

"Left" Premises — "Right" Conclusions.

The Cardinal Mistake of the Theses of the Centre Majority in the German C. P. and its Tactical Results.

By A. Thalheimer.

In reading through the theses of the present Central majority over the tactics of the October retreat and the next tasks of the Communist Party of Germany, in accordance with a Marxist habit, we sought for an analysis of the objective situation during the October days. To our great astonishment there is not a word on this question in the whole theses. In the introduction it is stated that before and during the October struggle, the objective situation was highly revolutionary. That is all. The October events themselves, that is, the Fascist victory over the November republic and the retreat of the workers before Fascism had, according to the theses, absolutely no objective grounds. They state:

„The retreat of the Party in the October struggles is to be explained not only by organisatory, military or technical defects, nor by the unfavorable general proportion of forces, which was far more unfavorable when the Party adopted its measures for struggle than in the decisive month, but before all by the mistakes in regard to the tactical and strategical attitude of the party in the struggle for winning over the majority of the proletariat, which was the first premise for success. These mistakes were the result of a false valuation of the Party's role in these struggles!“

In this sentence is contained the essence of the tactical conception of these theses. It is true that the tactical and strategical mistakes are regarded before all as being the cause of the retreat, but as there is no mention made of any other factor than the Party in the theses dealing with the October retreat, the causes of the retreat, according to the theses, are to be attributed not only partially, but completely to mistakes of the Party. Here on the one hand an objective revolutionary situation, and there on the other the Communist Party, which as a result of false strategy did not make use of the situation. These are the fundamental contents of the theses so far as they deal with the October retreat. Apart from the objective revolutionary situation of the Communist Party no other factors come into play. The Social Democratic Party and the trade unions led by it do not exist for these theses. The same remark applies to the organisations of the bourgeoisie. To put it quite clearly, the Party betrayed the revolution out of stupidity. („These mistakes were the result of a false conception of the nature of civil war and armed rising, and of a false estimation of the role of the Party in this struggle“). The real Left has at least the courage to say it openly and to draw the logical conclusions therefrom. The semi-Left or, as it calls itself, the centre, differs from the Left before all in that it has not the courage to declare plainly that which follows from its assumptions. If the situation in October was revolutionary and only the mistaken strategy and tactics of the Party made the victory of Fascism possible, then, according to the usual rules of logic, it follows that with correct strategy the Party could have defeated Fascism in October. But what do the theses of the Centre say? They criticise the retreat of the Party both during and after the Conference in Chemnitz, but they should also have declared that the decisive struggle

ought not to have been avoided. They criticize the unresisting retreat, but not the retreat itself. It is true that they see the causes of the retreat not in mistakes which immediately precede October, but which go back much further; but if these mistakes had been avoided, then victory would have been certain. This is the unavoidable conclusion, but it is not given by the Centre. The real Left says that, as the mistakes had already been made (in which both the Left and semi-Left were involved) one should have taken up the decisive struggle even at the risk of a defeat. That is a definite standpoint even, though it be false. The Centre says that one should at least have carried out the retreat with local struggles. That is no standpoint at all.

The question of the decisive struggle was not one that could be chosen like a hot or cold dish. The question was: either we accepted battle and the enemy forced the decision (for the Centre, this enemy has absolutely no existence), when we would have been disastrously defeated (the real Left accepts this as part of the bargain), or we refused battle. Outside of these two possibilities there was no third way. What is the kernel of this idea? It is the old well-known offensive theory that requires only two elements for victory: the revolutionary will of the revolutionary party and sheer bluff. Given the correct strategy and tactics of the civil war and one is victorious, be the objective situation what it may.

Wherein consists the fundamental strategic mistake and the false methods of the civil war? According to the theses it consists in not leading up to the decisive struggle by local struggles. As soon as this correct method is adopted success is certain (assuming that the enemy also desires a decisive struggle at that particular moment, and also that one is already so far advanced with the local struggles and has the majority of the proletariat at one's back for the deciding struggle). For our part we consider this to be pure childishness.

The tactical consequences of such a conception are obvious. They consist in the Party operating without objectively considering the relative strength and the subjective preparedness of the workers. That means either purely revolutionary propaganda, „Putschism“, or shilly shallying between the two.

These are the tactical conclusions which would result from reasoning these theses out to their end. We say *would* result, for as it happens these theses carefully avoid drawing these conclusions for the practical tasks of the Party. Conclusions are only drawn in relation to the revolutionary prospective which means in short „It will break out again tomorrow“.

