

13TH PLENUM

Revolutionary Crisis, Fascism and War

Speech by
D. Z. MANUILSKY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
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Revolutionary Crisis, Fascism and War

By D. Z. MANUILSKY

THE content of the work of the present Plenum consists, firstly, in revealing any new development that has occurred since the time of the Twelfth Plenum, both in the world crisis and in the general world situation; secondly, in giving an analysis of the shiftings which have taken place during the past year in the correlation of class forces both within capitalist countries and on the international arena; thirdly, on the basis of this analysis, in giving a correct appraisal of the forces of revolution and of reaction. The Communist Parties expect from this plenum an answer to the question of what constitutes the present stage of world development, what is the relative importance at this stage of the elements of revolutionary crisis on the one hand and the elements of fascism and imperialist war on the other; whether the coming to power of the fascists in Germany has interrupted the maturing of the elements of revolutionary crisis there, in what concretely, at the present stage of the correlation of class forces, does the maturing of the world revolutionary crisis find its expression. Fourthly and lastly, in conformity with the appraisal given of the forces of revolution and reaction, the Plenum should outline the basic tasks of the world Communist movement.

I. The New Factors in the International Situation

The new factors which are to be observed in the development of the world economic crisis are the following:

1. In individual capitalist countries (U.S.A., Japan, Germany) a certain revival of economic life was to be observed in the summer of 1933, connected in the first place with the growth in orders for armaments, in the second place with the introduction of inflation,

in the third place with certain government measures directed towards an artificial, albeit short-lived, increase of production and raising of prices. This revival only lasted a few months and was followed in the United States by another sharp decline in industrial production and prices. Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that this new decline has not yet reached the very lowest point which characterized the development of the crisis in the past.

2. The intertwining of the world economic crisis with the general crisis of capitalism has gone so far that though the possibility of isolated improvements in the economic situation is not excluded, yet the basic line of development of world capitalism, determined by its general crisis, will go downward. It is becoming ever increasingly clear to millions of people that there can be no return of capitalism to its pre-crisis condition, that "prosperity" was only a short-lived episode on the background of capitalist stabilization. In connection with this the crisis on the one hand grows ever more "political," while on the other hand the factors of the general crisis of capitalism—fascism, war, the revolutionary movement of the masses—appear in it ever more markedly as factors in the destruction of the capitalist system.

3. The attempts of the bourgeoisie to rescue capitalist society from ruin (Roosevelt's plan, the Ottawa Conference, economic autarchy), even though they may have brought about some improvement of a temporary character in the economic situation, have nevertheless proved bankrupt as a means of overcoming the general crisis of capitalism. The statesmen, appearing in the role of sorcerers who have found a remedy for curing the doomed system, remind us ever more and more of the Swiss banker Necker on the eve of the Great French Revolution.

4. During the past year the elements of fascism and war have matured more rapidly than the elements of revolutionary crisis. And none the less the revolutionary crisis, which up to the time of the Twelfth Plenum of the E.C.C.I., had matured only in individual capitalist countries, is now on the way to growing over into a revolutionary crisis of the whole world system of capitalism. This does not mean that this revolutionary crisis will embrace all capitalist countries at the same time. It only means that the quantitative

changes caused by the economic crisis in world capitalist economy will bring such qualitative changes in their train that though there may not be a revolutionary crisis in this or that individual country, there will nevertheless be a revolutionary crisis of the entire system of world capitalism. Such a revolutionary crisis will develop on the basis of the further deepening and sharpening of the general crisis of capitalism. The inner dialectical connection of the processes of the maturing of the revolutionary crisis, of fascism and war is stipulated by the extremely rapid shiftings in the correlation of class forces. Fascism, if it does not receive an adequate repulse from the toilers, will grow over into imperialist war, and imperialist war, if it is not converted into a victorious proletarian revolution, breeds fascism, as may be seen from the example of Italy. On the other hand, imperialist war will bring revolution in its train (as we see from the examples of tsarist Russia and the Central Empires), and revolution will call down an attack upon itself by the capitalist world, as is shown by the experience of the intervention in the U.S. S.R. And if at the present time there is a force which is holding back imperialist war, then it is the threat of proletarian revolution and the fear felt by the bourgeoisie for the U.S.S.R.

5. The feverish preparations of capitalist states for new imperialist wars have created a pre-war atmosphere. The years of clandestine work by the general staffs, the years of work of the League of Nations as a weapon of imperialist wars, the years of pernicious, pseudo-pacifist propaganda by Social-Democracy, which has been preparing for war, are now being brought to completion. All the characteristic factors of a pre-war atmosphere are present: the rupture of international treaties and agreements (the violation of the Versailles and Washington pledges), the growth of secret and open armaments, the militarization of economic and public life in the capitalist countries, the intensification of political reaction. Economic war, as the prelude of imperialist war, is in full swing. Fascism, with its unbridled chauvinist propaganda, with its gospel of savage nationalist man-hatred, is creating a psychological atmosphere for bloody massacres; a crusade is going on against the Communists, manifestations of mass discontent are stifled with merciless cruelty, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is taking on an

ever more terrorist character, creating the possibility that the bourgeoisie will once again risk throwing the peoples into a bloody slaughter. And the toiling masses of the whole world must know that from the first day after its outbreak the new imperialist war will still further accelerate the process of fascization of all capitalist states; it will create an atmosphere of reaction in which it will be difficult to breathe, unless the toilers put an end to the capitalist system before it drags them into the catastrophe of war.

