

About the C. P. Plenum Thesis

THE "NEW TURN" TWISTS BACK

by Herbert Zam

(Concluded from last issue)

For almost three years, the Communist Opposition has been insisting that the serious crisis in the Party is brought about by sectarian, ultra-left policies, which isolate the Party from the masses and the mass organizations and paralyze its capacity to mobilize the workers. After three years of howling at "right opportunism," the "right danger" and the "Lovestone right wing," after expelling all those who dared suggest that, not "right" deviations, but ultra-left adventurism was ruining the Party, after putting the ultra-leftists in power and permitting them to run the Party on the rocks, the Party leadership now innocently suggests that there is an ultra-left danger after all and that it occupies first place in the Party's shortcomings! Listen to the resolution:

"The chief obstacles which stood in the way of carrying out a correct mass policy and in the further development of the Party are the following:

1. The strong **sectarian tendencies** (emphasis in original) in the entire work of the Party, as well as in the mass organizations—tendencies which are based on deeply rooted formalism. The Party carries thru the united front in a rigid and formal way. It has not yet learned how to connect itself up firmly with the broad masses of non-Party and reformist workers, work in the old unions, to work on the basis of their concrete needs (general demands) and to draw up the demands together with them. Thus, the Party appears before the masses as a Party for the workers but not the Party of the workers."

Four years ago, the Comintern characterized the Party as the "stalwart leader of the workers," as having ceased being a propaganda organization and having become a Party of action. Three years of the "new line" and the "new leadership," which were to have "transformed" the Party, etc., etc., and the leadership is compelled to admit that they do not even know how to draw up proper demands or to work in trade unions. Is any further commentary needed regarding the conditions of the Party in the United States, of the entire Communist International?

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And What Remedies?

Well, having duly taken note of the sectarian character of the Party's work, what remedies are proposed by the "leaders"? Here they are:

"In order to overcome sectarianism which constitutes the chief obstacle in the revolutionary mass work of the Party, the Party must carry on a consistent struggle against right opportunism as the main danger . . ."

What hypocrisy! Or perhaps we had better say: What stupidity! What blindness! Eliminate sectarianism by still more sectarianism! Fight leftism by still

greater leftism! Pile isolation upon isolation! Pat yourself on the back as great leaders! Find more scape-goats! Expel more Lovestoneites! Smash and destroy everything! That is how to build a mass Party.

The sectarianism and isolation of the Party can be overcome by abandoning the policies which are sectarian and cause isolation. They are:

1. A wrong attitude to the Social-democratic and reformist workers and reformist organizations—the theory of "social-fascism."

2. A false trade union policy—dual-unionism and union-splitting in place of working in the old unions and building them.

3. The abandonment of the united front in favor of the pseudo-united front "from below only."

4. The slavish and mechanical imitation of Soviet Party activities, blind obedience without thought and without discussion of all instructions from the E.C.C.I.

5. A system of Party dictatorship in the mass organizations and among the non-Party masses, a system of leader dictatorship inside the Party, the condemnation of any organization as "social-fascist" if it is not quickly won over to the Party position and attempts to split it, disruption of meetings of other organizations, an attitude of intolerance towards all other views in the labor movement and in the Party.

Regarding this system of "Party dictatorship," it is interesting to quote one who carried on an energetic campaign against all conceptions and practices of "Party dictatorship." Polemizing against it, he declared that the conception must be rejected because it would mean:

"1. To the non-Party masses: 'Don't dare to contradict, or to discuss matters; the Party is supreme; the dictatorship of the Party has been established.'

"2. To the members of the Party: 'Act more resolutely; tighten up the screws; pay no heed to what the non-Party masses say; the dictatorship of the Party is in force.'

3. To the Party leaders: 'You can enjoy the luxury of self-satisfaction; you can have a touch of swelled head if you like; a Party dictatorship has been set up, and of course that really means the dictatorship of the leaders.'

"The present moment is one at which it is more than ever incumbent upon us to keep these dangers well in mind, at a time when the political activity of the masses is increasing. Now, in especial, the Party must be ready to pay close attention to the voice of the masses, must have a fine ear for their demands, must display extreme caution and show peculiar elasticity in its policy. Now, more than ever, will the Party leadership of the masses be im-

posed to the experience of those who still follow them. If they accept, then not only is the labor front broadened, but the course of the actual struggle will help to expose the reformists for what they are.

2. Another objection: Is it possible for united front organizations to carry on any fight at all unless they are under Communist leadership?

Yes, but only within definite limits. They cannot, of course, carry on revolutionary struggles for power unless they are under Communist leadership. They cannot even carry on the more militant forms of struggle for immediate demands, unless the Communist influence is strong. But—the necessary Communist influence is not won by asking for it but by beginning the struggle under the given conditions in which the Communist Party may still be in a minority and convincing the workers in the course of the struggle and thru the experiences of the struggle, and thereby win their support.

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These are only some of the most important questions. Others, dealing with the problems of Fascism and "social-fascism", the Far Eastern situation, Party democracy, etc., will be taken up in future issues of the *Workers Age*.

periled if Communists should suffer from swelled head."

Peculiarly enough, this was written by nobody else but Joseph Stalin ("Leninism," p. 51), who is today the expert in violating his own best advice and who has, unfortunately, more followers in its violation than he ever had in its acceptance. The attitude of the Party leadership to the voices of the non-Party masses is today precisely as Stalin described, or as Harrison George explained in the language of the "third period" (And what, by the way, has happened to the "third period"?):

"Those who accept the Communist program but vilify the Communist leadership are left social-fascists."

That is, the dictatorship of the leaders is in full force. No matter how many of the fundamental principles of Communism you agree with, if you don't believe that Harrison George and Earl Browder make the best possible leaders for the American proletariat, then you are a "left social-fascist." (Presumably, we should be grateful for the "left"!) If the Party is to overcome its sectarianism and isolation, it must change its policies in accordance with the criticism of the Communist Opposition, it must return to the tactical principles of Leninism. The maintenance of the present policies will only deepen the crisis, no matter what internal shifts are carried out.

The Party must do still another thing. It must change its attitude toward those who have been the pioneers in the struggle against sectarianism and ultra-leftism. It must readmit them to the Party and give them an opportunity to influence the Party's policies—that is, it must restore internal Party democracy. It must open the doors of the Party to all those who accept the principles of Communism and are willing to carry out Party decisions,

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regardless of differences on questions of policy. The present resolution indicates that the Party leadership is as far as ever from understanding the need for Communist unity. It does not realize that the present disunity in the ranks of Communism is one of the greatest obstacles to the advance of Communism and one of the greatest weapons in the hands of our enemies. Is it not time to end the drivel about "renegades" and take back into the Party the hundreds of able, self-sacrificing revolutionists who have been expelled? Is it not time to realize that here are some of the forces which the Party so badly needs? It is up to the membership of the Communist Party. The Party's future is in your hands. You need but act in a determined, Leninist manner to make sure that that future shall be a bright one!
