

FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCIST UNITED FRONT

(Notes for the Central Party School)

The crisis of capitalism got malignant in Imperialist era.

The Crisis went on aggravating in geometric proportion.

This was qualitatively different from cyclic crisis that was explained earlier in Capital by Marx.

This qualitative change that had occurred in the stage of imperialism had been called GENERAL CRISIS of capitalism by Comintern. Comintern differentiated two phases of General Crisis:

1) between ww 1 and ww 2

2) after ww 2

The acuteness of the General Crisis was the basic reason cited by Comintern for the ascendancy of fascism.

It is sure that the comintern's depiction of socialist growth that the socialist system advanced counterpoisedly with the degeneration of the imperialist economy is not existing today as such as it did in the days of Soviet Union and during the days of the socialist block. It also will not be correct to say that more and more nations are getting dissociated with the imperialist economic chain joining the socialist camp or the non aligned path befriending socialist camp. Still, the basic explanation of General crisis is valid. That is, the degeneration and spiralling crisis of global capitalism has almost hit all the sectors of global capitalism; this time in quite unprecedented way in magnitude and severity of impact.

Further, this crisis goes on unabated from recessions to recessions without any sign of substantial recovery. In effect this has caused a lasting fall of global economy. This accumulative nature of crisis has led global capitalist imperialist system to the wide chasm of 3rd depression.

This phenomenon of 3rd Depression proves that the basic explanation of GENERAL CRISIS by the Comintern stands valid; that the present crisis is not of the nature of usual cyclic recurrence of crises and recoveries that was part of earlier capitalist system. The cyclic recurrence of crises and recoveries was the characteristic of capitalist economy prior to the imperialist stage.

As we learn from the experiences from the first decade of 20th century onward, that the old characteristic of cyclic recurrences of crises and recoveries had given way for new cumulative crises of imperialist stage. We know that this led to aggravated imperialist exploitation championed by the ever growing finance capital and the division and redivision of global riches and colonies among imperialist forces. We know that it led to world wars and fascist ascendancy. We know that these events in the first half of 20th century led to great October Revolution and Anti-fascist struggle that led to the emancipation of Nations and the people in all the continents to great extent.

So, the comintern's grasp of the General Crisis and its strategic and tactical resolutions derived from it are not a mere question of academic correctness. Instead, it stands testified through revolutionary successes, the global expansion of communist movement and the spectacular victory over fascism.

As the basic malady of imperialist crisis still lives on the basic malignancy of fascist rabidity also lives on. So, it still is valuable lesson that we have in the detailed examinations that comintern had done to grasp the dimensions of fascism in order to define it and to draw tactical line against it.

The 6th congress of the comintern dealt with the question of impending fascism and the 7th Congress derived the theoretical and practical proposals of Anti Fascist United Front. These two congresses of Comintern dealt with the wide questions ranging from that of defining the generation of fascism to differentiating its manifestations in various countries at various levels and various kinds; and, to defining the basic line of People's Front or Anti Fascist United Front.

" 2. THE REVOLUTIONARY CRISIS AND COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY.

During the progress of the international revolution, the leading cadres of the social democratic parties and of the reformist trade unions on the one hand, and the militant capitalist organisations of the Fascist type on the other, acquired special significance as a powerful counter-revolutionary force actively fighting against the revolution and actively supporting the partial stabilisation of capitalism.

The war crisis of 1914-1918 was accompanied by the disgraceful collapse of the social democratic Second International. Acting in complete violation of the thesis of the " Communist Manifesto" written by Marx-Engels, that the proletariat has no fatherland under capitalism and in complete violation of the anti-war resolutions passed by the Stuttgart and Basle Congresses, the leaders of the social democratic parties in the various countries, with a few exceptions, voted for the war credits, came out definitely in defence of the imperialist "fatherland" (i.e., the State organisations of the imperialist bourgeoisie) and instead of combatting the imperialist war, became its loyal soldiers, bards and propagandists (social-patriotism, which grew into social-imperialism). In the subsequent period, social democracy supported the predatory treaties (Brest-Litovsk, Versailles); it actively aligned itself with the militarists in the bloody suppression of proletarian uprisings (Noske); it conducted armed warfare against the first proletarian republic (Soviet Russia); it despicably betrayed the victorious proletariat (Hungary); it joined the imperialist League of Nations (Albert Thomas, Paul Boncour, Vandervelde); it openly supported the imperialist slave-owners against the colonial slaves (the British Labour Party); it actively supported the most reactionary executioners of the working class (Bulgaria, Poland); it took upon itself the initiative in securing the passage of imperialist " military laws" (France); it betrayed the general strike of the British proletariat; it helped and is still helping to strangle China and India (the MacDonald Government); it acts as the propagandist for the imperialist League of Nations; it is capital's herald and organiser in its struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. (Kautsky, Hilferding).

