

## Some Problems of Fascism

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THE phenomenon of fascism has now developed for 16 years since the original formation of the Milan "Fascio di Combattimento" in 1919, and for 13 years since the first fascist accession to power in Italy. The first wave of fascism, following on the post-war revolutionary wave and preceding the period of partial stabilization, has been succeeded by the very much wider and further-reaching second wave, following on the breakdown of stabilization and preceding the second world revolutionary wave. The conditions of these two waves are profoundly different; fascism has gone through a very considerable development during this period; and the working class has also gone through a profound development in the experience of the struggle. The Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 dealt with fascism on the basis of the experience of the first wave and its aftermath (including the Polish coup of 1926). Today the Seventh Congress will need to carry forward the treatment of fascism on the basis of the conditions of the second wave, and the basis of the enormous experience of 1928-35, and in relation to the problems of the gathering, new, world revolutionary epoch.

### I. THE DEFINITION OF FASCISM

Fascism has widened and deepened its character and significance as a world phenomenon in the development of post-war capitalism from 1922 to 1935. In the early period after the war, during the first world revolutionary wave, bourgeois-democracy, with the accompanying special mechanism of Social-Democracy, appeared as the main savior of capitalism in the leading countries, as "the last anchor of salvation" of the entire reaction, in the phrase of Engels' letter to Bebel in 1884:

"Pure democracy may acquire for a short time a temporary importance at the moment of the revolution, in the role of the last anchor of salvation of the entire bourgeois, even feudal economy. . . . Both during the crisis and the day after it our only adversary will be the entire reactionary mass grouped around pure democracy." (Engels, letter to Bebel, December 11, 1884.)

This prediction was realized with startling completeness in the years 1917-1921. Fascism during this period appeared as a subsidiary auxiliary or alternative weapon of the bourgeoisie, of importance mainly in the less developed countries.

Today this situation has changed. It would not be correct to say that Engels' analysis is no longer applicable to modern capitalism; on the contrary, the development of the new world revolutionary epoch to its most intense point, with the crashing of the fascist dictatorships, may yet reveal once again for a short moment the same picture. But in the present period, in the period of the maturing revolutionary crisis, the face of capitalism is profoundly changed. The old "classic" bourgeois-democracy no longer survives intact in any country, the increasingly restricted remains of it, in a dwindling number of countries, have become the shell of a process of fascization. Despite the great differences of conditions in the different countries, and the differences of degree in

development towards fascist characteristics, fascism appears today as a *universal* tendency of the present stage of modern monopoly capitalism in all imperialist countries, not only in the countries of open fascist dictatorship, but also in the countries of bourgeois-democracy. Following on the world economic crisis and the shattering of capitalist stabilization, *fascism is revealed today as the dominant and most typical characteristic tendency of modern monopoly capitalism in the present stage of the general crisis, of intensified contradictions and of the menacing proletarian revolution.*

The treatment of fascism by the Communist International in the various theses and resolutions has developed step by step with the development of fascism since its inception. Four main stages of periods in this treatment may be distinguished:

1. The preliminary analysis, on the basis of the first wave of fascism, from 1921 to the Sixth Congress.
2. The main definition in the Sixth Congress Theses and Program.
3. The extended working out of the character of fascism, on the basis of the second wave following on the shattering of stabilization, and the question of social-fascism, from the Tenth to the Twelfth Plenums, 1929-32.
4. The final statement to date, following the Hitler dictatorship, at the Thirteenth Plenum, 1933.

It is important at the outset (above all in order to prevent unnecessary discussion of points already cleared) to review briefly what this step by step development of the line has already established and successfully demonstrated, in order to define more sharply the task of the Seventh Congress, *i.e.*, what is the new ground which requires to be covered by the Seventh Congress in order, not only to draw together the treatment in the light of our present very much fuller knowledge, but also to bring it up-to-date in relation to the present stage of fascism and its future perspectives.

The first treatment of fascism in the Theses of the Communist International was at the Third Congress in 1921. The Third Congress Theses on Tactics noted the development of

" . . . legal and semi-legal, though State protected white-guard organizations. . . . In Italy it is the Fascisti whose depredations affected a change in the mood of the bourgeoisie, giving the appearance of a complete change in the respective strength of the contending political forces."

With the Fascisti are compared the Orgesch in Germany, the Union Civique in France, the Defense Corps in England and the American Legion in the United States. The Communists are urged to rally

" . . . the best and most active among the workers to create their own labor legions and militant organizations which will resist the fascists and teach the 'golden youth' of the bourgeoisie a wholesome lesson."

This is the first, most elementary impact of fascism upon the working class movement, *i.e.*, as the extra-State, but State protected, militant organizations of the bourgeoisie for guerilla warfare on the working class vanguard.

The Fourth Congress in 1922 was already faced with the advent

of fascism to power in Italy. The lessons of this were drawn in the *Address to Italian Workers*, which laid bare the role of reformism in surrendering the initiative to the reaction, and the significance of the bourgeoisie themselves establishing that open dictatorship which the workers' leaders had hesitated to set up and trampling underfoot the forms of bourgeois-democracy and law and order—"those false gods which the weak leaders of Italian Socialism worshipped". The Fourth Congress Theses on Tactics already drew the *universal* significance of the Italian experience for all countries:

"The salient features of the Italian fascism—that 'classical' fascism which has now taken possession of that country for some time—consist in the fact that the fascists, not content with establishing their own counter-revolutionary militant organizations armed to the teeth, seek also to gain ground by social-demagogy, among the masses and the peasantry, among the lower bourgeoisie, and even among certain elements of the working class, in order to make use of the general disappointment with so-called democracy.

"The menace of fascism lurks today in many countries—in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in nearly all the Balkan countries, in Poland, in Germany, in Austria and America and even in countries like Norway. Fascism in one form or another is not altogether impossible even in countries like France and England." (*Fourth Congress Theses on Tactics*.)

It is noticeable that already in 1922, within the first weeks of the fascist accession to power in Italy, the Communist International clearly outlined the perspective: 1, that Italian fascism was likely to hold power "for some time"; 2, that Italian fascism was likely to prove a "classic" type; 3, that the menace of fascism applied to all imperialist countries without exception, including the most "advanced" "democratic" countries. At that time reformism was without exception declaring: 1, that the fascist "adventure" in Italy would immediately collapse; 2, that fascism was an "exceptional" "backward" "purely Italian" phenomenon; 3, that fascism could have no significance for "advanced" "democratic" industrial countries. Even as late as 1928 the Second International at its Brussels Congress was still declaring that fascism could only develop in "backward" "agrarian" countries and not in "advanced" "industrial" countries. Only in 1931 at its Vienna Congress the Second International was compelled to place on record that its previous view had been incorrect. Looking back, we can take a justifiable pride in the leadership of the Communist International, which thus already in 1922 gave with complete correctness the essential line with regard to fascism for the whole future epoch.

The 1923 Plenum, faced with the Bulgarian coup following on the Italian, gave detailed attention to the question of fascism. In its discussions are to be found the most comprehensive treatment of the question of fascism (in particular, of its social roots, also the exposure of its contradictions), on the basis of the first fascist wave.

The main characteristics of fascism, signalized by the Communist International on the basis of the first fascist wave, in the period up to the Sixth Congress, may be shortly summarized under the following heads:

1. Fascism is a phenomenon of the *disintegration* of bourgeois economy and of the old State forms.
2. The *social roots* of fascism in the impoverishment and

disillusionment of the petty bourgeoisie, small peasantry, intellectuals and declassed strata, also backward sections of the workers, consequent on the failure of reformism and the parliamentary system to meet the needs of these.

3. Inadequacy of the old mechanism of the State bureaucracy and armed forces to maintain the bourgeois dictatorship; organization of new *extra-State, semi-legal formations* to conduct destructive warfare on the working class organizations.

