

Preparing For The Seventh Party Convention

By EARL BROWDER

FOR five days, from March 31 to April 4, a gathering of 132 leading members of the Communist Party gathered in conferences on the most important tasks facing the movement, organizational, trade union, etc., and in the Plenum of the Central Committee, reviewing the progress of the Party, searching out its weaknesses, consolidating its gains, and preparing for the Seventh National Convention of the Party, which will be held in New York on June 20.

The central political point in the deliberations of the Plenum, was the estimation of the economic crisis and its consequences.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS

Unanimously the Plenum declared that the economic crisis marks the turning point in the development of American imperialist policy, and the growth of the revolutionary movement of the working class. It is the declaration in bankruptcy of the reformist illusions concerning "permanent prosperity," of the "exceptional" position of American capitalism, of the theories that through rationalization the workers can reach higher wages, etc., which the international social-reformist movement had built up on the basis of the boom period which closed with the stock market crash last October. The crisis has written "finish" to that chapter of history, and opened a new one, in which the American working class, in common with the workers of all countries, is forced into struggle for the barest necessities of existence.

Already at the Plenum of October 4-8, 1929, the Central Committee had noted "the clear features of an oncoming crisis." In a series of documents it registered the crisis development, and in its resolution of January 4, it gave a comprehensive picture of its growth, coming to the conclusion that we are dealing with "the most far-reaching economic crisis in the history of capitalism, involving the whole capitalist world." All these analyses and conclusions have been fully confirmed by events. Today, these judgments are not contested except by the apologists of capitalism. The

April Plenum brought our examination of the crisis up to date and rounded out our understanding of its full significance.

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS

Opportunists of all brands, who shrink from recognizing the deep-going nature of the crisis, find refuge in seizing upon all the fluctuations which arise out of the uneven development of the crisis, magnifying each little upturn in separate industries as signifying the ending, or at least the mitigation, of the crisis. The Plenum faced this question decisively, and analysed the true significance of this uneven development.

The course of development in the leading industries of steel and automobiles, which have shown the widest fluctuations, were examined as typical phenomena of this class. It was shown that precisely the extreme fluctuations in these industries, their first deep downward plunge followed by a partial recovery closer to the general level of economy, so far from being a sign of the ending of the crisis (as the gain in steel and autos was hailed in January and February) is, on the contrary one of the most effective factors deepening and aggravating the crisis, prolonging it and sending it to new depths.

The same is true of the uneven spreading of the crisis through the rest of the world. While guarding against the mechanical conception of a world crisis developing steadily and uniformly throughout the world, a view which would run sharply counter to the obvious facts and lead to gross errors of tactics, the Plenum emphasized the world nature of the crisis, its continued spread, its inexorable drawing of all countries into its orbit.

OFFENSIVE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

First of all, the effects of the crisis show themselves in an enormous sharpening of all antagonisms, of the class struggle and of the imperialist rivalries in preparation for war.

War against the living standards of the workers, is the first measure of the bourgeoisie to meet the crisis. The Plenum examined and summarized this offensive against the workers, establishing its main features in the gigantic unemployment and mass dismissals, the new and more drastic speeding-up in the workshops, wage cuts, and the sharp increase in the use of fascist methods of suppression of the workers' movement, and the growth of fascist tendencies generally. This offensive of the bourgeoisie gives rise to a movement of resistance on the part of the workers, and to the development of a counter-offensive. The Plenum set itself the task to find the correct strategy and tactics, to stimulate the radicalization

of the workers, to turn this into channels of organization and struggle, and to bring the movement under the leadership of the Communist Party.

MARCH 6—MILESTONE ON THE ROAD TO A MASS PARTY

The great outpouring of demonstrating workers on March 6, International Day of struggle against unemployment, was the high point up to this time of the expression of radicalization of the workers of America. At the same time it marked the turning point in the development of the revolutionary trade unions and the Communist Party into mass organizations.

The Plenum established the March 6 action as the movement of the workers onto the plane of mass action. The hitherto scattered struggles, the small and disconnected strike struggles, significant as they had been as signs of the growing radicalization and spirit of struggle of the workers, had not before emerged into any wide, concerted mass actions. March 6 served not only as the vehicle of struggle for unemployment insurance, for work or wages, for the seven-hour five-day week, etc., but also as the awakener of class consciousness, of the politicalization of the movement.

Organizationally, the March 6 action connected up more than a million workers with the revolutionary unions and with the Party, by leading them into a street demonstration under revolutionary slogans, under conditions of severest police repressions ever seen in America for tens of years.

FASCISM AND SOCIAL-FASCISM

The role of the American Federation of Labor and the Socialist Party in the development of fascism in the United States was clarified by the Plenum, which corrected a current error in the Party of speaking of the American Federation of Labor as "social-fascist." It was pointed out that the A. F. of L. is plainly a fascist organization, without any of the "protective coloring" of socialist phrases which distinguishes social-fascism. The Socialist Party and its Muste wing are social-fascists, differing from those of Europe only in their being farther away from governmental positions in which they must find their full flowering.

This distinction between two forms of fascist development must not be misunderstood as signifying different degrees of fascization. Indeed, it may well happen that the social-fascists, even though disguising themselves with "socialist" phrases, may be more viciously fascist in action than even the open fascist elements.