In its systematic conduct of this counter-revolutionary policy, social democracy operates on two flanks. The right wing of social democracy, avowedly counter-revolutionary, is essential for negotiating and maintaining direct contact with the

bourgeoisie; the left wing is essential for the subtle deception of the workers. While playing with pacifist and at times even with revolutionary phrases, "left" social democracy in practice acts against the workers, particularly in acute and critical situations (the British I.L.P. and the "left" leaders of the General Council during the general strike in 1926; Otto Bauer and Co., at the time of the Vienna uprising), and is therefore, the most dangerous faction in the social democratic parties. While serving the interests of the bourgeoisie in the working class and being wholly in favour of class co-operation and coalition with the bourgeoisie, social democracy, at certain periods, is compelled to play the part of an opposition party and even to pretend that it is defending the class interests of the proletariat in its industrial struggle. It tries thereby to win the confidence of a section of the working class and to be in a position more shamefully to betray the lasting interests of the working class, particularly in the midst of decisive class battles.

The principal function of social democracy at the present time is to disrupt the essential militant unity of the proletariat in its struggle against imperialism. In splitting and disrupting the united front of the proletarian struggle against capital, social democracy serves as the mainstay of imperialism in the working class. International social democracy of all shades; the Second International and its trade union branch, the Amsterdam Federation of Trade Unions, have thus become the last reserve of bourgeois society and its most reliable pillar of support.

3. THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND FASCISM

Side by side with social democracy, with whose aid the bourgeoisie suppresses the workers or lulls their class vigilance, stands Fascism.

The epoch of imperialism, the sharpening of the class struggle and the growth of the elements of civil war-particularly after the imperialist war-led to the bankruptcy of parliamentarism. Hence, the adoption of "new" methods and forms of administration (for example, the system of inner cabinets, the formation of oligarchical groups, acting behind the scenes, the deterioration and falsification of the function of "popular representation," the restriction and annulment of "democratic liberties," etc.). Under certain special historical conditions, the progress of this bourgeois, imperialist, reactionary offensive assumes the form of Fascism. These conditions are: instability of capitalist relationships; the existence of considerable de-classed social elements, the pauperisation of broad strata of the urban petty bourgeoisie and of the intelligentsia; discontent among the rural petty-bourgeoisie and, finally, the constant menace of mass proletarian action. In order to stabilise and perpetuate its rule, the bourgeoisie is compelled to an increasing degree to abandon the parliamentary system in favour of the Fascist system, which is independent of inter-party arrangements and combinations. The Fascist system is a system of direct dictatorship, ideologically marked by the "national idea" and by representation of the "professions" (in reality, representation of the various groups of the ruling class). It is a system that resorts to a peculiar form of social demagoguery (anti-semitism, occasional sorties against usurers' capital and gestures of impatience with the parliamentary "talking shop") in order to utilise the discontent of the petty bourgeois, the intellectuals and other strata of society, and to corruption-the creation of a compact and well paid hierarchy of Fascist units, a party apparatus and a bureaucracy. At the same time, Fascism strives to permeate the working class by recruiting the most backward strata of workers to its ranks-by playing upon their

discontent, by taking advantage of the inaction of social democracy, etc. The principal aim of Fascism is to destroy the revolutionary labour vanguard, i.e., the Communist Sections and leading units of the proletariat. The combination of social democracy, corruption and active white terror, in conjunction with extreme imperialist aggression in the sphere of foreign politics, are the characteristic features of Fascism. In periods of acute crisis for the bourgeoisie, Fascism resorts to anti-capitalist phraseology, but, after it has established itself at the helm of State, it casts aside its anti-capitalist prattle and discloses itself as a terrorist dictatorship of big capital.

