

First Congress of the Communist International

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I

The Soviet Conquers

By N. Lenin

NOTHING is firm in a revolution except what has been achieved by the masses of the people. It will therefore be sufficient to record in writing our real and solid conquests.

The founding of the Third (Communist) International at Moscow on March 2d, 1919, was the expression not only of the Russian proletarian masses, but of those of all nations of Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Finland, Switzerland, in a word of the proletarian masses of the world.

This is precisely the reason why the founding of the Third (Communist) International is a lasting work. But four months ago it was still impossible to say that the power of Soviets, the Soviet form of the state, constituted an international achievement. There was in this form an essential element which belonged not only to Russia but to all the capitalist countries. But it was still impossible to declare in advance what changes would be made in this form by the later development of the world revolution.

The German revolution was the necessary experiment performed to answer these questions. The most advanced capitalist country presented to the entire world, following the most reactionary capitalist country, within the short space of a hundred days, not only fundamentally the same revolutionary forces, not only the same general direction of events, but even the same essential form of the new proletarian democracy: namely, the Soviets. Simultaneously, in England, in this victorious country, in this country, the richest of all in colonies, in the country which has been for the longest period the model of social harmony, or which has seemed to be such, in the most ancient home of Capitalism, we behold a wide, irresistible transformation, a powerful growth of the Soviets, and of the new Soviet forms of the conflict of the proletarian masses: the Shop Stewards committees.

In America, the most powerful capitalist country, and the youngest, there is an immense sympathy of the working masses for the Soviets.

The ice is broken. The Soviets have triumphed all over the world. They have triumphed particularly and above all in the sense that they have conquered the sympathy of the proletarian masses. That is the important part. That is a conquest which the atrocities of the imperialistic bourgeoisie and the persecutions and assassinations of the Bolsheviks cannot now take away from the masses. The greater the fury of the so-called democratic bourgeoisie, the more will these conquests live in the souls of the proletarian masses, in their consciousness, in their heroic readiness for the struggle.

The ice is broken. And for that reason the work of the Communist International Conference, at Moscow, which founded the Third International, proceeded with so much smoothness and regularity, so much calm and firm determination.

We have recorded the conquests already made. We have put on paper what was already established in the consciousness of the masses. All of us knew much more than this. All of us saw and felt, by the experience of his own country, that a new proletarian movement had begun to ferment with a force and with a depth that were unheard of; that this movement would never fit into any of the old channels; that it cannot be restrained either by the "Socialism" of petty politics or by the Lloyd Georges and Wilsons of the so-called Democratic Capitalism of England and America, with all their experience and all their cleverness, nor by the Hendersons, the Renaudels, the Brantings, and other empty heroes of social-Chauvinism with all their skill in reconciling opposites.

This new movement is heading directly for a "dictatorship of the proletariat." It is advancing in spite of all hesitations, in spite of discouraging set-backs, in spite of this "Russian" chaos which is so prominent in the eyes of those who judge from the outside; it is marching toward the Soviet power with a might which is carrying along on its path millions and tens of millions of proletarians.

This is the record of our accomplishments. In our orders of the day, our reports, our papers, and our speeches, we have printed the accomplishments already made.

The Marxist theory, illuminated by the bright light of reason and experience, reaching all over the world in revolutionary workers, has assisted in grasping the full logic of events. It will aid all proletarians in the entire world who are struggling to overthrow capitalist slavery, to become clearly conscious of the object of their struggle, to march more steadily on the road already begun, to grasp more surely and consolidate their achievement. The founding of the Third International is the gateway of the International Soviet Republic, of the International victory of Communism.

II

A Great Epoch

By Leon Trotsky

I SUPPOSE the czars and the former priests who controlled the Moscow Kremlin, never imagined that there would gather within its venerable walls representatives of the most revolutionary party of the modern world. Yet this has happened. In one of the halls of the palace of justice, still haunted by the melancholy shades of the ancient Czarist penal code, are sitting the delegates of the Third International.

In truth, the tooth of war has done effective work in undermining the walls of the Kremlin.

This physical background for the Communist Congress is simply the external manifestation of the numerous changes that have taken place in the ten or twenty years just passed, in the conditions of the whole world.

In the days of the Second International, as well as of the First, Czarist Russia was the principal support of world reaction. In the international Socialist con-

gresses, the Russian revolution was represented by emigrants whom the majority of the opportunist leaders of the European Socialists regarded with an ironical condescension. The functionaries of parliamentarism were imbued with an unalterable conviction that the misfortunes of the revolution were the lot of semi-Asiatic Russia, while Europe might rely on a gradual, peaceful and painless development from Capitalism to Socialism.

In August 1914 the internal contradictions that had been heaped up by Imperialism broke through the pacific crust of Capitalism, with its parliamentarism, legal liberties, and its political and other propositions sanctified by law. From the pinnacle of civilization, humanity was cast down into a terrible abyss of barbarism and bloody savagery.

