

Lore and the Comintern

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Third Article.

Comrade Lore and the October Events in Germany.—Comrade Lore and MacDonald.—Comrade Lore and the Communist International.

As early as May 15, 1921, the "Volkszeitung" expressed its opinion on the advisability of aggressive revolutionary action in times of a receding revolutionary wave in the following form:

"What happened in Italy after Livorno is known to us. The new Communist Party immediately began an aggressive offensive policy . . . and it accomplished by it that the fascist organization, previously insignificant, met the offensive with still sharper attacks and so drove the Communists from an offensive to a defensive position. . . . Not the red, but the white terror now reigns in Italy."

These remarks may serve as a key note to Comrade Lore's attitude towards revolutionary action. Comrade Lore was averse to revolutionary battles of the working class, proceeding from a general assumption that Europe was not ripe for revolution. Comrade Lore considered appeals to revolutionary battles untimely and therefore, disastrous to the working class.

His attitude towards the October events in Germany is a point in case. It is now conceded even by the right wing of the German Communists that the situation in Germany in October, 1923, offered unusual revolutionary possibilities, that the bourgeoisie was in a state of confusion, that its power was weakened, and that the working class was only waiting for leadership to storm the mainstays of capitalism in Germany. It was lack of activity on the part of the central committee of the Communist Party of Germany, and it was an opportunist notion concerning the united front with the Saxony social-democrats in the government of Saxony that turned the October events into a defeat of the working class. This policy of inactivity was subsequently repudiated by the German rank and file Communists who at the Frankfurt convention (March, 1924) elected a left wing central committee, and also by the fifth congress of the Communist International. It is significant, however, that Comrade Lore, without directly communicating with the German Communists, maintained in New York the idea that the Communist Party of Germany should not lead the German workers into decisive battles, should, on the contrary, restrain the workers from spontaneous outbursts and revolts.

In an editorial entitled "Hunger, not Communism," in the "Volkszeitung" of Oct. 25, 1923, he expresses the idea that revolts in Germany are a result of hunger and not of a revolutionary plan conceived by the Communist Party, because, in his opinion, there are no objective possibilities of a revolution in Germany. The revolt in Hamburg, Bremen and other German cities he considered to be hunger riots which should be kept within limits. "The Communist movement works" he writes, "in Germany as elsewhere, for the social revolution. But it does not conduct a policy of adventurism. It chooses the most favorable time for its aim of social overthrow in order to be able to deal capitalist society the decisive blow. This is particularly true about the German Communist Party at present. It is hunger that drives the masses to despair. It is the intolerable misery which drives the masses into the streets, which compels them to plunder shops and warehouses full of foodstuffs and commodities of every kind. And when the natural impulse, the wish to live and not to starve, finally moves them to actions which, while certainly not bringing a liberation from under the capitalist yoke, still bring a momentary relief from the hunger, then it is only a self-understood duty of the Commun-

ists to put themselves in the ranks of the rebels, to aid them with advice and action, and to take the best care that the greatest possible advantage be gained with the least number of sacrifices. . . . The German Communists do not cause hunger revolts but they do not leave the hungry ones who are driven to despair in the hour of their greatest misery. At the same time, however, the Communists do not wish a revolution in Germany—because at present everything speaks against the possibility of a success of a proletarian revolutionary upheaval. They therefore concentrated their struggle against the fascist and monarchists, against the "constitutional" dictatorship and for securing the republic and supporting it thru a workingmen's government in the union and thru workingmen's governments in the individual states The Communist Party of Germany is placed before immensely difficult tasks. It must keep the revolutionary fire alive, it must not, however, allow the flames to shoot too high. It must take account of the despair of the pauperized German working masses, it must, however, only educate for struggle those who are ready for struggle, knowing that the struggle will be fought out only when victory is possible." (Blackface mine.—M. J. O.)

Comrade Lore certainly was not in favor of a revolution in Germany when the time was ripe for such revolution. The fifth congress of the Communist International branded such attitude as opportunism.

