

The General Staff of the World Revolution

A View on the V Congress of the Communist International.

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This is the eleventh day of the Congress. More than half of the work still remains undone. There will come out of the commissions a vast amount of leading principles and practical propositions as to the national and colonial problem, the peasant problem, the trade unions, organization and propaganda. There will, probably, be a number of decisions concerning the inner life of the most important parties of the Comintern.

Still, the heyday of the Congress is over. The debate on the political report of the Executive Committee has been completed. A resolution approving the policy of the Executive Committee has been adopted by the whole Congress against eight dissenting votes. The character of the Congress is now clear. All the rest of its work will only be an amplification of what is contained in this basic resolution.

It would be futile to attempt a survey of ten days' debate in a newspaper correspondence. There has been a wealth of Communist ideas poured forth in sixty-two speeches, some of which, reported stenographically, grew into fair size pamphlets. A brief analysis of this part of the Congress work alone will require a series of careful essays. What can be undertaken here is a few conclusions which force themselves upon every participant as self-evident and beyond dispute. These conclusions become a certainty as discussion develops. They lay, so to speak, on the surface.

1. This is a Congress of parties. There was a time, said Comrade Zinoviev in his report, when we were propaganda associations. We had no consciousness of being so, but we were no parties as yet. We saw a mass of discontent in every country, and we thought that was an organized Communist force. How the situation has changed. The seething of the masses referred to by Comrade Zinoviev, is smaller than it was four and five years ago. The attack of capital is fiercer. The companies work in a less favorable medium. Communists' work requires a solidly built organization, a pliability of tactics along a sharply drawn class line of action illuminated by theoretical groundwork. As one listens here to the reports of the various parties and to the passionate defense or denunciation of one policy or the other, one becomes aware that those are no more "societies for the propaganda of Communism," but political revolutionary parties in action. The main parties of the continent have a firm organization. They have developed a strict discipline. They are deeply rooted in the masses of the proletariat. They are winning over large numbers of workers. Some are mass parties themselves. And they are hooked up with every phase of the political, the economic, the social and the cultural life which has any relation to the interests of the working class or to the future of the social revolution. They are political factors of first importance.

2. This is a Congress of revolutionary parties. Revolution here is no abstraction, no pious desire. Revolution is the daily bread of most delegates here assembled. Europe is being shaken by revolutionary convulsions these last six years, and many parties have actually participated in proletarian upheavals. Here are the Italian Communists who fought bloody battles against their bourgeoisie and against the Fascists. Here are the Bulgarian representatives of a party which as late as September, 1923, conducted a series of armed insurrections. Here are the Poles in whose country there was a workers' revolt on the sixth of November, 1923, in Cracow. Here are the German comrades, steeled in numerous insurrections and bitter against their former right wing leaders who are blamed for not having led the masses into battle to seize power last October. And here are the members of the Russian Communist party which heads the proletarian dictatorship since October, 1917, after a glorious revolution.

No, revolution here is not a theoretical conception formulated on the basis of scientific speculation. Revolution is a fiery reality. It has not yet won a victory in any of the European countries, but it is daily nourished by the decomposition of capitalism, by growing burdens of militarism, by increasing ferocity of despairing bourgeoisie, by deepening misery and starvation of the workers, by the avalanche of an agrarian crisis, by mounting discontent of colonial peoples, by the bankruptcy of social-democratic and trade union bureaucratic leaders who are helping to mend the breaches in the structure of exploitation. The revolution is in the very tissue of European social organization. This is why the Congress talks of revolution as if it were the most commonplace order of business. This is why the delegates talk of preparations for revolutionary fights as if they were members of a military general staff in war time. This is war time in Europe. There may be a lull in military activities, but the war is on. The maneuvering for battle continues.

A detail: some of the parties here



Testing the Dawes Plan.

represented are illegal in their countries. Some delegates have come to Moscow under assumed names and may face grave dangers upon returning. But nobody seems to be upset over such prospects. They are taken for granted. They are a part of revolutionary life. "Illegality" today may turn out dictatorship tomorrow, and prison is an integral element of a Communist career.

