

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON ECONOMIC STRUGGLES

THALMANN.

COMRADES, it is easy to understand that in view of the daily more-accentuated economic crisis and the high state of political tension in various countries, as a result of the acceleration of the revolutionary upsurge, why a special discussion on the problem of economic struggles, a number of tactical questions in the sphere of our mass trade union political work and questions of inner-trade union practice should have been superseded at this plenum, by the discussion of political problems. Every delegate will agree with me, when we say that the discussion of the XII Plenum has provided all sections with a new wealth of knowledge and experience in struggle.

The Czecho-Slovakian delegation, in particular Comrade Gottwald, have, for example, shown us some brilliant practical examples of the tactics of the united front, of new and special methods of approach to the sections of non-Party and Social-Democratic workers, and those organised in trade unions, which should lead to an improvement in our revolutionary mass work.

It must, at the same time, be realised, that our tactics in the question of economic struggles and political mass strikes, in conjunction with the preparations for the decisive struggles for the dictatorship of the proletariat, that the experiences which have been gained in individual countries, cannot be transferred in a routine way to other sections. The resolutions which we are adopting here should not be taken over in a schematic way in the individual capitalist and colonial countries, but must be concretely applied according to the given situation.

We must not overlook the fact that economic strikes are interwoven with political mass strikes. We must at the same time consider that the stages of development of the revolutionary movement are continually changing, that they are changing through the increasing difficulties of the bourgeoisie and the further deepening of the crisis. It depends on us; how the revolutionary preparedness of our Party develops, and in how far our Parties succeed in mobilising the masses of the working class against the capitalist offensive of the bourgeoisie.

The tempo at which the general revolutionary upsurge is taking place in the different countries, varies considerably in accordance with the changed conditions characterising the end of capitalist stabilisation. Our policy must be

adapted concretely to suit these conditions from time to time.

We can register the fact that the character of the struggles, in the present situation is changing more rapidly than was the case during the past epoch. We must observe to-day, that, especially in those capitalist countries in which the crisis has already reached a very high level, every strike, and, in particular, the political mass strike, has a specific, much higher significance, than formerly. This fact must also be taken in connection with the greater activation of the Party, and of the revolutionary trade union movement. To-day, the end of the period of capitalist stabilisation, the strike, and in particular, the political mass strike, swings the relation of forces much more powerfully in favour of the working class. A number of new forms of struggle have appeared in all countries. Precisely in the province of economic struggles, we have new and international experience. The method of passive resistance, the fact that economic struggles, in connection with political strikes, and the political strikes themselves, are becoming ever more frequent, the fact that individual economic struggles are followed by sympathetic and demonstration strikes on the part of other enterprises, the ever more violent collisions with the state apparatus in these struggles, and besides this, the strikes which involve seizure of the factories—all these facts are of the greatest international significance. In addition to this, we have the new anti-war strikes in individual countries, above all in Japan and in China, which are of extraordinary importance for all sections of the Comintern.

In Germany we can further record cases where the workers who are still employed, have come out on strike in support of the unemployed. In various branches of industry in Poland and Belgium, where individual industrial groups came out on strike, other industrial groups expressed their solidarity with the strikers by strike decisions. We can already record political mass strikes, which, in many countries, contained the elements of civil war. Further, the strike struggles and political mass strikes perceptibly accentuate the contradictions and differences within the camp of the bourgeoisie; they increase in violence and pertinacity, they accentuate the crisis which is beginning in the camp of the Second, and of the Amsterdam International, and create new prerequisites for our mass influence

among the millions of workers organised in trade unions.

Whereas formerly strikes took place only in individual enterprises for the most part, in the majority of cases only in small and medium-sized enterprises, while great and political mass strikes in whole branches of industry were only isolated phenomena, we can observe to-day that whole branches of industry, in some cases several industrial branches together, are affected by strikes and general strikes.

The art of our strike tactics must consist in:

1. Adapting the daily demands and political slogans promptly to the changing objective and subjective conditions, for the higher development of the revolutionary class struggle.

2. Formation of an extended mass front of struggle by skilful linking-up of economic and political strikes.

3. Displaying the greatest possible manœuvring ability and striving to raise the movement to a higher revolutionary level.

4. Exhausting all possibilities of bringing the masses to realise the inevitability, and necessity, of the struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

5. With greater pertinacity and conviction to combine courageous and audacious use of the policy of the united proletarian front from below, with the correct methods of proletarian democracy, for the systematic winning over of the Social-Democratic, unorganised and organised workers from the sphere of influence of their Social-Fascist and Fascist leaders.