4. *Destruction of bourgeois-democratic forms.*

5. The distinctive characteristic of fascism as the combination of social-demagogy, utilized to organize a *special mass basis*, with counter-revolutionary terrorism.

6. Responsibility of *reformism* for the development of fascism ("the real forerunner of fascism was reformism", Resolution of the Italian Commission, Fourth Congress).

7. The menace of fascism as *applicable to all the imperialist countries.*

To these characteristics the Fifth Congress in 1924 added for the first time the point of the *parallel* character of Social-Democracy and fascism as parallel weapons of the bourgeoisie in the current period.

"The Social-Democrats from the Right wing of the Labor movement are in a process of transition and more and more becoming converted into the 'Left' wing of the bourgeoisie, and in places into a wing of fascism. This is the reason it is historically incorrect to speak of the 'victory of fascism over Social-Democracy. Fascism and Social-Democracy (insofar as their leaders are concerned) are the right and left hands of modern capitalism." (*Fifth Congress, Theses on Tactics* 3.)

This was the first formulation (following the line of Stalin's article earlier in 1924) of the signs of the new development of Social-Democracy towards social-fascism.

The Sixth Congress in 1928 drew together the results of the experience and analysis up to that date, both in its theses and above all in the International Program, into what still constitutes today the principal comprehensive Communist definition of fascism and its characteristics (*Theses on the International Situation*, No. 24, and Program, 2, 3). Fascism was now definitely defined as the "terrorist dictatorship of Big Capital" (in 1922 the Fourth Congress, in the address to the Italian workers, had still described the fascists, not incorrectly for that stage, as "international adventurers, without a definite program and definite ideals, without firm and united class basis"), specifically characterized by "the combination of social-demagogy, corruption and active white terror, in conjunction with extreme imperialist aggression in the sphere of foreign politics". The peculiar "characteristic feature" of fascism lay in its organization of "a reactionary mass movement".

The new features brought out by the Sixth Congress covered principally:

1. The attempt of fascism to organize "a new type of State"; its attempt "to establish political and organizational unity among all the governing classes of capitalist society" (*International Situation*, No. 24).
2. The "increasing application of fascist methods by the bourgeoisie" also in countries not under fascist dictatorship, *e.g.*, the Trade Union Act in Britain and the Paul-Boncour Military Law in France (*ibid.*, 16).
3. The increasing parallelism, both of theory and practice, of Social-Democracy and fascism:

"The ideology of class cooperation—the official ideology of Social-Democracy—has many points of contact with fascism. The employment of fascist methods in the struggle against the revolutionary movement is observed in a rudimentary form in the practice of many Social-Democratic Parties, as well as in that of the reformist trade-union bureaucracy." (*Ibid.*, 24.)

"The bourgeoisie resorts either to the method of fascism or to the method of coalition with Social-Democracy, according to the changes in the political situation; while Social-Democracy itself often plays a fascist role in periods when the situation is critical for capitalism. In the process of development Social-Democracy reveals fascist tendencies." (Program 2, 3).

The new period after the Sixth Congress, already foreshadowed by the Sixth Congress, marked by the shattering of capitalist stabilization, and opening in 1929 with the world economic crisis and the beginning of the second fascist wave, was to see, not only the intensive development of the main basic features of fascism, already noted (illustrated anew on a very much greater scale in the advance of the Nazis to power), but also the *qualitatively new* and very far-reaching extension of the new features, first briefly indicated by the Sixth Congress, *i.e.*:

1. The "increasing application of fascist methods by the bourgeoisie" in all countries, also in countries of still formal bourgeois-democracy, through an amazing variety of transitional and partial forms (Brüning, Von Papen, National Government, Roosevelt, etc.), necessitating a very great widening of the whole understanding of fascism and of the path of the transition to fascism.

2. The increasing approximation of the central staffs of Social-Democracy to fascist or semi-fascist conceptions and ideology (theories of organized capitalism, Mondism, drawing together of the labor bureaucracy and State apparatus) and utilization of methods analogous to fascist methods (war on revolutionary section of the working class movement by coercion and corruption, Berlin May Day shooting, Labor Government's role).

The problems represented by these phenomena of the new stage above all occupied the attention of the Tenth Plenum, the Eleventh Plenum and the Twelfth Plenum from 1929 to 1932. In consequence, the all-important work accomplished by these conferences in the sphere of the questions of fascism covered two main and associated groups of problems.

1. The process of *fascization*, and the relationship of bourgeois-democracy and fascism. The manifold development towards fascism in all countries, at an increasing speed and under all types of outer State forms, made it urgently necessary to destroy the remains of the abstract liberal counterposing of bourgeois-democracy and fascism as absolute opposites, separated by a supposedly rigid barrier; since this view, inculcated by Social-Democracy, led to the passive looking to the question of a future "coup" as the sole question of fascism, and in consequence inevitably to the "theory of the lesser evil", *i.e.*, the actual support of the encroaching fascist offensive in the name of the defense of bourgeois-democracy. Against this view it was necessary to awaken the workers to the present struggle against the already continuously developing fascist offensive, and to the decisive role of this present mass struggle as determining the development or otherwise of the future fascist "coup" and completed fascist dictatorship. These very difficult questions were cleared above all at the Eleventh Plenum in 1931, and the correctness of this line, as against the line of Social-Democracy, was fully confirmed by

the development in Germany, stage by stage, to Hitler, as also in the later Austrian example.

2. The problems of *social-fascism*. It was urgently necessary to awaken the workers from being drawn unconsciously into the stream towards fascism, through their faith in Social-Democracy as the supposed "opponent" of fascism, when in reality Social-Democracy was assisting in its own fashion the development towards fascism and the fascization of the State. The theory of social-fascism (first developed explicitly at the Tenth Plenum in 1929) placed this issue in the sharpest possible form, and, despite some confusions and errors in its current propagandist use in the various countries, achieved an important purpose in awakening a growing body of workers to the role of Social-Democracy in directly assisting the fascist offensive.

The advent of Hitler to power in Germany, in 1933, brought the whole issue of fascism on a world scale to a new stage. Here for the first time was demonstrated, with damning completeness, the final working out (where Social-Democracy succeeds in paralyzing the workers' action) of the process of fascization in an advanced industrial "democratic" country to its ultimate outcome in the open terrorist fascist dictatorship, throwing aside the last remnants of the old decayed bourgeois-democratic forms and openly setting itself the aim to exterminate physically the working class movement. The fascist offensive took on new energy in every country, at the same time as a widespread working class anti-fascist awakening took place.

The Thirteenth Plenum, at the end of 1933, had to review this situation, ratified the Presidium April resolution on Germany, and issued its definition of fascism as "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital". The Thirteenth Plenum further related the extension of fascism, and its coming to power in Germany, to the gathering revolutionary crisis; it drew the significance of the growth of fascism as indicating the growth of the revolutionary crisis and mass revolt, the failure of the old bourgeois-democratic forms to serve the purpose of the bourgeois dictatorship either for internal politics or for foreign politics, and the close connection of the development to fascism with the direct preparation of the future imperialist war. At the same time the fallacies of the "inevitability" of fascism, and of the opening of a "fascist epoch" had to be combated; the Thirteenth Plenum showed how fascism simultaneously hastens and hinders the revolutionary advance, how it represents at the same time the strongest offensive of the bourgeoisie, and at the same time reveals the weakening and growing instability of the bourgeoisie.

Since then, a whole further development has taken place, with the landmark of June 30 in Germany and the narrowing of the mass basis in the countries of completed fascist dictatorship, with the events in Austria, France and Spain, with the growing resistance of the working class and advance of the united front, with the signs of a check in the upward economic movement of 1933-34, with the increasingly difficult positions of the National Government in Britain and the Roosevelt dictatorship, and with the intensified preparations for imperialist war.

