

The Plenum of the "New Turn"

by Will Herberg

(Continued from last issue)

3. Social-Democracy and "Social-Fascism."

The section of the resolution on Social-democracy is singularly empty of all, even agitational, significance. Literally, not one word is to be found here about the acute crisis in international Social-democracy and the emergence of a leftward movement within it. (Elsewhere in the resolution one line is devoted to this phenomenon.) The theory of "social-fascism" is here in full flower, although peculiarly enough the phrase is only sparingly used—again the diplomacy of the "new turn."

"The whole development of Social-democracy from the time of the war . . . is an uninterrupted process of evolution towards Fascism."

On this we only want to ask two questions:

a. Haven't we had it dinned into our ears time without number in the last two years that it was the "changed situation of the third period" that "transformed social-reformism into social fascism" (Bela Kun at the X Plenum)? Now we learn that "social-fascism" has been developing since the war.

b. If "social-fascism" has been "uninterruptedly" developing since the war (i.e., before even there was Fascism!) why then did nobody (including Lenin) notice this development for the first fifteen years after the war and why did it remain for Bela Kun and Manuilsky to "discover" this astonishing phenomenon in 1929?

4. Tactical Line and United Front

But if the "new turn" diplomacy permeates the analysis of the situation and the estimation of the working class movement, there is no vestige of diplomacy or evasive phrases in the formulation of the tactical line: here the ultra-left course, which has led to disaster after disaster, is advocated in all its sectarianism, without any attempt to gloss over or to evade!

On the united front. The resolution tells us that there must be the "concrete application of the united front from below in preparing for mass actions." What this means is told with the greatest precision in the Pravda editorial (April 24, 1931) on the XI Plenum, which is even more authoritative than the Plenum itself:

"THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE OR BLOCK WITH THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC WORKERS AGAINST FASCISM."

In other words, in the struggle against Fascism, and therefore certainly in any other political struggle, there can be no united front ("block") with the Social-democratic workers! This is the most categorical repudiation of the tactics of the united front ever made by the most "left" of "leftists" in the Comintern. It even rejects the so-called "united front from below"! Not even a phrase is left of the united front.

On trade union tactics: Four distinct lines we are told that the chief task of the Communist parties is the "consolidation of the independent revolutionary trade union movement", i.e., the continuation of the policy of splitting the mass unions and of the establishment of caricature "Red" dual unions and dual union centers. Of course, the usual complaints are made about the "neglect of work . . . in the reformist unions" but this "work" is conceived of as the work of destroying the mass unions from within and not as the work of winning the unions for the revolutionary class struggle. In such a sense, "work" in the reformist unions is an essential part of the anti-Leninist splitting tactics and is just as harmful to the working class and to Communism.

Not a single phrase is to be found in the XI Plenum resolution to lend substance to the fraudulent "new turn" propaganda we meet on all sides today.

In striking contrast to the sectarian mess of the XI Plenum resolution on this question is the section on trade union work in the International Opposition Platform. In these brief but highly significant paragraphs are laid down the Leninist fundamentals on the trade union question: the general aim of the winning of the trade unions (the elimination of reformist influence), the concrete application of this aim and the struggle for trade union unity under various forms corresponding to the specific conditions in the various countries, and the categorical rejection of all splitting, sectarian tactics.

On the immediate task of the C.P.'s: It is hard to believe but the XI Plenum resolution literally declares that the "principal task that now (that is, immediate task and not long-range strategical objective. W.H.) confronts all the Communist Parties is to win the majority of the working class . . ." Perhaps this may be valid for the German Party but can any sane man insist that immediate objective of the French or the Italian or the Czechoslovakian or the English or the American Party is to win the majority of the working class? Why, in actual fact, the immediate task of these Parties is to reestablish contact with the workers, to reestablish Communist influence in the workers organizations! Such a thoroly false, leftist estimate of the immediate tasks of the Parties can only lead to further and deeper isolation.

What About the C. P. U. S. A.?

A peculiar thing! The American Party is not mentioned once thruout the resolution. More than one party is praised for "achievements" (imaginary it is true) and some Parties are even slightly criticized. But not the American Party! It is treated as if it were nonexistent, in marked contrast to the praise lavished on it at the X Plenum. What can this sudden coldness mean? About this we will have much of interest to say very soon.

The Question of Unity

In the entire Plenum the question of the reunification of the Communist International was not once raised. Can any more damaging testimony of the political irresponsibility of the present "leaders" of the Communist International be conceived? At a time when the whole world movement and the Communist Parties of practically all countries are split in three different ways, when the whole labor movement is demoralized thru the fratricidal struggles within Communist ranks, when these deep divisions are not only undermining the revolutionary struggle against capitalism but also weakening the power of the working class to defend the Soviet Union—at such a time the official leaders of the world Communist movement find it possible to gather in plenary session without saying one word on the necessity for unity and the road to it! This alone is enough to brand the occasional "unity talk" with which the Party leaders "unofficially" accompany their "new turns" in this country for what it is—petty trickery, dishonest manouvers, criminal irresponsibility.

The desire for the reunification of the Communist International is the animating force of the International Communist Opposition as expressed at the International Conference (December 1930) and in the International Platform. This reunification can only take place on the basis of a return to Leninist tactical principles and to a Leninist inner-Party course—to the achievement of these objectives the International Communist Opposition is dedicated.

CAMP SOLIDARITY IN SUCCESSFUL OPENING

Over a hundred workers gathered around the camp fire to celebrate the opening of Camp Solidarity. L. Becker, the chairman of the evening, explained the purpose of the building of the camp. An appropriate program had been prepared for the occasion. Among the speakers were Chas. S. Zimmerman, representing the left wing in the needle trades; Comrade Broder, representing the Boro Park Workers Youth Club, and J. O. Bentall, addressing the gathering in the name of the Communist Party (Majority Group).

Sunday morning two busses arrived, one carrying a group of the Boro Park Workers Youth Club and the other containing workers coming out to spend the week-end. All in all about 150 were present. All present expressed full satisfaction with the arrangements and promised to come out again and bring their friends. All wishing to come out for week-end or excursion during the month of June should register in the city office of the Camp, 25 East 27 Street or call Bogardus 4-9399.