6. Working out the leading rôle of the Communist Party, and the revolutionary trade union organisations, and their leadership, while representing the class interests of the proletariat.

7. Swiftly and ruthlessly unmasking and fighting against the treacherous "Left" manœuvres of the Social-Democratic-reformist trade union bureaucracy.

8. Strengthening the position of the revolutionary trade union movement (such as the R.G.O.,* opposition movements, and Red Unions) as also that of the Communist Parties, and the Young Communist League in the enterprises.

The various speakers of almost all sections, and the comrades who work in the revolutionary trade union organisations, have emphasised here, with a special sharpness, the manifold and treacherous "Left" manœuvres of the Amsterdam International and of Social-Democracy.

The social-demagogy, and the special "Left" manœuvres, of the Amsterdam and Social-Demo-

cratic leaders, which are employed by them to rivet those of their own adherents who are ready to go over to Communism, to the Second and the Amsterdam International, compels us to make timely recognition, of the great danger of Right opportunism in our ranks, as representing the main danger—the danger of deviating from the correct Bolshevik line — and to open a struggle against this. This should in no way diminish the intensity of the struggle against "Left" sectarian deviations.

The brutal wage-cutting decrees in Germany are being issued under the motto of a "programme for providing work"; this is to carry through the predatory plans of the Papen government more easily. The measures for granting state aid to, and financing large-scale industry, and the great landlords, are declared by the bourgeoisie to be "measures taken to produce a boom," as a means for the "overcoming of the crisis." These facts, and the treacherous "Left" manœuvres of the P.P.S. in Poland mentioned here, prove that only the daily and tireless unmasking, and the daily indefatigable and pertinacious mass struggle against every "Left" manœuvre and against the social-demagogy of the Social-Democrats, the Amsterdam International, and all the enemies of the workers, will promote the class consciousness of the working class, strengthen our authority, and more and more arouse and stimulate the initiative for independent leadership in the struggle.

Now the question: How can we more rapidly approach the million masses of workers.

The fact that the economic basis for the aristocracy of labour has become attenuated, the fact of the growth of opposition tendencies, and over and above this, all the revolutionary factors connected with the revolutionary upsurge, present us with new and favourable prerequisites for our work among the masses. The struggle must be carried on, on the inner trade union front, above all in the factories, and among the unemployed. In the mass strike in Belgium, we witnessed, in its most clearly visible form, the deepest indignation of the workers, in particular of the workers organised in trade unions, against the class betrayal of the reformist bureaucracy. The information given us by our Belgian comrades that the Belgian mass strike was led and directed by the masses themselves, that is to say, by the unorganised workers jointly with those organised in trade unions, by a new revolutionary active group, by new cadres of workers, who were placed at the head of the struggle, by the masses themselves in the heat of the strike is of the utmost importance.

*Revolutionäre Gewerkschafts Opposition. (T.U. Opposition..)

We must see to it, first and foremost, that our own comrades in the Communist Parties overcome those inner obstacles which still hamper the carrying out of the inner trade union work. Chief among these obstacles are, generally speaking:

Firstly, an underestimation of the militant capacity of the organised workers ("You can't do anything with them").

Secondly, however, we have a simultaneous overestimation of the degree of maturity attained by the organised workers, often expressed in such phrases as: "They will come over to us of their own accord."

Thirdly, many comrades are afraid of coming sharply to grips with the bureaucrats in the various trade unions, since they feel themselves insufficiently developed and not strong enough politically.

It is not a question of doing what we did for too long in Germany — of drawing up bureaucratic six-monthly plans, and paper projects for "storm plans" or of working out elaborate systems of points; this will not get us much further, and not forward. What we need is a direct and systematic revolutionary mass work.

The Plenum was right in attaching great importance precisely to the question of inner-trade union work. I must say, however, that in this connection, the problem of the unorganised workers has been scarcely touched upon during the whole discussion, and has claimed far too little of our attention. In the present Belgian strike, we have seen how the unorganised workers are playing an important part, by their revolutionary co-operation with the organised workers. I remind you once again of the highly significant explanations which were laid before the presidium of the E.C.C.I. at the VI World Congress during the discussion on the German question. It was Comrade Stalin who on that occasion—and this holds good in full measure for the present situation as well—made especial reference to the great revolutionary rôle and importance of the unorganised workers.

In all countries there has been a strong growth of the urge of the masses towards unity, on the basis of the new situation.

