

# - INTERNATIONAL -

# PRESS

# CORRESPONDENCE

Vol. 9. No. 29

21<sup>st</sup> June 1929

Editorial Offices and Central Despatching Department: Berggasse 31, Vienna IX. — Postal Address, to which all remittances should be sent by registered mail: Postamt 66, Schüsselbach 213, Vienna IX.  
Telegraphic Address: Inprekorr, Vienna.

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## Questions of the Plenary Session of the E. C. of the C. I.

By D. Manuilski.

Almost a year has passed since the Sixth World Congress of the C. I., a period which is sufficient to draw a few fundamental conclusions and to examine the correctness of the decisions of the Sixth World Congress and the attitude of all the sections of the C. I., upon the basis of the political experience of the international communist movement.

The period which the world movement of the workers is now experiencing is not one of those in which the events follow each other in rapid succession, in which the relations of class forces alter radically from week to week and the revolutionary parties of the proletariat are compelled to alter their tactical line within 24 hours in accordance with such a changing situation. In various periods history gives us various measures. Political impressionism, the attempt to discover "new characteristics" in the third period of the post-war development of capitalism every three months, to discover "new stages"

in the working class movement at all costs every few weeks, would be very damaging at present. Such attempts would often lead to regarding things which are inseparable from the nature of imperialism as new; and the efforts to say something new at all costs would develop into mechanical formulations completely divorced from the actual historical conditions under which the working class movement is developing.

The policy laid down by the Sixth World Congress is correct and has not lost its significance in the present situation. The correctness of this policy is proved by the course of events in the past year. At the same time it would also be a great mistake, and still more damaging, to remain immovable within the limits of hard and fast formulations and to refuse to see the real alterations in the situation of the international working class movement both economically and politically since the Sixth World Congress. A good example of such

scholastic conservatism is offered by the attitude of the right-wing and conciliatory groups in the C. I. who fail to see the third period, the functional alterations in the role of the Social Democracy and the necessity of any other tactical line than for instance that of the period of the Third World Congress of the C. I.

In the past year events of great significance have taken place. Everywhere, the wave of economic strikes is growing, strikes which are split up and not co-operated for the moment. This wave of strikes shows however that the offensive of capitalism in its present phase has already arrived at the barriers of proletarian resistance. The class struggles of an offensive character on the part of the proletariat are developing into a counter-attack. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries the strike movement is taking on the form of armed insurrections in consequence of the extreme intensification of colonial oppression, as shown by the insurrection of the plantation workers in Columbia. In India tremendous colonial reserves are being drawn into revolutionary processes which are reminiscent of recent events in China. The Indian revolution is on the agenda. In the heart of capitalist Europe, in Berlin, events are developing whose significance will be tremendous for the revolutionisation of the international working class and for the breaking up of the influence of the Social Democracy upon the working class movement.

The increased fighting activity of the working class and of the toilers in the colonies is causing the bourgeoisie to mobilise its police and military apparatus for an armed struggle against the toilers, to strengthen the repression and to introduce Fascist methods of administration. The internal reaction is in accordance with the increasing aggressiveness abroad, in particular against the Soviet Union, the strongest barricade of the international revolutionary movement. This process of the intensification of the class struggle in the international arena has affected the colonial countries in as far as in the last year the national bourgeoisie everywhere moved suddenly to the right by capitulating before imperialism (India, China, Egypt). The process of differentiation within the national-revolutionary movement is also very sharply outlined, and the petty-bourgeois elements in this movement are developing swiftly towards the right. In the countries of South and Central America this process can be seen with great clarity in the fate of governments like that of Mexico etc.

In the past year the offensive of American capital increased considerably, not only in Europe (Kellogg Pact, the Plan for an inter-allied Reparations Bank), but also in those colonies which were previously ruled almost exclusively by British capital: In China American capital holds first place, the advance of American capital in the Near East, in Egypt, Arabia and Persia. The struggle between the United States and Great Britain for the hegemony of the world (the central contradiction of the whole capitalist world) is nearing its final decision. The little war in China between the Nanking Government and the Kwangsi Group represents the bloody manoeuvring of these two great antagonists of world politics, a threatening signal of the coming great war in the Pacific.

The "inter-relations" of economic interests (international cartels, trusts, emission banks) in which the Social Democracy sees a guarantee against war and which the right-wing communists, for instance, Crosé in France, regard as a factor which will postpone war for many years to come, will in fact contribute to turning the coming war into a war of such world dimensions that there will be no such thing as neutral States. At the same time those monopolist tendencies of capitalism pointed out by the Sixth World Congress, are becoming more and more stressed, tendencies towards State capitalism, which is represented by the Social Democrats as the birth of "democracy", as the real socialism.

