

10th Plenum of the Communist International

The Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International will be recorded in history as the most fruitless and superficial world gathering of a revolutionary movement that ever assembled to solve the burning problems with which it is confronted and to diagnose the diseases corroding its vitals.

Characteristic of the gathering was the monotonous mediocrity of its spokesmen and their auditors. The sessions of the Communist International, once illuminated by the genius of Lenin and Trotsky, flanked by Zinoviev, Radek, Rakovsky, Bucharin and a host of others, were "graced" this time by such fourth-rate functionaries as Kuusinen and Manuisky, the main political reporters, droning out their platitudinous wisdom to an audience of officials. The importance attributed to this Plenum can perhaps best be estimated by the fact that Stalin, the present leader of the International, its spokesman and theorist—save the mark!—did not even bother to attend a single session, much less to make an address.

Of the political reports, the less said the kinder one is to the reporters. Very few even of the Party members today pay much attention to what a Kuusinen or a Manuisky have to say; even fewer read it. Manuisky may repeat a hundred times that he considers "the capture of the majority of the working class to be a burning task of the political moment today confronting the mass Communist Parties of Europe", but everyone knows that there are no mass Communist Parties in Europe and that Manuisky took four hours to fail to tell his inattentive audience how to remedy the defect.

As for the dry-as-dust professor, Kuusinen, with his ABC class lecture on economics, he reached the height of his directive genius in the Comintern at the 10th Plenum in a bloodless battle of quotations from Marx and Lenin with Varga. When he had no quotations left to fire, he simply stated: "I am not quite certain if a Red professor would not be able to ferret out some sentence in Marx' works as a proof that Marx had even taken the effect of the conveyor system into consideration." In the face of the sharp defeats of the Comintern in half a dozen countries, of its decline in every section, of the advancing strength of the social democracy internationally, of splits and degeneration in the International, we have this pitiful Punch-and-Judy battle of words occupying half the Plenum's time.

One gets the same impression of senility from the remarks of most of the speakers, chewing over again, like old men, the cud of infantile theories on the offensive, on social democracy, on fascism, on trade union work, for which better men than they were whipped by Lenin and Trotsky almost a decade ago.

At this Plenum the "Third Period"—probably because Bucharin was its co-parent with Stalin—did not occupy the center of the stage. That place of honor was reserved for the new theory of "social fascism", and it was mauled about by one speaker after another. Bear in mind that it has become one of the main-springs of Comintern policy today. It appears in every manifesto, every thesis, every article and news-story in the Party press. Yet, after all of its phases had been exhausted—even Bela Kun's theory of "the possibility, nay, even the necessity of the transformation of democracy into fascism"—it remained for Martinov to admit that although "the question of social fascism is now of tremendous and fundamental importance, yet no definition of social fascism has been given in the theses or in the main reports"! As to Kolarov, who probably had no other answer to Varga's contentions, it remained for this oyster to shed a pearl of truly classic luster: "As a matter of fact, bourgeois statistics have now entered into the period of their fascization, becoming transformed into fascist statistics. This is a fact which comrade Varga overlooks!" Had Kolarov produced nothing else in his career, he would achieve eternal fame by that alone.

The same wearying blabber in a vacuum featured the "struggle against the Rights and the Conciliators". Serra was denounced, Humbert-Droz and Ewert were denounced, Weisert was threatened. Bucharin was openly attacked. But only one of them was present and none spoke. The Right wing is not yet ready to play its full hand of cards. When it does, Manuisky and Kuusinen may have a different song to sing.

But it is with Piatnitsky, head of the organization al section of the Comintern, that the greatest interest

lies. According to the theses of the International, the Communist Parties are now on the very verge of capturing the majority of the working class, and in many cases, of entering into acute revolutionary battle for power, in the streets, on barricades. A sober review of Piatnitsky's report shows in what position the sections of the International are today with regard to their organizational strength. Exaggerated though most of his figures still are, they nevertheless give shocking proof of the tremendous decline of the membership of the world Party. They are a striking refutation of all the sickeningly bombastic claims of the daily Party press. His report is worth reading. We give a small excerpt from it here, summarized and tabulated:

PARTY	MEMBERSHIP IN				
	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Czecho-Slovakia	138,996	93,220	92,818	138,000	150,000
Great Britain		5,000	10,730**	9,000	5,556
France	68,191	83,326	65,230	56,010	52,526

*Tremendous drop reported by secretary since new Party crisis.

**In October, at the time of the great strikes.

These figures are typical, and that even they are highly colored is clear from Piatnitsky's report that the American Party has between 9 and 11 thousand members, when the real figure is closer to 3 or 4 thousand. And in every case, the perspective for the next future is an additional decline. The picture Piatnitsky gives of the trade union work of the various Parties, of the virtual liquidation of the shop nuclei, of the general passivity and indifference of the membership as a whole, is one of the blackest yet painted in our movement. Piatnitsky's only remedy is an appeal that new members must be recruited, that more work must be done, that all resources must be utilized, i.e., a commonplace; and yet no one else had any thing else to propose for this alarming loss of blood in the Comintern,

These generals who talked so loudly of the approaching revolution never looked back once to see that their armies are melting away or dying of political malnutrition. Not a moment was wasted on the really burning questions before the revolutionary movement; the Thermidorian danger in the Soviet Union and the platform of the Opposition; the two class worker and peasant Parties sponsored by the Comintern which still exist in India, Japan and Mexico; the new situation and consequently the new problems of the Chinese revolution; the danger of corruption and decay of the Communist Parties; the destructive ultra-"Left" somersaults that are discrediting the movement in Europe and America and alienating the masses of the workers, and numerous other vital questions.

If there is such a thing as a Third Period in the International then surely it is the period of the ideological and organizational decline of the Parties. The echo of its hollow rattle is a warning sound to all conscientious Communists.

How Not to Build New Unions

The *Daily Worker* (9-17-29) carries a story from North Carolina which says in part: "Ten thousand leaflets calling for a one-day protest strike . . . have been issued. 'Every mill worker into the National Textile Workers Union,' and 'Every class conscious worker into the Communist Party,' are the slogans of the leaflet, which is signed by Hugo Oehler, southern organizer of the National Textile Workers Union, and Bill Dunne, organizer for the Communist Party."

We cannot think of a more harmful and incorrect act yet taken by the Party in the Gastonia fight than the issuance of this joint leaflet with those slogans. It is one thing for the Communist Party to urge workers to join the N. T. W. U. It is entirely senseless for the N. T. W. U. to sign its name jointly with the Communist Party urging workers to join the latter organization—particularly in the present situation in North Carolina. That is not the way to build the new unions. It is the way to "politicize" them to a sectarian death, to "Communistize" them out of existence as a mass organization. "The whole of the Communist problem," said Lenin, "is to be able to convince the backward, to work in their midst, and not to set up a barrier between us and them, a barrier of artificial childishly 'Left' slogans." That is precisely what the leaflet does. It is incomprehensible how comrades like Oehler and Dunne can be got to endorse such ridiculousness. Neither Communists nor unionists will be made that way.