

STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF THE COMINTERN (1928-1935)

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STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF THE COMINTERN (1928-1935)

I. Introduction

The years 1928 and 1935 mark the years of the Sixth and Seventh Congresses of the Communist International. Each Congress is associated with a distinct policy or set of policies. The years following the VI Congress, from 1928 to about 1934, were identified as the "third period", the period of the "united front from below" and the attack on "social-fascism." The years after the VII Congress were ones in which the Communist movement took up a new tack in the struggle against fascism, social-democracy, and capitalism. The VII Congress modified the tactics of the united front, made overtures to social-democracy at all levels, and proposed the formation of a broad multi-class "Popular Front" to be built around the "core" of the (single-class) proletarian "united front." There were substantial differences on other issues as well, which will be gone into in this report.¹

This period, and the two basic perspectives and policies of the two Congresses, is increasingly being referred to by our present movement for several reasons. One is the split between the Chinese Communist Party and the Party of Labor of Albania over the strategy for revolution in this period and other issues. This split has opened the minds of some in the so-called "dogmatic" wing of the movement on a number of questions: the overall correctness of the line of the CPC and PLA since the break with Soviet revisionism in the late 1950's and before; the question of an international center for the world communist movement; the attitude of Marxists toward the war that appears to be developing and the nature of World War II; the role of nations in the "third world" in the context of war and in all countries, etc. Another reason, related to the above, is the contention and collusion of the USA and USSR and the danger of world war which this is bringing. Since this wing of the movement views the USSR as having restored capitalism and (based on the viewpoint of Mao) as being a "fascist state" of "the Hitler type",² the parallel with the 1935 period is being made, and the question of what kinds of alliances have to be made to counter the threat of Soviet expansionism is being raised.

Finally, too, after all these years, questions are arising about the "united front against imperialism" as the strategy for revolution in an imperialist country like the U.S. In this connection, the views of Stalin on strategy and tactics are increasingly being referred to, usually in the imitative and dogmatic way which has characterized the majority of "M-L" analysis in our movement, but now with overt opportunist twists on a larger scale. The most flagrant example of this is probably the October League's (i.e. CPML's) characterization of the Soviet Union as the "main social prop" of imperialism, which, according to Klonskyite reasoning, legitimizes OL's attack on the USSR as the force against which the "main blow" should be struck.

Because of the importance of an understanding of strategy and tactics, and the confusion on these points that most of us have had, the report will begin with an overview of the approach of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao to strategy and tactics and to related problems.

II. The Approach of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao to Programme, Strategy and Tactics

In Foundations of Leninism (1924), Stalin dealt in an authoritative way with the bases of Marxism-Leninism, and this work became a handbook for the then developing Leninist parties throughout the world. Chapter 7 is titled "Strategy and Tactics" and in it Stalin discusses such topics as "strategic leadership" and "tactical leadership"; "stages of the revolution, and strategy" along with "the flow and ebb of the movement, and tactics", etc. Materials from earlier articles were used in this work.³

The 1928 Programme of the Comintern follows this usage, devoting a section to "The Strategy and Tactics of the Communist International in the Struggle for the Proletarian Dictatorship."

But this usage--the "strategy and tactics" conception--was by no means common in Lenin's writings or in those of other Bolsheviks (if Trotsky can be believed) in the pre-World War I years. Even after the war, Lenin was seldom given to the use of both terms, preferring "tactics". In Mao too, apart from military matters, the translators use "tactics" far more than they use "strategy." The "united front" as practiced in China, for example, is always referred to as a "tactic" by Mao. He seldom mentions political "strategy".

Trotsky explains this usage in the Bolshevik party by saying that it was only under the influence of military terminology from World War I that the concept of revolutionary strategy took roots in the party. Before the war, he says, the party (of which he was not really a member) spoke only of "tactics." (Leon Trotsky, The Third International After Lenin, p. 75).⁴

Whether this explanation is correct or not, Lenin's writings during that period (as well as later) hardly ever spoke of "strategy". That this is true is perhaps most strikingly shown in a volume published in 1936 by International Publishers titled Strategy and Tactics of the Proletarian Revolution. The volume consists of excerpts from Lenin, Stalin, Marx and Engels. Even in sections devoted to both strategy and tactics the compilers are unable to find any writing by Lenin which approaches the subject in those terms. Here, too, lots of references to tactics, none to strategy.

Another indication of Lenin's approach may be seen in his "Karl Marx: A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism" (1914), which contains no section on "strategy" but a major section on the "Tactics of the Class Struggle of the Proletariat."

The question arises, what is Lenin's theoretical approach if he doesn't use the concepts of strategy and tactics?

On the whole, Lenin prefers to speak of the party's program and tactics, or sometimes, the theory of Marxism, and tactics. For example, in the "Preface" to Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution (1905), he says "The revolution will confirm the program and tactics of Social-Democracy in actual practice" (p. 2). In "Karl Marx," Lenin writes of the democratic (bourgeois) revolution, the socialist revolution, and the tactics of class struggle in relation to each. That is, he speaks of the Marxist theory of the democratic revolution (in this case, bourgeois democratic) and the socialist revolution and the tactics appropriate to each. Many other examples could be cited.

In general, Mao Tse-tung takes the same approach, although he seems to use even more terms to describe the policy of the party. Even in summing up Stalin's contribution, he speaks of the "theory and tactics of proletarian revolution" (Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Works, Vol. 1, p.330) rather than adopt Stalin's terminology. Elsewhere in Mao we find a number of terms that are closely related: line, plans, principles, policies, tactics, measures, methods of work; general programme, specific programme; ideas, theories, analyses, etc. Lenin and Stalin also use many of these terms, but in a more restricted way than Mao does. In my opinion, these particular differences are not of great significance.

What Mao shares with Lenin, and of course with Stalin, is the same basic theory of revolution, the theory that is embodied in the party program. An early formulation is found in Lenin's writings on the 1905 period when he speaks of "the well-known Marxist thesis concerning the three major forces of the revolution in the nineteenth (and the twentieth) century and its three main stages":

The gist of this thesis is that the first steps of revolution is the restriction of absolutism, which satisfies the bourgeoisie; the second is the attainment of the republic, which satisfies the 'people'--the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie at large; the third is the socialist revolution, which alone can satisfy the proletariat...We actually have here an ascent by three different schematic stages, varying according to the classes, which, at best, will accompany us in this ascent. But if we interpret this correct Marxist scheme and before any ascent begins, we sought to 'draw up a plan of action in the revolutionary epoch,' we should be virtuosi of philistinism. (V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 8, p. 465)

The first two "stages" refer to the old type of bourgeois revolution (led by the bourgeoisie) and the new type of bourgeois revolution (led by the proletariat). The third stage is the socialist revolution. In later versions, the first type referred to is generally dropped, since the bourgeois revolutions against feudalism have largely been completed and conditions have changed enough so that the general approach is a one-stage revolution for the developed capitalist countries (socialist revolution in one stage) and a two-stage revolution in the undeveloped, colonial countries where feudalism still persists (new democratic revolution followed by the socialist revolution). This scheme differs from the perspective of Trotsky, who would not hear of halting at any step or stage of the "ascent," regardless of the correlation of class forces.

