

# A Party Plenum of Cliques

## The Mechanics of the Coming Struggle within the Party

The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the first one to be held since the last "open address" of the Comintern, has only two accomplishments to its credit. The first is the adoption of a thesis on the present situation in the country and the tasks of the Party, which is a classic of confusionism, word-mongering, false evaluations and stark ignorance of many fundamentals of Marxism, and is at least twice as long as it should be. The second is the growing manifestations of collapse in the patched-together "leadership" imposed upon the "now unified" party by arbitrary Stalinist decree. There is very little to say about the thesis since its only future is its inevitable reversal or repudiation some six months from now. The second product of the Plenum, however, is of first-rate consequence, since it contains all the essentials of an inevitable factional struggle in the very near future, which will be even less principled and more destructive than those of the past.

The very nature of the present amalgam of leadership in the Party is a guarantee of its brief duration, since it was not established as a result of a struggle between principled viewpoints in which the correct view issued forth victoriously. It was thrown together hastily out of the rag-tag and bobtail of all factions, having nothing at all in common except their readiness to rubber-stamp enthusiastically any policy and decision of the dominant faction in the Russian Communist Party. If this were not enough to insure the speedy disintegration of this leadership, the lack is more than made up for by the ruinous inner-Party regime and the policies being carried out today in the general class struggle. It has ceased to be news that the Party is losing heavily in membership and in influence among the workers (the coming elections in New York City will only be another demonstration of the latter).

A year ago, upon the expulsion of the Opposition from the Party by the joint forces of Foster and Lovestone, we were quite safe in predicting that the great "unification" achieved in the Party against Trotskyism was the sheerest illusion and would fall to pieces at the first blow. The same prediction held true in the similarly great "unification" achieved by the Foster group and the remnants of the Lovestone-Pepper faction after the expulsion of the latter's leaders. The failure to reinstate the expelled Opposition which alone has fought for a Marxist policy in the class struggle, against sectarian opportunism, and for a democratic inner-Party regime, continues to leave the newly-concocted leadership floundering in ever seawier seas with fatal reefs just ahead.

It is important to analyze the contending factors inside the Party today and the mechanism of the impending factional struggle which will become "official" Party property in a relatively short time.

1. The Plenum officially transferred the leadership of the Party (the Political Committee) to the former Foster group by replacing the expelled Lovestoneites with William F. Dunne, C. A. Hathaway and that granite monument to brilliance Harrison George. But this is an achievement without a victory. The Foster group is an army without a general. The Fosterites who have thirsted for four years to replace the Lovestoneites in power, find that their Caesar refuses the crown not only thrice but every day in the week. Foster is being cajoled and urged by this faction colleagues to "assert his leadership" in the Party, but he steadfastly declines to take all the responsibility of that office. Foster is too shrewd for that. He knows that the Party is due for pretty stormy weather, for painfully regular decline, not the least reason for which is the pseudo-Left policy. He goes along with this policy, and is even to be found at the head of the parade some times, but his heart is not in it. Foster's every instinct and inclination has always been in the other direction, i. e., to the Right. Even when it appears most certain that Foster has closed all his doors, one may be just as sure that he has left himself an open window for a necessary future right-about face. He is biding his time for new Communist winds from Moscow, or winds of a different kind in the United States. . .

2. Nevertheless, the formal transference of Party power to the old Foster faction, gives another set of leaders the opportunity for a revival of their tenuous political life. That is the thin layer of former Lovestoneites still clustering furtively around Bedacht and Stachel. These two unfortunates sniffed the Moscow wind tardily. The solitary difference between them and Lovestone-Gitlow-Wolfe was that the latter refused to sign a document acknowledging that they were corrupt, petty-bourgeois, speculating, lying, Tammany Hall politicians, whereas Bedacht and Stachel readily agreed to say all that and more if necessary. But all this was done on the promise that the decision meant a victory for neither the Lovestone nor the Foster factions, and that the Party would not be turned over to the minority (Foster). But that is precisely what has happened, and it is far from being to the liking of Bedacht and his old cronies of the Lovestone group who "stayed loyal to the Comintern".

In these dog days, when a mild inquiry is denounced as a factional conspiracy, all that is left to these poor comrades is to look helplessly at each other, plan little intrigues and bemoan the glories of their past. And little intrigues there are a-plenty. At the Plenum, three of the former Lovestoneites, including Jakira and Benjamin (of Philadelphia) laid down a barrage

against the nomination of Dunne for the Political Committee, ostensibly for good Party reasons. It is no-one's secret that they were put up to this bit of stage play by Bedacht and Stachel who are vainly trying to stem the tide that swept the old minority into Party control.

