

1909 Communist Party of the U.S.A. / 1907

Report (Leningrad) by ...
Mikodokoy Merba 1923

REFERENCES TO THE FIFTH CONGRESS (Pyatyi S'ezhd. RSDRP)

VII, Collected Works, Vol. 12, Jan-June 1907

The very first Draft Resolution for the 5th Congress was written by Lenin in Feb (thought the Congress was not to meet until the end of May), and was discussed in several Bolshevik caucuses and called "The Present Stage in the Democratic Revolution." The 2nd section, "The Attitude to the Bourgeois Party" is what would become the major resolution at the actual 5th congress. The 3rd section, "Class Tasks of the Proletariat at the Present Stage of the Democratic Revolution", with its emphasis on the fact of "democracy" is actually on the role of the proletariat who alone can consummate the rev'n. The conference declares: ... that any belittling of this task will inevitably have the result of converting the working class from the leader of the people's revolution, carrying with it the mass of the democratic peasantry, into a passive participant of the revolution, trailing behind the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie; ... that all organizations of the Party must guide the activities of the proletariat in carrying out this task, without for a moment losing sight of the independent socialist aims of the proletariat." (p. 139)

Then the 5th Congress (April 30 to May 19 (May 13 to June 1) 1907) reproduces the main Lenin speeches (on the question of the Congress agenda, May 2 (May 15) (speech on the activities of the Central Committee, May 4 (May 17); on the activities of the Duma group, May 6 (May 21) ... the most important, however, is the speech on the attitude toward bourgeois parties since that is a main resolution, May 7 (May 25), pp. 456-468, it should actually include also the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ concluding remarks (May 14, (27) pp. 469-474. It's the latter which answers Plekhanov (p. 471).

"Plekhanov too evaded the substance of the dispute, only in another way. Plekhanov spoke about Rosa Luxemburg, picturing her as a Madonna reclining on clouds. What could be finer! Elegant, gallant and effective polemics... But I would nevertheless like to ask Plekhanov: Madonna or not, -- but what do you think about the substance of the question? (Applause from the Centre and the Bolsheviks.) After all, it is a pretty bad thing to have to resort to a Madonna in order to avoid analysing the point at issue. Madonna or not -- what must our attitude be towards "a Duman with full powers"? What is this? Does this resemble Marxism, does it resemble the independent policy of the proletariat?" (this appears on p. 329 of the original 1909 edition).

The volume also includes the objections to Trotsky's amendment; the attitude to the original Polish draft; objections to Martov's and Martynov's and finally, pp. 489-509, the actual Resolution.

Handwritten signature/initials

14206

Handwritten notes: "Rev. ... Party = ...", "Attitude to ...", "can consummate dem. rev'n"

Handwritten note: "11 People's Rev"

Handwritten note: "4/30-5/11 6/13-6/11"

Handwritten note: "The ..."

Handwritten notes: "Oh E", "M", "D", "S", "T", "K", "S"

Handwritten note: "P"

-2- References of 1907 Congress

Of all the references to the 5th 1907 Congress -- and there are damn few -- the superficiality stands out most glaringly. Thus, though the Collected Works give the speeches, the Selected Works, Vol. 3, give no more than one single extract, on non-party organization, which is only 2 pages. The excuse was that an article, "The Platform of the Revolutionary Social Democracy", covered that, but in fact that article in this volume is not the happenings of the 5th Congress, but what the Bolsheviks were doing in Feb. in preparation for it.

on p. 202, LI' mentions the Congress: "It was a protracted, crowded, stormy and chaotic Congress" whereupon all else he mentions is meeting Gor'ki whom he admires; meeting Rosa, whom he had known since 1904; and mentioning one of his speeches "which to this day I think is absolutely right" (and which happens to be reproduced in the 1905 pamphlet reproduced in 1971 in which he includes that speech as an appendix, in which he focuses on the fact that he had not ignored the peasantry and Lenin had so recognized it, which is a fantastic way to refer to the 1907 Congress).

Now what is fantastic about that is that, that 1907 talk he had reproduced in the 1922 edition, or rather the 2nd edition in 1922 -- July 10th 1922 -- (the first edition was Jan. 1922) included the statement (p. 277) "the peasantry, however revolutionary it may be, is not capable of playing an independent, still less a leading political role." And on the whole it is quite superficial. More fantastic still is that he also had reproduced the 1908 analysis, which he had published in Luxemburg's journal and which had predicted (p. 316) that "while the antirevolutionary aspects of Menshevism have already become fully apparent, those of Bolshevism are likely to become a serious threat only in the event of a victory" which he dares to footnote in this totally irresponsible way "This threat, as we know, never materialized because, under the leadership of Comrade Lenin, the Bolsheviks changed their policy line on this most important matter (not without inner struggle in the Spring of 1917, that is, before the seizure of power." Even more outlandish is the fact that he decided to include this ridiculous and totally wrong article, though he wrote in the first footnote "The critique of the Bolshevik position of the time (democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry) is today of historic interest only. Past differences have long been resolved." (p. 299) And as if that weren't enough, the majority of the article had been directed against Plekhanov and the Mensheviks and even though, towards the end he had written "The Mensheviks' view on the Russian revolution was never distinguished by great clarity. Together with the Bolsheviks, they spoke of 'carrying the revolution to the end', but both sides interpreted this in a purely formal sense..." The truth is that he had supported (after trying to modify it and losing) the Bolshevik Resolution, and that, moreover, this, far from having anything to do with the Permanent Revolution, was on the relationship to bourgeois parties as his own speech, not the best he made there, showed. (reference above). And throughout, his disdain for democracy is so great that far from reproducing Lenin's phrase about it being revolutionary democracy of the proletariat and peasantry in dictatorship, he always prefaces the word democracy with the word "bourgeois".

