

The Foundation of the Youth International

By JULIUS ALPARI.

It has been repeatedly said that the birth of the Youth International in the year 1907 did not take place under the zodiac of reformism which at that time impregnated the II. International. It began its existence as a revolutionary organization out of which of necessity the Communist Youth International had to develop. This is perfectly correct. The manner of its origin as shown by the protocol of the inaugural conference is full proof of this. Karl Liebknecht was the central figure at the organizational conference. It is no mere chance that the other speakers on the chief point on the agenda: Comrade H. Roland Holst and the writer of this article, should have logically preceded from the Zimmerwald Conference to the Communist International.

Comparatively speaking, Socialist Youth organizations developed late. To recognize their importance, to unite them, to give them a revolutionary programme of action, for that it was necessary to begin a new period in the history of revolutionary development; the Russian revolution in the year 1905. Also up to that time we fought against the reformists who romanced about a peaceful growth into "the state of the future". We had, however, no correct idea of what a real revolutionary struggle meant. The Russian Revolution of 1905 taught us to recognize the general strike and the armed rising as the most important means of struggle in the proletarian revolution. Those among us who were seriously engaged with the question of the conquest of political power suddenly began to see daylight. The "magic method" had been discovered. Instead of waiting or avoiding the struggle in the hope that through "the revolutionizing of the leaders" victory would be ours, we were faced by mass actions and especially the winning over of the youth. This was to be brought about not by pacifist slogans based on non-Marxist so-called idealist conceptions, but by the economic struggle for the improvement of the position of the

youth, by Marxist educational work and by the conscious struggle against militarism.

Liebknecht Pioneers.

Already in the year 1904 at the Bremen Party Conference of the German Social Democrats, i. e. before the Russian Revolution, Karl Liebknecht had drawn attention to the absolute necessity of the struggle against militarism. This marked the starting point of his activity on these lines. From the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, he devoted especial interest to the proletarian youth. Youth organizations became his speciality. He was in closest contact with the North-German proletarian youth organizations which were founded in 1904-05, he took part in the foundation of the League of Young German Workers in September 1906 in Mannheim. On this occasion Liebknecht raised the point of convening an international youth centre which was entrusted with the preparation of the international conference. In the spring of 1907, he published his book on "Militarism and Anti-Militarism" in which as a real revolutionary Social Democrat he starts from the dogma: the question of Social Democracy is a military question. In this book we find the first estimation of the international youth movement. At the foundation Conference of the Youth International Liebknecht was the central figure.

His speech on anti-militarism lasted four hours. It had to be divided into two sections. The protocol which is still available is not a stenographic report, but is a compilation based on journalistic notes. It contains only a skeleton of Liebknecht's speech, and even as such is incomplete. The conference was a closed one. The authorities were not present. The report which was intended for the public had to be compiled in a careful manner, for already the first indictment of Liebknecht for high treason had begun. He spoke in great detail about the Russian experiences and their application to conditions in our country which is not mentioned in the report. Today it is absolutely impossible to remem-

ber all the details of his speech. A notable expression which has not been reported I still recall. When Liebknecht finished his dissertation on our Russian comrades the conference applauded vociferously and he exclaimed: I am very proud that I have so many Russian friends!

For Struggle First.

Comrade Roland Holst, who at that time was very prominent as leader of the general strike in Central Europe (her book on the general strike was published in 1904), in her speech on the question of proletarian education presented the most advanced point of view which we had heard at that time. The conference almost unanimously agreed with her theses. The Swiss delegate, a free-thinking young teacher, demanded that the natural creation history and the struggle with religion should be given first place in the educational programme. The writer of this article protested on this issue. The protocol reports that "Comrade Alpári opposed him pointing out that the basis of socialist education must be social science." But I also opposed Comrade Roland Holst on one point. She maintained that the first task of independent youth organizations ought to be the spread of knowledge. I said struggle must take the first place. According to the protocol I am reported to have said: "Before we proceed with the realization of the educational programme, there must exist a minimum of free time and of protection of young workers against exploitation. The premise for everything else is the struggle of the working youth for the improvement of their economic position."

The report on the economic struggle of the youth was to have been presented by Robert Danneberg from Vienna. A few weeks before the conference he notified his inability to attend, and the international centre, on the suggestion of Liebknecht, asked me to deal with this resolution. I agreed on the condition that I should be permitted to protest against the reformist conception of Danneberg.

(To Be Continued).

KARL LIEBKNECHT AND ROSE LUXEMBURG



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(In the previous installment Comrade Alpuri tells of his offer to present to the Youth Conference the report on the economic question if he were allowed to attack the reformist conceptions of Danneberg.)