Within the working class itself, this urge towards unity has brought with it much vagueness, and many dangerous illusions which are especially strong, on occasions when the wishes and expectations of many workers, with regard to the tempo of development of the united front, are not satisfied. In this sphere we have had great experience in Germany. As a result of Nazi terrorism there were strong feelings to be met with, in favour of unity, but there were also such

dangerous conceptions as "unity over the heads of *all* leaders!" or such conceptions as "unity over all parties!" or "the achievement of unity at any price." The S.A.P.,* this "Left" branch of Social-Fascism, together with the Brandlerites and Trotskyists in Germany, put forward the slogan of union of the S.P.D.† and the K.P.D., to divert the desire for unity among the masses into false political channels. When such demands are rejected on principle by the Communist Party, there is sometimes a feeling of dissatisfaction among the masses which is quite consciously fostered by renegades, by the S.A.P. and sometimes even by certain sections of the Social-Fascists. This feeling has also been temporarily fostered by making preparations in the Party in individual cases, for joint demonstrations, etc., which were not in accord with its revolutionary nature and by which the character of the K.P.D., as opposed to the Social-Democratic Party in principle, was temporarily weakened and obscured. This gives rise to incorrect conceptions, of every sort and kind, on the policy of the united front. For example: "The leaders of both Parties, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, bear the blame for the failure of the united front." Such tendencies often penetrate into the outskirts of the Party and are capable of doing the Party the greatest harm in decisive situations. Thanks to the vigilance of the German Central Committee, the mistakes made, in the use of the policy of the united front from above, have been vigorously criticised and effaced to prevent fresh difficulties, in the carrying out of a revolutionary mass policy. At the elections we could everywhere record great progress, in cases where we had carried out a correct and courageous policy of the united front from below among the masses. This greatly strengthened the authority of the Party among the masses.

We must now raise the question: What is the main lever in mobilising and activating the masses for the carrying out of a united front from below? The decisive method in the use of the policy of the united front, the formation of the united front from below, is the common militant mobilisation of the free trade union, Social-Democratic, Christian and unorganised workers for the struggle for the common demands of the working class. In this we do not raise the question of our leadership as a "condition." The more strongly we raise the question of the policy of a united front *from below*, the more easily will we efface the Right errors which are made in turning the

*"Sozialistische Arbeiter Partei." Corresponding to British I.L.P.

†Social-Democratic Party. K.P.D. Communist Party.

united front into a policy from above; which has sometimes been committed by certain sections of Party members and certain functionaries under the impression that this might strengthen our position among the masses—a purely instinctive conception.

In the discussion here, on the question of how to apply the policy of the united front, there were one or two vague formulations. Our rôle of leader in all the strikes, whether, as has often been the case, they break out spontaneously, or whether they have been organised and launched by us, or whether again, the reformists called the strike under pressure from the masses—our leading rôle must not, anywhere, or at any time, be underestimated. Comrade Piatnitsky* was right in saying: If we are already leading the masses, then we should also emphasise: it is we Communists who are leading you in the struggle for wages and bread.

That is perfectly correct. These are facts to which we must pay the greatest attention in applying the policy of a united front from below, to win over the masses for still higher revolutionary tasks, under the leadership of the Party. If we do not do this, how shall we then lead the masses to higher class aims in this changed situation? During strikes and demonstrations among the masses the face of the Party, the leading rôle of the Party, must not be obscured or hidden. We put forward the slogan of the united front, not that of fusion. If we speak, for example, in Germany of union, the illusion of the "fusion of the S.P.D. and the K.P.D.," as it is phrased by the renegades in Germany, will be fostered. The slogan of unity was employed by Comrade Lenin in the period of the split in the Social-Democratic Parties, and in the formation of Left revolutionary wings, and, in that connection, it was of course possible to speak of a unity with the Communist Parties which already existed, to some extent.

To-day we already have great Communist mass Parties which have developed and matured, which are able to fulfil their independent rôle as sole leaders of the proletariat.

In Germany, we have still much to learn from the Czecho-Slovakian Party, in the sphere of mass policy. We must effect a change in this field, in the question of the methods, and the tone to be employed in winning over the Social-Democratic and Free-trade union workers, despite the fact, that in recent times, we can already record some fresh progress in this field. That is important and absolutely necessary. But it is not enough to stop there. We must make a decisive stride forward.

*See page 707.

