

The X Plenum of the ECCI

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(CONTINUED FROM THE LAST ISSUE)

Stabilization and the Third Period

The chief source of the revisionist line of the X Plenum was its false estimation of the question of stabilization and the third period. The line of the Plenum amounted to giving up completely the whole idea of the third period as developed by the VI Congress. It is significant that neither Comrade Kuusinen nor Manuisky so much as mentioned the "third period" in their reports, altho one of the stock "arguments" of the EccI against the "rights and conciliators" is failure to "recognize" the third period. The Plenum not only dropped the whole idea of the third period but it adopted a characteristically negative Trotskyist attitude towards stabilization.

The III Congress of the Comintern (1921) recognized in its famous resolution on "The International Situation" that the first post-war period was reaching its end and that a period of "stabilization" was setting in (the *second* period). It was, however, not until 1925-6 that the idea of stabilization was precisely defined. The VI Plenum (February 1926) in its resolution on "The Current Problems of the International Communist Movement" pointed out that the *second* period was a period in which capitalism in practically all countries had begun to recover economically from the collapse of the first immediate post-war period altho the level of production had not yet reached pre-war standards. The VI Congress (July 1928) noted the setting in of a *third* period and characterized both as follows (Report of Comrade Bukharin):

"From an economic point of view, from the point of view of an analysis of the capitalist economy, the second period may be described as the period of the restoration of the productive forces of capitalism . . ."

"The second period passed away to give place to the third period, the period of capitalist reconstruction. This reconstruction was expressed in the pre-war limits being exceeded quantitatively and qualitatively . . ."

The Theses of the VI Congress declare:

"Finally came the third period which in the main is the period in which capitalist economy exceeds its pre-war level and in which also the economy of the U.S.S.R. almost exceeds its pre-war level . . ."

The VI Congress also pointed out that this growth of the productive forces beyond the pre-war level was accompanied by a relative contraction of world markets leading to the development of sharp contradictions and opening up of a period of revolutionary perspectives. The revolutionary perspectives implied in the third period, according to the VI Congress, are to be traced not to the fact that the third period is the period of the liquidation of stabilization but to the fact that in the third period the development of stabilization to a new level, meeting with the contraction of the world markets, sharpens the contradictions within stabilization and leads to the growth of the revolutionary struggle. Such were the views of the VI Congress, visible in every line of the main reports and resolutions. At the VI Congress itself there was already a pronounced tendency on the part of the "corridor congress" to reject these perspectives and in particular the idea of the third period. In fact the majority of the German delegation (controlled by Thalmann, Neumann, etc.) at first openly repudiated the concept of the third period as "opportunist" and only afterwards gave a grudging acquiescence to it. But, altho "accepted" in words, the VI

Congress line was rejected and revised in fact, in the first place by the new EccI and then by the "new leaderships" of the various Parties. This came out as clear as daylight at the X Plenum.

The X Plenum threw away entirely the yardstick by which the Comintern had always estimated the question of stabilization: the economic situation (especially the level of production) — and replaced it by vague impressionistic phrases. In this way Comrade Kuusinen reached the conclusion that:

"The 'third period' is not a period of stabilization but a period of the liquidation of capitalist stabilization . . ."

which is obviously directly contrary not only to the line of the VI Congress but to all decisions and concepts of the Comintern on the question of stabilization. It should now be clear why the reporters and speakers at the X Plenum avoided referring to the third period or else spoke of it as the "so-called third period" or put the phrase in quotation marks. *The very idea of the third period was rejected by the X Plenum.*

But the X Plenum went even further in its revision. Not only did it give up the third period as laid down by the VI Congress but it rejected the idea of stabilization altogether! Comrade Kuusinen declared that "stabilization" was a very "confusing" idea and said that "the 'contradictions of stabilization' . . . is a rather vague expression," altho this has been a basic concept of the Comintern for many years and is referred to many times in the VI Congress Theses. Indeed the words "contradictions of capitalist stabilization" form one of the chapter headings of the Program. In this negative attitude towards the question of stabilization the Plenum took a position very close to that taken by the Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc in 1926.

The turn to Trotskyism is found also in another direction. If it is true as Comrade Kuusinen maintains, that the third period (which set in about 1927) is the period of the "break-up of stabilization" then Trotsky and Zinoviev were quite correct when thruout 1926 they shouted that the end of stabilization was at hand; consequently also the C.P.S.U. and the C.I. were quite wrong in rejecting their views (see VII Plenum, December, 1926). This must be stated openly by the present leaders of the EccI who are smuggling in Trotskyist conceptions. What the XV Conference of the C.P.S.U. said of the Trotskyites applies now to the X Plenum itself:

"The Opposition Bloc falls into despair in view of the retarded pace of the world revolution and therefore slips from a basis of a Marxist analysis of the objective economic situation down to 'ultra-left' self-deception and loud-mouthed phrase-mongering."

The general point of view of the X Plenum is essentially the much discredited "apex theory" of Comrade Bittleman and the Foster group. Both have a pessimistic point of departure: they maintain that it is impossible to have any revolutionary perspectives unless you believe that—"American imperialism is about to reach the apex of its development"—that stabilization is being liquidated. The VI Congress rejected such inverted social-democratic conceptions and maintained that it is the very development of stabilization to a new level accompanied by the narrowing of world markets that sharpens the inherent contradictions of stabilization and opens up revolutionary perspectives.

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