

4. THE STRUGGLE AT THE STUTTGART CONGRESS

In the years after the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, the working-class movement surged forward in the capitalist countries, with frequent large-scale strikes taking place in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, the United States, Italy, Holland and Belgium, in the course of which the workers even came into armed conflict with the police and the troops. The national-liberation movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East was also growing. Wars of aggression broke out in this period one after another, international relations grew very much tenser and the munitions drive was intensified as never before. These were the circumstances in which the Second International held its Stuttgart Congress in August 1907. It was the first international conference Lenin ever attended at which he fought the opportunists of the Second International face to face.

THE GERMAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY USES ITS PRESTIGE TO MANIPULATE THE CONGRESS AND SPREAD ITS ERRONEOUS IDEAS

The opportunist position of the leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party had a very bad influence on the congress. Germany was the land of Marx and Engels, and the German Party, the oldest and the biggest proletarian

party at that time, enjoyed high prestige in the Second International. Taking advantage of this the opportunist leaders of the German Party did their utmost to spread their erroneous ideas among the other Parties. Many leaders of these Parties blindly followed the opportunist line of the German Party. In "Our Revolution", Lenin later pointed out that one of the characteristics of these people was that they were "extraordinarily fainthearted" and "that when it comes to the minutest deviation from the German model . . . [they] fortify themselves with reservations".¹

The German Party took certain organizational steps in order to manipulate the congress. At the very beginning of the congress, it had a special decision passed by the International Socialist Bureau whereby the plenary sessions were to be presided over by representatives of the German Party and the principal commissions of the congress were to be led by prominent members of the same Party. Thus the Anti-Militarism Commission, for example, was headed by Südekum, and Kautsky was secretary of the Commission on the Relations Between the Socialist Parties and the Trade Unions. The congress also specified a definite number of votes for each nation — twenty each for the big nations and two each for the small ones. Moreover, the German Party arranged for such extreme Right-wing opportunists as Bernstein, David, Legien, Scheidemann and Vollmar to be delegates, while it did its level best to prevent Left-wingers, and especially Rosa Luxemburg, from attending. However, Rosa Luxemburg finally attended the congress, but as a delegate of the Polish instead of the German Party.

¹ *Selected Works*, Moscow, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 724.

The composition of the Russian delegation was very mixed. It consisted, among others, of Social-Democrats, Socialist-Revolutionaries and trade union representatives. There were both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks among the delegates of the Social-Democratic Party.

The Right-wingers and the centrists constituted the majority at the congress; the only forces Lenin and the Bolsheviks could rely on were the Polish Left-wing Social-Democrats headed by Rosa Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski, and the German Left-wing Social-Democrats headed by Klara Zetkin.

The Stuttgart Congress was held at a time when the international revolutionaries were in the minority.

THE ADOPTION OF A CORRECT RESOLUTION ON ANTI-MILITARISM AS A RESULT OF STRUGGLE

Anti-militarism was the most important and the most heatedly debated question at the congress. Lenin himself was a member of the Anti-Militarism Commission.

Four draft resolutions were submitted to the congress for discussion, one by Bebel on behalf of the German Social-Democratic Party, and the others by Hervé, Guesde, Jaurès and Vaillant, representing the French Socialist Party. All of them had serious shortcomings and errors. Lenin made a special point of analysing Hervé's and Bebel's resolutions.

Hervé's draft resolution stated that the proletariat had no fatherland, that all wars were in the interests of the capitalists, and that the proletariat must oppose every war with strikes and uprisings. Lenin pointed out that Hervé was advocating a semi-anarchist view. First, he

did not understand "that war is a necessary product of capitalism, and that the proletariat cannot renounce participation in revolutionary wars";¹ second, he did not understand that whether or not a war should be opposed by strikes and uprisings "depends on the objective conditions of the particular crisis, economic or political, precipitated by the war, and not on any previous decision that revolutionaries may have made";² and third, he and his followers were "capable of letting anti-militarism make them forget socialism".³ Lenin said that the struggle must consist not simply in replacing war by peace, but in replacing capitalism by socialism, and that the essential thing was not merely to prevent war but to utilize the crisis created by war in order to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