Starting with this common framework, Lenin, Stalin and Mao also recognize that there definitely will be periods, stages (or sub-stages) in each revolutionary process. For example, see Lenin on the periods 1904-1907, Stalin on strategic periods and tactical periods (5.65), or Mao on sub-stages (he uses the term stage or period) in the Chinese revolution (MSW 1.290, 1.326, 2.344f, etc.). In these period, as conditions change, tactics will change "dozens of times." (Stalin).

This elementary fact, that there can be periods or "stages" within a revolutionary process, including our revolutionary process, is something that none of the would-be vanguard parties has ever really dealt with. This is related to their unwillingness or inability to make an analysis of the devel-

opment of monopoly capitalism in this country, a class analysis, etc. Lately the RCP has made an initial and feeble attempt in its articles on "revolutionary work in a non-revolutionary situation."

Looking at it from this perspective, the question that comes up is, how does Stalin fit "strategy" into this approach?

In "Concerning the Question of the Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists" (1923) Stalin discusses "strategic plans" in relation to "historic turns" in the history of the Russian revolution. The "historic turns" are directly related to: 1) "the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia," 2) "the course toward the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia" and 3) "the course toward the proletarian revolution in Europe" (Works 5.177-81). The third turn refers to Europe, but Stalin has in mind the breach in the front of imperialism and the beginning of the epoch of proletarian revolution on a world scale. For each of the historic turns there is a strategic plan.

For the first turn (Lenin, 1905), the Bolshevik strategy, Stalin says, referring us to Lenin's Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, was planning "the revolution's main blow at tsarism along the line of a coalition between the proletariat and the peasantry, while the liberal bourgeoisie was to be neutralised." (Stalin, Works 5.178) The Mensheviks had a corresponding, incorrect plan: "the main blow at tsarism along the line of a coalition between the liberal bourgeoisie and the proletariat."

For the second turn (Lenin's April 1917 "Theses"), the Bolshevik strategy planned "the main blow along the line of liquidating the power of the bourgeoisie by the combined forces of the proletariat and the poor peasants, along the line of organizing the dictatorship of the proletariat in the shape of a Soviet Republic." (Works 5.180) The Menshevik strategy vacillated but finally took the form of "the gradual but steady removal of the Soviets from power and the concentration of all power in the country in the hands of the 'Pre-parliament', the prototype of a future bourgeois parliament."

For the third turn, the Bolshevik strategic plan was "To do the utmost possible in one country (one's own--J. St.) for the development, support and awakening of the revolution in all countries." (Works 5.183, Stalin is quoting Lenin).

In Foundations of Leninism, these "stages" in the revolution are given further elaboration, and there is a significant difference in the use of the idea of the "main blow," as we will see. The stages are given as "First stage. 1903 to February 1917." "Second stage. March 1917 to October 1917." and "Third stage. Began after the October revolution." (pp. 84-85)

In Foundations of Leninism, and elsewhere, Stalin proposes the strategic plan, the strategy, for a fundamental stage of the revolution, corresponding to the schema of "ascent" mentioned earlier. For example, the objective of the first stage is "to overthrow tsarism and completely wipe out the survivals of medievalism." For the second stage, it is "to overthrow imperialism in Russia and to withdraw from the imperialist war." For the third stage, it is "to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, using it as a base for the defeat of imperialism in all countries." That is, the historic turns and strategic plans correspond to the basic theory of the revolutionary process of certain primary stages. Stalin is not speaking here of periods within a

stage, or sub-stages, as he does elsewhere. So, it seems to me, in this respect, in relation to strategy, turns, and stages, Stalin is on solid ground, inasmuch as he relates strategy to the basic theory or programme of Marxism.

Returning to the topic of the "main blow," which has so far caused more confusion in our movement than has strategy and tactics, in his second treatment of the "main blow" (in Foundations of Leninism), Stalin does not make the same point as he does earlier.

In Foundations the "main blow" is to be directed at the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in the first stage of the revolution, because this class wanted to liquidate the revolution by compromise with tsarism. In the second stage: "Direction of the main blow: isolation of the petty-bourgeois democrats...who were striving to win over the toiling masses of the peasantry and to put an end to the revolution by a compromise with imperialism." Here Stalin claims the main blow is directed at the compromising class or party, not at the main enemy to be overthrown.

But, as mentioned, in his "Concerning the Question of the Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists," Stalin said the "main blow" was directed at tsarism in the first stage and at the bourgeoisie in the second stage. Stalin uses a military analogy "to note the different ways or paths along which the 'main blow' can be aimed", but he does say the main blow is directed, not at the compromising parties, but at the main enemy.

It might be argued: 'There is really no inconsistency. In the second formulation, Stalin is simply indicating, as he says, the direction of the main blow, not its ultimate target. You aim the main blow at the main class enemy in the direction of the compromising parties.' But, among other difficulties, this argument doesn't reckon with Stalin's support for the idea of directing the main blow at the "social-fascists," only a few years later. The theory of "social-fascism" was the simple application of this teaching of Stalin (the version in Foundations of Leninism) to the European social-democrats in the early years of the Great Depression.

At the very least, Stalin's works are inconsistent⁵ on the point, and in such a critical theoretical matter, this is a serious error.

There is further word from Stalin on the point. In "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists" (1924) Stalin writes:

What is the fundamental strategic rule of Leninism?

It is the recognition of the following:

- 1) the compromising parties are the most dangerous social support of the enemies of the revolution in the period of the approaching revolutionary outbreak;
- 2) it is impossible to overthrow the enemy (tsarism or the bourgeoisie) unless these parties are isolated;
- 3) the main weapons in the period of preparation for the revolution must therefore be directed towards isolating these parties, towards winning the broad masses of the working people away from them (Works 6.401-402).

Stalin goes on at some length to amplify the point, noting the Bolsheviks were

at one time accused of "Cadetophobia" and at another with displaying "excessive hatred" of the Mensheviks, and he claims that Bolshevik ferocity against them was necessary.

Given that this viewpoint was applied to the Social-Democrats in the 1928-1934 period, at a time when Stalin was the clear leader of the Comintern and must have stood behind the policy, it is evident he did hold the view that the "main blow" must be directed at the compromisers. The correctness or incorrectness of this policy in relation to the Social-Democrats of the 1920's and 1930's will be evaluated later.

