

Are the Decisions of the E. C. C. I. Plenum to Remain on Paper?

By O. W. KUUSINEN.

We, Communists, are all very fond of talking about the development of the Comintern into a strong international of common action, into a real Bolshevik world party. But when it comes to the Communist Parties making the decisions of an important Comintern session, such as those of the recent Plenum of the ECCI, their very own, and putting them into practice, most of the CI Sections still display a great lack of genuine, live internationalism.

The Congresses of the Second International can only make decisions with the purpose of letting them remain on paper. Our Congresses and Plenums make decisions of a different kind, and with another object. These decisions are intended to serve as directives for the revolutionary practice of the proletarian class struggle. Therefore, merely a formal acceptance and publication of these decisions through our Sections is absolutely inadmissible, and goes against their whole spirit and essence.

And yet it is unfortunately a fact that the decisions of the XI Plenum of the ECCI have been up till now, over two months after the Plenum, only formally adopted by most of the CI Sections, without leading to further measures.

This is naturally not a question of international Party discipline in the mechanical sense of the term. Only the enemies of Communism represent the internal discipline of the Comintern as blind super-centralism, according to which the Moscow Executive of the Comintern dictates everything that the Communists of the various countries have to do or leave undone. This is a mendacious caricature of Comintern discipline. By international development of our Sections we mean something quite different, as shown by the following:

An international session of the Comintern, such as the recent Plenums of the ECCI, performs important political work. The members of the Executive Committee, elected by the World Congress, and in addition, a considerable number of other representatives of other Sections from many countries, come together, in order to study once more collectively in the course of a fortnight, the old fighting experiences, analyze the economic and political situation and lay down the immediate main tasks of the Comintern. The result of this collective work, laid down in carefully considered resolutions, and theses of the Plenum, constitutes a result of great political importance for the Communist movement of the world. But this result can be lost to a great extent, if the Sections of the individual countries do not know HOW TO UTILIZE IT.

What does this utilization mean?

An international session makes chiefly only GENERAL decisions, appropriated to all the important countries, it gives the characteristics of the INTERNATIONAL situation and lays down in its directives the GENERAL COURSE of the Communist Parties for the immediate future. This is practically its task. It cannot analyze in detail the conditions of all the individual countries, and still less work out whole CONCRETE directives for the individual countries and situations which are rapidly changing. This should be the work of the individual Sections, which they are to carry out on the basis of the decisions of the international session.

But it is precisely regarding this point that we encounter one of the most characteristic defects in the work of our Sections, to the removal of which the Executive of the Comintern has paid considerable attention lately, and will have to continue to do so. The XI Plenum of the ECCI, also called special attention to it by giving prominence among the serious weaknesses and defects noticeable in the work of most sections and "indicating as special danger in the conditions of the present, higher stage of the class struggle," also to the following defect:

"A mechanical application of GENERAL directives without their CONCRETIZATION, with regard to the respective country and the respective and concrete case of the class struggle."

But there seems to be now the danger of the general directives given by the XI ECCI Plenum being also mechanically carried out by many Comintern Sections. The CP of Germany alone went immediately and seriously to work regarding the concretization of the decisions of the XI Plenum in accord with conditions in Germany.

On the other hand, for instance, the CP of France, Great Britain, USA and many other Sections of the Comintern have hitherto, if we are correctly informed, treated these decisions rather formally, have so to speak, "taken cognizance of them," which means that for the time being, the substance of the Plenum decisions have been the subject of a couple of short newspaper articles, and that otherwise the questions have been put off till the Plenum of the CC; then at the Plenum of the CC, a report on the ECCI Plenums was listened to, and after an inadequate discussion an equally inadequate resolution was adopted, in order to "proceed after that with the agenda."

However, it is just possible that one or other of these parties has after all done a LITTLE MORE, in order to make the results of the ECCI Plenum its own, but if so, we are not aware of it. Anyhow, one thing is certain, that most of the CI Sections have not yet done justice to the MOST IMPORTANT tasks arising for them out of the ECCI Plenum, namely, (1) concretization of these decisions in accord with the special conditions in their respective countries; and (2) drawing the whole membership of the Party into the discussion and concrete elaboration of the ECCI decisions.

The first of these asks demands a thorough re-examination of and a reply to a whole series of very important pressing questions by every one of the Communist Parties, on the basis of the new general resolutions of the ECCI.

The XI Plenum of the ECCI has above all called attention to the development of the crisis of the capitalist system, to the accentuation of the class struggle, to the development of the revolutionary upsurge, and to the fact that most of the CI Sections lag behind the radicalization of the masses. What are the concrete forms which these phenomena take in the given individual country? This must be clearly indicated. The XI Plenum has given special emphasis to the fact that the growth of the revolutionary upsurge is developing unevenly, "in accord with the degree and tempo of the development of the crisis and of the accentuation of the internal and external contradictions of capitalism in the given country." In countries such as Germany, Poland, Spain, the Plenum has established an upward development of the premises of the revolutionary crisis. But what about France, Britain, or America, etc. in this report? What is the tempo and degree of the development of the crisis and of the accentuation of the internal and external contradictions of capitalism in these countries? The executive of the respective Communist Party should have clearly worked out this immediately after the ECCI Plenum, beginning hereby a real popularization of the ECCI decisions in the ranks of the Party.

