

Interventions by the KAPD at 3rd congress of the Communist International¹⁰⁸

June 24th: Discussion of Trotsky's "Report on the World Economy"

Sachs (Alexander Schwab): Comrades, the comments I will make deal not only with Comrade Trotsky's speech yesterday but also just as much, or even more so, with the theses that he and Comrade Varga have jointly submitted. It seems to me and my party comrades that these theses are not an appropriate document to explain how the Communist International assesses the economic and the related political situation in the world today. We believe that the theses need to be thoroughly reworked before they are presented to the world in the name of the Communist International and as representing its viewpoint. The starting point of these theses was determined – this must be immediately acknowledged – by the need for a polemic against those who are rebuilding the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals. But that does not mean that it is factually justified and polemically effective simply to accept the question as they pose it. This way to pose the question – namely, whether capitalism is entering a reconstruction or a decline and collapse – is incorporated, at least in the introduction to these theses.

It is true that we heard Comrade Trotsky explain yesterday in detail – and I believe we are all in agreement with him here – how the transitory small cyclical crises and periods of expansion are related to the question of capitalism's rise or fall over longer periods of time. We will surely all be in agreement, of course, that the large curve, which pointed upwards, is now headed inexorably downwards, and that within this large curve, both in its upwards and downwards segments, there are also fluctuations.

But what is not stated in these theses, what is not vividly formulated there, is the way this period of decline is fundamentally different from previous periods of capitalist expansion. The presentation and economic analysis in these theses is based fundamentally on national wealth, or global wealth in terms of goods, and the question of productivity. Certainly these are important considerations, decisive for

¹⁰⁸ John Riddell, *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921*. Haymarket, 2015. Riddell's footnotes are included [–J.R.] and mine as [–M.S].

the well-being of humanity and the working masses. But this approach is inadequate for the analysis that we must undertake. It needs to be expanded and, I might say, even superseded by an over-riding consideration, namely that the economy today, more than ever before, is organised not for production but for profit. Production is only an accidental outcome, only a means to the goal of profit. The characteristic feature of this period of capitalist decline, taken as a whole and aside from its individual fluctuations, is the nature of the profit economy and the class-struggle character of the economy itself, which is ten times sharper than in the heyday of its development, just as was the case in the past, when capitalism was first being constructed.

We may express this fact popularly, in a fashion that is pointed and exaggerated but nonetheless clearly understandable, by saying that today capitalism is rebuilding itself, salvaging its profits, but at the cost of productivity. Capitalism builds its power by dismantling the economy. This rebuilding of capitalist power is quite different from and even almost directly counterposed to the rebuilding of its economy. This heightening of capitalism's power can only be paid for by the broad mass of the population. For what is being built is only capitalism's firm core – in the last analysis, the big raw-materials monopolists.

In the last analysis, it is the big raw-materials monopolists who hold capitalism's strongest fortress, because all other capitalists, all other industries are dependent, to varying degrees, on their deliveries. What is at stake today for this, capitalism's strongest core, is no longer regular production and the turn-over of capital in the slow and regular pace of normal production periods. What is at stake is essentially monopoly profits. That is the second feature of the economic situation during the decline of capitalism. Monopoly profits have become decisive.

It is the proletariat that pays the costs of reconstructing this, the strongest core of the capitalist structure. It is true that these payments, these costs, also weigh on broader layers of the bourgeoisie, those industrialists who are dependent on delivery of raw materials, who do not submit to the raw materials monopolies of Stinnes, Thyssen, and the like, as well as those industries that the raw materials monopolies cannot profitably exploit. As a result, factories are closed or forced to work shorter hours. But if the individual capitalist is often quite unable to avoid ruin and is suppressed, nonetheless we know that capitalism can always escape, as long as the essential

features of the capitalist economic system continue to exist. But for the proletariat there is ultimately no escape.

Consider the unemployment statistics in Germany, Britain, and the United States today. We must concede that this is no longer the industrial reserve army of earlier times. Unemployment today has a different character. In earlier times, the term 'industrial reserve army' expressed the thought that these unemployed masses were from time to time reabsorbed into the production process, in large part in order to drive down the wages of the still employed. But given the present extent of unemployment, this concept is absurd. The masses are not unemployed as a reserve army. They are unemployed in order to die off gradually, to starve – not only they but their descendents. That does not take the form of openly letting them starve to death but in the veiled and milder form created by unemployment benefits, which were once presented as a destructive force against capitalism. Unemployment benefits serve today as a means to veil the true situation; they have become a way of protecting capitalism.

With regard to unemployment benefits, I would like to indicate a significant point that is hardly mentioned at all in the theses. That is the role played by government finances, which is greater than in the past. Today, much of the activity of the government's financial administration is directed toward creating a detour or a number of facades that make it harder to perceive the exploitation of the working masses and the broad popular masses in general. Of course, individual taxes cannot be passed along – at least, that was previously the case. It remains to be determined whether the previous theoretical conclusions regarding the passing on of taxes still apply today, in all their particulars, in today's conditions dominated by monopolistic tendencies. Nonetheless, even if there are taxes that cannot be passed on, the fact remains that three-quarters of the purpose of financial administration is to find detours, covers, and disguises to enable the capitalist monopolies to rob the popular masses without resorting to the more difficult direct methods.

Comrade Trotsky says that the most ruined governments will sooner or later have to declare bankruptcy, a perspective very emphatically spelled out in the theses. I believe this is a very serious error. Who would gain from the bankruptcy of the weaker countries in a state of collapse, the countries in the worst financial condition? Who are the debtors; who are the creditors? There are two groups of creditors. First, the individual capitalists who hold government bonds; second, the governments that

wish to receive reparations. The individual capitalists have absolutely no interest whatsoever in any government going bankrupt. As the theses tell us, government bankruptcy would unleash a struggle for redistribution of national wealth. The capitalists who govern most of the national wealth, or at least control it, have no interest in unleashing such a struggle; they have an interest in preventing it.

In any case, they find another way to meet their needs, although certainly not to the full extent of the figures entered in the debit and credit ledgers. That is a point on which I disagree with Comrade Brand. It is certainly impossible to pay all the presently existing claims for interest, whether by governments or individuals, down to every nickel and penny recorded in all the accountbooks. That is not the issue here. Capitalism is now no longer at the stage in which it had to go by absolute figures stretching out to infinity. It is at the stage where everything depends on its ability to maintain power and to satisfy its claims, even if only partially, while the claims of the broad popular masses are simply not met.

Thus the capitalists must accept reductions in their claims; accept that, far from receiving everything at this time, they will have to postpone their demands. For the capitalists who keep these ledgers, that is not the issue; they just don't care. What matters to them is simply to survive successfully in the class struggle and in an economy transformed into class struggle. That is why I say that if the individual capitalists have no interest in national bankruptcy – and that will certainly be the case – it will not take place.

And would the ministers and top civil servants perhaps have an interest in bankruptcy? That will not happen. As for the creditor nations, they perhaps do have such an interest. But once again, this decision will not be made by the governments, which from an economic point of view barely exist. It is the capitalists of the creditor nations who will decide if debtor nations such as Germany and Austria will be forced into bankruptcy. It is highly questionable whether these capitalists will have an interest in bankruptcy. The comrades speaking after me will show that the capitalists manage to satisfy their claims in quite another fashion.

I said that capitalism is rebuilding its strength with regard to internal politics by rescuing profits in a concentrated core of capitalist power. I would like to add that governmental authority no longer acts toward capital in its previous manner.

Comrade Seemann will have more to say on that, because such matters can be explained better in an international than in a national framework.

Seemann (Bernhard Reichenbach): Comrades, the remarks of Comrade Sachs and his criticisms of the theses now before us have shown that a new era is unfolding. The question facing the capitalists is very simply this: We are experiencing a catastrophic world economic crisis, such as has never occurred before. How will it be possible to bring this crisis under control, restore stability, and reconstruct the world capitalist economic apparatus? In this situation, the new reality, the reality of new economic relationships never seen before, has also assumed a new form.

It is evident that capitalism has fully grasped the difficulty of this task and the struggle it requires. It is opposing us with new methods of struggle, which we must analyse with precision, in order to do as Trotsky asks right at the beginning of his theses, which read, 'We must decide whether these circumstances require changes in the Communist International's programme or policies. It is an unfortunate but irrefutable fact, we believe, that capitalism is again in the saddle everywhere, not only on a national level, but also internationally, and in an interweaving of national and international levels. The web of the Versailles Treaty is beginning to unravel and to be scaled down to what can be realised.

So how is capitalism going to undertake this? We know very well that capitalism cannot surmount the impoverishment experienced in the last five years except at the expense of the working masses. This fact is primary in capitalism's course of action regarding reconstruction. Capitalism has understood that it must set aside for the moment all national limitations, all national chauvinism and imperialism – even though these factors are part of its nature – in order to close ranks for combat with the enemy. This enemy is the proletariat, and Communists represent its most advanced and active sector.

Of course it is completely correct and will always remain correct that, sooner or later, the capitalist economy must perish. We do not need to dwell on this obvious truth. Otherwise we would be doing nothing different from the Independents and Majority Socialists. We do not need a Communist world congress for that. We must deal decisively with the question of how we bring down capitalism. How will we carry out this process in such a fashion that the proletariat takes hold of the reins?

The capitalists have realised that their main enemy is not their competitors but the proletariat. They have realised that the common interests among capitalist states are so great that the capitalists' course of action must be shaped by them. That has already happened internationally through the interweaving of the economy. This begins with the fact that British, French, and American capital has invested substantially in the German trusts, into which national German capital has consolidated itself. Things have already gone so far that French and British capitalists have an interest, both objectively and subjectively, in the success of Germany's capitalist reconstruction. If you have a 30 per cent or 25 per cent ownership stake in a business, you then have an interest in seeing this business get on its feet.

It is true that there is a fatal flaw in every capitalist process of concentration, whether international or national. This lies in the fact that the foundation of the capitalist economy is the selfish profit motive of every individual enterprise. Even the concentration we see today is based on merging the private self-interest of all the individual capitalists. We agree with Trotsky that the next world-political conflict will probably take place between Britain and the United States. But we do not believe that this is the next immediate stage –and certainly not in the sense that one can predict it with the certainty of a calendar. It remains true that whether or not there will be war depends on imponderables that can intervene at the last moment, and from accidents that cannot be foreseen in advance. But above all, there is quite another reason why this clash is not yet imminent. This should not be the focus of Communists' attention. Rather we should focus on the struggle being waged against the proletariat.

The capitalist economy, which has become interwoven into a community of interest, is guided by the fact that each capitalist wants to earn a great deal of money. This pressure, bearing down on every capitalist and on the united capitalists, seeks an outlet. Among the outlets is Russia. It seems to us that this has not been dealt with sufficiently in the theses. The most immediately available outlet is Russia; that is the challenge facing the countries of Western Europe. Western European capital wants to carry out the reconstruction of Russia. And Russia will represent for a considerable period a welcome outlet, where capitalism's need for markets can be satisfied.

Our task is to examine how Russia can be rebuilt. Russia has the moral right to utilise help from the capitalist states in carrying out reconstruction, if only because the proletariat has left it in the lurch for three years. We must examine how to create a synthesis between Russia's justified vital interests and the task of ensuring that the

creation of markets for capitalism in this fashion does not harm the revolutionary cause and does not impede progress. To discuss that here in this plenary, at a large meeting, would be going too far. But we have evidence of the fact that the unified capitalists are tending to pursue this goal. For example, large British industrialists have formed a syndicate, acting with the assistance of the British government. Similarly, leading British capitalists have concluded their negotiations with the magnates of German trusts. The topic of their discussions is already set: it is Soviet Russia. We will discuss that in more detail at another time.

Let me point out that the theses have a task that Trotsky himself referred to at the start but in the end did not discuss: namely, to examine the Communist International's course of action clearly and distinctly from the vantage point of this economic struggle. Granted, this text does not have the job of discussing such policies, but the report should indicate the rough direction. The fact should have been considered that capitalism has found new forms for its struggle against the proletariat, in which it appears to be adapting to the proletariat, such as workplace councils and the election of worker representatives onto supervisory boards. Only a few years back, no one even thought about such things. The next slogan of capitalism will be [workers] control of production¹⁰⁹. Capitalism's new methods of struggle demand that the proletariat, for its part, adopt new organisational forms, new and powerful forms of struggle, in order to counter the blows directed against it.

We therefore propose that the theses not be finalised here, in today's or tomorrow's discussion, but rather be referred back once again to the commission. Perhaps it will be possible for Comrade Trotsky to take part in a [commission] session, so that we can undertake to expand on this text, which we do not wish to criticise, for it presents excellent material on the overall economic situation. We are well aware how much inspired energy went into writing it. Perhaps the commission on this topic can take up the theses again. I ask you to approve this motion.

¹⁰⁹ au revoir à Cammate, Dauve, etc.

June 26th: Discussion of Zinoviev's "Report on the Activity of the Communist International"

Hempel (Jan Appel): Comrades, we are in agreement that the question of the Communist Workers' Party of Germany should be taken up in a separate agenda point. However, the comments of Comrade Zinoviev in his report yesterday cannot be left unchallenged. Comrade Zinoviev has a well-known habit of comparing us to opportunist elements like Serrati, Dittmann, and the like. We energetically protest against this accusation of opportunism. Our entire history and the development of our party speak against such a charge.

To demonstrate this, I will refer only to our stance during the Kapp Putsch in Germany and also on 20 August last year, when Russia's red soldiers stood at the gates of Warsaw, near the German border. On the latter occasion, only the KAPD expressed solidarity in action.¹¹⁰ The others, including the Communist Party of Germany of that time – the Spartacus League – wrecked active solidarity in action with Soviet Russia. Further, let me point to our stance in the Berlin electrical workers' strike, a stance that was recognised as correct by Comrade Radek.¹¹¹ We could point to many such facts and examples. Not a single fact can be cited that shows us to have lapsed into opportunism. That is our real position, our course of action, and also our principles. They vouch for the fact that we have not lapsed into opportunism.

We will have occasion to discuss our tactics, strategy, and principles under other agenda points. We hoped that this would give us sufficient opportunity to demonstrate our line quite clearly and distinctly. It is not possible for me to go into these matters at great length in the ten minutes at my disposal. All I can do is protest against us being lumped together with Serrati, Dittmann, and other opportunists.

Comrade Zinoviev also saw fit to attack a pamphlet published by our party, entitled "The Path of Dr. Levi – the Path of the VKPD". Comrade Zinoviev says that the pamphlet was written by Gorter. Let us be clear: this is a pamphlet of the KAPD. Gorter worked on it, but we assume full responsibility for this pamphlet.