Two side points on this. The RCP actually deals with these differences in Stalin, and they reject the view that the main blow should be struck at the intermediate forces. Although this needs qualification, this seems to me generally correct on RCP's part. But then RCP proposes its own "strategic rule" and this is far too open-ended. (Revolution, February 1977) Second, the Workers Congress claims Stalin wanted us to distinguish between the main blow of the class and the main blow of the party. The party supposedly aims the main blow at the main enemy. This distinction is false. The party leads, or tries to lead, the class; it doesn't and cannot stike "main blows" apart from the class. (See WC pamphlet, "The Main Blow in the Present Historic Period".) If WC were correct, you would think, in such an important matter, both Lenin and Stalin would have spelled out this distinction, but they did not. Further, Stalin's attempt to utilize Lenin to bolster his view on the main blow in Foundations of Leninism is unconvincing. Lenin's plan for the first stage, for instance, is:

The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution, by allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie.

To "crush" the main enemy and "paralyze the instability" of the intermediate class (intermediate in this situation). There is nothing here to justify the theory of the "main blow," whether of the class or its party. It seems to me Stalin is modifying Lenin, and WC goes further and modifies Stalin. But this cannot be taken up fully here.

In relation to this period (1928-1934) the main point is that the plan to strike the "main blow" at the compromising party or parties was implemented. This compromising party was the Social-Democratic party in each country, controlling or having influence over large sections of the working class. It was these parties, particularly but not exclusively their leaders, who were branded as "social-fascists" by the Comintern.

III. The Comintern's Program, Strategy and Tactics of the "Third Period"

The Comintern finally adopted a program at the VI Congress, which was held from July 17 to September 1, 1928. The Program took an orthodox approach to the "schema" of revolution. In part four, section 8, "The Struggle for the World Proletarian Dictatorship and the Principal Types of Revolution," the Program remarks:

The international proletarian revolution consists of a series of processes, differing in character and in time: purely proletarian revolutions; revolutions of a bourgeois-democratic type which turn into proletarian revolutions; wars of national liberation, or colonial revolutions. It is only when this development reaches its conclusion that the revolutionary process emerges as the world proletarian dictatorship. (in Jane Degras, The Communist International, Volume 2, p. 505)

It should be pointed out that while this schema is 'orthodox' in distinguishing between the direct revolution for socialism ("purely proletarian revolutions") and the indirect (those that will require transitional phases), it also introduces a distinction between revolutions in "countries at a medium level of capitalist development" and in "colonial and semi-colonial countries." As far as I know, this distinction is seldom, if ever, found in Stalin and Mao on "types of revolution." And I have seen no evidence that Stalin criticized this formulation in the Program (which was drafted largely by Bukharin, who lost his posts not long after the VI Congress).

The Program states that "in highly developed capitalist countries (the United States, Germany, England, etc.)... the principal political demand of the programme is the direct transition to the proletarian dictatorship."

For countries at "the medium level of capitalist development (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, the Balkans, etc.)... in some of these countries it is possible that the bourgeois-democratic revolution will develop more or less rapidly into the socialist revolution, while in others there may be types of proletarian revolution which will have many tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution to accomplish."

For "colonial and semi-colonial countries (China, India, etc.) and independent countries (Argentina, Brazil, etc.)... Here the transition to the proletarian dictatorship is as a rule possible only through a series of preparatory stages, only as the outcome of an entire period of transformation of the bourgeois-democratic into the socialist revolution." (Degras, p. 506)

The Program also speaks of a fourth category of country, "still more backward countries (for example in parts of Africa)," in which "the struggle for national liberation is the central task." "Here victorious national uprisings may open the road to socialism while by-passing the capitalist stage, if sufficiently powerful help is given by the countries with a proletarian dictatorship."

The Program also contains a section on "The Strategy and Tactics of the Communist International in the Struggle for the Proletarian Dictatorship." The Program discusses in a very general way the tasks and tactics of the communists in the different categories of countries. (Degras, p. 513f) Several pages are devoted to combatting the various forms of 'socialist' reformism."

This general perspective on the revolutionary process and "types" of revolution which the Program presents was not modified in any significant way during the "third period" (1928-approximately 1934).

At the VI Congress, the new tactical line known as the "united front from

below" was presented. The line was embodied in the second major document from the Congress, the "Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International." The "Theses" take the view that capitalism is undergoing a period of renewed crisis; stabilization is coming to an end and class struggle is sharpening. Reformism still "shows signs of life" in the European and American labor movements because of "the slow rate of development of the capitalist crisis." The CI discerns a rightward movement by the labor bureaucracy and the social-democrats, as they try to shore up capitalism at a time of developing crisis. It describes the "new ideology of social-democracy" as "thoroughly bourgeois and actively imperialist." (Degras, p. 461) These changes necessitate "changing the form of the united front" tactics: "To sharpen the struggle against social-democracy shifts the emphasis decisively to the united front from below." This meant that the communists would try to win over those workers under the sway of the social-democratic parties and unions by appealing directly to those workers. Appeals would not be made to the leaders or to the parties as a whole. The Congress noted that the tactics had already been tried out in the French elections and in the English movement as a result of decisions of the IX Plenum of the ECCI (January 1928).

These tactics, the united front from below, were consistently upheld by Comintern leadership throughout this period.

The tactics were based in part on a new evaluation of social-democracy, or rather, an intensification of the negative view taken of social-democracy. In a section of the Program titled "The Revolutionary Crisis and Counter-Revolutionary Social-Democracy," the CI outlines the history of treason to the cause of the working class which the leaders of social-democracy had engaged in since the first world war. Nor does it condemn only the leaders, but attacks "social-democracy" in general because it "engaged in armed struggle against the first proletarian republic," it "placed itself openly on the side of the imperialist slave-owners against the colonial slaves (the English Labour Party)," and it "actively supported the most reactionary executioners of the working class (Bulgaria, Poland)". It says that social-democracy has two wings, but both are treacherous. The Right wing is openly counter-revolutionary while the 'left' "is used to execute particularly subtle maneuvers for deceiving the working class." (Degras, p. 483) It sums up social-democracy by saying:

The principal function of social-democracy today is to undermine proletarian unity, which is essential for the struggle against imperialism. By splitting and destroying the united front of proletarian struggle against capital, social-democracy is becoming the chief pillar of imperialism within the working class. International social-democracy of all shades, the Second International, and its trade union branch the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions, have thus become the reserves of bourgeois society, its most reliable mainstays.

This appraisal of social-democracy was also maintained throughout the third period; in fact, it was deepened. Stalin referred to social-democracy as the "twin brother" of fascism and social-democracy was frequently called "social-fascism."