But the greatest event of the past year was the coming to power of the fascists in Germany. This was an event of no small importance. In the first place, the setting up of fascist dictatorship in Germany has driven one of the most powerful parties of the Communist International, the Communist Party of Germany, into illegality, into an illegality more grievous than has ever been seen in history before. Millions of toilers followed this Party. Of all the Communist Parties in capitalist countries it was closest to winning over the majority of the working class. This fact alone makes it impossible for us to disregard this event, to neglect to make use of the lessons which all the other sections of the Communist International have to learn from this murderous blow that has been struck at the German proletariat. The setting up of fascist dictatorship in Germany is bringing about a new re-grouping of forces among the capitalist powers; it brings nearer to a tremendous degree the outbreak of new imperialist wars; it is a blow not only at the German proletariat, but it is directed in all its sharpness against the focus-point of world Bolshevism—the U.S.S.R. It has drawn the whole of Central Europe into the orbit of fascist development; it has accelerated the process of fascization in all capitalist countries, intensifying the hurricane of reaction, rousing, with its fitful blasts, the storm of revolution. Another reason why the Plenum cannot disregard this event is because it has caused a tremendous transvaluation of values in the minds of the world proletariat—of less extent, it is true, than at the time of the World War but none the less a transvaluation the importance of which should not be underestimated. It has accelerated the process of the disintegration of world Social-Democracy, and this likewise constitutes a new factor of the political development since the Twelfth Plenum of the

E.C.C.I. The successes of socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. on the one hand and the economic crisis in capitalist countries on the other have brought in their train a crisis of Social-Democracy. The bankruptcy of German Social-Democracy in the face of fascism, together with the feverish preparations of the capitalist world for an imperialist war, have converted this crisis into the incipient disintegration of the Second International.

But the setting up of fascist dictatorship in Germany has caused some vacillations in the less stable links of the Communist Parties. In France, England, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Austria, and even in Germany itself, there were found individual persons for whom this test proved too severe. The stand taken on the German question has become a touchstone showing the degree of bolshevization of the various sections of the Communist International, the degree of their Bolshevik stamina, of their ability to meet abrupt changes in the course of events—changes with which the end of capitalist stabilization is inevitably connected—with their heads held high. And we must say at this Plenum with supreme satisfaction that the sections of the Comintern have stood this test with honor. Only think, comrades, what would have happened if this event had occurred a few years ago when the bolshevization of the sections of the Comintern was going forward in alternating crises. Such an event would inevitably have been followed by a profound crisis in the Comintern. And in contrast to this at the present day the German Communist Party has not only not had this crisis but it is upholding the banner still more heroically, raising it still higher, drenched in the blood of its best sons, of the best fighters in the working class. The conduct of Dimitrov at the Leipzig trial alone causes our hearts to beat with pride at the thought that our world Communist Party has reared many Dimitrovs, that tens of thousands of German Communists are evoking respect even among their enemies by their steadfastness and by their supreme devotion to the cause of world proletarian revolution. And against the background of this mass heroism all the more shameful is the desertion of the Remmeles and Neumanns, who in their political line reflect the demoralization of those sections of the backward workers who have followed Social-Democracy and who have lost their bearings after

the capitulation of German Social-Democracy to fascism. Engels once wrote: "The movement of the proletariat necessarily passes through different stages of development; at each stage some people get stuck and do not go further." And Remmele and Neumann have got stuck in the Social-Democratic swamp, have got stuck because they were criminally anxious to take advantage of the blow inflicted on the German working class in order to defame the Party and its Bolshevik leadership.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the line of the C.P.G. and of its leader, Comrade Thaelmann, in not joining open armed battle with the fascist gangs, was absolutely correct. At the present time, as is clear from the trial on the burning of the Reichstag, it was the plan of the fascist scoundrels to provoke this battle in order to cut off and physically annihilate the vanguard of the German working class. And this was also what German Social-Democracy and the whole Second International wanted when they rejected the Comintern's proposal of March 5 for a united front of struggle against fascism. To lead the German Communists under the axe of fascism, to finish off at one stroke one of the advance detachments of world Bolshevism, the C.P.G.—this was also in line with the wishes of the Welshes. It was just for this reason that the Welshes, who did not want to fight fascism, declined the repeated attempts of the C.P.G. to organize a joint struggle of the Social-Democratic and Communist workers against fascism.

The scoundrel Trotsky, who has become the chief purveyor of "ideas" for international reaction, was likewise trying to bring about the rout of Thaelmann's Party, which remained loyal to the Comintern. And these malicious plans of German fascism and social-fascism in regard to the C.P.G. are most intimately connected with the whole position of the Second International in regard to world Bolshevism and the U.S.S.R. International Social-Democracy, in conjunction with Trotsky, would have liked to see the armed destruction of the U.S.S.R., for it knows that the victory of socialism brings with it the death of Social-Democracy.

And it would have been pure adventurism if the German Communist Party, relying on a part of the proletariat split by Social-Democracy—a part which was moreover isolated from the peasantry

and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and which did not have any armed forces at its disposal—had got involved in a battle with the united fascist gangs and the Reichswehr.

To the same category belong the accusations launched by individual defeatists against the C.P.G. to the effect that after Social-Democracy had declined its proposal for a united front of struggle, it did not develop actions on its own initiative, not actions of an armed character but actions in general. And here it is perfectly clear that we have to do with parrot-like imitators of Social-Democracy who have succumbed to the pressure of Social-Democracy and are trying to shift the responsibility from it on to the German Communist Party. Instead of pillorying German Social-Democracy before the working class of their own country—German Social-Democracy which has foresaken the proletariat in its direst need, which has deliberately led it, unarmed both materially and politically, under the axe of the fascist hangmen—these people are casting a stone at the Party which has courageously done its duty and continues to do its duty by the proletariat. Such people represent an obstacle to the winning over of the Social-Democratic workers, and it is necessary to expose them in order to wage a successful struggle against Social-Democracy.

II. The Shifting in the Correlation of Class Forces

The importance of the coming to power of the fascists in Germany lies also in the fact that it has exercised an influence on the correlation of the forces of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in other capitalist countries.

The reasons for the self-assurance of the forces of reaction are to be sought for in the *split of the working class*, which is a consequence of the treacherous policy pursued by international Social-Democracy. The treachery of Social-Democracy helped the bourgeoisie to suppress the proletarian revolutions in the central empires in 1919-21, to effect the stabilization of capitalism on the bones of the working class. It is helping the bourgeoisie at the present time both to pursue a policy aiming at war and the setting up of fascist dictatorship and to bring about both of these even at the present time in individual capitalist countries.

