
Letter to the Workers Party of America on the Establishment of an English-Language Daily from Grigorii Zinoviev, Chairman of the Communist International in Moscow. [published Jan. 21, 1924]

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The appearance of a daily Communist newspaper in the English language in America is a great event, not only for the American labor movement, but for the whole Communist International; and that is so particularly because the appearance of this newspaper was preceded by long and serious work of preparation by American Communists among the masses, the collection of funds among the workers, and considerable agitation in the trade unions, etc. The American workers whose spirit is were dominated for many years at a stretch by the Gomperses and the Hillquits are now beginning to bestir themselves and rally around the young Communist Party. To collect among the workers the funds necessary for the launching of a great daily newspaper in the English language is no easy matter. *The American comrades worked at this task with perseverance, energy, and success.* We congratulate them warmly on this first success.

We still remember vividly how, approximately 10 or 11 years ago, under the leadership of Comrade Lenin, we began just such an undertaking in Russia, how the vanguard of the Russian workers collected the necessary funds in kopecks and half-kopecks, in order to issue in Petrograd the first Bolshevik daily newspaper, *Pravda*. We remember how Comrade Lenin gave his whole spirit to this thing, how he personally counted over the number of workers' groups which had responded to the appeal of the Bolsheviks and had given their share for the first Communist daily newspaper. *That was a great achievement, that was the preparation of the victory of the revolution. The American workers must regard their work from this angle.*

The labor movement in America is comparatively very young. American capitalism is the strongest in the whole world.

"We know that your aid, American working comrades, will perhaps not as yet come quickly at all, as the Revolution proceeds in different forms and in varying tempo in the various countries (and it cannot be otherwise)."

So wrote Comrade Lenin on Aug. 20, 1918, in his well known "Letter to American Workers." Since then five years have gone by. In 1918 the American Communist Party stood isolated in the working class of America. Today the situation is different. Through the efforts of the best of the American revolutionists considerable influence has been won for Communism within broad laboring masses of America. The first successes came with particular difficulty. In further successes the thing will doubtlessly go more quickly.

It is quite natural for the American Communists to concentrate their activity above all in the working class, in its trade unions. From here only was it possible to begin the work of revolutionary enlightenment of the American working class and its assembling under the banner of Communism. The successes which the American Communists have had hitherto in the trade unions (concentration of the left wing) can in no way be called little. *But it is yet more important that the American Communists were able, among the first, to broach and give impetus to the question of work among the small farmers. This fact testifies best of all to the great vitality of American Communism.*

You should not conceal from yourselves the truth that even in a few sections of the International the

traditional Social Democratic attitude toward the farmers is still very strong. The Communist International was born from the womb of the Second International. *It is no wonder that the individual Communist parties still pay heavy tribute to the Social Democratic traditions, especially in the question of the attitude towards the farmers.* The Social Democratic parties of the Second International, even in their best days, were in essence guild parties, which did not set themselves to the fight for the partial improvement of the working class within the framework of capitalism. This guild Menshevist can still be perceived mostly in the question of the attitude towards the farmers.

Not so long ago, we had the opportunity to speak with some prominent comrades of the Communist movement of Romania. *The Romanian comrades have won over the majority of the trade unions.* They deserve renown and honor for this. Their merit is especially great for the reason that they have to carry on their work under constant oppression by the united big landowners, capitalists, and yellow Social Democrats. Dozens of Romanian Communists were shot or were tortured in Romanian prisons. Many languished in life imprisonment. Every comrade risks his head for ordinary Communist agitation. To win over a majority in the trade unions under such circumstances deserves great merit. But from conversations with *the same Romanian comrades*, it became clearly apparent that *our comrades do not yet understand the tasks of revolutionary work among the farmers.* And this in a country like Romania where the majority of the population consists of farmers!

Just such an attitude you will frequently find in other parties as well. The work among the workers, in the trade unions, is a habitual thing to us; in this work we feel at home. But as for work among the farmers, we forget that. That is the situation in such countries as Italy, where the farmer population preponderates. Owing to the same attitude, the mistakes of the Bulgarian Communists were in a considerable degree brought to light in due course of time.

The First International Farmer Conference which took place a short time back in Moscow has produced a greater echo than any of us could have expected, especially in Germany (because the situation in general is most revolutionary there) and, as we hear, in America also. Already it is quite apparent now

that this First International Farmer Conference will have tremendous significance, and that the efforts which the calling of it has cost will be repaid a hundred fold.

Whoever wants to help the Communist Party to become, not a *guild organization* which defends only the narrow class interests of the working class, but a party of proletarian revolution, of Socialist upheaval, of the hegemony of the working class, *must, after the establishment of a party of workers, direct its attention also to the winning over of the farmers.*

In this respect, the American Communists first felt out the new path.

The American Communists helped to create the Federated Farmer-Labor Party (preserving, to be sure, their Communist proletarian Party as an independent organization.) Not everywhere, and now always, will precisely this form prove the most suitable. *But in any case the experience gained in this respect in America deserves serious study by and assiduous attention from the whole international movement.*

The underestimation of the role of the farmers is the fundamental original sin of *International Menshevism*. The essence of Bolshevism consists just in this, that it has clothed with flesh and blood the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat, that it has begun to transform into actuality the hegemony of the working class in the revolution, and precisely for that very reason it seeks an ally in the propertyless farmers who, with correct tactics on our part, will aid the proletariat to fulfill its historical mission.

The chief difference between the Russian Bolsheviki and Mensheviki could, in the final analysis, be brought down to the question of the farmers. Even the "Left" Mensheviki in 1905, *although they imagined that they were more Left than the Bolsheviki*, did not understand the significance of the farmer movement and in fact spoke an *opportunist* language. Almost all the conflicts among the Russian Bolsheviki during the six years of the proletarian revolution can be attributed essentially to the same thing: one (very small) part of the comrades underestimate even now the role of the farmers, and do not understand the tremendously revolutionary and at the same time immensely realistic policy towards the farmers which Bolshevism, embodied through Lenin, had already contributed to this problem as far back as 20 years

ago.

Let the American comrades, with still greater energy, labor to win before all the hearts of the American proletariat, to free the American working class and its labor unions from the tenacious deadly embraces of Gompers and other agents of capital. But let the foremost American workers, with unswerving energy, labor at the same time to attract the farmers over to the side of the workers. At the first opportunity the American comrades must establish a special mass Communist newspaper designed for hundreds and hundreds and thousands of small farmers. *The experience which you are going through in having helped to create the Federated Farmer-Labor Party is being followed attentively by every Communist in Europe and in the whole world.* Every success of yours fills us all with pride.

“We know that the European proletarian revolution will, perhaps, not develop as yet in the next few weeks, however quickly it may have ripened of late. We stake on the inevitability of the world revolution, but that does not mean that we, like fools, staked on the inevitability of the revolutions in our country, 1905 and 1917, and we know that revolutions are not made to order nor by agreement.... Notwithstanding that, we know that we are invincible...for the proletarian revolution is invincible.”

So wrote Comrade Lenin in the letter mentioned by us above. You will undoubtedly agree with us, comrades, that these words of the teacher remain fully and entirely in force.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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