Contrary to Lenin's Marxist criticism, Vollmar and others spread opportunist views in criticizing Hervé's mistakes. They said that parliamentary struggle was the form of struggle against war and that, instead of opposing war by strikes, it was necessary to strengthen the pressure on the authorities and sway public opinion in order to stop armed conflict. Directing himself against such views, Lenin pointed out that all the theoretical truths which had been set forth in refuting Hervé "serve as an introduction not to a justification of parliamentary cretinism, not to the sanction of peaceful methods alone, not to the worship of the present relatively peaceful and quiet situation, but to the acceptance of all methods of

¹ "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 13, pp. 79-80.

² "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 13, p. 91.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

struggle, to the appraisal of the experience of the revolution in Russia".¹ He said that the opportunist criticism of Hervé's views made one recognize the living spark in Hervéism: the practical truth in it was that Hervé stood for mass revolutionary action. Although as a whole Hervé's views were "heroic folly", Lenin declared, the position of Vollmar and others was "opportunist cowardice".²

The draft resolution put forward by Bebel on behalf of the German Social-Democratic Party stated that militarism was the product of capitalism and that war could be eliminated only after the capitalist system had been wiped out. However, it substituted the conception of "defensive" and "offensive" wars for that of imperialist war, thus providing a loophole for the "defencists". As for the kind of action to be taken against war, this draft, like the resolutions passed at the previous congresses of the Second International, actually recognized parliamentary struggle as the only form of struggle.

Lenin had a meeting with Rosa Luxemburg, Klara Zetkin and others and, together with Rosa Luxemburg, formulated amendments to the draft resolution proposed by the German Party. These proposed the deletion of the passages on defensive war, and a principled revision of the last two paragraphs. The revised version of these two paragraphs read:

If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved, supported by the coordinating activity of the International Socialist

¹ *Ibid.*

² "Bellicose Militarism and the Anti-Militarist Tactics of Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 15, p. 196.

Bureau, to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the sharpening of the general political situation.

In case war should break out anyway, it is their duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule.¹

All this redrafting transformed Bebel's resolution into an altogether different resolution. Lenin said that this resolution "is rich in thought and precisely formulates the tasks of the proletariat. It combines the stringency of orthodox — i.e., the only scientific Marxist analysis with recommendations for the most resolute and revolutionary action by the workers' parties. This resolution cannot be interpreted *à la* Vollmar, nor can it be fitted into the narrow framework of naive Hervéism".² This resolution as redrafted by Lenin was adopted by the congress unanimously.

THE FIGHT AGAINST "SOCIALIST COLONIAL POLICY" AND THE THEORY OF TRADE UNION NEUTRALITY

The colonial question was another question which aroused heated debate.

¹ "Manifesto of the International Socialist Congress at Basle", Appendices to Lenin's *Collected Works*, New York, Vol. XVIII, p. 469.

² "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *op. cit.*, p. 81.

The draft resolution put forward by the opportunist Van Kol of Holland made no mention of the struggle of the proletarian political parties against the policy of colonialism and failed to urge the oppressed people in the colonies to arise and resist colonialism; instead it only enumerated "reforms" that could be carried out in the colonies under the capitalist system. Van Kol and his like held that socialists should suggest to their own governments that they sign international treaties specifying certain rights for the inhabitants of the colonies. The resolution even stated openly: "The Congress did not in principle condemn all colonial policy, for under socialism colonial policy could play a civilising role."¹ While it was under discussion in the commission this resolution was supported by most of the opportunists, but it met with the strong opposition of the Left-wingers. In the congress, the opportunists Bernstein and David, speaking for the majority of the German delegation, urged acceptance of the "socialist colonial policy" and tried to impose Van Kol's views on the congress. They fulminated against the Left-wingers for their failure to appreciate the importance of reforms and their lack of a practical colonial programme.

