

The Workers Party Marches Forward

By BENJAMIN GITLOW

ONE of the most important plenums of The Central Committee of our party was the plenum held in February. The Plenum discussed all phases of the present situation and the tasks confronting our Party. It concluded the sessions by unanimously adopting the thesis presented by the Political Committee. The unanimous acceptance of the thesis indicates the progress towards unification made since the last party convention and is a guarantee that the Party fully aware of the tasks before it, will be able to take full advantage of whatever opportunities present themselves.

It is necessary, if we are to understand fully the significance of the plenum, to consider the present situation in the light of the thesis. The outstanding points brought out by the thesis are the following:

1. We are facing a new imperialist world war, and the danger of a war against the Soviet Union. The United States will be an active and leading factor in the war situation.
2. The peak of prosperity has been passed and a sharp decline has taken place in American industry.
3. That as a result of the growing capitalist offensive against the workers, the worsening of conditions on account of the depression, we can expect large and important struggles to take place against the capitalists on the part of the discontented workers. These struggles will present many opportunities to the Party.
4. That our Party is the only factor in the labor movement that has been gaining and not losing ground.
5. That in order to take full advantage of the opportunities that are bound to present themselves, we must concentrate on the big masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, organize them and lead them in their struggles.
6. At no time was it as necessary as now to liquidate completely all remnants of factionalism that still remain in our party. In facing the period of struggles we must have complete unity and the steps already taken in this direction at and since the last convention must be energetically followed up and concluded.

Sharper Antagonism.

The significance of the present situation is the fact that the very temporary stabilization of capitalism has given rise to new difficulties for the imperialists. The contradictions and antagonisms between the imperialist powers is marked by the sharpening antagonism between Great Britain and the United States. The need for markets for its manufactured goods, sources of raw materials for its industries, fields for the investment of its finance capital, are the factors that are forcing American imperialism into sharp conflicts with other imperialist powers, notably Great Britain.

At the same time, American imperialism faced with the growing ef-

fective competition of rationalized Europe in industry, is faced with the necessity of meeting that competition by intensifying its exploitation of the workers. Hence the offensive against the workers, and the intent of American imperialism to smash the unions in order to reduce wages, lengthen hours and further speed up production.

The War Danger

THE crisis facing the imperialists, the war danger, is the central point of the present situation. The Communist Parties must put this in the forefront of the consideration of their tasks. This especially is true for the Communist Party of the United States. This was fully appreciated by the Plenum because the starting point of the thesis is the war danger, with a clear indication of the leading role to be played by American imperialism as a factor making for a world war.

How to prepare for the world war and mobilize the workers against it therefore becomes the most important task before the Party.

War on Soviet Union.

At the same time a war against the Soviet Union is always imminent. The imperialists in order to lengthen the period of stabilization, secure reaction in the saddle crush the rising revolutionary movements in China and elsewhere, are preparing to make war against the Soviet Union, so that the extensive territories of the Soviet Union with its enormous population can be added to the sphere of imperialist exploitation.

They hope by such a war to wipe out the center of revolutionary inspiration to the exploited and oppressed masses all over the world.

The defense therefore of the Soviet Union is part of the whole war danger problem.

This fact the plenum emphatically stressed.

Now every effort must be made to win the support of the masses for the Soviet Union. Everything must be done to combat as counter-revolutionary and as an aid to the imperialists, those Trotskyite tendencies of pessimism and doubt about the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern that find expression in the labor movement. The fight against Trotskyism is linked up with the right in defense of the Soviet Union.

The Growing Depression.

AMERICAN imperialism has passed through a period of great prosperity. This period has now come to a close. A sharp decline has taken place in American industry. Millions are unemployed. The bottom of the downward trend as the thesis puts it, has not yet been reached.

These factors present many problems. It marks a turning point for our Party. The growing depression in the United States and its consequent effects upon conditions in the United States and particularly upon the working class was the main feature of the plenum discussions.

It is a recognized fact that American imperialism will utilize the depression to intensify its offensive against the working class. The whole

system of class collaboration which has been tested during a period of prosperity is now to be tested during a period of depression, during a period of hard times.

The party is fully aware that in the coming period particularly large sections of unskilled and semi-skilled workers will be forced by conditions to fight against the capitalists.

The capitalists also aware of this fact are preparing to meet it. In preparing to meet the coming struggles of the workers, the labor bureaucrats and the leaders of the Socialist Party are doing yeoman service to the capitalists. The socialist party is becoming more and more subservient to the labor bureaucracy while the labor bureaucracy continues to swing more and more to the right. The labor bureaucracy has abandoned every pretext of working class trade unionism. The pronouncement of William Green is as follows:

"Upon the very threshold of the New Year, Organized Labor in the United States challenges the owners and management of industry to co-operate with it in the establishment and maintenance of sound economic standards and industrial peace. We welcome the opportunity of giving our collective skill, training and technique to the development of industrial and individual efficiency."

