

ment of the party in Russia and Germany, for the simple reason that it would have helped the young party neither to examine its past critically, nor to take that path which was necessary to transplant Leninism into the life of the revolutionary fight in Germany. The fact that Leninism has the uncontested and incontestable leadership in the revolutionary world movement is due not only to the triumph of Bolshevik principles in the Russian revolution, but also to the special conditions under which Bolshevik ideology and organisation grew up in Russia.

"On the other hand, having come into existence on this granite theoretical foundation, Bolshevism went through fifteen years (1903-1917) of practical history which, in fertility of experience, had no equal anywhere else in the world. In no other country during those fifteen years was there anything approximating to such wide revolutionary experience, such a variety and rapidity of shifting forms in the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, open and underground, embracing small circles and large masses, parliamentary and terrorist. In no other country, during so short a period of time, has there been concentrated such a multiplicity of forms, shades and methods of struggle, embracing all classes of modern society. To this it must be added that the struggle, maturing with particular rapidity because of the backwardness of the country and the heavy yoke of Tsarism, assimilated eagerly and successfully the latest developments of American and European political

experience." ("Left Wing Communism," p. 12.)

Between 1903 and 1917 Bolshevism developed that all-embracing theory, strategy and tactics of the seizure of power as we understand it to-day. And that it had to become the international ideology of the revolutionary proletariat is due to those same causes adduced by Lenin why the Russian workers were the first to seize power. Just as that was no "accident," but a necessary result of diverse and unequal capitalist development, so too, it was no accident that the formation in Germany of a revolutionary Party, in Lenin's sense, took longer than in Russia, and had to tread, and is still treading, a more painful and laborious road.

So, when reviewing the ten years' history of the Communist World Party, one must understand and consider it in its totality. There are defeats as well as victories, in the history of the Comintern. In the critical, and often agonising process of the birth and development of the Comintern, there is reflected the transformation of the oppressed and enslaved proletariat into the ruling class of modern history. Every stage in that history is dear to us, and must be studied carefully by us and particularly by our younger Party comrades, so that, in the next stage, we shall know how to carry out a correct revolutionary policy. At the foundation of the Comintern Bolshevism, Lenin, formed the General Staff of the new army of the proletariat, determined on victory—Spartakus, Rosa Luxemburg, the first revolutionary battalion of Western Europe.

The Formation of the Communist International

J. Fineberg

THE historian of the Communist International, with all the material and documents before him, will be able to record with precision the minor as well as the outstanding events connected with its inception and birth. In these few lines I can only recall from memory the impression I had on the occasion of these historical events.

Looking back on the past ten years, in the endeavour to re-establish in my mind the occurrences of that time, I find that, so crowded with events has the period been, both in and around the Communist International, that its actual inception seems to have receded into the distant past.

I had the good fortune to attend the meeting at which the decision was made to take measures for the creation of the Third Communist International. The picture of that gathering that rises before my mind's eye is one shrouded in gloom. One day in January, 1919, I was informed that the meeting would take place that evening, and was invited to attend. At the hour appointed I went to the Kremlin, and was shown into a vast chamber almost in darkness. In one corner, lit by a single electric lamp, was a table and some chairs screened off from the rest of the room by a rich screen. Out of curiosity I looked behind the screen, and to my astonishment I saw a richly emblazoned canopied bed. It so happened that the consultation before the birth of the Communist International took place in the royal bedchamber of Nicholas the Last.

As far as I can recall, there were only four comrades present at that meeting: Comrades Lenin, Chicherin, Sirola of Finland and myself. We drew up to the table in the corner of the room, and the light from the single lamp seemed only to deepen the shadows around us. On the wall over the table hung the well-known painting of a young girl re-

clining at the mouth of a cave, reading a book resting on a skull. The whole surroundings seemed to clothe the proceedings in an atmosphere of mystery and portent. Actually, there was no particular secrecy about the matter. A day or two afterwards the decision was broadcast to the world. The gloom is to be explained simply by the fact that Moscow was obliged to economise in electricity in those days. But having arrived in Russia only a few months previously, I was still full of impressions of the revolution and somewhat inclined to take a romantic view of things.

Besides, the matter to be discussed was of outstanding historical significance. The Russian proletariat was struggling to consolidate its power in the midst of the close ring of the counter-revolution. Outside of the ring, in other countries, the proletariat was in revolt against the bourgeoisie, whose power had been shaken. The parties of the Second International, having betrayed the proletariat in the world war, had now openly come out as the saviours of capitalist society and with their own hands were massacring the workers in order to stem the tide of revolution with a rampart of workers' bodies. In Germany the Spartakus-Bund was battling manfully against the forces of the Butcher Scheidemann; in Austria the proletariat was in revolt, and even in England soldiers were in open mutiny. The Social-Democratic Parties and those sections of them which had remained loyal to the principles of international proletarian solidarity were floundering in this maelstrom, unable to control it.