At the Seventh Congress it will be necessary to draw together this whole development in a fresh survey of the present stage and development of fascism, utilizing the work that has already been accomplished in the successive Plenum discussions since the Sixth Congress, and at the same time bringing in what is newly developing.

## II. NEW QUESTIONS

The Thirteenth Plenum definition of fascism, which remains our weapon for the current movement, achieved an important purpose in stating in the sharpest possible terms the reactionary terrorist significance of fascism. Nevertheless, we cannot be satisfied to rest simply upon the basis of this definition for the purposes of the Seventh Congress which will need to achieve a more comprehensive review.

The existing definition, in stressing the character of fascism as a reactionary terrorist dictatorship of finance capital does not bring out with equal clearness the essential *differentia* of fascism from counter-revolutionary dictatorship and white-guard dictatorship in general. If this distinctive character is not sharply brought out, it inevitably gives rise to the danger of the frequent loose use of "fascism" in our press to describe any and every reactionary phenomenon all over the world without distinction, with the consequences of blurring the serious understanding of fascism by the workers, who come to regard our use of the term as a catchword for all phenomena and activities of capitalism and capitalist governments in the present period. The distinctive character of fascism does not lie in the degree of its reaction, terrorism or chauvinism, but in its *special social political mechanism* for sustaining this terrorism, *i.e.*, in its special system of social-demagogy for building a "reactionary mass movement" (Sixth Congress) on the basis of the general crisis of capitalism, of the impoverishment and disillusionment of the petty bourgeoisie and other strata, and of the disillusionment with reformism. Despite the destruction of bourgeois-democratic forms, the finance capitalist oligarchy cannot simply revert to pre-democratic (pre-capitalist) forms, but is on the contrary compelled to employ still more complicated forms of mass deception, alongside intensified terrorism, in order to maintain its rule. This is the distinctive character of fascism which differentiates it from other forms of counter-revolutionary dictatorship. The Thirteenth Plenum resolution in fact, fully recognizes this character, and proceeds immediately after the definition, to deal with the question of the "mass basis". This question, however, cannot be treated as subsidiary; it must be brought directly into the essential definition of fascism, if we are to understand correctly the conditions of the fight against fascism. Just herein we differ from the liberal reformist Social-Democratic conception, which sees in fascism only terrorism, only destruction of bourgeois-democracy and law and order, instead of its real character as the carrying forward, by the bourgeois dictatorship, of its methods of mass rule by combined coercion and deception, already demonstrated in an earlier form in bourgeois democracy, to an extreme stage of both aspects in fascism, that is, in the period of closely menacing proletarian revolution—endeavoring to utilize the very sentiments of mass revolt against its system in order to distort them to the opposite outcome.

"The fascist system is a system of direct dictatorship *ideologically masked* by the 'national' idea. . . . It is a system that resorts to a peculiar form of *social-demagogy* . . . the combination of social-demagogy, corruption and active white terror, in conjunction with extreme imperialist aggression in the sphere of foreign politics, are the characteristic features of fascism." (*International Program*).

It is from just this character of fascism that arise the *contradictions* of fascism, which provide the conditions for successfully fighting fascism.

What are the essential *new features* of fascism which it is important to bring out at the Seventh Congress?

First, it is essential to *deepen the treatment of the economic basis of fascism*. In the first wave of fascism, preceding the partial stabilization of capitalism, the fascist weapon was essentially the weapon of the bourgeoisie in certain special conditions to defeat and throttle the class struggle of the proletariat, in order to provide the conditions for the successful restoration of "normal" capitalism. But since the world economic crisis this situation is changed. The second wave of fascism reflects a far-reaching difference of the underlying economic conditions. The conditions of the old "normal" capitalism are today recognized by the capitalists themselves to have vanished.

It might even be said that capitalism has now *consciously* entered on the reversal of its ascending role (a reversal already implicit in the whole imperialist epoch as the epoch of capitalism in decay), *i.e.*,—the organized restriction of production and throttling of productive advance, cutting down of international trade in the intensified fight for the dwindling markets, acceptance of chronic large scale unemployment as a permanent phenomenon, and adjustment to a lowered standard of living for the masses. This changed economic situation of the deepened general crisis of capitalism, generating intensified class struggle and mass discontent, tends to require a different political mechanism for the bourgeois dictatorship from the old reformist-democratic mechanism, based on continuous concessions to buy off the revolt of the masses. Fascism is above all the most characteristic political expression of this stage, of this phase of the culminating processes of imperialist decay. *Fascism is, in the ultimate analysis, the attempted organization of capitalist decay*. It attempts *forcibly to overcome the intensified contradictions of capitalism*—both the contradictions of the class struggle reaching to the point of revolution, the economic contradictions of the gigantically increased productive power pressing against the narrow shell of capitalist relations, and the political contradictions of the internal divisions of the bourgeoisie within each State, expressed in the old style Party fight. Herein lies the significance of its ideology of "totalitarianism".

This is the deeper character of fascism which underlies, not only the policies of a Hitler and a Mussolini, but also can be traced in characteristically different forms in the policies of a Roosevelt, a MacDonald or an Elliot. For this reason not only the growth and extension of the open fascist dictatorships, not only the intensified dictatorship and special measures against the working class and restrictions of the old "freedoms" in all countries, but also the new economic measures of intensified trade war and closed imperialist blocs, the drive to "national planning" and so-called "autarchy", the wholesale organized restriction of production and destruction of the means of production, are characteristic signs of the tendencies towards fascism in modern capitalism; and the intensified dictatorship, the regimenting of the population, by new methods of combined terrorism and demagogy, are ultimately the necessary political accompaniment of this process. The wealth of experience of this process, since the world economic crisis, enables the Seventh Congress to deal with this economic basis of fascism more fully and fundamentally than has yet been done.\*

\* For a more complete discussion of these underlying economic tendencies connected with fascism, as well as for more complete material on the whole subject, see *Fascism and Social Revolution*, published in 1934.

Second, it is essential to bring out and elaborate more fully the question of the special *mass basis* of fascism, and the political armory—the “*demagogy*”—whereby it is enabled to build up this mass basis. Our treatment of *fascist ideology* has hitherto tended to be summary. But the experience of the last few years has enormously enlarged the examples of the methods of fascist agitation and propaganda in widely varying conditions—the characteristic differences in the methods of adaptation of fascist ideology and propaganda, not only to the varying conditions of Italy and Germany, but to the still more widely varying conditions of Britain, France, the United States, etc.

Contrast, for example, the line of Nazi propaganda before power and of present British fascist propaganda. Nazi propaganda concentrated on the “national” or “racial” idea. British fascist propaganda has to concentrate on the “British Empire” conception (a forced combination of widely differing races under British dominion). Nazi propaganda drew its main source of agitation from the “Diktat” of Versailles, and placed this political fight in the foreground as underlying the economic issues. British fascist propaganda, placed in the different situation of a “victor” country, draws its main inspiration of agitation from the manifest extreme decline of British capitalism since the war, the decay of the basic industries, the “derelict areas”, etc., and places in the forefront its *economic* program as the solution of British problems. Nazi propaganda, faced with a powerful and class-conscious working class, trained for half a century in the conceptions of Marxism, had to profess the nominal aim of “Socialism”, while attacking “Marxism”, and fascist propaganda attacks equally “Socialism” and “Marxism”, and thus appears more openly as an extremist wing of Die-hard Conservatism (compare Rothermere’s support of British fascism, as representing a powerful “party of the Right”—*Daily Mail*, Jan. 15, 1934). Nazi propaganda and fascist propaganda in all other European countries builds strongly on the upper and middle peasantry as one of the principal bases of support. In Britain, where agriculture, already capitalistically developed, occupies only seven per cent of the population, the appeal to the farmers, though important (compare the Tithes agitation), can only play a secondary part; and the main basis of appeal has to be the urban petty bourgeoisie, the rentier class, the parasitic occupations dependent on the wealthy class and a proportion of the professional and technical strata, alongside such of the unemployed and backward workers as can be won. In all these ways, while the principles of fascist propaganda remain the same in all countries (playing on the grievances of the intermediate and lower strata for the benefit of finance capital), the contents differ according to the concrete conditions and social composition of the population in each country.

