

Bolshevik Congresses Once and Now

On the Eve of the Congress

The impending congress of the ruling party of the Soviet Union is being called upon to give its approval of the political leadership, the economic plan and the work of the Comintern, in accordance with a formula prepared in advance.

First of all: why wasn't a regular party congress convened in three years and eight months? Under the most onerous conditions of underground struggle and emigration, from the years 1903 to 1907, four congresses took place: in Brussels-London, Geneva, Stockholm and again in London.

In April 1917 a new party conference is called, similarly equal in importance to a congress. Four months later, at the end of July 1917, under conditions of semi-legality, the Sixth party congress assembles and sets out the political premises for the October uprising.

Such was the regime prior to the death of Lenin and prior to the declaration of war against "Trotskyism". The 13th and 14th congresses already took place after great delays, necessitated by backstage bureaucratic maneuvers.

Liberals and social democrats have frequently drawn a very superficial analogy between Bolshevism and Fascism. The late Serrati, former leader of the Italian Maximalists and a Communist during the last years of his life, said to me in 1914: "To our shame, Mussolini learned more from the Bolsheviks than we did."

It is impossible to read without a feeling of embarrassment and sometimes shame the Soviet press where in each column, in each article, each telegram and report of a meeting, the "Leader" is honored and praised in the very same unchanged and universally obligatory expressions.

The connection between deifying the leader and the leaders (local leaders are deified within the limits of a definite territory) and the violation of the statutes, and the abolition of criticism of the summits, the convocation of congresses at arbitrary intervals, after even more arbitrary cleanings—is absolutely evident.

Bureaucratic Dictatorship and Social Contradictions.

For social development in general, for proletarian dictatorship in particular, a course and norms of pure reason cannot be prescribed. It is naive to say that the Soviet state is not a dictatorship of the proletariat merely on the basis that the given form of a dictatorship does not correspond to our a priori conceptions.

The harsh character of the dictatorship is caused by the need of suppressing the resistance of the overthrown ruling classes and to undermine their economic roots. But according to the official theory this basic task of the workers' state is in the main achieved.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 1)

to the dishonor of the workers to accept. An honest leadership worthy of the name will have no need of being ashamed to organize its ranks even for such an outcome if the conditions impose it upon the workers.

But as matters stand now, the hope and prospect for a victory remain unimpaired. It is necessary, however, that the steps be taken which have been indicated in these pages on several occasions.

The leadership is the decisive problem. It must prove capable of organizing and coordinating the work, of drawing in all progressive forces, of discarding all narrow and clique tendencies, of inspiring the workers with self-confidence, of sharpening and extending the demonstrations and picket lines by heightening the morale, of instilling the workers at the daily mass meetings with the knowledge and spirit which alone can make them a cohesive and battling army.

Any failure to make the neces-

In reality no one of the rulers of the U. S. S. R. believes in such a perspective. The second five year plan, calculated on a full and complete liquidation of class distinctions, does not foresee at all a mitigation of government coercion, nor a decrease in the budget of the G. P. U.

Young Soviet theoreticians, it is true, have attempted to present the matter in such a way that the socialist growth of the country and the liquidation of the classes lead before our very eyes to the mitigation and weakening of purely state functions. Some people believed them. Louis Fischer, is one of his generally not very fortunate excursions into the realm of theory, tried to present the merging of the Commissariat for Trade with the trade unions as the beginning of the liquidation of the state.

The withering away of the party in the socialist sense of the word presupposes the liquidation of politics in general, therefore also of state coercion, and signifies the approach to an anarchistic society and by no means to a bureaucratic regime. Is it this that we see in reality? If "politics" has disappeared in the U. S. S. R. it has disappeared for the masses only.

However, the disproportions of the belated and jumpy economic and cultural development have not disappeared in the dictatorship of the proletariat: they have merely taken on an unrecognizable form. The productive forces of the U. S. S. R. develop now in a nationalized form but they still pass the stages left far behind by the advanced capitalist countries—especially if reckoned on a per capita basis.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 1)

sary improvements has opened the door to the Stalinist wreckers. The only way to eliminate this dangerous cancer is by making the necessary corrections and then by dealing with the Stalinists in the only way permissible to class conscious militants: by proving in objective discussion and above all in practice, the superiority of the policies and conduct of the union's leadership to the misleadership of the 18th Street incompetents.

