

Workers' Dreadnought

ORGAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

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Communist Party.

British Section of the Third International.

On Saturday, June 19th, 1920, at the International Socialist Club, 28, East Road, City Road, London, the Communist Party (British section of the Third International) was formed.

The Conference at which the new party was formed consisted of delegates from the Aberdeens, Croydon, and Holt Communist groups, the Stepney Communist League, the Gorton Socialist Society, the Labour Abstentionist Party, the Manchester Soviet and the Workers' Socialist Federation (Communist Party) and its branches.

D. A. Davies, of South Wales, was elected to the chair.

Letters were read from various Communist organisations in the provinces sympathising with the objects of the gathering, but unable to send delegates.

The two main points on the agenda were:—

(a) Whether those present should take part in the Communist Unity Conference, provisionally fixed for August 1st.

(b) Whether they should take other action.

The W.S.F. delegates, who had hitherto taken part in the unity negotiations, reported:—

(1) That of the original four parties to the negotiations, the S.L.P. had withdrawn, and the South Wales Socialist Society had ceased to attend. There remained only the B.S.P., the W.S.F., and the Communist Unity Group recently expelled from the S.L.P.

(2) The withdrawals had upset the balance of parties, and had placed the right wing in a preponderant position.

(3) The right wing had used its majority power to insist that the organisations participating in the Unity Conference should be bound beforehand to accept the findings of that conference, and to merge their identity in whatever party might arise.

(4) Since, owing to the circumstances above outlined, and to the suggested basis of delegation, the Right Wing elements will dominate the Conference, the new body resulting from that conference will have Right Wing ideas, which include affiliation to the Labour Party and participation in Parliamentary action.

After discussion, the following resolution was adopted, with two dissentients:—

"We Revolutionary Communist delegates and individuals pledge ourselves to the Third International, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Soviet system, non-affiliation to the Labour Party, and to abstention from Parliamentary action; and decide not to take part in the August 1st Unity Conference, or in the Unity negotiations concerned with it.

As a logical consequence of this decision, the conference unanimously resolved to form the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International).

A provisional Organising Council of 25 members, with power to co-opt up to 30, was elected for three months.

The Councilmen resident in the London area, and such provincial Councilmen as are able to attend, will act as a provisional Organising Committee, pending the National Conference, which is to be held in September.

A full-time Secretary, a member of the Council, was elected.

Robert Stott, also a member of the Council, was appointed Honorary Treasurer.

The *Workers' Dreadnought* was adopted as the first official weekly organ of the Party. Sylvia Pankhurst, a member of the Council, was elected editor.

The second day's conference, under the chairmanship of Eden Paul, was devoted to drafting the provisional Party programme, and to detail work.

The Communist Party appeals for members who accept its programme. The minimum subscription is 3d. per week.—Edgar T. Whitehead, Secretary. Temporary address: International Socialist Club, 28, East Road, City Road, London, N.1.

OPPORTUNISM AND DOGMATISM.

By HERMAN GORTER.

The old dissension between "opportunists" and "dogmatists," which divided the Second International, seems to have come to life again in a new form in the Third International, whereas the struggle which caused the downfall of the First International was fought out in the Second, the dissension which split up the Second International seems destined to reach a solution only in the Third.

Opportunists in the Third International.

Moreover, it would be a wonder, nay, an impossibility, that with the erection of a Third International, opportunism should straightway



Capitalist Peace Negotiations.

disappear. On the contrary, and unless we are much mistaken, the opportunists will enter into the Third International in even greater numbers. The antithesis between the two trends, in Central and Western Europe, becomes ever more marked.

Two Distinct Trends.

We have clear examples in the two Communist parties (the Spartacusbund and the Kommunistische Partei) in Germany, and the W.S.F. with a few groups, and the B.S.P. in England.

Both trends are decidedly revolutionary, both want the subjection of capital, and the coming of Communism at the earliest possible date. Both accept the principal means towards the achievement of this aim, the Workers' Councils, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the unity of action of the proletariat.

But they differ in tactics, in the means by which they propose to obtain their aim. And this difference is most strongly marked in the conception regarding Parliamentarism and the Trade Unions.

Parliamentarism and Trade Unions.

These articles are written with the object of contributing towards as clear and keen an insight as possible into the general course of the world revolution. The view strongly taken by these articles is deeply tinged with a special tendency, to be sure, but it is as clear and true as the author can make it.

