

IN THE INTERNATIONAL

Notes of a Participant in the VI. Party Congress of the R.C.P.

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The preparations for the Party Congress, and the Party Congress itself, were held in the midst of a savage slander drive against the Bolsheviki, who were charged with being spies of Kaiser Wilhelm, and at a time when the dual power was being replaced by bourgeois-imperialist reaction. I had been delegated to the Party Congress by the Moscow Party organisation. A tremendous difference existed between the proletariat and the garrison of Petersburg and the proletariat and garrison of Moscow. In Petersburg it was difficult for our Party to restrain the masses of the workers, soldiers, and sailors from street demonstrations in April, June, and July. The Petersburg organisations of our Party took the lead of the demonstrations when these took place against the will of the Party authorities (the July days).

In Moscow, on the other hand, there were no demonstrations whatever. On 18th June there were demonstrations for the first time in response to the offensive on the front, and on 4th July the demonstration called by the Moscow Party Committee was not attended by even all the members of the Party, to say nothing of the broad masses of the workers and soldiers. And the demonstrations commenced after a delay of two hours.

This difference between Moscow and Petersburg in this respect is explained by the fact that the Moscow proletariat was more backward than that of Petersburg (being more closely bound up with the rural districts). Besides this, Moscow is a large railway junction; a large number of railwaymen lived there, and among these there were many petty-bourgeois elements who had contrived to escape military service. The garrison consisted mainly of divisions of troops which had just been formed.

The July days took the effect in Moscow of not only turning broad masses of the workers and soldiers from our Bolshevik organisations, but of losing members for our Moscow organisation itself in every quarter of the town, though not, however, for very long. This trend of feeling among the masses of the workers and soldiers, and in the organisation itself, exercised pressure on the wavering elements in the Committees of the Moscow organisations—and on some of the members of the Moscow Committee. At the meeting of the Moscow Party Committee on 6th and 7th August they whispered: "No smoke without fire", "Evidently somebody has something on his conscience", "The Moscow Party Committee must demand the immediate convention of a Party Congress", "The Moscow Party Committee must take the initiative", "The Moscow Party Committee must appoint a commission to examine into the charges brought against individual Bolsheviks", etc.

Happily such panic-stricken and cowardly proposals and speeches were merely isolated phenomena. They were swept annihilatingly aside by the overwhelming majority of the members of the Moscow Party Committee. Besides this, the writer of these lines, who was the chairman at the session of the Moscow Party Committee dealing with this question, refused to allow a division to be taken on these motions of the capitulators, in which decision he was supported by the approval of the overwhelming majority of the Moscow Party Committee.

In Petersburg, on the other hand, the events of the July days did not cause any such negative reaction among the masses of the workers and soldiers. The authority of our Party increased even further among the broad masses, for these saw that our Party, though opposed to the action, none the less placed itself at the head of the masses when these insisted on coming out into the streets. And in Petersburg there was not even the brief flight from the Party as in Moscow.

Besides this, there was no such reaction, nor were our Party organisations exposed to such persecution, as in Petersburg. During the demonstrations on 4th July, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the officers' bands, the Mensheviks, and the Socialist Revolutionaries (S.R.), encouraged by the fact that the Soviets were opposed to the demonstrations, cut the demonstrators off from the districts in the centre of the town. They confiscated the flags, the banners with inscriptions, and even beat up some of the demonstrators. After the July events a number of Bolshevik speakers were attacked in the streets. A police search was carried out in the Party committee premises in the city.

Reaction in Moscow contented itself with this. There were no arrests made, and the newspaper "Social Democracy" appeared regularly. The Moscow Party Committee and the Sub-District Committees held their meetings unhindered, with the exception of the meetings for the troops, in which difficulties were thrown in the way of us Bolsheviks at that time too. There was no depression among the Party members who had remained faithful. They worked with the intensest energy. This was the atmosphere in Moscow during the preparations for the VI. Party Congress.

At the Moscow Party Conference the most important items of the agenda of the Party Congress were discussed, and 15 delegates elected to the Party Congress. The Moscow delegation travelled to the Party Congress in the same carriage as the delegation of the Moscow Central Industrial District. On the road it was agreed that the delegations of the Moscow district and of Moscow itself should co-ordinate their action at the Conference, and this was carried out. During the Party Congress these two delegations held several joint consultations. At first the Party Congress met on the Wyborg side, in a very light and roomy hall. But after the Party Congress had shown its unanimous solidarity with Lenin, and had confuted all the vile accusations of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks, and the Socialist Revolutionaries, it became known that the Provisional Government was planning a raid on the Party Congress. Therefore the election of the Central Committee was undertaken in the middle of the Party Congress, instead of at the end as customary at all Congresses, and the Party Congress was reduced to a fifth, or even to a tenth, of the original number of delegates.

The district delegations elected comrades out of their midst to carry on the Party Congress on its reduced scale.

The Party Congress then continued its work in the extremely limited club rooms of a mixed organisation belonging to two districts, in the quarter of the town outside of the Narva city gate, not far from the Putilov Works. The reduced Party Congress only held a few meetings. None of the delegates of the Party Congress who had not been elected to the reduced Congress left Petersburg. They took further part in the Section and Commission meetings. Hence the whole of the delegates to the Congress continued the work of the Congress in the cramped premises at their disposal.

