

NARRATOR

In the congressional hall of Folkets Hus at Youngstorget, roughly 300 members of the Labour Party are finding their seats amongst long tables arranged in banquet style. There is a certain exquisiteness to the room that can't be ignored. On each side of the podium there are large palm trees, and the national flag is draped to the wall behind the main speaker. Bouquets of flowers decorate the tables, where every member has a neat folder in front of them with the agenda. Towering above them are giant chandeliers. One get's the feeling that the party certainly hadn't spared any expenses.

Martha Tynæs, Hanna Adolfsen and Rachel Grepp step into the room, filled almost exclusively with men.

HANNA ADOLFSEN

(Whispers) To think that we were over one-hundred women here at our own congress in January, and look at us here, *(spiteful, also with an air of cynicism)* at the big boys table where "real" decisions are made ... How many are we, Martha? *Thirteen women?* That makes about..... one percent in representation.

MARTHA TYNÆS

Keep your brooding to yourself, Adolfsen.

HANNA ADOLFSEN

You realize that you speak on behalf of that one percent, Mrs. Tynæs? When you talk about the needs of your bourgeois housewives ...

(Tynæs takes a deep breath, and sighs with a burst of contempt towards Adolfsen.)

NARRATOR

There is a heightened sense of expectation and distress in the room. A change is in order, a new radical stance must be taken, as was executed in the revolution by their fellow comrades in Russia in the month of October the year before. They need to be organized. And they need to be ready.

There is serious chatter amongst the tables.

FED-UP MEMBER

(Resentful.) The treatment our workers are getting from the sitting government is despicable ... let's see how that bastard Gunnar Knudsen would react if he got the rations most people in my neighborhood at Kampen have gotten ... some people not even that!

SNOTTY MEMBER

(Firm and strict.) Martin Tranmæl cannot and will not be the leader of our party ... I assure you, he will most certainly be the demise.

WORRIED MEMBER

(A bit shocked, worried.) Have you heard what happened to comrade Höglund at the border? Apparently he has been detained.

(Music suddenly starts to play, and all members sing "Gyr i Norden" at the melody of La Marseillaise.)

Gyr i Norden lengslenes sommer,
høres drønnet fra taktfaste skritt,
det er arbeiderhæren som kommer,
de som lenge har kjempet og lidt.
Fra de vaiende arbeiderfaner
lyser ropene: "Samhold gjør sterk!"
Den store sak, vårt fremtidsverk,
krever mot som til handling oss maner.

Kom broder, kom i dag!
Kom søster, slutter lag.

Vær med! Vær med og frihetens hær
skal finne seiren nær.

(The sudden sound of a hammer beating against the table.)

NARRATOR

On the podium stands Adam Egede-Nissen, master of ceremonies at the congress. He was called "the red postmaster" in his hometown of Stavanger. He had a fond interest in art, music and theatre, to quite an unusual extent for a communist. Earlier that year he had visited Russia and Petrograd, where he met Alexandra Kollontai and Vladimir Lenin. With a certain austerity he is seeking to influence the party through his first hand accounts with bolshevism. There is certainly an air of sophistication about the man.

ADAM EGEDE-NISSEN

(Reading from resolution.) The congress speaks with utmost indignation to the Norwegian government's scandalous methods of denying comrade Höglund entry to the country. The sitting

government has not only disregarded the law, but has also made a mockery out of the Norwegian working class.

We have been in contact with justice minister Otto Blehr, who said nothing more than that it would be looked into. He further inquired what "crimes" Höglund had been accused of in Sweden, and I refreshed his memory by stating that he was sentenced in 1905 for encouraging the Swedish people with all their might to oppose a war with Norway, as the bourgeoisie wanted to take the country back by force after the independence. *(A pause.)* He didn't inquire any further.

(Some chuckle in the audience.)

Nevertheless, Madame Balabanoff is here as a representative for the Bolshevik party. She will speak about her continued work for peace throughout this war within the Zimmerwald movement. Balabanoff is one of the foremost agitators for the Italian workers, and a member of Partito Socialista Italiano. Many there have left the party during the war for the national syndicalist cause, joining Mussolini's Fascist Revolutionary Party.

(More sincere.) Dear comrades, a movement that is fundamentally against everything we stand for is on the rise and spreading, and I think this is just the beginning. Balabanoff has been standing on the frontline fighting for international peace amidst this militant nationalistic tendency. We have all much to learn from each other. Let us give her a warm welcome!

(A warm applause.)

MADAME BALABANOFF

(Speaking with a Italian accent, confident.) I want to thank you on behalf of the Zimmerwald commission for inviting us, as I understand it has been quite a struggle. Zimmerwald is proof that despite the war there are workers who internationally stand united on the socialist ideals.

