

Keynote Message of Greetings to the Plenum*

By William Z. Foster

TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Dear Comrades:

Greetings to the meeting. I wish I could be with you, but unfortunately for me I cannot. May I, therefore, participate a little by means of this letter?

Of course, it is impossible for me to try to evaluate our experiences of the past period or to discuss to any extent our policies for the coming period. All I would like to do, and that briefly, is to point out some of the newer aspects of the general political situation and to draw a few conclusions therefrom. We, as Marxist-Leninists, must be especially acute to take note of major new developments, as they foreshadow basic future general trends.

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First, regarding the wage struggle: It is obvious from the strikes of the workers in steel and auto, and especially from that of the coal miners, that the struggle to protect the living standards of the workers has developed a new degree of intensity. This directly results from the more ex-

tensive war preparations and the worsening economic situation.

From now on the unions will really have to dig in and fight. This fact demands that we actively participate in all these struggles and that we develop all possible joint action pacts among the unions. Especially among the expelled Left unions must we build a strong bond of active cooperation. The economic struggle, from now on will constantly sharpen, and we must play our full part in it *at the grass roots*. The activities during the coal strike were a good beginning.

Second, about unemployment: This is rapidly becoming a decisive national issue. Even the government now admits that there are almost 5,000,000 workers without jobs. And the number is bound to increase heavily in the coming period. This means that we must pay close attention to this basic question, carefully working out our policies for organizing the unemployed and leading them in their struggles.

Let us remember our glorious traditions in this respect made during the great economic crisis 20 years ago. A special, new feature of the developing unemployment situation,

* The Plenary Session of the National Committee, Communist Party, U.S.A., was held in New York City, March 23-25, 1950.

and we must realize its full significance, is the tremendous importance that it gives to social security legislation in all its aspects. The workers are now fully aware of the basic necessity of social insurance of all kinds.

Third, on the Negro question: The new element in this basic question, besides its great sharpening on the national scene, is that it has now become a major international issue. The brutal repression of the Negro people in this country is now being rightly taken in many parts of the world as the measure of capitalist democracy in the United States.

For their shameful treatment of the Negro people, the capitalist reactionaries are now paying dearly in the colonial world. This fact most seriously puts the American warmongers on the spot, with their fake pretense of being the defenders of world democracy. We must be keen to utilize this most favorable situation to advance the whole fight of the Negro people. To this end, the Party's present efforts to cleanse itself and the ranks of the workers generally of all manifestations of white chauvinism, is of real importance.

Fourth, on the defense of the Party: Party security is now of real urgency. We must be under no illusions as to the grave danger presented, not only by the "guilty" verdict in the trial of our leaders, but especially by the passage of the anti-spying bill in the House, and the

threatened passage of the Mundt Bill in the Senate. We must mobilize all our forces to fight this monstrous Mundt Bill as an urgent and immediate danger, not only to our Party, but also to the whole labor and progressive movement.

We must also tie in this fight with the general struggle against the many fascist trends in our country—Taft-Hartley Law, "loyalty" tests, attempts to smash the unions, and all the rest of it.

One of the new features of the whole capitalist world situation is the renewed efforts to revive fascism in order to prepare war to stay the advance of Socialism. This is the meaning of the recent moves to the Right by the governments in Western Germany, Italy, France, England, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, etc. We must be fully conscious of this redeveloping fascist danger, in the United States and on a world scale. It is a key phase of the war program of American imperialism.

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Fifth, on the peace movement. Here we face our most decisive political task, and I want to lay the greatest possible stress upon it. Under no circumstances should we neglect the mass struggles over wages, unemployment, Negro rights, and fascism; but we must recognize that these are all bound up with the fight against war. Everything depends upon our success in this all-inclusive key struggle. To mobilize

the masses to fight for peace should be the very center of the work of this meeting of the National Committee.

There are a number of important considerations regarding the fight for peace that I should like to comment upon briefly:

First, we must clearly realize that from now on indefinitely the struggle for peace will remain an urgent international issue. With the two worlds—Socialist and capitalist—now so sharply defined, it will take a constant effort to prevent their coming into violent collision with one another. This is because monopoly capital, particularly American imperialism, by the force of its whole structure is driven to the policy of attempting to halt the irresistible advance of world Socialism by war. Nor will capitalism abandon this war program until it no longer has the power left with which to make war.

Regardless of any agreements that may be made to soften the cold war—and such agreements are quite possible—nevertheless the war danger will continue to exist, with greater or lesser intensity. That is because of the incurably warlike character of imperialism, especially American imperialism. The war danger will last as long as capitalism does, and we must orientate upon this realization. Henceforth, more than ever before, the fight for peace must be in the center of all our Party's work.

Second, the American people do

not want war. It is a tragic fact that huge masses of them, perhaps the majority, have been convinced by the liars of Wall Street that the United State is quite innocent and the Soviet Union completely to blame for the present dangerous cold war situation.

