

The Creation of the Finnish Communist Party

AFTER the defeat of the revolutionists in Finland, part of the Finnish Social Democracy found refuge from the White Terror on the territory of Russia. Lacking a connecting centre these Finns scattered in all directions, some even going to Siberia, so that now over one hundred Finns have settled in Tomsk.

The "Organization of Finnish Social Democrats Abroad" which was created about this time was so much burdened with work in connection with aiding the refugees—establishment of refugee colonies, supplying work to thousands who were unemployed, organizing Finnish regiments of the Red Army—that very little attention could be paid to building up the Party and agitation. In this respect the disorganization was complete.

In addition a part of the membership of the former party, including some of the leaders such as Valpas Chenin, only aided in the work of disruption. The paper, *Vapaus* (Freedom), established in Petrograd after great difficulty, devoted itself almost exclusively to criticising the revolutionary government of Finland, ignoring the inner party organization. But the spirit of organization engendered through many years of effort was bound to triumph. The masses, themselves, began to organize, to build up the Party: clubs and circles were established and soon it became necessary to call a congress to concentrate and connect the growing organization.

Finally at the end of last August a congress was held in Moscow. About 150 persons attended, but as only a small proportion had definite credentials it was decided to accept all those who came to the congress, as members of the so-called "preliminary conference."

The question facing this conference was whether it was now timely to restore the Finnish Social Democratic Party, which had been destroyed by the White Terror, and to revise the program, tactics, etc. On this question the Moscow and Petrograd Finnish Communist Clubs submitted propositions which had as a common basis: "the former Party is dead and

we must build on its ruins a new party—the Communist Party.

Kuusinen described in detail the growth of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, pointing to its gradual conversion to opportunism and, as civil liberties were gained, to parliamentarism. He also showed how the formerly strong trade union movement of Finland gradually lost its revolutionary significance, and finally at the height of its development became a purely reformist labor movement. He traced the manifestations of these facts during the revolutionary days—while the revolutionary working masses were aspiring, moved by their instinctive class feeling, towards proletarian dictatorship, the leaders and the main organs of the Party centered their attention on legislative measures not within the bounds of dictatorship but of universal franchise; putting in the forefront of their activities the gaining of "democratic liberties." This he declared was one of the main causes of the defeat of the revolutionists, arguing that if the revolution in Finland had been looked upon as a phase of the international proletarian revolution the Red Army could have been saved by retreating into Russia in face of the German reinforcements to the White Guards. But as the revolution was regarded as a national phenomenon—as a struggle of classes within Finland—its international significance was lost and the Finnish workers isolated themselves.

What was the use, he asked, of organization and propaganda work for fifteen years if at the decisive moment they could only advance such "democratic slogans" as universal suffrage, constituent assembly, etc? He urged the building of a new Party on a return to the Marxian basis, which had been ignored in the mire of parliamentarism and trade unionism.

In the lengthy discussion that followed the speech two sharply digressing points of view were manifested: one for Communism and the other against it. The opponents of Communism tried to evade the issue. They accepted in principle the dictatorship of

the proletariat and the aspiration to crush the bourgeoisie, they said, but should the international proletarian revolution fail, the imperialists of all lands would join hands for the purpose of strangling Soviet Russia. It would be better to be ready for all sorts of emergencies, and therefore, the fighting for civil liberties, their enactment by legislative measures, the raising of the economic level of the workers, should be their immediate aims, as only through the accomplishment of these aims would they ever be ready for the seizure of power.

After the discussion the Left Wing submitted the following program which was carried by a vote of 74 to 16, four abstaining from voting:

1. The proletariat must resolutely prepare for armed insurrection and must discard the pre-revolutionary methods of struggling: parliamentarism, trade union and cooperative organizations and other such means on which the Finnish Social Democratic Party had hitherto supported itself.

2. Only a labor movement, based on Communist teachings and having for its ultimate aim the Socialist revolution is acceptable. The groups and parties who share opposite views must be branded and their agitation among the masses resolutely combatted.

3. The aim of the revolution is the seizure of power by the proletariat; therefore its object is the abolition of the bourgeois state.

4. By the power of a proletarian dictatorship a Communist social structure must be established, land, factories and all means of production and distribution confiscated, and production and distribution organized on Communist lines through the disciplined power of the proletariat.

5. To conduct an energetic propaganda and agitation for the international proletarian revolution.

After the acceptance of this program the work of the "preliminary conference" was finished and the 74 delegates who voted in favor remained to continue the work of establishing the Finnish Communist Party.

