

# The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI

## The United Front and Trade Union Questions

By Will Herberg

(Continued from last issue)

### The United Front

THE real nature of the fantasies of "social fascism" and the ultra-left phrases of "revolutionary waves," etc. is shown in the complete rejection by the X Plenum of the tactic of the united front. Lenin and the Comintern repeatedly pointed out that the united front tactics must be applied until the barricade struggles—and after.

But if the Social-democratic masses "from top to bottom" are becoming fascists then they must be treated as fascists. What becomes of the distinction between leaders and masses? What becomes of the united front? Here is the answer of X Plenum (concluding remarks of Comrade Manuilsky):

*"Let us consider the question of the tactics of the united front. We have never considered it as a formula for everybody, for all times and peoples . . . Today we are stronger and we proceed to more aggressive methods in the struggle for the majority of the working class."*

So that the united front was all right for the second period but is too tame for the "third period" à la Heinz Neumann! Could a more disastrous rejection of Leninism be conceived? And yet Comrades Manuilsky speaks of "winning the majority of the working class."

### Trade Union Questions

The false revisionist line of the X Plenum in the mobilization of the masses came to the sharpest expression in the new line in trade union work. This new line is in essentials a sectarian anti-trade union course, amounting in effect not only to a rejection of the tasks of the Communists in the mass organizations but even to a repudiation of the essential role of the trade union movement—whether under reactionary or revolutionary leadership—as the elementary form of the class organization of the proletariat.

The false trade union line finds its roots in two sources: in the absolutely false estimation of the present objective situation and in the equally false attitude towards the mass organizations of the workers under reformist control, as expressed in the dangerous theories of "social-fascism." We have already examined these points. The ultra-left impressionistic phrases about the "new revolutionary wave" have given rise to the promulgation of a new edition of the theory of the "offensive all along the line." Every economic movement has become a "counter-defensive or a direct offensive struggle."

On the basis of the undoubted fact that the fusion of the reformist trade union bureaucracy with the state apparatus as well as with the apparatus of trust-capital has been greatly intensified in the last period, the X Plenum drew the absolutely false conclusion that the trade unions as such have ceased to be centers of class organization and have been transformed into "agencies and appendages of the capitalist state." It is clear that such a thoroly anti-Marxist conception is only the "trade-union" phase of the theory of "social-fascism."

The distinction between the bureaucratic leaders, "cringing at the feet of imperialism," on the one hand, and the "sincere but mistaken" masses is the primary distinction underlying Leninist strategy. To deny this distinction in word or deed is to break with Leninism!

The X Plenum did not have the political courage to declare

openly for the immediate inauguration of a split course; it would have been "untactful" and "premature." It satisfied itself with general declarations as to the "permissibility" of splits "under certain conditions" and with the putting forward of certain "organizational" proposals of profound political significance which would in effect mean the setting up of dual organizations immediately: the *vertrauensmaenner* system, the proposal (of Lozovsky) to set up "independent commissions opposed to the reformist unions" to lead strikes, to make terms, to conclude wage and hour agreements, etc. and to "maintain their existence after the struggle in order to see that the agreements are carried out," i.e., to set up new unions in fact, etc.

Already this split course has shown its results in England and in Germany and its continuance will certainly lead to isolation and disaster.

It is well known what Lenin thought of such split tactics. But unfortunately our "leaders" of today have forgotten entirely the lessons contained in Lenin's pamphlet on *Leftism*.

The negative anarcho-syndicalist orientation towards trade union work shows itself not only in the attitude towards the reformist unions but also in the attitude towards the red unions. The official theory of the X Plenum is that industrial struggles must be led not by the unions but by "fighting leaderships" (*kampfleitungen*) to which the red unions must serve as auxiliaries.

This is equivalent to the liquidation of the red unions for it denies them the role absolutely essential to any trade union organization—the role of leading economic struggles.

The anarcho-syndicalist deviation of the X Plenum shows itself most crassly in the utterly false estimation of the role of the organized workers and the relations between organized and unorganized. The organized workers are looked upon as "more or less reactionary" just because they are organized while the unorganized workers are considered the "most advanced section of the working class." Thus the position is reached that lack of organization is a revolutionary virtue. This is anarcho-syndicalism with a vengeance.

The new trade union line of the EccI as laid down by the X Plenum is not the line of Leninism. But if the "new line" can find no comfort in the teachings of Leninism it can at least fall back upon the threadbare doctrines of the ultra-left sectarians, upon the Trotskyites, and in the long run upon the syndicalists. The trade union line of the EccI today agrees in essentials with the trade union theses put forward by the ultra-left Korschites (the group *Entschiedene Linke*) in 1926. In the organ of the *Leninbund* (German Urbahns-Trotskyist organ, September 20, 1929) Lenorovics writes:

*"The trade union resolution of the X Plenum goes far, far indeed, even as far as 'Trotskyism'."*

The same author characterizes the trade union resolution as follows:

*"A step forward, even tho only on paper."*

The German syndicalists also fall in line. The old German syndicalist, *Lintner*, who certainly speaks with authority for the syndicalist viewpoint, recently announced publicly:

*"The Communist Party has taken over the best from syndicalism. I have absolutely no objections of any sort against the decisions of the Party which correspond to our conceptions."*

(Continued in the next issue)