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## THE FIFTH CONGRESS OF THE R.I.L.U.

IN a situation of growing class struggles of the "third period," the Fifth World Congress of the R.I.L.U. put into concrete form the very important decision passed two years ago at the Fourth Congress, on the *independent leadership* of the economic struggles. It is this making concrete of the new line that renders the Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U. of historic importance.

The putting into operation of the new line demanded from the revolutionary trade union organisations of all countries, *the reorganisation of their ranks and a change in methods of work*. Before the Fourth Congress of the R.I.L.U. the revolutionary trade union organisations were to a large extent organs of *propaganda and agitation*. The Fourth Congress demanded their transformation into organs of action, into organs for preparing and mobilising decisive masses of the proletariat for economic strikes, that would eventually be transformed into the general attack of the workers against the foundations of the capitalist system.

The two years that have elapsed since the Fourth Congress of the R.I.L.U. have fully confirmed the correctness of its decisions on the new line; the question of the new line now rouses no doubts. Only the counter-revolutionary Brandlerites and Trotskyists and the various opportunists echoing them, can still speak of the "fatal" significance of the Fourth R.I.L.U. Congress decisions.

But while the question of the correctness of the new line in the revolutionary trade union movement was definitely decided at the Fourth R.I.L.U. Congress, the operation of this line in *practice* encountered *tremendous difficulties*.

In summing up the work done since the Fourth Congress, the Fifth Congress placed on record that side by side with *serious achievements* in the sphere of the leadership of economic struggles and in the sphere of extending its influence to a number of new countries (there were forty-nine countries represented at the Fourth Congress and sixty at the Fifth Congress), the revolutionary movement during these two years "lost a number of positions in the old capitalist countries." The political resolution of the Fifth Congress

points out how this loss of positions was concretely expressed:

"(a) In a number of revolutionary trade unions there has been a considerable decrease in the membership (France, Czecho-Slovakia);

(b) a number of revolutionary trade union organisations have been driven underground and lost their mass basis (Yugo-Slavia, Roumania, etc.);

(c) a number of sections and organisations affiliated to the R.I.L.U., although growing organisationally, lagged far behind, not only from the demands of the movement, but also did not keep pace with the growth of the political influence of the sections themselves (Germany, China, Latin America)."

The entire work of the Fifth Congress was conducted in the light of *resolute self-criticism*. This self-criticism made it possible to record that: "The causes of the organisational weaknesses of the revolutionary trade union movement do *not* lie solely in the objective position; persecutions will undoubtedly continue in the future, but our movement must be strengthened *in spite of everything*."

Therefore, for the strengthening and further extension of the revolutionary trade union movement, in spite of growing objective difficulties, in spite of increasing police persecution, the terror of the employers and treacherous work of the social-fascists, it is necessary first of all to remedy the defects and errors in the *practical* operation of the new line in the revolutionary trade union movement.

The Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U. summed up the results of the tremendous international experience in carrying out the new line in the revolutionary trade union movement, during more than two years. This experience permits it to be asserted now—and this is one of the most important lessons of the Fifth R.I.L.U. Congress, which should without fail be understood by every active member and class-conscious worker—that the chief link for drawing the masses of the working class into the struggle, and organisationally strengthening the revolutionary trade union movement at the present stage, is the question of *partial economic demands*, which affect the *widest* sections of the proletariat—the question of resisting the capitalist offensive and of *how* this resistance and the advance to

the workers' counter-offensive is to be organised.

The history of all the big strikes that have taken place since the Fourth Congress of the R.I.L.U. shows:

(1). In those cases where the strikes broke out *spontaneously*, without preliminary preparation on the part of the Communist Party and revolutionary T.U. movement, this occurred because the respective organisations of the Communist Party and the revolutionary T.U. movement were badly connected with the masses and did not understand the questions which were agitating the masses and urging them to action.

(2). In those cases where the strikes were prepared by the Communist Party and revolutionary T.U. organisations, and developed under their leadership, in the overwhelming majority of cases the reformists succeeded in breaking these strikes by coming forward with *concrete* partial demands, *comprehensible to the masses*, whereas the Communists, forgetting all about such demands, merely agitated for the transforming of the movement to a higher stage of the political struggle;

(3). Finally, there are quite numerous cases where the Communist organisations and red trade unions (as, for instance, in the strike against the Social Insurance Law in France) have associated themselves with the partial demands of the reformists, have concluded unprincipled alliances in them, and lost their political identity, thus in practice nullifying the entire new line of independent leadership of the economic struggles.

*A most important lesson is to be derived from the above.* In order to prepare the economic strike properly, in order to draw *decisive* numbers into the movement *to the end* and to remain *at the head* of the fight *till the end*, the partial demands most vitally interesting the masses should be drawn up in good time and placed before these masses. The working class cannot be led into the struggle by general agitation about the "third period," the necessity for a counter-offensive, etc. The revolutionary trade union organisation cannot be strengthened by any such general declarations about the fighting reconstruction of the ranks. A strike once begun cannot be brought to a successful conclusion

without paying attention to the slightest changes in the feelings of the masses.

At the same time, every Communist and every member of the revolutionary trade union movement should always remember that, whereas for the social-fascists the formal presentation of partial demands is a means of undermining the revolutionary struggle of the workers for these same partial demands, for us they are a means of mobilising the masses for the revolutionary struggles. On the basis of these partial demands the Communists working in the trade union movement are confronted with the task of raising the masses who have entered the struggle to a higher stage of the movement.

In the political, and particularly the organisational, resolution of the Congress (which should be thoroughly studied by every class-conscious worker) the most detailed practical instructions are given as to how to conduct the day-to-day work of preparing decisive masses of the working class for the general counter-offensive against the bourgeoisie. In this respect the Fifth R.I.L.U. Congress might be called a Congress of concrete organisational preparation for the coming big revolutionary fights. It was therefore also a Congress of *great perspectives*. In studying and summing up the results of the practical work of the revolutionary trade union organisations of all countries, giving detailed advice to them as to *how* to conduct the day-to-day struggle, the Fifth Congress, in Bolshevik fashion, *linked* up the routine tasks of the revolutionary trade union organisations with the perspectives for preparing the working class for the struggles for *power*.

The Fifth Congress made it possible to confirm once more, that, as a result of the world economic crisis, we are face to face with the beginning of the decline of capitalist stabilisation and the growth of a new revolutionary wave in the labour movement.

The steady swing to the left of broad masses of the proletariat and the growth of the strike movement, which is acquiring an increasingly sharply expressed political nature, as also the increasing liberation of the masses from the influence of the Social-Democratic Parties and reformist T.U. leaders, enabled the Fifth Congress to present *in a new fashion*, the problem

of the fight with reformism and its main strongholds (such as Germany and England). The Fifth Congress passed a resolution, in the spirit of the Eleventh Plenum E.C.C.I., on the creation of parallel red trade unions in a definite situation of mass actions by the proletariat.

Furthermore, the Fifth Congress gave very detailed instructions on the organisational structure of the revolutionary trade union opposition inside the reformist trade unions, in regard to countries where there are no independent red trade unions (Germany, Austria, England). In regard to Germany and to Poland, where the leftward process of the working masses has met with the most considerable success, and where, on the other hand, ever wider sections of the workers are beginning to understand the process of fascisation of social-democracy, the Fifth Congress, while confirming the necessity to oppose resolutely the tendency to give up working in and to abandon voluntarily the reformist trade unions, decided to withdraw the slogan "join the reformist unions."

