

time has come, let them gather and raise up the masses to one grand, collective effort, for their economic demands and for the action on behalf of Russia. It is from that action that unity will spring, it is at that moment that the Third International will in truth become embodied in the working-masses of Western Europe.

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The differences in the Communist Party of Germany.

These differences can partly be traced back to the days of the rise of Communism. The opposition in Germany during the war, against the government and social democracy, had its origin in various centres and in various ways. K. Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg (with Fr. Mehring) maintained an unflinching and inexorable opposition against the war-policy, by means often of illegal writings, and were therefore kept in prison most of the time. The „Spartacus” group which they created constituted the extreme left wing of the „Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei” (the U. S. P. which, under Haase and Kautsky carried on a timid opposition in the spirit of radical socialism) and strove to bring about revolutionary movements. In Bremen and Hamburg the „Internationale” sprang up, (organ „Arbeiterpolitik”, editor: Knieff). The activities of this group tended above all towards an education of the masses on revolutionary lines, so that it waged a fierce contest against the wavering policy of the independents. In Hamburg, Lauffenberg and Wolfheim adopted the attitude of circumspect criticism with regard to the world-problems of imperialism.

After the German revolution, on the first conference in December 1918, these various tendencies united, („Spartacus” had by that time seceded from the „Unabhängigen”) into the „Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands”. Soon after this the workers’ action was violently suppressed by the Noske-troops, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered, the communists persecuted, and the party forcibly reduced to the conducting of a secret, illegal propaganda. Gradually the communist papers were suppressed, only in Bremen the „Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung” (Lauffenberg) managed to maintain itself. The policy propagated by this paper came into conflict with that of the „Zentrale” (the executive of the party), especially with regard to their attitude towards parliament and the unions. At a secret conference in the end of October 1919, the „Zentrale” proposed these which were to define the tactics of Communism; whosoever voted against them was to cease to be a member of the party. The opposition protested, claiming that the conference had been taken unawares by the proposal of these theses, so that the members were not prepared to pronounce on them. The minority of the conference rejected them and were excluded from the party. To this opposition belong the strongest sections: Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen, etc., it comprises about half the number of members of the K. D. P. According to the opposition these dealings of the „Zentrale” were a cunning trick to split up the opposition, which, in the question of parliamentarism constituted the majority of the party, and might have dismissed the „Zentrale”. The „Zentrale” maintains that this cleansing was needed, as the Hamburg and Berlin members had strayed away from communism, and drifted into syndicalism, so that it was necessary to draw a sharp line of demarcation. The opposition does not admit its expulsion, nor has it formed a separate party yet, only a loose link. Many other sections do not consider the decrees of the conference as lawful, and demand a new conference. The „Zentrale” endeavours to separately bring round each of the various parts of the opposition, and so far it seems likely to succeed. Since the raising of the state of siege it has continued the issue of its daily paper „Die Rote Fahne”; it disposes moreover of the funds of the party.

The differences between these two tendencies are in part essential; they are rooted on the one hand in the different origin of the groups from which the party sprang, and on the other

in the question as to the tactics which in the present difficult state of affairs in Germany, (economic ruin, power of the Noske-guards, impotence of the workers) will lead to the revolution.

In the present state of Germany the opposition is against participation in parliamentary action. The „Zentrale” wishes to take part in the next Reichstag-elections. The opposition wags a sharp contest against the independent Social democrats of the U.S.P. The „Zentrale” wishes to join forces with the independents, (whom it considers almost as communists.) after they shall have shelved their conservative leaders. A main factor in the antithesis is the attitude towards the big unions, (the leaders of which, Legien, Schlicke, Bauer, are the most powerful supports of the Ebert-government, and some of them ministers.) The independents wish to dismiss these social-patriotic leaders, and to substitute to them members of their own party. The opposition wishes to smash the bureaucratic organization of the union, and to substitute to it a new form of union on the basis of the industrial union instead of the craft-union. The unions thus formed, however, were a success in few places only, (in the coal-basin of the Ruhr the miners’ union affiliated itself to the feeble syndicalist groups), but for the greater part they remained weak. At first the „Zentrale” likewise recommended withdrawal from the big unions, not individually however, but in groups, and after a previous vigorous opposition only; now it recommends the formation of revolutionary groups of opposition, within the unions. The opposition considers the industrial organizations including all workers, irrespective of party-membership, as the firm basis for the political power of the working class, and as the organs for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The functions of the „Communist Party” will consist in discerning the aims, in directing the masses, and in educating them on class lines but not in governing.

The „Zentrale” criticizes this attitude as implying a belief that by means of a new form of organization it will be possible to avoid a revolution as the forcible means of conquering the power; and furthermore as debasing the „Communist Party” to the level of a harmless educational union.

The „Zentrale” considers it to be the task of the „Communist Party” to call the masses to the battle when the time has come; the dictatorship of the proletariat is embodied in the dictatorship of the „Communist Party”. The opposition condemns this as a policy of artificially organized outbreaks, for it is from the ranks of the masses that action must break out, and it is only then that communism can come forward and take the lead. A revolutionary minority cannot carry through the dictatorship of the proletariat: its victory would mean no more than the dictatorship of a few leaders.

The „Zentrale” says: the opposition is syndicalistic, because it rejects parliamentarism; it considers the „Communist Party” as superfluous, and it substitutes the federalism of industrial organizations for the rigidly centralized revolutionary party. The opposition says: the principle of the conquest of the political power by the proletariat, as well as the recognition of the need for centralization of the proletarian state, divides us from syndicalism whilst our conception of the functions of the industrial organizations exactly coincides with that of the Russian soviet-system.

Some confusion was occasioned in these antitheses, when the Hamburg leaders of the opposition, Lauffenberg and Wolfheim declared, in a manifesto to the German people, that the general misery necessitated a speedy revolution in Germany and that this revolution necessitated the tearing up of the Versailles peace-treaty, which meant the renewal of war by the Entente against Germany; and that on account of this, the Proletariat, whilst establishing a strict class-dictature, should endeavour to conclude a new truce with the bourgeoisie against the Entente. This dangerous tendency towards a „national bolshevism” was soon vigorously opposed by comrades belonging to either wing of the party; the groups constituting the opposition have not adopted the manifesto.

K. H.