Third, it is necessary to analyze, more fully, the *diversity of the process of fascization*, as now developing through many forms in all imperialist countries. The old mistaken reformist view of fascism as a phenomenon of backward, semi-agrarian countries has now been more than ever disproved by events. On the other hand, the development towards fascism in advanced industrial countries, with a powerful organized working-class movement, takes on peculiar forms and has to go through very complicated maneuvers, in order that the significance of the process in its earlier stages shall be concealed from the mass of the workers or even be disguised in the form of the fight against fascism for the defense of the existing “democratic” institutions. This question, and the laying bare of the significance of these half stages, become the main question of fascism at the present stage in all the bourgeois-democratic countries.

These questions will be considered further in the next section on “Fascization”, ‘Semi-fascization’, ‘Semi-fascism’ and ‘Pre-fascism’”.

Fourth, in connection with this widening of the process of fascization on a world scale, we shall have to deal more fully with the question of *fascism and the colonial countries*, in the light of certain developments of the most recent period, such as the “Blue Shirt” movement of Chiang Kai-shek in China, the “Blue Shirts” of General O’Duffy in Ireland, the tendencies of certain sections of the Indian national bourgeoisie (compare Subhas Bose’s recently issued book on *The Indian Struggle*) to open sympathy with fascism, etc. Hitherto we have taken the view, and with basic correctness, that fascism cannot develop in colonial countries. As typical of our view we may take the expression of Comrade Manuilsky at the Tenth Plenum:

“In the colonies which will stand before the stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, it is not, I think, possible to speak of fascism. Despite the existence of isolated capitalist factories of the latest type, pre-capitalist relations are dominant; these, and not highly developed capitalism, are typical for the colonies. In China it is the bourgeois-feudal counter-revolution that rages, and not fascism.” (*Tenth Plenum Protocol*, German text, p. 583.)

While this view remains in principle correct, we have now to take into account the significance of recent developments, revealing the influence of the world development of fascism on the methods of the counter-revolution in colonial countries. Fascism is the weapon of finance capital. But in the colonies and semi-colonial countries the power of finance capital is represented by foreign imperialism, which finds itself in opposition, not only to the masses of the population, but also in a certain variable degree of contradiction to the national bourgeoisie. Thus the conditions are not present for a mass movement of fascism to maintain the power of finance capital. Under what conditions, then, can phenomena of a “fascist” type arise in these countries, such as the “Blue Shirts” in China or Ireland? Clearly, only at that point when the inner class antagonisms and advance of the proletariat and peasantry have reached such a stage that the national bourgeoisie, or a considerable section of it, moves to an open counter-revolutionary role in the service of foreign imperialism, and in consequence, in the fight against the mass of the population, seeks to build up “fascist” formations, essentially in the service of foreign imperialism. Chiang Kai-shek, representing at once the leader of the bourgeois-feudal reaction and the agent of foreign imperialism, seeks to build up his “Blue Shirts” against Communism and against the national revolutionary struggle. O’Duffy, representing the minority section of the Irish bourgeoisie, (Cosgrave) which does not follow De Valera but is closely allied to British imperialism, seeks to build up the “Blue Shirts” in Ireland as an attempted basis of support in the interests of British imperialism. These developments, however, can take no deep root in the given conditions, and bear only a very limited analogy to fascism in the imperialist countries.

Fifth, it will be necessary to come to the new questions of the relations of *Social-Democracy and fascism*, consequent on the destruction of the old Social-Democratic Parties in Germany and Austria and development of new groups and formations, the crisis of Social-Democracy within the Second International, and the wide range of tendencies now

revealed. These questions will be considered further in a subsequent section.

Sixth, the question of the "middle classes" or intermediate strata, now becomes of burning urgency in relation to fascism. While the basic correctness of the Marxist analysis of the role of the middle classes, as only able to play an auxiliary role either to the ruling bourgeoisie or to the proletariat, is more than ever confirmed by the experiences of fascism and of the fight against fascism (in contradistinction to the Social-Democratic theory of fascism as the "independent movement of the middle class" or "middle class dictatorship"), we need now to give the closest and most careful attention to (1) the new "crisis of the middle class", consequent on the world economic crisis and the depression, which have provided a powerful part of the impetus for the second fascist wave; (2) our tactics and propaganda in relation to the middle class, to counteract or neutralize the support of fascism and win over the widest proportion as allies for the proletariat (significance of the broad anti-fascist and anti-war movements of the Amsterdam-Pleyel type), as well as self-criticism of previous mistakes in approach and propaganda to the middle classes, their special demands and ideology, or underestimation of their role (tendencies still sometimes visible of a contemptuous attitude towards, or neglect of, broad "mixed" movements of the Amsterdam-Pleyel type).

Seventh, the *contradictions* of fascism after its accession to power can now be more sharply brought out in the light of the developments of the two years since Hitler's coming to power; in the sphere of internal affairs, the economic dilemmas and the instability of the emergency expedients to overcome them, and the narrowing mass basis and loss of former petty-bourgeois supporters; in the sphere of foreign affairs, the extreme concentration on the preparation of the gamble of war, and the sharp conflicts already demonstrated between fascist Germany and fascist Austria, between fascist Germany and fascist Italy, etc. In particular, the close and direct connection of fascism with the *preparation and organization of the new imperialist war*, needs to be strongly brought into the forefront at the present stage.

Finally, we shall need to deal as fully as possible with the future *perspective of fascism*, as we see it; in particular:

1. The prospects of the second wave of fascism in relation to the development of the world economic situation, the worsening conditions in the separate countries, the advance to war, the sharpening of class antagonisms and the signs of the beginning of a crisis of fascism;

2. The fallacy of the liberal reformist view of the "epoch of fascism";

3. The fallacy of the view of the "inevitability" of fascism in all countries; on the contrary, the demonstration during the past two years of the international working class increasingly learning from the experience in each country and beginning to rise to the height of the struggle (ascending scale of struggle in Germany, Austria, Spain), the advance of the united front, and the possibility of preventing fascism from developing in the countries where it has not yet established its dictatorship;

4. The conditions of the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship in the countries where it is established, through the development of the mass struggle; the warning as to the possibility of the revival of bourgeois-democratic illusions (possible revival of Social-Democracy); and the necessity of placing in the forefront the goal of the proletarian dicta-

torship as the only decisive and finally victorious alternative to fascism and guarantee against fascism.

### III. "FASCIZATION", "SEMI-FASCISM" AND "PRE-FASCISM"

One of the outstanding characteristics of the second wave of fascism, developing since the world economic crisis, has been the enormous elaboration of the technique of fascist dictatorship and of the advance to fascism, and, in particular, the development of a manifold and extending variety of "between-stages" on the road to the completed fascist dictatorship. The formal barriers between bourgeois democracy and fascism have been worn increasingly thin by this process (at what point did Dollfuss, the widely acclaimed "champion of democracy" in Europe, become Dollfuss, fascist dictator?) which has extended in greater or lesser degree to all imperialist countries.