"In these countries," states the political resolution of the Fifth Congress, "in view of the increasing completely splitting tactics of the reformist leaders and the growing antagonism between them and the broad masses of the workers, it is already necessary to work consistently, consciously and untiringly for the organisation of an independent revolutionary trade union movement for the better and more successful preparation and leadership of the class struggles of the proletariat."

The social-fascists of all hues and brands will howl about this decision, and call it a new attempt to split the trade unions. The re-

volutionary proletariat should not be disturbed by the howls of these "labour leaders" who have gone over to the bourgeoisie. In applying the tactics of the *united front from below*, in grouping in Committees of Action and struggle the masses of organised and unorganised workers—including the social-democratic workers and the members of reformist trade unions—these decisions of the Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U. on the revolutionary trade union opposition should be carried out with the utmost effort. That is the best weapon for the most rapid complete defeat of the most dangerous enemy of the working class—the Amsterdam International.

The Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U. demonstrated the close contact and friendly joint work of the revolutionary trade union movement and the Communist International. The leading rôle of the Communist International in the revolutionary trade union movement has enabled the latter to discern in time the most dangerous opportunist deviations and "left" sectarian errors. Opportunism, particularly opportunism in practice, still remains the *chief* danger in the revolutionary trade union movement and retards its development, as also do the "left" sectarian tendencies and errors. The firm leadership of the Communist International, in assuring the putting into effect of the Fifth Congress R.I.L.U. decisions, will enable the revolutionary trade union movement to overcome all difficulties and to become transformed into the decisive organised force of the proletariat of the capitalist countries and the colonies.

# THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE AND THE FASCISATION OF GREAT BRITAIN

By ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

## PART I. THE GENERAL SITUATION.

FOR the second time the Imperial Conference—the consultation of the Governments of Great Britain, the Dominions and India—is being convened under conditions of enormous difficulty for British Imperialism. In 1926, the crisis was centred in Britain itself, racked by the tremendous struggle of the miners which itself was a sequel to the General Strike. In the colonial sphere the crisis was marked by the still victoriously advancing offensive of the Chinese Revolution. In 1930, the decay and crisis of capitalist economy in the metropolis of Britain, which after a short period of “prosperity” on the basis of rationalisation in 1928 and 1929, is now proceeding even more strongly than before, precisely as a result of this rationalisation. It is also linked up with the blows of the world crisis, now beginning to embrace in its clutches the bourgeoisie of the Dominions as well.

The position of Great Britain itself is characterised more clearly than anything by the fact that the figures of imports and exports for July, 1930, are still lower than the corresponding figures for July of 1926—a month of widespread stagnation in British economy. During the first half-year of 1930, imports fell by 10 per cent. and exports by 15 per cent. in comparison with 1929. The British share of world foreign trade shrank by 11 per cent. While the index of production compiled by the Board of Trade increased during 1928 from 110.5 in the first quarter of the year to 112 in the second quarter, and 113.9 in the fourth quarter (1924 level equals 100), in 1930 the contrary tendency was to be observed; 110.9 in the first quarter, and 103.4 in the second. To this must be added that in such important branches of industry as coal-mining, iron and steel, chemicals and textiles, the index of production was at a level not only below that of 1929 but also below that of 1928 (see the *Economist* of August, 1930). Unemployment reached a level of over 2,000,000 registered, and in actual fact at least 2,500,000 taking into account civil servants, railway workers, agricultural workers and domestic

servants. In some branches of industry, unemployment reached monstrous figures, as, for example, 42 per cent. in the cotton textile industry, 30 per cent. in metal industry and shipbuilding, etc.

Among the Dominions the most seriously hit of all by the crisis is AUSTRALIA. For the first half-year of 1930, its imports shrank by 80 per cent. and its exports by 31 per cent. This hit particularly hard the basic exporting industry, namely, cattle breeding, and led, on the one hand, to record figures of unemployment (14 per cent.) and, on the other hand, to an unprecedented financial crisis which was heightened by the pressure of the Bank of England, the chief creditor of the Australian Government.

In CANADA all the basic branches of industry are in the throes of crisis and unemployment is reckoned by hundreds of thousands; agriculture already since last year has been in a hopeless position with regard to the sale of its production. The elections during the summer of 1930 took place round the question of a considerable increase in import duties, and while the Liberal Government hoped to maintain its relative majority (118 seats out of 245) by turning the tariff weapon especially against the U.S.A., the Conservatives succeeded in obtaining an absolute majority (139 seats) with the help of the demand that there should not be given any kind of preferences, that is, preferential duties, even for Great Britain.

In SOUTH AFRICA the fall of world prices for raw materials (e.g. wool) and for foodstuffs (e.g., fruits, grain) created, besides the general phenomena of crisis, such a severe unemployment among the white proletariat that bourgeois politicians, including both the Hertzog Government representatives and those of the Smuts opposition, came forward with the proposal for driving out the negro workers from the ranks of semi-skilled labour in order that they might be replaced by whites. The crisis in South Africa also gave a new impetus to the tendency towards economic independence, which was expressed in 1929 in the conclusion of a trade agreement with Germany, giving the latter the privilege of

most favoured nation treatment, not even excluding Great Britain. On the eve of the departure of General Hertzog, stormy scenes were enacted in the South African Parliament, of course not without their comic side in relation to the demand for the right of complete separation from the British Empire.

The IRISH FREE STATE, suffering relatively less at the present time from the consequence of the crisis, thanks to the market for its livestock products still guaranteed to it in Great Britain, has also managed to conclude a trade agreement with Germany on the basis of the principle of most favoured nation treatment.

As far as INDIA is concerned, the growing upsurge of the revolutionary movement, the drawing in of already considerable masses of the peasantry into the struggle, which has been begun on the initiative of the proletariat, the incessant armed struggle along the whole of the north-west frontier which every now and again throws sparks into the very heart of the peasant countryside, and the fear still prevailing among a considerable section of the national reformist bourgeoisie of finally losing their power over the masses through an open compromise with the British, all this creates for the Imperial Conference a still more complicated situation than was the case in 1926.

The above only refers to the internal situation of the Empire. But the external situation—the world crisis and the world wave of protectionism, and the further sharpening of Anglo-American antagonism (which has already through puppet leaders passed into the form of armed struggle in a number of the Latin-American republics), the French manœuvres for the strengthening of their political and economic hegemony in Europe and the growing power of the Soviet Union on the eve of the third year of its Five Year Plan—all this makes the question of the internal relations in the Empire more critical than at any previous time.

At the 1926 Conference, an answer was given to this question in the famous formula that in their relation to Great Britain the "Dominions are equal in status but unequal in functions," and precisely on account of this difference Britain retains the leading role in questions of foreign policy and imperial defence. Recent years, as can be seen from the above hasty survey, have introduced certain "corrections" to this formula.

The chief task of the coming Imperial Conference will consist in an attempt to reach an agreement on the extent of these corrections.

#### PART 2. IMPERIAL PROTECTIONISM.

"If the rain washed away the Corn Laws, it is perhaps the fate of the torrent of unemployment to raze the edifice of Free Trade which has lasted almost a century."

The fact that this was written in the August number of *Foreign Affairs* by the "Left" Radical Norman Angell, testifies not only to the depressed mood of British Radicals, these "last of the Mohicans" of individualism and *laissez faire* policy, but also to the strength of the consolidated front of protectionism with which the British bourgeoisie as a whole will enter the Imperial Conference. It is precisely for this reason that the question of "Empire Free Trade" as it was delicately termed already half a year ago, and "Empire Economic Unity" as it is now more definitely spoken of by the Conservatives and the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, comes before the Imperial Conference as the most important subject for discussion.

