

(Resume by f.f.)

THE SECOND CONGRESS OF RUSSIAN S*D R.P.
REPORT OF THE SIBERIAN DELEGATION

N. TROTSKY - Geneva, 1905

(Cover reads: R. S*D R.P. ---"Workers of all Countries, unite!")

The introduction states that the author had not immediately consented to the publication of this pamphlet. The report had been written for the committees of the party, "were written almost on the second day after the Congress, were written hurriedly" and were not intended for wide distribution. But they were "copied" and copied from the copies so profusely that publication is practically unnecessary to give them wider distribution. However, weightier reasons prompt it: "the organizational differences which appeared at the Congress were not ended with the concluding words of the chairman. They tore themselves out of the halls of the Congress and 'poured out' everywhere in the party. Now with the declaration about the Congress, the differences have definitely come out from underground. It is impossible to keep quiet about them, or to evade them -- it is necessary to overcome them."

"All elements, consciously, semi-consciously and unpassionately group themselves around two tendencies. The differences are transformed into conflicts all the easier because the differences are organizational....."

"The author has experienced a great moral satisfaction from reading not long ago in ISKRA an article ("What Not To Do", No. 62) written by a very authoritative comrade, in which several characteristics of the "centralism" disorganizing the party are described in terms often met with in this report. This is explained by the fact that the explanations simply come out (naprashivayutsya) from under the pen."

LT states this has a historic interest since it deals with the past "But he who vividly embraces the possible future of the two tendencies -- and this cannot but take in every member of the party -- he must compare its present with its recent past, and for him my report retains still today and will retain tomorrow its actual significance."

"Dear Comrades!

You mandated us (the Siberian Delegation in whose name this is written, if) the presentation of the Siberian Union at the Second Congress of the party. The Second Congress, which was the subject of much passionate expectations, such great hopes... let us say immediately: the Second Congress did not justify the expectations. It did not only give much; it took away much....."

It is difficult so soon, says LT, to write a political balance sheet. "The future historian will do it better and more impartially than we. But we, too, can not refuse the right of such a task."

Then follows, underlined, an explanation of a formulation which, off and on, is repeated throughout the pamphlet: "A Congress is a register (registrator), controller -- but not a creator." But not all comrades, says T, accepted such a definition, and even within this definition the Congress did not live up to expectations.

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"The Congress should have brought together for several weeks the comrades of the various localities, various districts of party work -- and what is especially important -- the practical activists of the party with the theoretical leaders... his educational side of the Congress P.B. Axelrod especially strongly emphasized during the last year in discussions with the Russian comrades abroad."

Everyone, continued T, had a right to expect from the Congress a picture of collective working-out of resolutions on program and tactics but "He who expected this will be mistaken".

"It is true the Congress gave us a program-- more precisely it accepted without essential corrections the draft of a program presented by the editors of Iskra and Zarya. And, although this part of its work was undubitably positive, there is nothing to say about this since the Congress, in essence, merely bore witness to the fact that in this sphere, 'all is well'. The 'critical' voice of Comrades Martynov, Akinov, and several delegates of the Bund sounded isolated...."

If, in the rest of the report, much space is given not to this, but to various votes on various questions of statutes and elections, "then this is only because the center of the attention of the Congress was illegitimately transferred to this sphere. The second half of the sessions of the Congress became transformed purely and simply into a gamble (azartnyuyigra) of votes."

"It (the Congress, and he mentions there were 24 such, ff) thought it was creating ...it only destroyed."

Several "secondary details of organizational statute" were moved forward to first place and these created their "majority" (the word majority is put sarcastically into quotes by LT); "You will see that the Congress was worried (volnovall) not about the tasks of deepening and widening the political struggle, but about the question of 'mutual cooptation' of members into the C.O., and editorship of C.O. Not the question about the two-thirds of the organized workers in the cities who are outside the leadership of the local committees was the subject of the heated debates, but the question whether by two-thirds of ~~members~~ unanimously must one accept new members into the C.C....."

"facts must be taken as they are given (found)." One must find the reasons for this occurrence--that is the task. Then he mentions that the first thing that took up a lot of time was the Bund, and in the end they left the Congress. "The party to them was a fiction, an official firm."

