7. THE COPENHAGEN AND BASLE CONGRESSES

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REFORMISM ON THE QUESTION OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

In August 1910 the Second International held a congress at Copenhagen, and Lenin attended it. He rallied the Left-wingers who tried to get the congress to adopt some resolutions basically favourable to the international working-class movement.

Lenin was on the commission dealing with the question of co-operative societies; here, too, he fought against opportunism. At that time, co-operative societies had been organized extensively in the capitalist countries and most workers joined them. The opportunist view was prevalent that under the capitalist system it was possible to move towards socialism via the co-operative societies. The discussion on co-operatives, therefore, was very important.

Prior to the congress, three draft resolutions on co-operative societies were published, one by the Belgian Party, one by Jules Guesde representing the minority in the French Socialist Party and the other by Jean Jaurès representing the majority of the French Socialists.

Lenin analysed the three draft resolutions, and pointed out;

. . . there are two main lines of policy here: one — the line of proletarian class struggle, recognition of the value of the co-operative societies as a weapon in this struggle, as one of its subsidiary means, and a definition of the conditions under which the co-operative societies would really play such a part and not remain simple commercial enterprises. The other line is a petty-bourgeois one, obscuring the question of the role of the co-operative societies in the class struggle of the proletariat, attaching to the co-operative societies an importance transcending this struggle (i.e., confusing the proletarian and the proprietors' view of co-operative societies), defining the aims of the co-operative societies with general phrases that are acceptable even to the bourgeois reformers, those ideologues of the progressive employers, large and small.[1]

Jaurès was the representative of the other line, the one opposed to the line of the proletariat. Lenin fought firmly against Jaurès' views and put forward his own draft resolution; later he offered amendments to the resolution drafted by the sub-commission; however, both were rejected. To avoid a dispute over minor questions, Lenin, at the plenary session of the congress, voted for the resolution drafted by the sub-commission. By sheer insistence on the part of the revolutionaries, the following sentences were included in the resolution:

. . . although the co-operative movement can never in itself bring about the liberation of the workers, it can be an effective weapon in the class struggle led by the workers for achieving their immediate aim — the conquest of political and economic power for the purpose of socializing all the means of production and of exchange. . . .

[1] "The Question of Co-operative Societies at the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 16, p. 276.

The congress adopted this resolution unanimously.

The Copenhagen Congress also adopted a resolution against militarism and war, in view of the ever-growing armaments drive of the Great Powers and the increasing war danger in the three years following the Stuttgart Congress. It contained the basic points in the Stuttgart resolution on the question of militarism, particularly the part which had been revised by Lenin. The Copenhagen resolution also declared that wars "will stop completely only when the capitalist economic system is eliminated", and that "the organized socialist proletariat of all countries is, therefore, the only reliable guarantor for the peace of the world". The opportunists publicly voted for this resolution; in fact, however, they were already sliding down the road of plain chauvinism.

ON THE QUESTION OF WAR THE OPPORTUNISTS SHOW THEMSELVES AS RENEGADES

The international situation grew more critical in the period after the Copenhagen Congress. In 1911 France and Germany narrowly escaped going to war over the seizure of Morocco. A war between Italy and Turkey took place in the same year. The year 1912 saw the beginning of the Balkan wars. These events indicated that war on a larger scale was in the making.

The situation demanded of Socialists in every country that they should express a clear attitude to the war

policy of imperialism. The opportunists began to reveal themselves in their true colours on this important question. They supported the intensified armaments drive and war preparations of their own bourgeois governments, and they spread chauvinistic and reformist ideas among the masses.

The British Social-Democrats actually adopted a resolution at their conference endorsing the British government's expansion of its naval forces. Bissolati and other reformists in the Italian Socialist Party openly supported their bourgeois government's war against Turkey. Erismann and other opportunists among the Swiss Social-Democrats voted in favour of their government's prohibition of strike picketing. The Baden parliamentary group of the German Social-Democrats voted for the war budget of their bourgeois government. The German trade union leader Karl Legien visited the United States and expressed hearty admiration for American bourgeois democracy, noting that every congressman was supplied with not only a private office furnished according to the last word in comfort but also a paid secretary. He also made a "speech of greetings" to the U.S. Congress, currying favour with the bourgeoisie.

