

T H E   G E R M A N   L E F T  
A N D   T H E   R U S S I A N   O P P O S I T I O N  
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At the Follonica colloquium about Trotsky, Michel Prat, a specialist on Korsch, presented a communication on the "Crisis of the Russian Communist Party and Crisis of the Comintern 1926 - 27) (1) - a choice which is explained by the fact that the colloquium was about Trotsky and not about Korsch. None the less, it was Korschist theses which determined Michel Prat's conclusions, and we wish to discuss them here by pushing the study forward to 1928 (which he did not mention in his title, but with which he dealt in his text and his notes).

Michel Prat starts from a truism, in which he sees "a completely remarkable phenomenon", and which, he declares, has none the less remained almost totally un-noticed in the vast literature devoted to Trotsky... his "complete defeat" in 1927 and his statement that Trotsky carried on his struggle for internationalism within the Russian Communist Party (2). In Michel Prat's conclusion, he goes even further. He declares that Trotsky, like Zinoviev, elaborated a political position based "in the last analysis on the same realistic analysis of the hierarchy which in fact existed between the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern" and that consequently Trotsky was imprisoned "in a logic of activity within the framework of the Russian power monopoly" and, therefore, was led "to neglect the possibilities of an international left opposition"(3).

Of course, such an analysis could doubtless appear over the name of Korsch and could even summarise the criticism by the latter of Trotsky's role within this setting and on this point. However, in return, we may be permitted to say that such an analysis is hastily strung together, without overmuch concern for historical reality and for the real contradictions on the basis of which the policy of the oppositionists had to be elaborated.

Michel Prat's reasoning is, in fact, very simple and breaks down almost into the form of a syllogism. The Left Opposition within the German Communist Party was in 1926 of the order of 30% of its active membership in 1926; in 1929 it was negligible. In the interval, the Russian Opposition had struggled on the basis of the forces which it had in the party on which it depended, and the German Opposition strongly criticised it for having done so; it is, therefore, because the Russian Opposition neglected them that the German Oppositionists were defeated; Q.E.D. But it would be too nice if history and politics were to sketch themselves out so simply and harmoniously, in the form of black and

white propositions, which would allow the school-masters of later decades to distribute good and bad marks.

#### The Left in the K. P. D.

It is true that the "German Left", which corresponded in 1926 - 27 to the Unified Opposition in the Soviet Union had a real existence, unlike the Left Opposition in many other countries. For an opposition in a Communist Party it had a mass character and was solidly implanted in several authentically proletarian sectors, with leaders who had been party cadres in the preceding years. Far from being marginal, it was on the contrary situated at the heart of the most working-class of the Communist Parties in Europe, the nearest to the Bolshevik "model".

But the German Left was not born out of the same division within the German Party as that within the Bolshevik Party from which the Russian Opposition was born. The German Opposition was born out of the problems of the struggle for power in Germany, before the question of "Socialism in a Single Country", let alone "the struggle against Trotskyism" arose in the USSR. The German Left of Ruth Fischer and Maslow, of Werner Scholem and Hugo Urbahns, was neither a marginal gathering of apparatchiks nor a circle of intellectuals like its French counterparts, but the expression of an authentic current in the German working-class, and, more precisely, of that current in post-war Germany which we can call "working-class leftism", provided that we do not ever overlook that in the language of Bolshevism "left-ism" simply means "Left Communism" and is, therefore, a Communist current. This current was born out of the struggle against the Social-Democratic bureaucracy before the war, then out of the anti-militarist, pacifist struggle during the war, and bore the marks of this. It expressed itself in a spectacular way at the birth of the United German Communist Party, which, moreover, it led to ruin in the "Berlin Commune". Then it began to regain ground with the foundation in 1920 of the K.A.P.D., along the line of the Dutch Mannekoek and Gorter and of European Left-ism. It was a re-urrection of this genuine "Left-ism" when in 1921, at the heart of the German party, in its Berlin-Brandenburg district, intellectual and working-class cadres enthusiastically developed the implications for Germany of the well-known "theory of the offensive", born out of Bukharin's theoretical creativity, and unhappily in Germany by Bela Kun - what Lenin called a "belakunery".

The men and women who led this current had nothing to learn about finding their way through the jungle which the International had already become by 1921. Their captains joined the entourage of Zinoviev, whose support could be decisive to them. From their side there was considerable help which they could give to him. From the moment when they formed themselves into a current, they were determined adversaries of Trotsky... and, moreover, of Lenin... whom they believed