"A Congress is only a recorder - but not a creator.. One wishes to say: If the Congress is not a creator, then it is a destroyer -- and a destroyer with a capricious initiative. For who could have foretold that this "Iskra-ist" Congress will mercilessly break up the editorial collegium of the ISKRA which had just been recognized as the central organ of the party? Which political star-gazer would have foretold that comrades Martov and Lenin would appear at the Congress as hostile leaders of hostile sides?"

But, although this appeared to come as a bolt out of the blue, this was not really so since "The dead dictated their will to the living...."

"We spoke about the penalties of impersonal history. Of course by this we do not mean to deny the personal responsibility of Com. Lenin. At the Second Congress of the RSDP this man, with the energy and talent characteristic of him, played the role of a party disorganizer. But to put the whole fault on him would signify an impermissible simplification of the question. For Lenin, during the second period of the Congress, there was a new compact majority of "hard" Iskra-ists, in opposition to the 'soft' Iskra-ists. The delegates of the Siberian Union were among the 'soft'. And now, after a serious evaluation of their actions, we do not think that we spoiled our revolutionary formula...." (formulaary ???)

"Yes! The Congress was the triumph of a 'political' tendency in program and tactics and of centralism in organization. But this same congress revealed that for many comrades both the 'politics' and the 'centralism' had thus far a purely formal significance - a bare antithesis to 'economism' and 'primitivism' - (kustarnichestva -- home industry; handicraft)..."

"Earlier we were ^{or} simulated with the best of intentions, of course,) trade unionists. Now we try to move the masses, having gone through trade-union apprenticeship, into anti-Tsarist struggle by bare democratic slogans... such kind of 'politics' is often connected with zapodazrivanien of professional struggle in political unreliability is formally the antithesis to economism. And at the same time it is merely the translation of 'economism' to 'political' language."

Moreover, continues LT, an entirely homogenous process is proceeding in the sphere of organizational views. Here too "primitiveness" (kustarnichestvo) has learned to speak with the language of centralism."

"And that is why --let us say, running ahead -- the straight-lined, i.e. purely formal 'centralism' had as its most decided partisans... yesterday's economism. Precisely they proved to be 'Iskra-ists' of the highest hardness."

LT then explains that the differences did not appear suddenly at the congress; there already had been differences on composition of CC and relationship of CC to CO. But the point was that the basis of the first opposition - the definition of what constitutes a member of the party - "occurred, essentially, regarding something that had no direct or immediate relation to the disputed questions which divided us." Nevertheless it had a 'providential' character and the Congress fell into two groups, according to those who voted for Martov's formulation and were called 'soft' and those for Lenin who were considered 'hard'. "It is true that many members of the congress at that time had not sufficiently grasped exactly what is 'soft' and what is 'hard' - and the voting came out sufficiently motley."

LT says that he will not discuss the point since it was more than adequately discussed at the congress and can be found in the protocols but he nevertheless said "We wish to remark merely one, very instructive trait and that is the full abstractness of the position of Com. Lenin."

LT then goes over to the question of the relation of the CC to the CO, organization of a three man organizational 'direction' -- the question to which so much time was devoted that is that of establishing a Soviet (Council). LT says five members would no doubt have been better than 3, but that is no reason to consider this a 'monstrosity'. According to Lenin the congress should elect the Council out of the staffs of the CO and the CC - not less than two from each; hence the congress choses 3 from CO and 2 from CC. "The mood of the compact [majority] one may characterize as readiness in the highest degree - there is no doubt that the whole Council could have been composed of members of the Ed Bd only. Com. Lenin did not go that far. He stopped on the following: 3 editors received decisive voice in the Council, Council gets decisive force over the Ed Bd and over CC. The 'thesis' is: Ed Bd and CC are autonomous. The 'antithesis': 3 members of the Ed Bd have the right to change decisions of CC. The 'Synthesis': there is none yet. So concludes the saga of the statutes about two 'independent' centers."

.... "The proposition of Com. Lenin that the whole Soviet be elected at the congress is rejected. The proposition of Com. Martov that the Ed Bd and CC send into the Soviet 2 persons each is accepted. Com. proposes to permit the four to coop a fifth. Lenin insists that the fifth be appointed at the congress. Otherwise the highest institution of the party can remain without a roof, the four may not agree on the fifth (L had proposed that cooptation be on a unanimous basis only, ff) The council will be left in a random fashion, etc, etc....

