

Lore and the Comintern

By Moissaye J. Olgin

Second Article.

The Levi Case.—"Volkszeitung" in sympathy with Levi.—Comrade Lore and the Russian Discussion.

PAUL LEVI was a leading figure in the United German Communist Party. Paul Levi did not stand the test of Communist discipline. Paul Levi stabbed his party in the back in one of the most crucial moments of its history. And, Paul Levi was persona grata on the pages of the "Volkszeitung" both before and after he committed his act of treason against the German Communist Party. At one time it looked as if Paul Levi was the greatest authority on Communism and Communist tactics for the leading spirits of the "Volkszeitung." When Comrade Lore wished to find corroboration for his opinion on Serrati's refusal to comply with the decisions of the Comintern, he found no better authority than Paul Levi. When the crisis within the German Communist Party broke

while considering. The German Communist Party at that time led an "illegal" existence. Raids and arrests of Communists were rampant all over the country. Thousands of revolutionists were facing court martial. The brochure went to print on April 3, when the fight in many places was still going on. It was sent to print without the knowledge of the central committee of which Levi was a member. And it was published in spite of the fact that the enlarged executive committee had, by a majority of 44 to 5, rejected the resolution embodying the views of Levi's group. The German Communist Party could but expel Levi for such action which was more than a breach of discipline, which brought confusion and created a crisis in the German Communist Party at a most dangerous moment. The central committee excluded him from its own midst and from the party, as was stated in the resolution, for "crass breach of confidence and a grave injury to the party."

The executive committee of the C. I. took up the Levi case at its meet-

is sheer nonsense . . . Levi is putting his criticism in a non-permissible and injurious form. Levi who preaches to others cautious and circumspect strategy throws himself into the fight (against his party) so prematurely, so unpreparedly, in such a nonsensical, wild fashion. . . . Levi acted as an 'intellectual anarchist' instead of acting like an organized member of the proletarian Communist International. Levi broke discipline."

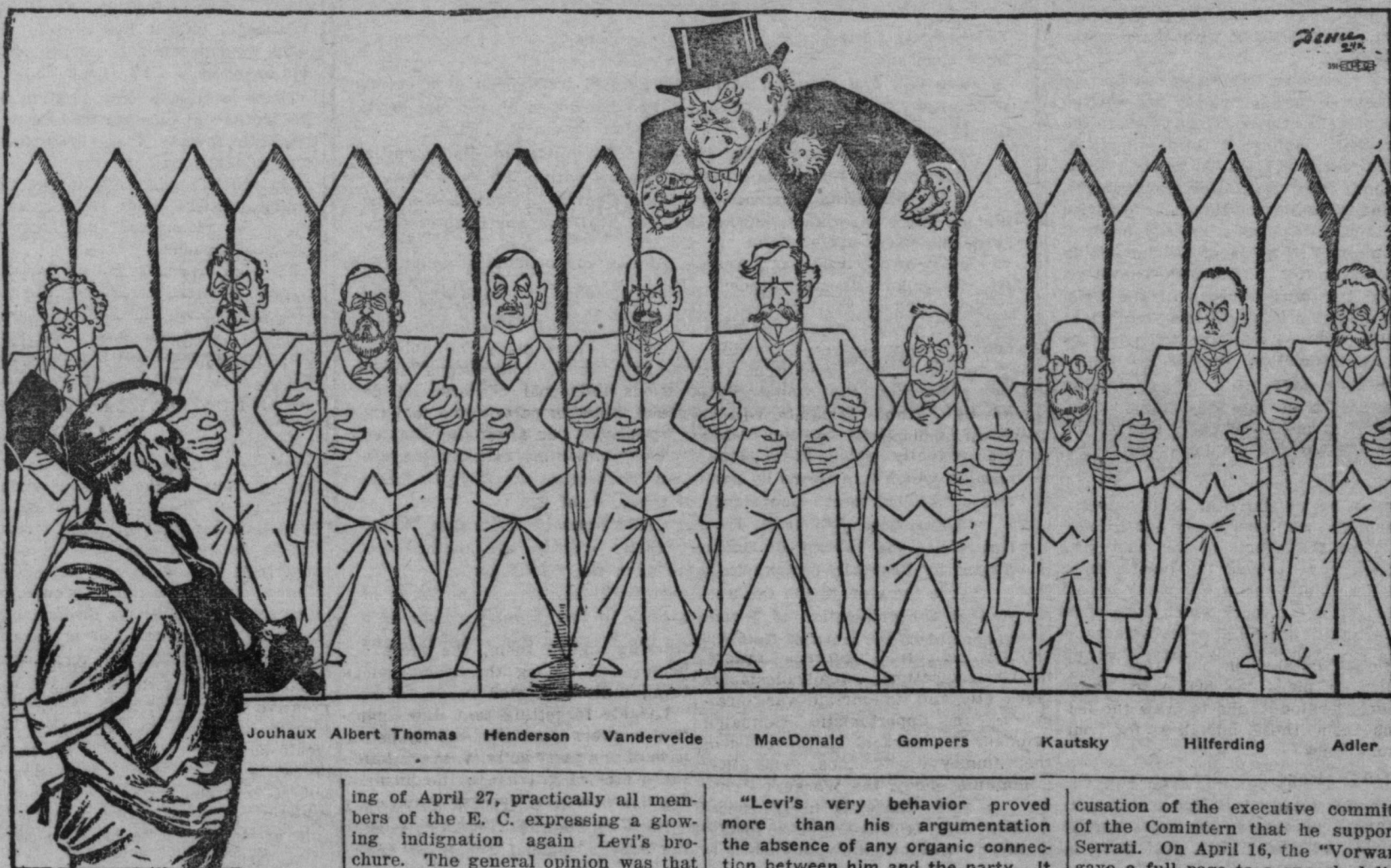
EARLIER still, at the session of the Third Congress of the C. I., July 1, 1924, Lenin, discussing the March action and Levi's attack, said: "It is important to have a critical attitude towards our errors. We have begun with that. If, however, after a fight in which hundreds of thousands participated, one attacks this fight and acts the way Levi acted, he must be excluded. And this we have done."

