

Some Remarks on the Sixth Congress

Dear Comrade:—

You ask me my opinion of the Congress. Up to now I have at hand neither the final text of the Program, nor the resolutions of the Congress, with the exception of that on tactics adopted after the reading of the report by Bucharin. This I received yesterday. As is known, the drafts of the resolutions were not published—this in order to prevent those who are on "the other side" from comparing them with the final text. Thus many of the speeches appear to allude to something "unknown to anybody." A final judgment could be formed only after receiving all the resolutions. For the moment I will confine myself to some provisional remarks.

1. The Congress has attempted to inaugurate a new line of conduct without having abandoned the old. Automatically, the two clash. In many questions, starting from revisionist-opportunist premises we arrive at conclusions now opportunist, now extreme leftist. The Congress has changed its color during the very month while its sessions lasted, or rather it has increased its "leftward" coloring. Very opportunist expressions on stabilization are contained in the first report of Bucharin. But at the end of the theses concluding this same report some phrases are added "on the possibility of abrupt historical changes," which were taken word for word from our documents but without any exposition of the tendencies characterizing the imperialist epoch.

Besides an influx of new colonial elements coming especially from across the Atlantic, and other new tendencies appearing in the speeches and proposals of numerous delegates, the general spirit of the leadership of the Congress, and of its resolutions, was that of eclecticism and epigonism.

2. Although, I repeat, I do not yet possess the final text of the Program, it is clear already that things have not gone beyond dissimulation of the worst parts.

The Program is a consecration of eclecticism. It therefore contains in germ a whole series of revisionist-opportunist and ultra-leftist abcesses. Like the resolutions of the Congress in general, it inaugurates a period of immense changes in the heart of the Comintern.

3. The Congress occupied itself the whole time with the Opposition. It was held under the banner of defense—of defense against us. Hence its peculiar tone of insecurity. On every question it made prudent reservations. Those who wanted to, accepted the theses; those who did not, availed themselves of the reservations. The Opposition constituted one of the most important "sectors" in the hall, although it seems we had no representative there. On the question of the Program, the delegate from Indonesia, Alfonso, was the only one to speak clearly from our standpoint. (Pravda, No. 191.)

4. The question of stabilization was judged differently at different moments of the Congress, this again being due to the influence of our attitude on that point. For Europe and America stabilization is presented as "organic" and not "accidental" (Bucharin). This absurd position easily allows inferences breaking with every principle of the Leninist analysis of the imperialist epoch (see the second chapter of my criticism of the Program.) At the same time it is announced that "in China the revolution is continuing." Anyone who thinks that after the defeats already suffered, China is going through a fairly extended period between two revolutions, is denounced as a liquidator.

5. No program of immediate demands was offered for this period of "organic stabilization," except the slogan of struggle against war.

6. The slogan of "struggle against war" was issued in a mechanical, isolated fashion, a real Bucharinist fashion. The Parties are urged to "concentrate all their forces" for this struggle. As if there were a special secret in the struggle against war, not to be found in any correct revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie and its state.

Bucharin poses in exactly the same way the question of the struggle against the social democracy. "We have already learned many things, but we have not yet learned to struggle against the social democracy," he says. As if this latter struggle were a special "art," independent of the correct line of revolutionary conduct in general.

7. While no program of immediate demands is offered, the struggle for the seizure of power is, on the other hand, indefinitely postponed. They present, as one of the most important tasks incumbent on the European Communist sections, the

By L. D. Trotsky

struggle for the Chinese Revolution. But there is no revolution at present in China; there is a counter-revolution. We cannot know when the revolution will have a rebirth there. In Europe even the perspective of a Revolution is practically abolished.

8. The report of Kuusinen on the colonial and semi-colonial countries is absolutely shameful in character. The poor devil has merely vomited up a lot of undigested Menshevism. Martinov had the pleasure of hearing himself talk exactly as he used to twenty years ago. The mere fact that the Congress did not drive Kuusinen from the tribune with an old broom is a warning.