For our own part, we stand with those who seriously pursue such a course, and with no one else. And although we represent only a minority in the ranks of the Amalgamated, we are ready to cooperate with all the progressive and militant forces in the union who are marching in the same direction because they, like we, are concerned only with the advancement of the interests of the workers and their strike. Especially a labor strike is the last place in which a faction monopoly or clique tendencies can be permitted. Their continued existence can only prove fatal, because they are an insidious poison.

A genuinely collective direction of the strike, a heightened note of militancy, a serious concern with the organization of the work, a sober approach to the prospective outcome of the struggle—these problems, at the end of the second week, now stand out, full of promise that their solution will mean the triumph of the workers and their union!

Disagreements within the uncontrolled bureaucracy must be settled from above, by the "Leader" who is but the personification of the apparatus.

But if it is not a question now of the withering away of the state out of its highest intensification, here should be deep social contradictions which give rise to this process. In what direction must we look for them?

Polemizing in 1932 against the author of these lines in the columns of the Berliner Tageblatt, Radek explained to us with his usual playfulness that socialism means the nationalization of the means of production and distribution and nothing more, and that if working class children do not get enough milk, this is explained by the scarcity of cows and not by the absence of socialism. Despite all its captivating simplicity this theory is radically false.

It is true that social democrats drew from this proposition the reactionary conclusion that the Russian proletariat must not take power in general. They came to the same conclusion for Germany of 1918 as well and through the officers of Noske brought this admonishment forcefully to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. But the conclusions of the social democracy are no less false than those of Radek. The theory of Kautsky, Otto Bauer, Leon Blum and others assumes an extremely harmonious evolution of social forms: having reached the necessary maturity, the productive forces invite Messrs. socialist leaders to power.

Socialism, that is a society of harmonious production and distribution, presupposes at any rate that all the children should drink milk to their heart's content. If the cows are nationalized but their number is insufficient, or their udders dry, it is still not socialism, because for lack of milk conflicts arise: between the city and village, between the Kolkhozes, Sovkhozes and individual peasants, between various layers of the proletariat, between all the toilers and the bureaucracy.

When La Guardia saw the torrent he attempted to unload responsibility before his own bourgeois and petty bourgeois supporters and hamstringing the movement. He advised the men to affiliate with the A. F. of L. and made efforts to secure the intervention of Green himself. As a result of his "help" Gailbraith of the A. F. of L. Philadelphia Taxi-men's Union was sent to New York as general organizer of the strike.

The problem is, of course, not exhausted by milk, it only begins with milk and bread. The contradictions pass through the whole system of economy and of social relations. The question, however, is too complicated and requires a special article. —L. TROTSKY. January 20, 1934.

Another "Victory" for Lewis

The U.M.W. of A. Convention

(Continued from page 1)

But what is the real significance of these declarations of conciliation? Are they intended to secure peace and harmony in the mine camps with a filled pay envelope and a "full dinner pail" for the miners? That is not the motive.

The cringing pledge of these "industrial statesman" before the coal operators is an effort to guarantee that there will be no fight for improved wages and working conditions made by the miners so that Lewis may secure formal recognition of the union and collect the check-off on the dues payments.

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No Strike Assurances But the convention went on record for higher wages, for the six-hour work day and for the five-day

week. Yes, but on this point also, Lewis hastened the assurance that there would be no truculence in the attitude of the union. He warned the delegates not to raise false hopes back home that such desires could be obtained. "We do not wish to cripple the industry or embarrass the federal government or the recovery administration," he said—There must be no strikes, according to Lewis. In glaring contrast to these assurances, however, it is necessary to recall the fact that never in history have any serious gains been recorded by the miners except by fighting for them, by using the powerful strike weapon.

The most brilliant pages of American labor history carry the story of the valiant fight of the coal miners. But they also record the innumerable betrayals perpetrated by Lewis during the administration covering almost two decades.