The XI Plenum gave a general characteristic, but not separately for every country, of the ruthless capitalist offensive against the standard of living of the workers (mass dismissals and unemployment, wage cuts, higher taxes, artificially maintained high retail prices, reduction of social insurance, etc.), and recorded at the same time the growing discontent of the wide masses, a further sharpening of the strike and unemployment movement, the growth of the opposition of the petty-bourgeois urban masses, etc. "What form does this take in our country?" Every Communist Party should have asked itself this question. Why? Above all for this reason: because the ECCI Plenum had to establish the fact that there were serious defects in most of the CI Sections, which took the following form:

A policy of Kvostism with regard to a series of great revolutionary movements; unemployment demonstrations, strikes and peasant movements. Lagging behind with regard to the mobilization of the masses for the defense of the daily needs of the workers, inadequate linking up of the struggle for these demands with the struggle for proletarian dictatorship.

"In how far does this weakness exist in our Section? This is what every Communist Party should have asked itself. It should also seriously consider the measures to be taken, in order to completely remedy this weakness. The popularization of the decisions of the ECCI at the Plenum should have been utilized precisely for the purpose of mobilizing all Party organizations and members for the struggle against our chief weaknesses, and final victory over them. In



"—And they're telling us to go to

PARTY LIFE

Some New Methods of Building the Party

By BEATRICE SISKIND

THE lack of method with which to dig down and get the workers is a great shortcoming in our work. It keeps our Party isolated from the masses in many Sections of the country.

We have some experiences in District No. 9 (Minnesota) in our effort to overcome this shortcoming, especially in the metal mining areas.

The greatest complaint of the outlying sections especially was isolation from the masses, no roots among the miners and farmers, and little organization among them. The District Buro discussed this, issued instructions, the organization department worked out a plan of work with a view of focusing the attention of the Party members by giving them definite quotas and tasks to obtain for the Miners Union, and the United Farmers League, but things proceeded slowly and not at all in some units. There was not enough incentive to begin.

Prior to the 3rd Annual Convention of the Metal Miners Union in District No. 9, the Buro had the prospective of moving the Union headquarters to Ironwood, and comrade Irma Martin was sent into that section to strengthen the

which domains above all?

In the struggle against mass unemployment which has assumed enormous proportions in most capitalist countries, and is bound to grow still more. The majority of the CI Sections have not yet displayed much activity in regard to the organizations of the unemployed movement which has rather developed quite spontaneously. One of the first conclusions which every individual Communist Party should draw from the political resolutions of the ECCI Plenum is, that it must work out immediately concrete measures capable of strengthening its work in this domain.

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

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(Concluded from yesterday's issue.)

By O. W. KUUSINEN.

Matters are no better but rather worse in regard to the strike movements, with only a few exceptions. As a rule we do not yet know what practical preparation of a strike movement means, we are unable to give a correct lead to the struggle for the independent leadership of the strike, with the utilization of the tactics of the united front from below, neither do we know how to prepare the mass of the strikers for the almost inevitable eventuality that the reformists will strike by their maneuvers. It is, however, high time for the Communists to learn what a correct revolutionary strike tactic means. In enterprises where Communists have only a few followers and yet advocate a strike without making the least effort to draw the followers of the reformists into it, they can even spoil the best opportunities of the movement. This is by no means a rare occurrence, for instance, in France where the fighting spirit of the masses is on the increase, but the confidence of the masses that the Communists know how to lead the struggle correctly is frequently undermined through the mistakes of our comrades.

This is mainly a question of our Comrades in the various countries having to learn how to apply in the preparation of mass demonstrations, forms of the UNITED FRONT FROM BELOW capable of drawing into these demonstrations broad masses of men and women workers, young workers, the unemployed, as well as office workers, semi-proletarian strata.

According to the XI ECCI Plenum, "this demands, apart from a careful consideration of the general situation, a careful consideration of the situation and correlation of forces in the various branches of production, as well as in every enterprise, a careful consideration of all the peculiarities of the position of the various strata of the working class, and also the application of suitable concrete fighting methods; economic strike, short protest strike, revolutionary demonstration, political mass strike. This demands an energetic struggle against the Right danger, against any forms of opportunism, against a Kvostist policy, passivity and sectarianism."

In regard to the organizational reinforcement of the Red Trade Unions and Revolutionary Opposition in the reformist trade unions, we are considerably behind the existing possibilities in all the capitalist countries, especially in the United States and Britain, but also in Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, etc. And yet, for the organization of a broad and strong counter-attack of the proletariat against the capitalist offensive, a strong, organized mass basis in the form of the revolutionary trade union movement is an essential prerequisite.—"What measures, new, important measures must be taken immediately in our country in this domain?", this is one of the concrete questions which should be considered in every Party in connection with the ECCI decisions. "What are the best means of getting into the reformist trade unions? Is it above all by strengthening our work in the factories? But how can we really strengthen this work? Is it not, for instance, expedient to use unemployed workers who are in sympathy with us for the strengthening of this work? How are we to make them fit for this purpose?" etc., etc.

