

The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI

By Will Herberg

(Continued from the last issue.)

Technical Progress and Rationalization

The VI Congress in its Thesis declared:

"There is not the slightest doubt that considerable progress has been made in the technique of industry in a number of capitalist countries. In some countries (United States, Germany) it has assumed the character of a technical revolution . . ."

The report of Comrade Bukharin in behalf of the delegation of the C.P.S.U. developed this point to great length. This was one of the leading ideas of the Congress.

At the X Plenum Comrade Kuusinen suddenly discovered a new "Right deviation"—the "overestimation of the technical development of capitalism." The objections of Comrade Varga that facts cannot be either "right" or "left" or even "conciliatory"—but are either facts or not facts—proved of no avail. It has now become a sign of opportunism to recognize facts and figures.

The main "argument" Comrade Kuusinen held out against the line of the VI Congress was his reference to the fact that: capitalism inherently places obstacles in the way of technical development and monopolist capitalism, in particular, because of its parasitic character, means stagnation for technique. Is it possible that Comrade Kuusinen has suddenly forgotten the fact that within a period of general decline it is possible to have stages of rapid and considerable advance? Lenin makes this very clear in his book on *Imperialism*:

"It would be erroneous to think that this tendency towards stagnation precludes the rapid growth of capitalism, for such is not the case . . . In general capitalism develops with incomparably greater rapidity than before, but this development becomes generally more irregular . . ."

In fact Comrade Kuusinen's argument is precisely like that of the ultra-lefts at the III Congress who opposed the very idea of recognizing a temporary rise of capitalist economy because imperialism is, as Lenin says, the period of "declining" capitalism! At the III Congress Lenin publicly declared that "if such a mode of argument finds any hold in the Comintern it would be a disaster for the whole revolutionary movement." This is especially true today.

But in its attempt to revise the conceptions of the Comintern on the question of technical progress the X Plenum found an obstacle in rationalization. Comrade Kuusinen then proceeds to "remove" this obstacle by revising every idea the Comintern and every Marxist has ever had about rationalization.

Comrade Kuusinen defines rationalization:

"Capitalist rationalization in the true sense means enforcement of maximum intensification of labor for the individual worker thru the reorganization of the process of labor according to the conveyor (belt) system or according to similar system of automatic speeding up and control of labor intensity."

This analysis—which makes rationalization simply a matter of the intensification of labor and omits entirely the factor of the heightened productivity of labor due to technical advance—is fundamentally anti-Marxian and against the often expressed views of the Comintern. But for the sake of another "argument" against the VI Congress the X Plenum was ready to confuse and falsify every idea the Comintern ever had on the vitally important question of rationalization. It should be remembered that this gross misconception of the nature of rationalization leads to very serious errors in the tactics for the practical

everyday struggle of the Comintern against capitalist rationalization.

Radicalization and the "New Revolutionary Wave."

On the question of the radicalization of the working masses the X Plenum completely rejected the objective, Leninist estimation of the VI Congress in favor of *superficial impressionistic phrases* without basis or content and often contradictory.

The Thesis of the VI Congress characterized the left-ward movement of the proletariat as follows:

"The resistance of the working class . . . is growing and assuming extremely diverse forms. The development of the contradictions of capitalist stabilization, rationalization, etc. . . . inevitably intensify the class struggle and broaden its basis. The general process of the 'proletarian swing' to the left continues further . . ."

Further on, the same thesis speaks in the following terms of the development of the revolution:

" . . . the slow rate of development of the crisis of capitalism in the course of which some of the principal parts comprising the capitalist system are on the upgrade while others are undergoing a process of relatively slow decline."

In contradiction to this balanced and realistic picture we have at the X Plenum such ideas as that of Comrade Molotov who maintains that "there can be no fourth period since the third period ends in revolution." Some comrades spoke of the "ripening of a new revolutionary wave," others maintained that we were already "in this new wave of revolution," while others went still farther. In his official report on the trade union question Comrade Lozovsky declared in so many words:

"The characteristic sign of the present . . . is the heightened political sensitivity of the broad masses . . . This is a characteristic sign of the eve of a revolution . . ."

But surely the height of "ultra-left" self-deception" was reached in the remarks of Comrade Moireva, member of the Presidium of the EccI, who asserted with the approval of the X Plenum.

"Unquestionably we stand today in a whole series of countries before extraordinarily significant revolutionary events. It is my opinion from the May events as well as from the recent Polish events that there were a series of elements in them that recall our July days. The fact alone that the Communist Parties had to restrain the most advanced sections of the working class in their surge forward, speaks for a rapidly approaching revolutionary situation."

When we recall that the July (1917) days in Russia were the days in which, after the first revolution, the proletariat was preparing for the struggle to seize power (which actually took place three months later), the full significance of the above remarks may be appreciated. *The substitution of wild impressions for objective analysis, the construction of strategy and tactics upon superficial phrases is bound to lead the Comintern to disaster if unchecked.*

(Continued in the next issue.)

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