

# Celebrate The 60th Anniversary Of The Founding Of The Third Communist International! —March, 1919—



SPEECH AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE CONGRESS

MARCH 2

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party I declare the First Congress of the Communist International open. First I would ask all present to rise in tribute to the finest representatives of the Third International: Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. (*All Rise.*)

Comrades, our gathering has great historic significance. It testifies to the collapse of all the illusions cherished by bourgeois democrats. Not only in Russia, but in the most developed capitalist countries of Europe, Germany for example, civil war is a fact.

The bourgeoisie are terror-stricken at the growing workers' revolutionary movement. This is understandable if we take into account that the development of events since the imperialist war inevitably favours the workers' revolutionary movement, and that the world revolution is beginning and growing in intensity everywhere.

The people are aware of the greatness and significance of the struggle now going on. All that is needed is to find the practical form to enable the proletariat to establish its rule. Such a form is the Soviet system with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dictatorship of the proletariat—until now these words were Latin to the masses. Thanks to the spread of the Soviets throughout the world this Latin has been translated into all modern languages; a practical form of dictator-

ship has been found by the working people. The mass of workers now understand it thanks to Soviet power in Russia, thanks to the Spartacus League in Germany and to similar organizations in other countries, such as, for example, the Shop Stewards Committees in Britain. All this shows that a revolutionary form of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been found, that the proletariat is now able to exercise its rule.

Comrades, I think that after the events in Russia and the January struggle in Germany, it is especially important to note that in other countries, too, the latest form of the workers' movement is asserting itself and getting the upper hand. Today, for example, I read in an anti-socialist newspaper a report to the effect that the British Government had received a deputation from the Birmingham Workers' Council and had expressed its readiness to recognise the Councils as economic bodies. The Soviet system has triumphed not only in backward Russia, but also in the most developed country of Europe—in Germany, and in Britain, the oldest capitalist country.

Even though the bourgeoisie are still raging, even though they may kill thousands more workers, victory will be ours, the victory of the world-wide communist revolution is assured.

Comrades, I extend hearty greetings to you on behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. I move that we elect a presidium. Let us have nominations.

(Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 28, July, 1918-March, 1919, pgs. 455-456)

## WON AND RECORDED

The only firm gain in a revolution is that which has been won by the mass of the proletariat. The only gain worth recording is that which really has been firmly won.

The founding of the Third, Communist International in Moscow on March 2, 1919, was a record of what has been gained not only by the Russian workers, but also by the German, Austrian, Hungarian, Finnish, Swiss—in a word, by the workers of the world.

Precisely because of this the founding of the Third Communist International really is firm.

Only four months ago it was impossible to say that Soviet government, the Soviet form of state, was an international achievement. There was something in it, and moreover something essential, which belonged to all capitalist countries as well as to Russia. But, until it had been put to the test, it was still impossible to say what changes, of what depth and importance, the development of the world revolution would bring.

The German revolution has provided this test. An advanced capitalist country, coming after one of the most backward, has demonstrated to the whole world in a matter of a hundred-odd days not only the same principal revolutionary forces and principal direction of the revolution, but also the same principal form of the new, proletarian democracy—the Soviets.

At the same time in Britain, a victor country, the richest in colonies, the longest serving model of "social peace", or so it was reputed, the oldest capitalist country, we can see an extensive, irrepressible, intense and powerful growth of Soviets and of new forms of mass proletarian struggle—the Shop Stewards Committees.

In America, the strongest and youngest capitalist country, the workers have tremendous sympathy with the Soviets.

The ice has been broken.

The Soviets have triumphed throughout the world.

They have triumphed first and foremost because they have won the workers' sympathy. That is the main thing. No savagery by the imperialist bourgeoisie, no persecution or murder of Bolsheviks can deprive the people of this gain. The more the "democratic" bourgeoisie rage, the firmer the grip these gains will take on the hearts of the workers, on their moods, on their minds, and the more they will inspire their heroic struggle.

The ice has been broken.

That is why the work of the International Conference of Communists in Moscow which founded the Third International has proceeded so easily, so smoothly, with such calm and firm resolution.

We have recorded what has already been won. We have written down what has already taken a firm grip on the people's minds. Everyone knew, and what is more, everyone saw, felt, sensed, each from his own country's experience, that a new proletarian movement was in full swing. Everyone realised that this unprecedentedly strong and deep-going movement cannot be confined to any of the old frame-

works, or held in check by the past masters at petty politics, neither by the world-schooled, world-skilled Lloyd Georges and Wilsons of British and American "democratic" capitalism, nor by the Hendersons, Renaudels, Brantings and all the other case-hardened heroes of social-chauvinism.

The new movement is heading towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, making headway despite all the vacillation, despite desperate reverses, despite the unparalleled and incredible "Russian" chaos (if one judges superficially as an onlooker). It is heading for *Soviet government* with the torrential might of millions and tens of millions of workers sweeping everything from their path.

This is what we have recorded. We have embodied in our resolutions, theses, reports and speeches what has already been won.