With regard to the struggle against the bourgeois dictatorship in all its forms: The XI Plenum criticized the mistakes made in this domain, and made it incumbent on the individual sections to develop better their fighting methods against the concrete forms of the bourgeois dictatorship and fascist movement which exists in every country. Has this already been done? Only in a very few countries I think. Neither were the directives of the Plenum for the conquest of the toiling peasant masses as allies of the proletariat in the struggle against bourgeois dictatorship meant to remain on paper. The Communist Party of Germany has shown in its programme of aid to the farmers an example of how concretely to apply the directives of the ECCI.

With regard to the struggle against imperialist wars and the war of intervention against the Soviet Union: The XI Plenum emphasized the inadequate work of the Communist Parties in regard to the struggle against the direct danger of a war of intervention, and placed all the CI sections under the obligation to carry on an energetic struggle for the defense of the S. U., against imperialist wars and for peace, exposing at the same time the infamous pacifist maneuvers of the Second Social Fascist International, the most active instigator and organizer of the counter-revolutionary war against the Soviet Union." It is also essential to expose the maneuvers which some of the imperialist governments, and lately also the French government, are compelled to undertake. Simultaneously, the Plenum urged all the sections to struggle against intervention in the Soviet districts of China, and also to give an impetus to anti-imperialist

activity and to the struggle for the winning over of the working youth.

By means of facts, the XI Plenum fully demonstrated the counter-revolutionary role of the International Social Democracy, as the main social prop of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the proletariat, and the political education therefrom was formulated by the Plenum thus:

"Therefore the exposure of social democracy and the Second International, the release of the toiling masses from the influence of social democracy, the isolation and defeat of social democracy are the immediate and most urgent tasks of the Communist Parties.

If this does not place every C. I. Section under the obligation to examine once more and to develop further the methods of its struggle against social democracy, then the convocation of international sessions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern is utterly useless.

The ECCI Plenum itself has already given in its political resolution a series of directives as to how the struggle against the social democratic reformist leaders is to be conducted during the preparation and development of all revolutionary activities. But the Plenum has naturally left it to the individual sections to work out the concrete forms, methods and slogans of the struggle in accord with the local conditions in the respective countries. In Britain, for instance, the Executive of the Labour Party deceives large masses of workers with the "Argument" that the MacDonald government has not a free hand to carry on a radical Labour policy, because it is still a minority government, but that it is certainly better than a conservative government. . . . This is a British variety of the swindle indulged in by the German Police-Socialists who try to make it out to the German workers that the Bruening government is the "lesser evil." This must be exposed in England in true English fashion. In another country again in a different manner.

The ECCI Plenum said: "On the basis of a concrete platform of every-day demands, and by means of methods intelligible to the masses, the C. I. Sections must expose every treacherous act of the social democrats. Wherever Communists do not develop an adequate activity in the struggle against the Right danger within the parties, apply mechanically the correct "class against class" tactic without considering the stage of development of the Communist movement, wherever they do not apply it concretely, in accord with the special conditions of their country, and identify without reservation social fascism with fascism, the social fascist leaders with the ordinary social democratic workers, they weaken hereby their own independent leadership of the class struggle and the offensive character of their struggle against the Social Democrats, and allow the latter to carry out their struggle against the social democrats, and allow the latter to carry out their sham maneuvers against fascism, and to deceive the masses who are following them."

Thus, the decisions of the ECCI Plenum were certainly not intended to be looked upon as a finished work of art which one hangs up and admires. On the contrary, through these decisions a whole series of tasks were imposed on the individual C. I. Sections with a view to their further elaboration and concretization. This is the most important part of the work which remained to be done by the Sections, and which has not yet been done. But this work must be done. The Political Secretariat of the ECCI thinks that the Sections must be emphatically reminded of this duty.

This is not a matter only for the Party executive. The whole Party, all its organizations and members are to be drawn into the discussion and elaboration of the decisions of the ECCI Plenum. Every Party organ and every nucleus is to participate in the examination and concretization of these tasks. There must be healthy comradely self-criticism regarding Party work with the object of improving it.

Without such broad collective working out of the questions in the Party, the result which the Plenum of the ECCI set itself, cannot be attained. It goes without saying that the leading Party organs must guide, organize and control this collective consideration of the questions, distribute the necessary material which is to serve as a basis for the discussion, issue political instructions, in order to help the lower organizations to deal with the questions correctly, etc. Nothing sensible can be achieved if things are left to look after themselves.

If part of what I have mentioned here has already been carried out by this or that Section, all the better. But what has been left undone must be done immediately. Comrades, see to this everywhere with true Bolshevik energy! The result of the XI Plenum must not be allowed to go past our Parties without leaving a deeper impression.