Even after the October defeat, when its disastrous consequences were manifest to every observer, Comrade Lore defended the German Communists on the ground that they did not want a revolution. Commenting on the suppression of the German Communist Party, Lore writes in an editorial November 24, 1923:

"Even the German government authorities know that it was the German Communist Party which hitherto held the masses back; that it was the Communists who warned the despairing and pauperized masses against actions of despair, against useless sacrifices. They know that if it were not for the strong Communist movement in Germany, a guerrilla warfare would have long broken out in Germany."

Comrade Lore praises the German Communists for preventing guerrilla warfare against capitalism in Germany. Comrade Lore sees in this a particular merit of the German comrades.

Viewing the revolutionary movement in Germany from such angle, it was natural for Comrade Lore to maintain that the Russian comrades were also against decisive revolutionary action on the part of the German workers in October, 1923. In an editorial entitled "Russia and Germany," published in the "Volkszeitung" Oct. 26, 1923, Comrade Lore writes:

"What those bourgeois and socialist-reformist elements fail to understand, or claim to misunderstand, is that it is the Russian conception that the proletarian revolution in Germany should not be overestimated either from without or by the Communist Party. The proletarian masses must be spiritually prepared for it. They must know their aim before the real struggle begins. They must not again, as was the case in former years, step on the battlefield aimlessly and unequipped."

Comrade Lore attributes to the Russian comrades his own aversion to a decisive revolutionary upheaval. On the other hand, he is most favorably inclined towards the left social-democrats, particularly towards the coalition government in Saxony. Commenting on the declaration in the Saxon parliament by the social-democratic prime minister Zeigner, a very mild and non-revolutionary declaration, Comrade Lore writes in the "Volkszeitung" of Nov. 14, 1923:

"Dr. Zeigner's declaration in the People's Parliament of Saxony which served to introduce the socialist-communist era, deserves a place of honor in the rank of revolutionary mani-

festations."

Comrade Lore seemed to believe in the constructive possibilities of a combined socialist-Communist government. This belief in parliamentary possibilities was even more pronounced in his attitude towards the labor government of Great Britain. Generally speaking, Comrade Lore maintained a benevolent neutrality towards MacDonald, considering his government an "interesting experiment," praising it for what Comrade Lore considered good actions, mildly criticising it for its hesitation, and spreading the illusion that the government of the Second International had a genuine wish to serve the interests of the working class but that it was thwarted by the opposition of the liberals who held the balance of power between the conservatives and laborites. In an editorial of January 24, Comrade Lore writes:

"We do not believe it necessary to emphasize at this point that every labor party and labor paper meets the new British government with great sympathy, even, when, as is the case with Communist parties and papers, they are from the very beginning of the conviction that we have to deal here with nothing but an experiment which in addition is being undertaken with entirely insufficient and unfitted means."

Having thus outlined his attitude of "great sympathy" towards the MacDonald government, Comrade Lore proceeds to find favorable indications in the first steps of the new government. Commenting on the release of Ghandi, who was freed by the new government after signing a declaration of renouncing the struggle, Comrade Lore writes:

"Here also the British prime minister conducts a policy which would like to sneak between two extremes without offending either. In this, however, the prime minister, who surely means well, will not succeed. It is not only a question of freeing a couple of political prisoners or to warn against excesses. The British labor party government will have to decide to declare itself either for or against the British imperialist policy We know very well that the labor party government can not help but follow in the imperialist paths trodden by Lloyd George, Asquith, Baldwin, etc., otherwise the liberals will immediately tighten the noose whose end they hold in their hands. This being the case, the labor party men in the government should at least keep their mouths shut on such questions, as long as they insist on exercising a power which is based on the good or bad will of the capitalist politicians."

