

The Congress of the Communist International

By A. Nyemanov

THE first Congress of the Communist International, called into being by the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks) met in session on March 2, in Moscow. Our news of the Congress is meagre and indirect, only the reports in some German newspapers now being available.

Thirty-two delegates with full power to act participated in this first Congress of the Communist International, representing the Communist or "left" Socialist parties and groups of Germany, Russia, Hungary, Sweden, Norway, Bulgaria (the group "Teshniki"), Rumania, Finland, Ukraine, Esthonia, Armenia and America (S. L. P.). [The S. L. P., however, has, through its official organ, the *Weekly People*, practically repudiated the Communist International by repudiating the original call for this Congress. The S. L. P. was "represented" by Boris Reinstein, who has not been in touch with his party.]

In addition, there sat as full members at the Congress delegates of the "Union of Socialists of Eastern Countries," a union functioning in Russia, representatives of labor organizations of Germans in Russia, and the "Union of Revolutionary Socialists" in the Balkans.

There were also present, with consultative powers, representatives of the Socialist Propaganda League (represented by S. J. Rutgers—the League is now merged with the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party in New York City), and the Communist parties or groups of Switzerland, Holland, Bohemia, Jugoslavia, France, Britain, Turkey, Turkestan, Persia

and Corea. The Chinese "Labor Group" was also represented.

The Congress would have been considerably larger had it not been for the fact that the representatives of nearly all capitalist countries did their best to prevent representatives of the revolutionary Socialist organizations from getting to Moscow.

The Russian Communist Party was represented by Comrades Lenin, Trotzky, Zinoviev, Bucharin and Stalin. A letter was read to the Congress from Comrade Lorient, leader of the Left Wing in the French Socialist Party, attacking and repudiating the Berne Congress of the social-patriots. The letter aroused great enthusiasm.

The following questions were on the agenda: 1, program of the Communist International; 2, dictatorship of the proletariat and bourgeois democracy; 3, attitude toward other Socialist tendencies and the Berne Conference; 4, the present international situation and the policy of the Allies; 5, electing an International Bureau of the new International.

The Moscow labor organizations made a gala day of the first session of the Congress, to greet the founders of the Third International. Comrade Kamienov in his speech compared the Moscow Congress with the London Congress of 1864 which organized the first International. The Moscow *Izvestia*, organ of the local Soviet, declared that attempts to restore the sec-

ond International are doomed to inevitable disaster.

This first Congress of the Communist International decided to liquidate the Zimmerwald "International Commission," hitherto headed by Comrade Balabanova. Participation in the Zimmerwald Congress, C. Rakovsky, N. Lenin, G. Zinoviev, L. Trotzky and F. Platten, made a joint declaration that, while at the time the Zimmerwald movement played an important part, it gradually out-lived its usefulness. The misfortune of the Zimmerwald movement was that there clustered around it representatives of the Socialist "centre" who in the end joined the social-patriots and betrayed Socialism. The Bolsheviks, as early as 1916, realized that a severance of relations was necessary with the "centre" and Zimmerwald, a severance prompted by the interests of the revolutionary movement. This explains why, proceeds the joint declaration, even at the time a split occurred among the participants in the Zimmerwald Conference, the "left" elements of the Socialist movement rallying around the "International Commission."

The "Central Bureau" of the Communist International will comprise representatives from the following countries: Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, one representative from the Scandinavian countries and one representative of the Balkan Socialists. Any Socialist Party that severs its relations with the second International and accepts the Communist International (as has already been done by the Socialist Party of Italy) is entitled to a representative on the Central Bureau.

Socialism and Mass Action

By S. J. Rutgers

ROSA LUXEMBURG has called the mass strike the dynamic method of the proletarian struggle in the Revolution. She considers mass action, and its most important feature the mass strike, as the sum total of a period in the class struggle that may last for years or tens of years until victory comes to the proletariat. In permanent change, it comprises all the phases of the political and economic struggle, all phases of the Revolution. Mass action in its highest form of political strike means the unity of political and economic action, means the proletarian revolution as an historic process.

The word "mass action" like the words "class struggle," "industrial action," "Imperialism," etc., may mean nothing; in fact they are used to cover the most conflicting thoughts and deeds. Representing a general conception living in the minds and the deeds of millions of workers, a word may become a powerful symbol and active force in the struggle for emancipation. Since Capitalism is outgrown and has to maintain its grasp on the world by mental and moral fraud, a clear conception of proletarian methods is most essential. Science being the monopoly of non-proletarian classes under Capitalism, all the workers can hope for, unless they will leave their fate in the hands and heads of middle class representatives, is to grasp some of the fundamental proletarian truths. These truths inevitably have to be coined into short slogans, this being the only form of theoretical abstraction, suitable both for the purpose of proletarian theory and fighting practice. What a "thesis" means to the scientist is expressed by the workers in general slogans and expressions, such as mass action, Imperialism, industrial unionism, class struggle, etc. Such and similar words may be said to express the proletarian philosophy, the strength of which depends upon the completeness and the unity of conception reflected by these words in the minds of the workers. The meaning of the words changes with the position of the workers in the class struggle and together with the consolidation of tactics, the corresponding conceptions get a more definite and more general shape. But at the same time the consolidation of these conceptions in the heads of the workers results in a more efficient, a more powerful struggle for emancipation.