The revolution is an international matter. Fortunately the times are past when the proletariat of the country was only superficially and theoretically interested in the development in other countries. Our cause is one. We must learn by the struggle of the proletariat of other countries. International capitalism can only be overcome by all of us. We must come together in one battle with the same tactics. Capital unites more and more on one single front, the proletariat must do the same.

In a series of three articles we shall expose various opinions regarding the tactics that have

to be adopted in Germany. In the first we shall give the arguments of Comrade Pannekoek, against the use of Parliamentary action in Germany, and in favour of the institution of industrial unions. In the second we shall point out the dangers of Parliamentary action in Germany, by means of a report on the last rising of the German workers at the time of the Kapp-putsch, as delivered by one of the most prominent members of the Communist Party in the United States, an eye-witness of that rising. In the third we shall consider what lessons the other countries may draw from these events.

At no moment could these investigations be more propitious than to-day, now that the Soviet army is fighting Poland, and the invasion of Persia by the Red Armies causes the world empire of Britain to tremble to its foundations.

The German Situation.

In connection herewith we should also consider the elections in a part of Germany, Brunswick, where the Independent Socialists of Germany gained a large majority over the Noske Party, when the middle parties nearly disappeared, and the masses went either right or left. It is generally expected that the general elections will take the same course. This would make a new revolution probable.

With regard to the first article we should observe that Comrade Pannekoek, a Dutchman, was for many years a teacher at the party school of the Social-Democrats in Berlin, and later, after having been expelled from Germany by the Prussian Government, in the city of Bremen. He was a regular contributor to some twenty or thirty German papers, and before the War, he was with Rosa Luxemburg and Radek, one of the leaders of the left-radical trend in Germany which, even at that time, was already against Kautsky. He is thoroughly familiar with the German Labour movement.

During these last months, moreover, he has been the spiritual leader of the Bureau of the Third International in Amsterdam. From his article the English reader will learn at the same time the difference of opinion with Moscow, which led to the abrogation of this Bureau.

Pannekoek's View: Parliament—a Fight by Leaders.

The article is as follows:—

"Parliamentarism is the typical form of a fight by means of leaders, in which the masses play a subordinate part. The question is not, why Parliamentarism as a form of government cannot lead to self-government through the masses, and why we oppose it by the Soviet system. We treat here of Parliamentarism as a method of proletarian warfare. The practice of Parliamentarism accustoms the workers to letting others act for them; it creates the illusion that others can fight their battle for them. At a certain stage Parliamentarism is necessary. It is necessary when the workers are still unable to create for themselves the organs required for the management of society, when their spiritual orientation and their understanding of Capitalism are as yet in the very first stages of development, and when the Socialist Party must expose the governing system by means of keen criticism, and must attract the masses by demanding reforms. Then the leaders must force themselves into Parliament, and must carry on the political party contest in the elections.

The Masses Acting for Themselves.

When, however, the masses themselves have come into action, and are at the same time be-

gining to build up their own organs, their Soviets, that is to say, when the revolution has begun, then the need for Parliamentary action becomes of ever less importance, as compared with the great drawback involved in keeping the workers from taking action.

The Masses Act from Necessity.

The workers do not feel or act in a revolutionary way because they are urged to do so, but from bitter necessity, and when they see no other way out.

To be revolutionary in deed means actually to take in hand the reorganisation of the great problems of society, to study them, to take momentous decisions, to convince others, to come to action.

These problems cannot be solved by clever leaders, a solution can only be found, first, by the Communist vanguard, and then the masses themselves taking them in hand, searching, propagating, struggling, trying, venturing, persevering, bearing the responsibility, and recognising it. All this is hard and painful, and as long as the working-class imagines there is an easier way, as long as the workers are told that others will do it for them, will carry on the propaganda from a high platform, will take the decisions, give the signal for action, and decide on the legislative measures, as long as they are not controlled by an iron necessity, the workers will hesitate from an innate inertia, and will remain massive merged as they are in old modes of thinking and traditions.

The Russian Contribution.

The great, the really Communist character of the Russian Revolution, lies firstly in the fact that it called forth the activity of the masses themselves, in that it fired their psychical and physical energy, so that they themselves are the makers and the bearers of the new society. This self-enfranchisement of the masses is not at once complete, it comes in stages, and the giving up of Parliamentarism is one of these stages. That the Communist Party in Germany in December, 1918, should have agreed to boycott the elections, was no foolish illusions of an easy victory, but the craving to throw off a mental subjection as soon as there had been found a way towards constructive activity of the masses, by means of the "Councils."

This new anti-Parliamentarism which has become manifest among the Communists of various countries, has nothing in common with Syndicalism or Anarchism—as has often been averred—it is closely connected with the Soviet principle.

