The VI Congress and the World Situation

By Will Herberg

IN a recent issue[1] of *Gegen den Strom* (central organ of the Communist Party of Germany—Opposition) Comrade *M. N. Roy* has an article on *The Problem of Centralization* (the fourth of his series on *The Crisis in the Comintern*). After some very acute and generally true remarks on the question of centralization in relation to the present crisis, he comes to the essential political content of the article—*a critique of the VI World Congress.* This question is a very important one and since we believe that Comrade Roy's conclusions are based on a general misapprehension we proceed to examine Comrade Roy's arguments. In essential points his critique of the VI Congress deals with *the estimation of the Congress of the present stage and of course of the world revolution.* Around this question everything else centers. About this Comrade Roy has the following to say:

> *"The failure to see that in this period of its general decline capitalism cannot only stabilize itself but* even prosper in particular countries *led the VI Congress to set up the theory of* offensive all along the line."

If this charge against the VI Congress were true it would be a serious one indeed. But is it? The theses of the *International Situation* of the VI Congress speak of the

> *"slow rate of development of the crisis of capitalism, in the course of which* some *of the principle parts of the capitalist system are* on the upgrade *while* others *are undergoing a process of* relatively slow decline."

In speaking of the process of radicalization the theses point out that

> *"the* resistance *of the working class . . . is growing and assuming* extremely diverse forms."

This was the general line of the whole Congress. Does this look as if the VI Congress denied that capitalism can "even prosper in some countries"? Does this look as if the VI Congress launched "the theory of offensive all along the line"?

The fact of the matter is that it is not the VI Congress and its *main* line that the sharp critique of Comrade Roy strikes; on the contrary it strikes very aptly the course of revision *away* from the line of the VI Congress now carried thru by the Ecci. Comrade Roy's arguments hit not the official World Congress but the unofficial factional "corridor congress", that was organized behind the scenes of the World Congress by Stalin and his supporters (Thalmann, Neumann, Bittleman, etc.) and that carried on a demoralizing underground propaganda against the work of the Congress. It is the line of the "corridor congress"—now become the official line of the Ecci and of the sections of the Comintern and proclaimed officially by the X Plenum—that Comrade Roy really strikes at. It was the weakness of the VI Congress that it allowed *surface unanimity* hide deep dissensions, that it did not uncover, expose and condemn the "corridor congress" openly and officially. But this weakness *did not and does not* extend to the actual decisions of the Congress which are in the main generally correct and as clear and ambiguous as the decisions of any previous Congress, at least.

Comrade Roy does not see that the dangerous ultra-left line of the Ecci against which he is fighting is *not* a consequence of the line of the VI World Congress but is on the contrary a *revision* of this line. If this were not the case why then are those who first brought forward the line of the VI Congress and are defending it now being persecuted and expelled as "opportunists", "right wingers", and "renegades" along with Comrade Roy himself? Why has Party leadership after leadership been removed (America, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, etc.) composed of those (Lovestone, Jilek, Samuelson, etc.) who stood out most prominently as the enemies of the "corridor congress"? Comrade Roy should not let himself be deceived by the empty phrases of "loyalty" to VI Congress with which the new revisionist leadership is accustomed to strew its resolutions and speeches. Comrade Roy should compare the line of the X Plenum—which we all agree embodies the dangerous ultra-left line—with the line of the VI Congress and see whether they are opposed or not. Such an examination can only yield one answer: *the line of the X Plenum, the line of the present leadership of the Ecci, is a line of fundamental revision of the decisions of the VI Congress!*

At the VI Congress Comrade *Tittel* (now one of the leading figures of the CPG-Opposition) concluded his speech as follows:

> *"Establishment of real concentration of forces on the basis of the decisions of the VI World Congress!"*

If this line had been carried thru by the Ecci (and thru the Ecci in the various Parties) after the VI World Congress, there would be no crisis in the Comintern now. It is because the concentration has taken place *not* on the basis of the decisions of the VI World Congress but on the basis of a *revision* of these decisions and—more broadly—on the basis of a revision of the basic ideas of Leninism, that we have the Comintern in sharp crisis today. A clear understanding of this fact will help very much to increase the Leninist effectiveness of the international Opposition movements.

1. Gegen den Strom, *vol.* 2, *No.* 44, *November* 2, 1929.

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bosses—all of these problems received but scant attention at the conference.

The official representatives believe that if they can drum together 1000 delegates to the next District convention of the T.U.U.L., the "Lovestoneites" will then be buried forever . . . What political fools they are . . . The only way to meet the problems is to have a correct Leninist analysis of the economic and political situation, to estimate properly the degree of radicalization of the American working classes, to work out the correct approach to mobilize the masses thru real united front movements from below, to struggle against the most powerful enemy of the working class—American imperialism!

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