The growth of the inter-relation between the Social Democracy and the reformist trade union bureaucracy with the employers organisations and the capitalist State has advanced very considerably not only in the last year, but in recent years. To-day one can no longer, as after the treachery of the 4th August 1914, speak of the harnessing of the leaders of the Social Democracy into the apparatus of the capitalist State. To-day the Social Democracy has corrupted thousands of its officials by the crumbs which fall from the table of the bourgeoisie. The Social Democracy has given its officials a material interest in the maintenance of the capitalist regime

which it serves, through the trade unions, the employers organisations, the municipal administrations, the posts in connection with the health insurance scheme etc., in the police apparatus etc.

The Berlin events showed that this stratum of officials etc. is, in order to avoid dismissal by the bourgeoisie, becoming Fascist in accordance with the speed with which it is losing influence upon the working masses. The Social Democracy is developing into a wild beast because it recognises that the historical period of its role in the working class movement has been shortened and that it will be the first corpse one which the working class will march to take up the decisive struggle with the bourgeoisie.

The extension of capitalism with all its chain of organisations and with the assistance of its agency within the working class, the Social Democracy, makes the struggle of the workers very difficult. Every economic struggle leads to a collision between the workers and the whole capitalist State. On the other hand however this fact is drawing the working class more and more into "politics", and it is beginning to realise more and more the whole mechanism of the capitalist system.

The conflict in the Ruhr district, in one of the most highly developed capitalist countries, where all these characteristics found their clearest expression, placed the whole international proletariat before the question of what methods to use in order to break through the front formed by all the forces of capitalist society. This question is made of still greater practical importance because the special circumstances of the struggle in the present period cause a spirit in certain sections of the working class to the effect that part struggles are useless and that all forces must be saved for the final decisive blow. Such a spirit is to be found for instance amongst the French railwaymen who are organised in the C. G. T. U. They have not yet freed themselves from the after-effects of the defeat of their movement in 1920.

Finally, in the past year there were a number of right-wing crises in certain Communist Parties (Germany, Czechoslovakia). In the years of the crisis phase in connection with the bolshevisation of the sections, which co-incided in part of time with the period of the partial and relative stabilisation of capitalism, we enjoyed a certain stability of inner-party relations and groups in our sections. The increased activity of the working class however came into contradiction with the organisational methods and customs in the solution of the fundamental questions of the international communist movement, with the customs which had formed in individual groups of our sections in the period of a certain stabilisation of class relations.

The right-wing and conciliatory groups, the historical political bequest of the Social Democracy, which showed their opportunist nature on more than one occasion at the important stages of the struggle of the working class (1923 in Germany, the Bubnik crisis in Czechoslovakia), and which had really degenerated into little nuclei of the "left-wing" Social Democracy inside the ranks of the Communist Parties, were swept away by the rising tide of the international working class movement.

The higher the tide of the working class movement, the sooner these groups develop towards the Social Democracy. The right-wing "crisis" (Brandler and Thalheimer in Germany, Hais, Jilek and Neurath in Czechoslovakia) showed quite clearly that during the ten years of the existence of the Communist International and its persistent struggle for the bolshevisation of the individual sections of the international communist movement, such firm bolshevist foundations had been laid, that all elements which attempt to split the communist movement must suffer shipwreck. These bolshevist battalions have not yet received their baptism of fire, they have still deficiencies and weaknesses, but deeply rooted in their consciousness is the knowledge that there can be no communist movement outside of the Communist International.

The past year has also shown still more clearly the development of the right-wing and ultra-left groups (Urbahn) into a united Social Democratic tendency. In consequence of sectarian persistence these groups still exist organisationally independent for the outside world, but, apart from former ex-

periences, their relation to each other is seen plainly in connection with the Berlin events: the same accusations against the C. P. of Germany which is charged with isolation from the masses, putschism, of ignoring the "masses" of trade union members who were called upon by the Social Democracy to demonstrate in closed meetings as a counter-demonstration to the appeal of the C. P. of Germany for street demonstrations. All these questions can not be regarded isolated from each other, they are connected with the analysis of the world situation whose chief characteristics were laid down by the Sixth World Congress.

## II.

At the Plenary Session of the E. C. of the C. I. we shall have above all to repulse attempts of the right-wingers and the conciliators to revise the decisions of the Sixth World Congress in the question of the capitalist stabilisation. It will then be necessary to formulate the term "third period" more definitely and more concretely upon the basis of the new factors.