The so-called analysis which supports the prospective, enumerates, in part correctly and partly incorrectly, a number of revolutionary symptoms in the international situation as well as in the internal situation of Germany. A careful conscientious analysis will only yield one result, and that is, that neither in Germany nor in the international situation does the situation permit any solution except a revolutionary one.

As to the rate of the revolution these symptoms, taken by themselves, say nothing. For this purpose one must examine with the same thoroughness the means which are internationally at the disposal of the counter-revolution. In the whole theses there is not a single word over this question. It is however clear, that the speed of the actual revolutionary and counter-revolutionary development are always only the resultants of two factors, of that which encourages revolution and that which hinders it. The theses, however, state in a cheerful non-chalant manner:

„The rise of the revolutionary wave in Central Europe is therefore immediately imminent.“

And at the end of the so-called prospective:

„For all these reasons a tremendous tension and huge proletarian mass struggles are to be expected in Germany in the next months.“

Such a thing is not out of the question, but it is not proved in the theses, it is simply asserted.

It is no sign of strength, on the contrary, it is a sign of lack of revolutionary self-confidence when one has to conjure up short-termed revolutionary prospectives out of mere nothing in order to be able to work. In a situation where the data renders it impossible to express an opinion over the speed of the next revolutionary developments and where the situation, as it exists at present, forces the workers on to the defensive, — in such a situation, the proper conception demands the proper adaptation of the Party, that is, that it be prepared both

for a speedier as well as a slower development and to attack the problem where it can be attacked, that is to organize the defence of working class and to set the further aims in accordance with the changes in the concrete situation as they occur, both in the objective situation as well as in the subjective factors in the working class. In our opinion, that is the only possible basis alongside of the general revolutionary prospective which will not result in beating the air.

So much for the prospectives. „The next tasks of the Party“, as one would think, should be logically connected and contain conclusions developed from what goes before. But there is no indication of that. It is a collection of isolated demands and tasks without connection or system, which is not surprising in view of the lack of a real analysis of the objective and subjective factors of the struggle. These „next tasks of the Party“ are perfectly on a par with the tactical fundamental conception. For example, propaganda for the dictatorship of the proletariat figures alongside of local struggles as well as a remedial program (socialization) and a demand for the destruction of the Social Democratic Party. All this hangs completely in the air, because the previous paragraph contains not a single word concerning what an enormous role the Social Democrats played in the October retreat (indeed only the mistakes of the German Communist Party were to blame!); nor is there one word said as to the defeat of the November republic and the transition solutions which were to be developed out of bourgeois democracy having no longer any actual basis.

The theses of the Centre are a contradictory compromise between the assumptions of the Left and the conclusions of the Right.

Such a compromise can only increase the existing confusion and make it permanent in the Party. A sure leadership of the party is impossible on this basis. The comrades who have not yet taken up their stand on this ground but are hesitating, will soon be compelled by the actual tasks of the Party to decide whether they wish to retain their Left assumptions or their Right conclusions. Both together — that will not do at all.

So much for the theses as a whole. Much more could be said over details.

RED RELIEF

The Suffering of the Children of the German Barricade Fighters.

By Ehrenfried Wagner.

In the month of November there were in Germany twelve hundred women and two thousand four hundred children of revolutionary fighters to be supported. Of the children, four hundred were from Hamburg alone. That means no light task for the Red Relief. One must not forget that a great famine already prevails in Germany. Thus the children of political prisoners and of fighters slain on the barricades find themselves in particularly bad circumstances.

Of the 2,400 children who are awaiting Red Relief 800 are without shirts and only 350 possess shirts and clothes. Only 10 per cent have decent shoes, all the rest having such dilapidated ones that they cannot go out in wet winter weather. They cannot even go to school and are forced to remain in bed. Only three per cent of the children dwell in warm rooms. Only those children can get food whose mothers are working and thereby receiving half of a tolerable wage. These children constitute a disappearing minority. Those women whose husbands took part in the „disorders“ or „acts of violence“ are thereby placed outside of the laws of the bourgeois Order, and naturally have no claim whatever for support by the State. They are thrown upon their own resources. From whence shall they obtain work when there are already millions of unemployed in Germany? The widow of a Saxon worker, who fell in a street fight, was offered a weekly payment of one gold mark (equal to twenty-five cents) under the condition that she performed six hours work daily. This work, or better call it hard labour, consisted in the cleaning of lavatories and spittoons in school buildings. For her whole week's wages she would have been just able to buy one pound of horse flesh.