This feeble struggle that has such potentialities for the future is manifest elsewhere. The triumvirate that is running the I. L. D., Engdahl, Jakira and Codkind, are pulling strings to keep George Maurer down in the field and out of the national office, where he was first placed as a Fosterite balance against the repentant (but not entirely trustworthy!) Lovestoneites. On the other hand, a spike has been put into Stachel by shifting John Williamson from the T. U. U. L. into the position of Stachel's assistant in the Party organization department, (where Williamson hopes to settle up a few old scores with Stachel from the old days of the Y. W. L.). Furthermore, now that Weinstone is to become American representative on the E. C. C. I the struggle for his position as New York district organizer has been opened up. Bedacht is working for that notorious incompetent Amter to become N. Y. District Organizer; the old Foster wheelhorses, who never forget a friend or forgive a foe, are planning to occupy that strategic post through Charlie Krumbain, who is not only a good proletarian but has a newly-framed diploma from the Lenin School. Stachel is being shipped to Detroit to plague the auto workers and mend his factional fences. And more may be expected.

3. Weinstone is waiting for the future. He has got out from under the slow wrecking of the once powerful New York organization by accepting the post of American representative across. That gives him the double advantage of not being in on the crash and of staging a well-timed comeback when a savior is required. He has gathered around him a meager ring of New York functionaries to form the nucleus for a coming faction (Weinstone's factions have always been a spectacle!) Weinstone reckons: Right now things are too unstable. I will go off to Moscow where my somewhat tarnished reputation can be refurbished. It is certain that Bedacht and Stachel are too discredited to offer any serious competition for leadership. It is equally certain that Foster, even if he should take over the leadership, will soon hit a blind alley, since he has no Bittelman and only a very dubious Browder; his own theoretical qualifications are below contempt. Then, when chaos and lassitude have set in in the Party, I will make my entry again. After all, why should not the mantle of leadership rest snugly on my broad shoulders and the scepter of power be wielded by my hand and brain? It is true there is that annoying matter of Judge Panken, and the cooperatives, and a few other trifles. But they will be forgotten. . .

This far more fantastic. It is merely Weinstone's method of thinking. He is not the only one who has Napoleonic dreams. There are many others who muse over this corrupting, unprincipled struggle for leadership, among them those from whom better could be expected.

4. There remain the Weisbords and the Browders. The former has already been put to the sword by Bedacht and Stachel, formally for certain heresies, and in actuality because he claims (by the way, with justice) that Bedacht and Stachel are just as guilty of every crime with which Lovestone is charged as Lovestone is himself. Weisbord has a deep ineradicable conviction, that if the American Party must have a leader, there are few if any so well fitted for that imposing task as he is.

As for Browder, he has the unique distinction of having been wrong on almost every single important disputed political question in Party history. This does not prevent him from having delusions of grandeur. He is no longer satisfied, as he was years ago, to play the role of Foster's secretary of state. He has managed to get himself placed on the secretariat, together with Minor and Bedacht. Right now, the secretariat plays only a lesser role, but it has possibilities. Didn't Stalin succeed in making the Russian Pol-bureau a tail of the secretariat at one time? Browder reckons like Weinstone: What little competition there is can be overcome with judicious activity. There is not even a Bittelman left to fear (by the way, where is Bittelman now?) In the meantime, I will not offend anyone and try to live at peace with all, for allies can come from the strangest quarters. And when the hour strikes. . .

That is the blueprint of the coming factional fight in the Party. There may, in fact there will undoubtedly, be some changes in the personalities, but in essence it is there. It may be objected: What will do the Comintern representative do? Where are the differences in principle? The former is not so much of a factor in this connection. He has only a formal standing with the present Party leaders, because they know him for what he has done in the last seven or eight years—a minor functionary in the apparatus of the C. I.

As for principles, that is another matter. The essence of the coming fight will be the absence of principles. No one dares to advance any differences of principles, for that involves a deviation to one side or another of the current line of the C. I. and the thought of the fatal consequences of such a bold step makes your average bureaucrat shudder. Not only must everyone shout in chorus for every comma in every

C. I. decision, but they must even refrain from "interpreting" these decisions, for that again will lead to deviating in one direction or another. The memory of Lovestone's ghastly fate is too fresh in the minds of all.