This process corresponds necessarily to the wider and *universal* character of the second fascist wave, in contradistinction to the first. The first fascist wave affected only certain countries strongly, and the remaining countries only slightly or not at all (hence the liberal reformist illusions at the time as to the "backward" or "Italian" character of fascism). The second fascist wave has affected all imperialist countries in greater or lesser degree. In particular, it has been marked by the extension to advanced industrial countries with a high degree of working-class organization. But the conditions for its extension in countries of this type necessarily differ from the conditions in countries of the earlier type. On the one hand, the completed fascist dictatorship, once established has to act with far greater speed to consolidate its power and endeavor to smash all working-class organization (contrast the relative slowness of the evolution of the Italian fascist dictatorship to its completed form between 1922 and 1926, and the extreme speed of the Hitler dictatorship in immediately setting up its terror and striking at all working-class organization). On the other hand, if the final stage is thus carried through with greater rapidity, the preparation and process leading up to this final stage is far longer and more complicated, because of the intricate initial maneuvers required to transform bourgeois democracy from within and to lull the opposition of the working class. Hence arises the characteristic new phenomenon of *fascization*, of an enormous variety of *partial and preparatory stages towards complete fascism*, developing in widely different forms in many countries—a phenomenon of which only the first signs and indications were visible at the time of the Sixth Congress.

The Mussolini fascist dictatorship in Italy was preceded by the interim process of the Giolitti and Faola regimes, with the formal maintenance of parliamentarism and actual State assistance to the fascist forces and their guerilla warfare on the working-class organizations and property. But Hitler-fascism in Germany had to be preceded by the far more complicated process of the Bruening, Papen and Schleicher emergency regimes, supported by Social-Democracy as the "lesser evil" supposedly "against the menace of fascism", and in reality intensifying the bourgeois dictatorship in every field and paving the way for Hitler. The classic Bruening model was next repeated in foreshortened order by Dollfuss, who took on himself to fulfill in one person successively the roles of Bruening and of Hitler. Still further, in the Western imperialist countries with the longest established and rooted parliamentary democratic forms, an even more complicated process of advance towards fascist forms began, illustrated by the National Government in Britain, the

Roosevelt emergency dictatorship in the United States, and the unsuccessful Doumergue National Concentration Government in France, while a different and more direct type, developing within a process of revolution, was revealed by the Lerroix-Robles dictatorship in Spain.

How are we to characterize these manifold and varied "between-stages"? At what point does the intensified dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and gradual restriction of the older parliamentary democratic forms by new emergency forms, become definitely fascist dictatorship? There is no Chinese wall, and to dispute on rigidly fixed terms in relation to what is a dialectical process is nothing but barren scholasticism. Nevertheless a distinction of a definite importance of degree can be made and is necessary. The essential answer to this question was given already by the Sixth Congress definition of fascism, which declared (*International Program*) that "the principal aim of fascism is to destroy the revolutionary labor vanguard, i.e., the Communist sections and leading units of the proletariat". This is the decisive characteristic of the completed fascist dictatorship, as demonstrated most fully in Germany and Italy. In the partial stages of the Bruening type the advance has not yet been made to the formal suppression and war of annihilation against the revolutionary working-class organizations.

In the early stages of these transitional processes, there was revealed a certain degree of confusion in terminology in our propaganda expression, which led to the frequent application of the term "fascist dictatorship", without reservation, to these transitional stages, thus blurring the sharpness of the issue in front with regard to the culminating stage of the completed fascist dictatorship. This tendency was in fact specifically corrected by the E.C.C.I., in relation to the Bruening dictatorship in December, 1930. The *Rote Fahne* of December 2, 1930, had written:

"The semi-fascist Bruening Government has taken a determined step on the road towards the establishment of fascist dictatorship in Germany. The fascist dictatorship is no longer a menace—it is a fact. We are living now in a fascist republic. The Bruening Cabinet has become a fascist dictatorship."

On this the E.C.C.I. issued the correction:

"The estimate given in the *Rote Fahne* of December 2 and 3, to the effect that a fascist dictatorship already exists in Germany is politically incorrect. The Emergency Decrees issued with the support of Social-Democracy and the reformist trade unions against the toilers represent a step on the road to the establishment of a fascist dictatorship, but is not yet a decisive step. That depends upon the power of resistance of the working class."

The subsequent development in Germany has fully confirmed the correctness of this analysis. Similarly, at the Twelfth Plenum, Comrade Kuusinen in his report, referring to the Papen dictatorship, declared:

"It would be incorrect to assert that the present regime in Germany constitutes a full and complete fascist dictatorship. This question with regard to the final setting up of a fascist dictatorship is not yet determined in Germany. The decisive struggles have not yet come to pass."

At the same time the Papen and Schleicher Governments were

widely referred to as "fascist dictatorship" without reservation. Thus, at the Twelfth Plenum, Comrade Piatnitsky, after quoting the above mentioned correction of the International Executive against describing the Bruening dictatorship as a fascist dictatorship, proceeded shortly after in the same speech to speak of "Papen's Government of fascist dictatorship". The Presidium Resolution on Germany in April, 1933, makes the distinction between "the fascist dictatorship in the shape of the Papen and Schleicher Governments" and the "open fascist dictatorship" of Hitler. With this may be compared the statement in Comrade Pieck's report to the Thirteenth Plenum, quoting Comrade Thaelmann's declaration to the Hamburg District Party Congress in December, 1932, that "with the constitution of the Schleicher Cabinet we are entering upon a new and accentuated stage of the fascist dictatorship". The analysis here is essentially correct. But the danger of its reflection in our local press may be noted in the editorial of the London *Daily Worker* on January 31, 1933, on the advent of Hitler to power:

"This is the new government of fascist concentration. A fascist dictatorship already existed in Germany. But the new government means a sharpening of that dictatorship."

Here the decisive significance of the advent of Hitler or open fascism to power in Germany, in place of the previous governments of bourgeois preparation of fascism without the participation of the open fascist party, as constituting a landmark and vital issue for the whole international movement, is only weakly presented under the expression of "sharpening" of the "already existing" fascist dictatorship (i.e., precisely the same description as was already applied to the transition from Papen to Schleicher). The loose universal use of "fascist dictatorship" to describe all the stages, has led to the danger of a weakening of the vision of the decisive character of the issue at the most critical point of the struggle.

The formal contradiction between the two conceptions or stages of fascist dictatorship, both described under the same term, or between "fascist dictatorship" and "open" or "completed fascist dictatorship", is not basically a contradiction. Essentially, these governments represent successive stages of a *developing fascist dictatorship*. Nevertheless, it may be valuable, for greater clearness in the future, to distinguish more definitely between the two types or stages (always with the provision that the border-line is not necessarily a sharp one), and to make a regular practice, as is already often done, of referring to the transitional stages as "semi-fascism", "Pre-fascism", "veiled fascism", etc., rather than as "fascist dictatorship" without reservation. This is especially important because of the danger, otherwise, of blurring the significance of the final and decisive stage of the struggle.

There are in fact two dangers needed to be guarded against. One is the danger, already mentioned, of in such a way emphasizing the character of the given transitional stage as already fascist dictatorship, that the continual reiteration, instead of sharply awakening the workers to the struggle, as intended, may have the opposite effect of lowering the understanding of the serious issue of fascism into a catchword for reaction in general, and weakening the sharp alertness of the workers at the most critical point of the struggle when the open fascist dictatorship is for the first time attempted to be established. The other is the danger, most grossly expressed in the line of Social-Democratic propaganda, of fixing the attention on the menace of fascism as solely the menace of a future "coup", and, in consequence, denying or minimizing

the significance of the actual growth towards fascism taking place within the forms of bourgeois democracy (in the case of the traditional Social-Democratic line, even supporting this process as the supposed "lesser evil" against fascism), and thus in fact weakening the all-important present struggle against the fascist offensive, although this present struggle is decisive as to whether the future final stage will arrive or not.

Both these dangers, not only in their gross form, but even in a modified form, need to be guarded against. With extreme soberness, without exaggeration, we need to show the steadily growing fascist tendencies in the present transitional regimes in the various countries of still nominal bourgeois democracy; we need to show where this process has led, in country after country, and must inevitably lead, to open and complete fascist dictatorship and terror, unless the workers already take up the united struggle against the present stage of the offensive; and on this basis we call the workers in these countries to the struggle against fascism and against the governments which are preparing fascist dictatorship.