3. This is a European Congress. There was a time when an international Communist congress resembled a full sized man surrounded by Lilliputians. The Russian Communist Party loomed up as the one and only great mass party consolidated into fighting battalions. The others were in a process of formation. The center of gravity, therefore, lay in the East of Europe. Russia not only led, Russia dictated. The word of Russia was law. In the present Congress, the leading influences of the Russian Communists remain in full force. The wisdom, insight, experience, knowledge of the best Russian comrades animates the whole International as ever before. The loss of the greatest of all political leaders, Lenin, leaves, of course, a colossal gap; his leadership can be replaced by none; yet, all the other brains of the Russian revolution are at work, and the western Communists look up at them for direction, aid, criticism, approval. Still, the center of gravity is gradually moving westward. The European parties become a factor more

and more decisive, not because the Russian Communist party is diminishing in influence, but because the other parties become more consolidated and gain in experience. The German party is a force at the present congress. Next come the French comrades. Third in importance are Italy and Czecho-Slovakia, the former for the revolutionary possibilities the Italian situation is fraught with, the latter for its solid party of 130,000 in a country whose entire population hardly exceeds thirteen million. Due to the key position of Great Britain among imperialist states, the British Communist party is given much attention. Western communism is a very active force both at the plenary sessions of the congress and in the numerous commissions. Ruth Fisher, the leader of the German Communist party, has been the reporter of the most important congress commission—the commission on the political report of the executive committee. Thalheimer, tho of the minority of the German party, is co-reporter, with Bucharin, on the program question.

4. This is a left congress. We do not mean to say that the fourth world

revolution.

Back of this tendency is an iron-clad conviction that Europe is heading towards a revolution, that capitalism is bankrupt, that the contradictions of capitalism and imperialism cannot be cured within the framework of bourgeois society, that even if there is a temporary halt in the downward trend of the present social and economic order, its final breakdown is unavoidable and approaching with fatal sureness. In such a historic era, every detail of Communist preparations may become of momentous consequences in the near future. Every aberration may prove disastrous.

This conviction, on the other hand, is based on a new powerful factor without which one cannot understand revolutionary Europe of today: the new proletarian generation. In the last six-seven years, millions of young workers have grown into manhood, millions of sturdy modern fighters who have not gone thru the old school of social-democratic adaptations, who have not lost their spirit in the crucible of disappointments following the war and its hideous "peace," who have retained a great source of unexhausted energy and have no patience with the existing order of things. It is the impetus of this young generation, unspoiled, unbiased in favor of compromises with capitalist order, untouched by the poison of bourgeois psychology, which is the driving power back of the new left leaders of European Communist parties. It is they, the millions of post-war proletarians, and not the old, tired, worn-out middle aged workers of the old type, who will be in the first ranks of the revolution.

5. This is a Congress of Bolshevization. The most feverish interest is given to the problems of the United front tactics and the Farmer-Labor government slogan. They are the nerves of the congress, the throbbing heart of all the discussion. They have been thrust upon the Communist parties by the recent developments in bourgeois states and by the practice of revolutionary struggle.

The practice of the German Communist party is of paramount importance. The German leaders of the right wing are branded for having failed to lead the working class into a battle for power last October. The Brandler group is accused of having allowed itself to be caught in the net of bourgeois democratic parliamentarism when the German Communists entered the Saxon government last fall. There are no words hot enough to express the scorn of the German delegates when they speak of the Chemnitz conference at which the right wing leaders failed to issue a call for insurrection. What was the reason for such hesitation, they ask. And their answer is: because the Brandler group believed in organic co-operation with the Social-Democracy on the basis of the constitution; because the right wing Communists were afraid of losing contact with the left wing social-democratic leaders; because they were not free from the inheritance of the past—from parliamentary democratic illusions; because they misunderstood and misinterpreted the tactics of the united front and the slogan of a labor-farmer government which must be a revolutionary tactic and a revolutionary slogan.

Nor is this wrong application of a correct set of principles confined to the German party alone. Over and over again representatives of the various countries appeal to the Congress against opportunist deviations in their respective parties. There is, for instance, the Czecho-slovakian party whose conference adopted a resolution to the effect that the workers' government can be a peaceful transition to the proletarian dictatorship. There is the Swedish Communist party where a portion of the Central Executive Committee was against the centralization of the Communist International and where a noted leader showed strange aberrations in the question of religion. There is a tendency towards peaceful compromises in the Bulgarian Communist party. All such shortcomings are under a

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heavy barrage at the Congress. The Congress by no means repudiates the tactics of the united front, it is only giving it a clearly defined revolutionary contents as a means of winning over the majority of the working class, as an instrument for mobilizing the masses, as a method of class propaganda and as a test for the social-democracy to prove its anti-proletarian and anti-revolutionary nature. There can be a million ways of applying the united front tactics, says the Congress; the practical steps may differ according to the concrete situation in every country. But if we have in mind our task of mobilizing the masses for the conquest of power, if we use every opportunity to strengthen the working class in its class struggle and to straighten its line in the direction of a revolution, then we may not be afraid of any strategical maneuvers including those which demand compromises. Enormous applause followed Zinoviev's quotation from Lenin's article, "On Compromises": "The task of a truly revolutionary party consists not in impossible repudiation of every compromise, but in making all compromises which cannot be avoided while remaining loyal to its principles, to its class, to its revolutionary task, to its cause of preparing for the revolution and of educating the masses of the people for a victorious revolution."