It is not today nor was it during the past year that the working class was split. Here it is not a case of quantitative changes. The new factor consists in the importance which the split of the working class acquires in view of the maturing of fascism and imperialist war. In the period of capitalist stabilization Social-Democracy betrayed strikes, but the workers suffered only partial defeats. Treachery in the face of advancing fascism is a blow at the working class as a whole. This crime is of an almost equally great historical character as the betrayal of August 4, as the bloody suppression of the German proletarian revolution. Consider for a moment how the world would look today if the vile Social-Democratic reptile had been crushed within the working class, if the world labor movement were united under the leadership of the Communist Party and the Communist International, coupled with the existence of the Soviet Union plus the Soviets in China. Then there would be no German fascism, no threat of imperialist war.

The setting up of fascist dictatorship permits the bourgeoisie temporarily to reconcile the interests of various groups, to rally these groups into one shock troop against the working class; it greatly increases the resistance of the bourgeoisie to the proletarian revolution. And over against these serried ranks of the bourgeoisie and the forces of reaction there stands a split working class. This fact alone changes the correlation of forces in capitalist countries in a direction unfavorable to the proletariat.

This does not mean of course that these dynamics in the correlation of forces may not change and change with extreme rapidity. This process is already going on and will inevitably go on with catastrophic swiftness under conditions prevailing at the end of capitalist stabilization, but the development of fascist tendencies in the capitalist world is for the time being rendering the conditions for the struggle of the proletariat less favorable. The crisis is having a tremendous revolutionizing effect on the masses, but it is also creating tremendous cadres of unemployed, especially among the youth, part of whom are today being attracted by fascism with its desperate social demagogy.

Fascist influences are thus penetrating into individual sections of the proletariat.

Take into account, moreover, the increased difficulty of the strike struggle under conditions of the crisis, the terrorism of the employers in the factories, the unheard-of pressure of the state apparatus of terrorist dictatorship upon the working class, the great difficulty involved in developing open forms of the labor movement, and it will be clear to you where the causes are to be sought for the relative hitch in the labor movement in capitalist countries between the Twelfth and Thirteenth Plenums of the E.C.C.I., and why the labor movement in these countries is not marching steadily onward.

And it is precisely in these changes that we must seek the explanation of the fact that the total number of members in the parties forming sections of the Comintern has not increased in comparison with the figures at the time of the Twelfth Plenum of the E.C.C.I.

This does not mean of course that individual sections of the Comintern have not grown. The Chinese Communist Party, for example, has increased its membership by 100,000 during one year, and numbers about 400,000 members at the present time. But there are sections which have suffered cruelly during the past year from the blows of the class enemy. And without doubt first place in respect of the number of victims belongs to the German Communist Party, which since the moment when the fascists came to power has lost upwards of 2,000 killed, 60-70,000 imprisoned in concentration camps, but which nevertheless, as Comrade Pieck has told us, has retained about 100,000 members in its ranks.

If the German Communist Party today appeared before the Plenum even with one-half or with one-third of this number, even in that case we should say that the C.P.G. remains a model section of the Communist International. But it is not only in Germany that repressions have been dealt out; during this year they have affected to a lesser or greater extent the majority of the sections of the Communist International. During the eight months of 1933, according to the data of the Executive Committee of the I.R.A., there have been 46,000 persons killed, 160,000 wounded or maimed and 228,000 revolutionary workers and peasants arrested, the overwhelming majority of whom are members of the Communist Parties or active adherents of Communist ideas.

In Japan there were 14,000 arrested during the past two years, while 30,000 have been arrested since 1929. This figure is enough for a whole party!

But we must not forget that this year has been connected with the transition of a large number of our sections to an illegal or semi-legal position. The Communist Party has been suppressed not only in Germany but also in Austria and in other countries; the Communist press has been closed down, the Red trade unions are being suppressed.

And if under these conditions when the white terror is spreading, the Communist Parties of capitalist countries, which in the past have had no experience of illegality, which have grown up in an atmosphere of bourgeois legalism, have retreated in good order to an illegal position and have been able, although with difficulty, to

reconstruct the methods of their work, that alone is a great achievement of the Comintern.

It must be understood that the general tendency of development under conditions of an inevitable clash of two classes and two worlds, of the intensified growth of antagonisms between them, will lead to a regime in relation to the organizations of the hostile class under which there will be no place for elements of so-called democratic liberties. Bourgeois dictatorship will continue to suppress and destroy revolutionary organizations of the working class without mercy, and this circumstance is a characteristic symptom of the epoch of revolutions and war.

The changes in the correlation of class forces in capitalist countries are likewise connected with the strengthening of fascist influence among the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie. Of the sections of the Comintern only individual Communist Parties, such as the Bulgarian Party, have been able to consolidate their influence over the peasantry, while in the overwhelming majority of capitalist countries the peasantry have hitherto followed the bourgeois parties. Here the new factor which has been apparent during the past year is that under the influence of the severe agrarian crisis more or less considerable groups of the peasantry in individual countries have shifted over into the camp of fascism.

These processes have been all the more marked among the urban petty bourgeoisie and the "middle" strata who have been ruined by the crisis. Here we must say frankly that not one Communist Party of capitalist countries has hitherto devoted its attention to winning over the urban petty bourgeoisie to the side of the proletariat or even to the task of neutralizing it.

And meanwhile fascism, even though it has not succeeded in winning over to its side the reserves of the proletariat, has undoubtedly made a step forward in this direction. The force of attraction of these reserves towards the proletariat has been weakened by the fact of the split in the world labor movement, for the petty bourgeoisie respects the prestige of power and wavers towards the side which impresses it most by its power.

Finally, in the colonies, if we do not count China, the past year, in consequence of the differentiation of the national-revolu-

tionary movement, has been marked in comparison with previous years by a certain weakening of the sweep of this movement—resembling rather the calm before the storm, but nevertheless a calm which permits the bourgeoisie to descend with all the greater fury upon the proletariat.