The new manifestations, represented by the National Government in Britain, the Roosevelt regime in the United States, etc., will need special analysis.

In the case of Britain, the fascist significance of the National Government, as marking a step on the road towards fascism, lies in (1) The conditions of its formation, *i.e.*, the bankruptcy and collapse of the Second Labor Government, the disillusionment of a wide body of workers, as seen in the fall of the Labor vote by two millions, and the cunning utilization of this situation by the bourgeoisie to conceal their old parties under a new "national" front, with a "National Labor" wing, and on this basis win a majority; (2) The intensification of the capitalist dictatorship by the National Government, diminution of the role of parliament, and increasing government by administrative and executive order within the framework of very wide enabling laws; (3) The economic program, comparable in many respects to the Hitler type, of highly fettered tariff, quota and license system, state subsidies and regulation, compulsory reorganization, restriction of production, raising of prices, etc., for the benefit of the big trusts, towards the aim of increasing national and imperialist "self-sufficiency", and towards war aims; (4) The intensified repression against the working class, both legislative measures such as the Sedition Act and Unemployment Act, and police measures, strengthening and militarization of the police, prohibitions of meetings and demonstrations, increase of arrests, formation of training camps for the unemployed youth; (5) Protection of the new open fascist formations, and assistance to them through the police and law courts.

In the United States, the Roosevelt emergency regime shows the whole process in a still clearer and sharper form, the concentration of wide emergency dictatorial powers in the hands of the President, the state regulation of industry for the benefit of monopoly capital, extreme violence against the workers, and intensified war preparations all under a cover of extreme social demagogy. Here is the classic type of the most modern process of fascization within the Western imperialist, still nominally bourgeois-democratic States.

In France, the open fascist offensive of February 6, 1934, led to the ignominious capitulation of the weak "Left" Government, despite its parliamentary majority, and thus showed already the power of fascism over the parliamentary forms, forcing in this way by extra-parliamentary pressure the formation of the National Concentration Government of Doumergue, which proceeded to attempt to carry out the reactionary

transformation of the constitution. Here, however, the strength of the workers' united front checked the advance, brought about the fall of Doumergue, and led to the interim Flandin Cabinet, under which the organization and arming of the fascist formations has gone rapidly forward.

In Belgium, the parliament is openly replaced by the Emergency Powers ("pleins pouvoirs") of the government, which rules by decree, as in the Bruening regime, at the same time as the chiefs of the Labor Party enter into direct coalition with the government Ministers in the National Commission of Labor. The offensive against the working class, carried out with extreme ruthlessness in the economic field, and in the political field directed in the first place against the Communists, extended even to the prohibition of the Labor mass demonstration in Brussels on February 24, 1935.

In Czechoslovakia we see an open Coalition Government, with the participation of Social-Democracy, nominally for the "defense of democracy", which strengthens administrative measures against the working class and prepares the legislative prohibition of the Communist Party (proposed legislation for the registration of political parties, to give legal rights only to parties accepting the basis of bourgeois democracy).

In Canada, the Bennett Government proclaims a Rooseveltian "New Deal" (amid the applause of the leaders of the Social-Democratic Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), denounces the "old capitalism" as "bankrupt", promises wide social reform and "redistribution of income", and combines this social demagogy with a ruthless offensive against the working class and legal prohibition of the Communist Party.

All these examples, which could be further illustrated from the experiences of Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Australia, etc., show the enormous variety and manifold paths of the process of fascization in the different countries. There is no single line of fascization for all countries, but only a common universal tendency of present day capitalism, the detailed working out of which requires to be analyzed in relation to the concrete conditions of each country. Only on the basis of such a concrete analysis, can we convince the workers in each country of the sharp reality of the menace of fascism in all these transitional forms.

Still more important, there is no single straight-line *automatic* process of fascization leading through a fixed gradation of stages to an inevitable conclusion. The process at each stage is dependent on the degree of resistance of the workers, and consequently can frequently take on a *zigzag* character. This has been most powerfully shown by the example of France, where the strength of the workers' united front definitely checked the advance of the planned fascist offensive in 1934, and compelled the bourgeoisie to pursue a slower and more complicated course. Similarly, the armed struggle in Spain threw into confusion the rapid fascist transformation, and, despite the raging reaction, gives the possibility of further development of the workers' struggle and changing of the whole line of development. On a smaller scale, the still limited, but growing, united front from below in Britain compelled the National Government in February 1935, to retreat in its offensive against the unemployed (hasty suspension of the new legislation under mass pressure), created confusion in the government ranks, and led to hasty plans for a "reconstruction" of the government, either by the inclusion of the demagogue Lloyd George in the government, or possibly for a Lloyd George-Labor Government or a Labor Government.

*The fascist offensive can be turned at every stage by the workers' resistance.* A continuous battle develops in all countries, the fortunes of



which depend on the strength of the workers' united front at the given stage. So far, from each country necessarily reproducing the experiences of those countries where fascism has won power, the experience of the latter countries and of the development of the fight in each country awakens and strengthens the working class in every country to learn the lessons and advance to the new conditions of the fight. The experience revealed in the chain, Italy-Germany-Austria-France-Spain, shows a continuous advance in the experience and strength of the fight of the international working class against fascism. In consequence the most important lesson with regard to the whole process of fascization is precisely that it is *not inevitable*, but that the strength of the workers' resistance against the *present* stage of the offensive determines the future course of the struggle.

#### IV. SOME QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AND FASCISM IN THE NEW STAGE

The special problems of the relations of Social-Democracy and fascism have mainly developed in the period since the Sixth Congress, and, while touched on by the Sixth Congress, have received their fullest treatment so far (*i.e.*, up to 1933, but not yet further) in the successive plenary sessions of the Executive from the Tenth Plenum to the Thirteenth Plenum.

The analysis of social-fascism, as to the increasing new tendency revealed by Social-Democracy parallel to the transition of capitalism as a whole to fascist forms and methods, was first explicitly elaborated at the Tenth Plenum in 1929. The Sixth Congress had already noted the "many points of contact with fascism" shown by the ideology of Social-Democracy, the "employment of fascist methods in a rudimentary form in the practice of many Social-Democratic parties", and that (*International Program*) "Social-Democracy itself often plays a fascist role in periods when the situation is critical for capitalism; in the process of development Social-Democracy reveals fascist tendencies". The Tenth Plenum for the first time laid down the principle that

"... in countries where there are strong Social-Democratic parties, fascism assumes the particular form of social-fascism, which to an ever increasing extent serves the bourgeoisie as an instrument for paralyzing the activities of the masses against the regime of fascist dictatorship."

And further that in Germany:

"Social-Democracy prohibits May Day demonstrations. It shoots down unarmed workers during May Day demonstrations. It is Social-Democracy which suppresses the labor press (*Rote Fahne*) and mass labor organizations, prepares the suppression of the C.P.G. and organizes the crushing of the working class by fascist methods. This is the road of the coalition policy of Social-Democracy leading to social-fascism."

The Eleventh Plenum noted that:

"The whole development of Social-Democracy from the time of the war and the rise of the Soviet Government of the U.S.S.R. is an uninterrupted process of evolution towards fascism."

The Twelfth Plenum clearly stated the difference between fascism and social-fascism, which is no less important than the analogy between them:

"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 moderate and '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 forces and build the road for the fascist dictatorship."

Finally the Thirteenth Plenum elaborated this distinction between the tactical methods of fascism and social-fascism:

"The general line of all bourgeois parties, including Social-Democracy, is towards the fascization of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie"; but "the realization of this line inevitably gives rise to disagreements among them as to forms and methods of fascization. Certain bourgeois groups, particularly the social-fascists, who in practice stick at nothing in their acts of police violence against the proletariat, urge the maintenance of parliamentary forms when carrying through the fascization of the bourgeois dictatorship."

It will be seen that the conception of social-fascism, or the role of Social-Democracy in assisting the advance of fascism, involves two main factors: (1) the *negative* factor of assisting the advance of fascism by paralyzing the struggle of the working class against it; (2) the *positive* factor of directly assisting the process of fascization of the State, and use of fascist methods of coercion against the working class by Social-Democracy in possession of the State apparatus.

At the time of the Tenth Plenum in 1929, this positive factor was strongly to the forefront through the demonstration of the role of the German Social-Democratic Government in suppressing the revolutionary working class press and mass organizations, prohibiting May Day demonstrations and shooting down unarmed workers. In consequence the question arose whether social-fascism might not prove in certain countries and conditions to be a *substitute* for open fascism, replacing open fascism where Social-Democracy was strongly organized ("In countries where there are strong Social-Democratic parties fascism assumes the particular form of social-fascism", *Tenth Plenum Theses*), or whether social-fascism should rather be regarded as a *part* of the process of fascization and a *stage* on the road to full fascism. In the Tenth Plenum discussions, Comrade Martynov put forward the view:

"In highly industrialized countries like Germany and England, we are faced with direct civil war between the proletariat and the labor aristocracy, which is today the spearhead of the bourgeois counter-revolution. In these advanced industrialized countries the counter-revolutionary role of the pure fascist organizations will be no doubt of lesser significance. Pure fascism will, in the situation of a war or civil war, be our strongest enemy only in backward semi-agrarian countries, where pure fascism holds the reins." (*Tenth Plenum Protocol*, German text, p. 231.)

It is clear that this formulation requires qualification in the light of later experience. In the same debate Comrade Bela Kun put the issue more sharply and clearly as follows:

"We need to determine whether social-fascism is only a stage to fascism, or whether it represents a distinct phenomenon. However, too few facts are yet available to determine this. The development of Social-Democracy to social-fascism has not yet advanced so far as to enable us to decide whether social-fascism is a distinct and final form of fascization for many countries, or whether it is only a stage to the full development of fascism also in countries like Germany." (*Ibid.* p. 190.)

History has now given the answer to this question. It is clear that social-fascism can represent no final resting place, no permanent system or realization of fascist dictatorship in a peculiar form for advanced industrial countries, but only a factor in the process of fascization, of the evolution to full and open fascism or "pure fascism" also in the advanced industrial countries. This, the example of Germany has shown. The decisive reasons for this lie in the whole character of social-fascism, and in the conditions of the sharpening class struggle. In the first place, as has been repeatedly insisted in all our theses, social-fascism represents no final completed outcome of Social-Democracy in any country, but has only represented an increasing *tendency* of Social-Democracy in the period of the capitalist advance to fascism ("the road of Social-Democracy leading to social-fascism", *Tenth Plenum Theses: "evolution towards fascism"*, *Eleventh Plenum Theses*; "Social-Democracy turns more and more into open social-fascism", *Molotov at the Tenth Plenum*, p. 420); it is a moving process, not a fixed form. In the second place, this process cannot be other than a *stage* in the whole of fascization and the development of the class struggle. For, *in proportion as Social-Democracy advances to social-fascism and succeeds in its role of strangling the struggle of the working class against fascism, in precisely that same proportion the advance of open fascism is facilitated, and the final outcome is inevitably, not the rule of Social-Democracy as the substitute for open fascism, but the victory of open fascism and ultimate thrusting aside of Social-Democracy from the State apparatus and open political life as no longer necessary in this role to the open fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.* This is the key process, the demonstration of the contradictory and ultimately suicidal and self-destructive role of social-fascism, which has received its classic exemplification in Germany and later in Austria.

Up to the very last, the German Social-Democratic leadership sought to carry through the role of social-fascism to its logical conclusion, and openly offered their services to the Hitler fascist dictatorship (May 17 Reichstag vote, and A.D.G.B. Executive declaration to Hitler). But they were thrust aside; their offer was not accepted; their party and trade-union organizations, which were the basis of their political value to the bourgeoisie, were dissolved; and those of the leadership who did not pass over to fascism as individuals, or disappear from political life, passed into exile. Why were they thus thrust aside? Not because of any unwillingness on their part to serve fascism, but because, while their services were indispensable in the process leading up to fascism, the completed fascist dictatorship could no longer have any confidence in their ability to control the workers in the interests of open fascism (it was on May 2 that the trade-union central offices were occupied and Leipart arrested, the day after the ineffectiveness of the trade-union leaders' call to the workers to participate in Hitler's May Day demonstration had been revealed), and above all because the completed fascist dictatorship could not tolerate the existence of any form of working-class organizations save under its direct control (ultimately even break-

ing up those under its own control, as in the increasing dissolution of the N.S.B.O. organizations).

This does not exclude the possibility that, if the situation of the open fascist dictatorship becomes critical, the Social-Democratic leadership may once again be called in to assist, as certain signs have already given a preliminary indication. Such a development, however, would be a characteristic sign of the *weakening*, not of the strengthening, of the fascist dictatorship, and would therefore only the more fully reveal the essential role of Social-Democracy as in the *transitional* stages, when the masses are in movement and require to be held back, and not as having a place in the completed fascist dictatorship. The present phase has thus sharply revealed the *blind alley* at the end of the road of social-fascism, that even for the highest, most consistent and most shameless social-fascist leadership the end of the road is, not State power and the domination of the completed fascist stage, but Prague and Brunn. This experience has had a profound effect on the other Social-Democratic parties, not merely on the mass of the membership, but also on a considerable proportion of the leadership, who have awakened sharply to the menace of fascism and in a number of countries have become ready to enter into a united front with Communism against fascism.

It is thus clear that, since the accession of Hitler to power and the dissolution of the German Social-Democratic Party, and the consequent crisis of Social-Democracy, we have entered into a *new stage of the question of Social-Democracy and fascism on an international scale*; and the whole question requires to be reviewed afresh in the light of the new situation.

The new stage (which should not of course be marked off too sharply, incorporating, as it does, also tendencies which had begun to arise with the effects of the world economic crisis) is characterized by:

1. The dissolution of the powerful German and Austrian Social-Democratic Parties, which had formerly played a leading role in the Second International, and their replacement by smaller illegal formations, showing a degree of independence from the older leadership in exile, and the strong tendencies to the united front with Communism;
2. The advance of a series of Social-Democratic Parties in important countries, especially France and Spain, to the united front with Communism;
3. Sharp division within the Second International between the minority, supporting the united front, and the majority, maintaining the old line; consequent raising of the ban on the united front;
4. Ideological confusion within Social-Democracy, and wide-spread repudiation of the old line (as represented by German Social-Democracy and the first two British Labor Governments) as mistaken and incorrect; declarations by a section, including by a section of the leadership, in favor of the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat;
5. Conflict of tendencies within Social-Democracy, and splitting off of sections both on the Right and on the Left;
6. Formation of a grouping of "Left Socialist Parties", outside the Second International, but not yet prepared to enter into the Communist International.

All this process reflects the profound change taking place within the working class consequent on the advance of fascism, and the varied effects of this mass pressure on the existing Social-Democratic Parties.

It is evident that we have here an extremely manifold and varied picture of present-day Social-Democracy, in contrast to the situation of

1928 (Sixth Congress) or 1929 (Tenth Plenum). Under these conditions, *Social-Democracy can no longer be adequately treated as a single whole*, even in the sense in which, at the time of the Brussels Congress of the Second International in 1928, the various Social-Democratic Parties despite divergences, could be treated as representing a more or less uniform basic type. *We need now to analyze the situation in each country, or in each group or type of countries, separately, and to develop our tactics accordingly.* Similarly within each country we need to distinguish carefully between the different sections and tendencies.