The character of the capitalist stabilisation is the decisive question, and the answer of the C. I. to this question determines the estimation of the international and internal situation not only in the Soviet Union, but in all capitalist countries. Whoever underestimates the significance of the internal economic contradictions of capitalism, the proletarian class struggles, the movement in the colonies recently (China, India), the insurrections on the international front (Congo, Indonesia etc.) as factors making for the disorganisation of the capitalist stabilisation, must also overestimate the capacity of the stabilisation for resistance. The essence of opportunism always consisted in an overestimation of the strength of the class enemy and in a sceptical attitude towards the forces of the working class.

At the Sixth World Congress Comrade Ewert proved seriously that movements like the July insurrection of the Vienna proletariat in 1927 were only possible in a country like Austria and were determined by the special international situation of Austria. The May events in Berlin one year after the Sixth Congress showed how "far-seeing" such contentions were. In estimating the character of the capitalist stabilisation our Communist opportunists do not dare to deny theoretically the factor of the intensification of the class struggle. In all cases of concrete proletarian struggles however, for instance during the class struggles carried on by the proletariat in the last year, they are at hand to inject the poison of their pessimism and to cripple the fighting spirit of the proletariat.

However, the role of international opportunism is seen most clearly in the estimation of the Berlin events and in its attitude to the international action against war on the 1st August. These confused right-wingers and conciliators who see a "defeat" in the May action of the Berlin proletariat, and who are already prophesying the "failure" of the demonstration on the 1st August, spread an atmosphere of faintheartedness. Measured by the practical questions the actual attitude of the opportunist elements to the character of the capitalist stabilisation is exposed.

The underestimation of the forces of the proletariat by the opportunists in the international communist movement is closely connected with the right-wing elements in the Soviet Union who underestimate the forces of the working class of the Soviet Union in the struggle against the remnants of capitalist in the country. Our socialist stabilisation is no less a disorganising factor of the capitalist stabilisation of the world economic system, than is the revolutionary movement of the workers in the capitalist countries. The nature of the international right-wing deviation is expressed in the attempts to reduce the significance of our socialist stabilisation, the tendency to retreat in face of the difficulties of the socialist constructive work, to see everything in the Soviet Union with jaundiced eyes, and at the same time to exaggerate the resistance of the capitalist stabilisation of the world, to give way before the "prosperity" of capitalism and in this connection to take up an attitude related to that of the Social Democracy.

Such an attitude of course produces a corresponding tactical line. The opportunist elements capitulate before capitalism by overestimating its strength. The tendency amongst certain circles in the Soviet Union not to place too much pressure upon the kulak is the counterpart of the tactics of the right-

wingers in the capitalist countries based upon a more or less peaceful parallel existence of the Social Democracy and the Communists in the international working class movement. Therefore the attitude of the opportunists towards the Soviet Union is purely defensive. They are in favour of trade union loyalty in the reformist unions and against independent strike committees elected by the masses from below for carrying on strike movements, because this would violate the statutes of the trade unions and give the bureaucrats the chance to expel left-wing workers from the unions. They degrade the role of the unorganised workers. For them the third period is the period of the consolidation of the capitalist stabilisation and the strengthening of the positions of the bourgeoisie. And finally, the class struggle is regarded by them as the offensive of capitalism against the disarmed and exhausted working class.

The Plenary Session of the E. C. of the C. I. will have to stress still more strongly the factor of the tremendous contradictions which have accumulated in the third period upon the basis of the capitalist stabilisation and which make this stabilisation relative. The Plenary Session will have to urge the organised communist movement to utilise these contradictions still more persistently in order to prepare class struggles on a greater scale than previously.

The third period is the period in which the decisive contradictions of capitalism appear in sharper form than ever before upon the basis of the technical development of capitalism, and take on an insoluble character (market problems, unemployment, under-consumption of the masses etc.). It is the period in which the parasitic characteristics of monopolist capitalism appear with the greatest possible clarity, and make it into a hindrance for the development of the productive forces, narrow down the economic basis of reformism and give in this connection the social conflicts the character of great revolutionary movements, strengthened still more by the existence of a country of the proletarian dictatorship. It is the period in which tremendous crises arise, above all the danger of war against the Soviet Union, in short, it is the period of the decline of the capitalist stabilisation which intensifies the general crisis of capitalism and leads inevitably to the phase of the victorious proletarian revolutions.

"Organised" capitalism of the third period is decaying capitalism. The theoreticians of capitalist economy like Sombart, Schmalenbach etc., who are able only to "describe" the existing, call this form of capitalism "bound" capitalism and enumerate with the conscientiousness of a German scientist the various stages of the bound nature of capitalism as a consequence of its monopolist character. They point to the process of decomposition in its fabric, to the decay of such characteristics as personal initiative and the spirit of enterprise which in the past gave the capitalist system the appearance of usefulness, and which to-day are regarded by the apologists of the capitalist system produces. The quick change from booms to depressions is crazy in the economic leadership of the tremendous trusts and concerns of united undertakings, the obviously irrational management of the business of monopolist capitalism, which is directly faced with the question of socialisation, plan economy etc., all these characteristics of "organised" capitalism are by no means the discovery of Sombart and Schmalenbach\*). They represent the typical characteristics of decaying capitalism described by Lenin in his work on imperialism.

