

Party Construction in the Sections of the Communist International.

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Party construction and the building up of Party organisations in Europe and America have differed greatly from the structure of our Russian Party organisations which came into being with the very commencement of a labour movement in Russia.

In other countries at the dawn of the labour movement, there were, comparatively speaking, suitable political conditions which gave the workers an opportunity to organise legal political parties of the working class, as well as to establish local and provincial branches. The latter had the right to convene Party meetings and workers' mass meetings. They could also have their own Party press. Therefore, Party organisations led from the beginning an existence **apart from factories and workshops**. This was perfectly comprehensible, for why should the German social democratic party organise workers' public meetings and Party meetings in the workshops and factories (besides, the German capitalists would not have allowed them), when they could easily convene them after working hours, and in any locality where the workers lived, meetings which were actually very well-attended by the workers.

It should also be said that in New York, Paris, London, Berlin and other large towns the residential quarters of the workers are not in the vicinity of workshops and factories, and that in some places there are few late trains. The latter circumstance is even now a great obstacle to making the workshops and factories the main centre of communist work.

There were also two other features in which the Party construction and Party work of the social democratic parties of other countries differed from the construction of our Russian Party organisations. Side by side with the political proletarian parties of Germany, Austria, France and Italy, there existed trade unions. Between these two forms of labour movement there was so to speak a division of labour: the trade unions had to make a stand for all the economic demands of the working class, while the social democratic parties stood for their political interests. The social democratic parties cultivated "high" politics and left it to the trade unions to settle all conflicts between the workers and the manufacturers. (In some countries the trade unions, although connected with the factories and workshops through their treasurers, did not hold their trade union meetings in the factories and workshops.)

The other differentiating feature was that all the political parties of the proletariat (social democratic) in Europe aimed at conducting "the struggle" with capitalism within the framework of the existing order, chiefly by means of the vote (at present it has become an established fact that all social democratic parties are no longer "opponents" but defenders of the capitalist order). Therefore the constituency was the basis of working-class organisations.

In Russia conditions were utterly different. The Russian working class, even before it made its appearance on the political arena, was deprived of the right of having its own press and its own Party and trade unions. Neither did it enjoy the right of meeting. Therefore, the only places where workers could discuss their needs, the political situation of Russia and the tasks of the working class were the factories and workshops where class-conscious workers had an opportunity to agitate, to carry on propaganda, and to form their small factory and workshop political organisations. As trade unions in the European sense did not exist in Russia (except during the short period 1905—1907) until 1917, the political social democratic organisations in the factories and workshops and the local committees of the Party, which coordinated the latter, entered into all the details of the employers' exploitation of men, women and young workers, formulated the demands of the workers and took the lead in their economic strikes. Moreover, the social democratic organisations of Russia connected the economic demands of the workers with the political struggle of the working class against the feudal-bourgeois czarist regime of Russia.

Owing to the above-mentioned facts, union was established between the political organisations in Russia before the February revolution, and also after the revolution of 1917 this union was maintained when trade unions were organised which brought nearly all the workers of Soviet Russia into their ranks.

Until 1905, there were no parliamentary (Duma) elections in Russia, and even after 1905 workers elected their Duma representatives through factory and workshop electoral colleges. Moreover, Russian revolutionary social democrats used the Duma election not as an aim in itself, but only as one of the means for the overthrow of the czarist regime through armed rising and through the establishment of proletarian and peasant dictatorship. Therefore, Party organisations were built up territorially in accordance with the workers' and party members place of employment, and not on a residential qualification.

Revolutionary social democrats (now communists) in Russia built up their Party organisations on the basis of factories and workshops, offices, shops, barracks and schools situated in the respective ward, district or small township. But in other countries working class organisations were based on the constituency in which voters resided. This difference must be taken into consideration when studying the Party construction of the Communist Parties of other countries.

It would be as well to point out yet another difference between the Russian Communist Party (formerly the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party [Bolshevik]) and the communist parties of Europe and America, although this difference has perhaps no direct relation with Party construction.

Because of its 20 years illegal existence the Russian Communist Party produced a type of professional revolutionaries — "the Lenin Guard", which has gone through "the ordeal of fire etc.". The members of this Lenin Guard have gained great experience in the building up of Party organisations dependent on political conditions.

This experience was lacking in the former members of the social democratic parties of Europe. It is for this reason that our brother communist parties find it so difficult to adapt their party organisations to the illegal conditions which have been forced on them by their bourgeoisie.