The congress accepts the proposition of Com. Lenin. Thereby, of course, the whole question of the numerical superiority of Ed Bd over CC is foreclosed."

But the numerical majority is still indecisive since two members in the Council will surely oppose transforming the CC into a joke. Hence: "Wille sur March (will to power) of Lenin here based itself on a sharply posed dilemma: either to give up the influence in the Council, or to free oneself from participation in the Ed Bd. The first would have signified a retreat. Com. Lenin is consistent. He chose the second. He decided to insist on the selection by the congress of 3 members, instead of approving in full the whole Ed Bd. Such is the dialectic of the 'struggle for power': its point of departure was to oboznachit independence of the CO from influence by the CC. The task of the following moment: to create statutory guarantees of the dependence of the CC upon the Ed Bd. The further conclusion: to destroy the Ed Bd which stood for the defence of the independence of the CC.

STATutory

"We speak about the 'struggle for power', but we do not place into this word any sort of personal (individual) content. Personal struggle has a principled, so to speak person-less character. It was the conclusion of a system. 'The state of siege' on which Lenin insisted with such energy, demands 'hard power'. The practice of organized lack of faith demands and iron hand. The system of terror was owned by Robespierre. Com. Lenin made a mental roll-call of the party personnel and arrived at the conclusion that the iron hand - that is himself and only himself. And he was right. The hegemony of the S-D in the liberating struggle signified, according to the logic of the state of siege, the hegemony of Lenin over the S-D. In such a context the 'struggle for power' lost its personal character - it has appeared as the last link in the system. Its success would mean the success of the system. All the more ruinous can it become for the party."

It then proceeds to take up the selection by the congress of the major committees and institutions of the party and concludes: "24 against 20 - 'true' Iskra-ists against the coalition. We will not roll-call the 'majority': outside of comrades Flekhanov and Lenin, we will not meet familiar names who had been connected with the revolutionary leadership in the Rus. S-D."

It then proceeds to show that the voting occurred after the exit of the Bund, that he has full knowledge of all the political inadequacies of the Bund "but no one will deny them that which the Russian Comrades miss - organizational experience" and these, when they had voted had been, not with what later became the 'majority' but with the 'minority'. Then he mentions all important people who had voted "with us", that is the minority. Finally the last day of the congress showed that some of "hard" Iskra-ists were not so "hard".

"Such comrades are the results of the work of the congress in its second half. Its character predominantly is a nullifying one. There was nullified (abolished) its Ed Bd, and its CC for a long time. And there is basis to think that the idea of centralism itself - which seemed at the congress to be the victor on the triumphant chariot - that it itself is also threatened with nullification. Such are the results of the victory of the "hard" Iskra-ists and qualified centralists.

"We did all we could, comrades. We defended the inviolability of the old editorial collegium of the Iskra because we considered ourselves Iskra-ists and Iskra we knew only as the creation of a collective body. We defended the independence of the ~~existing~~ militant leader of the party - the CC - because we considered ourselves centralists."

"But we suffered defeat because in the book of prophecies there was destined to be the victory, not of centralism, but of ego-centrism which found a basis in the patient psychology of yesterday's economism and primitivism. Here is

the formula which contains the explanation of the fact and historic justification of the 'victors', because, in our view, not the 'vanquished' but the 'victors' stand in need of justification before the party."

The rest of the letter - 4 pp - concerns itself with the authors (LT) conclusions and characterization of the majority's (always put in quotes by him) "will to power". "According to Lenin the role of the congress is entirely a different one. It is the role of the policeman of centralism. He 'dismisses' the opposition and bangs the doors of the party. Demonstrating before the congress the significance of the CG, Lenin showed ...kulak (in Russian it means 'fat', ff) (we speak here without metaphors) as the 'political' symbol of the CG. We do not remember whether this centralist imagery was included in the protocols of the sessions. Too bad if not. This kulak in fact is the crowning point of the edifice."

