

In the Party

N. Y. District Plenum

If the Plenum of the C. E. C. demonstrated the utter bankruptcy of the present Party leadership and its line, the New York District Plenum can be said to have surpassed it in that respect. Needless to say, the session was held up for hours on Saturday (May 10) while the best thinkers in the Party were working out the most proper thesis. Then came the reports of Hathaway, for the Central Committee, and Benjamin for the district.

Hathaway's report gave neither analysis nor perspectives. "There is a disparity between the resolutions adopted and their execution by the Party members, as well as between these resolutions and our organizational strength. There must be a sharp turn (again!) in the Party orientation because so far all decisions are accepted in words but not in deeds (because the comrades have no real belief in your idiotic decisions!) Discipline is needed and there cannot be any neutrality on decisions, as for example in our Czecho-Slovakian organ which accepts all the criticisms made of it but refuses to publish critical articles." It never occurred to him to explain that the "disparities" result from the fact that his decisions have little if any relation to the realities of the situation.

"Our Negro department is bankrupt," he reported. Then why does he print all the lies in the Daily Worker about the successes with Negro work, and then tell only the assembled bureaucrats the truth behind closed doors? "There are no new cadres or forces in the Party. The T.U. U. L. is really going through a crisis and there also there are no cadres for leadership." Why then do you expel and remove all the capable comrades, just because they fight your weekly zig-zags of policy? Why do you crush all our initiative in the Party ranks, killing every possibility for the development of members and poisoning them with your misconceived theories? Why don't you really carry out workers democracy in the Party instead of just writing junky resolutions about it? When you do that and change the present Party course, maybe you will not have to admit so shamefacedly to a Plenum that "in the membership drive we got 1,400 applications (in the press you exaggerated again!) and only half remained. We got these applications at mass meetings and demonstrations but not from elements in the shops."

As for his analysis of the American situation, it was miserable. We sent him to school in Moscow to get a Marxist education and he came back to tell us that there is fascism of the state here because the government has become super-organized, because Hoover conferred with the business men, because financial capitalists are in the government, and power is being concentrated in the president and judiciary. Nor did we need his trip for him to report "the crisis in America is deepening" without adding a single word of explanation, elaboration, proof or analysis to those six words.

If anything, Benjamin only painted the coal blacker. The district has failed here and there and everywhere. "We are still lagging behind the masses." In Patterson, a spontaneous strike, but the Party is nowhere to be seen. (What has happened to us? But this form was never created, by the author, and was not selected by him voluntarily. It was imposed upon him partly by opponents, and partly by the very course of political development. Even the truths of mathematics, the most abstract of the sciences can best of all be learned in connection with the history of their discoveries. This holds all the more truly of more concrete, that is, historically conditioned truths of Marxist policy. The history of the origin and development of the prognoses of the revolution in the conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia will, we think bring the reader much nearer and far more concretely to the essence of the revolutionary tasks of the world proletariat than the school-like and pedantic exposition of political ideas, torn out of the circumstances that gave birth to

pened to the general silk strike you were boasting about?) Our women's department has collapsed; the Negro department is completely bankrupt; the building trades fraction is impotent and unorganized; our demonstrations were not utilized at all; the same forces that are always with us were there at the May Day conference, but no new ones (why didn't you adopt the Trotskyists' proposals for a broad united front?); the department work is uncoordinated; etc., etc., etc. The only "success" Benjamin mentioned was the "elimination of the language branches"; only Le forgot to say that the members were eliminated too.

Comrades, let us demand a real discussion, not of trifles and not bureaucratically but on the basis of the vital questions of principle, of strategy and tactics that our expelled Trotskyist comrades have raised. And let's fight to reinstate them! —ROGER

The Pittsburgh Expulsions

PITTSBURGH—

The latest news in the Communist Party is that John Kaspar has been expelled from the Party and M. Garfinkel suspended for six months. Unit No. 2 protested in favor of Garfinkel and Kaspar with the results that a squad of officials, headed by the acting district organizer, Salzman attended the meeting to pass the resolution against Kaspar. Salzman is the boy who walks around with a diploma from the International Stalin School and won his spurs as a leader by wrecking the Pittsburgh district of the I. L. D. The unit elected its own chairman but Dunne took the chair without asking the membership. The membership was terrorized so that they were even afraid to speak.

