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Fourth Congress of the Profintern (R.I.L.U.)

THE opening of the Fourth Congress is fixed for March 15th, 1928, three years and eight months after the Third Congress. The period between these two congresses is one of extreme significance in the history of the international working class movement. During these few years all the contradictions of capitalist stabilisation have been manifested; in certain countries (Germany) capitalist rationalisation has been carried to its extreme limits; the fusion of the capitalist State and political and trade union organised reformism (the Second and Amsterdam Internationals and their sections) has been revealed in an absolutely clear and concrete form; gigantic economic and political conflicts have broken out with elemental force (general strike and miners' lock-out in Britain, etc.); a rise in the activity of the working class has begun, finding expression in severe social conflicts; the participation of the Amsterdam and the Second Internationals in the suppression not only of the political but also of the economic activity of the working class has been revealed as definitely as possible; while at the same time the united front between the Amsterdammers and the employers' organisations grows the closer as the leftward movement of the masses accelerates its tempo.

TREMENDOUS movements have occurred in the world working class movement during this period. It is sufficient to note that between the Third and Fourth Congress has come the advance of the Chinese proletariat on to the historical stage, with their victories and defeats and their transformation under the conditions of revolution. It is also necessary to note the growing activity of the workers' movement all around the Pacific coast—in Japan, India, the Philippines, Indo-China, Australia, etc. And finally, these last few years have seen the swift move to the left of the workers' movement in Latin America, the workers of which are raising the banner of revolt against American imperialism and its pan-American Federation of Labour. These few years are so crammed with such events, that a simple calculation of results would justify a close attention on the part of all the international revolutionary trade union movement to the forthcoming

Profintern Congress. But it is not merely a question of results, but of prospects also.

FIRST of all to draw some general conclusions. How should the international working class movement approach this congress? That is the question which every Communist Party and every revolutionary trade union should ask itself. For us Communists a congress is a very serious matter. Unlike the Amsterdammers, we do not regard a congress as a picnic, an opportunity for taking our wives with us, for organising various excursions and occupying ourselves a little between-whiles with revolution. Nor do we regard a congress as a place where we can advance our personal ambitions, where squabbles and struggles go on for the soft jobs. That kind of thing is the Amsterdammers' speciality. At their last Paris Conference they proved that in this regard they are surpassed by no one.

For us Communists a congress is first and foremost a basis for serious self-criticism. There is no point in our concealing and smothering our weaknesses and inadequacies. We shall never move forward if we come to regard reciprocal self-criticism at congresses from the point of view of national honour, personal insult and such-like. Those are not the morals of the Comintern, those are not the morals of the revolutionary workers' movement. The Communist Party and the revolutionary trade unions must come to this congress with a clear answer to the question—what have they done during these years, how have they carried out the decisions of the Comintern and the Profintern in the sphere of trade union work, and if they have put into operation only an insignificant percentage of the resolutions carried why is that so? We should not be Communists, but bourgeois if we were afraid of openly admitting our weaknesses. And we have many weaknesses, while our mistakes have been still more. And this at a time when the objective situation is extremely favourable to the political and organisational growth of our influence.

THE first and main question which both before the congress and at the congress itself demands an answer, is: what are the causes of the disproportion between the political influence of the Communist Party

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in the trade unions and the organisational consolidation of this influence? That such a disproportion exists we all know. It is sufficient merely to take Germany, Britain, or any country, and it is to be seen at once. But it is not sufficient merely to take cognisance of the fact. That will not get us any further. At this congress we must indicate the methods of closing the gap between the blades of these scissors, for these scissors are dangerous to the highest degree. A growth of political influence simultaneously with an organisational marking time must automatically lead to a decline in the political influence of the Communist Party. For all the Comintern it is very important to know the reasons why our organisational work lags behind agitational and propagandist activity, and to know what has been done to close these scissors. The very worst decision of all would be to pass by this question with a few meaningless formulas. The Communist Party must exert all its influence in the revolutionary trade union movement in order to feel where is the root of the danger which has to be overcome.

IF one attempts to formulate the reasons for the "scissors" in a few words, one may expound them as follows: The agitational and propagandist activity of our Communist Parties and of the revolutionary unions and minorities does not have organisational work as its natural continuation. There exists some kind of breach between agitational and propaganda work and the practical, concrete, every-day organisational consolidation of our correct political slogans and instructions. One often gains the impression that our agitational and propaganda work is in a compartment to itself, and organisational work also in a compartment to itself. Meantime, this breach between our political and our every-day humdrum organisational work leads to the result that the scissors are not only not closing, but frequently open still more. At the bottom of this breach lies the insufficiently intelligent work of the fractions in the trade unions—work which very often does not have a sufficiently practical trade union character, which cannot but render difficult the consolidation of our political influence. Fractions are still wholly and entirely being built from the top downwards. If a careful examination is made of what each member of the Party is doing in the trade union movement, it appears that, in the first place, not every member of the Party is yet a member of a trade union, and secondly—what is of chief importance—only an insignificant percentage of members of the Party actively work in the lower sections of the trade union organisations.

