

The International Socialist Congress

Space will not permit a full report of the seven day's proceedings of the Amsterdam Congress, but in later issues of our paper we shall, no doubt, be enabled to deal more fully with some of the points raised.

This was the sixth International Congress and was attended by 482 delegates – Great Britain with 101 and France with 98 sending the largest delegations. Congress had already opened when the majority of the Britishers reached Amsterdam on Sunday, with Van Kol (Dutch) as President and Plekhanoff (Russian) and Sen Katayama (an English-speaking Jap) as Vice-Presidents. Troelstra, in the name of the Dutch Socialists, welcomed the Delegates to Amsterdam, and at the conclusion of his speech the two vice-presidents rose and shook hands amidst great cheering. Katayama referred to the difficulties of Socialist propaganda in Japan, and declared that the Japanese workman had no quarrel with his fellow workman of Russia. Both were crushed by capitalism and militarism. Plekhanoff followed in similar strain. The Czar, who was making the war, was the greatest enemy the Russian people had. The Congress then adopted a motion sending fraternal greetings to the proletariat of Russia and Japan, after which the sitting terminated.

In the afternoon a great outdoor demonstration was held at which speeches were delivered by the prominent men and women of the movement. Here we were fortunate in meeting an English-speaking Dutch comrade. to whom we explained the situation in England and the reasons which led us to found The Socialist Party of Great Britain. We exchanged addresses for correspondence purposes.

On Monday morning the British section met. At this and the following meetings contests took place between the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. over matters which they considered important. In the main the I.L.P. scored. The Congress met in the morning. passed a resolution of sympathy with the Colorado miners, and after formal announcements had been made as to the constitution of the various commissions, adjourned until Tuesday afternoon, so that the commissions could prepare their reports. At that sitting Cipriani (France) presided, the vice-presidents being Hilquit (U.S.A.) and Iglesias (Spain). It was immediately proposed that the meeting be suspended until the following morning. as the Commission on International Policy and Tactics as well as others had not prepared their reports. Hyndman opposed this, for the reasons which he had put forward in the British Section, *viz.*, that the discussion upon International Policy should be put off as long as possible. He preferred that disputed matters such as that should not be discussed at the Congress, and he therefore wished the Congress to proceed with the discussion of minor matters, to the exclusion, if possible of this, the one really important matter on the Agenda. We fail to recognise the necessity for holding an International Congress in order to pass resolutions upon matters concerning which we are already agreed. Surely matters of disagreement should be discussed with the object of arriving at an understanding which shall be a guide to the movement internationally. However, Hyndman was not successful, and the Congress adjourned.

When Congress was resumed on Wednesday morning the Tactics Commission report

was not ready, so that other matters had to be proceeded with. The first was that of Industrial Insurance and Labour Protective Legislation. Molkenbuhr (Germany) presented the report which called attention to the low wages which the workers received, and which prevented them from making provision for illness, accident, inability, old age, glut, pregnancy or maternity. The workers should therefore demand state provided insurance to meet these contingencies. S. G. Hobson then moved a resolution which had been drafted with the special object of condemning Great Britain for her treatment of India. Its concluding words called “upon the workers of Great Britain to enforce upon their Government the abandonment of the present nefarious and dishonourable system and the establishment of self-government in the best form practicable by the Indians themselves (under British Paramountcy)”. Dadabhai Naoroji, at whose instance were added the last three words (which seem to us to take away from the Indians the right which it is desired to concede in the preceding phrases), seconded the resolution, which was adopted.

Van Kol again presided on Thursday, Pete Curran (Britain) and Knudsen (Denmark) being vice-chairmen. On the motion of Ferri, the Congress agreed to a resolution sympathising with the Italian Committee which is agitating for the release of those imprisoned for participation in the disturbances of 1898. Van Kol then submitted the report of the Commission on Colonial Policy, and a resolution was adopted declaring it to be the duty of national Socialist parties and of parliamentary groups to oppose without any compromise colonial expansion in the interests of financial gangs. In the afternoon Madame Roland Holst reported that the Commission on the General Strike had adopted the resolution formulated by the Dutch Party, and eventually this became the resolution of the Congress. It declared a general strike would defeat its own object and warned the workers not to be misled by the Anarchists, who were responsible for this proposal.

