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IMPORTANT LANDMARK IN THE HISTORY OF BOLSHEVISM

(Forty-fifth anniversary of the Third Congress
of the RSDLP)

By A. Grigorenko

THE Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party opened in London 45 years ago, on April 25, 1905. The rising revolutionary tide dictated to the Party the necessity for a clear-cut revolutionary tactics in the new situation.

Two lines clashed in the Party after the Second Congress: the proletarian, Bolshevik line led by Lenin and Stalin, and the petty-bourgeois, Menshevik line. In addition to the differences on organizational questions which divided the Party in two groups—Bolsheviks and Mensheviks—after the Second Congress, disagreements over tactical questions developed on the eve of the revolution. The Mensheviks were sinking ever deeper into the quagmire of opportunism. All this tended to deepen the split. The absence of a united Party

resulted in the absence of a uniform party tactics. A way out of the crisis might have been found by summoning another congress. But the Menshevik splitters would not even hear of it. The Bolsheviks decided to take the initiative of convening the Third Congress.

In August, 1904, a conference of 22 Bolsheviks was held in Switzerland under Lenin's leadership. The conference adopted the appeal "To the Party" written by Lenin; this appeal laid down a programme of action for the convocation of the Third Congress. A bureau of the majority committees was set up for the practical organization of the Congress. A major role in the struggle for the convocation of the Congress was played by the Transcaucasian Bolsheviks led by J. V. Stalin.

Invitations to the Congress were sent out to all the organisations of the Party, but the Mensheviks refused to take part in it and convened a congress of their own at Geneva calling it a conference.

The Third Congress discussed the most important tactical and organizational problems of the Party and adopted a number of resolutions on the attitude towards other parties and trends. All the proceedings of the Congress were guided directly by Lenin.

The decisions of the Congress, and Lenin's reports and speeches, dealt a crushing blow to the opportunism of the Mensheviks and armed the working class with the understanding of its role as the hegemon in the developing bourgeois-democratic revolution.

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The resolutions of the Bolshevik Congress and of the Menshevik conference disclosed the fundamental differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in appraising the character, driving forces and prospects of the revolution and the role of the working class in the revolution. "Two congresses—to parties," was the way Lenin summed up the situation.

Echoing the West-European reformists, the Mensheviks maintained that since the Russian revolution was bourgeois, it could be led only by the bourgeoisie. The proletariat was allocated the miserable role of its "tail." Exposing the Mensheviks, J. V. Stalin wrote that anyone who advises the proletariat to "follow the bourgeois opposition," deprives the proletariat of independence and converts the Russian proletariat into a tool of the bourgeoisie. (*Collected Works*, Russ. ed., Vol. 2, p. 3).

Lenin showed that the days of revolutions in which the bourgeoisie was the driving force

had passed. The bourgeoisie could be the leader of the revolution in the West because the working class was still weak and small at that time and lacked a political party of its own. But at the beginning of the revolution in Russia, the proletariat was already comparatively numerous and organized; it had its own political party and had already carried through a number of successful battles with the bourgeoisie, whereas the bourgeoisie, frightened by the militancy of the working class, was an anti-revolutionary force.

Lenin showed that efforts of the Mensheviks to keep the proletariat away from the bourgeois revolution was treachery to the interests of Socialism, for "there is not, nor can there be, at the present time, any other means of bringing Socialism nearer, than complete political liberty, than a democratic republic." (*Collected Works*, Russ. 4th ed., Vol. 9, p. 93). The proletariat could and should be the leader of the revolution, because it was the most advanced and consistently revolutionary class of society and has its own political party. The proletariat must be the leader of the revolution also because it is more interested in its victory than the bourgeoisie. The overthrow of autocracy, pointed out Lenin, would enable the working class to organize itself, to advance politically, acquire experience in the leadership of millions of working people and to

pass over from the bourgeois to the socialist revolution.

