

The Y. C. I. Plenum

By John Williamson



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THIS Plenum met under circumstances which showed the Communist Youth movement had reached the low point of its temporary decline, recorded in the years of 24-26, and had entered a period of gradual upward develop-

ment. The reasons for this change are due not only to the favorable objective situation but to the leadership of the Executive of the Y. C. I., which followed a Bolshevik line at all times.

THE RUSSIAN PARTY DISCUSSION

One of the principal questions was that of the recent discussion within the Russian Communist Party, having as its central point the question, "Is it possible to build Socialism in the Soviet Union?" As a result of the denial by the Opposition to this principal question, they developed a series of other fundamental mistakes as follows:

1. Underestimation of the internal forces of development within U. S. S. R.
2. A policy of narrow nationalism is being followed by the C. P. S. U.
3. The N. R. P. is a systematic retreat for the Soviet Union.
4. Incorrect relationships between peasantry and proletariat (especially exaggeration of Kulak danger).
5. Charge of degeneration of Dictatorship of Proletariat and references to Thermidism.
6. Withdraw state capital from trade.
7. Excessive taxation of peasantry and high prices on manufactured goods.
8. Assertion that no temporary stabilization of international capitalism existed.
9. Rejection and violation of elementary party discipline and attempts to organize international fractional activity in their support.

Most of these points were analyzed thoroughly and rejected. It was emphasized that the U. S. S. R. contains "all that is necessary and sufficient" for the complete construction of socialist society. A denial of this is a denial of the premises for social revolution in Russia.

The charge of "narrow nationalism" has not a leg to stand on when we remember the constant support and inspiration the Russian Revolution has been to the international proletariat. Such practical deeds as the support of the German Revolution in '23, the millions of dollars, support to the British coal miners, the support to the Chinese Revolution, shatter such arguments to the ground.

If space permitted each accusation could be analyzed and shattered. (*)

The entire policy of the Opposition is based on the old "theory of permanent revolution" propagated by Trotsky for years and just as persistently fought by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party during all this time. The entire program is based on a policy of pessimism and lack of confidence in the international proletariat.

The Opposition (led by Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev) appealed to the Party and League masses in the Soviet Union and received such a severe defeat that they themselves had to launch the "white flag" and sign a declaration admitting their breach of discipline. The Plenum of the Y. C. I., following the brilliant example of the Russian Party Conference, the Comintern Plenum, overwhelmingly condemned the Opposition and its program, branding it as a Right Wing deviation which must be fought ruthlessly. The adherents of the Opposition on the Executive, Comrades Vujovich and Michalets, were severely criticized and removed from all activity on the Executive Committee.

RATIONALIZATION OF INDUSTRY

The question of rationalization of industry (meaning scientific management) as we in America know it is a

ORG. CHANGES AT Y. C. I. PLENUM

THE Seventh Plenum of the Young Communist International closed its sessions immediately after the one month session of the Comintern Plenum. As reported in a previous issue, the Y. C. I. Plenum started prior to the C. I. plenum where the major portion of the agenda was completed.

There was present 57 participating delegates, 28 regular members of the Executive Committee, 24 delegates representing 16 Leagues and five reps of the Comintern. Including the E. C. members there were 19 Leagues represented in all. The American Y. W. L. was represented by Comrades Williamson and Zam.

At the final session, the reports of all the Commissions were heard and accepted with slight corrections. Comrade Lomonadze, who has been the active leader of the Y. C. I. Executive during this past period, withdrew from the Executive for activity in the Comintern Executive. A new Secretariat of five and Presidium of 13 was selected. The Secretariat is composed of Comrades Shatzkin (U. S. S. R.), Schueller (Austria), Gyptner (Germany), Young (England), Longo (Italy).

Comrades Vujovich and Michalets were unanimously removed from the Executive for their fractional activity and support of the right wing tendencies expressed in the Russian Opposition.

new phase of capitalist stabilization, and the attitude we must adopt towards it, received considerable discussion. Some comrades contended that we could not oppose this process, with its attacks on the living standards of the workers, young and old, as that would mean we were opposing machine development and thus be obstructing social progress. The Plenum pointed out that the main consequences of this rationalization process was the throwing out of employment of huge masses of young workers; the intensification of exploitation of those retaining employment and the subsequent lowering of the general level of resistance of the workers in the class struggle. The Plenum emphasized that we must combat this rationalization process by raising in the foreground the partial demands of the young workers, especially emphasizing that the needs of the young workers be protected in all collective agreements concluded by the trade unions. The slogans were raised, "Struggle against stabilization of capital"—"Not capitalist but socialist rationalization." In this connection the Plenum especially emphasized a formulation of Lenin, "We struggle against this development, but HOW do we struggle. We do not wish to return to artisanship, to pre-monopolistic capitalism . . . Onward thru the trusts and beyond them to socialism."

UNITED FRONT ACTIVITIES

An increased application and more successful results during the past period from the United Front tactics, was the opinion of the Plenum. Many rich experiences were given and lengthy discussion with criticism and suggestions followed. The E. C. Y. C. I. continued its United Front efforts on an international scale. In connection with the British strike the Y. C. I. suggested to the Y. S. I. a united front campaign to support the British coal miners but this so-called working class body didn't even answer the communication and in actions showed itself a true counterpart of the Amsterdammers, who had only criticism instead of support for the strike. The greatest accomplishment was the organization of seven young workers' delegations to Soviet Russia. The composition and type of these delegations was much higher this year than previously.