A considerable path has been traversed from the time of the proclamation of the "Empire Crusade" in December, 1929, and even from the time of the foundation of the "United Empire Party" in February, 1930. At that time there was going on in the Conservative Party if not a furious discussion, at least an appearance of one in relation to the new protectionist doctrine, for Baldwin and the leadership of the Conservative Party were not going to allow themselves to be stampeded, not desiring to be assailed by attacks on the part of the general mass of consumers. Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere came out against them with furious onslaughts and categorical demands, not only for Preference for Empire products, but also monopoly; taxes not only on foreign industrial goods, but also on foodstuffs. But the Liberals and the Labourists stood on one side and rejoiced at the spectacle, not observing that they were already obtaining the adhesion of bandits from their own camp.

At this moment the picture is entirely different thanks to the intervention of the world economic crisis. As early as June 26th, the General Council produced its Memorandum on "Economic Groups" after previous agreement with the Federation of British Industries (as was

revealed from the Report of the General Council to the Congress) reached at the joint sessions of May 15th and May 26th, and this memorandum has now been approved by the Nottingham Trade Union Congress session by 1,800,000 votes to 1,200,000. The Memorandum declares that under present conditions in the world there is no other course except the formation of a world "economic group," that the most "practicable group for Great Britain is as full a development as possible of the economic relations between the constituent parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations," that the old notions of the validity of Free Trade have long ago become out of date, and that although, on the one hand, the question of tariffs was not even discussed by the Committee yet, on the other hand, its conception of an economic group presupposes "Free Trade within the group, but protection against outsiders if necessary." (*Times*, June 26th, 1930). One of the oldest Conservative organs, the *Birmingham Post* writes concerning this document:—

"The Unionists (i.e., the Conservatives) believing in protective duties and in Imperial Preference, could not desire anything better."

Ever since this document was issued, Snowden has kept silent although only half a year ago he was a fairly vociferous defender of Free Trade. Dr. Addison, Minister of Health, however, only a short time ago a prominent Liberal, has declared that "Free Trade in the sense that Cobden understood it is as dead as Queen Anne."

Many former Liberals have put their signatures also to a second document which provides evidence that the new Protectionist campaign has entered a higher "State" phase. This document is the Bankers' Manifesto of July 4th, which simply and clearly declared that:—

"The immediate path towards strengthening and extending the markets for British goods lies through mutual trade agreements between the nations, comprising the British Empire. As the conditions for such an agreement Great Britain must keep its market open for all Imperial products, at the same time being ready to impose taxes on all goods imported from all other countries." (*Times*, July 10th.)

Simultaneously the *Times* communicates that the big Committee of the Federation of British Industries has decided to ascertain from its members their opinions concerning (1) "a wider application of Protective duties" and (2) "a wide development of the policy of reciprocal agree-

ments between the United Kingdom and the Dominions on the basis of mutual preference."

Thus, in one way or another the basic forces of the British bourgeoisie are coming to the Imperial Conference with a well-prepared position in principle. The difficulties begin with the passing from principles to practice.

### PART 3. THE INDUSTRIAL QUESTION.

The first difficulty, and the basic one, lies in the question of industry. All the Conservatives and a large number of industrialists are agreed that it is necessary to close the British market to foreign industrial goods. But all of them, and particularly those industrialists who are working for export, e.g., in the textile industry, understand that this is a two-edged weapon and that it is necessary to make certain of securing a new market without reprisals on the part of other States against British goods. The first thoughts, naturally, are directed towards the Dominions as an immense market for Great Britain. But, as we have already pointed out, it is just here that the bourgeoisie of the Dominions is beginning to forget all about "Anglo-Saxon brotherhood," "blood unity" and all the other beautiful subjects of toasts at Imperial banquets.

There is no need to repeat here figures that have already been given in the *Communist International* on the growth of industrialisation in the Dominions. It is sufficient to adduce certain characteristic facts which go to show that the young bourgeoisie in these countries is not for a moment prepared to surrender itself and its growing industry as a sacrifice to British industrial magnates. For example, on the eve of the Parliamentary elections in Canada, the leader of the Conservative Party, Bennett, now Prime Minister, declared that "there can be no question of agreements regarding Empire trade which do not guarantee in a satisfactory fashion the agricultural, industrial and other workers [read employers.—A.R.] of Canada." At the Conference of the Imperial Federation of Chambers of Commerce in London, the representative from South Africa (from Durban) in approving the trade agreement with Germany, said:—

"Why do British manufacturers not adopt a firm line for the creation of subsidiary enterprises in the Dominions for all goods which can be produced there?" (*Times*, May 29th.)

In Australia, only recently, the Minister of Customs enumerated a whole series of new types of production (worsted, matches, preserves, tobacco, electrical construction) which had been transferred into Australia from America, Great Britain, Sweden, and Germany as a result of tariff increases. (*Times*, May 31st.) A month afterwards, Hirst, President of the British General Electrical Company, who was visiting Australia as a member of the British Economic Mission, gave a similar declaration in regard to the General Electric Company (*Times*, June 26th), and he added that other British industrialists should also take this into consideration, otherwise there is a danger that "their place will be taken by manufacturers from other countries." In Ireland, the Minister of Trade declared recently in the Senate that there could be no question of refraining from the development of an independent industry.

Do British industrialists understand that to obtain the Dominion markets for their products is not such a simple affair? Obviously, they do understand this. Already in February last a special report of the Federation of British Industries outlined the problem and attempted to explore a possible way out by distinguishing between

"healthy profit-making new industry in the Dominions which Great Britain must assist in financial and technical respects"

and

"the artificial fostering of non-profit-making production which in the last analysis is harmful to the Dominions themselves because it increases the cost of primary production and raises the general cost of living and overstrains the national finances. At the same time, it does harm to Great Britain because it contracts the market for British exports, thus weakening British buying capacity for the products of the Dominions and restricting new capital for the development of the Dominions." (*Daily Telegraph*, February 19th, 1930.)

However, a too firm pressure on the Dominions for fostering "non-profit-making production," i.e., putting it simply, the production of means of production, freeing the Dominions from economic dependence on Great Britain, contains a danger, not only from manufacturers from other countries, especially America, but also that of a "breach" in their own front of far from organised capitalism by those eager for a tit-bit in the contracting world markets. It is precisely for this reason, it may be supposed, that the President of the Imperial Conference of Cham-

bers of Commerce in Britain, Shirley Benn, spoke in a much more persuasive fashion in making his speech of greeting, declaring "Now that the Dominions possess the right of self-government and self-defence they are in duty bound to create their own factories in their own country," and he invited business people and not politicians to occupy themselves with this question.

This does not mean, of course, that the British bourgeoisie, approaching ever closer and closer to the introduction of Protection at home, desires to abstain, or is able to abstain without a struggle, from industrial exploitation of the Dominions, from the differential profits which were guaranteed to it in the past owing to Dominion industrial backwardness. A struggle will be a certainty. But it is still more clear that the Dominions will not accept any agreement restricting their industrial development simply because of the beautiful eyes of the Mother Country, but, on the contrary, in the circumstances of the present world crisis they will strive for the greatest possible concessions on the part of Great Britain, utilising to this end the absence of unity in the capitalist camp.

#### PART 4. THE FOOD QUESTION.

The situation in regard to the imports of food stuffs and raw materials from the Dominions and Colonies is a different one. Here it is the Dominions that are attacking with a united front, demanding close access to the British markets for foreign foodstuffs and the monopoly of this market for themselves. The sharp world agrarian crisis, the enormous stocks of Canadian grain, of Australian and South American wool, etc., all this drives the Dominions to special insistence on this question.