Marxism, illuminated by the bright light of the new, universally rich experience of the revolutionary workers, has helped us to understand the inevitability of the present development. It will help the workers of the whole world, who are fighting to overthrow capitalist wage-slavery, more clearly to appreciate the aims of their struggle, to march more firmly along the path already outlined, more confidently and firmly to achieve victory and to consolidate it.

The founding of the Third, Communist International heralds the international republic of Soviets, the international victory of communism.

(Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, July, 1918-March, 1919, pgs. 478-480)

## CONCLUDING SPEECH AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE CONGRESS

MARCH 6

That we have been able to gather, despite all the persecution and all the difficulties created by the police, that we have been able without any serious differences and in a brief space of time to reach important decisions on all the vitally urgent questions of the contemporary revolutionary epoch, we owe to the fact that the proletarian masses of the whole world, by their action, have brought up these questions in practice and begun to tackle them.

All we have had to do here has been to record the gains already won by the people in the process of their revolutionary struggle.

Not only in the East-European but also in the West-European countries, not only in the vanquished but also in the victor countries, for example in Britain, the movement in favour of Soviets is spreading farther and farther, and this movement is, most assuredly, a movement pursuing the aim of establishing the new, proletarian democracy. It is the most significant step towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, towards the complete victory of communism.

No matter how the bourgeoisie of the whole world rage, how much they deport or jail or even kill Spartacists and Bolsheviks—all this will no longer help. It

will only serve to enlighten the masses, help rid them of the old bourgeois-democratic prejudices and steel them in struggle. The victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is assured. The founding of an international Soviet republic is on the way. (*Stormy applause.*)

(Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, July, 1918-March, 1919, pgs. 476-477)

## SPEECH AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE THE MOSCOW SOVIET THE MOSCOW COMMITTEE OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (BOLSHEVIKS) THE ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS MOSCOW TRADE UNIONS AND FACTORY COMMITTEES TO MARK THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL MARCH 6, 1919

(*Stormy ovation.*) Comrades, at the First Congress of the Communist International we did not succeed in getting representatives from all countries where this organization has most faithful friends and where there are workers whose sympathies are entirely with us. Allow me, therefore, to begin with a short quotation which will show you that in reality we have more friends than we can see, than we know and than we were able to assemble here, in Moscow, despite all persecution, despite the entire, seemingly omnipotent, union of the bourgeoisie of the whole world. This persecution has gone to such lengths as to attempt to surround us with a sort of Great Wall of China, and to deport Bolsheviks in dozens from the freest republics of the world. They seem to be scared stiff that ten or a dozen Bolsheviks will infect the whole world. But, we, of course, know that this fear is ridiculous—because they have already infected the whole world, because the Russian workers' struggle has already convinced working people everywhere that the destiny of the world revolution is being decided here, in Russia.

Comrades, I have here a copy of *L'Humanite*, a French newspaper whose policy corresponds more to that of our Mensheviks or Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. During the war, this paper was utterly ruthless in its attacks on those who supported our viewpoint. Today it is defending those who during the war went along with their own bourgeoisie. This very newspaper reports in its issue of January 13, 1919, that a mammoth meeting (as the newspaper itself admits) took place in Paris of active party and trade union members of the Seine Federation, i.e., the district nearest to Paris, the centre of the proletarian movement, the centre of all political life in France. The first speaker was Bracke, a socialist who throughout the war took the same line as our Mensheviks and Right-wing defence advocates. He was meek and mild now. Not a word about a single burning issue! He ended by saying that he was against his government's interference in the struggle of the proletariat of other countries. His words were drowned in applause. The next speaker was a supporter of his, a certain Pierre Laval. He spoke of demobilisation, the burning issue

in France today—a country which has probably borne greater sacrifices than any other country in this criminal war. And this country now sees that demobilisation is being dragged out, held up, that there is no desire to carry it through, that preparations are being made for a new war that will obviously demand new sacrifices from the French workers for the sake of settling how much more of the spoils the French or British capitalists will get. The newspaper goes on to say that the crowd listened to the speaker, Pierre Laval, but when he started running down Bolshevism, the protests and excitement stopped the meeting. After that, citizen Pierre Renaudel was refused a hearing, and the meeting ended with a brief statement by citizen Pericat. He is one of the few people in the French labour movement who in the main is in agreement with us. And so, the newspaper has to admit that the speaker who began to attack the Bolsheviks was immediately pulled up.

Comrades, we have not been able to get even one delegate here directly from France, and only one Frenchman, Comrade Guilbeaux, arrived here, and he with great difficulty. (*Stormy applause.*) He will speak here today. He spent months in the prisons of that free republic, Switzerland, being accused of having contact with Lenin and preparing a revolution in Switzerland. He was escorted through Germany by gendarmes and officers, for fear, evidently, that he might drop a match that would set Germany on fire. But Germany is ablaze without this match. In France, too, as we can see, there are sympathisers with the Bolshevik movement. The French people are probably among the most experienced, most politically conscious, most active and responsive. They will not allow a speaker at a public meeting to strike a false note: he is stopped. Considering the French temperament, he was lucky not to have been dragged down from the rostrum! Therefore, when a newspaper hostile to us admits what took place at this big meeting we can safely say the French proletariat is on our side.