Many countries have come together in Zimmerwald and declared that the war being led is not their war – not to create a divide, but to unite all socialists who believe *(more pronounced.)* that we must fight against all war. The so-called "peace" the bourgeois governments are stating, is simply a mask to increase their sphere of exploitation. A "capitalist peace" would only mean heavy war debts on the working masses.

It is with great unease we see how the ruling classes have categorically condemned the proposed manifesto from our last conference. With it we want to encourage the working class to use the necessary methods, mass protest and general strike, to bring the war to an end. The

russian workers do not want to be chased out on the warfield to die for the bourgeoisie, but they are willing to suffer and die for socialism's execution.

We thank you for the sympathy you have shown, and that you understand that the russian revolution cannot be victorious alone, only with the whole world's proletariat. Norway's part in this mission is of great importance.

Now the bell tolls for the resurrection of Christ – let us hope that the day is near, when all bells will toll, all lips will sing and all hearts will cheer, that socialism has arised in humanity.

(A great applause.)

NARRATOR

The members of the congress were to vote for or against participation in Zimmerwald. Voting functioned in the way that a majority proposal, the elected leadership's view and strategy, was first presented. Members could object by presenting a so-called minority proposal, and all members would vote in favour of the majority's or the minority's view on the issue. In the case of Zimmerwald there was no minority proposal, and endorsement was approved almost unanimous with the majority.

(Hammer beating against the table.)

OLE O. LIAN

(With a certain doomsday tone.) Now, to address the most urgent matter.

NARRATOR

Ole O. Lian is speaking, a well rounded and eloquent man that represents the reformist side of the party. Although he himself has a clear understanding of where his allegiance lies, he is seen as a bridge between the two sides. There is no doubt that his rhetoric sways the stance of his listeners. Lian is intimidated by the radical aura in the room, which he is certainly not a part of. Is he perhaps even viewed as a bit of a bourgeois?



(A caricature of inspiration for the characters in the coming discussion. Martin Tranmæl holding the carriage with the conservative side of the Labour Party. Veslefrikk is from a norwegian fairytale. It is about a poor worker (interpreted as Tranmæl in this case) who fights with the means he has to survive yet still reaches out to the poor beggar that has it worse than himself. For this goodwill he is granted three wishes by a sorcerer. First he asks for a fiddle that has the ability to force everything that has life to dance to it's sound (Tranmæls belief in the revolution). Then he asks for a rifle that works like it hits everything it aims at (the working class will against the ruling class). Last he asks that no one can deny him his first wish (kinda: "¡No pasarán!".)

OLE O. LIAN

(Kind of snakey tone.) In these times where there has been such a high cost-of-living one says that there must be 'a swift and radical intervention on the states side', so that every aspect of these goods ... all key commodities are seized or registered. And further, that our society through its organs can gain complete control over the turnover and distribution.

(To the point tone.) There has been five demands we all can agree on:

The **first** concerning the conditions of our nutrition. We need sudden rationing of food, and an effective distribution of milk, so that these goods are not withheld from the least able buyers of the public. Our fish, which we have more than enough of, can't just be sent off to Spain! And we must regulate the maximum prices. The **second** demand regards the production of food – as our men are sent out on weapon training instead of farming our land, they leave our poor women and children to take care of that work.

FED-UP MEMBER

(In the background.) You'll never farm a single potato in your life ...

OLE O. LIAN

(Continuing pretending to be unaffected.) The **third** is about the question of unemployment, which we all agree should more or less be eliminated by the state. The **fourth** – lowering prices for residence and the catastrophic sums for building. State and municipality must control the building materials. The **fifth** and final demand is that the state must provide proper funding for these demands.

That we now pursue these steps in an organized manner is the most reasonable strategy for reaching socialism.

FED-UP MEMBER

Enough of this bureaucratic reasoning! Nothing will happen unless we take action!

(Grunts in agreement in the room.)

OLE O. LIAN

(Sort of agreeable and trying to ease.) Which is exactly what brings me to my next point.

Although we agree about our demands, we do not agree on our approach – on our tactics so to speak. The quarrel within our party has become so tearing that it threatens the unity of our movement. As one side wants to execute direct action ...

FED-UP MEMBER

(Sort of in the background.) Damn right!

OLE O. LIAN

... the other is of the opinion that general strike, mass protest or revolution will only hurt the working class' own cause.

It is not the working class' freedom and the community's victory one wants; but the working class superiority with an oppression of everyone who thinks differently.

FED-UP MEMBER

(Sort of in the background.) Give me a break!

OLE O. LIAN

How are we going to destroy this galling self-righteous right-wing regime in the elections this fall if we can't even reach a majority in parliament. At most we can reach 45 representatives in Stortinget, and even with that we won't have a majority.

While some want to go to parliament, others do not. So to parliament or not to parliament ... what do we do?

MARTIN TRANMÆL

(Rhetorically.) What must be done?