In Britain, there is a less uniform front of opinion, for from the beginning of the campaign there have been in conflict two mutually exclusive desires, (1) the desire to retain the cheapest possible prices for foodstuffs and raw materials in order not to provoke an intense struggle for increase of wages, and (2) the desire to give to the Dominions a guaranteed British market for their agricultural products in exchange for concessions on their part in the question of imports of industrial goods from Britain.

To this must be added yet another contradiction arising from the backward and in-



evitably retrogressive position of British agriculture. All bourgeois Parties are extraordinarily interested in supporting the farmers (representing with their families one-and-a-half to two million votes, not counting the agricultural workers.) The farmers, however, are very unambiguously demanding guarantees for themselves not only against foreign imports, but against imports of any kind, for the big mechanised grain production of Canada is in no way different from the similar production of Argentine in the eyes of the British small farmer working still on the scale of the nineteenth century and deprived of any chance of competing with either Argentine or Canada.

The position of the "Die-hard" wing of the Conservatives was from the very beginning of the campaign a definite one. They demand prohibitive duties on foreign foodstuffs. The leaders of the Party, especially Baldwin, were much more cautious, agreeing to all kinds of auxiliary measures for improving the position of British farmers—the ban on imports of oats sold below cost of production; compulsory use of the known percentage standards of British meat and wheat put forward by the War Office—but refraining from openly subscribing to the slogan of Taxes on Foreign Food. But the economic crisis is a powerful lever; from the firm declaration of the beginning of February 'No Protective Duties for Agriculture,' Baldwin passed in March to a new position, agreeing with Lord Beaverbrook on the introduction of a National Referendum on this question after the next General Elections. In June, Baldwin added that he was ready in case of a Conservative majority to introduce guaranteed minimum prices for British wheat, thus in fact, deciding in advance the question of partial taxation of wheat of foreign origin. This did not prevent Baldwin in the same speech from triumphantly warning the farmers that "it would be madness at the present time even to think of it being possible to convert the industrial areas to voting for such protection of agriculture as would give the latter the possibility of raising prices," and hinted at a subsidy on the part of the State. A month later (July 2nd) Baldwin discarded not only this mask but also the talk of a referendum, declaring:—

"I am not ready in view of my present lack of information on the subject to instigate our Party to ask the people to vote for unknown categories of foodstuffs

as long as we are not able to tell them what they will receive in return."

In other words, with suitable concessions on the part of the Dominions in regard to the export of British manufactures, the Conservatives are ready immediately after the Imperial Conference to adopt the slogan of taxation of foreign food.

It is characteristic that while Baldwin has evolved from rejection of taxes on food to accepting them, the representatives of the "Die-hard" wing of the Conservatives, who, in the early part of the year were modestly declaring that taxation of food could not in any case increase the price of bread (dishonestly juggling with figures of the "Imperial reserves" of wheat and meat), have now completely come out in the open, declaring:—

"Taxation of foreign foodstuffs, imported into Great Britain, is absolutely essential. . . . Although it is not inevitable, this measure might for a time raise prices of some products for the consumer."

(Speech of Sir Abe Bailey at the banquet of the "Imperial Economic Union, June 26th, 1930, in the presence of the leaders of the Conservative Party, Beaverbrook, Lord Melchett, etc.)

It is understandable that this evolution, or more correctly this discarding of a mask, on the part of the Conservatives, was determined by the enormous sharpening of the economic crisis which is causing British finance capital to make a series of concessions to the Dominions with the object of maintaining their markets even at the price of pressure on the standard of life of the masses of the British people, necessitating development towards methods of open violence in governing, i.e., involving accelerated fascisation of the State. This evolution, however, has been considerably facilitated by the fact that the Liberals and Labourists, under the pressure of the same objective forces, are also going through a rapid process of evolution. It is characteristic that a few days before the June declaration of Baldwin on guaranteed prices for wheat, the *Times* (June 5th) gave the news that this proposal (for the establishment of firm prices for British wheat) had just been made at the meeting of the Parliamentary Liberal Party fraction, with the proviso only that 80 per cent. of grain must be bought "at world prices."

As far as the Labour Party is concerned, it has naturally had to proceed more cautiously. For example, the report of the General Council to

the Trade Union Congress on Empire Economic Unity, which adduced all possible proofs that the doctrine of Free Trade was an out-of-date "fetish," and pointed to the necessity of "guaranteeing" raw material in a suitable fashion, still did not openly speak of taxes on foodstuffs. This report was accepted by the General Council at the end of June. In the beginning of August it became known that the Government was discussing a plan for the State purchase of grain abroad with the establishment of firm minimum prices for British wheat, i.e., by a Government subsidy to British farmers, which would lead very quickly to the introduction of increased prices of grain for mass consumption. Quite recently, on September 1st, at the Nottingham Trade Union Congress, we heard from the lips of the President, Mr. Beard, quite open statements that the working-class has no right to claim "privileges" in the sense of cheap food, when at the same time the "Labour" Party has to defend the interests also of agriculture.

#### PART 5. THE EXPLOITATION OF LABOUR.

The Imperial Conference is not and cannot be anything else than a conference of the agents of the British imperialist bourgeoisie for discussion of questions relating to the strengthening and maintenance of their system of exploitation. It is precisely in virtue of this role that there stands glaringly revealed the shameful character of the British "Labour" Government, for which millions of workers cast their votes last year in the hope that it would assist them in the struggle against rationalisation and the increasing exploitation of the capitalists. Precisely for this reason also, the maximum unity will prevail in regard to the question on which it is easiest of all to come to an agreement with the bourgeoisie—the question of exploitation of labour.

It is true that the question of the emigration of British unemployed into countries with a relatively high standard of life of the proletariat, such as Canada and Australia, has long been a source of difference between the Dominions and the metropolis, especially in recent years in relation to growing unemployment. The deepening of the economic crisis can only intensify this antagonism. The *Daily Herald* (August 12th) declared that the MacDonald Government is going to propose at the Imperial Conference the creation of "General Utility

Trusts," the object of which would be the colonisation of undeveloped regions of the Dominions by organised groups of British unemployed workers with the aid of credits from the British Government. This declaration only testifies to the fact that in this sphere the Labour Party is fulfilling its chief task—to deceive and enslave the working-class by new super-rationalisation manœuvres.

How will the Dominions react to such a proposal? For some time there has begun in the Dominions also serious attacks against the workers. For example, in Australia the first result of the rehabilitation of Australian finances by Sir Otto Niemeyer, the representative of the Bank of England, has been the removal in New South Wales of the 44-hour week, a general cut in salaries of civil servants of 8 per cent., and a general tax of 1.25 per cent. on wages and other incomes in order to create an unemployment fund throughout the continent, as well as a general attack on the working day by means of decisions of the compulsory arbitration Courts. All these things are introduced by a Labour Party. Note the proposal for the compulsory exclusion of coloured labour from the ranks of important branches of industry in South Africa, first put forward by the opposition and now adopted and worked out by the Government. Note, again, the proposal of the same leader of the opposition, General Smuts, for forbidding working negroes in the South to have their families with them, ostensibly for the preservation of agriculture in the native "reservations," but in fact with the object of further cutting down the starvation wages of the black workers.

In such circumstances, the possibility is not excluded that, following the example of the Canadian farmers in the years of very sharp unemployment in their country, the bourgeoisie of the other Dominions also will not be averse to importing a certain quantity of starving British unemployed workers in order thereby to create more favourable conditions for successful attack on the standard of life of "their own" proletariat.