This rather pessimistic remark seemed to indicate that Comrade Lore had its doubts as to the possibilities of a radical course of the so-called labor government. However, subsequent articles showed that Comrade Lore was rather inclined to praise the activities of the new government. Commenting on MacDonald's discussion of foreign problems with invited press correspondents, Comrade Lore, in an editorial of Feb. 16, 1924, put what he calls "the open diplomacy" methods of MacDonald on the same level as the methods of the Soviet Republic. The article says in part:

"Soviet Russia had to conquer the confidence of the labor world and thus put the possible capitalist peace breakers in the wrong before the rest of the world. It is therefore that Tchicherin published all notes sent by him to the powers and all diplomatic papers, and it is therefore that it was impossible for the political clowns in high public and state positions to spread suspicion against the foreign policy of the Soviet Republic. Just the same is at present being aspired to by MacDonald. We do not put too great hopes on the success of MacDonald's foreign policy, altho MacDonald does not lack perspective and clarity of aims. He cannot achieve anything complete because the liberals only wait for an occasion to drive into the back of the labor party government the knife they have been holding in readiness for a long while."

Nevertheless, it will be impossible for the British government's policy under this administration to be anything else but the first attempt at reconciliation of the nations, at the greatest possible avoidance of war, at the sharpest fight against national hatreds."

But Comrade Lore saw a bright view not only in the field of the foreign policy. He believed the so-called labor government was opening a new era also in domestic policies. Commenting on the impending strikes in England, Comrade Lore says in an editorial of Feb. 20, 1924:

"Under the 'liberal' coalition of Lloyd George and under the recent conservative government, the strikes of the British workers for the most part ended in bitter defeats. This is easily explained by the fact that the representatives of the interests of large capitalists in the government caused all means at the disposal of the capitalist state without exception to be arrayed against the strikers. . . . This, however, is impossible under a labor government. MacDonald will not and cannot mobilize either the police or the soldiers or even the courts in favor of the employers. Just as little will his departments be able to utilize the unemployment doles as a weapon against the strikers and for the recruiting of scabs. It is therefore that the most favorable opportunity conceivable is now offered to the British workers for the conduct of their struggles against capitalism."

If this is not spreading parliamentary illusions, what is it?

Comrade Lore's conception of the history and the role of the Communist International was most clearly revealed in his article published March 5, on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Communist International. After reviewing the history of the Communist International, Comrade Lore proceeds to say:

"For the first time in the history of the labor movement we see a revolutionary organization at work, an organization knowing only one aim and constantly accentuating this aim before the entire world—the overthrow of the capitalist order of society, the construction of Communist society by means of the proletarian dictatorship; an organization which—and this differentiates it from similar organizations of previous times—uses all means capable of bringing it closer to its aim, not even stopping to ask whether it has not repudiated or even condemned the same means a day before. The Third International changes its tactics, nay, even its methods, every day, and if need be, even oftener. Heedlessly it strides over its own guiding principles, squashes theses accepted yesterday and adapts itself in every country to new situation which may offer itself. The Communist International is, therefore, opportunistic in its methods to the extreme point, but since it keeps in its mind the one and only revolutionary aim, the reformist method works for the revolution and thus loses its opportunistic character."

If this characterization sounds more like a disguised mockery than like an appreciation of the work of the Communist International, the following paragraph is an open condemnation of all past history of the Communist International. The paragraph reads:

"The Third International has in the five years of its existence gone thru many an infantile sickness. It has swung itself up from the strictest rejection of parliamentarism to its utilization—always revealing the impotence of parliamentarism. It repudiated the creation of dual labor unions, altho at the beginning it preached the splitting of labor unions. It freed itself from the utopian conception that a small minority in each country, conscious of its purpose, could 'make' a revolution, and it taught that a majority of the proletariat must at least have a sym-

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thetic understanding of the necessity of the overthrow. It led Communism over the tactic of secret societies of underground conspirators and it proclaimed the right of revolution and revolutionary propaganda."

No enemy could have given the Communist International less credit and could have twisted the history of the Communist International more to the satisfaction of the social-reformers than did Comrade Lore.

Now it is the idea of the Communist International that when a comrade reveals himself consistently in so many cases and in the course of so many years as a supporter of the opportunist tendencies in the Communist International, as an opponent of drastic revolutionary action, as an opponent of Communist discipline, both nationally and internationally, and as inclined to put hopes in the parliamentary action of representatives of the Second International, then he must be named what he actually is—an opportunist and a centrist.