A special feature of the VI. Party Congress was Lenin's absence. The Bolshevik Party, the old Bolshevik Guard of whom many were present at this Party Congress, were accustomed to see the tactics laid down by Lenin in all difficult moments. The moment at which the VI. Party Congress met was a decisive and highly responsible turning point. The country was passing from the dual power, from the actual power of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, to the dictatorship of the imperialist bourgeoisie backed up by the military camarilla. The moment was extremely responsible, and Lenin, the Party leader recognised by all, was sadly missed. We knew of course that the C.C. was in contact with him, that the C.C. had his collaboration in drawing up the main outlines of the most important resolutions, but none the less every one of us felt a double responsibility at this Party Congress in view of Lenin's absence.

The Party Congress passed off with great unanimity, although differences of opinion on important questions were apparent in the discussions.

It should be emphasised that all the delegates took an active part in the work of the Party Congress, especially in that of the commissions. The agenda of the Party Congress contained such important items as the estimate of the situation, of the war and the international situation, the political and economic situation, the changes in the Party program, the International, the trade unions.

The central figure of the Party Congress was Comrade Stalin. Of the nine C.C. members elected at the All Russian Conference of the Party in April, six were present. Of these six, Comrades Stalin and Sverdlov were engaged in the preparations for and the conducting of the Party Congress. Sverdlov dealt chiefly with important organisational questions, whilst Comrade Stalin determined the political line of the Party. At the VI. Party Congress Comrade Stalin gave two reports: the report of the C.C. on its political activities, and the report on the political situation. The leading feature of the whole Party Congress was Stalin's report on the political situation, which aroused most discussion.

The report was brief, but extremely graphic. Differences of opinion arose on the role of the Soviets and with regard to the slogan: "All power to the Soviets". Comrade Stalin proposed that this slogan be cancelled, for:

"Now nobody, not a single bourgeois, speaks of a dual power. Whilst at one time the Soviets represented an actual power, to-day they are merely the organs of the coalition of the masses, but have no real power. Hence it is nonsense to give them the power . . . Even if you now win over the whole of the Soviets, that will not give you the power."

" . . . The comrades rush at the question of the organisation of power. But you have no power." (Stalin, Concluding words on the political situation. Minutes of the VI. Party Congress. Publ. "Communist", 1919, page 126.)

" . . . Hence the question on the agenda is not the organisation of power, but the overthrow of the ruling power. When we have once the power in our hands, we shall know how to organise it." (Ibid., page 127.)

During the discussion there was a hail of questions, such as: What about the new elections to the Soviets, and what about the Soviets in which we have the majority? Comrade Stalin replied to all these questions:

"To return once more to the Soviets: In annulling the former slogan, we are not turning against the Soviets. Quite the contrary; we can and must work in the Soviets, even

in the Central Executive Committee, this organ giving cover to counter-revolution. Although to-day the Soviets are only organs for the coalition of the masses, we must continue to go with the masses, and shall not leave the Soviets till we are thrown out of them. In the same manner we remain in the factory councils and municipal administrations for instance, although these do not possess the power." (Stalin. Ibid.)

Events have confirmed the correctness of the decision of the Party Congress and the forecast of Lenin and Stalin. By September the Bolsheviki had the majority in the Petersburg and Moscow Soviets, and yet the power remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It was only by means of the armed insurrection of the workers and soldiers of Petersburg, Moscow, and other cities that we succeeded, under the leadership of the Party and with the aid of the Soviets, in seizing power from the bourgeoisie and realising the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Another prophecy made by Comrade Stalin at the VI. Party Congress was fulfilled. The 9th point of the draft of the resolution on the political situation was as follows:

"The task of the revolutionary class will then be the exertion of all forces for the conquest of state power, and the application of this power, in alliance with the revolutionary proletariat of the advanced countries, for peace and for the socialist re-organisation of Society."

Comrade **Preobrazhensky** proposed another formulation: "For peace and, after the outbreak of proletarian revolution in the West, for socialism". Comrade Stalin rejected this amendment on the following grounds, which were completely confirmed by subsequent events:

"I am opposed to closing the resolution with such a formulation. It is not impossible that precisely Russia will be the country which will clear path to socialism."
(Minutes of the VI. Party Congress, page 214.)

The decisions of the Party Congress were perfectly correct, although Lenin was not able to attend it. They furthered the efforts of our Party to win over the masses of the workers, soldiers, and peasants in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, against the Mensheviks, and against the Socialist Revolutionaries, and to conquer power. Whilst before the Party Congress there were still broad masses of the workers who were not in favour of our Party, the energetic and determined work of every section of the Moscow organisation of our Party enabled such successes to be gained that as early as August the Moscow organisation was able, during the Moscow State Conference, to organise a general strike against the decision of the Plenary Session of this council, and besides this, during the Kornilov days, the Moscow workers and soldiers already followed the Bolsheviki, thus aiding our Party to the victory during the October rising.