The next congress of the Communist International was not held until 1935, although the Statutes of the CI, adopted at the VI Congress, stated that "the world congress shall be convened once every two years." (Degras, p. 467) In the interim the responsibility for guiding the line of the world communist movement rested in the plenums of the Executive Committee of the Communist

International (ECCI). These were held as follows: X Plenum in July 1929; XI Plenum in March-April 1931; XII Plenum, August-September 1932; XIII Plenum, November-December 1933; and in 1934, the meeting of the preparatory committee for the VII Congress.

From this distance and on this topic, the plenums of the ECCI in these years present the picture of a firmly held tactical policy confronted by resistance in a number of the sections of the Comintern (the parties in each country) and a development of events which contradicted that policy. These events centered around the rise of fascism, particularly in Germany, a rise not expected in Comintern theory and one which found the policy of the Comintern at odds with reality.

A brief overview of some of the themes and emphasis of these plenums follows.

The bourgeois scholar Kermit McKenzie takes the view that the X Plenum (1929) and the meeting of the enlarged Presidium of the ECCI in February 1930 took a harder, stronger line than did the XI Plenum and the XII Plenum. This appraisal is shared by the Soviet revisionists in their Outline History of the Communist International. (For McKenzie see his useful Comintern and World Revolution, 1928-1943.) On this point both of these sources seem correct.

The X Plenum pointed to the increasing capitalist crisis, the growing war danger, the concomitant radicalization of the masses and urged a policy of vigorously combatting the social-democrats to win the masses of workers. The main error to be fought within the sections of the Comintern was the Right danger. As an example of the plenum's view of social-democracy, the ECCI wrote:

The plenum of the ECCI instructs all sections of the CI to pay special attention to an energetic struggle against the 'left' wing of social-democracy which retards the process of the disintegration of social-democracy by creating the illusion that it--the 'left' wing--represents an opposition to the policy of the leading social-democratic bodies, whereas as a matter of fact, it whole-heartedly supports the policy of social-fascism. (Degras, Volume 3, p. 47)

At the X Plenum there was opposition to the new tactical line of the CI, particularly in the Swedish CP, in which a split took place over these issues, and in the Polish CP. (Degras, pp. 38-39)

At the February 1930 Presidium meeting, the new themes were repeated: "particularly great importance attaches to work in the reformist unions, conducted on the basis of the tactics of a united front from below, to liberate the masses from the influence of reformist traitors." (Degras, p. 108)

The XI Plenum of the ECCI met from March 25 to April 13, 1931. There were 180 delegates (50 votes) representing 25 countries. According to Degras:

The ECCI Materials for the seventh Comintern congress (1935) said that the XI plenum met at a time when the conditions for a revolutionary crisis were maturing in a number of countries, when the danger of war on the USSR was increasing, and social-democracy was clearing the road to fascism. The chief question at the plenum was how to

organize the fight against fascist aggression, the social-democratic policy of the lesser evil, and the preparations for imperialist war. It showed that social-democracy was 'acting as a leading detachment of world imperialism, preparing war against the Soviet Union.' (Degras, p. 150)

At the plenum the view was put forward that:

The fascist regime is not a new type of State; it is a form of the bourgeois dictatorship in the epoch of imperialism. It grows organically out of bourgeois democracy... Only a bourgeois liberal can accept that there is a contradiction between bourgeois democracy and a fascist regime, that these two political forms are different in principle; by constructing such a contradiction, social-democracy is deliberately deceiving the masses. (Degras, p. 151-52)

This was said by Manuilsky in his opening speech on the proposed "Theses on the Tasks of the Comintern Sections in Connection with the Deepening of the Economic Crisis and the Development of the Conditions Making for a Revolutionary Crisis in a number of countries." It was necessary to take up the topic since there was "still great reluctance" (Degras) in many communist parties to treat the social-democrats as "social-fascists". Manuilsky went on to correctly criticize those communists who considered the fascists to be enemies of bourgeois dictatorship, but he also displayed an underestimation of fascism (and underestimation of fascism at this Plenum was criticized by the next Plenum) when he said:

Our definition does not place fascism in the position of a deciding factor of the revolutionary crisis, but allocates it the modest role of one of the symptoms of the disorientation of the ruling classes and of their endeavor to find a way out of the position by the suppression of the working class... Fascism is not a new method of rule distinct from the whole system of bourgeois dictatorship. Whoever thinks that is a liberal. (Degras, p. 152)

The resolution of the Plenum bore out this viewpoint:

The recent growth of fascism was possible only because of the support given by international social-democracy since the war to the bourgeois dictatorship, whatever its form. Social-democracy, which, by fabricating a contradiction between the 'democratic' form of the bourgeois dictatorship and fascism, blunts the vigilance of the masses in the struggle against the rising wave of political reaction and against fascism, and which conceals the counter-revolutionary nature of bourgeois democracy as one form of bourgeois dictatorship, is the most active factor and pace-maker in the development of the capitalist State towards fascism. (Degras, p. 159)

The tactic proposed was the united front from below:

The successful struggle against fascism requires the communist parties to mobilize the masses on the basis of the united front from below against all forms of the bourgeois dictatorship and against every one of its reactionary measures which clears the way

for open fascist dictatorship. It requires the rapid and decisive correction of errors, which arise primarily from the liberal idea of a basic difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy, and between the parliamentary and the openly fascist forms of the bourgeois dictatorship; such ideas are a reflection of social-democratic influence in the communist parties. (Degras, p. 159)

So, for the XI Plenum there was no "contradiction", no different "method of rule", no "basic difference", no difference "in principle" between bourgeois democratic rule under capitalism and fascist rule under capitalism.

As A. pointed out in his report "The Bourgeois State in Crisis", the CI in this period did not clearly distinguish the primary enemy; it took a strong stand against social-democracy, fascism, and capitalism, to use its own terms. But because social-democracy was considered the "Chief Social Pillar of the Bourgeoisie" there was a tendency to aim most of the fire in their direction. Later this took the explicit form of directing the "main blow" at social-democracy.

The attitude of the CI leadership at the time can be seen in this un-attributed quote from the plenum:

It has been said that our chief enemy is fascism. Such a view contains within itself great danger, because it bolsters up social-democracy, which tries to justify all its vileness and all the vile-ness of the bourgeois-democratic government by the fact that it is, they say, 'the lesser evil'...Comrade Thaelmann (German CP) showed plainly that social-democracy can most successfully play the role of fascists, not to mention that it clears the way for fascism by its whole policy. (Degras, p. 149)

The stand on the relation between social-democracy and fascism taken up by the CI leadership at this plenum (and other plenums in this period) was resisted by a number of sections of the Comintern at the time; was rejected by Trotsky in his writings, mostly on the KPD and the German situation, at the time; and was rejected by the Comintern leadership and most of the world movement in 1935. Here I'll touch on the resistance of the CI sections.