In these conditions comrade Lenin had come to the conclusion that the time had arrived when the work commenced at Zimmerwald and Kienthal must be completed. The Second International was completely exposed. The international proletariat could now have no doubts that it had joined forces with the in-

ternational bourgeoisie to crush the proletarian revolution. They must be called upon once and for all to break with this treacherous organisation and to unite their forces under the banner of a new, revolutionary, international organisation, that would lead them in the struggle successfully commenced by the Russian proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

It was in this sense that comrade Lenin explained the reasons for convening the meeting. He submitted a draft of the manifesto to be broadcast to the workers of the world, and suggested that it be signed by the representatives of the Russian Party and of the sympathetic foreign parties, who were then in Moscow. After some discussion comrade Lenin's proposal was agreed to. At the same time a draft was accepted of an invitation to be sent to the parties that were in opposition to the Second International to attend the inaugural Congress of the Third International, which it was decided at this meeting to convene in Moscow in March.

Although I had no mandate from my party, the British Socialist Party, to pledge it to the formation of a new International, nevertheless, I signed the manifesto in the name of the party in the conviction that it would approve my action. After expelling the jingo Hyndman and his followers, the British Socialist Party had fought to counteract the war fever among the working class that was fanned by the bourgeoisie aided by their social-democratic lackeys. It had responded to the call of the revolutionary wing of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences, and only the physical impossibility of sending delegates prevented it from being represented at these conferences and supporting the revolutionary wing. On my departure for Russia it had instructed me to express its complete solidarity with the Russian Bolshevik Party. I was convinced that logically it must endorse my action in joining its name to this act of initiating the Third International.

The manifesto and the invitation were broadcast by radio, and in Moscow preparations were proceeded with for the holding of the Inaugural Congress in March.

Unlike subsequent Congresses, the Inaugural Congress, as far as I can remember,

took place on, or very near, the appointed date. But also unlike other Congresses, we did not expect, nor did we receive, many delegates from abroad. In fact, the only delegates that I can recall who came directly from abroad were comrade Eberlein, representing the Spartakus-Bund, comrade Rutgers, representing the American Propaganda League and a section of the Social-Democratic Party of Holland, and several Finnish comrades. The other foreign parties represented at the Congress were represented by members of those parties then in Moscow.

On the same grounds that prompted me to sign the invitation to the Congress, I took it upon myself to represent the British Socialist Party at the Congress, and subsequent events proved that I was right in doing so. After the First Congress the B.S.P. took the initiative in convening a conference of the revolutionary parties and groups in Great Britain for the purpose of forming a Communist Party. As the outcome of that conference, the Communist Party of Great Britain, which affiliated to the Communist International, was formed.

The main point of discussion at the March Congress was the question as to whether that Congress should indeed be the Inaugural Congress of the Communist International, *i.e.*, whether the International should be declared formed at that Congress, which should be counted as the First Congress, or whether it should be regarded merely as a preliminary conference to discuss the advisability of forming the Communist International. The Russian Communist Party, led by Lenin, and the overwhelming majority of the delegates present were in favour of the immediate inauguration of the International. To the disappointment of all, the representative of the Spartakus-Bund hesitated to cast his vote in favour of this proposal without direct instructions from his organisation, and urged the postponement of a decision until a future conference. This was a serious obstacle, for the Spartakus-Bund was, next to the Russian Communist Party, the largest proletarian organisation actually engaged in the revolutionary struggle. The newly formed Communist International would be far less influential without the affiliation of the fighting

German organisation than if it had it in its ranks.

Long and earnest were the appeals of the other delegates to comrade Eberlein to alter his attitude, but his sense of duty to his organisation would not permit him to budge from his position. Lenin's logic, however, proved to be more sound and far-sighted than that of comrade Eberlein's. He argued that the Spartakus-Bund could not fail to join the Communist International if it were formed. He proposed, therefore, that, notwithstanding comrade Eberlein's reservations, the Third International be formally declared established, firm in the conviction that the Spartakus-Bund and all other revolutionary proletarian organisations would rally to its banner.

This proposal was carried with acclamation by the Congress; the Third International was declared formed, and that gathering was declared to be its First Congress.

Lenin's forecast of the attitude of the revolutionary proletarian organisation in other countries towards the Communist International

soon proved to be correct. A little more than a year later the Second Congress was held, and was attended by delegates from all countries, who, in order to reach Moscow, had to break through the barbed wire entanglements with which the bourgeois governments had blockaded Soviet Russia. More than that, the flowing tide of revolution that carried these revolutionary organisations into the Communist International also swept with it the flotsam and jetsam of the disintegrated Second International. But the Second Congress put up a grating in the shape of the Twenty-one Points to keep out undesirable elements, and at subsequent Congresses a good comb was fashioned to comb out such as had managed to penetrate through the grating.

Since it was formed ten years ago, the Communist International has witnessed many arrivals and departures with every rise and fall of the revolutionary tide. But its core, the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, remains steadfast like a rock on the sure foundations that Lenin laid.

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