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[Karl Radek's impressions and evaluation of the Baku Congress of Eastern Peoples, September, 1920]

✓ Pravda, No. 208, September 19, 1920, p. 1.

When we went to Baku none of us knew what the real significance of that Congress would be. We did not know to what extent we would be successful in attracting to the Congress the real broad masses of the Eastern toilers and hence would be able to serve as a conduit of revolutionary ideas to the Near East. We can say now without exaggeration that the Congress exceeded all our expectations.

Millions of toilers of the East were represented by two thousand peasants and workers at the Congress

No less surprising was the level of class consciousness of the delegates. We Europeans who sympathize with the toiling masses of the East have been accustomed too much to the negligent attitude toward them of European literature. We have become accustomed to look upon them as savages. Conversations with the representatives of the Eastern toilers proved to us that in spite of all the difficulties, all basic information about the European situation and about the struggle of the capitalist states against Soviet Russia has had a wide circulation among these masses; they know very well who is their foe and who their friend. The victories of Soviet Russia over their enemies have everywhere strengthened the confidence of the popular masses with respect to struggle and victory; and the task of the Congress was merely to formulate whatever the delegates' knowledge, expectations, and convictions had in common

The first two reports at the Congress - Comrade Zinoviev's report and

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my own - were devoted to the world situation. These reports pointed out to the Eastern masses the chief enemy - British imperialism. They drew for them the picture of the strength and impotence of this enemy, its aggressive aims and its decay. These reports, which were translated into five Eastern languages and discussed by the individual delegations, evoked tremendous enthusiasm at the plenary session of the Congress. Not a single participant of the Congress will forget the moment when Comrade Zinoviev called for a Holy War against world imperialism, and first and foremost against British imperialism, and when two thousand delegates rose to their feet as one man, drew their revolvers, daggers, and sabres and, carried away by enthusiasm, vowed to struggle to the last drop of blood against their enslavers

We did not play a "game" with the representatives of the toiling masses of the East; we did not promise them an easy victory. On the contrary, we pointed out to them that the struggle is going to be very protracted; that they will have to make grave sacrifices in this struggle; ~~XXX~~ that it is not enough merely to welcome the Red Army We told them openly that these sacrifices demanded by the struggle against imperialism will be depicted by the agents of international capital as proof of Soviet imperialism: The Entente agents are already shouting that Soviet Russia does not so much strive to liberate the East as she strives to rob it of cotton, rice, and oil

At the same time, we pointed out to them that the struggle must be conducted on two fronts [against] British imperialism [and against] the large feudal landholders and the clergy

The picture of Turkish agrarian relations differs fundamentally from the picture which the representatives of Persia drew for us. Therefore, the Congress was unable to lay down an exact program for each country individually. The Congress had to be satisfied for the time being with a general resolution, by which the energy of the Eastern peasants is directed toward the combatting of the feudal elements in the realms of land distribution and taxation. It stands to reason that the European Communist movement cannot count on a Communist response in the East. In the East there is no proletariat - the standard bearer of the Communist revolution, the creator of a life based on Communist principles. But we would be committing a grave error were we to regard the revolution in the East as a bourgeois revolution. It destroys feudalism, creates for the time being a class of small landholders. Yet it takes place in world surroundings in which the disintegration of capitalism will make difficult the establishment and development of a bourgeois regime in the East. If the European proletariat in the course of the next twenty years is able to abolish capitalism in Europe, then the workers' states in Europe, by giving the toiling masses of the East the means of production in exchange for raw materials and grain, will help them to make the transition from a petty bourgeois organization of their life to higher cooperative forms, thus making it possible for them to by-pass the period of capitalist exploitation....

The Congress of the Eastern peoples was, undoubtedly, a congress of the Eastern vanguard. But this vanguard did not consist of people who study Europe in West-European coffee shops. It consisted of people

who are rooted in the Orient. During the sessions, many a delegate would spread his rug on the ground and perform his Mohammedan prayers. Even among the members of the Presidium, we saw representatives who did not part with their rosaries.

The Congress of the advanced elements of the East reflected the strong ferment among the masses. It began the work of formulating the ideology of this ferment. What the delegates to this Congress heard and saw made a tremendous impression upon them. What they learned, they will carry with them to their countries.

The Council of Propaganda and Action which we established at Baku will have as its task the continuation of this work by means of hundreds of pamphlets, journals, and appeals. It will not merely formulate ideas, but will simultaneously establish organizational contacts among the revolutionaries of the East. The Communist International should not spare its efforts in this work, for it is tremendously significant. Not only must the International accelerate our destructive work which is directed against world capitalism, but at the same time it must formulate premises for the solution of the question which seems to be insolvable for all reformists: "If we liberate the European colonies, how will Europe receive the raw materials without which it cannot maintain the acquired standard of living, let alone rise to the highest living standard?" This is what we were asked by representatives of reformism, who try to prove to the workers that the exploitation of the East through a system of colonial policies is inevitable.

The aid of the insurgent proletariat of Europe will give the toiling masses of the East in their struggle against capitalist colonial policy

the means by which to create strong ties between the Communist proletariat and these peoples - ties of confidence and of mutual interests upon which mutual economic relations between the Communist world and the liberated East will be established.

In the light of these problems it is obvious that a correct Soviet policy in Central Asia, Turkey, Bokhara, Khiva, and in the Caucasus may play a tremendous role. If in spite of our need and our deprecation, we fail to find a way by which we may prove in practice to the Moslem masses attached to us that this is not a continuation of the policy of exploitation pursued by the Tsarist Tashkentists, then our propaganda will be but an empty sound. It will be paralyzed by our own action. One of the tasks of our Party Conference consists, therefore, in drawing conclusions from the experience of our activity in Central Asia, in liquidating the errors we have made there, in pointing out a steady, correct course, and in guaranteeing its completion. In this respect, the representatives of Soviet Russia gained much experience at the Congress of the Eastern Peoples. We had an opportunity to speak intimately with the delegates of the East, to find out how our policy resounds in their ears, and what changes it requires. We came back firmly resolved not to allow the stupidity of our honest comrades and the colonization tendencies of our hangers-on to spoil the sublime task of awakening the Eastern peoples, - a task which was begun by Soviet Russia, and which the European proletariat will carry to fruition.