¹¹⁰ As the Red Army advanced through Poland toward Germany in mid-August 1920, the KAPD and anarcho-syndicalist forces made plans for uprisings in a number of German cities and towns. Most of these plans were cancelled as the Red Army retreated, but in Velbert and Köthen on 20 August the local KAPD went ahead anyway. The actions were quickly suppressed. [–J.R.]

¹¹¹ A reference to the 7–12 November 1920 strike by electrical workers in Berlin. The ECCI criticised the KPD for not having tried to extend and generalise the strike. The KAPD denounced the SPD and KPD's role in the strike, which it termed a betrayal. [–J.R.]

What is being held against Gorter and our party here? That we say, with regard to the Third International and its policies, ‘You are seeking only the masses, and not quality.’ Yes, that is certainly what we say. We will say it under other agenda points as well and explain how we see matters. But Comrade Zinoviev passes over these matters so flippantly, simply saying, ‘Here you claim that in Germany we do not have the Russian peasants, but rather only the proletariat, and this proletariat is counterrevolutionary.’ And then you go further, saying, ‘The revolution could begin tomorrow.’ Comrades, you cannot fathom such questions of revolution in this fashion. We strongly regret the use of polemics of this sort.

We will demonstrate that we intend to carry out the revolution with the masses, not without them, one way or another, as proposed in the theses adopted at the Second Congress of the International. We have a perfect right to point here to the lessons that the German revolution has provided to the international proletariat. And it is wrong of Comrade Zinoviev to pass over this so lightly.

Comrade Zinoviev also said that the KAPD calls for unity but will quite soon be counted among the enemies of Soviet Russia. He refers to this year’s May Day issue of *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung*. He read a few lines from this paper. I will read you some other lines, and will then speak directly to the point that Comrade Zinoviev has touched on. It says here:

“The notion that mass Communist parties can be deployed to carry out parliamentary and trade-union – that is, bourgeois – methods of struggle has been exposed as a giant bluff. Such mass parties are good at demonstrating for Soviet Russia on Sundays and holidays, but they are completely useless for revolutionary struggle”.

That is our assessment of the policies advocated by Comrade Zinoviev. And we must tell you that we cannot continue like this. also say that this is rooted in the policies of the Russian state. Therefore we add:

“This does not imply calling for struggle against Soviet Russia in the fashion of Rühle. We commit ourselves to use every means to ensure, through action, that Russia continues to exist as a proletarian power. But the goal that we must strive for, in order to do justice to the requirements of revolution in Western Europe, is to detach the Third International, politically and organisationally, from the policies of the Russian state”.

That is the point Comrade Zinoviev is taking up when he says, 'If you continue like that, you will be outside the Third International.' He refers to the telegram we have received from our party empowering us to leave the Third International. He then concludes, 'If you leave the Third International, you will be fighting against Russia.' Not at all, comrades! We tell you that we are fighting for the proletariat of Soviet Russia, and we will not let ourselves be led astray in this work. If you no longer want us in the Third International, if you want to continue down the opportunist path, we will still stand up for Soviet Russia anyway. But we will denounce the opportunist actions of the Communist International. I will now read a statement of our delegation on this particular point, which we have written and will read, so that our words cannot be misinterpreted and distorted:

“We protest most energetically against the use of quotations taken out of context in an attempt to liken our political line to that of Serrati and Dittmann. Not for a minute do we underestimate the difficulties caused for the Soviet government by the delay of the world revolution. But we also see the danger that this delay, these difficulties, are producing a contradiction between the interests of the revolutionary world proletariat and the immediate interests – apparent or genuine – of Soviet Russia”.

It was stated in a commission meeting that the Third International should not be seen as a tool of the Soviet government, but rather the Soviet government should be seen as the strongest outpost of the Third International. We agree that it should be so. But in our view, when contradictions arise between the vital interests of the Soviet government of Russia and those of the Third International, a duty exists to subject this to a frank and fraternal discussion inside the International.

We have always carried out our evident duty of expressing solidarity in action with Soviet Russia. For example, we celebrate the October Revolution through demonstrations; we participate energetically in the care of interned Red Army soldiers; we prepared support actions in August 1920, which were thwarted thanks to the USPD and KPD. When our party decided to affiliate to the Third International, despite our grave reservations regarding the International's reformist policies, one of the decisive considerations was to give expression to our solidarity with Soviet Russia.

We will hold firm on this course. However, we will resist most vigorously, whenever and wherever we see that Soviet Russia's policies find expression – mistakenly or through misunderstanding – in the Third International taking a reformist course, all the more given our conviction that such a course contradicts the true interests of Soviet Russia just as much as those of the world proletariat”.

[...]

Seemann (Reichenbach): Comrades, the previous speaker referred again to a point regarding which Zinoviev also earlier criticised us, when he termed our criticism of Russian government policy as being aligned with that of Dittmann. I will not go into this further; that will be done later.

However, I must once again protest the method of simply branding every criticism that is raised as counterrevolutionary. This method amounts to choking off all opposition. It indicates a lack of any understanding of the need for opposition, without which an organisation as vast as the International is simply condemned to stagnation. Allow me to give you an example. Clemenceau and Karl Liebknecht both maintained that the War did not have a defensive character [for Germany - J.R.]. However, I do not believe that anyone here in this room – including Comrade Zinoviev – would consider the two positions identical, based on this similarity. It is just as absurd to liken us to Dittmann. I will demonstrate what an opposition means and what purpose it serves, and why such methods should not be used against it, simply in order to conceal every error.

We have been reproached for speaking so sharply. We did not think that we were in a ladies' finishing school here. We learned this approach from the Russian comrades, who always act sharply and energetically when they believe an error has been made. They slip in the word 'fraternally' here and there, while using the same sharp words.

I must also demonstrate the character of our opposition. I will give an accounting to show that the question of the Third International is not a simple matter for us, and that we do not take it lightly. We have demonstrated how useful the opposition is; unfortunately the Executive does not make any use of this fruitful opposition. Instead, great care has been taken to prevent delegates to the Executive here in Moscow from seeing our publications.

Let me cite some examples. Before the March Action, we carried out a sharp struggle for several months against the way in which the VKPD carried out education of proletarian public opinion. We pointed out that the broadmasses are not capable of reversing course so quickly, when their publications have been pounding away in quite another spirit. Here the Executive had an opportunity, for it had publications from which it might have learned, for they portrayed the disastrous path that the VKPD had taken before it was too late, as during the March Action. What we said back in January was repeated later, in April and May, by Comrades Zinoviev and Radek. They said precisely what we had told the Executive in advance. When Levi still had his party post, we wrote an article entitled, 'Does the VKPD Belong to the Communist International?'¹¹² This article stated what was later confirmed by Zinoviev and Radek, namely that the VKPD press, because of its opportunist stance during the months before the action, was itself to blame for the fact that, during the March events, broad sectors of the party sabotaged the action. It is wrong to introduce a method that, over time, simply cuts out any opposition.

Unfortunately, Comrade Frölich has not read our newspapers any more attentively than the Executive, although he had more opportunity. He comes up with the most blatant stupidities. You claim that we are naïve fools and that our entire attitude to current political issues has been wrong, and that this was expressed particularly strikingly with regard to reparations. We are said to have written that this was not of concern to the proletarians. No, we did not write that. Granted, we did not refer to a looming conflict between Germany and France, because – as is now obvious to everyone – no such conflict exists. Instead, the bourgeoisie is about to achieve a far-reaching agreement. We said that this was what deserves the proletariat's vigilance, rather than waiting for a conflict with France.

The main thing is not to block criticism that must necessarily be present in an organisation that includes so many different types of workers from every country. Even if such an opposition now and then makes a mistake, that will cause no harm. Recall the last congress. It was that congress's shame to have as its two honorary chairs, sitting next to Zinoviev, Serrati and Levi. Take care that the present congress is not shamed by the fact that the KAPD is compelled to leave the Third International.

Radek: And where is Rühle?

¹¹² "Gehört die VKPD noch der Kommunistischen Internationale?". *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 178 (undated, 1921). [-J.R.]

Seemann: Not in the KAPD.

June 29th: the Italian question and Executive Committee's report

Sachs (Schwab): Comrades, I wish to speak on a point of order on behalf of the KAPD delegation. We ask, first, for the adoption of the French delegation's motion to take the vote on the resolution now before us at the end of our deliberations. Secondly, we ask the congress to specify now that the vote on this resolution will be taken in sections, that is, that the different issues should be separated out and then, of course, that another vote be taken on the resolution as a whole. Regarding the separate vote, we present a counter-motion to the passage in the resolution that takes up the KAPD. I would now like to read this motion:

- 1.) The Twenty-One Conditions of the Second Congress will in the future be even less able than now to provide any guarantee against the reformist swamp.
- 2.) After having created and admitted mass parties shot through with centrism and reformism, the Third International needs even more than before to encompass a purely proletarian and revolutionary opposition.
- 3.) Such an opposition can be effective only if it is not oppressed by the apparatus and the voting strength of a party devoted to recruiting the masses whatever the cost, which necessarily leads to opportunism.
- 4.) The VKPD, in particular, is based even today, in its tactical principles, on the ideas of Paul Levi. Even its left wing is at best trapped in disastrous self-deception.
- 5.) Finally, currents related to the KAPD are now being formed in almost all the parties of the Communist International. But they will be able to evolve in a manner favourable to the interests of proletarian revolution only if the KAPD remains within the Communist International as a separate party.

For all these reasons, we propose that the congress decide to maintain the KAPD's affiliation as a sympathising organisation. If it is decided to discuss this matter further in commission, we are agreeable to referring this motion there. If a discussion of this question in commission is rejected, and the congress wishes to take the vote now, we would like to motivate this motion briefly.

[The KAPD's resolution is rejected, and the executive's resolution on the Italian and KAPD question passes – M.S.]

July 1st: Discussion of Radek's June 30th report on Tactics and Strategy

Hempel (Jan Appel, KAPD): Comrades, after listening to Comrade Radek's report on the tactics and strategy to be adopted by the Communist International, we can say that we agree with a portion of his initial comments: namely, the assertion, based on examining the economic situation, that we are witnessing the collapse of the capitalist economic system, which will lead necessarily and unconditionally to proletarian revolution. However, as soon as we come to the question of how this proletarian revolution unfolds, how the revolutionary proletarian masses form up in struggle, differences become apparent.

I will attempt to go into this quite briefly, since I have been given little time. Let us consider the period of the revolution in Russia, in 1917. We observe revolution in Germany and Austria, and all the revolutionary struggles of this period, and we note that the proletariat in Russia formed up for struggle in soviets. In Germany we call them councils. That is how the proletariat formed up; that was the organisational form of the masses.

We also observe this in the smaller revolutionary struggles that took place in Italy during the occupation of the factories. The proletariat has its councils, or at least the form of councils. The proletariat in Britain had workplace councils, and they are forming now in the great miners' strike – the genuine revolutionary leadership of the shop stewards.¹¹³ In all the revolutionary struggles of the German proletariat after 1918, ranging from the very small to the very large, the struggle was structured by councils, factories, and workplaces. That is what we observe in the revolution.

We should reflect on this. We should conclude that if this is how the proletariat forms up in revolution, then that is how we as Communists, who wish to be the leadership

¹¹³ Shop stewards committees, elective organs of workers' struggle that developed in Britain before World War I, expanded rapidly during the War. Centred in the Clyde Valley industrial district, these committees spread throughout England and Scotland. After 1917 the movement took on an increasingly political character, actively opposing British military intervention against Soviet Russia. [–J.R.]

in this revolution and must be that leadership, should undertake to organise the revolutionary proletariat. That is what we of the Communist Workers' Party say. And this is not something cooked up, as Comrade Radek believes, in the brain and test tube of Comrade Gorter in the Netherlands. It arises from the experiences of the struggle that we have fought since 1918. We workers are not great theoreticians; we have only the experiences of our struggles. We have learned to separate off revolutionary workers who really want to fight from the old structures of the workers' movement and give them support in the new forms in which the revolution is taking place

That becomes fully apparent if you consider the tasks assumed by the old workers' movement – or more precisely, the workers' movement before the period of outbreak of direct revolution. Its tasks were, first, to utilise the political organisations of the working class – the parties – to send deputies into parliament and other institutions made available by the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy for working-class representation. That was the first task, and that was done. And for that time, it was correct.

The economic organisations of the working class, for their part, had the task of improving the status of the working class in capitalism, through struggle, and when struggle was no longer possible, through negotiations. I must be brief. Those were the tasks of workers' organisations before the War. But when the revolution broke out, new tasks became apparent. The workers' organisations could no longer focus on the struggle for wage increases and content themselves with that. They could no longer set their primary goal as merely being represented in parliament and pushing through improvements for the working class. That is reformism. Now we are told, 'But we don't want that', and we reply: we believe that you do not want it, but when you take the same path as the old workers' movement, you will be swept along down this path. You cannot avoid it, and no number of resolutions will protect you from that. This is shown by experience.

The old workers' movement had good reason for its specialised organisations. After all, what do you need in order to be represented in parliament? You do not need revolutionary fighters. You need education regarding conditions in this state plus people who know how to negotiate – parliamentarians – who send you reports. That is all.

What is needed for the economic struggle? You need a unification of workers. You elect union representatives, able workers, who can negotiate with the employers and their organisations. Such organisations need leaders, and the masses follow them unquestioningly. You collect money in order to be able to carry out a strike. You set up support organisations – the trade unions – which are tools of the working class for a quite specific purpose, namely, to find a place within the capitalist order. And if Communists then believe that this tool, incapable of conducting revolutionary struggles, and this leadership and these organisations can be utilised to carry out revolutions – they are wrong and they will be crushed.

Again and again we experience that the workers' organisations following this path fail in the decisive battles, despite all their revolutionary speeches. That is the great lesson that we draw from these experiences. That is why we say that the proletariat must keep focused on the goal, which is to demolish capitalist power, demolish state power. It is only for this purpose that the proletariat must create organisations. The proletariat creates them itself. We see this when in a factory, let us say in Germany, workers raise demands that the employers cannot accept in this period. What do the workers do? They elect as representatives people who they know, people from their factories, their workplaces. They must conduct this struggle, from its earliest beginnings, against the will of the trade unions. That is demonstrated by a lengthy history – from small struggles and small strikes right up to the recent massive struggles.

So the working class is forced to organise itself in the revolutionary struggle in the economy, and is doing so. We say that we, as Communists, should recognise this. We should recognise that the path of the old workers' movement is wrong. We have something new – the revolutionary struggle. That is why we say that workers should organise in a manner consistent with the development of the revolution to this point, and we Communists should be in the leadership when they go into battle. That is why we say that Communists must get the proletariat to organise by factory and workplace with a quite specific goal and purpose, namely to take over production, the productive forces, the factories, and all the rest, and take all this in hand. With this in view, the proletariat must organise on such a basis, for these are the things for which its struggle is waged.