9. The question of "peasant" and "worker and peasant" parties was left pending. They didn't dare touch the Peasants International. Some voices, to be sure, were raised in favor of creating parties of this kind, which would affiliate with the Communist Parties. The objections, timidly advanced, were not objections in principle. I do not yet know whether this question was broached in any way in the resolutions. This is in reality a question of life and death for the colonial Communist Parties, and even for the whole Comintern.

10. The slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants" is definitely transformed into a super-historical abstraction for four-fifths of humanity (Asia, Africa, South America.) The debates of the Congress, even according to the expurgated, polished and repainted reports appearing in Pravda make it evident that the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry signifies the path of the Kuo Min Tang with all possible historical variations.

11. I must quote here on this subject the truly refreshing words of Martinov:

"According to the opinion of Bucharin, we are in India on the eve of a transformation of the bourgeois and democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. But this is just what Radek said about China. What becomes, then, of the struggle against imperialism, the struggle for national liberation, the stage of the anti-imperialist dictatorship of workers and peasants? They disappear."

The struggle against imperialism "disappears" because it is conducted under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the same way with us the agrarian revolution ought to have "disappeared" because it was not made till after the coup d'Etat of October.

12. The "Anti-Imperialist League" remains a sort of super-Kuo Min Tang, an arena in which adventurers and careerists from the colonial and imperialist countries may refresh their reputations at the expense of the oppressed peoples and of the proletariat. It suffices to point out that one of the representatives of this League for parliamentary carnivals, is the English demi-Purcell, Maxton, for whom our TASS¹ makes publicity as it recently did for Purcell.

13. By simply declaring the Chinese revolution "in process of continuation," the leaders have relieved themselves of the necessity of furnishing the Communist Party of China a program of action for the Stolypin period of Chiang Kai-Shek through which China is now passing. The absolutely necessary transitional slogans have not been issued; Expropriation of lands belonging to the "landed gentry," eight-hour day, abrogation of unequal treaties. The struggle for these slogans carried on also in the parliament (when the parliament is established) should lead, the moment the revolution begins anew, to the creation of Soviets and the battle for the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the urban and rural poor. Our heroes, however, "jump over" the strategy of the present reactionary period in the evolution of China. They attempt to stuff up all holes with the panacea of the democratic dictatorship which in that country has a significance only for the Kuo Min Tang.

The report of Manuilsky² is remarkable only for the personality of the reporter. Things must have gone pretty far when they put on this harlequin, whom no one takes seriously (his masters less than others), introducing him as the attorney general and guardian of Marxist doctrine and Bolshevik instruction. Here the struggle against the Opposition has descended to the level of collecting anecdotes. This is an imprudent step.

A group which designates Manuilsky to defend its ideas is reaching the end of its rope.

14. The report of Varga, if weighed discerningly, presents material from the point of view of "socialism in one country," but in such a way that he will not be rendered entirely responsible for this theory. Varga is theoretically much too educated not to know that this whole conception cannot stand up.

In the Spring of 1926 when I was in Berlin, Varga said to me literally, in the presence of Lapinsky and Krestinsky, the following words:

"Obviously, this theory is false, but it gives the Russian worker a view of the future and sustains his morale. If the Russian worker were sufficiently developed to become enthusiastic over the international perspectives of the future, we would not have needed the theory of socialism in one country. In a word, this is a pious lie of the priest, but it offers salvation."

In the Communist International Varga is a theoretician like the Polonius of Hamlet. He is ready to demonstrate theoretically that the clouds on the horizon resemble a camel, or a fish, or, if this pleases the prince, even "socialism in one country," or in general whomever and whatever you wish. The Communist International already possesses a whole army of Poloniuses of this kidney.

15. The theses announce "a Bolshevization and internal consolidation" of the Parties of the Comintern, and "the suppression of the internal struggle." The Congress, however (even as seen through the bars set up by the editorial censors), presents a picture of an entirely different character. A violent and muffled struggle is developing all along the line. Factional groupings, large and small, revealed themselves at the Congress in the delegations from Germany, England, Poland, the United States, Rumania, Jugo-Slavia, etc. The delegation of the U.S.S.R. naturally was no exception. On the contrary, it is the one which transplants scissions into the other Parties. In a multitude of speeches complaints were heard about sharp factional battles "which are not justified by any serious political differences."

