

# Leading the World Revolution

By Alexander Bittelman

**T**HIS should be understood literally. The Communist International is actually leading the revolutionary struggles of the working class in every corner of the world. It is leading these struggles much more truly and effectively than any general staff has ever led an army on the field of battle.

A child of our time, the Communist International is fast becoming its master. Because of all the human forces that are operating within the frame-work of present-day society, none is more creative, none more consciously purposeful, none more truly international in every one of its deeds, none more alive and determined than is the party of International Communism.

And in this lies the secret of its power. It never loses sight of its objective. It never permits extraneous considerations to dim or blur the glowing image of the central aim of the proletarian struggle for power. Through the maze, temptations, and complexities of the everyday struggle the Communist International steadily and persistently pushes ahead and ever forward to the final realization of the dream of the ages—the society of Communist Brotherhood.

## Think of the 21 Points.

What comes to our mind most vividly just now is the period of the so-called 21 points. Ridiculed, maligned, resisted and fought against by the adherents of the Second International in company with the straggling army of the Second-and-a-half, these 21 points stand out as an eternal monument to the far-sightedness and determination of the founders of the International Communist party.

Where would we have been by this day, if not for the 21 points of admission which served as an iron brace of union for the young family of Communists and at the same time as an impregnable fortress of defense against the penetrating influences of social-patriotisms, half-and-half socialism and communism, milk and water revolutionism, etc., etc.

It seems at times as if ages had passed since that period when the conditions of admission were the burning issue in the life of the Communist International. And yet it is only four years since the Second Congress of the Comintern, held in July-August, 1920, has laid down these conditions, thereby insuring the young Communist movement against all possible dangers of being swamped by opportunism and centrism.

## An International Party.

Now it is a party. One international party of Communism with disciplined sections in every corner of the world. In this party of the proletarian revolution, the decisions of the world congress are law, to be taken as such by every section of the Communist International that is affected by the decision and immediately put into life.

And the Executive Committee of the Communist International is a real executive organ. Between world congresses, and enlarged sessions of its own body, this Executive Committee has unlimited authority and power over the policies and actions of each affiliated organization. In communist ranks, there is no questioning its sphere of competency or the extent of its directing power. Its word is law, to be taken as given, and carried out with the maximum of efficiency.

Does it strike you, then, as an army of blind soldiers, kept in subjection by some supernatural terrible power? If it does, then you have got something to learn yet about the true nature of the Communist International. In fact, nothing is farther from this organization, nothing more foreign to the spirit of its life than blind unquestioning obedience.

Just take a glance, when opportunity permits, at even an ordinary branch meeting of the Party. Or—at a meeting of a City Central Committee, local conference, etc. Or—follow carefully the communist press, particularly the letters to the editor and the discussion sections. Do this, reflect a little over what you have seen and heard, and then tell us whether you know of any other organization that is seething with as intensive an inner life, with as high a degree of self-criticism, intelligent creation and independence of mind of its membership as the Communist party.

Blind obedience?! Tell it to the rank and file of the Communist International and watch what will happen. Resentment? No! Such emotions they reserve for more useful occupations. Besides, the charge of blind obedience directed against a Communist is so incongruous, so totally incompatible with the spirit of the organization that it cannot be taken seriously. It simply cannot cause any hot feelings. A shrug of the shoulder and a good-humored smile would be the most probable reaction.

The force that keeps together the army of international communism is loyalty to an ideal, devotion to a principle, belief in the competency and ability of its leadership, and, finally, the ever-present readiness to forego and sacrifice in order to enhance the day of victory.

## The Fifth Congress.

The highest governing body of the Communist International is its World Congress. It is held annually in Lenin-grad, or Moscow, or both. Moscow is the seat of the Executive Committee, and will continue most probably in that capacity until a successful revolution by the European workers will make it possible for the Comintern to move farther west. We have no doubt that upon the success of such a revolution, every European capital will vie for the honor of being the seat of the Communist International.

For the present, Moscow is the place. It was the good (and deserved) fortune of the workers of Moscow to greet again the leaders of the Communist International on the occasion of its Fifth Congress, which came into session in that city on the 15th of June, 1924.

This congress was unique in the sense that it was the first one to be held without Lenin. He was not there to enlighten, to inspire, and to instruct. And it is altogether futile to try to minimize the loss or to build up one sort of an illusion or another which should apparently serve as a compensation.

He was not there. But there is still in the Communist International the living memory of him, of his teachings, his methods and his general way of leadership. There is a whole group of communist leaders who have known Lenin's personal influence and direction. These men and women have



1918 — 1924.

A Cartoon from "Pravda." The documents accumulated on the Bayonet of the Red Soldier are marked "Recognitions."

grown to revolutionary maturity and have become leading veterans in the Communist movement under the personal guidance of Lenin.

These men and women have now a serious service to perform. They have got to transmit their intimate knowledge of Lenin's ways of revolutionary leadership to the entire Communist International. They have got to make the experiences of Lenin himself, and their own derived from association with him, the property of every living communist.

It was, therefore, perfectly appropriate, and in answer to the real need of the hour, to place at the top of the agenda of the Fifth Congress the question: **Lenin and the Communist International.**

"Leninism" they call it, and it's a good name, Max Eastman to the contrary notwithstanding. It is true, as Eastman remarks (*Liberator*, June, 1924) that Lenin's judgments "were characterized primarily by their mobility and reference to a changing state of facts." But it is not true that because of the above there can be no such thing as "Leninism."