Comrades, I am not able to go into these matters in more detail. It is up to Communists to recognise and come to grips with these tasks.

We now come to the next point. The methods of proletarian struggle flow from its tasks and the way it forms up and organises. Its methods, which must be revolutionary, are determined by analysing the situation of the economy and of our opponent at this time. At present the enemy is taking counter-measures. That did not begin now, but it is more intense now. These countermeasures are designed to maintain its power – the power of its state and also the profits generated by the economy. They are incapable of getting the entire economy working. That is not possible. What they can do is to consolidate one segment of the economy, its core, at the cost of the other. That is taking place today in every country of the world. We Communists must analyse this and examine what the further effects will be of this start-up by these very conscious capitalists.

The result for the proletariat is that a segment of it is being sustained – those in the factories that are being maintained, in the economic sector that is kept viable. And we see that this core, these cartels, these super-cartels in every country are joining together and are dominant. However, if one segment of the proletariat is engaged and sustained by these cartelised factories, another segment is ejected. And this extremely large mass of unemployed, who cannot find a job in the present system, are condemned to extinction. In this way, the working class is divided in two and split economically. The worker in the factory, who is still able to get by, is anxious not to lose his job. And the worker who is already outside the factory is the enemy of those that still have a livelihood. Capitalism strives consciously to achieve this split, while the bourgeois press fans the flames. That is how capitalism is being reconstructed today.

We do not say that this reconstruction of capitalist rule is permanent. It is a temporary reconstruction built on the corpses of starving proletarians. We must recognise this situation, which determines our policies in struggle and the methods we utilise to move forward. We Communists must, with the aid of the proletariat, prevent the consolidation of this one segment of the economy, the proletariat, from taking place. For that would be a defeat for the proletariat. We have to take up the struggle in all its phases, wherever the slightest opening exists. We have to use every means – I agree with Comrade Radek; use every means – to prevent the economy from being reconstructed in line with the capitalists' plans.

To this end we must utilise the enormous and constantly growing mass of the unemployed and starving workers. We must unite them. We do not unite them so

that they can elect members of parliament or vote for resolutions. Our appeal to them must be based on their immediate needs. We must organise them in councils and bring them into contact with other councils and with union stewards from the factories. That is how we create the proletariat's organisation; that is how we unite the proletariat in life. We will have to engage in consistent struggle. The platform for the unification of the revolutionary proletariat is not, as Radek suggested, the speeches, the decisions, and the open letters. The platform is the ongoing struggle.

Comrade Radek spoke of offence and defence. At the beginning of this year, we saw how things in Germany were developing. We saw how bourgeois democracy was being maintained, using every means, from the Social Democrats to the Independents, using all parliamentary parties and organisations. This process was advancing at a crawl, and capitalism required this crawl. It had to be stopped. We called for every conflict in every workplace to be utilised and driven forward, for defying the individual capitalists at every opportunity, for the establishment of ties from one workplace to another, for intensifying the struggles.

Comrades, as we have seen, this process led to a sharpening of the situation in Central Germany, and then the March Action happened. Hörsing launched his attacks, and the torpor in Germany was banished. This was an offensive, as we conceive of it, and it had to be carried out.

But ordering the offensive quite suddenly, without preparation, is nonsense. Let me refer to our conduct on 20 August 1920, when the Red Army troops were on the border of East Prussia and near Warsaw. That must also be considered in judging offensive and defensive. We of the KAPD had prepared across the country for many weeks, through public meetings, leaflets, propaganda in the factories, and by utilising the mood regarding the presence of Red Army troops at the borders. Then when troops and munitions from France started rolling across Germany, the question was posed of what to do. We decided then to drive things forward toward a rebellion. We began preparing for that systematically in every field of work.

During the evening before 20 August and on the day itself – only now can we speak of these things, because previously this would have landed our comrades in prison – *Die Rote Fahne* and *Freiheit* and all the provincial newspapers carried an appeal: 'To the proletarians of Germany: Beware! Provocateurs, spies, and unscrupulous elements want to draw you into a bloodbath', and so on. We now concede freely that if we ever

made a mistake, it was on this day. Our mistake lay in bending every effort to hold back the action that was to break out in the most important sectors of Germany.

We were successful in many localities. Today people sneer at us because our comrades in Velbert and Köthen proclaimed a soviet republic. We say: let them jeer, it does not bother us. But it was the duty of Communists to launch an offensive at that moment. We regard that as an offensive in Germany, and internationally it was not an offensive but simple solidarity with the struggles of the Russian brothers, who had been placed under great pressure by the deliveries of war materiel. These are things that must be said in passing judgement on offensive and defensive.

Now let us consider partial demands. I already touched on this. We have the Open Letter and workers' control of production – these are partial demands. And Comrade Radek has said very clearly how partial demands should look and how they should not look. The Open Letter in Germany, supported by the trade unions and the parliamentary parties, this Open Letter was opportunist and could only be opportunist. An Open Letter based on economic and revolutionary organisations offers what Comrade Radek finds lacking in the VKPD. Where do we see meetings of the action committees that were needed to create the foundation for the struggle that the Open Letter was supposed to call into being? Yes, we rejected it, because we knew these people, we knew it could lead to nothing but negotiations with the government; it was all just talk. That is why we rejected it. We are always in favour of launching a struggle, but you must also consider how that is done. You can't just produce it out of thin air. Revolution requires preparations, which must be undertaken. These preparations would have been made if there were revolutionary organisations, and they would have existed, if the Spartacus League Zentrale and the Third International had not for two years been calling for using the old trade unions rather than building workplace organizations and *Unionen*¹¹⁴. You must see things as they are. Ask the fighters permanently engaged in struggle; they will tell you where things stand. They will show you how to struggle. However, I do not have time to go into this in detail.

There has also been discussion of partial actions. Our position is that we never reject partial actions. Every action, every struggle – for they are actions too – must be developed and driven onward. We cannot say that we reject this struggle and that

¹¹⁴ In John Riddell's translation the term "syndicalist union" is used to distinguish the *Unionen* from the trade unions or *Gewerkschaften*. However, Appel is most likely referring exclusively to the AAUD and workplace organizations.[– M.S.]

struggle. Struggles that arise from workers' economic deprivation must be driven forward by every available means. Especially in a country like Germany, or like Britain and other countries with a bourgeois democracy, who have experienced bourgeois democracy for forty or fifty years and felt its effects, the workers must first of all become accustomed to struggle. Slogans must correspond to these partial actions.

Let us take an example. Suppose that a so-called general strike breaks out in a factory, in several factories, and sweeps across a small region. In such a case the slogan cannot be, 'Struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat'. That would be nonsense. The slogans must conform to the circumstances, and to what can be achieved there. The slogans must also be brought into line with the nature of the struggle that is to sustain this movement. Let us assume that a generalised uprising is taking place in a country. In this case, the slogans should be for a struggle for our basic goals.

Now I would like to take up the March Action, in order to show briefly what have been the effects of your teachings in this case, given that this has not yet been touched on here. The March Action, in itself, was not an action that could bring about the overthrow of capitalist power. Everyone now agrees on that point. We saw it too. But it was nonetheless necessary to raise the slogan, 'Down with the government!' This slogan was required because otherwise proletarians in Germany can no longer carry out a genuine struggle. However, it was also necessary to raise this slogan because overall, in Germany, proletarians have no alternative. The existing social order means that millions and millions of proletarians will die of hunger, that larger and larger portions of the population will die. Accordingly, the working class, facing this emergency, has no option but to set itself the goal of overthrowing this social order. That is what the slogan had to be in Central Germany. That slogan was needed in order to show the German proletariat for the first time how it could get out of this emergency.

I would like to cite an example from Germany in January 1918. War, together with all its consequences, weighed down on the proletariat. In January 1918 the munitions workers and the dockworkers succeeded everywhere in rising up against the straightjacket of war, against hunger, want, and poverty. They launched a general strike.¹¹⁵ What was the result? The proletarians in uniform did not yet understand the

¹¹⁵ A general strike of four hundred thousand workers took place in Berlin 28 January–3 February 1918. [–J.R.]

workers. Some did, but the ice was not yet broken. And how did this struggle develop across the country? How did the smear campaign against the workers take shape? As they were being persecuted in every nook and cranny, news of this strike, of this working-class movement, penetrated everywhere. Everyone knew of it. And when conditions had developed to the point where the militarised economy and the so-called German Empire was beyond salvation, the workers and soldiers acted as they had been taught to act by the pioneer fighters of January 1918.

That is how things are in Germany today. The March struggles of 1921 showed the proletariat in Germany the only way it can escape collapse. Everyone in Germany now knows this. We do not have sufficient means and propaganda tools to take this message into every corner of the country. We must leave that task to the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeois do it in a different way than we do. They stir up hatred against us, curse us as criminals and miserable dogs, and they persecute us. And today the proletariat joins in cursing us. They join in the curses. And when conditions grow more acute and urgent, then will the proletariat be ready to follow the same path – and to recognise this path. That is how the revolution forces its way through. That is why it was necessary to raise the slogan and to orient the struggle toward the overthrow of capitalist power and of the existing social order. That is the great lesson for the German proletariat and the International that witnessed the March Action. This lesson is greater than all the petty matters that people here are stressing so much.

Comrades, I still have to explain briefly how the struggling proletariat should be organised. Earlier I only touched on this. The proletariat should no longer organise itself in order to achieve political and economic representation in the capitalist state. It should no longer organise in order to utilise bourgeois democracy. Instead, the proletariat should organise for the revolution. The proletariat should absorb the lessons of revolutions – those of the Russian Revolution, of the German and Austrian revolutions – and should organise itself accordingly. That is why we say that the Communists must act right now to create a nucleus and a framework that the proletariat can fit into when conditions draw it into struggle. This framework is provided by the workplace organizations set up in different industries, sectors of the economy, and regions. Today such organisations are still few.

Interjection: Fewer and fewer.

Hempel: They are the organisations that hold their banners high and provide a framework. And when struggles flare up, as will happen more and more, the proletariat will be compelled to grasp hold of this framework, because it cannot any longer struggle through and with the trade unions. We must recognise this. This understanding must guide the policies of the Third International – that will enable us to advance. In order to maintain these organisations, to lead them, and to provide ongoing education for the class organisation as a whole, the proletariat needs a Communist Party. Not a Communist Party that is unable to take the lead through its every individual unit and has to be led by directives issuing from a central leadership. Instead, the proletariat needs a thoroughly educated party of cadres. That is how it should be. Every single Communist should be fully competent to play a leading role at his post. That should be our goal. Whatever the circumstances, whatever the struggle in which he is engaged, he should stand his ground, and the force that enables him to stand firm is his programme. What forces him to act is the decisions taken by the Communists. He is governed by the strictest discipline, based not on forgiveness but on expulsion or other forms of punishment. In other words, a party that is a nucleus; that knows what it wants; that stands firm, tested in battle; that no longer negotiates but rather is constantly engaged in struggle.

Such a party can arise only if it really throws itself into the struggle, breaking with the entire heritage of the trade-union and party movements, with reformist methods – which include the trade-union movement – and with parliamentarism. Communists must break with all that. Instead they have barred off their own road with such obstacles, and not only that, but through collaboration and participation at the points left open by the bourgeoisie in order to serve as a trap that captures and transforms revolutionary energy. Communists must banish all that from their ranks. Only when they have been reformed in this way can they take up their tasks and undertake revolutionary activity.

I have thus explained very briefly, to the degree that time permits, the course that the Communist International must follow in order to play a leadership role.

Viewing these matters from an international standpoint, we see that we will find the forces to sustain this structure, the materials from which to construct this revolutionary workers' organisation, this revolutionary International. In France, Spain, Italy, and also in the United States we encounter syndicalists and anarchists. Perhaps someone will cry out, 'Yes! You are an anarchist, a syndicalist!' Let us pause

to consider these matters. It must be conceded that for many years, this is where the most revolutionary forces of the working class have been located. We realise that they do not understand the class struggle, the organised class struggle. Well, comrades, they were living too early in history. Their tactics and strategy were premature by many decades. The methods of the old workers' movement in Germany and elsewhere were then correct, but, now, in this time of collapse, we need the methods of direct struggle. These anarchists and syndicalists of the world have not experienced the organisation of the working class and its cohesiveness. Here is where the Communists should step forward and teach them to conduct the struggle and unify the forces, while offering them an organisational form they can unite with and fit into.

To be sure, these forces demand that the break with all bourgeois traditions be carried out in such a manner that there is no going back. All the workers who went into the anarchist and syndicalist camp have been disoriented by the betrayal of the parliamentary leaders. They recognised just how grave were the errors of the parliamentary workers' movement. The task is to yank them out of this camp, and Communists must take care not to fail in this task.

Rejection of parliamentarism and the trade-union movement are not principled questions for Communists. They are practical issues that are on the agenda today. If we view the matter in this fashion, we see that precisely in the United States and the Western European countries there are large workers' organisations that demand anti-parliamentarism and a break with the trade-union movement. So the question today is what this congress will now decide. If it adopts the line of the old workers' movement, it will also follow the course of the old workers' movement. And if it resolutely follows the path and resolutely takes the step of joining with the left-wing forces that are here today in Moscow, and recognises that there is some good in them, then the Third International congress will give new impetus to the revolution. Any other course will run it aground. It is up to this congress to take its decision. That is also how we view the question of our affiliation to the Third International.

July 2nd: Discussion of tactics, continued

Sachs (Schwab, KAPD): Comrades, my remarks link up with what has just been said by Comrade Bell from Britain. For it appears to me that on a quite significant point,

namely that of the party's size, he has borne out the correctness of our point of view. But I will come back to this point further on.

I prefer to first take up the remarks of Comrade Heckert yesterday. I note that he has conceded something that is undeniable: the old KPD failed in the Kapp Putsch in Germany. However, he skated in polite silence around the failure of the KPD, the official section of the Communist International, in August 1920, when the Russian army was advancing toward Warsaw. That silence may help his party but does precious little to inform the rest of us about the situation at that time. Third, he conceded the party's dangerous and disturbing vacillation during the Berlin electrical workers' strike.

What is more, who was responsible for this vacillation; who was it that actually brought about the party's failure, its inactivity, during the electrical workers' strike? That was not the fault of Paul Levi. It was Comrade Brandler, now the left-wing revolutionary chair of the VKPD, new and improved edition. We all have the pleasure today to deliberate, some with decisive and some with consultative vote, under his honorary chairmanship. I did not elect him. It was Brandler – and a lot more could be said about him (Commotion) – Brandler, who imagines that the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat as a system of workers' councils can be carried out with due respect and within the framework of the German constitution. (Commotion) He said that at his trial. Here is the newspaper where this appears.