The Insurgent Unions In 1925 he made his infamous proposal to drive 350,000 miners from the industry. The scourge of unemployment and the increase of machine mining aided this nefarious plan. Where once upwards of 800,000 coal miners worked in and around the mines, there are now 400,000 men employed. Many revolts against the Lewis regime have occurred, and insurgent unions have been created. There is today an independent union in the anthracite claiming 50,000 members;

the Progressive Miners Union in Illinois, which lays claim to 30,000 members. New unions have sprung up in Washington, West Virginia, and Nova Scotia. But the independent union in the anthracite, headed by Cappellini and Maloney has not differed essentially in its methods from the U. M. W. The so-called progressive leaders of the Illinois union have adopted all the bureaucratic methods of expulsions and frame-ups of the Lewis machine.

However, the indomitable spirit of the rank and file coal miners has remained. It is due to their vitality and fighting ability that the U. M. W. has revived and today represents perhaps the strongest union in the country. There are still great latent forces hidden within the innumerable betrayals perpetrated by Lewis during the administration covering almost two decades. The spirit of rebellion will again assert itself. The economic pressure upon the miners will call forth their resistance against the continuous and increased enslavement. This resistance will reduce the deceptive conciliation and peace proposals to naught. In the mine fields are excellent prospects for new and more serious rebellions and for much more serious contests against the treacherous Lewis machine. —A. S.

Masses Shake French Regime

(Continued from Page 1)

important bourgeois politicians were part of Stavisky's swindling apparatus.

The long pent-up discontent of the masses now began to break loose. Its dramatic expression was the attempt of thousands of Parisians to storm the Chamber of Deputies. Undeniably the demonstration in the Place de la Concorde was organized by reactionary elements. The Royalist groups led by the Camelots du Rot—an organization led by the sons of the nobility which the liberal French Republic has decade after decade permitted to plot openly its own destruction—desired by a show of force to bring about a swing to the right in the French Chamber. Thus they hoped to get into the tent the nose of the Bourbon camel which is eventually to crowd out the republic.

What the Royalists did not count on was the mood of the masses. By the thousands, workers hastened to the Place de la Concorde to join in the demonstration. Among them were many war veterans, tired of the "ingratitude of the Third Republic". But these masses did more than join the demonstration. They transformed its political character. From an expression of Royalist reaction, its voice was changing to that of the oppressed masses of the country, to become a thundering protest against political corruption, economic collapse and relentless exploitation. From the organized Royalists and would-be Fascist groups, the government had little to fear. But in the close-packed mass which boldly went head-on against armed and mounted soldiery, there moved a different spirit from that of the reaction.

Hence the launching of cavalry and machine gunners against the demonstrators, hence the press censorship and suspension of civil liberties. And hence the calling to power of Doumergue, "the strong man", who the bourgeoisist hopes,

will tame the masses. This fierce reactionary was co-author of the imperialist Franco-Czarist secret treaty of 1917. He is an enemy of reform and democracy, and a professional Red-baiter.

It is doubtful in the extreme, however, that Doumergue will succeed in stifling the rebellious mood of the oppressed French masses. "Whether successful or not," writes the liberal New York World-Telegram, "this wide popular revolt and violence is the stuff of which revolution is made.... An event of this kind is never forgotten. It lights new flames of revolt which, even though smothered for a while, are likely to burst out with greater intensity later."

With open reaction in the saddle in France, however, there will be a more rapid and intensive development of French Fascist trends. L'Ami du Peuple, organ of millionaire Senator Coty, is preaching an unadulterated Hitlerian doctrine to its enormous body of discontented petty bourgeois readers. Half a dozen Fascist grouplets contend for the honor of becoming the vanguard of reaction. Money will now flow to them from the coffers of the Comite des Forges more generously than before. While the liberal press tries to center attention on the demands of the Royalists, laughing them off as silly and outmoded, Fascism, the reaction a la mode is being prepared.

To trust in such a situation to "the common sense of the French people" the democratic traditions of 1789, the parliamentary opposition of the Socialists, for the head-on of Fascism would be as futile and deceptive as it proved to be in Germany. The Socialist Party of France continues to work to hold back the workers of the country from militant extra-parliamentary struggle. And the Communist Party of France, having learned nothing from the German catastrophe or from the steady decline in its own membership report-

ed by Piatnitsky at the recent 13th Plenum continues its sectarian, disruptive course. The two bureaucracies together manage to keep half the working class immobile while the other half throws away its energy in futile forays.