IMMINENT WAR DANGER

Sharpening imperialist rivalries, dramatized by the London Naval Conference, served to help the Plenum in its task of sharpening the realization of the Party and the working class of the imminence of the war danger. The Plenum noted that the economic crisis has brought the profound antagonisms between the United States and Britain to the most serious point yet seen in the relations of these powers. In the wild trade-war now raging throughout Europe, Asia, and Latin-America between these imperialist giants, there is maturing the new world war.

The world economic crisis has further cut down the possible manoeuvring ground, shortened the breathing space, and brought the war as the only possible way out of the blind alley of capitalism.

In this situation, the enormous advances being made in the Soviet Union, in the construction of socialism, and especially in the collectivization of agriculture, has been the most important influence undermining the precarious stabilization of capitalism. Especially in the conditions of economic crisis, the very existence of the Soviet Union is a threat to capitalism, and rouses its wildest rage. The world campaign led by the Pope and all churches of the world, organized and launched in connection with the London Conference, was a lighting-flash that warned the workers of the whole world of the preparations for war against the Soviet Union on the part of world capitalism. For the workers of the capitalist countries, it is impossible to fight effectively against the coming imperialist war, without putting in the foreground the struggle for defense of the Soviet Union, the fortress of the world's workingclass.

FIGHT AGAINST OPPORTUNISM

In the new situation created by the economic crisis, new tasks and new opportunities are created for the Communist Party.

Above all, the Party must take a drastic turn to mass work, to the building up of mass organizations. There is no possible way by which the Party can extend its leadership over the masses except through organization. The awakening millions cannot all be brought directly into the Party itself. The connecting belts between the Party and the masses can only be the non-Party mass organizations, above all the revolutionary trade unions.

The Plenum placed this task of building the trade unions as the very center of all Party discussion and activity.

Standing as the main obstacle to the successful solution of the Party problems, the Plenum pointed out the persistence of oppor-

tunist practices and methods in the work of the movement. The struggle against opportunism in all its forms and manifestations, this becomes the central line in the inner-Party and trade union life. Without a relentless and stubborn fight, to root out all remnants of opportunism, especially the most insidious form of opportunism, which does not theorize itself but shows itself in practice in a persistent line of opportunist errors it is impossible to build the mass organizations.

Much of the attention of the Plenum was taken up in the concrete examination of the practical work of the Party, in the light of the struggle against opportunism. The documents of the Plenum give a concrete lead to the whole Party for this struggle.

SELF-CRITICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF CADRES

With the enormous multiplication of tasks before it, the Party has become keenly conscious of a crisis of cadres. There is a tremendous shortage of leading forces for the organization and direction of the work. The problem of the promotion of new and fresh forces for this work, the problem of creating new cadres, is bound up with the whole development of the Party life. Especially it requires the development of an active inner-Party life, of proletarian democracy, of systematic self-criticism and the conscious promotion of workers to responsible posts by the Party.

The Plenum not only gave the directives for meeting these problems, but itself furnished the Party with a concrete example of how to put it into practice.

WORK AMONG NEGROES: WORK IN THE SOUTH

A special discussion and resolution in the Plenum on work in the South, furnished the Party with its first comprehensive and detailed examination of this enormously important field of work. This, together with the clarification of the Party on the slogan of self-determination for the Negroes, were among the most important contributions of this Plenum. The documents of the Plenum on these points will be studied by the entire Party, and will mark the beginning of more solid progress in both fields. The Plenum marked the advance of work in these fields upon a practical basis, on a far wider scale than anything hitherto seen, although still very unsatisfactory considering the immense possibilities and opportunities open to our Party.

TRADE UNION RECRUITMENT

The problem of building the revolutionary trade unions was concretized around support of the announced Recruitment Campaign of the Trade Union Unity League. The Plenum established

that the three major conditions for success in this work are: (a) the full mobilization of all Party forces for the work; (b) the development of a large body of trained forces for leadership, the solution of the problem of cadres, and (c) the concretization of the struggle against opportunism in the trade union work.

For the Party the Plenum put forth these three tasks as the ABC of all progress in the trade union field, which itself is the key to the growth of the Party as a Party of the masses.

PARTY UNIFICATION

That this Plenum marked the final burial of all remnants of factionalism, which for so long had cursed the Party, was demonstrated by the fact that there was no necessity of any kind of resolution whatever on this subject.

Some small remnants of factional tendencies, which did not touch the heart of Party life, were found in the opportunist struggles against the Party line in the Chicago District, personified in comrades Held and Cline.

The resolution on the problems of the Chicago District dealt quite fully with the Party method of dealing with these remnants of factionalism. At the same time, this resolution was intended for the Party as an example for every District to review its problems and its work, to search out its weakness and overcome them, and to place the Party in Chicago and all other Districts, upon a firm Bolshevik line in practice as well as theory.

CONCLUSION

Our Plenum of the Central Committee has done its work. The results will be embodied in a pamphlet containing all the resolutions of the gathering, which will furnish the basis for the work of the forthcoming Convention. In this article, we have merely sketched some of the high spots of the Plenum's work, which will be completed in the Convention opening on June 20. Our Seventh National Convention will be the first such gathering in the new period, with the Party completely reorientated upon the line of the Communist International, and will be a testimonial to the soundness of our International leadership, with whose help we have been able to so thoroughly sanitize our Party and lay the solid foundations upon which we are building a mass Communist Party, Section of the Communist International.