Perhaps the day will come when Comrade Heckert and others of his party will admit that, this time too, during the run-up to the struggles of the March Action, this very same improved edition of the KPD failed again. That happened – despite everything that has been said so far – regarding something that has not yet been mentioned, namely that the party issued its call for a general strike only on the Friday before Easter [25 March – J.R.].

Heckert thought it necessary to apologise at length for the fact that the party issued its call for a general strike on Friday, although it knew full well that Easter would follow, when the workers are not in the factories. It did not occur to him that, in Halle, on the Tuesday before Easter [22 March], in the absence of any call, gas, water, and electricity workers had gone on strike in support of the workers of Central Germany. These workers were left on their own, receiving no help either from the Halle district leadership (heading the VKPD's strongest district) or the national

leadership. They returned to work in order not to be left alone in struggle. We had pressed in every city across the nation for quick action, so that the general strike would start up before Easter and could be maintained through the Easter holiday. Nonetheless, it was only on Friday that they finally managed to issue the call for a general strike.

I tell you, Comrade Heckert admitted three instances of failure. Perhaps he will admit a fourth instance some day soon. Now is it not quite remarkable that in all these cases the only genuine and patented Communist Party of Germany failed, while in each case, through a remarkable coincidence, the KAPD – or rather the former opposition that gave birth to the KAPD – always did the right thing? The districts that took up the struggle during the Kapp Putsch immediately were formerly districts of the opposition. So were those who tried to utilise the month of August [1920 – J.R.] but were blocked by resistance from both you and the USPD. Those who did not take part in the vacillations over the electrical workers' strike but rather tried with all their strength to provide the workers with solidarity and support – once again, that was the KAPD. I tell you, either this comparison results from a strange series of coincidences or there is some deeper cause at work here.

Rogalski: Sheer fantasy!

Sachs: Comrade Rogalski, I took part in all this; there is no fantasy here. Well, the underlying factor in this comparison, in these remarkable occurrences on both sides – this factor cannot be of interest solely in a German framework. It is of concern to the entire International. It must be of importance for you. Fundamentally, it is simply the fact that the KAPD – even if it has developed clarity only slowly and with difficulty – that the KAPD's programme, organisation, course of action, and its fundamental positions provide from the outset a guarantee that the party taken as a whole cannot fail in such situations.

Yesterday, Comrade Lenin spoke, surprisingly, in much the same terms as Comrade Bell of the potential of a small party. To our astonishment, he explained that even – he said 'even' – a small party could well be in a position to initiate revolutionary struggles and, indeed, the decisive and final revolutionary struggle, and to carry it through to victory. So what became of the principle of a mass party, which had previously been defended so frantically? Where did it disappear to? For Comrade Lenin said that even a small party can do this, provided – and he is right here – that it

wins the majority of the proletariat and of the working population as a whole for its policies. Very good indeed! Here we are in complete agreement with him, and we do not understand why, with regard to this point, he is still so disturbed about our leftist blunders. We ask him this: if even a small party can do this, could he please say where he stands on the following proposition: In our view, a small party can do it, but if a mass party tries – a mass party in the sense that has been proclaimed as dogma – in all likelihood, it will fail. What does he say to this point?

In our view, such a mass party, formed as it is according to the principle of encompassing as many as possible and then battering them into shape, so that under the battering and pressure of its leadership it becomes properly revolutionary – such a party, battered into shape in this way on the model of the VKPD, carries within it, in its entire structure, a high probability of failure. For these masses are not just lifeless figures in account books and lists. They are living workers, who come to meetings, send the delegates from their branches to the local leadership and from the locality to the district, and the influence of their intentions and outlook makes itself felt. Perhaps it is possible, else wherein the world, to build a party in this fashion, led and commanded in military fashion by a leadership with a sergeant's swagger stick in hand, reckoning the members as so many heads or digits. But this will no longer work today in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Britain.

Certainly we too are well aware, we too explain that broad masses are necessary for the victory of revolution in the industrially advanced countries. Of course the Communist Party must win these broad masses. But now we hear the 'Open Letter' published in Germany being recommended as an exemplary method of winning the masses. I hope that comrades abroad are familiar with the Open Letter, which is a conglomeration of everything conceivable. Well, here we must say that of course the Open Letter was written with good intentions to win the masses and thereby help them advance.

Nonetheless, there are evil souls who claim that the Open Letter's real intention was to carry out electoral propaganda. I will not get into an argument about that right now, but I will say that the Open Letter's method is unworkable and undialectical. It is a method of attracting the masses as they are, without dwelling on their suffering and oppression, but rather just linking up with the thinking of the masses such as it is. Of course, the final sentence says, 'We are well aware that this is not adequate, but nonetheless we demand', etc. The masses do not understand this contradiction, but

they do know that it cannot be done that way. Or on the other hand, they are still blind and do not yet see the truth. And so they conclude that if even the Communists are saying that we must demand this, then it must be a good thing. In short, the masses are reinforced in their opportunist illusions. If we want to win the masses, then we must say that the recent March Action, taken as a whole, with all its errors and weaknesses, represents a much better method of winning the masses than the Open Letter.

It is true that hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, raised their hands in support of the Open Letter. But this did not win them to the cause of communism. Further, it is also true that during the March Action broad masses turned against those in struggle, not only with words but by wielding iron bars in the factories to drive out those who called for a strike. But that is simply how the dialectical process takes place. Initially, we unite those who are ready and able to struggle, so that they can advance. Then, after a certain time, the masses who were against the action will understand and learn. 'We were against this struggle', they will say, 'We thought things would get better, but they did not, and we see now that you were right, you whom we then hit over the head with iron bars'. By and large, that is the right way to win the masses.

Comrades, for us of the KAPD, neither the theses presented here nor the amendments are the main issue. I have no mandate and am not able to take a position for or against the one or the other, for the very simple reason that these theses, as a whole, are obviously based on the previously existing foundation of the Second Congress decisions. They are a continuation, and in some respects they are no doubt an improvement, and we may find that very welcome, but it is not the main issue. We still believe that the main task is to modify the basic decisions of the broad tactical and strategic guidelines adopted by the Second Congress. We therefore present the delegations and the Presidium with our Second Congress theses, which deal with the trade-union movement, the workplace councils, and workers' control of production, and our theses on proletarian revolution.¹¹⁶ We do not believe that these are arriving too late, and if they arrive with some delay, that is your fault, because you did not pay heed to us sooner. We hope that many delegations will take these theses home with them, so that they can become seeds of a discussion that can lead us to

¹¹⁶ For KAPD resolutions, see Comintern archives, RGASPI, 490/1/5, and the KAPD publication *Proletarier*, 1, 7. [-J.R.]

victory more quickly and more surely than theses adopted by the Second Congress on these themes.

I would like to take up briefly Comrade Bukharin's attacks on us yesterday. Comrade Bukharin attacked us quite harshly, but with arguments that were bookish in the extreme. He quoted some sentences from a pamphlet by Comrade Gorter, believing he could hit us over the head with these passages. In the process, he did read one decisive sentence, but most of his listeners no doubt missed it. The sentence was as follows: 'The Kronstadt proletariat revolted against you, against the Communist Party. You proclaimed a state of siege in Petersburg that was also aimed against the proletariat . . .!' This is the inner consistency of events, with respect both to the Russian course of action as to the forms of resistance that arise against them. Gorter always recognised and emphasised that this was inevitable. This is the sentence that you must read in order to understand that neither Comrade Gorter nor the KAPD was taking the side of the Kronstadt rebels. Rather they were saying that these difficulties are inherent in the situation here. And when Comrade Bukharin says that Comrade Gorter is our best theorist, well, that may be true. But he has learned a very great deal from our practice, and we from him. Thus I am in a position now to say that if Gorter were to deviate from the party's line in his theoretical writings, and he has not done that so far, nonetheless the party's line prevails, not that of Comrade Gorter.

Let me say again that Comrade Bukharin took us on yesterday with purely bookish arguments. He did not advance any arguments taken from life – neither ours nor that of the VKPD – and he cannot do so. The kind of word games that Comrade Bukharin employed against us yesterday can perhaps have some effect at a congress, for those who do not and cannot know the facts, but not in Germany, where we will go to report just what it is that many comrades here are denouncing as 'leftist blunders'.

July 4th, Discussion on the World Situation and Trade Union question

Bergmann (Frantz Meyer, KAPD): Comrades, yesterday Comrade Zinoviev stressed in his report the decisive importance of our position on the trade unions for the development and conduct of the revolution. As we know, the assumption of political and of economic power must proceed hand in hand. Indeed, far more is at stake than merely the assumption of political and economic power. Even now we must prepare for the fact that taking power in itself achieves nothing unless we have created the

preconditions for reinforcing and maintaining this power. That is the problem for which we must now find a solution.

In the previous phase of the revolution in different countries we have seen that certain segments were setting about to seize power, but they did not understand how to reinforce and secure this power, once it was in their hands. That was the case in 1918 when the German revolution broke out, and the task was then to secure economic power. Comrades, we must look into the causes of this. Comrades must examine what must be done to prevent such errors and to find the ways and means to prevent any future repetition of them.

In the highly developed capitalist countries, we cannot and must not depend on accidental occurrences and give way to the delusion that everything will turn out for the best. Concretely, insofar as this is possible within capitalist society, we must attempt to create bodies that can spring into action when the occasion arises for them to carry out their task. Comrade Heckert's report yesterday provided us with an analysis showing us the tasks that the old trade unions undertook and attempted to carry out within capitalist society. Comrade Zinoviev showed clearly and distinctly what trade unions must do in the revolution and how they – as I have just explained – must then secure and help construct economic power.

Let us consider the task and structure of trade unions under capitalism. Everywhere in the highly developed capitalist countries, their task was to improve the living conditions of the working class. This task assumed by the trade unions can no longer be carried out, can no longer be accomplished. On that there is no disagreement among us here. Nonetheless, we see that many trade unions are still attempting, even today, to carry out these old tasks, which were appropriate and correct in prerevolutionary times. But the facts now make it evident that these tasks can no longer be accomplished. These trade unions have now become an auxiliary weapon of the capitalist state.

Comrade Zinoviev said yesterday that capitalist states are now holding down the working class not only with the sword but also by means of deception. And this state apparatus of deception that permanently holds down the working class is now the old trade unions. That is what they are today. We see this above all in Germany. They have turned into nothing less than an instrument and bulwark of the capitalist state.

Comrades, some think that such organisations can be won over today and transformed into instruments for revolution. On this point, the opinion of the KAPD – and not it alone, as was stated here – is quite different from that of the majority of parties affiliated to the Communist International. As I said, the KAPD is not alone in this view, because the shop stewards in Britain, the IWW in the United States, and the syndicalist organisations in France, Spain, and Italy also hold an alternative view, namely that it is impossible, by winning the counterrevolutionary trade unions, to convert them into instruments of revolution and with their help revolutionise the working masses.

We can see quite clearly in Germany how this pattern is developing and progressing. Until now, comrades of the VKPD have stood for winning the trade unions. But yesterday we heard for the first time, in the speeches of Zinoviev and Heckert, even if not explicitly, that the trade unions must be smashed.¹¹⁷ If that's the way these matters are addressed, if you are talking about smashing the trade unions, then perhaps there is common ground between us and the majority. We are categorically for clearing the old counterrevolutionary trade unions out of the way. Not because we take any pleasure in destruction, but because we see that they have become genuine agencies of the capitalist state, which it utilises for suppression, in the worst sense of the word, of the revolution.

In 1918 the collapse of the German army seemed to have brought about the moment for the conquest of power. We seemed to be only hours, minutes removed from having power in our hands. It was then that the German trade unions and their leading bodies – which during the War had preached 'holding out' from the first moment to the last – stitched together a state that had collapsed. It was trade-union leaders, Noske and others, who, with the help of an officers' clique, reconstituted the shattered bourgeois bands and thus blocked revolution in Germany.

Today the whole array of old trade unions are united around this viewpoint. Comrades, they are trying to replace the open struggle of the working masses with mock battles. In 1918, following the example of the Russian Revolution, the German workers set about creating workers' councils. The idea of workers' councils found expression again and again among the German proletarian masses. This concept

¹¹⁷ No implication that trade unions should be smashed is found in the stenographic transcripts of Zinoviev and Heckert's reports on the trade-union question in Session 15. Bergmann appears to be referring to what he later states to be the inevitable results of the establishment of Communist cells in the unions. [–J.R.]

refused to be buried and suppressed. Meanwhile, the trade-union leaders twisted and turned right up to April and May 1919. At first they strongly opposed the idea of workers' councils and suppressed them harshly, with bayonets. But this concept popped up again and again. So these trade-union puppets helped to create the law on workers' councils, which supposedly assured the working masses of some influence on production, consumption, and the economic process as a whole.¹¹⁸ Large masses of workers were fooled by this, thinking that the law on councils would really give them influence over future developments. Bit by bit, however, it has become plain that the law is cleverly crafted to serve as nothing other than a club against the revolution. Today we see that the working masses who fell for the bait of the council law, when it was tossed to them, have turned away from this idea.

This does not mean that all workers have already seen through this blatant deception. However, today we see that large segments of the revolutionary workers have taken up arms in a vigorous struggle against this seemingly revolutionary but in reality reactionary law. The councils that were elected and set up at that time are not instruments of revolution for the masses but nothing less than instruments of reaction. We say this in every struggle, large or small. Let me take just one example. In March, when the struggle began and unfolded in Central Germany, in the largest factory in this region – the Leuna Works – confidence in these councils had sunk so low that the first action of the twenty-five thousand workers there was to overturn the legally constituted council and elect, in its place, a revolutionary action committee.

Heckert: That is simply nonsense.

Bergmann: Well, Comrade Heckert, I'm more familiar than you with the situation at the Leuna Works, and I know what happened there. One comrade of the VKPD and one from the KAPD overturned this council, after a struggle, and on Tuesday morning [22 March] the factory workers elected a revolutionary action committee.

That was the situation almost everywhere the workers moved into struggle. Comrades, we must now assess whether developments can and should continue on this path. We see that the workers have no confidence in these factory councils legally established according to the law on councils. So we must attempt to draw workers together in a different way, to give them different councils, which will then, on the morrow of the victorious revolution, really enjoy the trust of the broad masses of the industrial

¹¹⁸ Presumably a reference to the German law adopted 2 February 1920. The existence of workers' councils was also recognised in Article 165 of the Weimar Constitution. [–J.R.]

proletariat. How can that come to be? Is it or is it not possible inside the current trade-union movement? We say that this is not possible. The old trade unions have shown in life that they have become a segment – and indeed a strong segment – of the capitalist state itself.