16. No one took the trouble to ask himself why these "factional struggles" "devour" "the internally consolidated Communist International." The answer is nevertheless clear. At present, the Communist International is basing itself on a bloc composed of the Right and the Center, or to speak more precisely, on the opportunist faction. The situation in the U.S.S.R., and the regime in the Communist International, have retarded the development of the differences of opinion between these groups, whereas the class struggle makes their coalition, shot at from all sides, insupportable. That is where the bitter factional struggles come from, in the absence of "important political differences."

17. Much was said at the Congress of the integration of the social democracy with the capitalist state. Incontestably, the social democratic and trade union bureaucracy is forced, because of the situation of the petty-bourgeois layers caught between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to assume at all critical moments, in all important questions, direct responsibility in the bourgeois state. But, at the same time, the social democratic bureaucracy provides positions for new petty-bourgeois layers.

These positions are occupied in part by the Left social democracy, but for the great part by the Right Wing of the Comintern. In China and in England we have seen this phenomenon in its most complete and classic form. But the same tendencies exist also in other countries. It is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which forms the basis of this situation.

In the Centrist-Left groupings of the Comintern we frequently see a distorted picture of proletarian tendencies that cannot attain legal expression under the present regime, in view of the mechanical destruction of the Opposition.

A differentiation of the proletarian and petty-bourgeois tendencies in the Comintern is absolutely inevitable and imminent.

18. The theses concerning the "victory over the Trotskyist Opposition" hinge upon that. It has already been said above that the whole Congress took place under the banner of a defense against us. We have already resumed the attack in the ideological domain on the whole international front. Only hopeless imbeciles can imagine (and hypocritical bureaucrats can confirm it) that the resolutions of the Sixth Congress, which approve those of the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, signify "the end of the Opposition." The end is still far off. The

Party Convention Results

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ites will "split" on this question. Their aim was to discredit the idea of Foster as the actual "leader" of the Party so completely that Stalin will either withdraw his demand that Foster be appointed Secretary; or, if Stalin insists, on the ground of the exigencies of the fight against "Trotskyism," they can finally accept it without in any way endangering their real control.

Eight delegates of the Lovestone caucus, including Weinstein, split from the faction over this issue on the platform of the literal acceptance of all decisions of the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern regardless of their contents and no matter how much one contradicts another. The nimbleness which such a platform requires in these days makes Weinstein its natural leader. Two years ago he broke with Lovestone because he thought the C.I. really meant to unify the Party. A year later he returned to the faction because he thought the C.I. was against Foster. Now he makes another switch because he read the latest cablegram literally, without thinking of what it really means. He hasn't got things straight yet.

A FREE-FOR-ALL FIGHT

The Convention session of Friday evening, March 8, was broken up by a free-for-all fight which began with the refusal to grant the floor to a minority delegate and was soon followed by a general melee which spread throughout the hall and among the visitors in the balcony until the singing of "The International" brought a lull during which the meeting was adjourned. Such a thing never happened before in all the history of our Party—not even in gatherings which ended in splits. This unheard-of scandal is the first interest-

Opposition has only begun.

19. This resolution makes a pitiful attempt to foist upon us the group of adventurers of Suhl who, with the workers duped by them, have passed from the Opposition to the social democracy. I will not explain here why good-revolutionary workers are sometimes dragged along into all sorts of blind alleys which they can not get out of by themselves. The blame lies upon the leadership of the Comintern. Obviously, it also touches us indirectly: we have not been able up to the present to state our views clearly, resolutely and concretely enough, adapting them to the situation in each country. But one thing is clear: a certain group which, for a brief lapse of time, had come to us and to our former allies of the Bloc (Zinoviev and Co.) went over to the social democrats. We are neither more nor less responsible for it than are the leaders of the present regime for the events of Smolensk, Artemovsk, Schachty, etc., which took place under their leadership.

If we bear the responsibility for the defection of the Suhl group, our accusers must answer for the faction of Malachov.