RADEK who severely criticised the position of the German Communist Party at the Third Congress of the C. I., had to say concerning Levi:

action was insanely begun, no man knew what the fight was for." "This action, this foolhardiness had to be stimulated, had to be enlarged. It was capable of enlargement. To the dead in the Mannfeld region and Hamburg were added the dead in Halle. But they did not bring the necessary 'mood.' After the dead in Halle came the dead in Essen. But the 'mood' did not arrive. After the dead in Essen came the dead in Mannheim. But there was no 'mood' as yet." "We wish our comrades to have no repentance for what they did. We would put only one punishment on them, namely, that they should never appear before the eyes of the German workers."

THIS and other excerpts were freely published in the "Volkszeitung" without a word of unfavorable comment as to the behavior of Paul Levi. On the contrary, the "Volkszeitung" continued to give Paul Levi full publicity as one of its favorites. On April 13, 1921, the "Vorwärts," weekly edition of the "Volkszeitung," reprinted in full Levi's reply to the ac-

THE LAST DEFENSE OF CAPITALISM



Jouhaux Albert Thomas Henderson Vanderveide MacDonald Gompers Kautsky Hilferding Adler

out, the "Volkszeitung" was in open sympathy with Paul Levi against the German Communist Party and against the Communist International.

Important Case For Comintern.

THE Levi case is still very fresh in the memory of all those who participated in the life of the Comintern. In March, 1921, the famous March action of the German proletariat took place. The movement was a failure. Partial insurrections did not lead to a general revolt of the German masses. The white terror set in. The German bourgeoisie, aided by the German social-democrats, filled the jails with Communists. Court martials were meting vengeance on the revolutionary proletariat. At this time Paul Levi, a member of the executive committee of the Communist Party and editor of one of its papers, published a brochure under the name "Our Way—Against Putschism," which in scathing words accused the party and the Communist International of having wantonly provoked the March action without any hope for success and with full knowledge that the action would bring only bloodshed and misery to the German proletariat.

Levi's Treason.

THE circumstances under which this brochure was published are worth-

ing of April 27, practically all members of the E. C. expressing a glowing indignation again Levi's brochure. The general opinion was that Levi became a traitor. In the name of the E. C., Zinoviev branded as an infamous lie the statement of Levi that the March action was initiated by the E. C. of the C. I. The resolution adopted at that session reads in part:

The executive committee of the Communist International, having detailed knowledge of Paul Levi's brochure 'Our Way—Against Putschism,' approves of the action of the United Communist Party of Germany in excluding Paul Levi from the party and thereby from the C. I. Even if nine-tenths of Paul Levi's judgment of the March action were correct, he would have had to be expelled in this case for a monstrous breach of discipline and because Levi's attack in the given situation represents a blow to the party from behind."

AMONG those who signed the resolution was Lenin. In a letter to the German comrades published subsequently in the "Communist International" for December, 1921, but written on August 14, 1921, Lenin, discussing the character of and the lessons to be derived from the March action, says about Levi:

Of course, Paul Levi's assertion that the action was a 'putsch'

"Levi's very behavior proved more than his argumentation the absence of any organic connection between him and the party. It proved that he was capable of throwing a bomb at the party at a moment when it was bleeding to death."

It is evident that whatever the opinion of the C. I. might have been concerning the revolutionary action of March, 1921, in Germany, it was unanimous in considering Paul Levi's stand as non-Communist. Paul Levi's attitude had to be judged by every Communist quite apart from correctness or incorrectness of his view on the March action. Paul Levi's action could not have been tolerated in any revolutionary organization which meant action. Yet the "Volkszeitung" totally ignoring this side of Levi's demonstration and refusing to condemn Levi for his treacherous attack upon his party, gave full prominence to Levi's attacks on the C. P. and the international.