Not only in Germany but everywhere the trade unions have developed in this manner. We see it in the United States with the big trade unions led by Gompers. We see it again, quite recently, in recent weeks in Britain, in the giant strike in Italy that was defeated with the help of the reactionary Socialist Party. Everywhere we see the old trade unions and the old Social-Democratic parties joining hand in hand. They work together hand in hand, in order to bridge class antagonisms, while we as Communists have the task – which we must fulfil – of making these more apparent. The development and the entire structure of the old trade unions makes them bodies that function inside capitalist society and are adapted to it.

The initiative and determination of individuals or even quite large minorities could not find living space in these trade unions. It was simply an impossibility for significant minorities to make headway against the will of the leaders of the individual unions, given their thickly webbed laws, statutes, and regulations. Everywhere we see that a substantial majority of members active in the union are assaulted and must submit against their will to the dictatorship of the leaders, who have a firm grip on the reins of the organisation, indeed its entire apparatus, including its finances. For this reason, these large masses of members are absolutely unable to be active in a revolutionary fashion. They are condemned to subjugation and forced against their will to collaborate in maintaining the present capitalist trade unions. In our view, it is not possible to revolutionise such trade unions.

There have been many attempts of this kind, and we can now observe how the first and most emphatic of them is developing in Germany. The comrades of the VKPD undertook such an effort to revolutionise the trade unions by forming cells in them, Communist cells. But the logic of such cells is to disrupt and destroy the unions. Deny it as you will, wherever such cells have been setup, what we see in reality is a destruction of the fabric of the national trade union. It is evident everywhere that the formation of cells does not change the unions' character and does not break the leaders' grip on the membership. Rather, what we observe is that so long as the masses are tied organisationally to these counterrevolutionary union leaders, they are

inclined to follow the slogans of these leaders more than those of the Communist parties.

We have experienced typical examples of this in Central Germany, where broad masses who are members of the VKPD did not follow the slogans of their party because, as members of the union, they followed its slogans against the strike. And so it is, wherever you look. Comrade Zinoviev told us here yesterday that the trade unions must be bodies that undertake the construction of the future society, that have as much influence as possible in building the communist society. Look at the past of the unions, the tasks they took on previously, and their present struggle for the revolution. What we see is the opposite of the way they are utilised in a revolution and what they must be made into today.

In Germany, even during the War, a strong aversion developed against the trade-union movement, even a splitting away of large segments of workers from the old unions. When the revolution began, in its first weeks, we believed that the trade-union question was not so urgent. At the founding convention of the Spartacus League this question was not resolved in the way that is necessary today.⁸ At that time we believed that the wave of revolution would advance rapidly. (We were not alone in this belief. Other comrades too, including the Russian comrades, were wrong about the pace of the revolution.) We thought the pace of revolution in Germany and other countries would be quicker, and the trade-union question would not play the decisive role that it has in fact played in the course of the revolution. To repeat, even during the War, significant portions of the workers left the old unions, because their betrayal was more evident than before the War. That is why, in the very first months of the revolution, the Spartacus League slogan to the working masses was, 'Out of the trade unions!'

This slogan received a strong response, above all among the working masses in the Ruhr district. Here, in the German miners' federation, the betrayal had been so blatantly obvious that a large portion of the miners took up this slogan and founded their own workplace organizations. Later, of course, the best leaders of the revolution – Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Leo Jogiches, and thousands and thousands of unknown proletarians – fell to the ground. Levi and his clique won the upper hand, and this slogan was transformed, indeed reversed, because they feared the struggle. They wished to evade the struggle against the reactionary trade-union bureaucracy.

They adopted the slogan of going into the trade unions and revolutionising them from within, of winning them over.

That was carried further in the course of the revolution. They went over to forming cells. Wherever that was done, it soon became evident that the trade unions could not remain unified in their previous form. Indeed not only members of the cells but entire units of the organisations were expelled from the German federations. Today, in Germany, there are cases where all former members of cells and indeed entire segments of the organisation have been expelled from the federations. So, in reality, the result is a wrecking of the trade unions. The old trade-union bureaucracy claims that this has wrecked and split apart the unions, and I say that too. The comrades of the VKPD, on the other hand, claim that this is not the case, and that they form these cells to build the unions. They believe that they can breathe a revolutionary spirit into the unions, which have become firm bastions of reaction.

Comrades, as was said yesterday, the working class is subjugated by sword and revolver and by deception, by both the army and the trade-union bureaucracy. You cannot breathe a Communist spirit into the standing army; there is no dispute about that. Just as you cannot convert the standing army into an instrument for revolution, so too you cannot do this with the instruments of deception, the trade unions. That is how things are developing everywhere. That is why the Communists' slogan must be not to win over the trade unions but to destroy them and, simultaneously, to build new organisations.

Comrades, we must today recognise and clearly define the form needed by the proletariat in order, once it is victorious, to maintain and secure its power. That is why even today it is necessary, especially in the highly developed Western European countries, that we bring the masses of the proletariat, as far as possible, to create organs whose task is to take control of production. Heckert said yesterday that the cells to be established in the factories must develop beyond them into industry-wide organisations. We are striving for this same goal, but in a more distinct form, through the Unionen of different types established during the German revolution.

The old workers' syndicate of miners, which I referred to earlier, displays in its entire being and direction a different character than the old organisations of the earlier period. It stands in fierce struggle with reaction, with the Amsterdammers, and it shows that it can build organs capable of taking control of production. Granted, these

organisations are not yet free of weaknesses, but they will become purer and more solid in the course of the revolution. For example, in the miners' syndicate, they still believe that the legally established workplace councils are a tool for revolution. But even the miners' workplace and industry-wide organisation will come to understand, in the course of the revolution, that this law on workplace councils is a blatant means of deception.

The General Workers' Union of Germany, which works closely with the KAPD, declared from the start and recognised that the trade unions are today going down another path, that they must be built in a different manner, and that other methods must be found to struggle and fight. The AAUD rejects wholesale the methods of struggle previously practised in the trade unions. The AAUD statutes specify as a precondition of membership in the workplace organization that the member must support the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its statutes also state that members must reject the old rotted-out weapon of political action, namely participation in parliamentary elections. Out of its ranks and its workplace organizations it creates the councils that will be the organs exercising power when the day of struggle comes. On that day, the masses of the proletariat will support these organs.

These councils, comrades, are not like the fake councils we saw arise in Germany at the beginning of 1919. They are not councils anchored in the laws of the capitalist state, constituted and elected on the basis of the law on workplace councils, and charged with ensuring that factory production rises and that law and order reigns on the shop floor. Rather, these are councils formed by the working masses themselves, who are themselves working at the carpenter's vice and bench, leading the factory workers in their daily struggle, and giving expression to the will of the comrades working in the factory. These are councils rooted in the masses, showing them the path of struggle. These councils, comrades, these organs, will truly have the working masses with them on the day of battle.

We must establish the preconditions so that we will not see – even in Germany – conditions like those of 1918, when the working masses and soldiers created councils. At that time the German proletariat did not understand the concept of councils. They knew nothing of them except the few crumbs of information that had come our way from Russia. And if we do not build these councils today, in the present revolutionary epoch, and thus show the masses in action the way forward, then there is an urgent danger that in a coming revolutionary upsurge the proletariat will be once again be

betrayed, and that it will once again find that we do not have the organs needed to secure our victory. That is why we are obliged to create these bodies everywhere.

It is not only in Germany that we see developments taking this path. This is true in a number of highly developed capitalist countries. In Britain we see a current, the shop stewards, conducting a vigorous struggle against British trade unionism. We see that their influence today is numerically small, because these workers' organisations have to struggle not only against the trade-union bureaucracy but simultaneously against the full power of the government. In almost every country, the old-line trade unions have become arms of the government. They enjoy very broad governmental protection. After the battles in Central Germany, we observed that in the giant factories the workers are now obliged to join the old trade-union organisations. The employers exert pressure on them to do that if they wish to work again in the workplace. Everywhere we see events developing in this fashion. And these comrades still insist that it will be possible to win over these trade unions from the inside and imbue them with a Communist spirit. This is such a delusion that we can make no concessions to it. We believe that this is not possible, and we see this belief confirmed in life. We must create organs today that can take up the struggle against these bulwarks defending the capitalist state.

Comrades, the international workers' movement, the international Communist movement must focus its attention on this. To avoid a mistake, to perceive the course of events in the capitalist countries, it must take this path, in order to be in a position, when it is able to win power in the capitalist countries, to maintain its grip on this power. As we can see today, the old trade unions even now have the task of masking the class antagonisms that are growing more and more acute, of bridging them over, and of deluding and tricking the workers. All the more, therefore, is it our task to show the workers in life that it is possible now to create working organs that show the working masses another path. These organs will show the workers in life what a council system must be. This cannot be done in the old trade unions. Our conception of trade unions is to build them as workplace organizations at the point of production, where the great masses of workers are together, where they form a great unity in the workplace. Here each worker must be drawn into activity as much as possible, in the shaping of their organisation, so that he gains an interest in the broad course of development and activity.

Comrades, we must not create national trade unions in which a dictatorship at the centre rules from the top down. That must not be. On the contrary, the will of the masses, the highly developed industrial working masses, must find expression from the bottom up. The source of this power is in the workplace itself. Here in the process of production we must educate and school the workers to truly become instruments of revolution. So centralisation from the top down cannot be the basis for shaping the trade unions; indeed, quite the opposite. In the factories, we unite the workers in workplace organisations. The workers in the factories elect their councils, their institutions, which represent their interests.

Comrade Heckert said yesterday that we, the Communist Workers' Party (KAPD), refuse to take action on issues of the day; that we always keep our focus solely on the overriding goal. It is not our task as Communists to throw the slogans of daily struggle at the working masses. Rather, these slogans must be raised by the working masses themselves in the factories. We must always point out to these working masses that resolving these daily issues will not improve their conditions, let alone bring about the downfall of capitalist society. Rather we, as Communists, have the task of always bringing home to these broad masses the overriding goal, the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a communist society. We Communists have the task of fighting alongside them and leading them forward in these daily struggles. So, comrades, we do not reject the daily struggle, but, rather, place ourselves at the head of the masses in these struggles and always show them the road to the great goal of communism.

That is the task of Communist parties in these workers' organisations.

We are well aware that these economic organisations can only too readily decay into opportunism. Everywhere we perceive the danger that they will fail to understand the goal. We see this not only with the German trade unions, but with unions everywhere that have broken free from the old confederations and are struggling in revolutionary fashion. We saw this in Italy with the occupation of the factories, and also, in part, with the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World], which rejects political struggle in principle. Everywhere we see that this leads to the organisations losing their depth.

The task of Communists is to fill these trade unions with a revolutionary spirit, the spirit of communism, so that they do not stray onto the path of opportunism. So we take part in all these struggles. Wherever struggles arise, Communists have the

bounden duty to forge ahead. Comrades, in founding these workplace organizations, we can and must not forget to link them together on a broad scale into a block, which forms a unified whole. These workplace organizations are unified locally, regionally, and nationally, such that we see the foundations of a council system developing inside capitalist society. It is possible at least to constitute and hold on to the council system in broad outline and familiarise the working class with this concept.

We will conduct the struggle and school the working class along these lines, educating them so they become instruments to tear down the capitalist state and build a communist one. If we do that, comrades, we will have already created the preconditions, within capitalist society and, when the revolution comes, we will not stand there with empty hands. We will have familiarised the working class with the concept that we absolutely have to instil in them. We must promote and help shape the development of these organisations and fill them with the spirit of communism.

Schulz: What percentage of Dittmann is there in this concept?

Bergmann: I don't understand why you would compare this with Dittmann, Comrade Schulz. Today we see organisations of many countries coming together for the congress of the Red International of Labour Unions, all imbued with the idea of driving through the world revolution, filling the masses with a revolutionary spirit, and overthrowing capitalist society. So we must find ways and means of uniting these masses, as much as possible, around a common fundamental line, uniting them in such a manner that as much scope as possible is accorded to the individual countries, in a manner appropriate to their structure. The movement is not identical in every country; there are diverse tendencies and possibilities for development. In the United States, IWW members belong simultaneously to the old trade unions, and we recognise that they perhaps have no choice in the matter right now. But if they go into these trade unions, at the same time they have another organisation. They build a new organisation, and that is the core of their movement.

But that is not the present situation in Germany. If the VKPD comrades would recognise – as they must, in our view – that winning the trade unions is nonsense, that it will not work, then they must take other paths. Three million or two and a half million trade-union members in Germany have now decided for affiliation to Moscow. However, this fact means nothing for unless they simultaneously break from the spell of their leaders. This programmatic statement, this sympathy with Moscow

means nothing. Unless the attempt is made to break them free from the old trade unions, we will see that even though these members have opted for Moscow through a ballot or by raising their hand, when the battle breaks out they will follow the call of their old trade-union bosses and leaders. We see that in Chemnitz, Comrade Heckert, where you live. And if you have a different point of view, produce evidence to sustain it.

Comrades, events are moving quickly. If we believe that revolution is developing, we must absolutely move into action. Otherwise the revolution will take us by surprise. We do not think that a simple declaration in favour of affiliation, made by a segment of trade-union members, constitutes evidence that the cell policy is revolutionising the masses. More evidence is needed.

It is nonsense to project revolutionising the trade unions in countries where they have become firm pillars of capitalism. To think this can be done is a false start. The nine or ten million German trade unionists, if they were revolutionary, if they were organs of the revolution, could actually seize power today. If they were on our side, they could on any day, at any hour, utilise the situation to overthrow capitalist society and kindle revolution in Germany and thus drive the world revolution forward. We see these bodies failing everywhere, as they must, and that is why we demand and insist, in the interests of the revolution, that they must be destroyed, before we can arrive at the victory of the revolution.

Comrades, it is true that the decay of the trade unions in the highly developed capitalist countries is not yet that far advanced, the struggle within them is not yet that intense, and we on our side have not yet given it sufficient emphasis. The reason for this is that the beginnings of revolution in these countries are more political than economic in character. We see today that the economic question has perhaps moved somewhat more to the foreground, and that the economic basis of the struggle is more clearly defined. As a result, the decay and destruction of the trade unions is proceeding apace. In Britain and in Germany we see that, although the trade-union bureaucrats were guilty of at least as many sins during the War as the political parties in prerevolutionary times, the trade unions did not decay at a comparable pace, because demands were not made on them in a forceful manner. However, comrades, by this I do not mean to say and to maintain that the political organisations have now fulfilled their task. That is not how this should be interpreted. Rather, what we are seeing everywhere, as I have said, is that the economic question has now risen to a

higher level and pressed its way to the fore. The trade unions from the prerevolutionary period cannot resolve this task of the revolution, and that is why they must be destroyed.

