

GERMANY

The Present Situation in the Communist Party of Germany.

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The retreat which the German working class began in October and the difference between the tense expectations and preparations of the Party and the actual course of events has naturally not failed to produce certain reactions in our Party. These reactions found expression in a temporary reduction of activity which found its ideological expression in the cry, „All or nothing“. That is, since the deciding struggle could not be carried out, a strong feeling of hesitation grew up against entering upon the organization of those minor actions which were necessary and possible. This reduced activity became temporarily noticeable in the neglect of the elementary tasks which were laid upon the party by its relegation into illegality and the reprisals of Fascism. Examples of this were the distribution of illegal literature, placards, small posters, the carrying out of illegal propaganda and the other preparations of minor actions. One can say that this condition has been for the most part overcome and that the greater part of the party are taking up the tasks of the present with earnestness and eagerness. Thus for example in Berlin the circulation of illegal literature has been successfully raised from 5,000 to 20,000 copies three times a week within a few weeks. A corresponding increase in the activity of the party is visible in the other districts. In the matter of organisation, the complete illegalising of the party has not caused the difficulties which our opponents expected. Benefitting by the experience of the old guard of Communism in Germany, the Party has been able to adapt itself to this illegal work in a thousand ways. The chief organization work of the party in the present moment is to transfer the focus of the party efforts into the workshops and especially into the party cells there. This work is now being carried out. It is rendered more difficult by the fact that unemployment and short time have affected the members of the party very severely. The employers have made use of the opportunity to „purify“ their works of Communists. However, the party has also found methods of organization to

meet this situation. The numerous arrests of members of the party have left practically no gaps which it was not possible to fill up at once. In this respect the members of the party have shown a wonderful tenacity and self-sacrifice which disperses any doubt as to whether the long period of legal work has caused the party to lose something of its revolutionary character. Naturally shortcomings show themselves everywhere which, however, are unavoidable in a task of such gigantic proportions. Loss of members on a large scale has not taken place. For the present however, the transfer of members from the German Social Democratic Party is a movement of individuals.

In the domestic politics of the party there are at present three chief currents. The party debates centre themselves around two chief questions: 1. The cause of the October defeat; 2. the general prospects of the revolution in Germany. As to the present tasks, a wide-reaching unity exists in the party. These debates have led to the laying down of theses by the various groups which will shortly be made accessible to the members of the party*).

The group that has so far led within the executive held the view that the reasons for the October defeat are to be found first of all in objective circumstances. It sees the chief cause in the hindering power of the Social Democrats and the yellow trade unions which was underestimated by us. The experiences in Saxony, Thuringia, and also in Hamburg show that not only the Left Social Democratic leaders were not prepared to fight for the defence of bourgeois democracy against Fascism, but that the same held good in the case of the majority of the Left Social Democratic workers. As a result of this it was impossible to fight the deciding struggle in October. With a divided front in the forces of labour and an insufficient technical preparation, it would have inevitably led to a shattering defeat of the party. As to the party, it recognises that a number of mistakes and weaknesses were present, both political and structural, in the preparations, which, without exception can be traced back to one fundamental fact; the over-estimating of the speed of the revolution, the over-estimation of our own strength and the underestimation of the strength of the opponent and above all the hindering power of the Social Democrats and the Amsterdam trade unions. At present the chief task is to call a halt to the retreat

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of the workers which is proceeding almost without any effort at resistance, and at every point where the offensive begins, to attempt to build up centres of resistance through the party and to rally the workers around these centres. In the question of the revolutionary prospective, this group is of the opinion that none of the fundamental political or economic questions in Germany can be solved by the Junker-industrial military dictatorship, that the situation still remains objectively revolutionary as it was before, and that the class differences must become intenser. On the other hand this group sees no possibility at present to say at what rate this new sharpening will proceed, and what form it will take in its details. Certainly the party is an essential factor but it is not the only one.

The group which up to the present has been the Left wing of the party considers the real causes of the October defeat and the revolutionary prospect to be quite different. It supports the view that the party should have accepted a decisive battle in October even at the risk of a defeat. In the October retreat it does not see a result of the relative strength, but an essential breaking down of the party and especially of the party staff. As a result, this group demands that the leadership of the party shall be placed in the hands of the Left. That the transition to minor actions has come up against considerable hindrances within the party is to be attributed in a large measure to the effects of this view. In respect to the present task this group lays the chief emphasis upon the propaganda of the final objectives of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Socialism. This tendency within the party is to a certain extent emotionally directed in a large measure by those sections within the working class, the unemployed and short time workers who, as a result of their situation, tend to overlook the objective difficulties of the path of revolution. The revolutionary prospective presented by this group states that within a very short time the situation will once more sharpen into a decisive struggle.

Between these two groups there is a middle group which chiefly criticizes the fact that the October retreat took place without sufficiently making use of the possibilities of minor struggles, and who tend to find the causes of the retreat chiefly in subjective mistakes of the party. It is difficult to give the views of this group clearly, as they are not a unity and it is in the nature of a middle group to unite contradictory elements. Both in the Left and Middle groups there is a disposition, in the same way as after the March Action, to neglect the analysis of the objective situation and the consideration of the role of the party in connection with the strength of the other chief factors. This groups also feels that they can now say with certainty that already in the next few months the basis for extensive mass struggles will be present.

In our opinion the debates which are now taking place within the party are unavoidable and they will prove fruitful for clearing up the methods of the revolutionary struggle in German conditions. The process of the proletarian revolution in Germany is not simply a weak imitation of the Russian revolution, and so we must simply regard it as a sign of health that the party is endeavouring in all earnestness, by its own efforts, to draw lessons for the future from the experiences, that it has, already made. In spite of all the sharpness of the debate it is certain beyond all doubt, that the overwhelming majority of the party will not tolerate any shaking of the unity of the party.