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 which, however, do not prevent it, in other political situations, from acting as a sort of Fronde against the bourgeois government in the capacity of an opposition party. The Fascist method and the method of coalition with social democracy, are not the methods usually employed in "normal" capitalist conditions; they are the symptoms of the general capitalist crisis, and are employed by the bourgeoisie in order to stem the advance of the revolution."

(The Programme of the Communist International.

Comintern Sixth Congress 1929.

II. The General Crisis of Capitalism and the First Phase of World Revolution.)

"Fascism is not a form of state power "standing above both classes -- the proletariat and the bourgeoisie," as Otto Bauer, for instance, has asserted. It is not "the revolt of the petty bourgeoisie which has captured the machinery of the state," as the British Socialist Brailsford declares. No, fascism is not a power standing above class, nor government of the petty bourgeoisie or the lumpen-proletariat over finance capital. Fascism is the power of finance capital itself. It is the organization of terrorist vengeance against the working class and the revolutionary section of the peasantry and intelligentsia. In foreign policy, fascism is jingoism in its most brutal form, fomenting bestial hatred of other nations.

This, the true character of fascism, must be particularly stressed because in a number of countries, under cover of social demagoguery, fascism has managed to gain the following of the mass of the petty bourgeoisie that has been dislocated by the crisis, and even of certain sections of the most backward strata of the proletariat. These would never have supported fascism if they had understood its real character and its true nature.

The development of fascism, and the fascist dictatorship itself, assume different forms in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions and to the national peculiarities, and the international position of the given country. In certain countries, principally those in which fascism has no broad mass basis and in which the struggle of the various groups within the camp of the fascist bourgeoisie itself is rather acute, fascism does not immediately venture to abolish parliament, but allows the other bourgeois parties, as well as the Social-Democratic Parties, to retain a modicum of legality. In other countries, where the ruling

bourgeoisie fears an early outbreak of revolution, fascism establishes its unrestricted political monopoly, either immediately or by intensifying its reign of terror against and persecution of all rival parties and groups. This does not prevent fascism, when its position becomes particularly acute, from trying to extend its basis and, without altering its class nature, trying to combine open terrorist dictatorship with a crude sham of parliamentarism.

The accession to power of fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government by another, but a substitution of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie -- bourgeois democracy -- by another form -- open terrorist dictatorship. It would be a serious mistake to ignore this distinction, a mistake liable to prevent the revolutionary proletariat from mobilizing the widest strata of the working people of town and country for the struggle against the menace of the seizure of power by the fascists, and from taking advantage of the contradictions which exist in the camp of the bourgeoisie itself. But it is a mistake, no less serious and dangerous, to underrate the importance, for the establishment of fascist dictatorship, of the reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie at present increasingly developing in bourgeois-democratic countries -- measures which suppress the democratic liberties of the working people, falsify and curtail the rights of parliament and intensify the repression of the revolutionary movement.

Comrades, the accession to power of fascism must not be conceived of in so simplified and smooth a form, as though some committee or other of finance capital decided on a certain date to set up a fascist dictatorship. In reality, fascism usually comes to power in the course of a mutual, and at times severe, struggle against the old bourgeois parties, or a definite section of these parties, in the course of a struggle even within the fascist camp itself -- a struggle which at times leads to armed clashes, as we have witnessed in the case of Germany, Austria and other countries. All this, however, does not make less important the fact that, before the establishment of a fascist dictatorship, bourgeois governments usually pass through a number of preliminary stages and adopt a number of reactionary measures which directly facilitate the accession to power of fascism. Whoever does not fight the reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie and the growth of fascism at these preparatory stages is not in a position to prevent the victory of fascism, but, on the contrary, facilitates that victory.

The Social-Democratic leaders glossed over and concealed from the masses the true class nature of fascism, and did not call them to the struggle against the increasingly reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie. They bear great historical responsibility for the fact that, at the decisive moment of the fascist offensive, a large section of the working people of Germany and of a number of other fascist countries failed to recognize in fascism the most bloodthirsty monster of finance capital, their most vicious enemy, and that these masses were not prepared to resist it.

What is the source of the influence of fascism over the masses? Fascism is able to attract the masses because it demagogically appeals to their most urgent needs and demands. Fascism not only inflames prejudices that are deeply ingrained in the masses, but also plays on the better sentiments of the masses, on their sense of justice and sometimes even on their revolutionary traditions. Why do the German fascists, those lackeys of the bourgeoisie and mortal enemies of socialism, represent themselves to the masses as "Socialists," and depict their accession to power as a "revolution"? Because they try to exploit the faith in revolution and the

urge towards socialism that lives in the hearts of the mass of working people in Germany.