Parliamentary and Trade Union Power over the Masses.

Whereas Parliamentarism stands for the spiritual power of the leaders over the masses, the Trade Union movement represents their material power. The big Trade Unions have grown to be institutions of the nature of State organisms, from being servants, the leaders have become masters, forming a caste that identifies itself with the organisation. They control all the engines of power, the finances and the press. Any attempt at revolt on the part of the members is shattered against the apparatus of regulations and the bureaucratic hierarchy, before it has succeeded in carrying through its opposition. It is only at the cost of the greatest perseverance and energy that an opposition current in the masses can in the long run lead to a moderate success, and in most cases such currents are confined to changes of personnel, which leave the system intact.

Over and over again, during the past years, in England, in Germany, in America, the members openly have rebelled, and gone their own way, in defiance of the leaders, and of the union rules and resolutions. That this is a common experience proves that the members do not control the union, and that the union, instead of being their collectivity, is a strange power by which they are dominated, though it springs from their own ranks. The union is, therefore, something analogous to the State.

Once the rebellion has quieted down, the old domination asserts itself in the old manner. In spite of the impotent exasperation and hatred amongst the masses, it manages to maintain itself, owing to the support of the many indifferent elements, and especially because the need for the union is felt by all, as the only means whereby the workers can gather strength in a strong in-

ter-organism, against capitalism. The bureaucratic leaders are like the State bureaucracy, not only in their domination of the masses in the service of capitalism, which, through them, keeps the workers in check, but also in that their "policy" more and more becomes a coaxing of the masses, through demagogic phrases, in favour of their agreements with the capitalists.

In Germany the trade union bureaucracy is rough and coarse in its manifestations, forcing the workers, by insidious or violent means, to accept once more piece-work and longer working hours. In England its method is more subtle and cunning; the British leaders to all appearances allow themselves to be shoved by the workers against their will, as does also the Government, whilst in reality they ignore the wishes of the workers.

The Counter-Revolutionary Force of Trade Unions.

The counter-revolutionary force of trade union bureaucracy cannot be weakened or done away with by a mere change of persons; it is the form of organisation itself which renders the masses well-nigh impotent, which prevents them from making the trade unions into organs of their proper will. The revolution can only be triumphant, if these organisations themselves are abolished, that is to say, if their form of organisation is to be so completely altered, as to become something altogether different. The Soviet system will form not only the new political organs of the proletariat as compared with the bourgeois Parliament, but also the new foundation for the trade unions. Some traces hereof became manifest already in the Syndicalist and especially in the industrial unions, in so far as the bureaucratic apparatus has been reduced to a small scale, all the strength being derived from the activity of the masses.

This was done more directly, and more consciously in the Shop Stewards' movement in England, with its organs of the masses created through practice, in opposition to the trade union bureaucracy. In the German unions it was done more consciously, but feebly, owing to the defeat of the revolution. Every movement of that kind, which weakens the inner firmness of the centralised unions, does away with some of the obstacles to the revolution. On the other hand, whereas, with a view to immediate success, the Communists strengthen the trade union form of organisation; they strengthen the obstacles that later on will hamper them most severely.

As long as capitalism still stands firmly upright, these new rank and file formations can attain but a limited state of development, except under very special conditions. In America, for instance, where the large numbers of the un-schooled workers outside the trade unions caused the wide development of the I.W.W., and the big trade unions remain well-nigh intact as a reactionary force. It is only during the revolution, which awakens the action of the masses, that the trade unions are undermined, and that their character changes entirely.

The Mission of the Communist Party.

As far Comrade Pannekoek's article. I have but one thing to add to it; Pannekoek, in my opinion, omits one important matter, perhaps the most important of all.

It seems hopeless, and to many comrades it will seem hopeless, that the proletariat in this period of transition from evolution to revolution, should not join in Parliamentary action, nor be able to make any really strong economic league outside the trade unions. Is it impossible then that in this period the proletariat should form a strong organisation?

This question Comrade Pannekoek omits.

The answer is:—

Just now, in this period, the proletariat can constitute the strong Communist Party. The Party which criticises all other parties and the trade unions, itself remaining absolutely clear and guided by principle in its tactics. The Party which leads the way towards the revolution, and in the revolution, and which, thanks to that, small though it may remain in the beginning, already forms the core, hard as steel, clear as glass, around which the masses will rally once the revolution has come.

Ireland: the Achilles Heel of England." By HERMAN GORTER. From the W.S.F. Price 1d.