ON May 5, 1921, the "Volkszeitung" reprinted big excerpts from Levi's brochure. These excerpts contained such accusations as this:

"It is a total departure from the past that the Communists should work as somebody's errand boys, that they should provoke massacre of their brothers. The March revolution was 'the greatest Bakuninist putsch of history up to date.' 'The

cusation of the executive committee of the Comintern that he supported Serrati. On April 16, the "Vorwärts" gave a full page to a speech delivered by Paul Levi in the German reichstag. On May 10, the "Volkszeitung" reprinted the protest of several local Communist groups against the central committee of the German Party for temporarily suspending the members of the Levi group from participation in the reichstag faction.

Levi Publicity No Accident.

THE favorable prominence given to Levi was by no means an accident. It was in full harmony with the "Volkszeitung's" view on discipline in the C. I. This view was expressed as early as March, 1921, in an article by a German comrade published in the "Volkszeitung" and expressing the view that, bluntly speaking, "Moscow" should not "dictate" to other Communist Parties the course of their action. The article, giving an account of a difference of opinion between some of the German comrades and the executive committee of the C. I., says in part: "After the Russian C. P., the German C. P. is the strongest and most important in the C. I. It has made proposals as to the organization of relationships between the individual C. P.'s and it was right in doing so. Communication with the E. C. was often deficient, in consequence (Continued on page 7)

LORE AND THE COMINTERN

(Continued from Page 2.)

of which the Russian comrades were often incorrectly informed of the situation in western Europe. Comrade Paul Levi writes about these as follows: "The Russian comrades judge events in a situation which is different from that of the rest of the world. They judge conditions in the position of owners of political power. To change their trend of thought from their situation to ours is difficult, and herein may lie the cause of misunderstandings."

COMRADE LORE thus allowed to spread thru the "Volkszeitung" the idea that the Communist International was a plaything in the hands of the Russian comrades, that the Russian comrades were uninformed as to the situation in Europe, that the mentality of the Russian comrades was entirely different from that of the rest of the world, and that herein lay the reason for discrepancies in the Communist International.

Lore's Peculiar Idea of R. C. P.

SOME time later Comrade Lore proved that he had peculiar notions about the Russian party itself. Not only were the Russian comrades, in his opinion, misdirecting the Com-

munist International, but even in their own party they created intolerable conditions. Comrade Lore expressed this idea in the course of the discussion with the Russian Communist Party a year ago, a discussion connected with the name of Comrade Trotsky.

IT was a severe discussion which shook the Russian Communist Party to its very foundation. It was a broad comprehensive discussion embracing all phases of party life. To use only the captions of Trotsky's book, "The New Course," which was the storm center of all the discussion, would suffice to realize the scope of the discussion. The captions are: 1—"Question of Party Generations," (the Old Guard and the younger Communists; the position of the Old Guard within the party and the state apparatus, etc.). 2—"The Social Composition of the Party" (Number of workers and number of peasants, number of non-workers; role of the students, especially the workingclass students, as a 'barometer' of party life.) 3—"Groupings and Factional Formations" (A hint at the possibility of forming groupings, an assertion that if the party proceeds in its course, groupings would be inevitable.) 4—"Bureaucracy and Revolution." 5—"Tra-

dition and Revolutionary Policy" (Necessity to adapt one's self to ever-changing conditions.) 6—"Lack of Appreciation of the Peasantry." 7—"The Main Problems of the Supply and Land Policy." 8—"Planned Economic Activities." 9—"Red Tape, Military and Other." 10—"Linking Town with Village."

Lore on Discipline.

IN all of these problems the question of discipline pure and simple occupied an almost insignificant place. It may be said that Communist discipline as such, apart from the question of the older vs. the younger generation, did not occupy the minds of the Russian comrades. However, Comrade Lore found the problem of discipline to be the pivotal problem of all the Russian discussion. Commenting on the Russian discussion in the "Volkszeitung" editorial, Jan. 6, 1924, he writes:

"Self-control and discipline will naturally be inevitable in a party which has to carry out such formidable tasks. But a rigid centralization which allows the member no right to raise objections, which makes the member a link in a large chain, moved and operated by invisible hands, such discipline, according to the opinion of Trotsky and many other

influential comrades, may gradually be loosened to be superceded by a sort of democratic centralization. Today Trotsky may still find himself in the minority in the Russian Communist Party, in the end he will prove to be right because it is simply unthinkable that the state of war should be maintained within the organization even under conditions of peace which are now being approached by the Soviet Republic."

THESE remarks proved Comrade Lore to be sharing at least part of the menshevik prejudices concerning the Russian Communist Party. According to Comrade Lore, a Russian Communist was not allowed to raise objections, was only "a link in a chain," i. e., a mute and obedient tool, manipulated by "invisible hands." According to Comrade Lore, the system obtaining within the Russian Communist Party was not democratic centralization. Comrade Lore thus misjudged discipline within one of the national parties as he misjudged discipline within the Communist International. Comrade Lore had a distorted view of the requirements of party discipline, and his distortions were akin to those made by the social-democrats of the Two-and-a-Half International.

(Third Article in Next Supplement.)