Although the Marxist theory had foreseen the bloody catastrophe, the reformist Socialist parties were taken unawares. The prospect of peaceful development vanished in thin air. The opportunists could see no other duty than to invite the working masses to defend their nationalistic bourgeois fatherland. On August 4, 1914, the Second International perished ingloriously. Since that day, all true revolutionists, the heirs of Marxist spirit, have had no other aim than to create a new international for the implacable revolutionary struggle against capitalist society. The war unleashed by Imperialism has thrown the entire capitalist world out of its equilibrium. All questions have been revealed as revolutionary questions. The old masters of social-patriotism have displayed all their talent in the effort to preserve the appearance of their former parties, their former lies, and their old organizations. But it was no use. Once more in history, war was the mother of revolution. The imperialist war was the mother of a proletarian revolution.

The honor of initiating a proletarian revolution belongs to the Russian working class and to its Communist Party, hardened as it has been in conflict. By its November revolution, the Russian proletariat not only opened the gates of the Kremlin to the representatives of the International proletariat, but it also laid the cornerstone of the edifice of the Third International.

The revolutions of Germany, Austria, Hungary, the lightning spread of the Soviet movement and of civil war, marked by the martyrdom of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and of how many nameless thousands of nameless heroes, showed that Europe did not have at its disposal any other methods than those of Russia. The essential identity of the methods in the struggle for Socialism, which has been proved by experience, has permitted the creation of the Communist International and simultaneously rendered immediately necessary the convoking of the Communist Congress.

This Congress is in session within the walls of the Kremlin. We were witnesses and participants in one of the greatest events of the world war. The working class of the whole world has captured from its enemies the most inaccessible citadel of the ancient Russia of the Czars, and from this citadel it launches all its energies for the final conflict. What a joy to fight and live in such a time!

The Emptying of the Cities

By Phillips Russell

RECENT dispatches in the capitalist press have quoted bourgeois refugees from Russia as saying that Petrograd is to a large extent deserted. Critics of the Soviet regime have eagerly accepted these reports as proof of the general ruin and decay caused by proletarian management. We have no means of learning the truth as to these stories, since so much of the "news" from Russia appearing in the daily press is not news at all but mere anti-Bolshevik propaganda.

But if it is true even to a partial extent that its inhabitants have begun to leave Petrograd, it is a healthy sign.

The obese cities of modern times are mere creations of Capitalism. They will have no reason for existence under working class rule and will, as soon as a universal revolution has been accomplished, rapidly tend to disappear.

Modern cities are mostly mere dumping grounds of privately owned transportation systems—the railroads and steamship lines. The railroads, especially, have fostered the mushroom growth of great cities. By encouraging the heaping up of human beings and merchandise at certain centres they have made their own work easier and fattened their profits. Plump earnings accrue to the transportation systems from express hauls—there is less money for them in scattered traffic and frequent stops.

Other capitalistic factors also assist in the process of creating the cancerous growths known as cities. The location of great industries and governmental establishments near transportation termini inevitably draw the workers thither, and with this accumulating army of toil go the usual camp followers—tradesmen, hotel keepers, purveyors of food, drink and amusement, along with a host of lesser thieves and grafters, all hoping to snatch a living from the store of wealth that begins to be heaped up as soon as labor is applied to aggregations of machinery.

Employers encourage this gathering of job hunters because it brings to their doors masses of human working animals who can be quickly hitched to a machine when times are good and who can be as quickly discharged when prosperity declines.

This accumulation of organisms, each with appetites that must be fed soon gives rise to terrific competition for the means of livelihood. The stronger, the healthier and more docile get all the jobs that require regular hours and daily attendance. The weak, the unfortunate, the depraved and the more cunning, being crowded

out of or made unacceptable to industry, are forced to rely on such means as they can muster, in order to live. Finally we have the invariable accompaniments of all great cities—crime, theft, prostitution, unemployment, degeneracy and murder.

The establishment of a regime under which things are done for service and use and not for profit, will immediately tend to draw off this mass of corruption.

The jealous monopolies of transportation being removed, new avenues of travel by rail, motor, trolley and airplane will be opened; and those persons hitherto herded in shamefully crowded buildings will be able to spread out into the country and suburbs where they may obtain access to the soil, maintain plenty of elbow room and raise their children in the sunshine.

This is not to say that cities have no sound reason for existence. They have, and it is founded deep in the human instinct for gregariousness and the craving for fellowship. There will always be cities as long as there are persons who like to live in them. There are certain kinds of human beings who will never live elsewhere if they can avoid it. There are perhaps more kinds of human beings who live in cities only because they must. As soon as artificial restrictions and compulsions are removed, they go running back to the mother of us all—the earth.