So apparent in this that the bourgeoisie indulges in complacency. "The World-Telegram remarks that "there seems to be even less organization now than in the somewhat similar riots which resulted in the short-lived Red Commune of 1871." However exaggerated this statement may be, revolutionaries can draw small comfort from the recent record of the French C. P. The problem in France today is one of speed: can the real revolutionary leadership, and especially the International-Communists, organize a powerful revolutionary party more rapidly than the Fascists rally their black hundred forces? The possibility cannot be doubted. The task is posed.

The coming of Doumergue to power, it must be added, has its importance for the U. S. S. R. Under Stalin, the workers' state has placed its trust not in the forces of international revolution, but in pacts and treaties with bourgeois governments. The Stalinists have argued that Hitler's triumph was not an unmitigated evil from the revolutionary viewpoint, since "it threw Poland and France into our arms."

With a fierce Communist-hunter in the saddle of France, and behind him the steel trust, whose handy man, Tardieu, may become Doumergue's Foreign Minister, the illusory nature of Stalinist diplomacy is again exposed. Once again it is demonstrated that only the revolutionary proletariat of France can help restrain French capitalism from launching against the Soviet Union a Franco-Russian-Polish army of intervention under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, whom Leon Trotsky long ago characterized as "the super-Wrangel" of counter revolution.

The Significance of the Taxi Strike

(Continued from page 1)

them and the companies against them.

When La Guardia saw the torrent he attempted to unload responsibility before his own bourgeois and petty bourgeois supporters and hamstringing the movement. He advised the men to affiliate with the A. F. of L. and made efforts to secure the intervention of Green himself. As a result of his "help" Gailbraith of the A. F. of L. Philadelphia Taxi-men's Union was sent to New York as general organizer of the strike.

At the same time La Guardia called in Morris L. Ernst of the American Civil Liberties Union to act as mediator. Ernst arranged a number of meetings. The fruit of his efforts was a "settlement" which said nothing about the recognition of the union, minimum wages or maximum hours. In addition the proposed distribution of the accumulated tax money was unsatisfactory. The men voted down this "settlement" and demonstrated what they thought of it on the streets against the scab drivers.

But the nub of the boss strategy was the attempt to use the independents to divide the ranks. An independent is the owner-driver of

one cab. The five-cent tax question did not affect them as it went into their pockets. They are likewise indifferent to the hours and wage question. In short they are petty bourgeois individualists. Consequently they were and are eager to reap the harvest of fares that they saw when the company drivers went on strike. Terminals and piers reserved to the company cabs by contract were now inviting them to come in and render "service to the public". The independents offered to pay two dollars apiece a day into the treasury of the union if the union would agree to their working.

But the strikers saw through this scheme. They realized that if the independents were out on the streets that would be a powerful lever in the hands of the bosses to break the strike. They sacrificed the money and voted for "no cabs on the streets." And forthwith they repaired to the streets to translate the vote into reality.

It is not clear exactly how the Socialist Panken got into the strike and how he became one of its spokesmen. But one thing is certain; he is a partner to the latest perfidious sell-out arranged by La Guardia, Ernst and some people on

the Committee of Thirteen which conducted the negotiations for the strikers. The terms of this sell-out are the worst imaginable. The question of union recognition which has become the crucial one in the strike is not even mentioned. The wages and hours question is ignored. The accumulated tax money is referred to the future for distribution. The men get absolutely nothing.

Before this maneuver was put over on the men they tried to spread the strike to other sectors of transportation. They chose the bus drivers and conductors of the Fifth Ave. buses as the point of attack.

The strike has already recorded positive gains for the taxi men and the entire labor movement. It stiffened the morale of the hotel strikers, and it has helped their strike to the extent that it has made it difficult for most and impossible for some diners to reach the hotels. It has set an inspiring example of working class militancy and will undoubtedly be an impetus to other workers to struggle against their intolerable conditions. And what is of paramount importance for the taxi drivers; win or lose they will come out of this strike with a union. We are also sure of another thing. This strike of the taxi drivers will not be the last. —T. STAMM.