Lenin held that in reality Van Kol's proposition was tantamount to a direct retreat towards bourgeois policy and the bourgeois world outlook that justified colonial wars and colonial atrocities. He declared that the very concept "socialist colonial policy" was a hopeless muddle and the only correct stand for socialists to take was "down with all colonial policy, down with the whole

¹ Quoted by Lenin in "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *op. cit.*, p. 75.

policy of intervention and capitalist struggle for the conquest of foreign lands and foreign populations, for new privileges, new markets, control of the Straits, etc."¹

As a result of the sharp struggle, the revolutionaries represented by Lenin succeeded in rallying around themselves the delegates who came from small nations which either did not pursue a colonial policy or suffered from it. Thus they were able to win a majority vote and get a comparatively correct resolution passed at the congress.

The congress also discussed the question of the relations between the Party and the trade unions.

The opportunists were opposed to the idea of the Party assuming leadership of the trade unions. The draft resolution submitted to the congress by the majority group of the French Socialist Party stood for free co-operation between the Party and the trade unions on an independent basis. This resolution had the all-out support of the trade union representatives, who made up half the German delegation. Plekhanov upheld the proposition of trade union neutrality, saying that "introducing political differences into the trade unions in Russia would be harmful".²

Lenin thoroughly refuted the theory of trade union neutrality. He explained that the class interests of the bourgeoisie inevitably gave rise to the attempt to confine the trade unions to petty and narrow activity within the framework of the capitalist system and keep them away from any contact with socialism, and that the neutrality theory was the ideological cover for these efforts of the

¹ "Events in the Balkans and in Persia", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 15, p. 229.

² Quoted by Lenin in "Trade-Union Neutrality", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 13, p. 464.

bourgeoisie; it was a theory which served to strengthen the influence of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Quoting irrefutable facts, Lenin showed the actual harmful results of the advocacy of neutrality which played into the hands of the opportunists in the German Social-Democratic Party and as a result of which the trade union leaders of Germany had so clearly deviated in the direction of opportunism. Led by Lenin, the Russian Bolshevik delegates, together with the revolutionaries of other Parties, waged a fight against the theory of trade union neutrality at the congress. And the resolution which the congress adopted rejected this theory in principle.

THE LEAST CREDITABLE FEATURES OF GERMAN
SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY SHOULD NOT BE HELD UP
AS A MODEL WORTHY OF IMITATION

On all these important questions the discussions at the Stuttgart Congress clearly demonstrated the antagonism between Marxism and opportunism, and between the proletarian and the bourgeois world outlook. Lenin wrote:

. . . the Stuttgart Congress brought into sharp contrast the opportunist and revolutionary wings of the international Social-Democratic movement on a number of cardinal issues and decided these issues in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism.¹

The resolutions passed at the Stuttgart Congress were powerful weapons for the Left-wing Social-Democrats of various countries in their struggle against opportunism,

¹ "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *op. cit.*, p. 81.

social chauvinism and "defencism". Although the Right-wingers and the "centrists" had been in the majority at the congress, Lenin upheld the Marxist truth and had finally defeated opportunism, as a result of his unity with the Left-wingers and the various other forms of work that he undertook.

After the congress, Lenin set out the attitude which should be taken towards the opportunist policy of the German Party. He explained that it was inadvisable "to represent the least creditable features of German Social-Democracy as a model worthy of imitation".¹ He said:

We must criticise the mistakes of the German leaders fearlessly and openly if we wish to be true to the spirit of Marx and help the Russian socialists to be equal to the present-day tasks of the workers' movement. . . . We should not conceal these mistakes, but should use them as an example to teach the Russian Social-Democrats how to avoid them and live up to the more rigorous requirements of revolutionary Marxism.²

Lenin held that the Stuttgart Congress confirmed the observation made by Engels in 1886 concerning the German labour movement: "In Germany everything becomes philistine in calm times; the sting of French competition is thus absolutely necessary. And it will not be lacking."³

¹ "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *op. cit.*, p. 85.

² "Preface to the Pamphlet by Voinov (A. V. Lunacharsky) on the Attitude of the Party Towards the Trade Unions", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 13, p. 165.

³ Quoted by Lenin in "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *op. cit.*, p. 85.