

ONE COMMUNIST PARTY. By HERMAN GORTER.

One of the vital changes brought about by the World War, is this: the decisions of each national Communist Party are of almost equal importance to the members of the Communist parties in other countries, as to those of the national party itself.

Before the War, and before the rise of Imperialism in general, the development of the brother Socialist parties was of import and interest. Now that the English Labour Party, the French, German, Austrian, Belgian and other Labour parties have slaughtered over ten million men, and maimed over 20 million, the development of the various parties has become a matter of life and death for the parties of all nations.

It is necessary, moreover, that the proletarians of all countries should form one united front against the Imperialism and Capitalism of all nations, and against the Imperialism of the world. It is highly probable that in the end the fight between Labour and Capital, between Capitalism and Communism, will be an international struggle, wherein the Capital of all, or of many countries, will fight the Communism of all countries.

For these reasons, whenever a foreign Communist can in any way contribute to the fight of the unity of a party, he is not only entitled, but bound to do so.

In England the Communist parties are progressing towards unity. One of the differences of opinion forming an obstacle to this unity is the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. This question is of the greatest moment for the foreign parties; also. The English comrades will therefore allow a foreign Communist to express himself on this point.

In the recent numbers of the *Call* of February 26th and March 4th, a plea is published advocating the policy of staying on in the big British party; and one strong argument is certainly brought forward, that is, the close contact with the masses that would result from it. Nevertheless, the matter should be clearly and sharply put, though all the consequences that would arise from affiliation to the big party should be drawn. This is not done in the *Call* article.

I shall here attempt to give a survey of some strong arguments against it.

The writer of the *Call* article says the Labour Party is different from the Social-Patriotic Party of Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske. The latter was Socialist; the Labour Party is not. To the Party of Scheidemann no Communists could ever adhere; to the Labour Party they can. This course of reasoning, however, is exceedingly weak, for if the Labour Party is not Socialist, it is bourgeois. The Noske Party is not Socialist. When the Communists and Independents still belonged to it, it was in part Socialist; now, since the secession, there is hardly a trace of Socialism left in that Party. In this respect it is absolutely like the Labour Party. The percentage of Socialists is the same for both, one to every 50, 60 or 100.

Then there is another very weak point in the argument of the *Call* article. The great enemy of the German Communists has been not so much the Noske Party as the German Trade Union movement. There was no doubt but that Scheidemann, Ebert and Noske would help the bourgeoisie during the revolution, but the German Workers' Councils that were instituted all over the country would have been able to deal with both Ebert and Scheidemann, and with the bourgeoisie, if the Trade Unions had not interfered. These latter took possession of the Workers' Councils, made an agreement with the employers, and thus broke down the revolution.

The German Trade Unions certainly do not differ in the main from the great mass of the British Labour Party.

Does the writer of the *Call* article deny that in case of an English revolution the English Trade Unions will do as the German Trade Unions have done.

The Labour Party in its great masses may not, or not yet be altogether equivalent to the German Socialist Party (though in so far as it is non-Socialist, the two are alike), it is, however, identical with the German Trade Unions.

It is the Trade Unions which have caused the downfall of the German revolution.

And it is greatly to be feared that the English Trade Unions would do the same for the English revolution.

The question as to whether the English Communists are to be affiliated with the Labour Party hangs indissolubly together with the question as to whether in England the proletarian, the Communist revolution to abolish Capitalism, is impending.

At the present moment the world-revolution depends on three great questions. In the first place:—

Will the Russian Soviet Republic be able to maintain Communism, and to spread it, now that a large part of the Russian population, especially the rich peasants, will want to re-establish Capitalist trade; will the Soviet Republic be able to hold them in check?

Secondly, will the German revolution revive, and win?

Thirdly, will English Capitalism, which has been less severely shaken than that of the continental countries, regain its strength?

It is on these three questions that at this moment the world-revolution depends.

If Communism in Russia continues to exist, and manages to spread, this example, sooner or later to be followed by the entire world. If the German revolution revives and wins, the example will be doubled. Capitalism will be shaken to its foundations everywhere, and Communism all the world over will come quickly. If Capital in England does not manage to regain its strength, and to guarantee its workers their existence, the English revolution will break out.