It was not difficult to convince Liebknecht on this point. But I had also to win over de Man, the secretary of the international centre. When I had succeeded in this I was able to set about the work, and discussed my report repeatedly with Liebknecht. He agreed that in the first instance we should concentrate on the youth in large-scale industry. The demands of my resolution met with approval. As far as I can remember today he criticized that I had set the limits for compulsory education too low; he insisted that the importance of special youth organizations for the economic struggle be more sharply defined. For the rest he merely made some changes in style, especially in the theoretical section of my resolution where he considered many formulations too trite. He found fault with the statement that only with the growth of machinery had real exploitation of the youth begun. I did not want to give in on this point and urged that the most acute exploitation of apprentices took place in small industries as a result of competition with the machine. We had not decided our dispute prior to the conference. Liebknecht based his argument on manufacture, which already carried on large scale exploitation of children. I quoted Marx's "capital": "The work of women and children was the first word in the capitalist application of machinery. . . This powerful substitute of work and workers places the entire working class family under the heel of capital." Finally, we found a formulation which satisfied all parties.

Opposed Workshop.

On the economic programme there were no further differences of opinion. Only one point was the cause of a heated discussion, namely, national apprenticeship workshops. Danneberg wrote a pamphlet on this subject in which he advocates the establishment of apprenticeship workshops as the only means of remedying the exploitation of apprentices. He de-

manded that this should form a part of the minimum programme of the social democrats and that special campaigns should be carried on to realize it. The Austrian delegation, supported by the Swiss and one Czech delegate, insisted that this apprenticeship workshop idea should be adopted in our economic programme. I opposed. The so-called apprenticeships constitute a very small section of the exploited youth. If the capitalist states should establish special apprenticeship centres for these it would only intensify the split in the ranks of the workers which would be used in the struggle against the proletariat. We should not cherish any illusions that the exploitation of apprentices can be abolished under capitalism. Our demands must be: protection of apprentices for the limitation and overthrow of capitalism, for the abolition of exploitation. Finally, my point of view gained the day and it was unanimously decided not to insert the clause on apprenticeship workshops in our programme.

The Stuttgart conference accomplished a very important piece of work. A year previously we had no idea of youth organizations or of what activity they carried on. At that time we learned that in the various countries there are three main types of youth organizations: anti-militarist organizations (Belgium and a part of Scandinavia), educational organizations (Holland, Switzerland), apprenticeship protection organizations (Austria, Hungary). Now an international is formed which had developed a revolutionary programme of work for all organizations. The first powerful step was thereby made for the inclusion of the proletarian youth in the class conscious struggle for the

overthrow of the dominations of the bourgeoisie.

Just a brief reference to the participants in the conference. A number of Russian comrades were present. Their names were not mentioned. I never met them again. Perhaps as far as they still exist they will report. I entered into a long conversation with one of them from whom I learned that he had been a Bundist. Balabanova represented the Italian youth. Comrade Remmele took the minutes of the conference. Gustav Moller the Swiss delegate warmly supported Liebknecht, he became later the minister of the Swedish king. Zetal Hoglung told me that this same Moller after the war, is said to have declared that given the choice "Liebknecht or Noske" he would decide for Noske. De Man, who, together with Liebknecht, had done most to bring about the conference, has had an interesting career. He was a militant Marxist, a bitter opponent of Vandervelde. He volunteered in the war, and after the February Revolution went to Russia with Vandervelde in order to support Kerensky and his offensive as a "left." Finally, from his impact with Marxism he came to the conclusion that not he was bad, but Marxism. Before the war we were close friends, and also during the war I had hoped that he would find the way to us. I greatly regret his loss. In April, 1922, I met him at the conference of the three internationals in Berlin where he acted as interpreter for the last time for the II. International. Exactly 12 years had elapsed since we had met. De Man recognized me at once, came to me and exclaimed: "You are of course in the III. International!" "Of course!" I replied.

NEGRO STUDENT, BACK FROM VISIT TO THE U. S. S. R., ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT FREE EDUCATION THERE

BALTIMORE, Sept. 20 (FP).—Students in Negro colleges are reading with interest the report brought back from Soviet Russia by Richard Hurst Hill, senior at Lincoln University, and published this week as the leading article in Afro-American, ranked as one of the most influential race papers in America.

and their families if for any reason they are ill or incapacitated for work.

Not Interested in Christianity.

"The average Russian is not only more intelligent than the average American, but he is more enthusiastic about what he terms 'our government'. He is more interested in its success and works more ardently