That is why the only thing left for this heterogeneous and absolutely incompatible collection of leaders is a struggle of cliques, devoid of principle and pregnant with further corruption of the movement. If there is any doubt of the clique character of the coming fight, read Frankfeld's letter reprinted in the first issue of Lovestone's paper. The principle "basis" for the purely clique struggle will be erected according to need. You will yet hear of Bedacht's and Stachel's role in the various Lovestone intrigues.

But the Party ranks, the membership? It is dwindling rapidly, but that is where the source of regeneration is to be found. For the moment it is in a barracks. The Communist Opposition must help it to break out of the stifling atmosphere and into the open struggle against corruption and opportunism.

### Nadir Khan, Liberator of Afghanistan, Will Convoke a National Assembly

He will Give the People Voting Right.—National Assembly Will Decide Form of Government.—Nadir Khan and Amanullah Renounce Kingship.—A Republic Possible?—Nadir Khan Renowned as Idealist and Liberator.

#### PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN DANCE IN THE STREETS WITH JOY AT THEIR LIBERATION

PESHWAR, India, Oct. 10.—The population of Kabul, the principal city of Arghanistan, is simply dancing with joy at their liberation from the tyrannical King Habibullah, or Bacha Sakao, who was set upon the throne of Afghanistan a few years ago with the aid of agents of England.

King Habibullah fled in an airplane, but all his officials who did not flee with him, have been arrested. Nadir Khan, commander of the revolutionary forces, is now being awaited in the city.

It is now expected that Nadir Khan will call together the leaders of all the tribes to a national assembly which will give voting rights to the entire people, so that they can themselves determine their government.

It appears that the former King Amanullah will not be called back to Afghanistan. Nadir Khan also declares that he does not want to become a King. Whether he has in mind proposing a republican form of government to the national assembly is as yet unknown.

Nadir Khan, the leader of the uprising against King Habibullah, is very much beloved by the entire people. His name is now borne on everyone's lips as the hero and liberator of the country.

In the days when Amanullah was King, Nadir Khan was his diplomatic representative in Paris. He is pictured by the Afghanistan Consulate in Paris as an interesting personality, courageous and ready to sacrifice himself, for his ideals.

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The reader may well rub his eyes in astonished disbelief that the stupidly reactionary nonsense printed above should appear in the columns of the Militant. We hasten to assure him that it is copied, word for word, from the first headline to the last sentence, from the front page of the Jewish *Morning Freiheit*, (October 11, 1929) official organ of the Communist Party of the U. S., which was recently spanked, de-chauvinized, de-nationalized, purged, re-organized and Bolshevized by the Central Committee of the Party.

"The Liberator of Afghanistan . . . Renowned as Idealist . . . population dancing with joy . . . commander of the revolutionary forces . . . rights to the entire people to determine their government . . . beloved by the entire people . . . and liberator!" Who is it? It is a Nadir Khan, the Lenin-Simon Bolivar-Debs-Chiang Kai-Shek-Kemal Pasha-Herbert Hoover of Afghanistan rolled into one, the darling of the *Freiheit*!

The *Freiheit* news-writer who wrote that story, and the Bolshevized editor who let it pass—to this day—without a word, have simply made a horrible mistake. They have wandered into the Communist movement purely by accident. They have a couple of splendid, good-paying jobs waiting for them on a Hearst newspaper or in the press department of the Chinese embassy at Washington.

### The Real Situation in Russia

"THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA" by L. D. Trotsky, containing the PLATFORM OF THE OPPOSITION and the FALSIFICATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, a book of 350 pages, can be purchased through the *Militant*, in either ENGLISH or JEWISH at \$2.00 per copy. No work is more important for an understanding of the situation in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in the Communist International and the causes of the crisis in the Communist movement internationally and in each country. Comrade Trotsky also presents in this work, first given to the XVth Party Congress of the Soviet Union, the solutions to the problems facing the Soviet Union and the Communist International. Make money orders payable to THE MILITANT.

#### A DEBATE IN WASHINGTON

All workers are invited to the debate at the Washington (D. C.) Open Forum, 808 Eye Street, N. W., between Edward J. Irvine, who will defend the viewpoint of the Russian Opposition and Maurice Holloed, who will represent the viewpoint of the Stalinist faction. The debate will take place on Sunday, November 24, 1929, at 3 p. m. Discussion will follow.