In Lenin's judgment there was **method**. In his way of handling revolutionary problems there was a **certain ap-**

**proach**. And it is this that they call "Leninism" and which we all must know, understand, and master.

#### What Are We About?

The usual way of getting down to business at a communist congress and particularly at an International Congress, is by first propounding the question: What Are We About? What is the precise or approximate location on the map of the world revolution that we find ourselves fixed to at this particular moment?

And, by the way, this, too, is a characteristic trait of a revolutionary mind which never loses sight of its final objective. It always asks the question: How much have we moved ahead? How far have we yet to go to reach our final destination?

The formal way this "locating business" is done at the world congress is by discussing a proposition on the agenda (usually the first or second point), which reads something like this: "The World Situation and Our Immediate Task," or "The Outlook of the World Revolution."

And this locating business came before the Fifth Congress through two points on the agenda. Point 2 provides for a report by Comrade E. Varga, on "The World Economic Situation." Then point 3 begins with a report by Comrade G. Zinoviev on "The Activity and Tactics of the Communist International." In this way—the old, tested out Marxian way—the Congress first got a picture of the present-day economics of the world. It ascertained the basic factors and their inter-relations as they exist and operate at this moment. And then it proceeded to politics. With the help of Comrade Zinoviev's report, the congress weighs and measures the comparative strength in the class-struggle of the various classes and social groups, the policies and strategy of the enemy, and on the basis of such an analysis, decisions are formed as to where we are at and what should be our next step.

#### Our Next Step.

This is a composite problem. It includes questions of strategy and tactics for the whole International and specific problems of application of these general policies to the particular conditions of each individual country.

Also separate **phases** of the general strategy as, for instance, the National problem, Colonial problems, Trade Union Tactics, problems of organization, etc., etc.

With the Communist International it is always this way: First, the final aim and then the next step to it.

The First Congress (March, 1919) proclaimed the formation of the Communist International, formulated the principle of the proletarian dictatorship, and laid down as the next step: War against the Second International and the formation of Communist parties in every country in the world.

The Second Congress, July-August, 1920, adopted the now famous 21 points, formulated the precise role of a Communist party in the proletarian revolution, passed a number of decisions on the attitude of Communists toward parliamentary action on Trade Union Tactics and laid down as the next step: Intensive preparations for the seizure of power.

The Third Congress, (July, 1921) found the world situation somewhat changed. The capitalist class all over the world was on the offensive while the working class, due to the betrayal of the social-patriots and trade union reactionaries was retreating and demoralized. The tempo of revolu-

tionary development had slackened. There was the actual danger in a number of countries, of the Communist parties getting too far ahead of and becoming isolated from the masses.

Analyzing the then prevailing situation, the Third Congress defined the next step: To the Masses! Participate and lead the everyday struggle of the workers. Penetrate with a revolutionary ideology their mass organizations. Transform the Communist parties into mass parties.

Between the Third and the Fourth Congress, i. e., between December, 1921, and March, 1922, the Executive Committee of the Communist International and also the Enlarged Session had formulated the tactics of the United Front. This tactic was a more concrete expression of the general policy, "To The Masses," laid down at the Third Congress.

The Fourth Congress (November-December, 1922) registered a revival in the spirit of the working class who had then begun taking the offensive in a number of countries, and decided to continue the United Front policy as the best means of developing mass Communist parties.

The Fifth Congress, opened in Moscow, on the 15th of June, 1924, found the revolutionary situation considerably improved. The rate of development is picking up again and so is the fighting spirit of the working class. The next step is: More organization and more aggressiveness.

#### One Program.

The outcome of this Congress will show one program for the whole International with special additions for the individual national sections. The work of preparing such a program had begun prior to the Fourth Congress. It was the universal opinion that the time has already arrived for the Communist International which has become in fact, as well as in name one International party, to have one program. A special Program Commission, headed by Comrade Bucharin, had been charged by the Fourth Congress with the duty of preparing such a program in co-operation with similar commissions that were to be established by each national section.

With the amount of preparatory work done in the last eighteen months, the Fifth Congress had little difficulty in finally disposing of the matter by giving the Communist International one program for one party.

#### A Few Special Problems.

As was the case with previous congresses, so the Fifth Congress, too, had to deal with specific problems involving particularly certain individual sections of the Communist International. This time there were Russia, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, England, the United States, and Japan.

Russia claimed the attention of the International, first, because it is the home of the first successful proletarian revolution, and second, because of the recent controversy in its Communist party, which, by the way, has already been settled by the Russian Party Congress.

Germany is the country next in importance to Russia. Events in Germany are moving fast now-a-days, and German Communists are confronted with highly complicated problems.

Not so very long ago the German party was shaken by a serious internal struggle over questions of policy that arose out of the political crisis following the breakdown of "the passive resistance situation" in the Ruhr and the offensive of the German monarchists. This internal struggle has been practically settled by the last German Party Congress.

However, the issues that have been raised are of such importance to the future of the world revolution that the Fifth Congress carefully examined the situation and delivered its opinion on the future tactics and strategy of the German Communist party.

Italy—because of the Fascisti-regime, Bulgaria—because of the serious mistakes committed by its Communist party during the overthrow of the late peasant government, England—because of the new problems before the British Communists arising out of the "Labor regime," the United States—because of the advice asked by the American party on the policies to be pursued in the present complicated political situation, and Japan—because of the unique nature of the struggle of its working masses which must carry on a two-fold struggle against the existing regime of the feudal monarchy and against the bourgeoisie which is rising to power—all these countries present to their Communist parties problems of great complexity which only the expert advice and instruction of the Communist International can assist in solving correctly.

The congress is over; another milestone has been passed on the road to final victory. The revolutionary movement in Europe, America, Asia, Africa, and India has received a fresh impetus and a new inspiration to move onward, to struggle and to conquer.

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