Salzman read my article from the last issue of the Militant to the membership in order to show that Kaspar is connected with the Opposition. After long speeches from Salzman, Dunne, Overgaard and the rest they approved the resolution by asking the members one by one to say Yes or No. Eight comrades didn't say either Yes or No and now they are also in danger of expulsion. These eight comrades are old members of the Party, real proletarians, very active in the Party's work, leaders of the unit and well acquainted with the bureaucrats of this district. All those that voted in favor of the resolutions spoke against it when the meeting was adjourned, which indicates how fearful they were to express their real opinions openly.

All honest comrades must see, and that soon, that such a leadership only wrecks the movement. It must be got rid of. The comrades know what a failure the May Day demonstration was, for which Salzman and the rest of his crew are to blame. At the park demonstration, there were about 400 people and only about 200 paraded in the street. At the evening mass meeting where there were only 50 or so Salzman spoke, and without blushing, told the workers who had participated in that day's demonstration that there had been 2,500 workers on the streets. When I heard that I said to myself that the Stalinist school in Moscow sure graduated a good diplomatic liar. —JAMES SIFAKIS

May Day in Youngstown

YOUNGSTOWN—

Tens of thousands of workers and business men gathered in the streets of Youngstown to see our small parade to hear the speakers in the Public Square, but the slogan of a mass political strike failed entirely. Not only did the steel workers not respond at all but even the Party members largely failed to act. The official Party here failed to mobilize the members and sympathizers with their families in order for the parade to be more successful, and there were neither women nor children in it. (Which doesn't prevent the Daily Worker from publishing its customary monstrous exaggeration about the May Day demonstration in Youngstown. —Ed.) The way to make the workers understand our political slogans is to organize them on the basis of concrete issues in the class struggle, and through hard fighting against the capitalist class to develop a working class understanding and political maturity. The Party leaders don't seem to understand this at all. —DENIS PLARINOS

In Italy

Crisis in the Communist Party

MOSCOW—

It seemed that the Italian Communist Party was an exception in the Communist International by its escape from the crises which have up to now ravaged its sections. And this fact was very disquieting for the leaders of the C. I. How is it possible, they said, that in the Italian C. P. the phenomenon of opportunism can be limited simply to the case of Tasca?

Italy is the country of the most ferocious capitalist dictatorship; the country where our Party, by great and constant bloodshed has been terribly decapitated. All the old directing cadres and also all the intermediary cadres of our Italian Party and then the cadres successively formed after the exceptional laws, have been swept away, destroyed by the enemy.

Opportunists, Real and Faked

Now however, the Heckerts, the Ferrats and their friends can be satisfied by the discovery that, within the Italian C.P. also a strong current of "Opportunism" has manifested itself, which has literally shattered in two the leading organs of this same Party. Every comrade, no matter how little initiated in the practices of the C. I.'s life in recent years, can guess immediately that you will not find among the opportunists the Ercolis and Garlandis who, in the same way that they spit on the "corpse" of Bucharin after having been its most fervent lackeys, have, themselves, hoisted the flag of the struggle against opportunism.

First of all, a preliminary remark: the fact that in this minority are the best elements who after the exceptional laws, all occupied the most perilous posts in the illegal work in Italy, as well as the proletarian elements of the former leadership elected by the last congress of the Party (Lyons, 1925); and the fact that on the other side there are all the petty bourgeois elements who made their revolutionary career in Party offices (these elements are under the direction and guidance of the attorney, Ercoli, precisely defined by comrade Trotsky, as "the attorney for all causes")—these facts are therefore already filled with significance by themselves to prove to us where the home of opportunism really is in the Italian Party. The very serious discords that have cut in two the leadership of the Italian Party which had up to now retained its unity at all costs, relate at once to political and to organizational questions.