NARRATOR

As a man stands up the whole room shifts with great expectation. Martin Tranmæl is the main voice of the radical currents within the party, and is historically often referred to as the norwegian workers movement's greatest legend, a public speaker graced by God (the socialist one). The captivating agitator was like dynamite for the workers in Norway; he could speak on demand for thousands, a reckless giant with sparkling blue eyes and stray hair. When he opened his mouth it was like the gates of hell opened, and out of it exploded a rain of lava that threatened to burn down the entire capitalist system.

Now he has a firm and calm tone to his fellow members.

MARTIN TRANMÆL

(Sincere.) Dear comrades, I think Lian must be referring to the "loony-bin" over at Løvebakken, where our current political representatives are steering the faith of this country only for the rich.

FED-UP MEMBER

Hear, hear!

MARTIN TRANMÆL

This is not about parliament or not. It is about the recognition or not of the non-parliamentary means with which we must stand ready to use. (*Brutish.*) The workers movement is more than voting every third year, and it is by the workers themselves that action shall come. They shall take it in their own hands and lead the way. We see that it works. In Trondheim 2000 housewives demonstrated, and quite readily the council for provisioning was more benevolent. Their demands came through and put food on the table. There is promise in this. It gives hope and strengthens the will to fight. These new forces that are arising should therefore be given room and not put in a straightjacket.

Lian and the reformists make parliamentarism identical with democracy, and they claim that mass protest leads to dictatorship. But I say: What is a system of government that can't even provide food and a roof over your head! It is a system that must be changed!

(Banging on the tables and roaring.)

OLE O. LIAN

(Cuts in.) What do you suggest then? Perhaps some "dynamite in the boreholes"? As you all well know, Tranmæl is a spokesman even for union sabotage, as he encouraged striking workers to leave dynamite if scabs showed up to take their duties. Tactics such as these are extremely counterproductive for the labour movement.

MARTIN TRANMÆL

How can we let the structural violence we have seen continue? The prosecution of our fellow comrades just for expressing their opinions ... (*strongly.*) without letting action speak louder than words. Our Workers' Councils are ... working. Decision power rises from bottom to top from the agendas of the workers themselves. Now we must recognize the importance of the Soldier Councils. Our goal is to demilitarize. But while the ruling class stands armed, the worker's stand unarmed. We all know that Gunnar Knudsen and his gentlemen won't hesitate a second in deploying the military against the workers and our revolutionary cause, and that is why we must take back the control of the army through the Soldier Councils, and then *demilitarize!*

OLE O. LIAN

Creating these Soldier Councils represent an unnecessary threat to the status quo, and they will create further confusion in how we organize towards our end goal. Demilitarization must come from a parliamentary level.

(Grunts and mumblings of disagreement in the room.)

FAIRY MEMBER

(Kind of dreamy tone.) When I hear the reformists ... the so-called "majority" speak here at the meeting today ... It reminds me of the Rat-catcher of Hamelin, who played his flute. Trying to attract our might with his charismatic words to keep things tidy and orderly while secretly leading us to our demise.

OLE O. LIAN

(Shocked.) Demise? *(Firm and explanatory.)* I agree that us deemed as conservatives within this party can at times waltz around like a tame bear with a ring in its nose. And by God – now it seems that this radical force can just drag us after itself.

(Almost deadly.) But I assure you, we will wake up from our slumber, we will be ferocious ... and we will eat all this radicalism and the illusionary fruits you think it may bear.

(Directed to the fairy.) We will awaken just like the troll in the fairy-tale, which has smelled the blood of a Christian.

FAIRY MEMBER

I think you got the wrong tale, Lian. Did you ever understand our dear Veslefrikk with the fiddle?

SNOTTY MEMBER

What on earth does Veslefrikk have to do with us reaching parliament? This is just another of you RAT-icals scheming shenanigans!

FAIRY MEMBER

(Continuing unaffected.) Even though he was poor, he chose to help the man poorer than himself. And for that he was granted three wishes. Even though he could wish for anything, he first asked if he could have a fiddle that made everyone dance when they heard it's sound. When Veslefrikk had his second wish granted, it was for a rifle that hit everything it aimed at, no matter the distance, much like the proletariats aim to strike down the ruling class.

Veslefrikks last wish was that no one could deny him his first wish, and therefore comrades ... it's time to start dancing!

(Starts playing the fiddle, to the tune of "Fanitullen")

WORRIED MEMBER

(Terrified.) Stop! Dancing is contagious. *(Music ends.)* Maybe it will end up like the plague of 1518, where so many went into a trancelike craze and danced all the way to their tombs.

FAIRY MEMBER

Ha! ... when the authorities in the end arrested our dear Veslefrikk and planned to hang him for his misdeeds and use of magic ...