This whole situation has undoubtedly contributed to a maturing of the elements of fascism and war more rapid than was the case previously. And at the same time it has given international Social-Democracy and its renegade imitators an opportunity to proclaim that the coming period is a period of counter-revolution.

Can we consider this period as one only of black reaction like that which began in Europe after the suppression of the revolution of 1848 or the crushing of the Paris Commune in 1871?

No, comrades, history knows different types of reaction, but in the main they may be classed under two heads. There is the type of reaction which comes after the defeat of the revolution and the rout of the proletariat when the wave of revolution is on the ebb. The periods which began after 1848 and after 1871 belong to this type of reaction. But there have been also other periods of frenzied reaction in history—periods which have preceded revolutions. It was precisely on the immediate eve of revolution that tsarism resorted to the cruelest methods of terror. The German monarchy which was tottering in 1918 shot down revolutionary sailors a few months before its own downfall. The terrorist dictatorship of the war years of 1914-18 could not prevent revolution in Central Europe from terminating the World War. And nevertheless during the months and weeks which preceded the end of the war, the terror against the toilers, against the soldiers, took on especially savage forms in all capitalist countries. Strikes were declared illegal, the free expression of opinion was punished as high treason, courts martial passed scores of death sentences, fire was opened on soldiers who refused to attack the enemy. The terror of the ruling classes was not in any way evidence of the consolidation of their power; they employed terror as a last resort to defer the outbreak of revolution.

It is precisely in relation to such periods that Marx's proposition to the effect that the party of revolution rallies the party of reaction

acquires twofold significance. It applies most of all to a situation when the forces of the proletariat have not yet matured to such an extent that it is possible to commence the overthrowing of the ruling class by armed force and when on the other hand the positions of the ruling classes are so shaken that they have to resort to extraordinary measures in order to maintain their rule. But, comrades, Marx's proposition has also its reverse side. The forces of reaction likewise rally the forces of revolution. Fascism does not only make the struggle of the working class more difficult; it also accelerates the processes of the maturing of the revolutionary crisis.

It is just such periods as the present which are characterized by the development of two contradictory processes, of two rising waves—the wave of revolution and the wave of reaction. Both these processes are shattering the capitalist system from different directions—shattering it ever more extensively, more profoundly, and more sharply. And he who at the present time admits the presence of only a single one-sided tendency, the tendency of political reaction alone, and completely disregards the elements of the revolutionary crisis which is maturing, this man inevitably bases himself on the recognition of “organized capitalism,” overcoming the contradictions which are tearing it asunder in the unity of reaction.

What at the present time are the manifestations of the elements of the maturing revolutionary crisis?

Firstly, the unprecedented tension of class interrelations. Fascist dictatorship is introducing into these relations utterly unmasked violence and civil war. Just as the war of 1914-18 did in its time, so fascism now, by placing the bayonet on the order of the day, is killing the illusion of legalism and bourgeois law among the masses. By these same methods bourgeois dictatorship is preparing its own destruction.

If the history of mankind knows no precedents of such a tension in class relations, it is not because the classes have not clashed previously in more bitter conflicts, but because the economic contradictions which lie at the root of this tension have passed beyond the bounds of anything which mankind has known hitherto. The dreadful force of pressure which monopoly capital exerts upon the

masses will inevitably bring in its train revolutionary outbursts of such a scale as have never been seen in the past.

Fascism is inculcating a frenzied hatred into the toiling masses not only towards its gangs of bandits but also towards the bourgeoisie as the class which is responsible for all violence and suppression of the toilers. He who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind.

Hypocritical pacifism both in class relations and in international relations is suffering bankruptcy before our eyes.

The rule of open violence, both in relations of classes and in those of capitalist states between each other, constitutes the basic content of the epoch of collapsing capitalism after the end of capitalist stabilization. This is the characteristic feature of the second round of revolutions and wars.

The *second* element of the world revolutionary crisis which is maturing is the growing indignation of the masses. Suppressed, driven underground, this mass indignation smoulders deep below the surface in the countries of fascist dictatorship. Its secret processes are often not noticeable to the naked eye, and this is why they lead to unexpected outbursts.

In 1916 during the World War Lenin wrote:

"The socialist revolution may break out not only in consequence of a great strike, a street demonstration, a hunger riot, a mutiny in the forces, or a colonial rebellion, but also in consequence of any political crisis, like the Dreyfuss affair, the Zabern incident, or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc."*

French bourgeois historians assert that if anyone had been walking the streets of Paris a few days before the fall of the Bastille, he would not have noticed anything such as might have presaged the events of July 14, 1789. Superficial "quiet" misleads the ruling classes. Fascist dictatorship, driving the mass discontent underground, loses the feeling of reality; it bases its judgment of the situation on the reports of those hysterical cretins whom it has appointed as leaders of its storm detachments. Those comrades who

* Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

guarded Nicholas II when he was held prisoner could tell of the almost idiotic lack of comprehension for the meaning of the events taking place in a revolutionary country revealed by this man who had had this vast country under his command. Fascism, like a vandal let loose, is smashing the whole system of those indices by which it is possible to judge of the state of feeling among the masses—statistics, trade unions, elections, etc. And every kind of reaction to a lesser or greater extent follows in its footsteps. Hence the “unexpected” character of mass outbursts.

We have had the English general strike of May 1, 1926, the uprising of the Vienna workers on July 15, 1927, the movement in the English fleet in the autumn of 1931 as symptoms of the growing indignation of the masses at the capitalist order of things. Can anyone assert that with the development of the crisis this indignation has diminished? Can the degree of this indignation in the countries of fascist dictatorship at the present time be measured only by strikes and demonstrations? Is not the growth of this indignation evidenced by such facts as the shootings in Geneva, as the events in Rumania, as the uprisings in the Dutch fleet by the joint action of the Dutch and Malayan sailors?