The majority, headed by Ercoli—in an endeavor to have his past errors, his Bucharinist and Tascan loves forgotten—has repaired, as usually happens, to the most advanced position of the "Leftest" Leftism. In accordance with the decisions of the 10th Plenum on the famous "Third Period", Ercoli and Co. say they see "the coming to maturity in Italy of all the elements of an acute revolutionary situation". The formula is typically "opportunist" for it affirms: 1. "seeing the coming"; 2. "to maturity"; that is, a process is indicated which may last months or years. But it is for the coming months that Ercoli and Co. put on the order of the day the anti-fascist insurrection in Italy. "The catastrophe is imminent...The crisis sharpens every day...The masses are on the streets...We must accomplish a political and organizational turn...The organizational work, they say, must be adapted to the 'new situation' and to the 'new tasks' posed by the situation that is being precipitated."

The Minority Viewpoint

The minority objects, in the first place: Is it possible to accomplish a turn, no matter which, without taking the Party situation into account? A turn which takes no account of the Party situation instead of bridging the gap existing between the Party and the objective situation, can only make it deeper, extend it. This is the sad experience that the Italian Party itself has had in the years of absolute illegality following the exceptional laws.

In the second place: The signs of militancy of the working and peasant masses are multiplying, it is true, every day (Faenza, Sulmona, Avellina, unemployment demonstrations etc., are a proof that a

change is beginning to take place in the general state of mind of the working population). But what still characterizes the Italian situation is the very grave state of disorganization of the workers, their condition of passivity and terror. It suffices to consider the following fact: even though the wage of the Italian workers has been reduced to almost 40 percent only in these last years, the industrialists today can permit themselves a new reduction of 10% without meeting open resistance. (Unemployment has assumed such proportions that the workers accept these reductions out of fear of seeing jobless hired in their places). To adapt the tasks and the work of the Party to the situation means to understand in the first place, where the masses are, so as to have the possibility to moving the forward. But the tasks of the Party towards the masses are not independent of the internal condition of the Party, in the working class of its effective bonds with the masses.

If the Party is not connected with the factories, it can have nothing but phrases when it speaks of the political general strike and the insurrection. If the Party is not in a position to organize the workers in the struggle against the bosses for their defense of their wages, it can have nothing but phrases when it speaks of guiding the masses in the civil war, in the battles of the street, etc.

Another discord involves the disposition of the forces of the revolutionary bloc. "In Italy today," declares the Ercoli majority, "everybody poses the dilemma: fascism or Communism?" Everybody? Yes, everybody: workers, peasants, city petty bourgeoisie. So there is nothing more for our Party to do for the conquest of the working class, its allies the peasant, to neutralize the middle sections, etc., since everybody in Italy poses the dilemma: "fascism or Communism". How could all this have happened when our Party, since the exceptional laws has been reduced to absolute illegality, has been chased from the factories by the harshest reaction, has lost its contacts with the country, etc? It is a matter, as all can see, of the theory of the revolution that matures of itself, the theory of the spontaneous revolution, which is at the basis of the whole system of the "creators" of revolutions who think that it is enough to write in a paper—which reaches only a very limited number of workers—that the insurrection is maturing in order for us actually to face the insurrection.

The Role of the Vanguard

Against the ridiculous infantism of those who announce everything ripe, easy ready for success, the minority affirms the need of fighting bitterly against the social democracy because it is not true that the democratic illusions (which, as Lenin taught, find their most favorable ground in every reactionary situation) have disappeared in Italy because it is not true that the dilemma is today posed: "fascism or Communism"; but on the contrary, it is the role of the proletarian vanguard organized in the Communist Party to see to it that this dilemma: "fascist dictatorship or proletarian dictatorship" becomes the dilemma of the whole toiling population.

The minority characterizes the ultra-Left position of Ercoli and Co. as a position of real capitulation in the face of difficulties. To substitute the revolutionary phrase for the old opportunist positions held in the past by Ercoli and Co. does not mean to give the Party a more radical policy. Petty bourgeois opportunism can mask its wares by revolutionary phrases: if it is under the banner of the official leadership of the C. I. that the endeavor is made to introduce these wares into our Parties, then the fight against opportunism appears once more as the fight for a firm really Bolshevik leadership of the Communist International. —H. S.

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