Fascism acts in the interests of the extreme imperialists, but it presents itself to the masses in the guise of champion of an ill-treated nation, and appeals to outraged national sentiments, as German fascism did, for instance, when it won the support of the masses of the petty bourgeoisie by the slogan "Down with the Versailles Treaty."

Fascism aims at the most unbridled exploitation of the masses but it approaches them with the most artful anti-capitalist demagogy, taking advantage of the deep hatred of the working people against the plundering bourgeoisie, the banks, trusts and financial magnates, and advancing those slogans which at the given moment are most alluring to the politically immature masses. In Germany -- "The general welfare is higher than the welfare of the individual," in Italy -- "Our state is not a capitalist, but a corporate state," in Japan -- "For Japan without exploitation," in the United States -- "Share the wealth," and so forth.

Fascism delivers up the people to be devoured by the most corrupt and venal elements, but comes before them with the demand for "an honest and incorruptible government." Speculating on the profound disillusionment of the masses in bourgeois-democratic governments, fascism hypocritically denounces corruption.

It is in the interests of the most reactionary circles of the bourgeoisie that fascism intercepts the disappointed masses who desert the old bourgeois parties. But it impresses these masses by the vehemence of its attacks on the bourgeois governments and its irreconcilable attitude to the old bourgeois parties.

Surpassing in its cynicism and hypocrisy all other varieties of bourgeois reaction, fascism adapts its demagogy to the national peculiarities of each country, and even to the peculiarities of the various social strata in one and the same country. And the mass of the petty bourgeoisie and even a section of the workers, reduced to despair by want, unemployment and the insecurity of their existence, fall victim to the social and chauvinist demagogy of fascism.

Fascism comes to power as a party of attack on the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, on the mass of the people who are in a state of unrest; yet it stages its accession to power as a "revolutionary" movement against the bourgeoisie on behalf of "the whole nation" and for the "salvation" of the nation. One recalls Mussolini's "march" on Rome, Pilsudski's "march" on Warsaw, Hitler's National-Socialist "revolution" in Germany, and so forth.

But whatever the masks that fascism adopts, whatever the forms in which it presents itself, whatever the ways by which it comes to power

Fascism is a most ferocious attack by capital on the mass of the working people;

Fascism is unbridled chauvinism and predatory war;

Fascism is rabid reaction and counter-revolution;

Fascism is the most vicious enemy of the working class and of all working people."

GEORGI DIMITROV

'The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism'

(Main Report delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International.

Delivered on: August 2, 1935)

As we see in the above quoted portions of the programme of the Comintern adopted in the sixth Congress of the Comintern and the report to the seventh Congress of the Comintern by the General Secretary comrade Georgi Dimitrov, much of the analysis of the characteristics of and tactics against fascism have much to draw from even at the current phase.

The Comintern drew the tactical line of proletarian unity and people's front to fight the onslaught of fascism. This was based on two chief characteristics of fascism. 1) fascism unleashes the most outrageous and bloody exploitation and oppression of working class 2) fascist rabidity predates among other classes and among masses. This sharpens contradiction between fascism and vast masses.

The former essentially necessitates wider unity of working class and the latter provides room for people's united front.

" THE ANTI-FASCIST PEOPLE'S FRONT

In mobilizing the mass of working people for the struggle against fascism, the formation of a wide anti-fascist People's Front on the basis of the proletarian united front is a particularly important task. The success of the whole struggle of the proletariat is closely bound up with the establishment of a fighting alliance between the proletariat, on the one hand, and the laboring peasantry and basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie who together form the majority of the population even in industrially developed countries, on the other.

In its agitation, fascism, desirous of winning these masses to its own side, tries to set the mass of the working people in town and countryside against the revolutionary proletariat, frightening the petty bourgeoisie with the bogey of the "Red peril." We must turn this weapon against those who wield it and show the working peasants, artisans and intellectuals whence the real danger threatens. We must show concretely who it is that piles the burden of taxes and imposts onto the peasant and squeezes usurious interest out of him; who it is that, while owning the best land and every form of wealth, drives the peasant and his family from their plot of land and dooms them to unemployment and poverty. We must explain concretely, patiently and persistently who it is that ruins the artisans and handicraftsmen with taxes, imposts, high rents and competition impossible for them to withstand; who it is that throws into the street and deprives of employment the wide masses of the working intelligentsia.