What lent the question of a Labor-Farmer government particular timeliness was not only the Saxon experiment but the present complexion of the most powerful European states. Social-democracy is becoming a leading factor in every country. The British labor government is directed by social-democrats. The French government is practically under the influence of social-democrats. In Belgium, the probability of social-democratic participation in the cabinet is near at hand. In most European countries there is a tendency on the part of the bourgeoisie to share power with the social-democrats. This is meant to save the capitalist order from collapse, but it may tempt some unstable proletarian elements, Communists not excluded, to cherish some

hopes of progress thru peaceful reforms. It puts the question of Communist co-operation with social-democrats on the order of the day. Those who think that a Farmer-Labor government may be a peaceful transition towards complete proletarian dictatorship, will they not advocate our joining a social-democratic government whenever opportunity offers itself, in order that we may reach our goal in this reformist way?

The Congress answered this question with an emphatic No! A Labor-Farmer government is not meant as a form of co-operation with social-democracy within the framework of the bourgeois state. A Labor-Farmer government is meant as a product of revolution, as a revolutionary slogan, as the popular name for the power of the masses, which is to destroy the apparatus of the old democratic state and take its place. A Labor-Farmer government is meant, not as an adaption to bourgeois democracy, but as a call to overthrow the bourgeois institutions, as an organization for such overthrow, in short, to put in Zinoviev's words, as a pseudonym for proletarian dictatorship. The forms, the circumstances, the composition of such a government may vary, but its fundamental principle must remain unaltered: a power to break the bourgeois rule. It may even be a coalition with some social-democratic parties which, under pressure from below, have lost their reformist meakness, but it must be a coalition for the seizure of power, for the realization of proletarian rule.

Thus the Congress, thru numberless clashes, thru feverish wrangles, thru sparkling explosions of oratory, passion, wit, sarcasm, thru a vast exchange of world-wide experience accumulated in actual struggles, proceeds to define a revolutionary, a Bolshevist policy which demands flexibility, alertness, shrewd and careful strategy on the part of a well organized and well-disciplined party, a policy which tho allowing for adaptations, for adequate approach to biased or unconscious masses on the basis of any program that defends their interests and is capable of shaking them from passivity and mobilizing them for revolutionary

struggles, retains in view and moves towards the goal of the proletarian revolution—the seizure of power.

To consolidate every party on this basis and for this kind of work is Bolshevisation. The resolution on the report of the E. C. defines it in the following words: "Making the party leadership, the organizations and the individual members active"; "real revolutionary initiative, energy and striking power, capacity for shrewd manoeuvring, conscious iron discipline of true revolutionary fighting organizations;" "consciousness of the task of the Communist party and of the Communist International as revolutionary leaders must become part of the blood of every individual member, so that out of the consciousness of a Communist fighting community there spring the firm loyalty which will cement the party into a Bolshevist organization and the International into a victorious world party."

6. This is a Congress moving towards a World Communist Party. The Congresses of the Second International were loose gatherings for the expression of opinions binding nobody. The Congress of the Third International is an assemblage of representatives who work out one

line of policy for all parties and whose decisions are obligatory to all parties. This alone is a token of the formation of a Communist world party. There is, however, something more. This move towards one international party did not spring from the heads of theoreticians. It was dictated by the practice of the struggle. It is not at all indifferent to the German party how the French comrades are going to act. Quite the contrary. On the activity of the French party depends much of the success of the German revolutionary movement, and vice versa. To the French Communist party, the strengthening or weakening of the Russian proletarian dictatorship is of paramount importance. To the Russian Communist party, the line pursued by the Polish comrades is a matter of grave concern. And so on, and so forth.

This is why every party is so keenly interested in the affairs of every other party. This is why all problems of all parties become here only the various facets of one great problem. The possibility of such a homogeneous policy for all countries is only an additional proof of the decay of capitalism. Conditions are ripening everywhere. The inheritors are steeling their arms.

SOCIAL-PATRIOTS SWEAR LOYALTY

The imperialist cannons in 1914 shattered nothing more completely than the illusion that the leaders of the French syndicalist and socialist movements were still revolutionists. Note how "Bataille Syndicaliste," Jouhaux and Vaillant swore their devotion to the great militarist ventures.

From "Bataille Syndicaliste," Aug. 4, 1914:

"From the power of the mailed fist, from German militarism, we must save the democratic and revolutionary tradition of France."

Jouhaux at the Grave of Jaures:

"And now, from this burial, we are entering into the war, and I am going too."

Edward Vaillant:

"Let us swear that we will do our duty for the Fatherland, for the Republic, for the Revolution."