WHY POLAND FIGHTS RUSSIA.

A Letter From Warsaw.

It is long since I have been lying in wait for a chance of describing to you the situation which is created for us here, especially since Poland received from the Supreme Council of the bourgeoisie the mandate for the defence of their "civilisation."

Independent Poland, since her origin in the autumn of 1918, has had an evolution in her interior politics which resembles the gradual clarification of troubled waters.

The Nationalist Mirage.

At the outset the idea of national independence dazzled great masses of the population, and the nationalist idea contaminated even the industrial proletariat. But such class confusion could not hold out long in the face of realities. The Nationalist Socialists of the Polish Socialist Party (P.S.P.), which, when it came into power, formed a Government that was but a continual balancing between the people and the bourgeoisie, at last made their choice, and benevolently handed over its power to the reaction. Since then, this party of petty and pitiful caricatures of the Scheidemanns, has again mistaken to the right, its sole ambition being not to be mistaken, even from afar, for Bolsheviki. The only legacy of the three months' reign of the Polish Socialist Party is the state of seige which has become permanent, thanks to the idol of patriotic class collaboration the P.S.P. impressed on the minds of the people.

However, the economic situation, becoming more and more lamentable, patriotic enthusiasm has almost disappeared in the great masses of the population. Each successive bourgeois government has worked desperately to create an efficient machine of bourgeois defence of the army and the gendarmery, instead of the popular militia which had been spontaneously formed when Poland obtained its freedom as a nation.

In one year, a Polish bourgeois State has been created, oppressive and police-again ridden. That demonstration of the truth of Marxist teaching has not been in vain. It has opened the eyes of numerous proletarians, and has rendered impossible that atmosphere of confusionism so necessary to the mountebanks of "Socialism within reason."

Polish Army Biggest in Central Europe.

To-day the bourgeoisie are armed to the teeth. The Polish army is the biggest of Central Europe. The minds of the soldiers are systematically worked upon in a reactionary sense. The whole civilian population is sacrificed to the army, yet, thanks to the incapacity, to the thefts, breaches of trust and stupidity of the officials, it is neither well clothed, nor well fed, and the first signs of demoralisation are distinctly visible in its ranks.

Motives of the War.

The effort of Poland is brought to bear upon two fronts:—

(1) Against Soviet Russia; occasionally, in point of fact, also against Germans, Ukrainians, Czechs, Jews, etc.

(2) Against the claims of the Polish proletariat. The motives for the war policy directed against the Soviets are various: fear of Bolshevism, annexation rapacity, the interests of the nobles who own the great domains in Lithuania and Ukraine, the necessity of a diversion of ideas from the interior situation, and servility towards the Allies; all these motives intervene against peace.

The War Unpopular in Poland.

But since the pacific propositions of the Soviets are known, the war becomes more and more unpopular. It is urged amongst the bourgeoisie that peace with Moscow will second the filtering of Bolshevist ideas into Poland, but if war against Soviet Russia is insisted upon, in spite of the great popular opposition, the spread of the revolutionary spirit among the masses will be still more certain.

In the beginning the bourgeoisie were afraid of the workers and affected to treat them with consideration.

How the Polish Soviets Were Crushed.

The Polish Soviets were regularly elected and sat till the month of July, 1919, in all our big towns. Several of them, for instance, that of the basin of Dombrocol, had a distinctly Communist majority. The situation was then fairly analogous to that of the Kerensky epoch in Russia; that is to say that, beside the government, there existed semi-officially representative bodies composed solely of workmen.

The merit (?) of having liberated our governing classes from the Soviet nightmare is due entirely to the Polish Socialist Party. In this atmosphere of reaction and ever-increasing repression the leaders of this Party discovered a contrivance worthy of the traitors and cheats that they are. They summoned all the delegates who were members of the Soviets to declare their opinions upon patriotism and upon the refusal of the majority to make a profession of patriotic faith. The minorities, the patriotic Socialist factions, then separated from the Soviets and formed their own "Councils of Patriotic Socialist Workers' Delegates." The reactionaries having departed the Soviets were thus rendered purely Communist, and were dissolved by force of arms, their secretaries and other officials being thrown into prisons.

As to the patriotic Soviets, they vegetate as enemy little groups, representing nobody, and listened to by no one. They meet once a fortnight to adopt tortuous resolutions, dictated by the great masters of the Party. The bourgeoisie leave them to drift on in freedom. At one sitting, a delegate, seized with disgust, uttered some words of truth: "This prating of ours is perfectly useless. Let us go to the cinema!"