Nearly all the communist parties throughout the world were formed between 1918 and 1920 from the left elements of the social democratic parties (and the French and Czech communist parties formed from the majority of the French and Czech socialist parties). Although the communist parties aim at the conquest of power by the working class and at the organisation of production on a communist basis, they have taken over, **by social democratic force of habit**, the old social democratic organisational forms of building up Party organisations. This being so, they have been unable to form strong Party organisations of the right type and to get into contact with the factories and workshops.

The ideological influence exercised by the Communist Parties of Western Europe over the working class was enormous: at the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Austrian workers organised in Vienna enormous demonstrations before the premises of the Central Committee of the Austrian Communist Party, suggesting to the latter to become the leader of the mass movement.

The seizure of factories in Italy in the year 1920 would have taken a different turn if the Italian Communist Party had had a proper and adequate leadership, and finally, if the Communist Party of Germany had had for its basis the factories and workshops, the German October events in 1923 would have had better results, not only for the German but also for the International proletariat.

The old social-democratic organisational methods in building up Party organisation did not give our brother Communist Parties an opportunity to consolidate organisationally their

ideological influence over the masses. The above statements are not mere theorising, but are based on numerous facts of which the organisation department of the E. C. C. I. has documentary proof.

In this article I will limit myself to a few facts from the German experience. In 1923 factories and workshops in Germany were, with a few exceptions minus Party nuclei, but in the big factories and workshops communists were members of factory and workshop committees. As there were no nuclei even in the factories where communists served on factory committees, there was no lead or control of the committees, through any nucleus. Besides, the communists in the factory and workshop committees had no definite standing, because they had no proper support due to the fact that the communists in the factories were not coordinated into one body. The result was that the discontented workers of these factories and workshops were led and controlled by trade union representatives and members of the social democratic party who played up to the mood of the workers, proposing radical resolutions, etc. But when these humbugs were given the leadership of the movement by the workers they did their utmost to hinder the movement, and certainly did nothing to encourage it. As yet there was no one who could have exposed all these Judases to the factory workers, for the communists among them were not coordinated, they had no uniform leadership and were not all of them working for the same aim. And Germany provided examples in the first half of 1924 during the big strikes in the Ruhr and the Hamburg district which showed clearly the difference in the leadership of the movement in factories, mines, and docks; wherever nuclei existed, the leadership of the movement was entirely in the hands of the nucleus, while in factories where no nuclei existed, communists acted against communists and in some places communist chairmen of meetings refused to put to the vote resolutions proposed by communists.

The same might be observed lately in Italy, in Milan and Turin. In works and factories with properly functioning nuclei the latter become the leading centres of these works and factories. The recent demonstrations of the Milan Metal Workers against the agreement of their fascist trade union with the metal industry employers were under the guidance of the factory nuclei of our Party. Big workers' meetings which take place in Italy when the workers leave their factories at the end of the day's work and which are frequently attended by as many as 5,000 workers, have only become possible after the organisation of nuclei in the factories, for it is they who organise these meetings and carry them through.

On the other hand, where factories in Italy have no Party nuclei, or where these nuclei are not very active, there are no meetings no demonstrations against fascist trade unions and other fascist organisations.

Everything has been done by the Communist International to make the Communist Parties of Europe and America realise the importance of creating correct forms of organisation.

The theses and report of Comrade Zinoviev on the role of the Party in the revolution presented at the Second Congress of the Communist International, Comrade Lenin's statement on the same question and nearly every one of the 21 conditions adopted at the same Second Congress gave to the Sections of the Communist International minute instructions on the building up of Party organisations and on the nature of their tasks. The question of organisation was also very prominent at the Third Congress of the Communist International. The theses on organisation which were elaborated with the help of Lenin, explained very minutely why nuclei and other forms of Party organisation are necessary, how they should work, etc.

At the Fourth Congress of the Communist International Lenin pointed out that the theses on organisation adopted by the Third Congress had remained on paper, although all the delegates to the Congress had voted for them. In fact, previous to the lesson of the German revolution, none of the decisions on the question of organisation had been carried out by any of the foreign sections of the Communist International, except the parties of countries which previous to 1917 had formed part of the Russian Empire. What is the explanation for this?

Many active comrades thought that nuclei which had been readily adopted in Russia, could not be mechanically transported to other countries because conditions in these coun-

tries differ from conditions in Russia. And finally there is the force of habit. There are even now communists who imagine that the destruction of the old form of organisation would also mean the destruction of the Communist Party. They see in the organisation of nuclei the destruction of local Party organisations.

There is also another element which resists, and quite consciously, the reorganisation of the Party on the factory and workshops nuclei basis. This element is not very numerous but it is the worst element in the Party — Party officials and a few members of the Party who have become members of Parliament, of municipal councils, trade union and cooperative administrations, etc.