References Contd.

[3] Impressions of Lenin by Angelica Balabanoff (Ann Arbor paperbacks, 1968) In chapter 2, Balabanova talks about Lenin at the London Congress of 1907, about his punctuality -- evidently he was the only one who was punctual -- and the "strategy and maneuvers" as well as "chaos", with him listening most carefull -- "not a single word escaped him, not a gesture". He meticulously took down everything in a sort of diary. When I saw him 10 years later, in Moscow, presiding over the sessions of the government, his manner was exactly the same." (p. 18) Whereupon, after all the complaints about the chaos, the over-lengthy talks, the fact that it took a whole week just to complete the disputes on the agenda, all she has to say about the actual content is: "Besides having been engaged in this activity (rd reference to the above) in London for over three weeks, Lenin gave a very long report on relations with the bourgeois parties and another one on the activity of the Party's Central Committee."

Now this was the most important resolution of the entire Congress, and it was especially important because it was the only theoretical topic that the Bolsheviks won, as all other topics, like the analysis of the revolution (as such) was voted down on the basis that the Congress was a unity Congress and we should talk business and tactics and not theory, whereas Lenin had not only wanted to discuss theory but the relationship of theory to the practical problems facing him. One wonders what was the state of theory for Angelica as well as the others to limit the report on that to one paragraph.

[4] Deutscher (1954, The Prophet Armed, who does devote one of the most important chapters (6) to the theory of the Permanent Revolution, (indeed, he makes Trotsky's whole life as a series of footnotes to that great genius' contribution) turns to the next chapter, where the 5th Congress takes place, and calls it "The Boldrum of 1907-1910". To that he devotes only 4 pages, and whereas he gives no reference to the actual minutes of the Congress, it isn't very clear that he had actually read them, because what he singles out to comment on is: (a) how Lenin acknowledged that Trotsky had "a common ground" on the question of an alliance of peasantry and with the proletariat, without once mentioning that they fought like cats and dogs; (b) whereas he admits that there was "intellectual superciliousness" (p. 178) in LT's attitude to both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, he says that it was due to the fact that LT "looked at both through the prism of his theory of Permanent Revolution" whereas in fact little of that seems to have emanated in the Congress; and (c) he attributes that horrible quotation the following year about "the antirevolutionary features of Bolshevism" (fn. 4, p. 178) to the fact that because of his belief in the theory of Permanent Revolution LT didn't think that either would stand the test of time, but "a new revolution would compel both factions to revise their views..."

The references Deutscher give to 5th Cong app 272-273, 417-418, 420-421 & that can't be theory of P.R. of alliance of workers & peasants. Only other ref. is pp 54-55 and that is to Martov

John
 1981
 10/15
 9/24/81

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(3) MINUTES OF THE FIFTH CONGRESS, CONTENTS OF SESSIONS

Congress was opened April 30, at 7 in evening by Plekhanov. The business of the Praesidium and elections of others, as well as the Secretariat, took place there and at a second session the following day. The greetings from other organizations continues all the way through the 7th session (and in fact continues later) but it's at that session, May 3 (16) that Luxemburg speaks (pp 97 to 104).

The debate on the agenda and whether or not there should be anything theoretical or just practical and business-like, like the Germans, continues for evermore, and I may quote one thing by Lenin. The report on the activities of the Duca begins at the 12th session, May 7 (20) and continues all the way through the ~~20th~~ 20th session. When at the 22nd session, May 12 (25) the quest. begins on the information bureau we get big reports by Lenin (pp 364-374) and Luxemburg (pp 383-392). ~~INEXTENSIBLE~~ on the relation to bourgeois parties and the same is true the following day, with IT on the subject (pp. 397-404), and the following day, session 24, May 14 (27) RL (pp 432-437), Lenin (pp 442-446), give the concluding remarks.

Despite Tyuhka's great recommendation for this 1963 edition, the introduction to it is typically Stalinist, and so are the footnotes. Actually, the very first edition, 1909 Paris, is the very best, the most objective, and with no footnotes. The 1933 ?, when Stalin was still alive, included naturally, an article by Stalin -- he did speak at the Congress -- and even more prejudiced footnotes than the 1963. What, however, is good in all editions is that no matter what liberties they took in footnoting and introducing and concluding the minutes have not been tampered with and the 1963 edition does have the added advantage that it reproduces a good part of what the Bolsheviks did in preparing for that Congress and therefore Lenin's speeches to those caucuses (these are included in Collected Works, Vol. 13).