Monopoly, oligarchy, the will for power instead of for freedom, wrote Lenin, the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a little group of rich or strong nations, all these things produce the special characteristics of imperialism, which force us to term it parasitical or decaying capitalism.

The structural alterations of capitalism are determined by the contradictions which arise in the epoch of monopolist capitalism between the productive forces and the forms of the appropriation of the product. "Organised" capitalism is based upon the contradictions which the unstable nature of its whole system produces. The quick change from booms to depressions is not only the consequence of a general instability but they increase this instability.

\*) German publication "Gesellschaft" No. 9.

Decaying capitalism is capitalism in the throes of a protracted progressive general crisis. All the contradictions of "normal" capitalism take on a tremendously increased character in the third period. The problem of markets also existed in the period of normal capitalism, but it was not an insoluble contradiction, as it is at present for monopolist capitalism. The ruined independent workers and the pauperised rural masses offered young industry an excess of labour power. Present day unemployment however has a structural character. Capitalist rationalisation in the epoch of decaying capitalism expels millions of people from the process of production, makes them beggars, Lumpenproletariat who represent a great burden for the proletarian masses still employed in the process of production. In colonial countries like India unemployment takes on dreadful forms, because it is at the same time the result of the capitalist rationalisation of industry and of the pauperisation of broad masses of small traders, independent workers and peasants.

Even the most favourable boom would not permit capitalism to take up in the process of production a great part of the unemployed masses who are now flooding the towns of the old world and the new. To-day it is perhaps too soon to build up any new law for the period of decaying capitalism based upon its tendency to reduce the number of workers employed in production and their transfer to the sphere of capital circulation (trade, the personal service of the bourgeoisie etc.). But the fact alone that the question is formulated concerning a general tendency to reduce the number of workers employed in production, proves that the task of solving the question is beyond the power of modern capitalism. This is shown by the confused state of mind of the ruling class in Great Britain in their search for a solution of this problem (see the electoral campaign in Great Britain).

The problem of the under-consumption of the masses has also taken on an insoluble character for modern capitalism. In connection with the tremendous increase in the productive capacity of industry on a world scale, the narrowing down of foreign markets owing to the industrialisation of economically backward countries, the removal of the Soviet Union from the sphere of capitalist economics, the civil wars in the colonial countries which destroy the trade relations with the capitalist countries (China), the reduced capacity of the internal market has a catastrophic significance for capitalism. The number of

unemployed all over the world is 15 millions, or together with their dependents 60 millions. And in the balance of consumption these 60 millions play a minimal role.

Parallel with the sinking purchasing power of the broad masses of the workers we can observe a rise in prices as a result of the monopolist character of capitalism. Men like the well-known German trade union leader Tarnow can console the workers deceived by them with the statement that the situation of the workers to-day is much better than the situation of the workers 200 years ago, but they cannot refute the absolute fact that the disproportion between the national wealth and the material situation of the workers in all capitalist countries is much greater to-day than it was before the world war.

Behind the objective contradictions of modern capitalism are the relations of the classes. The third period is not only a period in which all the contradictions of capitalism are reproduced upon an increased scale, it is also the period of the extreme intensification of the class struggle. In order to find a way out of the contradictions which are tearing at its vitals, capitalism will conduct great wars with a view to drawing all the continents of the world into war. These wars will be accompanied by civil wars and revolutions in the colonies. The world is approaching social conflicts and catastrophes against which the first revolutionary wave in Europe in 1918-19 as a result of the world war, will fade into insignificance, will appear as a passing episode. The countries in which the proletariat will be victorious will be compelled to conduct revolutionary wars against the counter-revolutionary governments of the capitalist countries.

At present we are only at the beginning of the third period which was introduced by the British General Strike and by the Chinese Revolution. The struggles of the proletariat are still sectional struggles, they have not yet taken on the tremendous extent which will no longer permit any difference of opinion with regard to their estimation, and will compel the sceptics to admit that they were in error. For the moment these struggles are developing in individual industries and proceeding on an isolated, national scale. Concentrated struggles class struggle on an international scale are before us. In this commencing period the class-consciousness of the proletariat is still being crushed by the firm apparatus of the class enemy. Therefore the radicalisation of the working class is a complicated process.

(To be continued.)