Thirdly and lastly, no small part in the maturing of the elements of the world-wide revolutionary crisis is played by the growth of influence of the Communist Parties and of the ideas of Communism in general. This influence is making itself felt in three main ways. First and foremost, it is increasing the number of the direct supporters of the aims and tasks of the Communist Party among the working class; secondly, there is a growth in the number of people who do not call themselves Communists but who instinctively, by virtue of their class instinct, accept our slogans, *our* methods of struggle, serve the aims of their own class. In any spontaneous strike or in any spontaneous movement one may find this type of unexpected “promotees” from among the masses themselves. Finally, the influence of the ideas of Communism is shown by the way in which they penetrate into the ranks of hostile organizations and above all into the ranks of Social-Democracy, which accelerates the process of the latter’s disintegration.

III. The Forces of Revolution

But what is the relative importance of the tendencies of the world revolutionary crisis in comparison with the tendency of fascism and war?

This question can only be answered by reckoning up the forces of revolution which stand against the world forces of reaction. The forces of revolution are, firstly, the Communist Parties of capitalist countries, secondly, the national revolutionary movements in the colonies, thirdly, Soviet China, and fourthly, the Soviet Union as the decisive and all-important factor in the world proletarian revolution.

The Communist Parties of capitalist countries are a very important factor in the world proletarian revolution, but with the exception of certain individual sections the Communist Parties do not yet have an organized mass basis—a fact which permits the elements of fascism and war to grow with extreme rapidity. Besides this the Communist Parties have a number of great shortcomings in their work.

Firstly, all Communist Parties of capitalist countries without exception make insufficient use of the world economic crisis in order to strengthen themselves politically and organizationally. They have not always headed the movement of the working class for its partial demands; they have not developed a huge mass movement of the unemployed in conformity with the dimensions of the present crisis; they have not always been able to mobilize the masses around clear, concrete slogans, conforming to the state of feeling among these masses, for the struggle against capitalism and bourgeois dictatorship. And the reason for the weak work of the Communist Party in this sphere lies in the opportunist passivity and sectarian habits which have not yet been outlived and which hinder both the organizational and the political growth of the sections of the Comintern. And if the Communist Parties, especially the less numerous ones, had overcome these manifestations of opportunism, they would

have come to this Plenum today with other results than those which they actually have.

Questions of mass politics and mass work must become the cornerstone of the whole activity of the Communist Parties, if the latter are seriously reckoning on blocking the way to fascism and imperialist war and on speeding up the maturing of the elements of world revolutionary crisis.

Secondly, the Communist Parties have made insufficient use of the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy in Germany and of the political and organizational crisis of German Social-Democracy in order to undermine the foundations of the influence of the whole Second International. There has not been a sufficiently resolute Bolshevik offensive against international Social-Democracy on the part of the sections of the Comintern. Opportunist waverings have begun, as reflected by Humbert-Droz in the Swiss Communist Party, by Gutmann in the Czechoslovakian Party, by Schueller in the Austrian Party—waverings which amount to a weakening of the struggle against Social-Democracy, to an open lapsing into Social-Democratic positions, and which introduce a “spirit of wavering and opportunism, a spirit of hesitation and demoralization.” (Stalin.)

Comrade Ercoli asks us what is the explanation of the fact that Social-Democracy managed to execute this maneuver, to unfold a new series of theories and arguments in defense of the treachery of German Social-Democracy. We answer that it is just because the offensive of the sections of the Comintern against international Social-Democracy has not been strong enough. There have been people who began to doubt whether Social-Democracy, after the blow inflicted on it by the Hitler government, is the main social bulwark of the bourgeoisie. As though the question of the social function of the Welses and Blums were decided by the form of bourgeois dictatorship!

The main question determining the role of Social-Democracy in the system of bourgeois dictatorship is whether Social-Democracy after Hitler's coming to power continues to be an agent of capital within the working class, an agent which splits the ranks of the proletariat and thereby facilitates the victory of fascism, and consequently whether it helps to preserve capitalism.

Has the position of Social-Democracy changed, since it was expelled from the Reichstag, on the question of the attitude towards the Communist Party, towards the Soviet Union, towards proletarian revolution, towards the class struggle, towards the united front for repulsing fascism, etc.?

No, comrades, and hence the conclusion is that Social-Democracy remains, as was correctly stated in the theses, the main social bulwark of the bourgeoisie.

Thirdly, the Communist Parties, with the exception of the Japanese, the Chinese, and perhaps the French, have made insufficient use of the menace of imperialist war for mobilizing the masses for a struggle against chauvinism and the war danger. And here the blame lies on a fatalist argument which has penetrated into our ranks; somewhere or other attempts are being made to interpret the theses given by Lenin to the delegation to the Hague Conference as meaning that it is impossible to hinder the coming of imperialist war, that a real revolution will only begin as a result of a new imperialist war. This is a mistake, comrades.

The Comintern and its sections would present a pretty spectacle indeed if at the moment of an attack on the U.S.S.R. by the capitalist world we began to wait for capitalism to bleed to death before commencing militant action upon it.

Remember, comrades, that in the struggle against the preparations for an out-and-out reactionary imperialist war of the capitalist world against the U.S.S.R., you in your countries will have to parry the full brunt of the class enemy's blow under conditions of frenzied terrorism and chauvinism. You should be ready for this, because there can be no faint-heartedness or retreat. Though the sections of the Comintern are not sufficiently strong organizationally, though the class enemy may seem strong to them with his threat of tanks, guns, all sorts of armaments on land, on sea and in the air—still our strength is not yet fully developed, it is as yet in a state of potentiality.

One thing which distinguishes bourgeois from proletarian dictatorship is the fact that in bourgeois dictatorship there is a deep gulf between the aims and interests which it upholds and its multifarious mass basis. In proletarian dictatorship there is no such gulf.

But it is just this gulf in bourgeois dictatorship, including fascist dictatorship, which forms its organic defect, leading inevitably to shiftings and "leakages" in its mass basis.

It must not be forgotten that those same people who went to war in August 1914 with patriotic songs, with bayonets decked with flowers, by the end of the war were using these bayonets to stab their officers. The forces of reaction least of all reveal social stability; they are quagmires, they are subjected to subterranean shocks, to shakings of the ground under their feet.