Comrades, on the trade-union question we stand in sharp opposition to the majority of comrades present and represented here. The fact that we have come to this conclusion and hold to it more firmly every day is not because it is our own idea, an idea with no foundation. Rather, it is because we have recognised, through the revolution's course in Germany and other countries, including now in Britain, that we must now create bodies capable of taking over production. We take this stand in the interests of the revolution and its development, and we must cling firmly to this position in order to avoid obstructing the revolution in these countries. We recognise the way things are developing with regard to the economic situation in each country; we draw the appropriate conclusions; we will act on that basis. Only if we see and understand the situation clearly and draw appropriate conclusions will we be able to perform genuine services to the revolution and create genuine preparatory bodies that will serve, on the day of revolutionary victory, as the bulwark on which the dictatorship of the proletariat can be constructed. There is no other way to do it. It cannot be done by leaving the old counterrevolutionary organisations in place and trying to undermine them from within. Rather, we must create new bodies to tear down capitalism and simultaneously build communism. Only then will the victory of the revolution be secure.

July 5th: Discussion of the Russian Communist Party

Sachs (Schwab, KAPD): Comrades, since no other delegation has asked for the floor, it is my duty to be the first to step into the breach, carry out my delegation's instructions, and assume the thankless task of initiating this discussion.

Comrade Lenin's remarks were of great interest to us because they showed how the Russian Communist Party intends to overcome the difficulties that have arisen from both Russia's backward economic development on the one hand and the halting advance of world revolution on the other. Comrade Lenin spoke decisively at the crucial moment. He said that so long as we, the comrades in the industrially developed countries, are still preparing and laying the groundwork for the revolution,

we in Russia will still have to pay tribute. The idea is obvious, and Comrade Lenin expressed it very clearly: under present conditions, to win time is to win everything.

But I must say that we still have some concerns about this situation.

Shout: We do too!

Sachs: I certainly believe that. I also believe it is proper that these concerns, which are shared not only by Western European comrades but by those of Russia, be expressed openly. In my view, these concerns, which we cannot set aside, are that the Russian party's economic policies both within Russia and in its relations to the capitalist states, must surely have repercussions, not only in strengthening Russia economically at the outset of the Soviet state's economic development, but also, as is inevitable, repercussions that are disquieting and dangerous. As Marxists, we must concede that within Russia, a political party, whichever it may be, and however tightly knit and disciplined it may be, can never remain unaffected by the economic foundation upon which it rests.

The party's activity and political life cannot escape the influences flowing from changes in the economic foundations – for a certain time it can, but not in the long run. So our first concern is that even the strictest unity, the strictest discipline, and the clearest and most ruthless use of force on the part of the Russian Communist Party provides no automatic guarantee that this party will remain unchanged as the economic foundation changes. This affects foreign relations. We already took this up in the debate on the theses of Comrade Trotsky, at least in the commission. In Comrade Trotsky's theses, there is a sentence that says that the resumption of economic relations between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries will not result in any significant changes in the near term. I disagreed with this sentence in the commission, but I was defeated by the majority.

These theses have been adopted by the congress, but the same question comes up again in this discussion, and since it arises, I feel justified in once more formally posing the issue. I am convinced that the resumption of international capitalist economic relations is possible, firstly, in the form of treaties whose principal goal is the recognition of the Soviet government. Their economic character serves only as a kind of excuse. In this case, there is no gain in economic development. Alternatively – and this is more likely – these treaties may actually serve as the foundation for

building concrete, real economic relations, either through concessions, or possibly through a large import trade based on credits.

If the economic provisions of these treaties are observed and thus contribute to Soviet Russia's economic development, it is unavoidable that they will simultaneously contribute to strengthening capitalism in the relevant capitalist countries. The Russian comrades see these repercussions and heed the danger they pose. We must ask, however, insofar as our politics as the Communist International come into question, how this situation affects us as Communist parties and as the Communist International. It must be said that Russia is now compelled by circumstances to advance along this path. For it must be conceded without hesitation that this compulsion exists. The Communist parties of the industrialised countries and the Communist International as a whole must therefore work all the harder to nullify the strengthening effect this policy will have for capitalism.

However, we have the impression here that the policy of the Communist International, as it has been carried out recently, and as it appears to have been determined by this congress in its decisions to this point, has been inadequate to recognise this danger. It can be readily foreseen – indeed, not merely foreseen but already perceived – that from time to time a certain conflict of interest necessarily arises between the interests of revolutionary workers in the Western countries and those of the Soviet government. Nobody is to be personally criticised for this. These are objective facts. Such a conflict of interest was evident when the British miners' strike actually seriously disrupted implementation of the Russo-British trade agreement, as Krasin stated in an interview in *Die Rote Fahne*.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, had the miners been expressly told, 'You may not strike because Russia needs the coal and the machines', that would not have helped the revolution in Western Europe. The course that has been attempted seems to me to be a middle path – a middle path that is disastrous for both sides. For I will tell you frankly, the support given to the British miners' strike was absolutely inadequate. True, it was not said that you may not strike because of Russian interests. But even if this has not yet happened, we foresee a great danger that the opportunists will gladly, very gladly seize this opportunity and tell the workers, at the onset of economic struggles, 'Yes, certainly, we are on your side with all our hearts, but think about Russia, don't strike because Soviet Russia is dependent

¹¹⁹ L.B. Krasin, a high official in Soviet economic management, was in Berlin 16 January 1921. [– J.R.]

on your deliveries.’ Comrade Radek thinks that’s a good joke. If that’s his view, then he is, I’m sorry to say, insufficiently familiar with our circumstances.

Comrades, our task is to create a safeguard against that. It is the task of the Communist parties and naturally also of this congress. Now this congress, in fact, truly gets its intellectual shape from the Russian comrades, who provide its essential leadership. This is the fault not of the Russian comrades but of the other parties whose conduct and whose inadequate criticism did not contribute to shaping this congress and the Communist International differently, in order to create a counterweight.

What I have to say in this regard amounts to this: a warning to the Communist parties of the industrialised countries as a whole. The current path is very heavily influenced – indeed, in our view, too heavily influenced – by Russian government policies. These parties must create a counterweight, not through speeches, but rather through practical and real actions and the openness of the criticism that they should express here.

[...]

Hempel (Appel, KAPD): Comrades, first I must make a remark to Comrade Radek, who is apparently not here –

Shout: He is present.

Hempel: My remark is this: Comrade Radek should spare us the jokes identifying us with the Mensheviks. When such jokes are repeated so often, it becomes absurd.

Comrade Radek then asked us a question, calling on us to say whether the Russian policies are right for Russia and the International. Our answer is simply this: it is the Russian comrades themselves who should decide whether the internal policy of the Russian Communist Party is correct. We were always of the opinion that the course of action pursued by the Russian comrades in their own country has been correct. Now we hear in Comrade Kollontai’s speech today that more emphasis should be placed on heightening initiative in the working class, so as not to be obliged to give so many concessions to the capitalists. If Comrade Kollontai has really portrayed conditions accurately, we must say that this represents an error in Russian policy. We say this because we have a different conception of party dictatorship of the proletariat for Germany and Western Europe. Certainly our opinion was that the dictatorship in

Russia was correct for Russian conditions, because the forces of the proletariat were insufficiently developed, and the dictatorship must therefore be exerted more from above. But now we see that efforts are being made inside the Russian proletariat to help out and share in responsibility for this development. Such strivings from below to above must be supported and taken into account. This is a power that sustains the proletarian dictatorship better than foreign capital. If we utilise this power as fully as possible, we will not have to make as many concessions to the capitalists.

Secondly, we need to investigate how Russian policy affects the International. Here we must say, however, that it is not yet clear at this moment whether this policy is completely wrong. However, we see that the preparations being made are wrong, and that needs to be examined.

The question is whether the comrades in Russia are supermen, people who can rise above circumstances, or will their actions be shaped by their surroundings? That is something we will have to observe. We are not influenced by a desire to voice criticisms, but we see the error and also that it is growing and will continue to grow. Comrade Trotsky said it clearly, and he is right; we are all in agreement: we must win time. Everything depends on whether the vanguard survives, on getting through what Comrade Lenin calls this state of unstable equilibrium, on the arrival of help from the world revolution or a revolution in some country.

Will this vanguard, this state power be able to survive the unstable equilibrium? That is the question. Trotsky responded to one aspect of it by saying that we will perish if we do not follow this simple path of making concessions to the petty bourgeoisie, that is, to small-scale capitalism, to foreign capital, to state capitalism. That is necessary. Who would oppose doing something when there is simply no other option? But can one do this and simultaneously remain a Communist? Are we that tough? Well, I want to direct our attention to the heart of the matter, namely, whether the Communist Party will be able to survive this activity, whether it lasts one year or many years? Will the Communist Party remain what it is today? Will it not then develop a stronger interest, for this or that reason, in not expanding the revolution abroad? That means renewed misery.

If the revolution breaks out abroad, in Germany, and it lasts for a year or even longer, we will not be able to help Russia. We must consider that the entire population, and the Russian party along with it, has become accustomed to reconstruction, to a rest

period, to a certain stability. This is so obvious! If things fall once again into disorder, if trade relations break off, if poverty returns, the population will rage against the government. That is the question. And this is evidence that the broad masses have a revolutionary need for a pause, a pause after the revolution. That has already become evident. This will have an impact on the Communist Party, and it must take this into account. I must ask if it is strong enough to do so.

There is something else I want to raise. As we know, in every country – we are now experiencing it again in Germany – if the economy is ruined, if capitalism is engaged in reconstruction, this generates an enormous amount of corruption. We see the black market, which is also here. We have heard about many things that penetrate into the Communist Party, and against such things even people as able as Lenin and Trotsky are powerless. That is the greatest danger, and we should keep it in view. That is why we say it is in the interests of the Russian Revolution, the world revolution, and communism that this unstable equilibrium does not last too long.

We will come, to be sure. We will unite in this process. We will find ways to speed things up. The Russian comrades lack an understanding of the prevailing situation in Western Europe. The Russian comrades think in terms of a population like that of Russia. The Russians endured long years of tsarist rule, and they are solid and firm, while our proletariat has experienced parliamentarism and become fully contaminated. Something different must be done. The task is to bar the road to opportunism.

Shout: Scheidemann's theory!

Hempel: Nonsense. It is not Scheidemann's theory. Since when does Scheidemann want to bar the road to opportunism? The task is to bar the road to opportunism for the fighting proletariat and the Communist parties, which must lead the way. And in our country opportunism is making use of parliament, making use of bourgeois economic institutions. And also the attempt to transform cooperatives into instruments of struggle that could possibly provide help to Russia, not in a revolutionary fashion but by using capitalist methods, to the degree that the proletariat has access to them.

Well, comrades, what does it mean to influence the international proletariat? If you persuade your consumer cooperatives to engage in trade relations with Russia, does that help Russia? Not in the slightest. The cooperatives must deal in terms of capital,

just like any other entrepreneur. They will be even more expensive. That diverts us from the correct path. That is the key issue here. The Third International has to ensure that Russia is not supported from abroad by capitalist methods, but rather by the proletariat, using revolutionary methods. That's what is at issue. And this cannot be done by adopting the policy followed by the Third International. We demand a tougher policy. That's the catch. (Laughter) Comrades may well laugh. Even Comrade Lenin is laughing; well, we can't help that. This is our conviction.

Shout: Comrade Bukharin will explain why we are laughing.

Hempel: Anyone can laugh. I must point out once more something common to Germany and to every country in the world with many long years of experience with democracy, which is not revolutionary at all. The working class and along with it the big Communist mass party, which harbours many opportunist elements, are very prone to take the path of not using tough methods but utilising parliament and trade unions and other such methods to help Russia. That is not support at all, but rather an evasion of any form of struggle.

Now Trotsky says that we must get out of this unstable equilibrium as quickly as possible. That brings me to my next point: There are great dangers if every effort is not made to give the foreign capitalists as little scope as possible here to extend their influence. We have to be extremely alert, and proletarians must watch closely, in order to keep control. Otherwise, I believe, we will live to see Soviet Russia become something quite different from what Comrade Trotsky projects. It will become a territory where – while the international proletariat is groaning – international capitalism rises up once again – not to the degree that it can regain complete health but sufficiently to stumble along for a lengthy period. The policies of the Third International must aim at rendering impossible this period of time, this course of capitalist development. This can be done through sabotage in the factories, sabotage in production, which by no means signifies destroying the means of production but aims rather at making the business unprofitable for the capitalists. That is the task of proletarians around the world, in order to drive the revolution forward as quickly as possible. For revolution will surely arise from the plight of the working population.

Thus, comrades, our message to the Third International is that the Russian party should be more aware of the dangers and should state them openly; this will reduce the dangers. In addition, the Russian party should also be aware that it is the

foundation of the Third International, and that the other parties are not in a position to match it either intellectually or materially. That is evident in the fact that no opinions critical of the Russian comrades can be expressed here. The Russian comrades should also take note and recognise that if they are not to be forced more and more – let us say it – to steer Russian state policy to the right, and given that they are not supermen, they need to have a counterweight in the Third International, one that has broken with all compromising policies, with parliamentarism, and with the old trade unions.

July 9th: The statement of the KAPD delegation during discussion of Tactics and Strategy, Germany, Cooperatives

Sachs (Schwab, KAPD): The Communist Workers' Party submits the following statement on the Theses on Tactics and Strategy for the record:

Statement of the KAPD

The Theses on Tactics and Strategy submitted for a vote by the Third Congress represent a consistent, direct continuation of the fundamental line initiated by the Second Congress and carried out since then by the Executive Committee. It provides traitorous opportunist and reformist intellectuals of every country with unlimited scope for their interpretive genius, particularly with regard to the Theses on the World Economic Situation. This is a licence for ambiguity, which contradicts the concept of revolution. Every clear demarcation from the Hilferdings is obliterated; every inner connection with the essence of the modern class struggle is abandoned.

The so-called Left at this congress, impelled by the revolutionary workers who support it, made feeble attempts to correct the Theses on Tactics and Strategy. These efforts were rightly rejected by the majority for their inconsistency, and we did not at all support them. Although they displayed good intentions with regard to increasing revolutionary activity, they lacked any insight into the concrete conditions of struggle. They did not challenge either the bourgeois parliamentary framework of the Twenty-One Points or the corresponding overall drive of the theses. They thus became an obstacle to all further clarification

Victory of the proletarian revolution in the capitalist countries can be prepared only in the struggles themselves. These struggles arise inevitably out of capitalist economic and political attacks. The Communist Party cannot command these struggles, and it must also not evade them, for that would sabotage preparation for victory. The Communist Party can achieve leadership of these struggles over time by counterposing to the masses' illusions the full clarity of its goal and its methods of struggle. This is the only way it can, through a dialectical process, become a nucleus bringing together the revolutionary militants who will, as the struggle proceeds, win the confidence of the masses.