The most novel feature, however, at the Imperial Conference of the bourgeoisie will be a considerable impetus towards strengthening the participation of the Dominion bourgeoisie in the exploitation of the colonies. This bait has already during the last few months been very

strongly advertised in the British press. Sir Edward Dawson, the President of the Imperial Sugar Committee, the Cocoa Committee, the Union of Employers of West India, etc., etc., at the Inter-Empire Conference of Chambers of Commerce called upon the Dominions to remember the colonies "belong to the whole Empire" and to take part in their "development," as, for example, when Canada concluded an agreement with the West Indies.

The meaning of this took on a more concrete form in the Memorandum of the General Council of the T.U.C. which pointed out that, in case of the formation of "an Empire group, we attempt to guarantee to each member of the group a sufficient supply of essential raw materials. In case of lack of certain forms of raw material, this could bring about a certain monopoly of such articles for our own group." Sir Basil Blackett also considered that the second fundamental task of the Conference (after the review of the question of industry) was the invitation to the Dominions "to co-operate with the United Kingdom in the economic development of the Colonial Empire," citing the example of the Nauru islands, where the phosphate deposits are exploited jointly by Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand (partly in exchange for the support by the latter two countries of the powerful radio station for war purposes).

Thus, the Imperial Conference is pregnant with attacks on the position of the proletariat; by means of the introduction of protection it will only intensify the exploitation of the Colonial masses and thereby accelerate in the Colonies the process of revolutionisation—in so far in general as the bourgeoisie of the Dominions will be able to take a fairly considerable part in the export of capital.

#### PART 6. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONFERENCE.

Let us summarise shortly the significance of the Tenth Imperial Conference:—

(1) *It represents an important step in the passage of the British bourgeoisie to the contemporary method of open violence in methods of government, i.e., to Fascism.* The introduction of a protectionist system which has already been openly prepared for under the flag of "Empire Free Trade" signifies the acceleration of the process of capitalist rationalisation of industry,

enormous strengthening of the drive against the workers, widespread "economies" at the expense of the unemployed, etc. The introduction of food taxes in one form or another, or the creation of a united State capitalist organisation for trading in grain, signifies in practice increase in prices for all food products.

The growth of the last two years of the mass movement of the working-class in general, and of the strike movement in particular, will receive a powerful stimulus, inevitably leading to a political struggle. The bourgeoisie and its political parties are already preparing, on the basis of the struggle for "Empire unity," to pass from Parliamentary to Fascist methods of government as their answer to the inevitable growth of the revolutionary mood of the proletariat.

(2) *The Conference represents an important step towards the complete fascisation of the "Labour" Party and of the reformist bureaucracy of the trade unions.* It has already been shown that in all basic questions the general council of the T.U.C. has not only shown its complete agreement with the bourgeoisie but has frequently played the role of interpreter and populariser for ideas which the bourgeoisie themselves have not wished openly to express. How far this process has gone is shown by the Trade Union Congress in Nottingham, where, on the basis of the already accepted doctrine of "industrial peace" the leaders of the trade union bureaucracy advanced to complete approval of the new, i.e., fascist-imperial, protectionism, to disgusting shauvinist, fascist attacks against the U.S.S.R. and to complete abandonment of Socialism in their utterances. The conference itself was prepared and carried through under the leadership of the "Labour" Government, which has taken up the same imperialist position on internal empire questions as at the Hague Conference on the question of reparations, organising the conference with the object of preparing the future war of British Imperialism for world hegemony both in the form of brutal repression in the metropolis and in the Colonies as well as in the form of war against the U.S.S.R. and against America.

(3) *The Conference denotes a new stage in the process of the collapse of the British Empire.* The contradictions between the industrial metropolis and the growing bourgeoisie of the Dominions,

more and more supported by America, the contradictions between the interests of the British industrial bourgeoisie and the agriculturists, including the farmers, the growing antagonism between the proletariat and the capitalists in Great Britain, between the bourgeoisie pursuing rationalisation in the Dominions and the working-class of these countries which is becoming more and more stormily active, the antagonisms between the white bourgeoisie of all the parts of the Empire and the exploited masses of the Colonies—all these contradictions are inevitably intensified as the Empire as a whole is put upon the basis of protectionism, and as the Dominions proceed with rapid industrial development. These contradictions demand in general radical measures, e.g., the fascisation of the State power in Great Britain and in the Dominions, bloody wars in the Colonies, which can only lead to a further intensification of the antagonisms. At the Imperial Conference there will be concluded temporary agreements with the Dominions on the basis of concessions to the latter. A further stage in the process of the breaking away of the Dominions will have to be registered by the present conference, and it will not be the last.

(4) *The conference signifies an important step taken towards a new world imperialist war and towards the proletarian revolution.* Even the temporary successes of British Imperialism in carrying through protectionism, capitalist rationalisation and conquest of the internal Empire markets will accentuate to an extreme degree all the world contradictions, and, in the first place, in relation to the U.S.A. At the same time, the growth of fascist and militarist tendencies must give rise to the expectation of the emergence of a movement for universal military service, the old companion of protectionist agitation. The growing revolution-

isation of the masses will tremendously strengthen the forces which are actively hostile to the U.S.S.R. Under the conditions of the world economic crisis, the programme of the Imperial Conference will be a programme of preparation for war against the Soviet Union.

It is characteristic that the ex-Radical, Norman Angell, in the article already quoted, hastens to associate himself with the inevitable development, at the same time zealously striving to conceal from the people precisely the terrible threat which is contained within the protectionist wave. He says:—

“If the world consisted of three or four great customs units, the United States, the British Empire (including India), a European Union and Russia, it would be easier to reach practical co-operation than between a very large quantity of small units.”

Reading this stupid and criminal lie, the reader will probably remember that it was exactly this same “pacifist,” Norman Angell, who played an analagous role on the eve of the World War, lulling the masses with his book “The Great Illusion,” in which he showed that as sure as twice two is four, a new war is highly improbable for it would be unprofitable! It is characteristic also that the general council of the T.U.C. has seized upon the same method of calming the masses, declaring in the previously quoted Memorandum that “the establishment of limited groupings will be a necessary stage towards the more all-embracing policy of a world economic unity.”

Taken as a whole, the Imperial Conference will be a new stage in the process of the intensifying of all the contradictions in the British Empire. Therefore, the more rapidly, energetically and decisively must the British Communist Party adapt itself to the enhanced share that will fall to it in the solution of the colossal tasks with which it is now faced.

# THE NOTTINGHAM TRADES UNION CONGRESS

By BERT WILLIAMS.

THE recent Trades Union Congress at Nottingham afforded clear proof that the reformist trade union movement has reached a new "higher" stage of fascisation. From this point of view, the Nottingham Congress has an international interest. This acceleration of the fascisation of the trades unions is directly linked up with the further sharpening of the world economic crisis and its development in Britain.

The shadows hanging over the British Bourgeoisie were also lowering over the British Trades Union Congress. In every one of the discussions at the Congress, the menace of further shocks to British capitalism made itself felt. Above the congress hovered the gloomy spectre of two million starving unemployed. There was not a single session at which the unemployed, marching in from the surrounding districts, were not knocking at the doors, hissing or hurling curses at the active agents of the employing class closeted in the hall. When the president, John Beard, declared in his opening address that the unemployment figures, now passing the second million, did not "appal" him, he not only demonstrated his complete indifference to the sufferings of the millions of unemployed workers, his statement was actually the retreat of a coward defending himself from reality by a gesture so as not entirely to lose heart. The refusal of the trade unions to hear the unemployed delegation only helped the growth of a spirit of revolt in their ranks. It was not of their own account that the delegates were reminded that Nottingham was once a centre of the Luddite movement.

In 1926, after the defeat of the General Strike as a result of unheard-of treachery on the part of the trade union bureaucrats, the latter were faced with two alternatives: to place themselves at the head of the working-class against the attacks of capital, or to co-operate openly with the employers in strengthening the tottering capitalist system. The trade union bureaucrats chose the latter course.

The Edinburgh Trades Union Congress in 1927 was noteworthy as a turning point in the British trade union movement. It inaugurated a new stage of co-operation with the employers,

("industrial peace") and was the beginning of the process of fascisation of the British trade unions. The Nottingham Congress just concluded, is not less important. At this Congress, the trades union bureaucracy openly and insolently stepped forward in the defence of the employers' interests. In Edinburgh, in 1927, at Swansea in 1928 and even in Belfast in 1929, attempts were made to justify the new policy in the eyes of the workers on the grounds that this was the only way to raise the standard of life of the working-class. But now, in Nottingham, the trades union bureaucrats threw aside all scruples and did not even pretend that anyone could consider that their policy was framed in defence of the workers' interests. The Trades Union Congress, like the Labour Party Conference, henceforth speaks in the name of the whole "nation" (i.e., the employers) not in the name of the working-class. The Nottingham Congress will go down to history as the Congress which definitely denied socialism and spoke against it.

What were the principal questions before the Congress? They were all questions relating to the consolidation and strengthening of British capital; the rationalisation of British industry, the invention of new weapons for the struggle against Great Britain's most formidable imperialist rival, the United States of America and against the Soviet Union. In a word, the problems before the T.U.C. at Nottingham were the problems of British imperialism. However dull the character of the Congress, no one could make any mistake about that. The Congress did important work for the capitalists. The leaders knew what they wanted and went straight to their goal without let or hindrance. They came there with a prearranged line and followed it to the end. The disgusting treatment of the small band of revolutionarily disposed delegates at the Congress, showed to what degree of severity the trades union delegates were prepared to go to carry through to the end their policy of binding the trades union apparatus to the employers' organisations and capitalist government.

The president in his opening address gave the tone to the whole Congress and showed what a long way the T.U.C. had travelled since the

General Strike in 1926. The changes which had taken place in the economic structure of British capital determined the regrouping of the class forces. A new policy appeared on the scene, a new weapon forged in the hope that the salvation of British capitalism might be successfully achieved by its help. In these changed conditions the social fascists of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. have to play a conspicuous role.

Beard, in his opening address, in speaking of the crisis, declared :—

“We might, of course, end capitalist production, and, if glib talk would do it [shaking his head at the pseudo-lefts] it would surely end in a year or two, though, if it did, I am not certain that there is at this moment any kind of organisation capable of working the change without tremendous dislocation of the social and economic life of the nation.”

The president further declared that there was no desire for socialism in the British Labour movement. He defended the capitalist policy of the “Labour” Government, related with pride the story of the conversations with the employers and advocated the policy of imperial unity laid down as the basis of the report presented to the Congress.

A whole series of resolutions were on the agenda on the question of rationalisation. These resolutions could not hide the fact that never, even in the very worst periods of British capitalism, was there such a terrible exploitation of human labour as to-day. At the same time, these resolutions obviously handed over the British proletariat to the employers’ organisations. This was the fruit of the joint meetings of the employers and reformists, part of the system of the unheard-of intensification of labour. The basic resolution moved by Bevin spoke of the “grave danger of rationalisation being developed in uneconomic forms” and urged the General Council to demand such legislation “as will prevent the workers’ conditions being worsened” and to insist on the shortening of the working day “to limit displacement.”

Bevin’s speech clearly showed what was here in view. He said that the trade unions must insist on the shortening of the working day *as far as possible, where new machines were introduced and labour intensified*. His proposal led to a resolution for the 44-hour week, inclusive of breaks for meals (making a 39-hour working week in reality). In some places, declared

Bevin, the eight-hour working day with modern machines and speeding up, would be unfavourable and it would be vastly healthier and more economical to work four shifts instead of three ! It was unnecessary for Bevin to remind them of the joint conferences with the employers, since it was clear to everyone that the resolution was the fruit of these meetings, a plan jointly worked out for unprecedented speeding up and intensification of labour.

To what extent even the more than modest demands were whittled down, can be judged from Bevin’s interpretation of the “demand” for pensions for aged workers. He proposed asking for pensions for old people of 65, and spoke against social maintenance at 60 years of age on the ground that “under modern conditions of hygiene and the *rise in the standard of life*, etc., longevity had considerably increased.” But his principal and most telling argument was that neither Snowden nor any other Chancellor of the Exchequer would give the necessary money. It is worth while remembering that Snowden, in his budget speech, assured the bourgeoisie that the “Labour” Government would not impose any new taxes in the course of the coming year (i.e., money would not be forthcoming for the extension of social relief, in fact, the Government was intending to cut down the social insurance already existing.) The same thing applied to the question of unemployment. Beard declared in his opening address :—

“The fact that there were two million unemployed men and women receiving monetary assistance to prevent their dying of starvation was an amazing change from the day when Charles Bowerman, M.P., put forward his modest request for grants in aid.”

Citrine put this even more definitely. Speaking of his recent journey abroad, he said :

“He had been continuously asked about our unemployment figures. He had replied that in this country *unemployment was accurately measured and all were provided for.*” (“*Daily Herald*,” Aug. 26th, 1930.)

Only the small group of members of the Minority Movement at this Congress actually struggled for the day-to-day needs of the working-class. Its small numbers reflected the weakness of our work inside the trade unions. The “lefts” made a disgusting exhibition of themselves. On every fundamental question they supported the General Council. It was nothing to be wondered at that Bevin and Co. laughed to scorn Kirkwood’s proposal that

representatives of the I.L.P. should be at the head of the trade union movement. Cook ventured on several cheap gestures, interposing, in particular, with a criticism of Bevin on the question of pensions for superannuated workers.

On this question of imperial trade, Cook and his followers of the type of S. O. Davies also took up an attitude of opposition, but through their lips spoke the coalowners, who reckoned that the markets for coal lay outside the Empire and therefore every rise in the price of imported goods would be an injury to the coal industry. Cook's proposal that there should be only one union for miners in the coal industry, and that this union, viz., the Miner's Federation of Great Britain, and its executive organ should be the sole organisation with the right to conclude agreements with the coalowners and have representation on the fascist "National Industrial Council," set up by the Coal Mines Act, was a purely fascist proposal. The "lefts" had a "day out" when the Congress considered family allowances. This proposal is part of the I.L.P. policy "of an income corresponding to the needs of life" and was put forward by the I.L.P. The members of the General Council, however, spoke against it, and insisted on their own resolution.

Clynes, who formally represented the Labour Party, but in reality the Labour Government, greeted the Congress and took up in his speech the line indicated by Beard. On one or two occasions he was sarcastic about the "lefts."

"I do not know whether we shall get socialism in its complete form in our time. I do know that we are getting socialism in one degree or another the whole time."

On the Trade Disputes Act, he made it perfectly plain that there would be no change. On the following day, the Congress passed a resolution demanding the repeal of this Act. But without doubt, even if the Government occupies itself with this, it will not repeal a law passed with the express purpose of excluding the possibility of a repetition of the General Strike.