But, while realizing this mood among the masses, as scientific Marxist-Leninists we would make the gravest possible mistake if we deduced therefrom that the American people also want war, as Wall Street definitely does. On the contrary, the democratic masses of the United States, like those in other capitalist countries, want peace. Especially now is their desire for peace sharpened up by the breaking of the American so-called monopoly on the atom bomb, and by Truman's announcement of the making of the Hydrogen bomb. This is what is new in the political situation, and we must pay the very closest attention to it; namely, the vast sharpening of mass peace sentiment in the United States because of this widespread conviction (for the reason stated) that another war, far from being the picnic-like affair for America pictured formerly by the war-mongers, would surely be a most devastating atomic war on both sides.

The American people want none of such a ruinious war. We must clearly grasp the political significance of this fundamental peace position of the democratic masses of the American people, and not be misled

by the powerful clamor of the immense war apparatus of American imperialism.

Third, the American people do not believe that war is inevitable. If they did, we would have been pushed into war long before this. While the American people, heavily deceived by Wall Street's war propaganda, widely believe that there is danger of war from "Soviet aggression," nevertheless they do not believe that such a war is unavoidable. This is why they respond so actively to every suggestion that is made to alleviate the present world tension. And now, with their recently acquired realization that the war would be a two-sided atomic slaughter, their urge to find a road to peace has become all the more intense.

We would be fools, however, to believe that the capitalists cannot eventually force the country into war in spite of this vague, unorganized mass opposition, unless it is thoroughly organized and made politically effective in fighting for a peace policy on the part of the government.

The big thing we have to understand clearly from this whole situation is to lay the heaviest possible stress upon our position that it is quite possible (as well as absolutely necessary) for capitalism and Socialism to live side by side peacefully in the world. Actually, the fundamental peace position of the American people, as well as that of other

peoples, is a tacit acceptance of this thesis.

For, only because they do believe it is possible for capitalism and Socialism to live peacefully in the same world do they respond so readily to every move in the direction of peace. We must be constantly aware of the enormous significance of this fact and bring forward with all our power the whole position of capitalism and Socialism co-existing peacefully and also tell them what is the condition for such peace—namely, the bridling of the monopolist warmongers of Wall Street.

A major point, it seems to me, in developing our fight for peace, is to focus our major peace fight around the most immediate aspects of the question: such as the holding of a meeting between Truman and Stalin, the fight against the H-bomb, the reduction of Marshall Plan "aid," the cutting of the arms budget in the country, etc., etc. These are the peace issues that the masses can be rallied around.

In our peace work, particularly in the development of the mass campaigns, we must, while explaining to the masses the full realities of the international situation, nevertheless always bear in mind that we are building the peace movement among people who have largely been convinced by imperialist propaganda that the war danger originates from the U.S.S.R.

Another new feature of the political situation is the fresh depth of

infamy to which Right Social-Democracy has sunk internationally in its lackey-like attempts to save world capitalism from its approaching doom. In no country is this Social-Democratic degradation more marked than in the United States, where the Greens, Reuthers, Murrays, Careys, Wolls, etc., in their subservience to Wall Street's war program, have become just so many militaristic war shouters, strike-breakers, union splitters, and government stoolpigeons. All this demands from us a much sharper political fight against Social-Democracy and, more than ever before, the development of the working policy of the united front from below.

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In summary, let me remark that in all our work—in the struggles over wages, unemployment, Negro rights, fascism, and peace—we must be conscious that we have to do now with a definitely rising wave of militancy and struggle on the part of the workers. The general prospect is for a sharpening of the class struggle on all fronts. This is the most important of all the new features and trends in the present political situation—the increased fighting spirit of the working class. We must base our whole policy upon this key reality.

In concluding this informal letter, let me once again stress what I consider to be the greatest of all the weaknesses of our Party, namely its lack of systematic theoretical work.

The decay of world capitalism and the rise of world Socialism are generating a whole series of new, major theoretical problems. And the United States, with its leading capitalist role, is right in the center of many of these problems. Unfortunately, however, our Party is not tackling these theoretical problems as it should. This is a grave hardship to all our Party's practical work.

Undoubtedly, even with our limited theoretical forces, we could do far better than we have done in the past. I think the plenum should pay attention to this matter and take steps to improve our Party's work in this most vital of all fields.

Our plenum is indeed meeting in the midst of a most historic situation. World capitalism is suffering one defeat after another and world Socialism is more and more rapidly on the march. It is a most inspiring time in which to work and live. Our Party, situated in the heart of the greatest capitalist empire, is being buffeted about by the forces of reaction. But no real Communist will be appalled by that. Our Party can be fully relied upon to do its utmost to bring the victory of Socialism to its earliest and fullest conclusion. Let this plenum take active steps to recruit our Party membership from the ranks of the fighting workers.

Again wishing the plenum the greatest of success, I remain,

Comradely yours,

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER