

German Social Democrat Crisis

(Note: The following is the concluding section of the article by Comrade Roy, the previous instalments of which were printed in recent issues of the Daily Worker.—EDITOR.)

By MANABENDRA NATH ROY.

Why were the social democratic leaders opposed to submit the question to referendum? For the same reason of their fear for the sharpening of class struggle into an open revolutionary civil war. To endorse the construction of the battleships violating the expressed will of the masses, to refuse to submit the question to referendum while making a dramatic gesture in opposition to it, to mislead, deceive and betray the masses by all means—all these are in the logic of the policy of coalition.

In the last referendum forced by the Communist Party on the question of the expropriation of the estates of the ex-princes, over fourteen million votes were cast in favor of expropriation. In view of the fact that in the general election over 13 million votes had been cast for the social democratic and Communist candidates, it could be reasonably expected that the referendum on the question of battleships would secure 18 million votes—the required two-thirds of the entire electorate.

This calculation could be made on the certainty that considerable petty bourgeois pacifists would also vote for the referendum. The social democratic leader opposed the referendum as impractical; but they were against it really because of the almost certainty of its success. The casting of the required number of votes against the construction of battleships will again expose the instability of the bourgeois state. In that case, not only the social democratic ministers, but the entire government must resign or the constitution of parliamentary democracy should be scrapped. In either eventuality the political situation would be acute. A new general election under such an atmosphere of class struggle would return more social democratic and Communist candidates, thus rendering the formation of a parliamentary government still more impossible. Bourgeois democracy would stand naked in its real nature—capitalist dictatorship—as in the revolutionary year of 1923.

Fear C. P. More Than Bourgeoisie.

The only thing for the working class to do in that situation would be to pay the bourgeoisie in their own coin—to replace unmasked parliamentary democracy by the dictatorship of the proletariat. If the situation were allowed to develop in such a revolutionary direction, if the sharpening of the class struggle were accelerated by bold tactics, then the Communist Party, as the most active and resolute vanguard of the proletariat, would win the confidence of the masses, and in the decisive moment lead them in the open attack upon the capitalist state, in spite of the social democratic leaders.

To avoid such a development of the situation was the burden of social democratic policy at that juncture. Some of them, in moments of carelessness, indeed, said they were opposed to the construction of battle-

Betray Masses in Cruiser Program, in Ruhr Strikes and With Coalition Cabinet

ships, but they did not want to play into the hands of the Communists. And in order not to play into the hands of the Communists, that is, in order not to act according to the logic of class struggle, they supported every demand of the bourgeoisie.

Reichstag Comedy.

The debate in the Reichstag on the social democratic motion about the prohibition of the construction of battleships, was a comedy. The social democratic party recommended the prohibition of the construction of battleships; but its representatives on the coalition government endorsed the construction! If the social democratic motion were anything but a demagogic trick to deceive the masses, the social democratic ministers should have logically resigned from the government, or been expelled from the party.

Just when the social democratic leaders were staging the parliamentary comedy to whitewash their shameful betrayal of the working class, the advocates of neomilitarism added a touch of piquancy to the situation. The minister of defense, openly supported by Hindenburg, challenged the social democratic motion with an insolent offensive. He threatened to resign, if the money required for the construction of the projected battleships were not sanctioned all at once. On the evening of the debate in the Reichstag, Hindenburg called the social democratic chancellor, Herman Mueller, to inform him that he "would not tolerate the Reichstag to interfere in his first effort to re-build the German navy."

State Above Class.

The Reichstag rejected the social democratic motion; and the social democratic finance minister, Hilferding, readily footed the bills of General Groener. That is how coalition works. The social democratic ministers voted formally for the motion of their party; but remained in the coalition government after the motion was rejected. The country above party—state above class,—this is the essence of the theory and practice of coalition.

Hardly had the social democratic party and its policy of coalition recovered from the shock of the cruiser controversy than they were entangled in a new crisis more deep-seated than the former. The iron and steel magnates of the Ruhr refused to abide by the finding of the social democratic minister of labor regarding wages, and locked out 200,000 workers.

Ruhr Betrayal.

Their action was an open challenge to the authority of the state. The function of the state is to defend the interest of the ruling class. If it attempts to function otherwise, the ruling class would not tolerate its interference. This was made clear by the Ruhr steel barons. It became evident that as members of a coalition government the social democrats could not even defend the most immediate economic interests of the working class. Even that is closely connected with the question of power.

During the cruiser controversy,

the social democratic leaders had asked their followers not to press the demand for the resignation of the social democratic ministers, for by the control of the state apparatus much economic and social gains could be made for the working class. The Ruhr lock-out and its subsequent development proved that as members of a coalition government the social democratic leaders do not acquire the least power to defend or promote the interests of the working class. On the contrary, they act as the administrators of the bourgeois state at the orders of the bourgeoisie, to protect and advance capitalist interests.

Socialists Took Orders.

The lock-out continued for five weeks. The coalition government was in a ridiculous position. For practical purposes, it did not exist. The representatives of the bourgeoisie on the government dictated, and the social democrats acted on their orders. It was not a coalition, but a purely bourgeois government. The bankruptcy of the theory of coalition could no longer be concealed. A government under parliamentary democracy can never be anything but an instrument of capitalist dictation. Representatives of a working class party can enter it only to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and betray the workers.

Finally, the peoples' party, representing the Ruhr magnates, threatened to break up the coalition, unless the social democrats would liquidate the resistance of the workers. The social democrats were in a desperate condition. Not only their policy of coalition, but the very political existence of their party was at stake. The debacle of their theory and practice of coalition would liberate the masses from their influence. The rank and file of the social democratic party would go over to the Communist Party en masse.

Bulwark Against Communism.

To save the coalition government was, therefore, the main concern of the social democratic leaders. When the Ruhr conflict had brought the coalition on the verge of a break-up, Stresemann, speaking in the Reichstag, said that coalition was the bulwark against Communism. In other words, in the period of sharpening class struggle, coalition of the social democrats with the bourgeoisie is a useful weapon against the working class striving towards Socialism. In the critical moment the most authoritative spokesman of the German bourgeoisie reminded the social democratic leaders of this quintessence of their theory of coalition.

Severing Acceptable.

After a conference with the social democratic chancellor, Herman Mueller, the employers declared their readiness to accept the arbitration of the social democratic minister of the interior, Severing. Obviously, they made this declaration upon Severing's having undertaken to arbitrate on their terms. Severing's record in the Ruhr struggle of 1921 is alone sufficient to inspire the confidence of the capitalists.

At that time, Severing, as the Prussian minister of the interior, cooperated with counter-revolutionary militarists in suppressing the workers. He was so ruthless against the workers that the monarchist leader Kapp desired to have him as a member of his counter-revolutionary cabinet.

In the revolutionary year of 1923, Severing also played a role which made him a favorite of the bourgeoisie. When the record of Severing is known, it can be understood how the employers accepted the arbitration of one social democratic

minister after they had initiated the struggle by refusing to abide by the finding of another.

The latest decision of theirs is not a surrender, as the social democratic coalitionists would have the workers believe. On the contrary, it is a complete victory on their part. They have obliged the social democratic ministers to enforce upon the workers their (employers') conditions. It is a public secret now that the general line of Severing arbitration will be the acceptance by the employers of the wage award of the social democratic minister of labor in return for the prolongation of working hours and worsening of labor conditions.

Bourgeoisie Need Coalition Now.

As the coalition is also useful for the bourgeoisie (Communism is no less a menace for them than the social democrats), they do not want to make the position altogether impossible for the social democratic ministers. These must be helped to save their faces before the workers and maintain their influence upon the masses. Otherwise, they would cease to be worthy of being ministers of the capitalist state. The last arrangement is made with this purpose.

But even the members of the social democratic party now see through the game. More than 50 per cent of the locked-out workers are under Communist leadership. It is certain that they would not accept the arbitration of Severing without the greatest possible resistance. Even the social democratic trade unions in the beginning flatly refused to bind themselves beforehand to accept the finding of their leader. Through the machinery of trade union bureaucracy the opposition was formally overcome; but the spirit of the masses is not changed by a resolution of the bureaucracy.

Crisis in Socialist Party.

The crisis in the social democratic party, the difficulty of the task undertaken by the social democratic ministers, are recognized even by the bourgeoisie. Commenting upon the arbitration arrangement, the bourgeois liberal, George Bernhard, writes: "It is not at all easy for Severing to intervene personally in the Ruhr affair. He will lose his popularity among the workers, and perhaps, in consequence of that, have difficulties inside his own party. Nevertheless he has decided to travel the difficult road, for he knows that in the interests of the state it is necessary."

There cannot be any more damaging criticism of the theory and practice of coalition than this complimentary remark of a bourgeois journalist. As a minister of the bourgeois state, the social democrat must act against the interest of the working class. Events of the last few months of coalition government have been slowly but steadily driving this fact home among the masses that still follow the social democratic party. The result is a crisis of social democracy which becomes deeper and sharper every day, by every act of treachery of the leaders.

C. P. Will Lead Final Battles.

The exposure of the real meaning of the policy of coalition will free the masses from the illusion of parliamentary democracy. With this illusion will also go the social democratic cant of gradual and peaceful advance towards Socialism. The correctness of the Marxian theory of state, revolution and dictatorship will be vindicated before the masses, who will then fight the last battles for Socialism under their only leader, the Communist Party.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.—Karl Marx (Communist Manifesto)

promise of a tremendous increase in the fighting strength of the working class. The struggle inside the old unions against the agents of the bosses will continue and sharpen. Our class must not let itself lie helpless in the power of the trade-union bureaucrats and socialist party crooks, agents of capitalism, while the struggle against capitalism becomes sharper. And already it is proven in action that no effective class struggle can be made without building and strengthening the organ of leadership of our class, the Workers (Communist) Party.

Watch Hoover—and prepare to fight!