

World Socialism

SOME COMMENTS ON THE COMINTERN

By HERBERT ZAM

Those revolutionists whose sole hope for a healthy movement was in the reform of the Communist International are now placed in the position of the doctor who cured a patient of alcoholism only to discover the patient had become a drug addict.

At its Seventh Congress, the Communist International undoubtedly corrected, or rather approved the correction of the most glaring errors of the first six years of its existence. It would be a serious error, however, to conclude from this that the Comintern was convalescing. On the contrary, the correction of these errors was only the first stage of the road which is leading the Comintern deeper into the swamp of opportunism than any section of the international labor movement has been in since the dark days of August, 1914.

In spite of its brave words, the Seventh Congress realized the serious isolation of the communists from the labor movement, brought about in almost a decade of ultra-left lunacy. Those who argue that the Comintern is preparing a "new assault upon labor" are entirely mistaken. Quite the contrary; the Comintern has issued an order for complete and extensive retreat along the front.

No More Splitting

No longer are the Socialists "social fascists." The idiotic slogan "class against class" is hardly a memory. Gone is the theory of "united front from below". Dual unionism, union splitting in general, and the more vulgar forms of disruptive tactics are condemned. A promise of greater degree of autonomy to the individual communist parties, both in their inner questions as well as in their specific tactics was formally made. A friendly approach to the Socialist Parties was adopted, including a promise of support in those countries where these parties are in coalition governments, such as Sweden, Belgium and Czechoslovakia; in general, the idea of a single revolutionary party of the proletariat, hitherto rejected with scorn, was approved.

All this is to the good, and if the "turn" were confined to these matters, there would be just cause for jubilation. But such, unfortunately, is not the case. Marx showed that anarchism is punishment for the opportunist sin of the working class. Now it seems that opportunism is punishment for a long period of adventurism. Having left the rarified stratosphere, the Comintern was not satisfied to remain on firm ground but plumped with both feet into the reformist mire.

"National Defense"

The Seventh Congress of the Comintern definitely approved the idea of "national defense" which has been its line since the Stalin-Laval communique approved it and extended it to a world scale. According to the new theory of the Comintern, there is only one government in the world which does not deserve support: Hitler. Practically all others fit into the many "worthy" categories from the Scandinavian "democracies" to poor, offensive France. A good word can even be said for Italy—is not Italy a friend of France which is a friend of the Soviet Union?

The entire orientation arises from Soviet diplomacy in connection with the Hitler regime.

Fascism

This new attitude was expressed in the Seventh Congress method of handling the question of fascism. From being viewed fascism as a transition to communism, the Comintern now looks upon fascism as the sole expression of capitalism, and it proposes to carry on a "class against class" without a "united front" from below. This is the reforming of the new line of the "United Front" in all countries, a united front which is to include all "left or seeming left" forces, and from which all "right or seeming right" forces are to be excluded.

satisfied—rather than hold with the perspective of Socialism as the alternative to fascism.

Coalitionism

The position adopted on war and fascism lead directly to the third of the unsavory trinity—coalitionism. True, the Comintern does not use this term. "United Front governments" is more euphonious but not more acceptable. The Comintern, like all proponents of coalitionism, overlooks one important item: Fascism developed precisely in the period of coalition governments.

Look at Germany. The masses turned to fascism because the coalition could only offer them the status quo, with which they were dissatisfied. The Socialist Parties discredited themselves through participation in the coalition governments. The Comintern now proposes that the German road should be followed in all countries. The result can only be the same.

But the Comintern coalition policy is even worse than that applied in Germany. The German social-democrats did not claim coalition as a victory for the worker. They considered it the "lesser of two evils." They felt they had no choice and apologized for accepting it. The communists on the other hand have become militant proponents of coalitionism and hail it as the first step toward—proletarian revolution!

Russian Domination

In comparison with these new "deviations," the old ones fade into insignificance. They serve only to emphasize the lack of realism, the mechanical changes, the isolation which characterize the Comintern's existence. Once again we see the dominant role of the Russian situation. Just as the period of ultra-leftism was a result of the 5-year plan, the period of opportunism is directly the result of Russia's new diplomatic policies since Hitler's withdrawal from the League of Nations.

The internal system remains—changes result from orders from above, not from discussion by the membership. There is no admission of previous errors—a few scapegoats are found. All those communists who during the "third period" raised their voices against the ultra-left are still denounced as "renegades" and "traitors."

The leadership is even further narrowed. Of the five reporters at the Seventh Congress, one was a Russian and four were political exiles living in Russia—a German, a Bulgarian, a Lithuanian, an Italian—not one representative of a substantial party.

In spite of its changes, and even more because of its changes, the Comintern remains what it was—a broken reed, an unreliable instrument, whether for fighting the everyday battle or in the fight for Socialism.

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