Conservative Socialists may call any meeting of a dozen persons or over, a mass meeting, and may consider a big middle class vote the highest form of mass action—there is little doubt, however, that in large and increasing groups of American workers the idea of revolutionary mass action grows into a living and powerful conception. Industrial action, no doubt, forms the backbone of the conception in a country with highly developed industry. Industrial Unionism may, however, develop into a struggle for wages only; into job control without any further vision. Mass action is the broader vision, which includes all mass movements towards the Social Revolution.

It may be objected that, if industrial action is the most efficient form of mass action, why bother about minor issues? Why not concentrate all our efforts and thought in building our industrial unions so strong

as to overcome the capitalist employers and their centralized power—the capitalist state? Such an objection overlooks the complexity of real conditions. We are not free in choosing our methods in accordance with certain general theoretical constructions, but have to build on the solid ground of actual facts in the light of historical developments. No matter what our preachings mass movements in one form or another will develop and we will have to make the best of it. And on the other hand, industrial organization has its historical limits beyond which we cannot rise at the given moment of our action. Large groups of workers will continue for a certain length of time to organize in craft unions, and although we will tell them they are wrong and fight them where injurious to their class, still they will be a factor in our revolutionary struggle either for or against. Moreover large groups of unskilled workers will continue to live in such a state of slavery and terrorism, that only occasional shocks will be able to overcome the pressure of the iron heel. We also have to bear in mind that the very process of capitalism consists in swallowing middle class groups and farmers between the grinding wheels of industry and that each generation needs again its education towards industrial action, and at any given moment millions and millions of proletarians will continue to work under conditions very remote from large industry, and though it may be true that these groups never will be the backbone of revolutionary movements, still they will have to play their part. To overcome the capitalist organization and the capitalist state is a job in which we cannot afford to neglect whatever forces may contribute to success. We are not satisfied to wait until in some problematic future all capitalist production will be in the form of big industry and all proletarians will have passed the school of industrial education. We are convinced that the technical development of the capitalist world makes conditions ripe for a Socialist commonwealth at this very moment, that only our lack of power stands in the way of the realization of our hopes. What we want above all is a unity and concentration of the forces already existing in a latent form, a combination and further development of these forces towards our revolutionary aims.

The mental expression of this unity of proletarian forces is "mass action." It is the expression of the firm belief that the workers can only count on their own power. It means a definite break with the diplomacy, corruption and betrayal of middle class leaders. It calls for clear-cut, straight-lined class struggle theory and tactics, not only within the mental grasp of the average worker, but in such a form that the mechanism of its organized expression can be carried on by the workers without being dependent upon high-brow intellectuals. Mass action appeals to the numbers, but numbers welded into a mass, numbers bound together by a common cause, a common aim, a common thought, leading to common action and common organization. In its complexity of form, mass action mir-

rors the actual variety of the working class, in its unity of action it throws aside all middle class elements, that are not willing to break with their capitalist affiliations. Mass action is the very horror of the small bourgeois minds; is mere craziness to the intellectual radical. How in the world should the poor uneducated worker get along without the well meaning costly advice and representation of intellectuals?

But is it possible to increase our power by street demonstrations, strikes of protest, general campaigns for political issues, such as freedom of speech, judicial murders, militarism, high cost of living, unemployment, etc.? Are not the masses who come together for those purposes too heterogeneous, too much liable to be dispersed or annihilated by military force, too unorganized to develop power? To answer this question, we should first realize what the purpose is of our power. We want power for the Social Revolution to overcome capitalist society. You may overcome power by strengthening your own, as well as by weakening your opponent's power. A wrestler may subdue his colleague by a supreme effort, but he will more likely succeed because his opponent tires out quicker. Mass demonstrations may not be able to force a government to give in, but there is no doubt that mass demonstrations, strikes of protest, etc., have a strong tendency to weaken the position of the capitalist state. Demonstrations can and will be suppressed by military force, but this at the same time endangers the morale of militarism itself. In a period of demonstrations and protests all over the country combined with a variety of strikes, the bureaucratic apparatus will have great difficulty in maintaining its regular efficiency. At the same time the government will, through concessions in some places and brutality in others, open the eyes of large groups of workers previously caught in bourgeois ideologies of a state for the benefit of "the People," etc. And we should not forget that education through mass action is one of the most important factors to increase our power. No education without action and no greater educator for the workers than mass action.

Mass action never can be antagonistic towards industrial action, because the latter is only the most efficient form of mass action, is a part, is the backbone of general mass action. No successful mass action is conceivable without being firmly rooted in the economic power of the workers, and the strongest form to organize this power is in industrial unions. But this does not mean that there is no economic power outside of this particular form of organization. In fact industrial unions at present are surprisingly weak. Is it logical, is it less than a crime to neglect all other forms of economic power of the workers so far as they can be utilized for the big fight against Capital and the capitalist state as its most formidable instrument? Will the Russian revolution with its splendid unity of industrial strikes and street demonstrations into one sweeping mass movement have no lessons for us?

Will we wait for certain forms where others act and win?