In July of 1931 Kuusinen wrote that only the KPD had done anything along the lines of implementing the resolutions of the XI Plenum, and an article in the journal Communist International in March 1932 made the same point. Resistance is also seen in a November 1931 article in the same journal which speaks of the large "regroupings" taking place in the communist parties after the adoption of the new tactics at the VI Congress of the CI:

As a result of these regroupings, during the period between the tenth and eleventh plenums of the ECCI (approximately during the course of two years), seven members of the ECCI have been excluded for opportunist deviations from the line of the Comintern and for breaches of party discipline; moreover, the leadership in twelve communist parties has been completely changed. (Degras, p. 150)

These removals were said to be mainly of the Right opportunists in the parties, though some "Left" opportunists had also been scuttled. Some parties were lo-

sing members in this period, which in some cases was undoubtedly related to the policy of combatting "social-fascism." Thorez wrote in August 1930 that the French party's membership had fallen from 56,000 in 1926 to 39,000 and there was strong resistance in the party to the new CI line. (It was the French party that was to be the first on the line when the time came to reverse the "united front from below" policy.) This particular drop should not be attributed solely to the new policy, since nearly all the parties in the Comintern were far from being models of Leninist parties, turnover was high in most periods, and at this time temporary or casual "comrades" probably left the party as well as some principled elements.

The XII Plenum was held from August 27 to September 15, 1932. At this plenum there were 178 delegates (38 votes) from 35 countries. The items on the agenda were the international situation and the tasks of the sections; the lessons of strikes and the struggle of the unemployed; the Far Eastern war (Japan had invaded Manchuria) and the struggle against imperialist war and anti-Soviet intervention; and socialist construction in the USSR.

This plenum retained the fundamental features of the XI plenum, the same basic policies and attitudes were upheld; however, the Soviet revisionists in their Outline History of the Communist International claim that signs of a more realistic attitude appeared in the plenum.

The "Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern Sections," as well as the speech of Kuusinen, noted that the period of new wars and revolutions was drawing closer, but had not yet really begun. In these circumstances, the task was the preparation of the masses for the transition to a revolutionary situation. This was not a denial of the old formula from the Third Congress of the CI--winning over the majority of the working class--but in the new circumstances the emphasis on preparation of the masses for the going over to a revolutionary situation seemed more appropriate.

In reference to social-democracy, the resolution of the plenum stated:

Both fascism and social-fascism (social-democracy) stand for the maintenance and the strengthening of capitalism and bourgeois dictatorship, but from this position they each adopt different tactical views...The social-fascists prefer a (more) moderate and (more) 'lawful' application of bourgeois class coercion, because they do not want to contract the basis of the bourgeois dictatorship; they guard its 'democratic' drapings, and strive chiefly to preserve its parliamentary forms, for without these, the social-fascists would be hampered in carrying out their special function of deceiving the working masses. At the same time the social-fascists restrain the workers from revolutionary action against the capitalist offensive and growing fascism, play the part of a screen behind which the fascists are able to organize their force, and build (clear) the road for the fascist dictatorship. (Degras, p. 225, additions by Degras)

Further:

The mass influence of the social-fascists has declined (in almost all countries). For that very reason their maneuvers have become more energetic and varied... In these maneuvers particular zeal is

displayed by the 'left' social-democratic groups, who simultaneously carry on a frenzied campaign of slander against the communist party and the USSR. Only by taking fully into account the variety of the forms of the policy and maneuvers of the social-fascists in all their concreteness will the communists be really able to expose and isolate the social-fascists. Only by directing the main blows against social-democracy, this social mainstay of the bourgeoisie--will it be possible to strike at and defeat the chief class enemy of the proletariat--the bourgeoisie. And only by strict differentiation between social-democratic leaders and workers will the communists be able, by means of the (revolutionary) united front from below, to break down the wall which often separates them from the social-democratic workers. (Degras, p. 226)

Here we see an explicit statement of the theory of the main blow against the intermediate force, while the bourgeoisie remains "the chief class enemy." This is in line with Stalin's theory described earlier. The emphasis which the resolution puts on differentiating the social-democratic leaders from the s-d workers is indicative of the fact that a number of communists had not been doing this; it was considered that social-democracy down to its lowest organs was becoming fascistic. And earlier declarations by CI leaders had referred to "social-democracy," not just the leaders, as "social-fascist." This proposed differentiating is one area in which the Outline History sees improvement in the CI line, correctly, I think.

The general tasks of the CI and its sections were judged to be:

1) against the capitalist offensive; 2) against fascism and reaction; 3) against the impending imperialist war and intervention in the Soviet Union (Degras, p. 228)

The specific tasks of various sections of the CI were also spelled out; for Germany they were:

To mobilize the vast masses of toilers in defence of their vital interests, against the bandit policy of monopolist capital, against fascism, against the emergency decrees, against nationalism and chauvinism, and by developing economic and political strikes, by struggle for proletarian internationalism, by means of demonstrations, to lead the masses to the point of the general political strike: to win over the bulk of the social-democratic masses, and definitely overcome the weaknesses of trade union work. The chief slogan which the CPG must put forward to offset the slogan of the fascist dictatorship (the 'Third Empire') and the slogan of the social-democratic party (the 'Second Republic') is the slogan of the workers' and peasants' republic, i.e., Socialist Soviet Germany, which will guarantee the possibility of the voluntary affiliation of the people of Austria and other German territories. (Degras, pp. 228-229)

Germany was a focal point for CI interest, since contradictions were again becoming acute there. (We have covered the development of the crisis in our report on the bourgeois state.) It should be noted that the above was written before Hitler came to power (January 1933), but not long after the July

1932 elections in which the social-democrats (SPD) had dropped (24.5% to 21.6%); the KPD vote had risen (13.1% to 14.3%); but the Nazi (NSDAP) vote had zoomed: 18.3% to 37.3%.

Within the CI sections, the French party was prominent in its resistance to the "social-fascism" line. Many in the French party questioned the correctness of the "Class against Class" line. Membership continued to decline and the circulation of L'Humanite continued to fall.

On the other hand, the German CP, under the leadership of Ernst Thaelmann, continued to try to hammer out or hammer in the "social-fascism" line. As was mentioned in an earlier report, "Jan Valtin" gives a vivid picture of the German C.P. at this time as well as in the 1920's. Valtin delineates the difficulties of implementing the CI line, including such measures as joint action with the Nazis against social-democratic meetings, joint voting with the Nazis against the social-democrats in an election, etc.⁶

At the XII Plenum, Thaelmann said that the KPD's struggle to win the proletariat was

directed in the first place against the two most important counter-revolutionary mass parties, the SPD and the NSDAP. But even in this struggle the main blow must be directed against the SPD, and it must be made clear to the masses that the Hitler party and the possibility of a Hitler government cannot be fought if the mass influence of . . . the "moderate wing" of fascism, namely the SPD, is not first overthrown. (Degras, p. 214)

Some leaders within the German CP objected to the Thaelmann line, notably Neumann and Remmele. At the XII plenum they argued that fascism in power would mean a change in the system of capitalist rule, that fascism stood in contradiction to bourgeois democracy. This, it seems to me, was correct on their part. However, they also elaborated a series of other views that were proved wrong, and on which they recanted. Neumann in particular was handed the blame for failures in KPD policy during the third period.