Then LT quotes Plekhanov's phrase 'mental poverty' and says the truer that was the more there was recourse to purely formal incitement. "The words: economism, opportunism have the same psychological influence as a hypnosis.".... "In the orthodox mountain started the process of self-devourment. 'The Fatherland is in danger, Caveant consules.' - and com. Lenin transformed the modest Council into an powerful Committee of General Safety, and he even took upon himself the role of 'unbought' Robespierre. Whatever stood in the way must be done away with - and com. Lenin did not stop at the destruction of the Iskra-ist Mountain, so long as he could receive the possibility through the means of the Council to plant without hindrance the 'Republic of Virtue and Horror'."

".. Such a regime cannot last long. The system of 'horror' operates in reaction. The Paris proletariat raised Robespierre hoping that he would bring them out of poverty. But the dictatorship gave it a great number of executions and very little bread. Robespierre fell and in his fall brought with him the whole Mountain - and with it - the matter of democracy in general."

"...The committee were convinced that it (centralism, ff) will give them people, literature directions, means. At the same time the regime which, in the interests of its support, begins with the expulsion of a whole series of the best workers, of literary and practical work - such a regime promises very many executions and very little bread. It will inevitably call forth disappointment which can prove fatal not only for Robespierre helots of centralism, but also for the idea of a single militant party organization. Then the bosses of the situation prove to be the 'Thermidorians' of socialist opportunism, and the doors of the party will truly swing wide open....

But it will not be comrades!....."

Two Words in the place of a Conclusion.

(The notes to this section states that it did not appear as part of the report, but was added by LT for publication; and that it was based on his notes of two years ago i.e. before Lenin's book "What is to be Done" had appeared. All this concerns the introductory statement of what a party and party work should be. The rest concerns itself with the fact that, First Martov left the Ed Bd and then Lenin, ff)

"The report was already corrected by me when there appeared as a separate publication a 'Letter to the Editors of Iskra', written by Lenin in explanation of his departure from the Ed Bd. This is a very strange document."

"Com. Lenin complains of the fact that the minority has created an 'underground' (sic!) literature which is abroad, is sent to the committees and is already beginning to return from Russia abroad. In this 'underground' (not anonymous then?) literature is included, incidentally, the report of the Siberian Delegation. What precisely does Lenin wish to say by this? Is it a sin that the 'Report of the Siberian Delegation' was not published as general information? But this could not have been done before the declaration ~~about~~ about the congress of the party? Or Com. Lenin wishes to point out that the speech was distributed only among definite groups and ~~individual~~ persons? But then it is not entirely understandable ~~why~~ on what basis Lenin quotes from a document which was not designed for publication? Further does Lenin wish to say that he could not find his way to that literature which he designates as 'underground'? And yet; if he did get to it, then does he not considered obliged now that he has allowed himself to quote from these ... 'underground' documents to publish his own more or less 'underground' documents? Or is he ~~now~~ only ready to recognize the right to do this for the 'minority'? We hope that Com. Lenin will give us the appropriate explanations." It is good, says LT, that Lenin quotes about the executions of Robespierre, but:

"The 'underground' report of the Siberian Delegate speaks about the caricature of Robespierre. It is distinguished from the great image exactly in the manner in which a vulgar farce is distinguished from historic tragedy..."

"Com. Lenin thinks, or, in any case, writes that the organizational differences are dragged in by us exclusively in order to prettify the position of the minority and reception of the struggle for the change of personnel composition of the centre... Com. Lenin does not know any sort of 'bureaucratic centralism'. But he does know many intrigues accomplished by the 'minority' with the aim of entering the party centers. Each one sees that which he needs to see..."

"...Every reader who will have read the 'Letter' of Com. Lenin entitled 'Why I Left the Editorial Board of the Iskra' through to the end will without fail ask: 'Yes, and why did Com. Lenin leave the Iskra? And if the reader will combine that which the 'Letter' gave him, he will say to himself this:

"Com. Lenin fought at the congress for the 'change of the composition of the party centers'. Com. Lenin had no principled basis for such a struggle. Nevertheless he prospered. The Ed Bd of the Iskra and the Organization Committee were destroyed. But the immediate result of this destruction was the departure of Lenin himself from the Ed Bd. It is clear that the 'tactic-plan' of Com. Lenin, who was led not by principled considerations, suffered several deficiencies which should not be in such delicate undertakings. Lenin 'slipped' (scrvat'sya). This happens. But in such cases - concludes further our reader - it follows that one removes oneself without noise and without superfluous commotion."

"And if he reasoned thus, the reader was right."