On Friday, Troelstra was President and Sigg (Geneva) and Rosa Luxembourg (Austria) the Vice Presidents. Vandervelde reported for the Commission on International Policy and Tactics. He stated that in the Commission the Swiss had proposed that the Congress proceed to the next business, which, however, was rejected. De Leon had offered an amendment to the following effect :

“Whereas, the struggle between the working-class and the capitalist class is a continuous and irrepressible conflict, a conflict that tends every day rather to be intensified than to be softened ;

“Whereas, the existing governments are committees of the ruling class, intended to safeguard the yoke of capitalist exploitation upon the neck of the working class;

“Whereas, at the last International Congress, held in Paris, in 1900, a resolution generally known as the Kautsky Resolution, was adopted, the closing clauses of which contemplate the emergency of the working-class accepting office at the hand of such capitalist governments, and also, especially, presupposes the possibility of impartiality on the part of the ruling class governments in the conflicts between the working class and the capitalist class; and

“Whereas, the said clauses – applicable, perhaps, in countries not yet wholly freed from feudal institutions – were adopted under conditions both in France and in the Paris Congress itself, that justify erroneous conclusions on the nature of the class

struggle, the character of capitalist government, and the tactics that are imperative, upon the proletariat in the pursuit of its campaign to overthrow the capitalist system in countries, which, like the United States of America, have wholly wiped out feudal institutions; therefore, be it –

“Resolved, (1) that the said Kautsky Resolution be and the same is hereby repealed as a principle of general Socialist tactics ;

“(2) That, in fully developed capitalist countries like America, the working class cannot, without betrayal of the cause of the proletariat, fill any political office other than such they conquer for and by themselves.”

which was also rejected. A further amendment had been proposed by Vandervelde and Adler, which merely confirmed the Kautsky Resolution of 1900. This also was rejected by 24 votes to 16, and the Dresden Resolution, adopted by the Socialist Party of France in order to be moved at this Congress, was adopted in the Commission by 27 votes to 3, with 10 abstentions. (It must be recollected that the above votes refer to Nationalities). It had therefore been agreed that the Dresden Resolution, with the amendment of Vandervelde and Adler, should be submitted to the Congress. After speeches by Jaures, Bebel, Adler, Ferri, Vaillant, and Anseele, the Dresden Resolution, with one alteration, was agreed to by 25 to 5 with 12 abstentions. The resolution as adopted read as follows :

“The Congress repudiates to the fullest extent possible the efforts of the Revisionists, which have for their object the modification of our tried and victorious policy based on the class war, and the substitution, for the conquest of political power by an unceasing attack on the bourgeoisie, of a policy of concession to the established order of society;

“The consequence of such Revisionist tactics would be to turn a party striving for the most speedy transformation possible of bourgeois society into Socialist society – a party therefore revolutionary in the best sense of the word – into a party satisfied with the reform of bourgeois society ;

“For this reason, the Congress, convinced, in opposition to Revisionist tendencies, that class antagonisms, far from diminishing, continually increase in bitterness, declares :

“1. That the party rejects all responsibility of any sort under the political and economic conditions based on capitalist production, and therefore can in no wise countenance any measure tending to maintain in power the dominant class.

“2. The Social-Democracy can accept no participation in the Government under bourgeois society, this decision being in accordance with the Kautsky Resolution passed at the International Congress of Paris in 1900.

“The Congress further condemns every attempt to mask the ever-growing class antagonisms, in order to bring about an understanding with the bourgeois parties.

“The Congress relies upon the Socialist Parliamentary Group to use its power, increased by the number of its members and by the great accession of electors who support it, to persevere in its propaganda towards the final object of Socialism, and, in conformity with our programme, to defend most resolutely the interests of the working class, the extension and consolidation of political liberties, in order to obtain equal rights for all; to carry on more vigorously than ever the fight against militarism, against the imperialist and colonial policy, against injustice, domination

and exploitation of every kind, and finally to exert itself to the utmost to perfect social legislation and to enable the working-class to fulfil its political and civilising mission.”

This concluded Friday's sitting.

On Saturday morning Congress decided to refer to the Bureau the Report of the Commission on Emigration, and adopted resolutions with reference to Women's Suffrage, the First of May, and Trusts. These will be published in full in *The Socialist Standard* at a future date. The President announced the formation of an International Parliamentary Bureau, composed of a Parliamentary Representative from each Nationality, which would endeavour to meet once a year and act in conjunction with the Bureau. It was decided that the next Congress should be held at Stuttgart in 1907.

J. KENT, A. PEARSON, *The Delegates of the Socialist Party of Great Britain*.

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