Lenin sharply criticized these opportunists for their open betrayal of the working class. He declared that by following in the wake of the war policy of the bourgeois government and advocating expansion of the naval forces which were used for subjugating the colonial peoples, the British social-democratic leaders had proved that they had gone over to chauvinism. Lenin fully agreed with the Italian Socialist Party's expulsion of Bissolati and others, maintaining that it was completely correct. As for Erismann and his like, Lenin wrote that those

people "are by no means common deserters to the enemy camp; they are simply peaceful petty bourgeois, opportunists who are accustomed to parliamentary 'vermicelli' and who have succumbed to constitutional democratic illusions. The moment the class struggle took a sharp turn . . . our philistines . . . lost their heads and slid into the marsh".[1] In his article "What Should Not Be Imitated in the German Labour Movement", Lenin said that Legien's actions revealed "the American bourgeois fashion of 'killing' unstable Socialists 'with kindness,' as well as the German opportunist fashion of renouncing socialism to please the 'kind,' affable and democratic bourgeoisie".[2] He added:

> We must not gloss over or confuse by "official optimistic" phrases the undoubted *disease* of the German Party which is manifesting itself in phenomena of this kind, we must expose it before the Russian workers, so that we may learn, by the experience of an older movement, what should not be imitated.[3]

THE BASLE MANIFESTO—A FAMOUS DOCUMENT AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR

Anti-war sentiment among the labouring masses surged to new heights after the outbreak of the Balkan War of 1912. In many European countries, there were mass rallies and demonstrations against the Balkan War and

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[1] "In Switzerland", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 18, pp. 308-09.
[2] *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 4, p. 335.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

the imminent threat of world war. In this situation, the Executive Committee of the International Socialist Bureau convened an extraordinary congress in Basle in November 1912. This important conference of the Second International lasted two days and was attended by delegates from all the European socialist parties. The only questions discussed at this congress were those related to the fight against the threat of war. Almost without dispute, the congress unanimously adopted a manifesto, the famous Basle Manifesto.

The manifesto reiterated the basic principles which had been set out in resolutions adopted at the Stuttgart and Copenhagen Congresses. It called on the people of all countries to oppose wars of aggression by every means and, in case war did break out, to utilize it to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule. The manifesto also pointed out that the war which was brewing was of a predatory, imperialist, reactionary and slave-driving character, that it would create an economic and political crisis and that the workers should regard participation in such a war as a crime, a criminal "shooting at each other for the profits of the capitalists, the ambitious dynasties". The manifesto served a warning on the bourgeois governments of the different countries in the following terms:

> Let the governments remember that with the present condition of Europe and the mood of the working class, they cannot unleash a war without danger to themselves. Let them remember that the Franco-German War was followed by the revolutionary outbreak of the Commune, that the Russo-Japanese War

> set into motion the revolutionary energies of the peoples of the Russian Empire. . . .[1]

Lenin made a high appraisal of the Basle Manifesto, saying:

> Summing up, as it does, the enormous propagandist and agitational literature of all the countries against war, this resolution is the most exact and complete, the most solemn and formal exposition of socialist views on war and on tactics in relation to war.[2]

He added, "There is less idle declamation and more definite content in the Basle resolution than in other resolutions".[3]

The opportunists, mainly restrained by the increasing mass sentiment against imperialist war, did not openly oppose the manifesto at the congress.

After the Basle Congress and under the pressure of intensified workers' struggles against imperialist war, the congresses of the socialist parties of Britain, France, Germany and other countries adopted resolutions against the threat of war or expressed opposition to the armaments drive. When a clash occurred between Austria and Serbia in June-July 1914, demonstrations and mass rallies protesting against imperialist war were held in Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Austria-Hungary.

However, the majority of the leaders of the various socialist parties either merely talked about peace or ac-

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[1] Documents in Lenin's *Collected Works*, New York, Vol. XVIII, p. 471.

[2] "The Collapse of the Second International", *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 5, pp. 168-69.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

tually used their own pacifist programmes to restrain the opposition to imperialist war. The leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party tried to create the impression that the reactionary German government was actively working for peace. The organ of the German Party went so far as to eulogize the German Kaiser as a faithful promoter of peace among mankind. Moreover, they secretly collaborated with their government and pledged their support in the event of war. They attempted to shift the entire responsibility for the July 1914 clash between Austria and Serbia onto Russia. The French Socialist Party leaders and most of the leaders of the other socialist parties, including the Russian Mensheviks, took up a stand of opposition to Germany in corresponding support of their own governments. Thus, the majority of the leaders of the socialist parties of the Second International actually betrayed the basic principles of the Basle Manifesto, assisted the instigators of imperialist war and enabled the imperialists to go ahead even more brazenly in unleashing the war.