But this is not enough.

The fundamental, the most decisive thing in establishing an anti-fascist People's Front is resolute action of the revolutionary proletariat in defense of the demands of these sections of the people, particularly the working peasantry -- demands in line with the basic interests of the proletariat -- and in the process of struggle combining the demands of the working class with these demands.

In forming an anti-fascist People's Front, a correct approach to those organizations and parties whose membership comprises a considerable number of the working peasantry and the mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie is of great importance.

In the capitalist countries the majority of these parties and organizations, political as well as economic, are still under the influence of the bourgeoisie and follow it. The social composition of these parties and organizations is heterogeneous. They include rich peasants side by side with landless peasants, big businessmen alongside petty shopkeepers; but control is in the hands of the former, the agents of big capital. This obliges us to approach the different organizations in different ways, remembering that often the bulk of the membership ignores the real political character of its leadership. Under certain conditions we can and must try to draw these parties and organizations or certain sections of them to the side of the anti-fascist People's Front, despite their bourgeois leadership. Such, for instance, is today the situation in France with the Radical party, in the United States with various farmers' organizations, in Poland with the "Stronnictwo Ludowe," 9) in Yugoslavia with the Croatian Peasants' Party, in Bulgaria with the Agrarian Union, in Greece with the Agrarians, etc. But regardless of whether or not there is any chance of attracting these parties and organizations as a whole to the People's Front, our tactics must under all circumstances be directed towards drawing the small peasants, artisans, handicraftsmen, etc., among their members into an anti-fascist People's Front.

Hence, you see that in this field we must all along the line put an end to what has not infrequently occurred in our work—neglect or contempt of the various organizations and parties of the peasants, artisans and the mass of petty bourgeoisie in the towns."

:Georgi Dimitrov

"The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism"

(Main Report delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International)

We have to look into the history of the world communist movement and the history of the global proletarian movement after the anti-fascist victory and resulted advance of the socialist camp. Did the international communist movement go complacent about the danger of possible recurrence of fascism? Did the working class movement go sleepy about the danger of recurrence of fascism?

In both cases we can see that there is clear answer in the negative. Neither the global communist movement nor the United movement of the international working class go complacent and sleepy about the fascist danger. Instead, these movements warned that unless active vigil was not kept against the regeneration of socio political crises forming into rabid proportions fascist recurrence is real danger.

"The cardinal purpose of the imperialist camp is to strengthen imperialism, to hatch a new imperialist war, to combat socialism and democracy, and to support reactionary and anti-democratic pro-fascist regimes and movements everywhere.

In the pursuit of these ends the imperialist camp is prepared to rely on reactionary and anti-democratic forces in all countries, and to support its former adversaries in the war against its wartime allies.

The anti-fascist forces comprise the second camp. This camp is based on the U.S.S.R. and the new democracies. It also includes countries that have broken with imperialism and have firmly set foot on the path of democratic development, such as Rumania, Hungary and Finland. Indonesia and Vietnam are associated with it; it

has the sympathy of India, Egypt and Syria. The anti-imperialist camp is backed by the labor and democratic movement and by the fraternal Communist parties in all countries, by the fighters for national liberation in the colonies and dependencies, by all progressive and democratic forces in every country. The purpose of this camp is to resist the threat of new wars and imperialist expansion, to strengthen democracy and to extirpate the vestiges of fascism." (**Report on the International Situation to the Cominform**

Andrei Zhdanov, September 22, 1947)

The first resolution adopted by the Paris Congress declared that "one of the primary tasks of the WFTU and the trade union movements of all countries is to fight for the speedy and complete eradication of fascism. We recognize that the forces of reaction do not want to see the German and Japanese war potentials utterly destroyed and fascism extirpated. World labour must take action to guarantee that these forces shall not prevail. . . ". . .The Congress declares that world labour must be ever-vigilant to prevent any hesitation or weakening in the application of these decisions (the Potsdam Agreements)."

: The First World Trade Union Congress (Paris, 3-8 October 1945)