The Soviet revisionists (Outline History) try to make the best of the XII plenum, pointing out the more realistic statements of Kuusinen, Thaelmann, and Gottwald. For example, Kuusinen was said to have urged the communist parties to base their policy of the united workers' front on "the immediate practical aims of the present class struggles of the proletariat, the actual action slogans of communist policy. . . , not the principles of the communist program which are, as yet, incomprehensible to the non-party and reformist workers, but which ought to be popularised among them during the course of the actual partial struggles." (Outline History, p. 325)

Similarly, Gottwald (Czechoslovakia):

stressed the important role which the principles of proletarian democracy play in mass work and said that the communist parties should not appoint such bodies as strike committees, committees of the unemployed, etc., from above, but should have them elected by all the workers on the basis of the principles of proletarian democracy. (Outline History, p. 326)

In January 1933, the Nazis came to power "by constitutional means". In an earlier report, an account was given of the events in Germany in this

period and the roles of the SPD and the KPD. I won't repeat here any of this material, except the view of the ECCI presidium in its April 1, 1933 resolution on the situation in Germany:

Having heard Comrade Heckert's report on the situation in Germany, the presidium of the ECCI states that the political line and the organizational policy followed by the CC of the Communist Party of Germany, with Comrade Thaelmann at its head, up to the Hitlerite coup, and at the moment when it occurred, was completely correct. (Degras, p. 257)

and in the Communist International shortly thereafter:

The events of the last few months in Germany have demonstrated the complete correctness of the Comintern theses on social-fascism. (Degras, p. 255)

The Outline History of the Communist International gives an account of two immediate developments:

In August 1933 the Anti-Fascist Central Committee and the World Committee of Struggle for Peace set up at the Amsterdam Congress in 1932 united to form the Joint World Committee Against Imperialist War and Fascism. This movement, known as the Amsterdam-Pleyel Movement, played an important role in exposing the home and foreign policies of German fascism, in rallying the working people of Europe to fight the fascist menace, and in drawing the workers close together with other anti-fascist forces.

The next strong impulse toward anti-fascist unity was provided by the international campaign in defence of the ardent revolutionary Georgi Dimitrov and other communists at the Leipzig Trial (1933) and by the speeches of Dimitrov. In engineering this trial, the nazis counted on 'proving' that the Communists were preparing a civil war in the country and had allegedly set fire to the Reichstag . . . Dimitrov at the Leipzig Trial courageously exposed the atrocities and terrorist policy of fascism and convincingly proved that the fire was instigated by the nazis with a view to taking bloody reprisals against the Communist Party and establishing in the country a regime of terror and witch-hunt . . . In his speeches at the trial Dimitrov expressed a number of important propositions concerning the policy of the Communists in the anti-fascist struggle. He spoke about the necessity of establishing a united front with the Social-Democratic and other workers if the fight against fascism was to succeed. Released from the clutches of his fascist jailer, Dimitrov said in one of his interviews that in his speeches in court "I defended not only the communist workers and the Communist Party, but also the Social-Democratic workers and, in some measure, the Social-Democratic Party . . . I did this because it was politically correct."

The idea running through all Dimitrov's speeches was that now, as never before, the Communists had to employ such methods of struggle

as would tend in the greatest possible degree to unite all anti-fascists. In defending the interests of the Bulgarian nation against the nazi attacks, Dimitrov gave an example of how Communists, in the fight against fascism, should take into their hands the banner of national demands. (Outline History, pp. 335-36)

Dimitrov's views sound quite a different note from established Comintern policy up till that point, and it is through the person of Dimitrov that the new line makes itself fully felt at the VII Congress of the Comintern two years later.

Later in the year 1933 the XIII Plenum of the ECCI was held. Seventy-two sections were represented, of which 16 were legal and 7 semi-legal. At this plenum also the basic tactical line of the united front from below was maintained as well as the related attitudes and views.

It was at this plenum that the "classical" definition of fascism was given prominence:

Fascism is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital. (Degras, p. 296)

There was no evident modification in the attitude toward social-democracy:

It is only for the purpose of deceiving and disarming the workers that social-democracy denies the fascization of bourgeois democracy and draws a contrast in principle between the democratic countries and the countries of the fascist dictatorship.

The establishment of the fascist dictatorship in Germany has unmasked German social-democracy before the whole world...Social-democracy continues to play the role of the main social prop of the bourgeoisie also in the countries of open fascist dictatorship. (Degras, p. 297)

In the same "Theses on Fascism, the War Danger, and the Tasks of the Communist Parties", the ECCI reaffirmed its tactical line: "Against Social-Democracy and For a United Front from Below."

That the ECCI had not modified its "schema" of revolution is seen in the fifth section of the resolution, "For a Revolutionary Way Out of the Crisis --For a Soviet Government":

It is necessary with all insistence to raise the question of power in the mass work of the communist parties. The chief slogan of the Communist International is: Soviet power. (Degras, p. 305)

In spite of the above points, the Soviet revisionists' history of the Comintern sees evidence of a change of attitude in the CI at this time. A fairly lengthy quote from their analysis follows:

The Plenum alerted the communist parties to the grave danger of fascism... (the new) definition revealed the true class nature of fascism in the developed capitalist countries. At the same time the

Plenum stressed that 'Fascism tries to secure a mass basis for monopolist capital among the petty bourgeoisie, appealing to the peasantry, artisans, office employees and civil servants who have been thrown out of their normal course of life and particularly to the declassed elements in the big cities, also trying to penetrate into the working class.' The appraisals of the Plenum enabled the communist parties to work out a correct anti-fascist policy. The characterisation of the class nature of fascism, the Plenum's conclusion to the effect that monopoly capitalism was shaping a course towards the liquidation of parliamentary methods and bourgeois democracy in general, served as a basis for future deductions concerning the possibility of uniting all anti-fascist, democratic forces. The Plenum emphasized once more that the fascist dictatorship was not an inevitable stage of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in all countries and that the possibility of averting it depended upon the forces of the fighting proletariat.