This is an open plea by the bureaucracy of the A. F. of L. to work for industrial peace and for individual efficiency (speed up) in the interests of the imperialists. It is an offer by the bureaucracy to become the direct agents of the bosses in industry, to turn the unions into company unions, to look out for the interests of the owners of industry and not of the workers.

The latest phase of the capitalist offensive against the workers are the proposals of the Bar Association. These proposals have the endorsement of the labor bureaucracy. They provide for compulsory arbitration through the agencies of the courts as an effective measure against strikes.



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WE must, as the Plenum indicated, become the organizer and leader in the present period of struggles on the part of the workers against the capitalists.

We must turn our attention more to the large masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the basic industries.

Does this involve the abandonment of the existing trade unions?

Quite the contrary.

Recognizing* the crisis facing the trade union movement and the possibility of the trade unions being destroyed by the treachery of the reactionary officialdom and the blows of the capitalists, we must do everything to fight to keep and maintain the unions as militant fighting organizations of the workers. As Communists, we do not abandon the mass organizations of the workers. We do not recognize them as static bodies. It was no accident that the plenum devoted so much time to our fight to save the Miners' Union. At the same time, we also repudiate the contention that because the trade union movement in the United States is facing a crisis which may destroy it completely, we must therefore start the organization of a new trade union movement in opposition to the A. F. of L.

Unskilled Workers Important.

The unskilled and semi-skilled workers, who are almost totally unorganized, are the big reservoir of the working class with which we can organize to revitalize the trade union movement and mobilize for militant action against the capitalists.

This as the Plenum correctly estimated, as a major task for our Party. We must take the initiative. We must not hesitate. We must in this task not be the victims of the fetish of dual unionism. If the reactionary unions stand in the way of organization, then we must proceed to organize them into new unions.

The present period is a period of coming struggles, of more favorable opportunities for our Party. This the Plenum has stressed repeatedly. Our Party must be the leader in this period of the working class. However, we must not make the mistake that American imperialism, because we are in a period of depression, has collapsed, that it has no power of resistance or temporary recuperation. Such a mistake would be due to our submitting to a subjective mood and ignoring the objective factors of American imperialism.

Equally is it wrong in the present period to state that the situation demands a fundamental revision in our tactics on the grounds that before the situation was unfavorable, now it is more favorable, tremendous struggles are ahead, we have big opportunities, American imperialism is declining etc. This view exaggerates the possibilities and underestimates the potentialities of American imperialism. The Communist International in an editorial in the "Communist International" makes clear its position on this point as follows:

"This new process is taking its own new peculiar roads:

"The objective situation still does not present a directly revolutionary

position, but for the workers' movement the most difficult stage is undoubtedly left behind. BUT this does not mean that the tasks of the working class and its Communist advance guard have been simplified in consequence. On the contrary. The class enemy is organized as never before. The concentration of capital and the fighting organization of the bourgeoisie have made gigantic strides forward during the latter years. The political influence of concentrated capital on the state apparatus has grown to unheard of dimensions. Trustified capital is stubbornly and insistently advancing against the working class. This advance is being carried on in the most varied forms; by intensified methods of capitalist rationalization, lengthening the working day, and lowering of wages, raising the cost of living, the denial of the right to strike, deprivation of trade union rights, high customs duties, the growth of taxes, the intensification of the white terror, growing imperialist activity, the military encirclement of the Soviet Union—such are the expressions of its advance."

Says the Communist International, the concentration of capital and the fighting organizations of the bourgeoisie have made gigantic strides. And of no country is this more true than the United States.

Aware of this fact, and the necessity of mobilizing the workers for struggle against the bourgeoisie, our Party must continue to develop those tactics which tend to broaden its influence and give it contact with the masses. It must continue the united front tactics, to mobilize ever larger sections of the working class against the bourgeoisie. To succumb to subjectivism and to ignore objective realities is to fall into sectarianism and isolation from the masses, the biggest calamity that can befall our party.

Big Work Ahead.

We face tremendous tasks, beset with great difficulties.

It is not enough to be satisfied that our Party has been the only one in the labor movement that can record gains. Our Party is still too weak. We must strengthen our Party. We must materially increase its membership. We must utilize the campaigns to consolidate the Party and build it up. The war danger, the depression, unemployment, the growing offensive against the workers, demand a unified Communist Party.

The Plenum has shown the Party the way. It has established political unity in the unanimous acceptance of the thesis. It has pointed out the way in which the Party can take full advantage of the objective factors developing in the United States. By throwing the Party into mass work, by mobilizing the workers against the threatened war and in defense of the Soviet Union, organizing the unorganized, fighting for the unemployed, mobilization of the workers for militant struggle against the capitalist offensive, and by the liquidation of all remnants of factionalism the Party under the leadership of the Central Committee will march forward and become the revolutionary leader of the toiling masses in America.