Especially interesting was the Italian Delegation, organized entirely illegal and containing even a representative of the Catholic Working Youth. The British Delegation had the best composition of all and reflected the conditions of the youth movement in that country, where for example the Y. C. I. thru its activities had been successful in organizing a whole series of local united fronts as well as the delegation itself, despite the opposition of the national leadership. In Italy, the Y. C. I. altho illegal, was successful in liquidating entirely the Y. S. I. thru winning over its entire membership to the Y. C. I. In the Maximilian Youth organization

the opposition was so strong that on a referendum on the U. F. with the Y. C. I., it received 40 per cent of the vote cast. In the Catholic and Peasant Youth, previously a fascist stronghold, strong oppositional movements are being built.

The Plenum recommended that in those countries where unity committees have been established they be extended in scope into real organs of political and economic struggle of the entire working youth. While the Y. C. I. retains leadership, the work must not be conducted by the Communists alone. They should become the medium of developing the activity of the non-party and Social-Democratic youth towards the Y. C. I.

Not enough efforts were made in winning over young workers from the large religious youth leagues. While basing our approach to them mostly on economic demands, we shall not refuse to draw them into political struggles, without, however, making any concessions to them. Greater anti-religious struggle was urged and co-operation with the Young Atheistic organizations recommended. The Plenum also considered it advisable to work for the organization of an Atheist International.

Very serious mistakes in application of the United Front tactics were pointed out to the Czech-Slovak and Polish Leagues, the first in connection with a proposed united front with fascist youth organization and the second in connection with support of Pilsudski in the May uprising. Both leagues admitted their mistakes and corrected them later.

The continuation on these tactics was urged as one of the principal tactics of the Y. C. I. Further youth delegations was urged as well as campaigns in favor of youth delegations from the Soviet to other capitalist countries.

ANTI-MILITARISM

With the intensification of preparations for new wars, it is of special importance that the anti-militarist activity, which has been inexcusably weakened, be intensified, was the opinion of the Plenum. Lengthy discussion took place regarding incorrect activities on this field, particularly of the American League. The tendencies of pacifism finding expression in a series of leagues was condemned and a sharp formulation of the line to be followed in our anti-militarist activity laid out.

In France where the most successful work within the forces was being conducted, the Y. C. I. had set up an agitation for a series of partial demands in connection with the compulsory conscription, such as 12 months' service only, railroad accommodation, etc. Some 20 Recruit Leagues had been organized and a periodical was issued regularly for the army. In Nancy, a joint demonstration of workers and sailors took place. As a result of the activity of the Y. C. I., 12 members are at present in jail. Despite the increased White Terror

the illegal leagues (forming one-half of all in the Y. C. I.) increased their activities. The importance of a clever combination of legal and illegal work in such countries was emphasized. Such legal activities must find expression thru sport organizations, Workers Clubs, youth sections in the trade unions, etc. It was also decided after a most thorough discussion that it is advisable and possible to create legal youth organizations parallel with the illegal organizations. A dangerous tendency was encountered which tended to believe that it was not possible to expand organizationally and extend activities although forced to be underground. This sectarian tendency was repudiated.

WHITE TERROR

In the report of the E. C. to the Plenum this question was especially stressed and the need for a permanent campaign being organized in all countries. At the present time White Terror is on the increase. The following figures of youth victims for the past period of 8 months gives an idea of its extent: In Bulgaria 200; Romania, entire league in jail; in Hungary, Weinberger and several score more; in Poland, 1,000 in jail; in Italy no record can be obtained; in Korea several hundred Y. C. I. members were shot; in France 20 soldiers and sailors members in jail; in England 10; etc., etc. The Plenum especially rapped the philosophical attitude towards this White Terror, showing the suffering of our members and the practical demand it does to the movement.

Extensive reports were given by the British and Chinese Leagues on the activities of their respective leagues. In both of these countries the league had showed itself well equipped to cope with the situation, altho experiencing many difficulties. Each had doubled its membership during this period. Reports were also given by the Russian and German leagues on their activities, experiences and defects.

AMERICAN Y. C. I. (**)

The anti-militarist activity of the league was investigated at great length and our policy criticized quite severely and correctly so. The tendency to base our activity on the petty bourgeoisie (National Student Forum, etc.) elements instead of the young worker as well as our entering the A. F. Y. in N. Y. district, after it had developed from the united front stage to an actual organization, were the principal points of criticism. Our activity re the Passaic and mining crisis were commended and the general line of policy, especially the internal unity line was endorsed. It was emphasized that the Y. W. L. must reject all tendencies in the party to reintroduce again the old fractional tendencies and also tendencies finding expression to dilute the political character of the league.

GENERAL

Other important questions considered were the economic struggle and trade union organization, work among opponent organizations, sport activity, political education and schools and Pioneer work.

The Plenum urges all leagues to continue intensifying their activities, utilizing the united front tactic on all fields; recognizing the importance of concentration on the economic and trade union field; greater attention to opponent organizations; an effective campaign against the White Terror; immediate application of previous Plenum decisions re adoption of new methods in all leagues and a greater all-around attention be given to crystallizing the political influence of the league and preventing thru proper inner life of the present great turnover in membership.

*Every reader should attempt to read the discussion on this question, as it is given speaker by speaker in the current issue. Full sets of these are obtainable at the Workers Book Store, 19 S. Lincoln St., Chicago, Ill.

**In a future article I will deal with the Plenum in relation to America in particular. An article in the Jan. 1933 issue of the Magazine Section of the Daily Worker presents the correct position on anti-militarist activity at this period.