

The Tenth Plenum ECCI

A Political Analysis

By WILL HERBERG

THE X Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International was essentially a political vacuum; yet it will certainly occupy a significant position in the history of the Comintern. For it put the stamp of official approval upon the revision of the essential principles of Leninism, of the traditional line of the Comintern and of the decisions of the VI Congress. It served as a point of departure for the continuation and development of this revisionist anti-Leninist line for the future. At the same time, however, the Plenum showed in an indirect and distorted form, it is true—the catastrophic results that are already clearly noticeable after only a few months of operation of the new course.

The X Plenum must be studied from the point of view of its revision of the principles of Leninism and the line of the Comintern on the part of the present leadership of the EccI. Here it must be kept in mind that the roots of the revision must be traced to the time of the VI Congress itself—at least. At this Congress (July 1928) there really took place two congresses: the official Congress whose leader was Bukharin, speaking for the old EccI and the delegation of the C.P.S.U., and the unofficial anti-Bukharin caucus, the “corridor congress,” whose floor leaders were Thalmann, Neumann, Mingulin, Lominadze, Foster, Cannon, etc., supported in secret by Stalin. Already at the Congress itself—in spite of unanimous votes and “no differences”—a vicious underground agitation went on against the main line of the Congress and against its chief defenders (Bukharin, etc.) Because of the “relation of forces” the revisionists did not dare to come out into the open; they contented themselves with demoralizing propaganda and preparing the revision to come. In this connection the “reservations” of the minority of the American delegation (the so-called “Johnstone’s reservations”) are of importance. They were made with the advice, consent and assistance of the leaders of the “corridor congress” (see Foster’s interview with Stalin); they represented in general the line of the future revision. Immediately after the Congress the revisionists—with Stalin now openly at the head—emerged into the open, organizationally and politically.

The revisionist anti-Leninist line of the X Plenum is most clearly apparent in the main reports of Comrade Kuusinen and Manuilsky and in the remarks of the best-known official spokesmen of the “new leadership” of the EccI (Molotov, Chitaroff, Bela Kun, Thalmann, Ulbricht, Neumann, etc.). Here the full flower of the revision is exhibited without shame or restraint. The actual political Theses adopted at the X Plenum contain the revision in a more vague, negative and indirect form, except in the section dealing with the inner situation of the Comintern. This resolution is characteristically a colorless document (except, of course, for the sections on the inner situation which are correspondingly bitter and venomous); it consists partly of badly joined paragraphs copied from the VI Congress Theses and partly of inappropriate agitation and propaganda material. *It contains absolutely no economic analysis, no serious political analysis, and no important conclusions except on fighting those whom they chose to label “rights and conciliators.”* This is quite in harmony with the nature of the main reports and with the character of the whole Plenum. As Comrade Varga complained:

“The chief shortcoming in the Theses as well as in the report of Comrade Kuusinen, as far as the analysis of the international situation and especially the economic situation

We Have Forced a Discussion

We have forced a discussion. The whole policy of the “new leadership” from the very beginning has been to prevent any form of discussion of the basic problems raised in the Address and arising out of the present crisis in the Comintern. In place of discussion—terror, the “enlightenment campaign.” But our political educational work among the Party membership has begun to tell and in panic before the rising tide of resistance in the Party the “new leadership” has been forced into a discussion of some sort—into an attempt to answer the political issues raised by us. The articles of Bedacht (“Lovestone’s Labyrinth of Contradictions”), of Browder (“Lovestone and the ‘Corridor Congress’”) and of Stachel (“Capitalist Stabilization, the Third Period and Lovestone Renegades”) are signs of this; there will be more. The Foster-Stachel-Weinstone clique has been forced to attempt, in a partial, distorted, and one-sided way, to defend themselves politically. This is a great achievement for once they do this the bankruptcy is so apparent that it exposes itself.

Of course the “new leadership” will not allow even the slightest semblance of a free discussion on the very basic questions raised. To ask for such a discussion in the Party today is to court expulsion. The Party press is closed to any one who attempts to defend Leninism against revision. A serious discussion of the important questions before the American Party today—even an honest presentation of the facts will be found today *only* in the material issued by the C.P.-Majority Group, especially in its press organ, *Revolutionary Age*.

The C.P.-Majority Group has issued mimeographed material on the important questions under discussion. The following are the main bulletins: “*The Revision of the Line of the VI Congress*,” “*A Political Analysis of the Tenth Plenum*,” “*The Truth About the ‘Corridor Congress’*,” “*The American Situation in the Eyes of Comrade Molotov*,” “*The Historical Right Wing in the American Party*,” as well as the printed “*Appeal of the Convention Delegation to the X Plenum*.” Comrades may obtain copies of any of the above for 5¢ a piece, to cover expenses. Write to: *Revolutionary Age*, 37 East 28 Street, Room 807, New York City.

is concerned, is their generality. Neither in the report of Comrade Kuusinen nor in the Theses are the concrete factors in the present situation sufficiently examined.”

The Plenum was “well prepared.” In the period following the VI Congress the imposition of the revisionist line upon the Comintern was necessarily accompanied by the distortion of the political line, the overturning of leadership, the demoralization and disorganization of the various Parties and the institution of a regime of terror, removal and wholesale expulsion in nearly all sections of the Comintern. The Plenum was certainly “made safe” for revision and not a voice of protest could be heard.

One of the most depressing features of the X Plenum was the thoroughgoing substitution of superficial and empty revolutionary-sounding phrases for an actual Leninist examination of the situation. Even the consideration of facts and figures was branded as an opportunist deviation. Varga, the only speaker who as much as attempted a concrete economic analysis, was attacked by all of the main speakers as “contaminated by the capitalist facts” (Kuusinen). How far the spirit of the X Plenum departed from the Marxist method of analysis is indicated by the historical remark of Comrade Kolarov:

“In fact bourgeois statistics have now set into a period of fascization. They have become fascist statistics.”

(Continued in the next issue).