The comrades in England, as we see from their papers, for one or more of these reasons believe the English proletarian, the Communist revolution, to be impending.

And as the English bourgeoisie is arming itself, the revolution is likely to be of a violent nature.

The affiliation with the Labour Party, therefore, should be considered from this point of view. The Communist revolution is not an election or a strike, where it is possible to co-operate with parties of a different trend. A revolution is a fight where non-Communist parties differ altogether from the Communists in their aim.

Now history teaches us that co-operation and compromise in the Communist revolution, or before that revolution, or for that revolution with other, differing groups, lead to ruin.

We will not deal here with the partaking of Socialists in governments before the War, as in the case of Millerand and Briand in France; it might be averred that at that time the revolution was, as yet, too far off for an analogy to be drawn. We will begin in August, 1914, when the situation in Europe became really revolutionary. The Labour parties at that time worked together with the bourgeoisie. The Communists in those Labour parties could do little or nothing, owing to their being affiliated. Had they formed an absolutely separate party, they might have carried on a stronger action. The affiliation led to

their destruction or powerlessness. Throughout the War the Labour parties in all countries made common cause with the bourgeoisie. Once more such co-operation ruined them, materially, mentally and morally, even those who were Marxists, with few exceptions, failed to escape and were able to accomplish but little.

Then came the Russian revolution. The great mass of the Russian Socialists (the Social revolutionaries), sided with the bourgeoisie. The Mensheviks sided with the Social revolutionaries. As Socialists they perished.

The German revolution followed. The majoritarians compromised with the bourgeois parties. As Socialists they ceased to exist. The Independent Socialists rallied round the Majoritarians. It was the end of them. Haase and Dittmann, together with Scheidemann and Ebert, betrayed the revolution, transferred the power of the Workers' Councils into the hands of the Parliament. The Independent Socialists are traitors to the revolution just as much as Noske. In Hungary, Bela Kun joined forces with the Majoritarians, who implored his aid. Therefore, Communism went to pieces.

In Bavaria the Communists, at the request of Majoritarians and Independents, first refused, then, in the hope of saving the revolution, acted in concert with the latter. They perished miserably.

And, on the other hand, the Russian Bolsheviks have never co-operated with other parties, neither during, nor before the Communist revolution. They never compromised, nor were affiliated. They did not go to others for support, but they put up their programme, and acted and waited till the others (workers and poor peasants) came to them. And the same tactics would, doubtless, have been advocated by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, had they still been alive.

Experience has proved that by compromising, either before or during the proletarian revolution for the abolition of Capitalism, the Communists work their own destruction. By standing alone, they win.

And is it likely that in England this will be different? We cannot believe it.

One argument given by the writer of the *Call* article—the close contact with the masses in the Labour Party, which would result from affiliation—is, no doubt, of great importance; but there are many other ways of keeping in contact; in the Trade Unions themselves, in the Shop Stewards' movement, etc.

In a following article I shall show how the character of the old parties and associations renders it undesirable that the Communists should join with them.

EVEN LENIN HAS FAILED!

George Lansbury, recounting his Russian experiences in Bow Baths, on March 29th, stated that he did not think it worth fighting to get the Soviet system here at present. He was still opposed to violence. He added: "If I had not been I think I should have supported the late War." It seems that even Lenin has failed to make Lansbury realize that there is a fundamental difference between the Workers' Revolution and any Capitalist war.

Lansbury further said that he was against sporadic strikes, but he would support any action the workers might find necessary to secure peace with Soviet Russia. Someone asked for further particulars; the answer was: "Well, you've got to kick the Members of Parliament inside and kick yourselves outside." What does it mean?

TEACHERS UPHOLD SOVIETS.

A meeting, organised by the Workers' League of Public Instruction and Socialist Culture (composed for the most part of teachers), was held on October 6th, 1919, in Petrograd. Zinoviev delivered a speech, in which he drew a parallel between the Russian intellectuals and those in western countries. A unanimous resolution was passed, in which those present affirmed that no Government in the world does as much as the Soviet Government to raise the intellectual level of the people. They further pointed out that the Soviet Government is the only interpreter of the will of the Russian people, and appealed to the intellectuals and workers of the world to secure peace for Russia, whose great wish is to create a new and happy existence for all who have hitherto lived in suffering.