20. The Congress has again shown the inefficacy of crude pretences. By minimizing differences of opinion, by adopting a hypocritical tone, one can slip into the Centro-Soyuz³ but not into the Comintern. The re-establishment of the unity of the Comintern must be preceded by a profound internal purification. The present leaders can not conduct this purification; they will be its first victims. They know it well. The naive peace-makers also will receive only blows and bruises. No concessions to cheap peace-making! On the contrary, relentless struggle for the re-establishment of the revolutionary unity of the Comintern through purification on a basis of principle!

The profound differences of opinion which rend the Comintern, and which even appear throughout the censored report of the Sixth Congress, prove that it is impossible to speak of our isolation. The muffled factional struggle in all the Parties will be transformed, under the pressure of events and of our criticism, into a battle between well-defined political lines. The proletarian line will adopt our principles as the only possible ones.

These are my provisional impressions after reading the report in Pravda.

With sincere greetings,
Yours,
L. D. TROTSKY.

Alma Ata, September 9, 1928.

1. TASS is the abbreviation for the TELEGRAPHIC Agency of the Soviet Union.

2. Manuilsky delivered the report against "Trotskyism" at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.

3. The reference here is to Zinoviev. Following his capitulation to Stalin, after the expulsion of the Opposition from the Party, Zinoviev finally received a post-in the Centro Soyuz (All Russian Central Cooperative Union).

payment received by the Party on its investment in the methods of gangsterism against the Opposition. It is a warning. The methods of the Labor Fakers cannot be played with "just a little"—they will permeate the whole movement and undermine its ideological foundations. And to what base uses is the noble song of the International proletariat being put? Nowadays they sing it at meetings of the Opposition to compel the audience to arise and prevent the speaker from being heard; and at Party meetings, it seems, they are beginning to sing it when a physical fight breaks out—if possible, before the cops arrive. Such desecration is a sign of the times. Hooliganism is a symptom of degeneration.

THE OPEN LETTER OF THE E.C.C.I.

According to the Daily Worker of March 11 the Convention unanimously accepted the Open Letter of the Comintern (printed in the Daily Worker of March 4) without reservations and declared complete agreement with it. All the previous theses, counter-theses, statements and declarations of the two factions were scrapped in favor of this document which, on the most important questions, is much nearer to the Platform of the Opposition than to the theses of the other groups. It would be a grave mistake, however, to conclude that this action signifies a change of course on the part of either of them or a removal of the basis of the quarrels. It is merely a gesture of internal diplomacy and an easy bureaucratic way of saying "The C.I. is always right." The light-heartedness with which the Open Letter was accepted as a substitute for their various theses and other documents demonstrates how little importance they themselves attached to them. Such practices reduce the authority of leadership to nothing.

The Open Letter represents a great departure from the line of the Sixth Congress on the position of American Imperialism and the perspectives of revolutionary development in Europe. Bucharin's report to the Sixth Congress was almost as one-sided in its awe before the power of American Imperialism, in its failure to estimate its involvement in the general crisis of Capitalism and the revolutionary implications of its world aggressions, as was the conception of Pepper and Lovestone. The Open Letter represents a partial attempt to "correct" this line under pressure of the criticisms of the International Opposition, in a typical Stalinist manner, without saying so or explaining the reasons. Trotsky's Criticism of the Draft Program makes a Leninist appraisal of the world situation and particularly the role of American Imperialism. This is the real source of the belated half-corrections revealed in the Open Letter. In "accepting" this new line they accept a part of that which they glibly pronounced a "menschivist" and "counter-revolutionary" program. Such turns are easy for people whose words signify nothing but factional speculation. In practice it means nothing. Tomorrow they can reverse the position and it will mean just as little.

THE QUESTION OF "AMERICANIZATION"

A section of the Open Letter of considerable interest to us is that which stresses the necessity of a course toward the Americanization of the Party in the Communist sense. This runs like a single thread throughout the document and is listed in the summary as one of the four conditions for the development of the Party on the path toward transformation into a mass party. We also emphasized this point in our Platform; and it is not a new opinion of ours. "The Party can become a mass proletarian Party only on condition that it widens its base by creating its main strongholds in the ranks of the American workers." "The course on the American workers and the decisive branches of industry must run through all the activities of the Party." Such expressions in the Open Letter are almost literally the same as those in our Platform.

