witness the correctness of his (Lore's) attitude towards Serrati. On February 19, 1921, the Volkszeitung reprinted from the "Rote Fahne" an article by Paul Levi, praising the Serrati group beyond words and expressing hope that the Communist International would keep them. A footnote of the editor to the article reads:

"It gives us vivid satisfaction that Comrade Dr. Paul Levi, author of this article, takes a position towards the Italian congress and particularly, towards the Serrati group which is perfectly identical with the position of the Volkszeitung as expressed in our editorial three weeks ago."

Comrade Lore thus links himself with Paul Levi. We shall see that this relationship was destined to become more pronounced later.

(Second article will be published in next issue of this supplement.)