Comrade Stalin has rightly said: "The masses must convince themselves, on the basis of their own experience, of the correctness of the Party's policy." Thus, we must do all we can, by our slogans, and our policy, to convince the masses, on the basis of their own experience, that there is only *one* workers' Party, only *one* revolutionary Party which demands and upholds the class interests of the proletariat and all toilers — the Communist Party! Precisely for this reason, we must bring the leading rôle of our Party to the political and revolutionary consciousness of the proletarian masses, because we must raise them, and educate them in struggles for the great aims that are ahead of us—for the victory of Socialism. We must not allow any false ideas about unity, or drivel about "unity at any price" to make headway among the masses, just as we must fight most sharply against all syndicalist conceptions, as, for example, the idea that it is possible to achieve the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, without a revolutionary Party. International examples have shown that the working class is tremendously sensitive, when the principle of a revolutionary Party and of its leading rôle is in any way obscured, neglected or set aside. We have seen, for example, in France how the C.G.T. performed manœuvres in the question of the policy of a united front, and how, for a long time, hundreds of thousands of workers were thus led into confusion, so that our Party and the C.G.T.U. sustained a certain loss of tempo through the skilful tactics of the reformists. Let us recall what has already been said at the second World Congress. There, in the theses and statutes it is said:

"Under certain historical conditions it is quite possible that the working class may be permeated by numerous reactionary strata. The task of Communism does not consist in adapting itself to these backward elements of the working class, but in raising the entire working class up to the level of the Communist vanguard. The confusion of these two conceptions—Party and class—can lead to the greatest mistakes and to chaos."

What real proletarian leadership means has been shown by the victory of the October Revolution in 1917. Without a firm, implacable, vanguard, always connected with the masses, without the Party of the Bolsheviks in the foreground, the masses would not have been convinced of the correctness of the Bolshevik policy, in the then situation. Any weakening, even the smallest weakening, of the leading rôle of our Parties among the masses may lead to the most fatal results in the present tense situation.

Comrades, the Czecho-Slovakian Party has shown us new, and, to some extent, brilliant experiences in the field of mass policy. What we can learn from the Czecho-Slovakian Party is to make use of its skilful methods in the carrying out of mass work; this applies to the mass work of other Parties, but especially to that of the German Party. But it can also be said that our Czecho-Slovakian comrades can sometimes learn from us too.

In addition to our prospects of revolutionary development, we have unfortunately, also such facts and such great weaknesses to record to-day, as have been shown already by Comrade Piatnitsky, in his references to the weakness and defective work of our factory cells.

Let us make a comparison between the Communist factory cadres of the Polish Party, and those of the German Party, in relation to the total number of members. In Germany, only about 12 to 15 per cent. of the total number of members are as yet employed in enterprises, while in Poland, out of the members of our Party who are numbered among the industrial proletariat, we can count nearly 35 to 40 per cent. in the small, medium-size and large enterprises. These facts compel us to take a much stronger line in the orientation of our mass work for the German Party, in particular in the large enterprises, to win over the factory workers for the revolutionary tasks of our Party, and the revolutionary trade union organisations. If we examine the decisions of the Comintern and the Profintern carefully, we will see that the progress which we have made in the important spheres of work in factories, in trade unions and among the unemployed, is still insufficient. Over and above this, we must raise the question of work among the young and among women workers, much more strongly within the province of this important mass work. In Germany, for example, we are attempting to approach the women workers by special new methods, for example, by the system of women worker delegates, to strengthen these sections of the proletariat on the revolutionary class front. Work among the masses of young workers must be improved, at all costs. If we everywhere strengthen our organisational positions in this field, the solution of the task of further developing great mass strikes, through the connection between the Party and the masses will be made still easier for us. The task of launching political mass strikes runs like a red thread through the assignment of tasks drawn up in our resolutions. The inseparable interconnection of political and economic struggles, the great significance of mass strikes as key-points in new con-

licts of classes, as the most important lever for the awakening, strengthening and raising of the revolutionary class consciousness and class power of the proletariat, was again and again emphasised by Lenin. We must strengthen the class power of the proletariat by the launching of real partial struggles, and political mass strikes, to bring forward the masses more closely and more rapidly to the decisive struggles for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

These are the problems, for whose concrete solution, all sections must work, with all their energy, on the basis of the resolutions of the XII Plenum.

The following questions were given especial significance in the trade union commission of this Plenum. We must do all that we can to win over trade union members for the revolutionary trade union opposition, and carry on a genuine and vigorous struggle for all positions in the trade unions, which are open to election. The winning of elective functions, and positions of leadership further promotes the winning over of trade union members within the individual trade unions.

The second important question was the decision that the formulation "that the economic struggle is, at present, the main form of class struggle" is to be struck out of the resolution. In place of this, the significance of economic struggles, as a means of leading on the backward sections of the workers to the revolutionary mass struggle is emphasised.