Under the existing old forms of organisation Party members are not active. They only meet when they are summoned to meetings before elections or campaigns connected with elections. Party members do not discuss and make decisions on all Party questions, they very seldom meet among themselves and therefore the above-mentioned Party officials and candidates to elective posts are able to carry through anything they like at the Party meetings which they convene.

The above-mentioned elements see, and quite rightly, in the organisation of nuclei, their coordination according to districts in big towns and on a city scale in the smaller towns, the end of the almost unlimited control which they exercised in the Party organisations. In Italy, in Turin and in some French towns, after the organisation of nuclei in the workshops, the leadership of local organisations went entirely into the hands of workers recommended by the nuclei. Through the failure of some active workers of the section of the C.I. to understand the importance of the organisation of nuclei in the workshops and of Communist Fractions in non-Party workers mass organisation, etc. and through the obstacles which were put in the way of the proposed reorganisation by certain obstructive elements of the Party, the favourable moment of the Labour Movement boom in 1919—21 was missed, a time when it would have been very easy to form and consolidate nuclei in the workshops. Now the organisation of nuclei is much more difficult.

In Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland and America, communists constitute a big percentage of the unemployed, which renders the organisation of nuclei still more difficult. There is wholesale unemployment; there is unprecedented terror on the part of employers. Not only Communists are dismissed but also all those who sympathise with them if this fact can be established. Employers are helped in the matter of spotting Communists by members of social-democratic parties and by opportunist trade union officials. And yet in spite of all the difficulties, this year has witnessed the practical reorganisation of the Party on the basis of factory nuclei in the big industrial centres of Germany, France, Italy and of some parts of Czecho-Slovakia and of Great Britain. An animated discussion on the organisation of nuclei in enterprises has also been initiated in America. In many countries the Young Communist Leagues have acted as the forerunner in this matter.

It should also be stated that in Germany and France nuclei publish periodically papers for their or several kindred factories, which have, in addition to political articles, also special columns describing factory life. These newspapers are varied and interesting. In Italy the Party organisations publish instead of factory newspapers small leaflets on various subjects, which are distributed among the workers. In Germany, France, Italy and Norway workers' correspondents from factories and workshops have begun to function and have already achieved a certain amount of success.

All this is most decidedly the right way to the transformation of our brother sections of the Communist International into mass parties supported by large sections of the urban and rural proletariat.

New life has been put into the Party organisations of the above-mentioned countries. They have become imbued with the revolutionary energy of the factory workers. The recent demonstrations of the Paris workers, with whom the Paris Party organisation has come into direct contact through the factory and workshop nuclei, have shown how much the latter were needed and how important they are for the proletarian and revolutionary Communist Party.

We have chosen the right path. The experience of the Communist nuclei in the west has absolutely proved that these

are not something peculiarly Russian, not adaptable to European and American conditions. They have stood the test also under western conditions. It is necessary to overcome the difficulties and to organise nuclei in all the factories, works, offices, shops, barracks, estates, etc. etc. — in fact wherever there are wage workers, whether they be men, women, young workers, mobilised soldiers, sailors, etc. Nuclei should be co-ordinated into wards and districts, the latter on a town or gubernia scale, and these in their turn on a national scale.

If something has been done in connection with the organisation of Party nuclei in factories and workshops and in connection with the creation of the correct forms of local Party organisations in the industrial centres of some countries, very little has been done in connection with the formation of Communist fractions in non-Party mass organisations of the working class and in connection with placing Communist fractions under the control of the Party. And yet the few Communist fractions which exist mainly in parliaments are, because of their short-comings a source of much harm to the Communist Parties.

Central and local committees of a considerable number of Communist Parties did not pay sufficient attention to this que-

stion. The minute instructions of the ECCI. of February 1924 on the organisation of Communist fractions, their work and their relations with Party organs compiled on the basis of the experience of the Russian Communist Party and other sections of the Communist International, have hitherto remained on paper, and in the meantime the actions of individual members of the Communist fractions are doing great harm to the Communist Parties.

In many countries Communist members of trade unions, cooperatives and other workers' organisations are not yet co-ordinated into Communist fractions. Hence it is so easy for the trade union and cooperative bureaucrats from the social-democratic party to drive the Communists out of the above-mentioned mass organisations.

It is essential to organise nuclei in the workshops and to form Communist fractions. At the same time these nuclei and fractions must be given a proper lead by the Party organs.

With a correct organisation of the Party and with correct and flexible tactics applied through nuclei and Communist fractions Communist Parties will be victorious in the struggle with capitalism.