The most serious discussion of the Congress took place on the Report of the Economic Committee on the policy of empire economic unity and tariffs.

The adoption of this report, the essence of which consists in reaching agreements with the dominions for joint exploitation of the colonial peoples, is the most important result of the

rapprochement of the T.U.C. and the employers' organisations. The tariff policy stood on the agenda of the joint conference of the T.U.C., the Federation of British Industries and the Association of Chambers of Commerce. The General Council consulted the F.B.I. before the report was drawn up; this consultation taking place through the apparatus of the Mond-Turner conferences. The findings of the General Council completely coincide with the proposals of the employers' federation. If it had not been necessary to present the report to Congress, it is possible that the T.U.C. and the employers' federation would have succeeded in publishing a joint declaration.

From this example we see that the present policy of the British trade unions is indistinguishable from that of the general programme of the social-fascists which has been proceeding since 1926. The fascisation of the British trade union movement has now reached a high point. This means that we are faced with co-operation between the British bourgeois i.e., the trade union bureaucracy and the dominions for joint exploitation of the millions of colonial workers and peasants.

The report of the Economic Committee of the Congress divides the whole world into various groups: (1) The European Group; (2) the Anglo-American Group; (3) the British Empire, and comes to the following conclusion:—

"If the policy of forming economic blocs is pursued by the nation, the most practicable group from our point of view would appear to be the consolidation of the British Commonwealth." And further, "Such a policy would not interfere in the slightest degree with our policy of world federation through the League of Nations, with our connection with the international trade union movement or with other international agreements for particular industries. The only difference is that we shall be able to negotiate and discuss as a Commonwealth instead of as a single nation."

This last paragraph shows that the T.U.C. does not entirely echo Beaverbrook and Co., who understand the Empire as a self-sufficing economic unit. The trade union bureaucracy are not attracted by this. They express far more clearly the policy of the dominant stratum of British finance capital. They know the hollowness of the whole Beaverbrook programme and put the problem on the plane of union with the dominions for the struggle against the U.S.A. and for exploitation of the colonies, utilising this union and the agreement

for a mutual preferential tariff for making a bargain with other capitalist countries. Of course, the British bourgeoisie cannot refuse to enter into other international agreements. On the question of import duties, it is pointed out in the report that—

“It is a matter for investigation in each case in order to estimate whether there is or is not a net advantage in imposing a duty. . . It is all a matter of expediency in a given situation.”

Bevin's speech concluding the discussion of the report was a declaration of arrant imperialism. The British Empire was not the only one of its kind.

“The U.S.A. was as much an empire as we were and so was Russia ; each had different methods of expanding its empire, but it was an empire nevertheless, and the attitude of each of these nations to the subject races was very much the same as ours : safety first for those in power and possession.” (“*Times*,” *Sept.* 3rd.)

Here we have the whole essence of the imperialist policy of the T.U.C. Here the trade union bureaucrats, *together with* the bourgeoisie decide the problems of British capitalism, the problems of markets, sources of raw materials and spheres of influence for the investment of British surplus capital. Together with the employers, the trade union bureaucracy is busy seeking for the most advantageous bloc for the struggle against the most powerful imperialist rival of Britain, the U.S.A. and for the preparation of attack on the U.S.S.R. *Together* they are trying to find the basis in close co-operation with the Dominions. Speaking of the U.S.A., Bevin said, “We might have gone to war if we could have afforded another war.” Mark the word “We”! The T.U.C. and the capitalists! Thus, the task of the T.U.C. and the capitalists is to secure the possibility of “affording another war.” But, for this, much must be done and one of the most important things is the final realisation of the fusion of the workers' organisations with the employers' State apparatus, and another is the organisation of international imperialist alliances. In the fulfilment of these tasks, an extremely important part has been assigned to the T.U.C.

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What constitutes the significance and lessons of the Nottingham Congress? Above all it lies in the fact that at this Congress was crystallised the whole process of the fascisation of the British trade union movement, a process which

was begun after the General Strike in 1926. From that time there has been a merciless attack on the active revolutionaries in the trade unions. Their expulsion was a necessary pre-requisite for the execution of the social-fascist policy of the trade union leaders. One of our greatest weaknesses was the fact that we did not know how to organise an effective resistance to this tactic, mobilising the workers inside the trades unions for the struggle against the leaders. We turned away from the struggle and gave the trade union bureaucrats the chance to isolate us from the masses of the workers.

Powerful trade unions have expelled members of the Communist Party and Minority Movement. Whole districts and lodges have been expelled for taking up a revolutionary line and for supporting members of the C.P. and M.M. In very many cases, Communists and M.M. members have not been allowed to represent their union in one organ or another.

In conflicts which have taken place, trade union bureaucrats have appeared in the role of organisers of strike-breaking, and have called in the police in order, with their help, to rid themselves of the revolutionary strike leaders. They have maintained telephonic communication with the employers to break strikes which were being carried on under revolutionary leadership. When workers have expressed their determination to struggle, voting by an enormous majority for declaration of a strike, the trade union bureaucrats have refused to translate this decision into action or delayed it by every means in their power till a favourable moment arrived for breaking the resistance of the workers.

In alliance with the “Labour” Government, the trade union bureaucrats have made use of anti-Labour legislation, such as the Trades Disputes Act., etc., and put into operation the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state (prisons, police action, fines too). They have had recourse to the arbitration courts of the “Labour” Government, expressly appointed for the purpose of huge wage reductions. They have met with open arms the agents of the Ministry of Labour sent into the strike districts through their joint forces to find ways of betraying the workers on strike. They have supported the rationalisation plans of the “Labour” Government, preparing further wage reductions, speeding up, the extension of the working day,



and the increasing of the millions of the army of unemployed. They were propagandists for, and partners in, the promotion of such fascist laws as the Coal Mines Act. chaining the miners to the capitalist Government apparatus. One could enumerate an unending series of examples of their treachery. They have played and are playing an enormous role in the enslavement of the colonial peoples. They are striving to incite the British workers against the Soviet Union. For the last three years they have fought actively against the working-class. There have always still been tendencies among us to say they are 'crawling in the wake of the bourgeoisie' that they "do not want to take account of the attacks being made on the working-class", to regard them merely as "the smoke screen" under which the employers make their attack. During the last three years, however, their activity has shown that they are now playing a far more active part in the employers' offensive.

This development of the social-fascist role of the trade union bureaucrats proceeds side by side with a growing militancy on the part of the working-class. The number of strikes which have taken place has increased in spite of the opposition of the trades union leaders. A characteristic feature of these strike struggles has been the tremendous activity of the unorganised workers. In these strikes, as in all the militant activities of the working-class, only the C.P. and the M.M. stood on guard for the day-to-day needs of the working-class. The workers are deserting from the social-fascists, but they have not yet come into the Communist Party. The M.M. was not able to consolidate the workers' ranks, and at present it is still isolated from the working-class. This is a fact, although the objective conditions have never been more favourable for our work.

How is this fact to be explained?

The explanation must be sought in the fact that our Party has not yet learnt how to carry out the new line in practice. The new line was interpreted as giving up our work inside the reformist unions. We did not understand that the new line means the strengthening of our work inside the trade unions, as part of our task of independent leadership of economic struggles. And we not only broke off our work inside the trade unions, but we did not go to the workers in the workshops, factories and mines, and did not

succeed on the basis of the struggle for their day-to-day needs in uniting the workers and attracting them into our ranks by means of new organs of struggle such as committees of action, factory defence committees, pit committees, etc. We interpreted too narrowly the policy of independent leadership. We frequently substituted revolutionary phraseology for mass work and, as a result of this, we have been cut off from the masses. Our self-criticism was often merely confined to a mere enumeration of all our faults without any kind of analysis of them, such as is necessary to avoid committing similar errors in further struggles.