In line with this statement, we completely oppose the adoption of these Theses on Tactics and Strategy, and propose instead our "Theses on the Role of the Party in the Proletarian Revolution".

Signed,

Delegation of the KAPD

KAPD report on the 3rd congress of the Communist International¹²⁰

Comrades!

The KAPD delegation arrived in Moscow before the Congress in order to become acquainted with all the problems relating to Russia and the international workers movement as a whole; to get an accurate idea of the current situation by means of an exchange of viewpoints with the other delegations as they were arriving, so as to rectify the attacks and distortions to which the KAPD has been subjected, and to clearly set forth our point of view to the other delegates during the course of individual discussions. All of these tasks have been impossible within the confines of the Third International; it was necessary to make the most of the occasion. In fact, even after we arrived in Moscow, the daily newspaper of the Congress and various Russian government journals continued to attack the KAPD and distort its positions. We arrived in Russia in mid-May with the following missions:

1. attacking the decisions of the Second Congress of the Third International;
2. establishing, to the greatest possible extent, an opposition within the Third International.

The delegation did not succumb to the illusion that it was possible to radically modify the official positions and Theses of the Second Congress; it had to emphatically insist upon battling against them, nonetheless.

We devoted our greatest efforts to the second task mentioned above (establishing an opposition). In the course of our discussions with the delegations from Bulgaria, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, England, Glasgow, the Bulgarian Group and the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), it became clear that we share some points in common with all these groups. The “Bulgarian Lefts” are closest to our positions. Their understanding of the Mexican situation is exactly the same as ours. The

¹²⁰ Reprinted in issue No. 7 of *Invariance*, pp. 81-93.

Bulgarian organizations are not actual “unions,” but coordinating bodies composed of syndicalists, anarchists and shop stewards. The relation between these organizations and the party is more or less such as we have tried to achieve: it is the party which directs the movement.

After the Bulgarian comrades, it was the Spanish comrades whose positions were closest to ours. They understood us perfectly. There is just one problem: the concept of the need for a political organization has yet to be generally accepted in Spain; but it is gaining ground. The comrades find themselves beyond trade unionism, on the road to communism. Their organization has 1,100,000 members: approximately 50% of all the organized workers in Spain.

The comrades from Luxembourg are convinced advocates of workplace organizations which are closely linked to the party. There is a “good” workers movement in Luxembourg, and its delegates assured us that they wanted to stay in close contact with us.

The Glasgow Group agrees with us on the theoretical level, but their organization is not very cohesive. The Belgian representatives, during the course of our first discussions with them, proved to be in complete agreement with our principles and tactics; they stated, however, that our methods of struggle were not yet applicable in their country.

The IWW was vehemently opposed to the positions of the Third International. It has a rather syndicalist character, but its delegates have admitted that a political organization is necessary for leading class struggles; they intend to study our experiences and draw the appropriate lessons. They asked us for political material. We also held interviews with comrade Roland-Holst, of the Dutch minority faction; and with some members of the Austrian delegation, with whom we were able to establish some points of agreement.

After these separate discussions with each delegation, we held an open forum. It was then that we came to clearly understand that the idea of forming an opposition within the Third International was an illusion, even though the delegates, considered separately, were in theoretical accord with our views. As it became clear to them that our discussions were meant to lead to the representation of a point of view in emphatic opposition to the Third International, they became frightened and balked. We then tried to create a framework for opposition on the basis of three themes:

parliamentarism, trade unions and ultra-centralism. This did not succeed either. Finally, we attempted to obtain a homogeneous position on the part of all the opposition groups on just one of these themes. The most promising one in this respect was the question of parliamentarism. But this attempt failed as well. Everyone was afraid of being excluded from the Third International. It was then that, more clearly than ever, we realized how right we were to break with the Spartacus League. Within the Third International, if the Theses of the Second Congress are accepted, it is impossible to express an opinion other than that of the Russian Communist Party.

All of which leads us to just one conclusion: we, the KAPD, stand alone. We must therefore abandon our mission to found an opposition. But we should not conclude that the KAPD's representation at the Congress was unjustified, or that we should have behaved like Rühle did at the Second Congress. We simply understand that we can only rely upon ourselves, and that our task has become much more difficult, but also much more necessary. It was necessary to force the Third International to clearly reveal its opportunism, to show by means of its exclusion of the KAPD, the impossibility of an independent revolutionary organization remaining within the Third International.

Since we had foreseen that we would only be allowed to speak for the minimum allotted time period, we used other means to make the delegates aware of the principles and methods of action of the KAPD. To this end, we composed outline presentations of all the important problems, theses and principle guidelines of the KAPD (see Volume No. 7 of *Proletarier*, the theoretical journal of the KAPD) as well as a report on the Communist Workers Party (the KAPD). These works were translated into English and French and were printed in large numbers and were distributed to many delegates.

Prior to the opening of the Congress, the Executive Committee held many meetings, in which all the members of our delegation participated. The line which the Congress would adopt could be seen at these meetings. Before we left Germany we had conceived a dual hypothesis concerning the Congress: either the Third International would inaugurate a new, more activist policy, or it would plunge deeper into the old orientation. As it turned out, even the hope for a reactivation of the Third International – a hope which could have been kept alive by the recognition of the March Action-seemed to be illusory.

After overcoming incredible difficulties, we managed to obtain an interview with Lenin prior to the opening day of the Congress. During the course of this interview, Lenin declared that Levi was basically totally correct in his position against the March Action; and that he had only violated party discipline and thus committed an act which could not go unpunished.

This constituted an important sign for us, since Lenin's authority is unquestioned within the Russian Communist Party.

This state of affairs was further illustrated by the attitude of the Russian representatives on the Executive Committee. The comrades of the French Youth group and certain elements of the French party, for example, criticized the party's leadership: it had remained inactive at the moment of class mobilization in 1919. The delegates from Luxembourg also formulated serious accusations against the French party. When the workers of Luxembourg occupied the factories in March and the French Army intervened, the leadership of the French party remained mere spectators and did nothing. When these complaints were brought up for debate, Trotsky took Loriot's side against the French Youth and Luxembourg delegates; he even reproached the latter for harboring nationalist motivations. Lenin also openly favored Loriot. Previously, Bela Kun, Radek and Zinoviev had mildly criticized Loriot. But from the moment that Trotsky and Lenin expressed their views, they shut their mouths. This sort of immobilizing opportunism also made its appearance in relation to the issue of the Czechoslovakian party, led by Šmeral, who is a complete rightist. The fact that the social-democratic rightists dominated this party and that they were allowed to enter the International was not mentioned at all. ... A mild resolution was presented, however, in which some observations were made concerning Šmeral and the rightists. (Immediately afterwards, during the Congress proceedings, the resolution was vacated of all meaning, even omitting the part which was directed against Šmeral: the Czechoslovakian delegation had demanded that it be revised in this manner and Lenin himself intervened on their behalf). These examples should suffice. The Executive Committee also determined the structure of the Congress proceedings. The political bureau of the Executive Committee made the proposals and, naturally, no one ventured to formulate the slightest revision of its proposals. This was how the various committees were constituted. We sent representatives to the following committees: the committee for preparing the report of the Executive Committee, the committee on the world economic situation, the committee on tactics, the committee on the trade union question, the committee on organization, and the

committee on the tactics of the RCP. We presented our theses to all these committees. But we could not present them before the whole Congress assembly. The Congress only heard the theses submitted by the Executive Committee itself.

We proposed to the Executive Committee that we should be permitted to present supplementary summaries on certain issues. We were told that we had to do this in the committees. But the committees, once formed, never actually functioned (except for the committee on the economic situation).

The first session of the Executive Committee took place in the Bolshoi Theater. It was an entire day of opening ceremonies; Zinoviev opened the Congress by delivering a speech summarizing the history of the Third International. The various delegates presented reports on the situations in their respective countries. The session ended with a performance by Russia's most eminent artists. Chaliapin (the Russian Caruso) aroused the most enthusiastic response. As the concluding act, the whole Congress was taught to sing a popular Russian folk song. To summarize: the day began with Zinoviev, and closed with Chaliapin. Despite all of these diversions it was not merely a day of ceremony, as, in the midst of all the confusion the rules of order were established and the Presidium of the Congress was elected.

On the second day, Trotsky presented a three-and-one-quarter-hour report on the world economic situation. Among the particular points, whether outstanding or not, of his speech, its central point eventually clearly emerged: the proletariat must come to terms with the fact that the revolution would be long-delayed and that, consequently, it must adopt a tactic of long-term preparation due to the fact that capitalism had recovered its strength and overcome its difficulties. As proof of the superficiality of Trotsky's analysis (which underestimates the new international alliance of world capital), we quote the following passage of his speech, in which he prophesies, with the precision of a railroad timetable, the outbreak of the Anglo-American War:

In 1924, the tonnage of the American fleet, according to its own program, will be significantly greater than that of the English and Japanese fleets combined. England's guiding principle has until now consisted in assuring that its fleet is more powerful than that of the next two largest fleets together. Many Americans in the Democratic Party are bragging: in 1923, or maybe even by the end of 1922, we will be as strong as England. In any case,

England's memento mori is written on the agenda: if you let this happen, you are lost."

Before the war, we had an armed peace. People said: there are two trains heading towards each other on the same rails, they will crash into each other. But it was not observed that, between their respective positions, there was a station. The time was not indicated on the timetable. On this occasion, we have it on paper or on world history's calendar. This should take place in 1923 or 1924. Either England will say: I will be pushed aside and become a second-rank power; or, to the contrary, England must employ all the forces inherited from its great past in the game of war and stake its whole destiny on this card for a limited period of time.

Our report on the same topic was not accepted. Since speaking time was limited to ten minutes per person, we applied the following tactic: we split up our report and had several comrades share the task of reading our report; thus, two comrades from the KAPD spoke (the speeches of comrades Sachs and Seeman are published in *Kampfruf*,¹²¹ issues Nos. 14 and 15).

Our delegation had already presented a critique of Trotsky's theses on the world economic situation during the committee's proceedings (this critique is published in No. 218 of this journal). They were subjected to many criticisms, but Trotsky continued to assert that his theses must be adopted in principle. They could not be subjected to corrections, except in matters of style or wording. Even though Fr"lich, of the VKPD, expressed his opposition, the theses were immediately adopted in principle, in accordance with Trotsky's proposal. At the moment this question came up for a vote, a rupture emerged in the VKPD delegation.

Meanwhile, the credentials committee presented its report. Radek's explanation of the problem involving the admission of the Bulgarian "leftists" is quite characteristic of this committee's work: "The group of the alleged Bulgarian 'leftists' cannot mention any activity of their own, and we have considered it to be totally inappropriate to reward people who have carried out a project of disorganization by giving them a consultative voice in the Congress." The admission of the Bulgarian "leftists" was rejected; it was the Communist Party of Bulgaria, of a purely social

¹²¹ Official journal of the AAUD

democratic character, which would constitute the official section of the Third International.

Afterwards, the report of the Executive Committee was presented. Zinoviev reported on the Executive Committee's activities over the last few years, defending the Executive Committee's point of view on strict compliance with the 21 Conditions, making special reference to the Italian party, the "March Action" and the KAPD. Later, the Executive Committee's position throughout the year received its critique in the practical form of the offer that the Italian Socialist Party would be readmitted to the Third International upon the condition that it should sacrifice Serrati. Just as the Executive Committee's harsh attacks against Levi and his cohorts were skillfully replaced by the accusation of having "violated discipline." It treated them gently and even soon thereafter came to fully approve of Levi's opportunism. After this report, he read the now-famous Memorial to the German Proletariat, concerning the Max Hölz affair. This Memorial describes Max Hölz as a valiant rebel against capitalist society, whose actions, while corresponding to his love for the proletariat and his hatred for the bourgeoisie, are not appropriate. The CI opposes his use of terror. The KAPD protested against this Memorial; it showed that this Memorial turns its back on the acts of Max Hölz and that in the KAPD's eyes it was nothing but an insult. Radek bridled at this "disruption," saying, among other things, that the KAPD had even gone so far as to fight in defense of the tomb of the fallen.

Then the debates on the Executive Committee's report began. It was the KAPD's delegation which fired the first shot. The KAPD, responding to Zinoviev who had attacked the party in his report, found it amusing that it should be included in the same bag with Dittmann and his ilk, and made the following declaration to conclude its interventions:

"We protest, with the greatest firmness, against the attempts to put us into the same bag with the Dittmanns and the Serratis, by the use of a few quotations taken out of context. We do not forget, for even one moment, the difficulties encountered by soviet power due to the ebb of the world revolutionary wave, but we are at the same time aware of the danger that all of these difficulties may lead to a contradiction between the interests of the world revolutionary proletariat and the momentary interests of soviet Russia—a real or an apparent contradiction."

“At a session of this committee, it was declared that the Third International must not be considered as an instrument of soviet power, but that the latter was merely the strongest bastion of the Third International. We also think that is how it should be. But we think that when contradictions arise between the vital interests of soviet power and those of the Third International, it is our duty to openly and fraternally examine these contradictions within the Third International.”

“As far as practical solidarity with soviet Russia is concerned, we have always done our duty, and this is obvious. For example, we have celebrated the October Revolution with demonstrations, we have generously participated in efforts to provide aid to imprisoned Red Army soldiers, and we prepared the solidarity actions of August 1920; the latter failed due to the lack of involvement on the part of the USPD and the Communist Party. Demonstrating our solidarity with soviet Russia was one of the decisive motivations for our party when it decided, despite our very serious reservations concerning its tactics, to join the Third International.”

“We shall continue to pursue such policies, but we shall, everywhere and at all times, oppose with the most steadfast resistance any instance where the policies of soviet Russia lead the Third International into reformist practice. We are convinced that such reformism is in contradiction of the true interests of soviet Russia itself, as well as those of the world proletariat.”

The well-known attack on the KAPD took place on the second day of the debate on the Executive Committee’s report. Number 214 of our journal provides the complete text.

In response to the vote on the ultimatum¹²² directed at the KAPD, we nonetheless presented the following motion:

- 1) The 21 Conditions of the Second Congress are now even less capable than they were previously of providing any kind of security against reformist putrefaction in the future.

¹²² The decree of the Executive Committee demanding the fusion of the KAPD into the VKPD.

- 2) After the creation and admission of the large mass parties, the Third International needs, now more than ever, the presence of a purely proletarian revolutionary opposition.
- 3) Such an opposition cannot be effective unless it is not overwhelmed by the apparatus and the number of votes of a party that wants (as a matter of principle), at whatever cost, to unify the masses behind it and thus can only be and must be reformist.
- 4) The Unified Communist Party (VKPD), in particular, remains to this very day, in relation to its tactical principles, within the camp of Paul Levi. Its own left wing is usually the prisoner of a fatal self-deception.
- 5) In conclusion, currents related to the KAPD are now forming in every party in the Comintern. But they cannot continue to grow in the interest of the proletarian revolution and the International, unless the KAPD can continue to subsist as an independent party within the CI.

For all of the above reasons, we propose that the KAPD should remain in the CI as a sympathizing organization.

Radek delivered the speech summarizing the question of tactics. We proposed a supplementary summary, but our entire delegation was granted only one hour to speak. We presented our point of view (rejection of trade union and parliamentary methods) and called for the application of the methods of struggle of the Communist Workers Party and the General Workers Union.

At one moment during the debate, the VKPD defended the offensive launched during the "March Action." Soon, however, the following typical incident took place: after Clara Zetkin had spoken and after everyone had their turn speaking, after Lenin and Trotsky said she was right and condemned Levi merely for a breach of discipline, the "leftist" whims of the VKPD's delegation evaporated. Radek reproached the Rote Fahne for having too suddenly and precipitously begun the "March Action." The VKPD's Friedland admitted that this was true.

The theses on this question were sent back to the committee for re-elaboration. Before the conclusion of the Congress a vote was taken on the appropriate tactical orientation for the International. Confronted with this vote, we prepared the following declaration:

“The theses presented for the vote of the Third Congress are the consistent and even intensified continuation of the basic line adopted by the Second Congress and of the policies which have been pursued until now by the EC. The theses grant an unlimited field of activity to the traitorous intelligentsia of the opportunists and reformists of every country for their work of mystification, especially when they are considered in the context of the world economic situation. Any clear dividing line separating them from the Hilferdings is erased; all organic relations to the reality of the modern class struggle are abandoned.”

“The supposed left wing of the Congress [VKPD – M.S.], pushed forward by the revolutionary workers who support it, began to make feeble attempts to correct these tactical theses. Their efforts were rebuffed in conformance with the wishes of the right wing, by the majority. Nor did we lend them any support. They did, of course, testify to their good faith desire to augment revolutionary activity, but they did not reckon with the concrete conditions of the struggle; they did not attack the bourgeois-parliamentary basis of the 21 Conditions, nor did they attack the general tendency implied by that basis; for this reason, their efforts were transformed into an obstacle to any further clarification.”

“The preparation for the victory of the proletarian revolution in the capitalist countries can only be carried out within the struggles themselves. These struggles are necessarily born from the fact of capital’s economic and political attacks. The communist party can neither unleash such struggles by itself, nor can it refuse to enter the fray, without sabotaging the preparations for victory. During the course of those struggles which do erupt, it cannot gain their leadership unless it opposes to all the illusions of the masses the complete clarity of the final goal and the methods of struggle. This is how it can become, by means of a dialectical process, the nucleus for the crystallization of the revolutionary fighters who, during the course of the struggle, gain the confidence of the masses.”

“With this declaration, we set ourselves in opposition in every possible way to the adoption of the theses on tactics, and we refer to the theses we have presented on the role of the party in the proletarian revolution.”

Lenin presented the report on the tactics of the Russian Communist Party. He unveiled the Russian government's new line on the policy of concessions, free trade, etc., and he defended it. Russia's new policies are well-known and have been subjected to criticism on various occasions. A comrade from the KAPD made a statement against Lenin's speech.

Then Radek gave his speech. After him, comrade Kollontai, of the Russian Workers Opposition, spoke. Her intervention was an event of the highest importance, which would have the most far-reaching consequences. Until then, no one had dared to publicly intervene in opposition to the current policies of the Bolsheviks and the soviet government. The comrade declared that she was obliged to put revolutionary discipline above party discipline. She directed her attack particularly against the Bolshevik policy "which is preparing the return to capitalism" and then she attacked the attitude of the soviet government "which rejects those workers who are ready to construct the soviet system."

Trotsky immediately took the floor and attempted, by means of very long explanations, to subject comrade Kollontai to ridicule. He could not, however, refute her arguments. The KAPD delegation then addressed this issue. We placed particular emphasis on the fact that, although we had never meddled in the domestic affairs of the Russian Party, now that we had become aware of comrade Kollontai's arguments, we were obliged to adopt an even more critical position in respect to the soviet government.

At that moment, comrade Roland-Holst, from the Dutch minority faction, felt obliged to defend the RCP against our attacks, declaring that the RCP was of the left and always had been.

On the trade union question, Zinoviev and Heckert from the VKPD presented their report amidst the total indifference of the Congress assembly. Once again, our entire delegation was condemned to only one hour to present our views. At that moment, the Congress feigned an attack of deafness. Our theses on the trade union question were referred to the committee, where they were rejected as possible bases for discussion, with the allegation that "the Congress had, in its every position, rejected the conceptions of the KAPD." We proposed, prior to the vote on the theses submitted by the central bureau of the EC, that we should once again explain our theses in a brief concluding intervention. This request was denied.

The Youth question: Mnzenberg's report. Women's rights. The Eastern question: none of these presentations aroused the least interest in the Congress.

After having vainly attempted, despite all the attacks and distortions to which we were subjected, despite all the maneuvers to reduce us to silence, to prevent the Third International from being utterly submerged in opportunism, we drew up a balance sheet of the Congress. Faced with the ultimatum of the Congress demanding that the KAPD yield to the discipline of the International, we responded as follows:

“The KAPD delegation has submitted the results of the Congress to a new examination, both as regards the decision which it must announce in response to the motion of the Congress which demands, in the form of an ultimatum, the dissolution of the KAPD into the VKPD, as well as in respect to our relations with the Third International. Fully acknowledging the gravity of the responsibilities it assumes, the delegation unanimously draws the following conclusions:

The tactical struggle against the KAPD throughout the Congress was from the beginning carried out like a fight against an adversary whose arguments must not be taken into consideration, insofar as its basis, and its very existence as a political factor, must be annihilated on the pretext of discipline.

This is confirmed by the following facts:

1. For several weeks, the Congress participants have been given a completely false image of the KAPD, through articles which misrepresent our party in the Russian press, in *The Communist International*¹²³ and in the Congress newspaper. Meanwhile, our in-depth reports and our rectifications have not been printed.
2. The way the Congress was structured constantly obliged us to fragment the expression of our positions. That this tactic had been pre-arranged becomes especially clear due to the fact that we were not even granted the opportunity to prepare a report or even a supplementary report on an issue which directly concerns us, the issue of the KAPD. We were thus obliged to refuse to speak at all so as to not become accomplices in a farce.

¹²³ Leading newspaper and official organ of the CI.

3. The basis for the ultimatum directed against us was an alleged EC resolution brought to the attention of the Congress participants despite the fact that the EC never addressed the matter in any of its sessions, and despite the fact that none of its sessions ever heard, and therefore had all the less opportunity to have arrived at, any decision on this problem.

4. This question, which had for a whole week remained one of the last points on the Congress's agenda, as an issue which was to be treated separately, was never even separately discussed with us in preparation for the EC report. (Point Number Two of the day's agenda). It was arranged by "decree." In this manner, the result which was expected in advance was achieved: the Congress's judgment was settled in advance, before it could have dared to become aware of our positions during the course of a debate on questions of principle.

This formal procedure is strictly connected to the political orientation along which the Third International has been evolving, under the determinant influence of the Russian comrades. The outcome of the Congress has proven this: the political line of Paul Levi has been victorious in the Congress; the formal recognition of the March Action has been revealed as the freedom of revolution."

The Czechoslovakian party was admitted as a section with full rights, without any real guarantees at all and on the basis of empty promises. Out of fear, its opportunist leader Šmeral was treated with great tact. As for the Italian Socialist Party, which has just signed a pact with the fascists, it was treated with the utmost indulgence amidst a welter of concern for details. The principle of participating in bourgeois parliaments was preserved, despite the sorrowful experiences of Germany, Austria, France, etc., and even though the caricatures of the supposed revolutionary parliamentarism were seen in action. Reaffirming the disastrous policy of working in the old trade unions has led those who have followed it, despite all their phraseology, towards Amsterdam; the capitalist ploy of economic parliamentarism was also preserved. The Congress has even supported, without a single word of demurral, the ridiculous idea of revolutionizing the consumer cooperatives.

All of this is testimony to continued adherence to the path laid out by the Second Congress, and to the same detour: from revolution to reformism; from the sphere of struggle to the tactics of diplomacy, to intrigues and the illusory whitewashing of contradictions. All of these examples justify the protest (against the adoption of the theses on tactics) which we have published in the summary reports.

These are the facts which must be taken into account (in considering the resolution demanding our dissolution into the VKPD) in order to conclude that the ultimatum is totally unacceptable to the KAPD. Such a reunification would mean our subordination to the discipline of a party in decomposition, in which reformism has snuck in the back door under the influence of the Congress. We would be muzzled by an organizational apparatus (press-finance-cliques-leaders) which is set up against us. Any faint hope of having a salutary influence within such a party lacks the least basis in reality. The delegation has dispensed with all such hopes on its own accord, even without a special order from the party:

The delegation unanimously rejects the ultimatum to join the VKPD.

We do not declare the KAPD's break with the Third International, although we do have the power to act in the name of our party. Our comrades will address this matter. They will provide their response to the attempt to force them to join with others on the road of reformism and opportunism. The international proletariat will await their response.

Our decision was made in the full awareness of its very serious nature. We are fully aware of our responsibility to the German workers, to soviet Russia, and to the world revolution. The revolution will not allow itself to be shackled by a Congress resolution. The revolution lives. It will continue on its path. We go with it; at its service, we follow our road.

Signed,

The KAPD Delegation"

We decided to read this declaration at the end of the Congress, in order to make our opinion completely known to all the delegates. But this was not authorized by the Presidium; we were merely allowed to include our declaration in the published summary reports.

We understood why the Presidium did this:

The entire Congress was overcome by a condition of blind enthusiasm. The applause was endless, the cameras were flashing, and the movie cameras whirred. At that moment, our delegation constituted an accusation; it was a warning, like the warning given of old to Babylon.

But the directors of the Bolshoi Theater would not get away so easily. During the course of the meeting of the Executive Committee which took place on the following day and which was attended by the representatives of every country, our declaration was nevertheless read by our delegation and convincingly and loudly proclaimed to more than one representative of the revolutionary proletariat that a hangover would necessarily follow the binge of resolutions adopted amidst all the hoopla and indecent publicity stunts.

We must also mention that our delegation was only admitted to the final session of the Executive Committee for the sole purpose of reading our declaration and that we had to immediately evacuate the premises afterwards. It was in our absence that the Executive Committee debated the question of the KAPD and approved a resolution which was later communicated to our delegation. This resolution stated:

“Despite the declaration of the KAPD which amounts to a declaration of war on the Communist International, the recently-elected Executive Committee has decided:

‘1. To immediately publish a detailed open letter to the members of the KAPD and to demand that the KAPD arrive at a decision within the next two months.

‘2. To send a delegation to the next congress of the KAPD.

‘3. The delegation of the KAPD is, pursuant to the terms of the resolution of the Congress, authorized to provisionally participate in the Executive in a consultative role, but without a vote.’”

The members of the KAPD are capable of providing the response which this declaration of the Executive Committee deserves. We know how it was arrived at, we know the text. The balance sheet of the Congress is this: the Levi tendency, in general, has won. The "March Action" has been renounced. The "theory of the revolutionary offensive" has been registered among the infantile disorders. The KAPD has been excluded from the Third International.

Comrades! We have done all we could. We acted as the members of the party had demanded. Without any compromise, and without any concessions to the tapestry of illusions known as the Third International, we have followed our own road at the Third World Congress.

The KAPD faces gigantic tasks. In its thought, its decisions and its action, it will have to make its way rapidly and decisively so that the world proletarian revolution will be victorious!

Report of the Session of the Central Committee of the KAPD (July 31, 1921)

On the third point of the agenda: the policy of the Russian State and the Third International.

From one era to another, history follows a logical course and not even Russia can avoid it. The economic relations in Russia can only thwart the Russian comrades in their ongoing attempt to skip the capitalist phase. The feudalism of the Russian agricultural economy must, first of all, be overcome, insofar as this agricultural economy, due to its immensity and the lack of developed industry and markets, stamps the economic and political character of the country with its basic features. Class contradictions exist between the Russian peasants, who aspire to a private capitalist economy, and the Russian proletariat, which is fighting for a communal proletarian economy. The Russian government has become the representative of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry through the alteration of its policies in favor of the economic interests of the peasants. Such policies are always the consequences of economic development. The soviet government thus finds itself, for some time now, in contradiction with part of the Russian proletariat. Today, discord has reached an extraordinary level: the formation of the workers opposition in Russia and the violent

struggles against the soviet government are characteristic proofs of this. The KAPD's position on the soviet government must be modified in accordance with these facts: in the future, the KAPD can no longer unconditionally support the decisions of the soviet government, since its decisions are directed in part against the revolutionary proletariat in Russia: the workers opposition. Support for the soviet government can only be justified to the degree that the latter fights against the common enemy of the Russian proletariat, the peasants, and the petit-bourgeoisie: the feudal nobility. Furthermore, the KAPD must definitively separate itself from the Third International, because the latter has become an element of Russian State policy and must consequently adapt to the transformation underway in the character of the Russian government. After the Third Congress, the Third International has openly shown itself to be an enemy of the proletarian world revolution, insofar as it has excluded the KAPD. But we cannot remain outside a proletarian communist international; the KAPD must, starting now, begin to lay the foundations of new, truly revolutionary communist workers international.

After debate, during the course of which some representatives expressed the idea that the soviet government-despite the radical reversal of its economic policy-might still be the representative of the Russian revolutionary proletariat, the Central Committee put forward its conceptions in the following declaration, which was adopted against the negative votes of Hanover and East Saxony, with Berlin abstaining:

1. The Central Committee believes that the course of events at the Third World Congress has brought about, in principle, a rupture within the Moscow International.

The Central Committee, taking into account the need for international class struggle, intends to construct a communist workers international for the accomplishment of the most urgent tasks of the world proletarian revolution.

The Central Committee believes, furthermore, that the fundamentals, the tactics and the organizational form of this communist workers international must be adapted to the conditions of the proletarian revolution.

2. The Central Committee declares that our policy towards the soviet government must at all times be dictated by that government's positions. If the soviet government were to act as a factor in the struggle of the proletarian revolution, then the KAPD must support it with active solidarity. Should that

government abandon our camp and assume the role of police chief for the bourgeois revolution, then the KAPD must fight it in a resolute manner.