OUR weaknesses are demonstrated with especial vividness when seen against the background of the growing strike wave. A brilliant example of this is found in the last conflict in the iron-working industry of Germany. It in the first place, the decision to bring the question before a compulsory arbitration board caused perplexity even among certain groups of Communists. Echoes of the social-democratic attitude found place in the ranks of the Communist Party. Once arbitration was enforced, there was nothing else to do! On the other hand, we see an utter inability to analyse

the situation, dissensions, and the absence of a single line of action. In the "Rote Fahne" certain slogans, in the "Kampf," others. The Ruhr regional Party committee proclaimed its own line. The Communist Party, which on one and the same question has three separate lines, has no line of action whatever.

But the workers' movement is not always being shaken with such gigantic conflicts as the British strike and lock-out or the struggle in the iron-working industry of Germany and so on. The every-day strikes also demand the closest attention. Not a day passes without a clash between workers and employers occurring on some section of the movement, and here, too, our deficiencies, our inability to manœuvre, our inability to link up the sectional slogans with the general purpose, and deviations, either of exclusively political slogans or primitive economic ones, are being manifested. In certain cases a fear of strikes is being displayed (in Czecho-Slovakia, before the conflict in the textile industry). One even hears the more than strange reasoning: "But how can the workers strike, if they haven't sufficient funds?" And how will the workers make a revolution? Here the many years of reformist influence are showing their effect. For long years the reformists educated the workers in the view that first money had to be collected, then they could strike. Every strike had to have its solid backing. But when the reformists had gathered large sums of money the theory began to develop that the unions must not risk all their possessions, which had been gathered with such difficulty. And now they have established a complete new anti-strike or strike-breaker theory; to strike is senseless, for the employers are strongly organised, and so we must set all our hopes on compulsory State arbitration.

LEAST of all, of course, can a Communist declare himself against large strike funds, but he is no Communist who makes the advance of the workers dependent on the size of the strike fund. The larger the strike, the bigger the attack, the thinner the strike fund becomes; and victory can be obtained not with financial resources, but with a revolutionary strike strategy, a revolutionary strike tactic. There are no general rules for winning a strike. It is not possible to write a text book on how to win a strike and to give a hundred per cent. guarantee of victory. But already, on the basis of a very rich experience, badly and poorly studied unfortunately, we can deduce a whole series of very important conclusions in the sense of establishing strike strategy under the conditions of the present-day frenzied concentration and trustification, both in countries with an independent revolutionary trade union movement, and in countries where we are working inside the reformist trade unions. But in order that these conclusions should be reached at the congress it is necessary that all the organisations, both the independent trade unions and the minorities attached to the Profintern, should each for its own country calculate the results of what they have done in this sphere; it is necessary that they themselves, on the basis of the experience of the last few years, should endeavour to elucidate the causes of a number of defeats and to determine how the struggle must be waged in the future so as to reduce defeats to a minimum and to ensure victory.

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THE Communist Parties must not look on from outside at the forthcoming congress of the Profintern. They must not wait for someone somewhere to calculate the results of trade union activity in every country without their initiative and their assistance. Such an attitude to the congress would be purely bureaucratic and would be highly dangerous for all the international working class movement. Every Communist Party must take part in the preparations for the congress. Preparation for the congress connotes the preliminary consideration of all the questions on the agenda, the calculation of the results of the trade union work in the given country, a discussion on the most important questions connected with the agenda of the Profintern congress in the Party press, the organising of a series of conferences and meetings, in the nuclei and the areas, for the purpose of checking the trade union work and the consideration of all the most important problems of the international trade union movement. Only such preparation for the congress can ensure the maximum results before, during and after the congress. Here also the Communists must take a position diametrically opposite to that of the Amsterdammers. What are the preparations for an Amsterdam congress? The agenda is printed; then several resolutions are printed; immediately before the congress a dozen or so trade union officials gather for the purpose of selecting the delegation. And that's the lot. Such a social-democratic "preparation" neither has nor can have anything in common with our understanding and conception of an international congress. We need every revolutionary worker taking part in the trade union movement to know what are the questions before the congress of the Profintern; what has been done in his or her own country in the direction of putting into operation the previous decisions; what the revolutionary wing of the workers' movement of the given country is contributing to the given congress; what proposals it is putting forward; what is their conduct and so on. And that will be a genuine, and not the shoddy Amsterdam preparation for the congress.