Let us Clean House

By Alanson Sessions

ONE of the valuable lessons the war has taught us is that the so-called "leaders" in the radical movement are little to be trusted. All of us can remember the time when John Spargo, A. M. Simons, W. A. Ghent, Winfield Gaylord and J. G. Phelps Stokes were looked upon by their admiring comrades as paragons of revolutionary virtue. We now know, and should have known long ago, that leaders, no matter how learned or brilliant, unless evolved from the ranks of the toiling working class, are not an asset but a serious liability. Revolutionists who do their rebelling through books published by the capitalist press nearly always waver in a crisis.

Consider, for instance, the career of John Spargo. Spargo, a few years ago, was very positive in his contentions that a true Socialist could never be a nationalist. He vehemently asserted that the class-war came before all other wars. Then in our first national crisis, Spargo dropped his internationalism and whooped it up for a capitalists' war. His latest volume, entitled "Bolshevism," is an attempt to prove that in essence the spirit of Prussianism and Bolshevism are identical!

Some months ago J. G. Phelps Stokes wrote me a letter which contained the following:

"You speak of yourself as being a Bolshevik. I trust that you are a Bolshevik only as regards ideals, and that you do not think that it would be a wise policy to attempt to impose millennial conditions by force upon an unwilling electorate. For that is what the Bolsheviks of Russia are trying to do. Millennial conditions of a type that will last can only be obtained as a result of a long educational process, and of a highly developed form of political democracy that men and women can, through its instrumentality, proceed in safety to develop such forms of industrial life as in their judgment will be conducive to the welfare of the whole community. I cannot believe that anything but chaotic conditions akin to those of Capitalism at its worst would result from the mere seizure of industrial powers here and there by groups aiming primarily at promoting their own advantage."

We will overlook Mr. Stokes' abysmal ignorance with reference to the progress and accomplishments of Bolshevism in Russia. What we wish to point out is the fact that Mr. Stokes and all who shared his apostasy were never revolutionists at all. They were purely and simply parlor Socialists. They loved to dabble in theory and probabilities and possibilities, just as many of our upper class women tinker with reform for the excitement of the thing. When an aggregation of energetic Socialists, taking Socialism seriously, attempt to put it into practice in Russia, these gentry recoil with horror.

They harangued about the class-struggle for years, but call their comrades traitors and pro-Germans the moment they actually engage in it. They preached revolution, but now revile the revolutionists who are

actively engaged in constructing the Co-operative Commonwealth.

But it has been a splendid lesson for the rank and file of American Socialists. It has taught them to place a minimum of responsibility on "authorities" and "leaders." It has taught them the necessity of basing the Socialist movement firmly on the broad, bent back of Labor.

Our national executive committee should not be composed of professors, editors and lawyers. It should be composed entirely of men directly representative of our basic national industries. And not until this is done can we say that the political machinery of our party is thoroughly under working-class control. Nor until this is done can we ever be sure that the "leaders" will not desert us in an emergency as they have done in the past.

Let us have a proletarianization of the Socialist Party.

The General Strike in Canada

THE general strike which a short time ago was considered impossible in the Americas, now looms large and threatening. The second week of the Winnipeg strike finds the workers daily gaining strength while throughout the Dominion the idea of the sympathetic strike, the living demonstration of the solidarity of labor, is spreading rapidly. The Central Strike Committee in Winnipeg has the situation well in hand and their strength can be estimated from the attitude of Federal Minister of Labor Robinson, who has suddenly manifested great anxiety lest the workers are deprived of their "rights" by this body.

"Instead of giving to the workmen in any individual plant or industry the right of collective bargaining with their employers" he is quoted as saying "the present plan deprives them of the right and places them entirely in the hands of a central body; which principle, the citizens' committee of Winnipeg, provincial and federal governments agree cannot be ac-

cepted."

When labor is forging ahead the opposing forces always become anxious for the working man, lest his "rights" and "liberties" are endangered by the strike committee. But the workers have suffered so much damage to their "rights" and "liberties" from the hands of their masters that they can well afford to have them "endangered" by the actions of their own committees. This is the old game of "divide and conquer," but it has been worked out. The workers are not exercised very much just now whether or not their "right" of bargaining by individual factory is "menaced." On the contrary they are beginning to wake up to the fact that the more factories engaged in the bargaining the better the chances of success and signs are not wanting that unless the employers and the Federal Government come to terms very shortly they will have to do the bargaining not only with a Central Strike Committee for one town, but with a Central Strike Committee for the whole country.