I am going to read another short quotation, from an Italian newspaper. The attempts to isolate us from the rest of the world are so great that we very rarely receive socialist newspapers from abroad. It is a rare thing to receive a copy of the Italian newspaper *Avanti!* the organ of the Italian Socialist Party, a party which participated in Zimmerwald, fought against the war and has now resolved not to attend the yellow congress in Berne, the congress of the old International, which was to be attended by people who had helped their governments to prolong this criminal war. To this day, *Avanti!* is under strict censorship. But in this issue, which arrived here by chance, I read an item on party life in a small locality called Cavriago (probably a remote spot because it cannot be located on the map). It appears that the workers there adopted a resolution supporting their newspaper for its uncompromising stand and declared their approval of the German Spartacists. Then follow the words "*Sovietisti russi*" which, even though they are in Italian, can be understood all over the world. They sent greetings

to the Russian "Sovietisti" and expressed the wish that the programme of the Russian and German revolutionaries should be adopted throughout the world and serve to carry the fight against the bourgeoisie and military domination to a conclusion. When you read a resolution like that, adopted in some Italian Poshek-honye, you have every right to say to yourself that the Italian people are on our side, the Italian people understand what the Russian "Sovietisti" are, what the programme of the Russian "Sovietisti" and the German Spartacists is. Yet at that time we had no such programme! We had no common programme with the German Spartacists, but the Italian workers rejected all they had seen in their bourgeois press, which, bribed as it is by the millionaires and multi-millionaires, spreads slander about us in millions of copies. It failed to deceive the Italian workers, who grasped what the Spartacists and the "Sovietisti" were and declared that they sympathised with their programme, at a time when this programme did not exist. That is why we found our task so easy at this Congress. All we had to do was to record as a programme what had already been implanted in the minds and hearts of the workers, even those cast away in some remote spot and cut off from us by police and military cordons. That is why we have been able to reach concerted decisions on all the main issues with such ease and complete unanimity. And we are fully convinced that these decisions will meet with a powerful response among workers elsewhere.

The Soviet movement, comrades, is the form which has been won in Russia, which is now spreading throughout the world and the very name of which gives the workers a complete programme. I hope that we, having had the good fortune to develop the Soviet form to victory, will not become swelled-headed about it.

We know very well that the reason we were the first to take part in a Soviet proletarian revolution was not because we were as well or better prepared than other workers, but because we were worse prepared. This is why we were faced with the most savage and decrepit enemy, and it is this that accounted for the outward scale of the revolution. But we also know that the Soviets exist here to this day, that they are grappling with gigantic difficulties which originate from an inadequate cultural level and from the burden that has weighed down on us for more than a year, on us who

stand alone at our posts, at a time when we are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and when, as you know perfectly well, harrowing ordeals, the hardships of famine and terrible suffering have befallen us.

Those who directly or indirectly side with the bourgeoisie often try to appeal to the workers and provoke indignation among them by pointing to the severe sufferings of the workers today. And we tell them: yes, these sufferings are severe and we do not conceal them from you. We tell the workers that, and they know it well from their own experience. You can see we are fighting not only to win socialism for ourselves, not only to ensure that our children shall only recollect capitalists and landowners as prehistoric monsters; we are fighting to ensure that the workers of the whole world triumph together with us.

And this First Congress of the Communist International, which has made the point that throughout the world the Soviets are winning the sympathy of the workers, shows us that the victory of the world communist revolution is assured. (*Applause.*) The bourgeoisie will continue to vent their fury in a number of countries; the bourgeoisie there are just beginning to prepare the destruction of the best people, the best representatives of socialism, as is evident from the brutal murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by the whiteguards. These sacrifices are inevitable. We seek no agreement with the bourgeoisie, we are marching to the final and decisive battle against them. But we know that after the ordeal, agony and distress of the war, when the people throughout the world are fighting for demobilisation, when they feel they have been betrayed and appreciate how incredibly heavy the burden of taxation is that has been placed upon them by the capitalists who killed tens of millions of people to decide who would receive more of the profits—we know that these brigands' rule is at an end!

Now that the meaning of the word "Soviet" is understood by everybody, the victory of the communist revolution is assured. The comrades present in this hall saw the founding of the first Soviet republic; now they see the founding of the Third, Communist International (*applause*), and they will all see the founding of the World Federative Republic of Soviets. (*Applause.*) (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, July, 1918-March, 1919, pgs. 481-485)

## **BOLSHEVIK**

**A MARXIST—LENINIST THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE  
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE U.S PROLETARIAN  
REVOLUTION— PUBLISHED BY THE U.S LENINIST CORE**

**P.O BOX 351 Bronx , New York 10452, New York**