IN this article we shall not set ourselves the task of surveying all the items on the Agenda. The agenda is printed and is known to all Communist Parties. Quite a large part of the Party press has not even printed the congress agenda yet, and this witnesses to the failure of many leading elements of our Communist movement to comprehend all the significance of the Profintern and its forthcoming Fourth Congress. While a few years ago the Amsterdam International, basing itself on its dozens of million members, was formally right in taking up a haughty attitude to the Profintern, the position has now been radically changed. According to the latest figures the Amsterdam International has less than thirteen million members, while the Soviet and Chinese trade unions alone have together as many members as the whole Amsterdam International. If to this be added the innumerable independent unions which are attached to the Profintern (France, Czecho-Slovakia, Japan, Colombia, etc.), and the revolutionary minorities inside the Amsterdam trade unions, the correlation of forces is seen clearly to be unfavourable to the Amsterdam International. Meantime many

Communists openly exaggerate the forces of Amsterdam and do not adequately evaluate the forces of the Profintern. While it is dangerous to over-estimate one's own forces, it is no less dangerous to underestimate them. Of course, in organisational relationships the Amsterdam is the better ordered organisation, for it unites only independent (organisationally, but not politically independent) unions, while in addition to its independent organisations the Profintern also federates the minorities. But if the correlation of forces on the international scale be taken, we can now say that the Amsterdam International, despite the fact that the majority of the trade unions of Germany and Britain stand behind it, continues to travel down a declining while the Profintern is travelling an ascending road. If to the revolutionary wing of the trade union movement be added the Pacific Ocean Secretariat of Trade Unions and the developing Latin-American Secretariat, and to the Amsterdammers be added the Pan-American Federation of Labour, then the utmost that can be said is that the forces of international reformism and of international Communism are approximately equal in the trade union movement, while everybody knows that formally our forces are, albeit slowly, yet continuously growing, while the forces of international reformism are continuously declining.

THIS correlation of forces which exists at the beginning of 1928 cannot in the least satisfy the Comintern and the revolutionary trade union movement. Still less can it reassure itself with what has been done in this sphere. The Profintern has a large number of weaknesses and deficiencies, which demand open consideration and elucidation. But it must not be forgotten that the weaknesses of the Profintern are our own weaknesses. This question must be given the attention of every Communist Party. The Comintern has more than once passed resolutions to the effect that it is necessary to strengthen the Profintern. But what is meant by strengthening the Profintern? First and foremost, the extension and development of work in all countries, the organisational consolidation of our position, both in the independent organisations and inside the reformist unions, and then the development of the work of the Profintern as an international organisation. The fundamental weakness of the Profintern (it is also a weak feature of the Comintern) consists in the fact that it is not yet in the condition directly to supervise the economic struggle of the proletarian masses. The Profintern cannot yet direct, and it cannot do so mainly because the internationalisation of our tactic, the organisation of simultaneous attacks in various countries abroad and the direct connection between the Profintern and its adherents in all countries has not reached the stage which is indispensable to the central supervision of all the strikes and conflicts occurring over the wide-flung international front of the class struggle. But the tasks before the trade union International consist in moving towards the goal, whatever obstacles the capitalist States may put in our way. It will be possible to realise that end only in the event of there being carried on a continuous, active policy in every event for putting into operation the Profintern and Comintern lines of policy in the trade union movement, on the basis of the growing activity of the masses and the daily increas-

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ing connection between local organisations and their international trade union centre.

THE Profintern congress will take place in one month's time. Already very little time is left, and meantime the Communist Parties have not yet set about preparation for this congress, despite the fact that direct instructions on this matter have already been given to all Communist Parties. If this continues it will once more confirm the fact that for certain parties their own slogans of "the utmost attention to trade union work" and "75 per cent. trade union work" are empty phrases imposing no obligation whatever. Attention to trade union work connotes first and foremost the calculation of the results of what has been done in this sphere during the last few years; of what is our positive and what our negative experience in the sphere of the operation of the united front and unity; whether any corrections need to be made in this sphere, and if so, what; what the revolutionary trade unions and

Communist Parties can offer the congress from their own experience in the struggle with capitalistic rationalisation, in the direction of the mass movement, in the organised consolidation of their political influence and so on. That is what is meant by preparation for the congress, that is what is meant by the putting into force of the Comintern's decisions to strengthen the Profintern in the centre and in the localities.

In conclusion we underline the absolute and pressing necessity for all the Party and trade union press to set aside adequate space devoted to the forthcoming congress, and for all Communist Parties to charge those of their members who are elected from the area or national conferences as delegates to the Profintern congress to contribute their share of positive experience to the further work of the world revolutionary trade union movement. Only sober self-criticism, a diligent study of our weak and strong sides will afford us the possibility of correctly indicating the further prospects opening up before the work of the Comintern and the Profintern for the further winning over of the working masses.