

Pepper (U. S. A.)

I want to begin my speech with a critical remark. I was afraid that the congress had become one-sidedly a German Congress, or at best a Central European Congress. So far it has been too little of a world congress. In one respect this is quite right since the German problem is the main problem, the vital question of the Communist International. As regards this problem, the German Party and the International has found the right answer in the various Left tendencies. On the other hand it is not right, because within the International there are other and newer problems than the German problem. The October defeat and the MacDonald Government have removed the centre of gravity from Germany to England. The next task is to crystallise a British Communist mass party.

In the discussions which have hitherto taken place only one side of the workers' and peasants' government came to the fore: the united front with the Social Democrats and the Workers' Government in Saxony. We have not spoken of the united front which requires consideration in connection with the labour parties in a number of countries, and especially in England. We must not forget that this is not only a British problem, it is also the problem of the labour movement in the United States, South Africa, Australia, etc. Here the united front has of course a quite different form from that on the European continent, where the tactics of the united front are conducted without organizational alliances. In the countries I have mentioned the tactics of the united front have gone so far that the members of the Communist Parties are also members of other non-Communist parties, Labour parties. We must of course not lose sight of the fact that the labour parties are not ordinary political parties in the continental sense. They represent a bloc of diverse political parties, trade unions, and other working class organizations. They are not based upon individual membership but upon the membership of whole organizations.

Before we determine our tactics in these countries, we must ask ourselves what is the true nature of the labour parties and how they have arisen. It is, of course, false and un-Marxian to think that their origin is due to the specific Anglo-Saxon psychology. They are the product of quite definite historical conditions. They have come into existence in the countries where the labour aristocracy developed so early and powerfully that a broad cleavage was formed between

the proletarian masses and the labour aristocracy. In the countries where the common interests of the proletariat as a class had not become sufficiently evident, no political mass parties could arise. For this reason the trade unions developed first and it was the trade unions which laid the foundations of the political labour party, in contradistinction to the European continent, where social democracy first came into being and in its turn founded the trade unions.

The period in which the Labour Parties arose is also important. In England the Labour Party came into being when the trade unions began to become a menace to the state power. In America the capitalist offensive and the new powerful bureaucratised state power of the trade unions are only just compelling the creation of a political mass party.

We must also not forget the role played by the small political parties. Everywhere we see, side by side with the trade unions, the beginnings of small, disciplined sects based upon individual membership which enter into mass organizations and facilitate the birth of mass political parties. In Britain this task fell to the Independent Labour Party and in America to our Workers' Party. It is very important to remember that the Independent Labour Party, with its 50,000 members, stands at the head of the Labour Party, with its 5,000,000 workers, and that our small Workers' Party was able to control a convention at which 600,000 workers and farmers were represented.

The situation in the United States is much more complicated than in England. In America there is a mass movement which is only just beginning to create a Labour Party. It is the task of the communists in America to sever the proletariat from the parties of finance capital.

In America there is not even a treacherous labour party which has organized the workers for any definite purpose. Another factor is that there is no labour party in America, but a Farmer-Labour Party, in which the workers and poor farmers are organized in common. There is a third peculiarity; the movement is bound up with the movement of petty-bourgeoisie and even of the rich peasants, from which it will be separated only with difficulty. This will be brought about only by the development of the class war. Comrade Zinoviev was right when he said that the situation in America is very complicated, and if the Executive hesitated long before it came to a decision, I hope that this decision will be adhered to.

What must be our tactics with relation to the Labour Party? Lenin said, and the Comintern in 1920 adopted a decision accordingly, that we were to enter the Labour Party not to use it mechanically as a means of contact with the masses, but to use it as a means of severing the masses from their opportunist leaders. Unfortunately, our parties have not understood these tactics correctly. There was a period when they refused to enter the Labour parties. There is now a period however when they want to remain in at all costs, even at the cost of our political independence and freedom of criticism. Neither of these standpoints is communistic. We must go in, but we must maintain our political independence. Comrade Murphy is wrong when he says that to leave the British Labour Party would be to leave the labour movement. Every communist can through his trade union membership remain a member of the Labour Party, but the Communist Party, as a party, is not obliged to remain in the Labour Party, (applause). This is determined historically. To-day I may be in favour of the British Communist Party remaining in the Labour Party, but to-morrow we may be against it, and I believe that the time will come when the whole Comintern will be against it. We must remain inside because the Labour Party still retains the confidence of its membership, and for three reasons: firstly, because it makes the workers certain small concessions which are important in their every-day life. Secondly because the working class masses hold the standpoint that the Labour Party is indeed in office but not in power. Thirdly, because we have still not been capable of spreading the idea of the proletarian revolution in Great Britain. The Communist Party in England must remain within the Labour Party organizationally, but outside ideologically.

It is very easy to criticise the British and American comrades, but it is a very important question, or as Comrade Zinoviev said, the central question of the Congress, to point out the way to the British, American, Canadian, South African and Australian comrades. We must give advice, not merely criticise. The crystallisation of the communist world party must be effected both intensively and extensively. Intensively in the sense that we must bolshevise the existing communist parties, and extensively in the sense that we must win new sections of the earth for communism (Great applause).