In order that the proletariat might actually become the leader in the revolution, it was necessary to force out of the arena of leadership and isolate the liberal bourgeoisie, and to secure a reliable ally in the struggle against tsardom. This ally, pointed out Lenin, was the peasantry. Oppressed by the survivals of serfdom and interested at that moment not so much in the preservation of private property as in the confiscation of the landed estates, one of the principal forms of private property, the peasantry, taught Lenin, was capable of becoming a whole-hearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution. Guided by Lenin's precepts, the Congress directed all the organizations of the Party to give their vigorous support to the peasant movement up to the confiscation of the landed estates.

Lenin's report and the resolutions of the Congress on the attitude towards the peasantry constituted an enormous contribution to the theory of Marxism. They showed that the revolutionary potentialities of the peasantry were not exhausted and could be used in the interest of overthrowing tsarism and achieving the proletarian dictatorship. Lenin's thesis was confirmed

by the experience of the three revolutions in Russia.

At the same time Lenin's annihilating criticism of the Menshevik tactics dealt a powerful blow at international opportunism and exposed the reformist conceptions on the bourgeois revolution and the tactics of the proletariat.

Lenin's treatment of the proletariat as the leader in the bourgeois revolution represented the new line of the Marxist party on the questions of tactics in the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Lenin deeply analyzed the question of the methods for securing the victory of the revolution. He proved that tsarism could be overthrown only through an armed uprising. Refuting the statements of the Mensheviks to the effect that the party, the working class, must not lead the armed struggle of the masses, Lenin pointed out that the revolutionary movement had already created the necessity for an uprising. The Congress defined as one of the main tasks of the party "the organization of the proletariat for direct struggle against autocracy through armed insurrection."

Colossal work in the preparation for an armed uprising was accomplished, under the leadership of J. V. Stalin, by the Transcaucasian organization, which, as specially noted by the

Congress, were among the most militant organizations of the Party. In a special resolution the Congress called attention to the fact that the revolutionary sentiment of the workers in the Caucasus had risen to the level of a nationwide uprising and sent its "ardent greetings to the heroic proletariat and peasantry of the Caucasus."

The tactical resolutions of the Congress advanced slogans which helped to lead the masses up to the uprising. The slogans called for the organization of mass political strikes, for the immediate establishment of an eight-hour working day through revolutionary action, for arming the workers and the organization of revolutionary peasants' committees. Lenin attached special significance to mass political strikes regarding them as the principal means for the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. The use of all these tactical means paralyzed the tsarist government apparatus and unfettered the revolutionary energy of the masses.

Following the overthrow of tsarism, in the course of an armed insurrection, pointed out Lenin, a provisional revolutionary government would have to be formed, and it would be the task of this government to consolidate the gains of the revolution, crush the resistance of the counter-revolutionary forces, carry into effect the

minimum programme of the RSDLP and ensure the development of the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution. The class substance of this government would be a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry resting upon the armed masses, upon insurrection.

The Congress recognized it possible for representatives of the party to take part in a provisional government—depending on the concrete historical situation—for the purpose of struggling against counter-revolution and defending the independent interests of the working class, provided that the party exercises strict control over its representatives.

In contradistinction to the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks opposed the inclusion of the Party representatives in a provisional government, for what they wanted was the establishment of an ordinary bourgeois government in Russia. While considering it impossible to participate in a revolutionary government, the Mensheviks, as it will be remembered, readily entered the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government in 1917.

Published in July, 1905, two months after the Third Congress, Lenin's famous book **Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution**, contained a masterly substantiation of the Bolshevik tactics proclaimed by the Congress and a classical criticism of the Menshevik line.

Upholding and developing the tactical principles adopted by the Third Congress and calling for selfless struggle for the overthrow of tsarism and for the establishment of a democratic republic, Lenin emphasized that all this does not exhaust the mission of the working class.