First, in the countries under fascist dictatorship, with Social-Democracy illegal, as typified by Germany and Austria (in countries like Hungary and Poland, where Social-Democracy still enjoys legal privileges under the dictatorship, the old analysis of social-fascism remains unchanged). Here it is essential to distinguish between the old leadership in emigration, as represented by Wels, and the illegal Social-Democratic groups, which, with whatever still remaining old or new prejudices and illusions, are striving to fight fascism, and in many cases are moving towards Communism or entering into united action with Communism. In the words of Comrade Knorin, at the Presidium discussion in July, 1934 (*Communist International*, English edition, Vol. XI, No. 16, August 20, 1934):

“The situation in Germany has altered. But even now it is correct to call Wels a social-fascist, and it is true that the fascists and Social-Democracy, led by Wels, were twins. But the illegal Social-Democratic groups which are now carrying on work in Germany are not social-fascists and do not constitute the social support of the bourgeoisie.”

The Thirteenth Plenum in December, 1933, still laid down that:

“Social-Democracy continues to play the role of the main social prop of the bourgeoisie also in the countries of open fascist dictatorship.”

It is clear that this analysis will require careful review and fuller working out in our future treatment, in order to prevent dangerous misunderstanding. We do not for a moment wish to suggest that the present illegal Social-Democratic groups in Germany which are seeking to fight fascism constitute “the main social prop of the bourgeoisie” in Germany. On the other hand, if the reference were understood as being made to the Prague Executive, it is decidedly open to question whether this at the present stage has any such degree of mass influence as to make it capable of being “the main social prop of the bourgeoisie” in existing Germany. What, then, remains correct? Two things. First, in so far as Social-Democratic *ideology* and the remains of passive Social-Democratic organizational traditions still hold back the mass of the industrial workers from revolutionary struggle and from the united class front with the Communists, then it is true that this situation, inherited from the old Social-Democracy, is still the decisive factor in making possible the maintenance of fascism in power and holding back the workers from its overthrow, and to this extent could still be described as “the main social prop of the bourgeoisie”, since fascism could not maintain itself against the struggle of the united working class. Secondly, it is also true that the old Social-Democratic leadership and the remaining old cadres still available or in contact with them do still constitute the *potential reserve* for the bourgeoisie, in the event of the development of the mass movement, to endeavor once again, as they undoubtedly will endeavor, to strangle it from within and draw it back into servitude to the

bourgeoisie dictatorship under new forms. Both these factors are of the greatest importance; and there could be no greater mistake than to regard Social-Democracy as “finished” in the countries of open fascist dictatorship because of the dissolution of the old Social-Democratic Parties. But it is evident that all these factors of the new situation will require very careful and thorough analysis in order to give correct guidance for the future.

The second main group and new type of situation is constituted by those countries where Social-Democracy has entered into a united front with Communism, as exemplified in different forms in Spain (where the present dominant leaders of the Socialist Party have proclaimed the aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat) and in France (where the Socialist Party remains on the basis of bourgeois democracy, but has entered into alliance with Communism for common struggle against the fascist menace). In this situation it is manifest that the analysis of social-fascism no longer applies. But this does not mean that the principles of Social-Democracy do not remain as the most serious inner danger to the advance of the working class, or that the united front can be regarded as a kind of solution of the issue of Social-Democracy and Communism. On the contrary, the further development of the struggle will inevitably bring sharper and more fundamental issues at each stage; and the future advance and victory of the proletarian front will depend on the majority of the workers becoming convinced, through the experience of the struggle, of the necessity of the revolutionary line, and rallying increasingly around the leadership of the Communist Party and ultimately in a United Communist Party embracing the overwhelming majority of the politically conscious workers. The situation of the Social-Democratic Parties which have entered into a provisional alliance with Communism cannot be regarded as a permanent situation, but is necessarily *transitional* in character—an unstable equilibrium between the mass pressure to the Left and the still retarding effect of the old Social-Democratic forces and traditions. Further development must inevitably compel, through the successive unfolding of the struggle, the further development of these parties in one direction or the other, or rather, will compel the *polarization of the conflicting elements* within these parties, either back to the bourgeois camp, or forward to the revolutionary line and increasing unity, ultimately unification, with Communism. In this process much will depend on our tactics, on our ability to combine pliability and sympathetic and comradely approach to the Leftward process with basic firmness of revolutionary principle, in order to assist the development.

Finally, the third main grouping is constituted by the right bloc of Social-Democracy which continues the old line, and in particular, by the *British-Dutch-Scandinavian Bloc*, which carries on the old line of German Social-Democracy in the most reactionary form. It is of the utmost importance to see clearly the character of this line, and its still so far dominant position in the Second International, in judging the changes and new tendencies developing within Social-Democracy. We have here a demonstration in the highest degree of the *inequality of development* of present Social-Democracy. It would obviously be the greatest danger if, because the undoubtedly changed situation in Germany and France has led to the old type of analysis of social-fascism no longer being applicable in the same form to those countries, we should therefore fail to see that in the slower development of Britain the British Labor Party, in its official policy and leadership, is still advancing to the highest degree of development towards social-fascism yet reached in Britain. While German Social-Democracy has suffered shipwreck, the British Labor Party is

carrying forward the same policy which led to that shipwreck, and is even reaching to a new temporary blooming, and going forward with marked electoral advance and rosy hopes towards a third Labor Government, as if it were still in a period corresponding to the 1929 period of German Social-Democracy. The leadership of the type of a Morrison, now dominant in Britain, is the clearest type of a social-fascist leadership yet reached in Britain. The Southport Program, adopted at the 1934 Conference, with its "public corporations" system for industry, its open support for imperialist war, and its intensified ban on any even "loose association" with Communists, is the most extreme social-fascist program yet reached in Britain. Certainly, the rapidly rising advance of the class struggle in Britain, and the growth of the united front from below, may bring considerable changes to this line of development in the near future; the fight for the united front is powerfully on the upgrade, despite all the bans. But at the present stage it is essential to recognize this position, and its enormous importance for the whole position of the Second International, in estimating the changes now taking place in Social-Democracy.

The period since June 30, 1934, which first demonstrated the beginning of a crisis of fascism on an international scale, has opened a new situation. We are undoubtedly advancing towards the decisive struggles against fascism. In the countries of open fascist dictatorship, the mass basis of the dictatorship is contracting. In the other countries the bourgeoisie is compelled for the moment to maneuver and temporize and adopt more subtle methods for its preparations of the further fascist offensive. In France the Doumergue-Tardieu Government had to be replaced by Flandin; in Britain the National Government is preparing its demise and replacement by a "reconstructed" government, or possibly even by a Labor Government; in the United States the hold of Roosevelt is weakening. In all countries the working-class forces are gathering strength.

This process has a twofold effect. On the one hand, liberal-reformism and the Right Social-Democratic leadership, passing from their previous lugubrious prophecies of an "epoch of fascism", begin now to preach illusions of the "retreat of fascism", that the highest point of the fascist menace is passed, that fascism will "pass away" peacefully without revolutionary struggle.

On the other hand, the working masses, gathering new confidence, advance with increasing force to the struggle in all countries; the united front advances; the Communist Parties gain in strength in all countries.

This twofold effect is reflected in the process of differentiation and polarization of forces within Social-Democracy, and the development for the first time in a number of important countries of the possibility and beginnings of realization of a united mass front with the Communist Parties in the leading role—the necessary condition for the defeat of fascism and the victory of the working class.

This is the situation which offers the greatest revolutionary opportunities in the coming period, but opportunities requiring the highest tactical skill, to mobilize the mass forces of the working class for decisive blows against fascism. For the guidance of this struggle we shall need, at the Seventh Congress, to carry through the most careful analysis and fresh review of the present position, forces and methods of fascism in the different countries, of our own forces and the situation in the working class for the fight against fascism, and the consequent tactics to be followed, in order to give to the working class the leadership and perspective for the victorious struggle against the present culminating stages of the capitalist dictatorship in all its forms.