
The Third International Congress.

by Dennis E. Batt

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Many interesting and important things happened at the 3rd Congress of the Communist International, which opened in Moscow on June 22nd, 1921. To tell the story of all of them would take a large volume, and I have neither the time nor the space to do it. However, there were a few features that are of particular interest to the readers of *The Proletarian* and have much importance as regards the American situation. As the delegate of the Proletarian Party of America I was not seated in the congress, but as a visitor I was permitted to attend the congress freely. Every session was of particular joy to me. The whole congress was a complete justification of the position that has been held by the Proletarian Party. Every fundamental thing for which we have fought in the past is in harmony with the principles enunciated by the 3rd Congress [June 22-July 12, 1921]. When it is considered that we fought for these principles and drafted them into program before the 2nd Congress was held [July 19-Aug. 7, 1920], we have nothing to be ashamed of. Theoretically we are in a stronger position than ever and should be able to continue the work of building up the Proletarian Party with growing success.

In the November 1919 issue of *The Proletarian*, shortly after the Communist Party convention in Chicago [Sept. 1-7, 1919], I wrote an article entitled "Minority Action." In that article I insistently pointed out that "it is impossible to accomplish a social revolution of the character of the proletarian revolution without the conscious support of the great mass of the people." For this I and our group were branded as Mensheviks. It was satisfying to find that the predominant opinion of the 3rd Congress was in favor of this position. Comrade Lenin, speaking on this question, said: "Whoever in Europe, where nearly the whole of

the proletariat is organized, fails to understand that we must conquer the majority of the working class, is lost to the communist movement." At other points in the same speech, which is reprinted in full elsewhere in this issue of *The Proletarian*, he said: "We won in Russia because we had a solid majority, not only among the working class, but among the army and peasants as well." Also: "And after making the majority of the workers and exploited join us in the struggle, we shall win." It is a mighty good thing that Lenin was not at the CP convention in Chicago in 1919. He surely would have been branded as a Centrist and Menshevik. You can contemplate the mental "somersaults" that the majority of the CP would have to turn in order to bring themselves in line with this attitude. We may take it for granted now that we will not have to argue any more with Blanquist-inclined "revolutionary troubadours" who delude themselves that they can magically get the masses to follow them like the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Another point of great importance considered by the 3rd Congress was the question of an open and legal party. The revolutionists (?) of America have been playing the ostrich act, staying underground, for almost 2 years. I use the term "ostrich act" advisedly. The only thing they conceal is their ignorance. They must now completely change their attitude. This is going to be very difficult as the majority of the membership is too stupid and ignorant of the proper Communist position to agree with this position of the Third International. It will be a struggle. Let us hope that those in the party who understand will win out. It is about time that the revolutionary movement in America came to its senses. As it stands today it is an international joke. The leaders of the Third Interna-

tional clearly realize the necessity of taking advantage of every legal method to acquaint the masses with Communism. They expressed themselves definitely upon this point and their "American arm" must swing into line. It is to be hoped that if this "arm" is to remain the same as it is, the International will be on the job when a revolutionary situation arrives; else there won't be anything done. They will have to give the orders.

On the question of parliaments, the position of the Proletarian Party I found to be in agreement with the International. In fact, I am not sure but what the International is in favor of a broader use of parliaments than we have been in the past. At any rate it is an undisputable fact that the International is opposed to the silly semi-syndicalist attitude that has been held by the Communist Party of America in the past. A broad use of parliaments and parliamentary campaigns for the purpose of educating the masses to Communism is absolutely necessary, doubly so in countries like the United States where the masses still have faith in bourgeois parliaments. Our position is in complete harmony with the stand of the 3rd Congress, just as it was in harmony with the stand of the 2nd Congress of the Comintern.

On the question of trade unions and the party, the International again justified the position of the Proletarian Party. Due to lack of experience our position has never been sufficiently elaborated, but in principle it is in harmony. In the delegation to the Red Trade Union International, the Proletarian Party showed just as much contact with the mass of union labor as any other political party in America. The International takes the attitude that the party that has the support of the trade unions is the party that will put its pro-

gram into effect. Without the support of the trade unions the proletarian revolution is unthinkable. The whole experience of Europe proves this. Trade union support is absolutely essential if a party is going to be at all successful. The problem is how to gain that support. For 25 years in America the method followed has been to organize "pure" unions and then try to smash the AF of L. The Communist Party continued this policy. This policy stubbed its toe on the cobblestone pavement in Moscow and bumped its nose. The "big" men in the International were a unit in condemning the policy of endeavoring to smash the large mass organizations of the workers. Therefore the Communist Party must change. After these changes are completed the party will have a lot of members who will be dizzy. Smashing the AF of L is not on the order of the day, but winning the masses within it and deposing the reactionary leaders is. The correct Communist attitude is for the Communists to get into the union, and there, by virtue of their activity and devotion to the cause of the workers, to convince the membership that Communism is the only solution for the endless struggle in which they are engaged. The unions should be the recruiting ground for the party. We have followed this policy well in the past to the extent of our ability. In the future we must follow it in a more organized and efficient manner.

Our position in general is in full agreement with the position stated by the 3rd Congress. We should be pleased because of this. It shows that there are others who understand that this position is in harmony with the conditions in America. All that remains is to work harder for the fundamental principles for which we have fought so long. The result is bound to be a big and stronger **Proletarian Party of America**.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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