The genius of the revolution, who combined exceptional theoretical power with the practical organizational experience of the proletarian movement, Lenin anticipated the course of events far ahead. He pointed out that the democratic and the Socialist revolutions were two links in the same chain. Developing the brilliant ideas of Marx about the uninterrupted revolution and the necessity of combining the peasant revolutionary movement with the proletarian revolution, Lenin proved that the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution would lead to its transition into a socialist revolution.

This, points out J. V. Stalin, was a new theory of the socialist revolution realized not by an isolated proletariat against the bourgeoisie as a whole, but by the proletariat as the hegemon with the semi-proletarian elements as its allies. This theory already contained the basic elements of the teachings about the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country. By his masterful book Lenin enriched Marxism with a great scientific discovery and laid the foundation for

Forty-five years separate us from the day when the Third Congress of the RSDLP was convened. The tactical principles of Bolshevism, advanced and substantiated at that Congress, withstood a most profound historical test through the experience of the three revolutions in Russia and acquired international significance. "Bolshevism," wrote Lenin, "can serve as a model of tactics for all." (Collected Works, Russ. 3rd ed., Vol. XXIII, p. 386).

The teachings of Lenin and Stalin about the hegemony of the proletariat, confirmed by the titanic experience of the USSR, is of epoch-making significance; it arms all the fraternal Communist and workers' parties. Carrying these teachings into life, the Communists in the People's Democracies secured to the working class of these countries leadership of all the working people in the building of Socialism. The Communist Parties in the bourgeois countries are rallying the working masses around the working class for struggle against the instigators of war, for the struggle for peace, democracy and socialism.

The teachings of Lenin and Stalin about the hegemony of the proletariat represent an infallible compass in the hands of the Communist Parties in the colonial and dependent countries,

in the hands of the heroic Chinese Communist Party which brought China to the historic victory of the people's revolution.

The great ideas of Lenin and Stalin illumine with the light of revolutionary theory the road to the victory of Communism for the working people of all countries.

[From Pravda, April 25, 1950]

the revolutionary tactics with the aid of which the working class, guided by the Communist Party, led the working people of Russia to victory over capitalism.

Lenin's faithful comrade-in-arms, J. V. Stalin, elaborated the Bolshevik tactics together with his teacher and persistently carried it into practice. From the very first steps in the Revolution of 1905, J. V. Stalin consistently defended Lenin's tactical plan in struggle against numerous enemies of the Party and the working class and creatively developed this plan.

Armed with this plan, the Bolshevik Party secured the hegemony of the proletariat and led the working class to great revolutionary battles. The Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution as regards its social content and proletarian—as regards the methods of struggle; it was the dress rehearsal for the Revolution of 1917.

At the Congress, Lenin stressed most emphatically that the working class will fulfil its role as the leader of all the working people only if it is united behind the banner of the proletarian party which directs its struggle ideologically as well as practically. Therefore, along with tactical questions, the Congress devoted much attention to organizational problems. The Congress endorsed Paragraph 1 of the Party Rules

dealing with Party membership as formulated by Lenin and condemned the Mensheviks as "a section that had split away from the Party." The Congress elected a new Central Committee headed by Lenin and instructed the Central Committee to found a new central organ of the Party, the **Proletary**. The plenary meeting of the Central Committee appointed Lenin editor of the **Proletary**.

The Third Congress played an important role in the struggle for the party of a new type, the Leninist Party.

"Bolshevism," wrote Lenin in 1910, "had taken full shape as a trend in the spring and summer of 1905...." (Collected Works, Russ. 4th ed. Vol. XVI, p. 350).

After the 3rd Congress, in spite of the formal unity with the Mensheviks at the 4th Congress of the RSDLP, the Bolsheviks actually comprised an independent party officially inaugurated as a separate, Bolshevik Party at the Prague Conference in 1912.

The great leaders of the Bolsheviks, Lenin and Stalin, founded a militant Marxist party of the working class, a party of the social revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. And the Third Congress of the RSDLP was one of the most important landmarks in the history of this party.

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