The need for such a course was not even mentioned in the theses of the Lovestone and Foster-Bittleman factions. They considered this idea, which we have brought forward repeatedly and insistently in the past, as a "deviation" peculiar to us, a part of our "pessimism," etc. Now they blandly "accept" it—and forget it. The "ideological campaign" to permeate the Party with this consciousness and the thorough-going organizational readjustments which such a course necessitates will not be thought of. It is impossible to educate a Party in this way.

Having withdrawn their own theses and adopted the Open Letter both factions have once again found a "common platform" as a basis for "unity."

According to tradition this should be the signal for the intensification of the factional struggle, and the Foster caucus document proceeds along that line. It accuses the other side of giving only "the customary lip service to the line of the C.I." Platforms have no real meaning in this degenerated struggle for power in the Party. Stalinization has produced the type of bureaucrats in all the Parties who have no definite standpoint, no stability of principle, and for whom the prevailing winds in the Russian Party are decisive.

It was the elder Liebknecht who said that a revolutionary must be able to change his mind within 24 hours if the interest of the revolution demands it. The Stalinist regime has modernized and "improved" this excellent formula to read: a bureaucrat must be able to change his position in 24 minutes if ordered to do so, without inquiry into the merits of the change or the reason for it.

"METHODS OF THE BOURGEOIS PARTIES"

"The peculiar characteristic" of the Lovestonites, says the caucus document of Bittleman and Foster, "is their unprincipledness, which reflects within our Party the methods and practices of the bourgeois Parties." This is quite true. But it does not prevent the authors from declaring in the same document "our readiness . . . to join with all comrades in the Convention . . . for the merciless struggle against and liquidation of the counter-revolutionary Cannon-Trotsky Opposition." "Unprincipledness" and the "methods and practices of the bourgeois Parties" are the necessary basis of such a combination against Communists.

The "political differences" between the leaders of the two factions are eliminated. We are told this in so many words by the unanimous resolution of the convention which says: "The political questions at issue between the Majority and the Minority of the Party no longer exist after the acceptance of the political platform of the Open Letter." This is true, however, only of the leaders. Their political coalescence at the top is accompanied by deeper and wider divisions below. The development of International events, the pressure of the class struggle and the criticisms of the Opposition strengthen and clarify the proletarian tendency in the ranks. These factors create the conditions for its consolidation on a principle basis and make the growth of the Opposition certain.

The new line decreed by the Convention, and echoed in the caucus document of the Bittleman group, for a stronger attack against the Opposition will react in our favor. It clears the air and draws the line of struggle between the petty bourgeois and proletarian tendencies more sharply. It leaves less room for "intermediaries" who catch the half-formed Opposition sentiments of the workers in the ranks and divert them into futile factional wrangles over small questions. It is bound to bring about a further cleavage in the ranks of the minority; which will draw the proletarian elements closer to us and push the bureaucratic functionaries at the top into one camp with Lovestone. More energetic and deliberate work on our part to accelerate this cleavage will be work for the re-establishment of the unity of the Communist forces on a principle line.

It is our task, above everything, to make the issues clear to the workers in the ranks and to base out activity upon them. What has been done up to now is only a beginning. The Opposition on an International scale has only completed the first stage of its development, the stage of formulating the platform and organizing the vanguard. The struggle for the winning over of the Communist masses is before us.

The establishment of the Militant as a Weekly and the holding of a National Conference of the Opposition are the next steps on the path to this goal.

ACTIVITY IN CLEVELAND

Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Comrades:

The Open Forum meeting last Sunday at which I spoke was very successful from the standpoint of attendance. I was told that it was the largest meeting of the Forum this season. I spoke about an hour and a half. Over a dozen questions were asked and answered satisfactorily to those present. I had plenty of material, most of it from Trotsky's book "The Real Situation in Russia" and material that I received from you in Trotsky's criticism of the policy pursued in the Chinese Revolution. Several of Amter's lieutenants were present and their behavior was excellent. . . . More of them came late and couldn't get into the hall since all the space was taken. Last night's meeting at the Workers' Center at which I also spoke had a record crowd despite bad weather.

Yours for the Opposition,

ELMER BOICH