
LETTER TO THE AUSTRIAN COMMUNISTS

The Austrian Communist Party has decided to boycott the elections to the bourgeois-democratic parliament. The Second Congress of the Communist International which ended recently recognised as the correct tactics Communist *participation* in elections to and the activities in bourgeois parliaments.

Judging by reports of the Austrian Communist Party's delegates, I have no doubt that it will set a decision by the Communist International above that of one of the parties.⁵⁴ Neither can it be doubted that the Austrian Social-Democrats, those traitors to socialism who have gone over to the bourgeoisie, will gloat over the Communist International decision, which is at variance with the Austrian Communist Party's boycott decision. However, politically-conscious workers will, of course, pay no heed to the malicious glee of people like the Austrian Social-Democrats, those confederates of the Scheidemanns and Noskes, Thomases and Gomperses. The Renners' servility to the bourgeoisie has revealed itself sufficiently, and in all countries the workers' indignation at the heroes of the yellow Second International is ever mounting and spreading.

The Austrian Social-Democrats are behaving in the bourgeois parliament, as in all spheres of their "work", including their own press, in the manner of petty-bourgeois democrats who are capable only of spineless vacillation, while in fact they are totally dependent on the capitalist class. We Communists enter bourgeois parliaments in order to unmask from their rostrums the deception practised by these thoroughly corrupt capitalist institutions, which dupe the workers and all working people.

One of the Austrian Communists' arguments against participation in the bourgeois parliaments deserves somewhat more careful consideration. Here it is:

"Parliament is of importance to Communists only as a platform for agitation. We in Austria have the Council of Workers' Deputies as a platform for agitation. We therefore refuse to take part in elections to the bourgeois parliament. In Germany there is no Council of Workers' Deputies which can be taken in earnest. That is why the German Communists pursue different tactics."

I consider this argument erroneous. As long as we are unable to disband the bourgeois parliament, we must work against it both from without and within. As long as a more or less appreciable number of working people (not only proletarians, but also semi-proletarians and small peasants) still have confidence in the bourgeois-democratic instruments employed by the bourgeoisie for duping the workers, we must expose that deception *from the very platform* which the backward sections of the workers, particularly of the non-proletarian working people, consider most important, and authoritative.

As long as we Communists are unable to take over state power and hold elections, with working people alone voting for *their* Soviets against the bourgeoisie; as long as the bourgeoisie exercise state power and call upon the different classes of the population to take part in the elections, we are in duty bound to take part in the elections with the purpose of conducting agitation among all working people, not only among proletarians. As long as the bourgeois parliament remains a means of duping the workers, and phrases about "democracy" are used to cover up financial swindling and every kind of bribery (the particularly "subtle" brand of bribery the bourgeoisie practises with regard to writers, M.P.s, lawyers, and others is nowhere to be seen on so wide a scale as in the bourgeois parliament), we Communists are in duty bound to be in this very institution (which is supposed to *express the people's will* but actually covers up the *deception of the people by the wealthy*) to untiringly expose this deception, and expose each and every case of the Renners and Co.'s desertion to the capitalists, against the workers. It is in parliament that the relations between bourgeois parties and groups manifest themselves most frequently and reflect the relations between all the classes of bourgeois society. That

is why it is in the bourgeois parliament, from within it, that we Communists must tell the people the *truth* about the relation between classes and parties, and the attitude of the landowners to the farm labourers, of the rich peasants to the poor peasants, of big capital to employees and petty proprietors, etc.

The proletariat *must* know all this, so as to learn to see through all the vile and refined machinations of the capitalists, and to learn to influence the petty-bourgeois masses, the non-proletarian masses of the working people. Without this "schooling" the proletariat cannot cope successfully with the tasks of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, for, even then the bourgeoisie, operating from its new position (that of a deposed class), will carry on, in different forms and in different fields, its policy of duping the peasants, of bribing and intimidating employees, of covering up its self-seeking and unsavoury aspirations with phrases about "democracy".

No, the Austrian Communists will not be frightened by the malicious glee of the Renners and similar lackeys of the bourgeoisie. The Austrian Communists will not be afraid to declare their open and forthright recognition of international proletarian discipline. We are proud that we settle the great problems of the workers' struggle for their emancipation by submitting to the international discipline of the revolutionary proletariat, with due account of the experience of the workers in different countries, reckoning with their knowledge and their will, and thus giving effect in deed (and not in word, as the Renners, Fritz Adlers and Otto Bauers do) to the unity of the workers' class struggle for communism throughout the world.

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August 15, 1920

Published in German
in *Die Rote Fahne* (Vienna)
No. 396, August 31, 1920

Collected Works,
Vol. 31, pp. 267-69

First published in Russian
in 1925 in *Lenin Miscellany IV*