The processes by which the masses desert fascism are inevitable, and they are already beginning in Germany. It is just because of this that we cannot speak of an interruption in the development of the revolutionary process in Germany. The maturing of the crisis in Germany has not come to an end; it has only taken on other forms, it is developing by zig-zags instead of a direct upward line.

There are some comrades who say that the setting up of a fascist dictatorship in Germany inflicts the severest defeat on the whole international working class. There can be no doubt that the victory of fascism in Germany is a severe blow not only for the German working class. But then the world working class has won tremendous victories during this year in China and in the Soviet Union. It is impossible to base one's estimate of the correlation of forces on one individual country alone. "Today it is necessary to speak," as Comrade Stalin said, "of proletarian world revolution, for the separate national fronts of capital have become links in a single chain called the world front of imperialism . . ." The victories won in China and the U.S.S.R. have turned the scale of the correlation of class forces on the international arena in favor of the proletariat. And the processes of revolutionary fermentation in the colonies have had an effect in the same direction. They have not everywhere been manifested in forms of strife, but imperialism has not consolidated its position in the colonies. The differentiation of the national revolutionary movement has weakened the sweep of this movement, but it has strengthened the influence of the Communist Parties over the sections of the toilers who are deserting the national reformists. In Manchuria at the present time there are over 100,000 partisans as compared with the several hundred thousand there were previously

but this movement is not under the leadership of General Ma or Su Ping-wen, but under the leadership of chiefs who have been promoted by the masses themselves.

Furthermore, the past year has been characterized by an upsurge of the national revolutionary movement in Arabian countries (Syria, Palestine, Algeria, Tunis, etc.). But there can be no doubt that the greatest successes of all have been gained by the Chinese revolution in the Soviet districts. The Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese Soviets, the Chinese Red Army—this is not simply a movement but an organized workers' and peasants' state, a state better organized and more civilized than any capitalist state. In this state the headsman's axe is unknown, the fruits of human genius are not consigned to the bonfire; this state is recognized by the most rabid enemies of the Chinese revolution as the firmest and most stable government in China.

This state has already become a serious factor in international politics; it is carrying on negotiations with the governments of individual provinces; the most powerful capitalist states have to reckon with its existence; the Chinese Soviets today are already threatening the flank of Japanese imperialism, constituting a factor which is holding up the latter's offensive against the Soviet Union, for the Japanese imperialists understand that in the event of an act of aggression against the U.S.S.R. 400,000,000 Chinese will be set in motion and that the Chinese Soviets may place themselves at the head of a movement for the national-revolutionary liberation of China from the yoke of the imperialists, for clearing Manchuria and Northern China from the army of occupation of the Japanese robbers. The successes of Soviet China do not only render the Chinese revolution invincible; they also strengthen the positions of the world working class in the struggle with the bourgeoisie and make Soviet China a most important element in the world revolutionary crisis which is maturing.

And what is happening in the U.S.S.R.? Here it is not a case simply of the Magnitogorsk blast furnaces and the lights of Dnieprostroy. The fact that the Donbas is now for the first time after several years fulfilling its extremely intensive program of coal production, that the land of socialist construction is now approaching a

figure of 26,000 tons of pig-iron per day—this is only one small isolated illustration against the magnificent background of the picture of the present day and the near future which is unfolding before us. This year we have gathered in a magnificent harvest, the autumn sowing campaign has been carried out in an efficient manner by the collective farms, a mighty work has been carried out by millions of collective farmers in the struggle against weeds. In our country there has never been such a high quality of sowing, such a careful tillage of the soil, as there has been this year. The land has been ploughed up in preparation for the spring sowing of industrial crops in a way that old Russia never knew. Our leader, our teacher, our tried and trusted battle-leader and great strategist of the world proletarian revolution, Comrade Stalin (*loud applause*) has told the Party and the country of the toilers that this year must be the last year of our difficulties, and the whole Party and the country are working with pertinacity, with indomitable energy to carry this slogan into effect. At the present time we are working at pig-breeding and putting into this task all our revolutionary ardor, Bolshevik vigor, all the flaming energy of former fighters on the front of the civil war. Next spring we will develop poultry-breeding on a mass scale, knowing that the world revolutionary crisis is hatching in the Soviet egg; during the next two years we will increase the quantity of cattle and we are convinced that the Soviet Yaroslavl cow will gore not only fascism but the whole of world capitalism. You understand why it is that during the past year there has been an unexampled strengthening of the collective farm system in our country, based on a marked increase in the value of the workday* in the collective farm. Last year a collective farm where a farmer obtained 3-4 kilos for one workday was reckoned a good collective farm, whereas in the present year such collective farms are not much in favor with us. Thanks to the correct general line of our Party, the present year has brought with it a strengthening of labor

* Workday: A unit for accounting the labor spent by members of collective farms and calculated according to the character, quantity and quality of the work performed. The income of the collective farm is distributed among its members according to the number of workdays put in by each member.

discipline on the collective farms, strengthening of the socialist attitude to labor, and increased faith in the Party and the Soviet power among the collective farm masses. This is especially striking among the women collective farmers. I can assure you that the non-Party women of our collective farms have a stronger and sounder assurance in regard to the perspectives of the revolution than has, for example, the ex-member of the E.C.C.I., Remmele. The collectivization of agriculture, developed on the basis of the technical revolution which we have effected, has smashed to pieces the old division of labor under which the woman collective farmer only did housework. She has now taken her place at the wheel of the tractor and the harvester combine; she has become the mechanic of a threshing machine, she has gone to plough the fields. The woman collective farmer, yesterday the slave of household chores, has come to feel herself a mistress of the new collective farm system enjoying equal rights with the men; her class consciousness has grown unbelievably, and the Soviet power is now winning over new millions of such women, awakened to political life by the collective farm revolution, as conscious builders of the socialist society.

During this year the basis of the proletarian dictatorship has broadened in the countryside and in the town. A crushing blow has been inflicted on the kulak and his wrecking work—a blow from which he will never recover. The collective farms have become the unshakable foundation of our Soviet system. And all this helps to increase the defensive capacity of the Soviet Union. It is here not only a question of the technical arming of the Red Army but of the political arming of the Party and the Soviet power with the devotion of millions of toilers. The overcoming of our difficulties which we are about to effect is exercising and will exercise a tremendous revolutionizing influence over the toiling masses of capitalist countries. And if by successfully fulfilling the first Five-Year Plan we have shown the whole world that only socialism can ensure a mighty development of the productive forces, then by overcoming our difficulties at the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan we are convincing all the toilers that only socialism can guarantee the highest standards of living among the masses and their material welfare. Do you feel, comrades, what a mighty weapon you are

receiving in your struggle against capitalism and Social-Democracy? To the German proletarians, our class and Party brothers, imprisoned in the fascist jails and concentration camps, this Plenum must say: We hear you, brothers, we are proud of your struggle, suffer for your afflictions. Thousands of hammers are beating in the Soviet land, smashing the shell of the old world, deepening the rifts in the capitalist system and bringing nearer the hour of deliverance to the whole world proletariat.

IV. The Tasks of the Communist Parties

But if there are contradictory tendencies in the course of world development, the international situation is rendered all the more complicated by the fact that the effects of the general crisis of capitalism make themselves felt unevenly in the various capitalist countries; and hence it follows that the degree of capitalism's collapse in individual countries, and the sharpness of class relations in them is uneven, that the processes of fascization proceed unevenly in view of the different levels attained by the labor movement, and also the different gradations in the maturing of the revolutionary crisis. This must be all the more forcibly stressed because, however great the role played by Germany in the intricate complex of world relations, it is nevertheless impossible to internationalize German fascism and tie down all parties to identical tactical tasks made to fit the conditions in Germany. There can be no doubt that the elements of fascism are maturing in all capitalist countries, but in the first place its forms will be different, and in the second place the type of German fascist development is by no means obligatory for other capitalist countries which are moving towards the setting up of the fascist form of bourgeois dictatorship. The French bourgeoisie, for example, finds the husk of bourgeois democracy, serving as it does as a convenient screen for fascist methods, more advantageous at the present stage than open fascist dictatorship. Firstly, this democratic husk gives the French bourgeoisie a ready-made ideology in the future imperialist war with Germany; secondly, it permits French imperialism better to achieve its aims both in the colonies and among the vassal states; thirdly, by upholding democratic illusions among the workers, it permits the French bourgeoisie to consolidate the regime of political bondage and economic exploitation of the proletariat.

Taking these factors into account, we must warn the sections of the Comintern against a dilettante universalism which may tend

to base the tactics of the Communist Parties on general tendencies of development without considering the peculiarities of each individual country. The tasks of the Communist Parties must be strictly differentiated in conformity with the concrete situation of the present day and with the given correlation of forces in their own country. If we are to sum up these tasks according to the types of development of individual countries, they may be reduced to the following propositions:

Firstly, the Communist Parties must do all in their power not to permit an *imperialist, out-and-out reactionary war of the capitalist world against the Soviet Union*, the fatherland of all the toilers and the bulwark of the world proletarian revolution. And here, comrades, it is not a question of war in general, of war in the abstract, preparations for which are designed for a period of many years, but of a concrete war with which the Soviet Union is being threatened at the present time by predatory Japanese imperialism. Today, we must give the theses of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern about the struggle against imperialist wars a more concrete interpretation in regard to the situation which is being created in the Far East. And here the most important part falls to the young Communist Party of Japan, to the Korean Communists and to the Chinese Communists of Manchuria. The work of the Communists in fighting the menace of war against the Soviet Union is most intimately bound up with the struggle against the robber war which is already being waged by Japanese imperialism in China. Defense of the Chinese toiling masses by all means which the situation may dictate—this also means the defense of the Soviet Union. The Communists of England, the U.S.A., France, have not done enough, as Comrade Wan Min has emphasized, to defend revolutionary China. You were not able to remove the dirty hand of your imperialists from China, you were not sufficiently strong—let us grant that! But your agitation was deficient in fire, in a live feeling of indignation impressing the worker by its sincerity; there were too few of those acts of struggle which would have made the Chinese worker and peasant feel that their cause is the blood-cause of world Communism. The Communists of England, the U.S.A. and France must unfold a struggle against the help which their gov-

ernments are rendering to Japanese imperialism in arming it for war against China, for aggression against the Soviet Union.

Secondly, the Communists of France, Germany and Poland must do everything in their power not to permit a new Franco-German or German-Polish war.

Thirdly, the Communists must be on the alert not to permit the *setting up of fascist dictatorship* in those countries where the bourgeoisie has set about fascizing the state apparatus. Not one inch to the bourgeoisie without resistance from the Communist Party, mobilizing the masses for this struggle. For every particle of liberty for the working class and the toilers an indefatigable struggle must be waged—a struggle linked up with the defense of the daily needs of the proletariat. Bear in mind, comrades, that the unprecedented sharpening of the class struggle does not remove the partial demands of the toilers right up to the last decisive struggle, but lends these demands a tremendous revolutionary sting, directed against the whole system of bourgeois dictatorship. In the struggle against fascism which aims at seizing the state apparatus, in the struggle against fascist dictatorship which is being set up, the Communist Parties cannot dispense with such a weapon of class resistance as the mass political strike.

Fourthly, the Communists must exert all their strength to *overthrow fascist dictatorship where it has already been set up*. The view that fascist dictatorship can be replaced only by the proletarian dictatorship smacks of "automatism." Without doubt, in such a country as Germany, proletarian dictatorship is coming to replace fascism. But experience also tells us that where the Communist Parties are weak, where the working class has not come under their leadership as an independent force, fascist dictatorship has been replaced by bourgeois dictatorship in the form of a republic, as for example in Spain. Therefore the possibility of a fascist-democratic see-saw is by no means precluded, if the Communists do not inflict a decisive blow on Social-Democracy. An especially important international task of the whole world Communist movement is to *struggle against German fascism* and to support the heroic struggle of the German Communist Party in every way. To hasten the

bankruptcy of German fascism, to achieve its overthrow—this would be a tremendous blow at all world reaction.

And all these four tasks bring us to the central slogan of our theses, the slogan of overthrowing bourgeois dictatorship and setting up *Soviet power* throughout the whole world. We intentionally put the task of proletarian dictatorship in a concrete form, clothing it in Soviet form, and we do this in order to expose the attempts of Social-Democracy, which is playing with the slogan of proletarian dictatorship as a preliminary political school, leading the masses towards bourgeois democracy. Our path towards the realization of this central slogan is the old one—winning over the majority of the working class as a condition for establishing the unity of the proletariat in revolutionary action, and attracting to our side the reserves of the revolution. And this presupposes the destruction of the agency of the class enemy among the workers—international Social-Democracy. By putting forward the slogan of Soviet power we want to emphasize more forcibly the importance of the armed uprising of the masses as the only means to overthrow the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. And thereby we want to attract the attention not only of the Communists but of all the toilers as well to the necessity of winning over the armies to the side of the insurgent people, to the necessity of work by the Communists among the soldiers and sailors, so as to guarantee the victory of the armed uprising.

We do not disguise our aims, they were written in the *Communist Manifesto* eighty-five years ago. But the ruling classes under whose feet the earth is beginning to tremble open their eyes in astonishment and accuse the Communists of plots. What stupidity! Millions of people have been set in motion, but the fascist lawyers, donning their fools' caps, want to confine the tremendous revolutionary movement of the masses within the bounds of a provocation police plot. But the frenzy of the ruling classes against Communism puts in the foreground with especial sharpness the question of the *transition of the Communist Parties to a state of illegality*. This is no longer "music of the future," comrades. The preparation of the Communist Parties for illegality on the basis of intensified mass work is a most important task of this Plenum. We do not

know how many of the Communist Parties will remain in a semi-legal position up to the outbreak of war, but we know for certain that on the outbreak of war the sections of the Comintern will have to go underground. Do not let the Communist Parties tell us that their cadres are weak and not prepared for underground work. We answer in the words of Lenin:

"It is not true to say that 'the French are incapable' of systematic illegal work. Untrue! The French quickly learned to conceal themselves in trenches; they will quickly learn the *new* conditions of illegal work and the systematic preparation of a *revolutionary mass* movement."*

Even today, taking into account the experience of Germany and Italy, the Communist Parties must reconstruct the system of their work in the shortest possible time on the basis of illegal factory nuclei. This is the first elementary condition of preparation for underground work.

The second condition is to take immediate steps to rid the Communist Parties of the reptile of provocation which is undermining the work of certain sections of the Comintern.

The third condition is the ability to combine methods of legal and semi-legal work with methods of underground work on the basis of the whole experience of the world revolutionary movement. And here the question of work in the fascist organizations acquires exceptional importance.

Fourthly, the structure of the organization and the methods of its work must be so reconstructed as to guarantee a definite decentralization calculated to insure the best methods of hiding our workers from the police and the realization of the old principle of underground work—each one should know not what he may know, but only what he must know.

The fifth condition is the training of cadres. For the period which is opening before us, we do not need simply Communists but Communist underground workers. They must be people tried and

* Lenin, "On the Tasks of the Opposition in France," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

tested in every respect; they must know how to conduct themselves under cross-examination, how to behave at trials, making use of the dock as a tribune for exposing the class enemy. They must be people of ideological firmness and political stamina, who continue to be Bolsheviks during their everyday work and do not lose their heads at moments when there is an abrupt change in the situation. They must be independent people, capable of quickly and boldly making responsible decisions in the most intricate circumstances. Finally, they must be revolutionaries and mass workers, sensing the processes which are going on among the masses, able to speak in the language of these masses, to clothe every revolutionary thought and every revolutionary action in the setting of class struggle. For this period we do not want people of the type of Neumann, who are fruitless alike in the theory and the practice of the labor movement, but fighters and mass workers of the type which the C.P.S.U., the German, Chinese and Polish Communist Parties have given us and continue to give us. Where are such cadres to be trained? They must be trained in militant action in the very bosom of the working class. The growth of such cadres is connected with the whole process of the bolshevization of the Communist Parties. During the process of the bolshevization the Communist Parties have been through a great schooling. But the historic stage which is now opening before the world Communist movement confronts the Communist Parties with higher demands in respect of their bolshevization.

In the fire of revolutionary battles the sections of the Comintern will grow stronger, reaching the level of the C.P.S.U. But for the success of these battles what is needed today is a still more resolute fire against Right opportunism, as the main danger, and against Leftist deviations. The feeling of organic hatred towards opportunism in all its forms, as an obstacle which hinders the winning over of the masses to the side of Communism, must be nurtured in every Communist.

The road which the sections of the Comintern are going is a hard one. That stern school through which the C.P.G. is passing is hardening it like high-class revolutionary steel. Not one grievous ordeal befalls the Communist Parties and the working class without bringing its fruits, without enriching their revolutionary experience,

without raising the Communist Party to a higher level of Bolshevik stamina.

The class whose historical course is upward, and its Party are growing strong under the severe blows, but the classes which are doomed by history to the scrap-heap, and their parties are collapsing under the weight of their own victories. The victories of the U.S. S.R. are strengthening the new world which is being born; the victories of fascism are only prolonging the agony of the old world which is in its death throes. The German Communist Party, hunted down and persecuted, feels itself more assured before the future that is opening before it than fascism which is persecuting it. That is why at the Leipzig trial it was not Dimitroff who was on trial; it was Dimitroff trying fascism. That is why the hangman Goering, his face distorted with fury, stands in the Leipzig dock as a criminal spat upon and loaded with universal contempt, while Dimitrov, bound in chains, becomes a mighty mouthpiece, calling upon the toilers of all countries to unite under the banner of Communism.

Let the fascist bloodhounds rave as they will—the Communists are marching onward, assured of their right, of their strength and of their victory.

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