The third question concerned the main weaknesses in the work of our Red Unions. In this connection especial mention was made of defective leadership in the struggle for the daily interests of the workers, the insufficient use of the policy of a united front, weaknesses and errors in regard to the employment of proletarian democracy in the unions.

The fourth question was the especial reference to the significance of the work of Communist factions, not only in the Red and reformist unions, but also within the most reactionary and Fascist unions.

Finally, as regards the question of our work among the unemployed. The Prague decisions have hardly been carried out by any of the sections. The reformists attempted to steal a march on us by creating their own organisations of the unemployed. Our task consists in animating and activating the unemployed movement, and further in founding revolutionary organisations of the unemployed, in extending the existing ones, and above all in strengthening our work of opposition in the existing reactionary and, to some

extent, Fascist unemployed organisations and groups.

The "plans for providing work" put forward by the various capitalist governments, and which, in most cases, are mere deceit and hoodwinking, providing the unemployed with little or no work, must cause the sections to put forward immediate demands for the unemployed, as for example in questions of money relief, demands for grants of clothing, linen, shoes, milk and bread for children, etc. The militant union between factory workers and unemployed must be promoted.

In our resolutions on the first two reports, especially definite reference was made to the awakening of militant initiative against the imperialist war. In connection with the struggle of factory workers and unemployed, we must beware here of false opportunist conceptions, such as have manifested themselves to some extent in certain sections.

In the R.T.U.O. in France we have had, among other things, a tendency which went so far as to put forward the formulation: "The economic struggle itself constitutes a struggle against imperialist war." A second tendency which manifested itself especially in France, tended to say: "The anti-war struggle is a political struggle and therefore an affair of the Party only." These are mutually complementary deviations and they represent the most dangerous form of pure and simple trade unionism.

In view of the tenseness of the present accentuated situation and the great increase of the danger of war, the combination of economic struggles with the struggle against imperialist war represents a most important question, and every deviation from the Bolshevik line, becomes a danger of class betrayal to the proletariat.

The following great changes are to be observed to-day in comparison with the XI Plenum: At that time, the strikes were confined, for the most part, to the small and medium-size enterprises, and only in a few complete branches of industry did we have major mass strikes. Now, at the XII Plenum, we can observe a mighty wave of mass strikes, in the various countries, in connection with which, the inter-connection of economic strikes with political mass strikes has reached a higher stage, and is daily becoming clearer. It is our task to concentrate more and more, on the most important large-scale enterprises, especially on the key-points such as transport, chemical and metal enterprises, etc., where we are, generally speaking, still weak.

It is urgently necessary to concentrate more sharply in the direction given to our work on the

large-scale enterprises, above all on the factories of war-time importance and the railways.

We speak of the beginnings of a crisis in the Amsterdam International. This means that the process of radicalisation among the members has reached a higher stage. This stage of ferment which can now be observed among almost all members of the Amsterdam International in the various countries, presents us with a favourable opportunity to deepen the increasing cleavage separating the members of the reformist leaders, to systematically make use of this process of radicalisation, to lead the trade union members into the path of our revolutionary mass struggle.

Among the Social-Democratic, Free trade union and unorganised workers, the increasing desire to put up common daily demands is accompanied by the growth of a great militant desire for political mass strikes and general strikes for Socialism, for the destruction of the capitalist system, for the ultimate revolutionary aim, for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is our task to make positive use of all these feelings and to raise every militant urge of the masses to a higher revolutionary level.

The present situation is abundantly charged with fresh explosive matter; there is an abundance of causes, for the blazing up of revolutionary mass struggles. We must react quickly, not neglect any occasion, sharpen our revolutionary strength and fighting ability and develop it in a Bolshevik manner. We know that our struggles demand new and great sacrifices. Prison, hard labour, hunger and the rope threaten some of our best comrades and the best of the revolutionary working class. Even in a victorious advance, even in fresh revolutionary progress, we cannot always avoid the occurrence of defeat in individual countries. But that must not in any way hinder our Parties in the further great development of the struggle. Our prospects of victory throughout the entire world, the end of capitalist stabilisation and the new growth of the revolutionary upsurge will aid us and make it easier for us, despite occasional failures, to storm our way forward the more boldly for the further victories of the working class.

The way of the proletariat to proletarian power is a thorny one, strewn with sacrifices. Girded with the weapon of Marxism and Leninism, in unconditional trust in the Comintern and the C.P.S.U., in iron self-confidence in our own strength and in the mighty power of the proletariat, we must go forward with new revolutionary militant spirit to tackle the work and the tasks which await us.