The idea was voiced at the Plenum (by Manuilsky--ed.) that the fall of fascism would not necessarily be followed by the direct establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These utterances bore within them in embryo the idea that the fight against fascism would be a general democratic movement spearheaded precisely against the fascist dictatorship.

The questions of the anti-war struggle were large dealt with at the Thirteenth Plenum in a new way. The Plenum stated clearly that the fascist government in Germany was the chief instigator of war in Europe and the spearhead of the anti-war campaign was to be directed against it...It drew the important conclusion that the proletariat, by its struggle, could 'hinder and put off the war.'...

On a number of important points, however, the Plenum gave guidelines which did not meet the new conditions. It proceeded from the assumption, for instance, that 'a new revolutionary upsurge' was beginning in Germany. The Plenum underestimated the extent of the fascist onset. It continued to orientate the communist parties of the developed capitalist countries towards a socialist uprising at a time when the bulk of the working people, the majority of anti-fascists, had not yet accepted this idea. Despite the changed conditions caused by the onset of fascism the Plenum reaffirmed the view that appraised Social-Democracy as the mainstay of the bourgeoisie, including that of the fascist countries. As before, the tactic of the united front from below was schematically contraposed to the tactic of unity from above. Nonetheless, many of the Plenum's guidelines on concrete aims of the struggle against fascism and war rendered important assistance to the communist parties in their activities. (Outline History, pp. 338-39)

IV. Conclusions

Several conclusions have already been drawn in the course of the report. These will be summarized here, and a few will be amplified.

First, on the general use of the terms 'strategy' and 'tactics', Lenin, Stalin and Mao do not use the same terminology, but they share the same basic approach to the revolutionary process. Lenin and Mao avoid the use of the term 'strategy' (except Mao on military matters), and instead utilize a framework based on 'theory,' 'program,' and 'tactics.' Stalin inserts the idea of

(political) strategy into his theoretical framework, conceiving of it in terms of fundamental "historic turns" in the revolutionary process, which is consistent with Lenin and Mao's conception of revolution by fundamental stages: the democratic revolution of a new kind going over to the socialist revolution. Trotsky makes use of the term 'strategy' but certainly doesn't share Stalin's approach to revolution. He explicitly rejected the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, for example.

In formulating the idea of the "main blow", Stalin is inconsistent.⁵ In some writings he states that the main blow is directed at the "compromising parties", while in others he says it is aimed at the main class enemy. Stalin's utilization of Lenin's remarks on this point is not convincing. Lenin speaks of "paralyzing the instability" of the compromising forces and "crushing" the main enemy, with no indication of the main blow. Stalin's teaching that the main social props of the bourgeoisie--"the compromising parties"--must be isolated and defeated if the revolution is to triumph is correct, but it is incorrect to generalize and say that the "main blow" must always be directed at the compromising parties.⁷ History has shown the fallacy of this idea when fascism becomes a grave danger.

Second, on the strategic and tactical line of the Comintern in this period, the CI did not modify the basic viewpoint on the revolutionary process that it put forward in the 1928 Program. Its strategic line on making revolution remained the same up to 1934-35. This line was that in the "highly developed capitalist countries...the principal political demand of the programme is the direct transition to the proletarian dictatorship."⁸ In the less developed capitalist countries and in the colonies and semi-colonies, the line was to make either a direct socialist revolution or a democratic revolution of a new kind, depending on the conditions. If the latter, the revolution would go over to the socialist phase and the dictatorship of the proletariat relatively quickly or relatively slowly, again depending on the concrete conditions. Prior to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, there would be the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, or other transitional forms.

In our view it was correct of the Comintern to maintain this strategic perspective, even with the rise of fascism. In a later report we will argue in detail that the CI should have continued to uphold this strategic perspective at the VII Congress and afterwards, when fascism had secured even greater gains.⁹

In 1928-29 the Comintern did modify its tactical line. Before 1928 the main tactic of the working class movement had been referred to as the "united front", though this was given different meanings and applications by Comintern leaders and branch parties. After 1928 the main tactical slogan was the "united front from below". The new emphasis arose because the Comintern foresaw a major economic and political crisis in the coming period and expected a radicalization of the working class, including a split in social-democracy, with more and more workers breaking with reformist illusions. The forecast of a major crisis was quite correct, and some revolutionization of the working masses did take place, but in our view the extent of the radicalization was overestimated by the Comintern. Further, the CI still failed to grasp the extent of the fascist threat in this period and so misconceived the struggle against social-democracy as a result.

The rise of fascism, beginning in Italy in the early 1920's, was neither anticipated by the Comintern nor well followed in its development. Despite the example of Italy, the Comintern did not take German fascism seriously for some time, misunderstood it theoretically, underestimated its strength as it developed, and failed to quickly acknowledge in the spring of 1933 that a massive defeat had occurred when the Nazis took power and the German CP was crushed. In the "third period" the Comintern repeatedly and insistently rejected the view that there was any difference of consequence between bourgeois rule in the form of a bourgeois democratic dictatorship and in the form of a fascist dictatorship. Despite objections from branch parties and from the social-democrats, the Comintern refused to concede that there could be any difference that mattered: the difference was not one of principle, was not basic, etc.

But clearly, the tossing aside of parliamentary rule, the institution of open terrorist government, the militarization of society, the destruction of all organizations of the working class, the virtual annihilation of the communist were not only considerable differences, they were a matter of life and death. Although it seems plain today, the CI did not recognize that fascist rule was qualitatively different from bourgeois democratic rule.¹⁰

Later, as we will see, the Comintern was to take these difference into account. In 1934-35 it was to admit the fundamental differences between bourgeois democratic and bourgeois fascist rule, but in the process the CI swung over to a Rightist perspective on strategic questions, especially on the seizing of state power.¹¹

Because of the misestimate of fascism, the theory of "social-fascism" grew and flourished. For all the correct leadership of Stalin in these and earlier years, on this question he was wrong. He played an important role in spreading the view that social-democracy was "social-fascism". But it was wrong to lump the millions of social-democratic workers with their leaders, who were capitulating to fascism and could be said with some justice to be socialist in words, objectively pro-fascist in deeds. Further, social-democracy was not the "left wing of fascism"; though social-democratic leadership did help fascism come to power, social-democracy was not a part of fascism at all, which was the clear meaning of many Comintern statements. Fascism in power wiped social-democracy out. Finally, for all the betrayals to the working class that the social-democratic leaders had committed in the previous decades, preventing the working class movement from coming to power, the "main blow" should not have been aimed at the social-democrats when the fascist danger was on the rise, as was the case in the 1928-1933 period. The "main blow" should have been at the fascist movements.

For the above reasons, the line of the third period, including the tactics of the united front from below, has been considered by some to be "leftist". We agree that there were "leftist" excesses in the formulation and application of the new tactics, but given the developing capitalist crisis, it was correct to put forward a tactical orientation which went deeper among the masses and which tried to isolate the social-democratic misleaders. For these purposes the united front from below was essential. But because of the excesses the masses of social-democratic workers were not won toward the communist perspective and organizations but were repulsed in considerable numbers, especially by the "social-fascist" line.

A final subject for consideration here is the beginning of the changeover

to the popular front tactics that were the mark of the VII Congress in 1935. Even after the accession to power of the Nazis in January 1933, there wasn't at first any recognition by the Comintern that a tactical reorientation was long overdue. There were some faint signs of future modifications in the line by some Comintern spokesmen at the Twelfth and Thirteenth plenums of the ECCI, but the basic line remained unchanged. No important distinction between fascism and bourgeois democracy was permitted and the direction of the main blow was toward the "social-fascists".

As we will see later, the French C.P. was the initiator and tester, as well as model, for the new approach, one which Dimitrov was to present at the VII Congress of the CI as the "United Front against Fascism".

The Soviet revisionists have this to say about the beginnings of the new line:

Events thus brought Communists to realize the need for rousing the working class and its allies to the fight, first and foremost, for anti-fascist, general democratic demands. Under the circumstances, the revolutionary struggle in the countries of imperialism, in its first stage or at its first steps, was bound, for objective and subjective reasons, to bear a general democratic, anti-fascist character before evolving into a socialist pattern. There was thus a growing need for effecting a serious change in the policy of the Communist International, for working out a new strategic line that made allowance for an unavoidable general, anti-imperialist phase of the struggle in the capitalist countries. (Outline History, p. 311)

The studied phrasing is designed to conceal opportunism, a characteristic of a great deal of recent Soviet writing, and understandably so, since they took the guts out of Marxism twenty years ago. The paragraph is designed to imply, but not explicitly state, the need for two-stage revolution in the imperialist countries, on the basis of what was admittedly a serious rising danger: fascist rule. Despite all that is wrong with the argument, one implication is correct; namely, that "a new strategic line" was to be worked out at the VII Congress. The word 'strategic' is apt: what the revisionists say was needed and what in fact was proposed at the Congress was not a tactical line for a period of retreat, but a new strategy, a change in the basic plan for revolution in the capitalist countries, the call for two stages rather than one: an interim form of government ("united front government" or "popular front government") leading to a dictatorship of the proletariat. For the capitalist countries such a policy was a welcome mat for the rightists and in fact it was one of the primary roots of modern revisionism.

V. Footnotes

1. This report takes up the policies of the VII Congress in 1935 only indirectly; the focus is on the VI Congress of 1928 and the events and policies through 1933-34.
2. In my opinion no convincing demonstration of this latter thesis--that the USSR is fascist as Hitler's Germany was--has been made.
3. For example, see Stalin's "Political Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists: Synopsis" (Works 5.63); "Concerning the Question of the Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists" (Works 5.163); and "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists" (Works 6.374). There are a number of other articles bearing on this topic, especially Works 5.349, 8.97, 9.182, 9.207, 9.274, 9.321, 9.337, and 11.105. It was in some of these articles (the first mentioned) that Stalin utilized the concepts of "main danger" and "direction of the main blow".
4. It should be noted that the adoption of military terminology, if that is what it was, provides an opening for opportunism, as does every theoretical tool. Stalin criticizes Kamenev on this very point. In his "Reply to S. Okrovsky" (Works 9.321), Stalin makes the following points in relation to a controversy in the Bolshevik party, in which Pokrovsky is, years after the fact, taking up the stand of Kamenev, who made the error at the time. Lenin fought Kamenev in April 1917, Stalin says, over the need for a "new strategic slogan" to replace the "old strategic slogan," since February 1917 marked "the transition from the first stage of the Russian revolution (a bourgeois-democratic revolution) to its second stage (a proletarian revolution)" (Works 9.326). The new strategic slogan was "the dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry" while the old slogan had been "the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (the whole peasantry)". Pokrovsky, Stalin says, had "proceeded to cover up (his) tracks by counterposing the 'tactical' task of securing the support of the peasantry as a whole to the 'strategic' task of securing an alliance with the poor peasantry..." He continues: "You evidently do not understand that tactical tasks are part of the strategic task, that the former cannot be identified with the latter, and still less can the one be counterposed to the other." It seems to me that Kamenev's maneuver was an early example of something that is not all that uncommon in the communist movement: justifying an opportunist policy by saying it was 'only' tactical, confusing in a given situation what is strategic and what is tactical. After all, you can string out your strategy by way of the "United Front Against Fascism" (considering it a tactic) until you get to "growing unity of the second and third world," the Chinese formulation in which the strategy for proletarian revolution lies buried in a jungle of nationalism. The UFAF, or as it was also termed at the VII Congress by Dimitrov, the Popular Front, will be looked at in later reports.
5. There is division of opinion within the study group on whether Stalin is in fact inconsistent and other aspects of the question of the "main blow".

6. In Out of the Night, Alliance Book Corporation, 1941. While containing a wealth of what appear to be the genuine experiences of a German seaman and later KPD and Comintern organizer (the author later admitted that some of the experiences did not happen to the narrator), this book was published as part of the U.S. war propaganda effort and must be read with great caution.
7. Stalin's "fundamental strategic rule of Leninism" should be contrasted with Mao's tactical principle: "make use of contradictions, win over the many, oppose the few, and crush our enemies one by one." (MSW 2.443-44) Stalin's rule, which generally reflects his viewpoint at least up until the VII Congress of the Comintern, aims the main blow at the compromising parties "in the period of the approaching revolutionary outbreak." Mao's principle does not speak of parties; in much more general terms it aims at winning over the many, opposing the few, and crushing the enemies one at a time. Elsewhere, Mao puts it this way:

With regard to the alignment of the various classes within the country, our basic policy is to develop the progressive forces, win over the middle forces and isolate the anti-communist die-hard forces. (MSW 2.442)

Again, not limited to parties, or the "approaching revolutionary outbreak," but a general rule for the approach of communists to different class forces. We do not have space for an analysis of these two principles, but we raise the point as one we consider important in the light, for example, of Mao's charge that Stalin had quite a bit of metaphysics in him. (See Mao Tsetung, A Critique of Soviet Economics, 1977.)
8. Degras, Volume 2, p. 505.
9. This is gone into in the report on the Seventh Congress on war and revolution. There we will also address the question of the tactical modifications required by the legitimacy in some European capitalist countries of wars of national defense against fascist aggression.
10. Politically, but not economically. Both were forms of monopoly capitalism.
11. It should be noted that in the early '30s, the arch-renegade Trotsky was much clearer than the Comintern on the attitude and policy to adopt toward social-democracy in the struggle against fascism. See Leon Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, Pathfinder Press: New York, 1971.

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