SNOTTY MEMBER

(In despair in the background.) Veslefrikk was a lunatic. Always so cheerful ... that smile ... it was only to *his fiddle* ...

FED-UP MEMBER

Just like Tranmæl! Who spoke at our rally at Stortinget earlier this month. Now he has a jail sentence on him for 60 days just for speaking his mind – *what all of us are thinking!* – in front of the "looney-bin" parliament. Agitation they call it, well ... so let us give them exactly that!

(Cheering and the fiddle starts again.)

NARRATOR

A woman suddenly springs up from her seat.

MADAME JOHNSON

(Eager.) I say let us instead listen to the minority and Tranmæl, who – when I come to think of it – reminds me of Veslefrikk with his fiddle.

NARRATOR

Martha Tynæs stands up in disapproval of this last comment made by Anna Johnson.

MARTHA TYNÆS

I beg your pardon?

NARRATOR

Johnsson, who has seen first hand how the poor working ladies of the city have not had their demands voiced, is now ready to express them. She will not be seated and silenced, and Tynæs' politeness for congress etiquette makes her stand down and let Johnsson proceed.

MADAME JOHNSSON

(Passionately.) When I vote for the minority's proposal which Tranmæl suggests ... it is with the assurance that I have most of Oslo's working women behind me. These women are affected greatly by the difficulties of these times and they feel it on a day-to-day basis – they demand that something must be done. When the conference dealing with these issues was cancelled last year, the leadership lost contact with the workers and even more with the working women.

We are disappointed and have lost our faith in the leadership, who should have provided working homes with the support they need and have a right to under the state.

You "reformists" now try to frighten us with this talk of a revolution and what it will lead to; but if conditions aren't improved and the situation will increasingly get worse, it will be the working women who encourage the revolution instead of preventing it.

(Applause.)

MARTHA TYNÆS

(Clears her throat.) When madame Johnsson said that she has the majority of the women with her, I want to remind you all that Oslo's Women Association have not agreed to the minority proposal.

(Fiddle-music ends.)

(Kind of excusing on behalf of Johnsson.) What I do know is that Madame Johnsson has agitated, which she has the right to, but that she has the nerve to say that she is speaking on behalf of all women in the country, to even think that she has them all behind her, that I simply cannot understand. My impression from women is the opposite of Madame Johnssons.

(Strict tone.) So, to say a womanly word from us referred to as "the majority" in regards to this. It is the question of food that is of utmost importance at this moment. Will there be more food if we start a revolution? Oh no, I dare say there will not. *(Furious.)* It will increase poverty, increase the mess and chaos we see around us right now.

NARRATOR

Heated discussions arose around the tables before the voting of the party's tactics.

When the votes came in late in the evening, a great roar was heard all the way outside of Folkets Hus at Youngstorget. The minority had won with 159 votes against the majority's 126.

A new current was established within the party.

Quite unbelievably, Kyrre Grepp, Rachel's husband, a man who could barely speak and would die of tuberculosis four years later, was voted as the new chairman for The Labour Party. He was by many viewed as the only man capable of keeping this two-headed troll at ease.

Martin Tranmæl was chosen as the new secretary, although in practice he would lead the party up until the second world war.

Amidst the jolly celebratory atmosphere amongst the radicals in the room, Adam Egede-Nissen approaches the podium with an announcement.

ADAM EGEDE-NISSEN

We have gotten a message that the detainment of Höglund ordered by the justice department has been lifted. He should be arriving any moment.

(Great applause, and even more when Zeth Höglund suddenly arrives.)

Ah! And here he is! Welcome dear comrade! What a pleasure ...

Z. HÖGLUND

The pleasure is all mine.

ADAM EGEDE-NISSEN

To those who are unfamiliar to our Swedish comrade, Höglund has fought hard for anti-militarism and is a good friend of Lenin. I hope you can share some words with us regarding the revolutionary developments abroad. Please take the podium my dear Z.

Z. HÖGLUND

Dear comrades, I was invited here to share my views on the Norwegian Labour Party's duties to join Zimmerwald and the peace manifest for Europe's workers. The decision that was taken today, as I have understood, that your party has chosen the revolutionary socialist path, shows

great promise. We must oppose the imperial system and capitalist institutions, and the continued class struggle is the only possibility in order to restore peace.

(Applause).

You understand our duties in the final settlement with capitalism.

(Powerful applause. They all sing The Internationale at the end of the congress.)

Opp, alle jordens bundne trelle!

Opp I, som sulten knuget har!

Nå drønner det av rettens velde,

til siste kamp det gjøres klar.

Alt det gamle med jorda vi jevner:

Opp slaver, til frihet frem!

Vi intet var, men alt vi evner,

til rydning for vårt samfunnshjem.

Så samles vi på valen,

seiærn, vet vi, at vi får!

Og Innnternasjonaalen

skal få sin folkevår!

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