The British Communist Party has yet to learn how to apply correctly the weapon of self-criticism. We have not succeeded in proving to the broad masses of the workers our superiority to the reformist trade union bureaucracy in the problems of the day-to-day struggle. In those militant actions in which we have played a leading part, as, for example, in the wool strike we did not know how to attract to our work those workers who showed themselves to be especially active. We concentrated the whole apparatus of the Central Strike Committee in our own narrow circle. These mistakes have assisted the growth of right opportunism in our Party.

Our fundamental slogan must be "*Face to the masses.*" The Workers' Charter which we are putting forward will give us a splendid opportunity for uniting the workers under our banner. But it is essential for us to work out such a programme of demands for every branch of production, studying all the needs and efforts of the workers in the given branch. It is specially important to concentrate our fire on the trade union bureaucrats and unceasingly to expose their treacherous role. We can unite the workers for the struggle against capitalist rationalisation supported by the T.U.C. if we organise the masses of the workers for the struggle against speeding up, against the pernicious results of rationalisation, against dismissals as the result of rationalisation and against the persecution of revolutionary workers.

If we can lead the workers correctly in this struggle, we shall succeed in tearing the mask from the trade union bureaucrats and exposing the essence of their "demand" for a shorter working week as part of the general plan for

enslaving the workers. Special attention must be devoted to the struggle *against the system of arbitration*.

But, to realise all this, we must work inside the trade unions, we must organise an opposition within the reformist trade unions ; not, however, on the former slogan of "make the leaders fight," but by means of systematic work for winning the workers away from the trade union bureaucracy and on to our side. We must achieve the unity of the organised and unorganised workers on the basis of a joint struggle under the leadership of the M.M. The essential prerequisite for this is the creation of a powerful M.M., embracing all those elements ready to fight against rationalisation and the policy of the General Council, irrespective of the fact whether they are prepared to struggle for a Revolutionary Workers' Government or for the whole programme of the Communist Party. The way to build up a powerful Minority Movement lies through energetic unceasing activity in this direction by all Communists, and through the active work of the Communist fractions. The unemployed movement must be brought into close organisational contact with the Minority Movement. Only by such means can an alliance between the employed and unemployed workers be obtained.

Such must be our reply to the efforts of the social-fascists at Nottingham to forge new chains for the workers.

The M.M. is now leading a campaign for the presentation of a charter of the workers'

demands. It has put forward a series of demands affording a basis for joint struggle of the organised and unorganised workers, employed and unemployed. The M.M. is securing the real united front of all workers on the basis of a struggle for their immediate needs. It does not impose on the workers a "pre-arranged" charter. The M.M. only brings forward for examination the demands of the workers. The charter must proceed from the working-class itself. The charter will be finally formulated after a whole series of local and district conferences and finally a national conference organised by the M.M.

This charter will be the answer of the revolutionary workers to the social-fascist programme of the T.U.C. The outcome of the Nottingham Congress of social-fascists puts in the forefront a campaign which will be of the greatest advantage to our Party.

Our Party will lead the campaign through its fractions in the M.M. All Party members must show the maximum amount of energy, initiative and revolutionary courage in the mobilisation of the workers to help the Party, and by this means show that the Party is ripe for the leadership of the working-class in the country. On the basis of this charter we can draw the workers into a movement for tackling the fundamental problems of the struggle of class against class and for participating in the revolutionary struggle for power.

## THE HISTORIC ELECTIONS IN GERMANY

THE German Elections on September 14th are of historic importance. They indicate the political consequences of the first stage of development of the world economic crisis, as exemplified in one of the biggest capitalist countries. They will give further impetus to the further undermining of capitalist stabilisation in Europe. They signal new, extremely rapid speeds of development of the class struggle and the revolutionising of the toiling masses in Germany.

There were 4,600,000 electors in favour of the Communist Party—the Party of proletarian dictatorship. This means that about four million *industrial workers* (employed and unemployed) demonstrated their readiness to fight under Communist Party leadership for a Soviet Germany. Nearly a *million* more votes than at the May, 1924 elections, which took place while post-war conditions still prevailed! Thirty-five per cent. more than the last elections. An increase of 44 per cent. in the Western industrial districts. *Does not this brilliant success of the Communist Party—which was particularly marked in the chief industrial centres, such as the Ruhr, Upper Silesia, etc.—testify to the fact that the masses are rapidly becoming revolutionary!*

Whereas the Communist programme met with the greatest success in the industrial districts, the demagogic slogans of the fascists met with tremendous response in districts with a big agricultural-labouring population, in handicraft districts, among the salariat (and among the backward workers). This is seen from the figures: The Fascists, who throughout the whole of Germany received 1,800,000 votes *more than* the C.P.G., polled 600,000 votes *less than* the C.P.G. in the industrial districts. The Fascists succeeded in getting to the poll probably not less than three million new electors, partly entirely new ones and partly those sections of the electorate who were formerly passive but now, having been shaken out of their usual rut of life had fallen into the trap of Fascist demagogy. A considerable proportion of those who voted for the Fascists, were *the millions of new electors who had awakened from their political apathy*

*for the first time*, and sought a way out of the crisis.

Does not this, along with the tremendous successes of the Communists, show more clearly than anything that Germany is in a condition of extreme instability, is on the eve of revolutionary events? It is precisely because the masses are seeking a new radical path, because the social-democrats exposed themselves as the Party which had carried through the Young Plan, enslaving the German workers, and had shown themselves as a Party assisting the attack of the capitalists, while we Communists were *late* in broadcasting to the masses our revolutionary programme of social and *national* liberation of Germany, and in exposing the trickery of the Fascists—it is for these reasons that the Fascists succeeded in getting hold of about 6½ million votes—or one-fifth of the total poll.

The Fascist success has a twofold significance. On the one hand, it means the temporary success of the bourgeoisie in its attempts to hold back the masses—awakening, as they are, from their political torpor and becoming more radical—from the revolutionary Communist path. On the other hand, the Fascist success means that ever-increasing masses are becoming disillusioned with capitalist Germany as it is as present, and that the revolt has begun.

Millions of electors—artisans, handicraft and agricultural workers, urban petty-bourgeoisie and employees, unemployed workers and a section of the factory proletariat, especially the youth—voted for the Fascists because of their false *anti-capitalist* slogans, *voted for them as a “National Socialist Labour Party,”* trusting them as champions of the social liberation of the masses, fighting to overthrow the yoke of the Versailles Treaty and the Young Plan. The millions of National-Socialist electors were millions of toilers *not wishing to go on living in the old way, seeking, but not yet finding a new way out* of the crisis. The very fact of the Fascist success, taken together with the success of the Communists is a clear sign of the decomposition of bourgeois society in Germany now taking place.

*Social-Democracy*, one of the main props of the bourgeois order, this Party which has stified the struggle of the German working class millions and which, this spring, went into opposition in order to help in the fascisation of bourgeois society under a covering of opportunist phrases, has suffered a serious defeat at these elections. The social-democrats, in spite of a considerable general increase in the electorate (five millions more than in May, 1928), in spite of the votes of a section of the electors of the Democratic Party who have gone over to social-democracy (some of the members of the Party and of the Hirsch-Dunker Trade Unions) has lost 600,000 voters. *This means that the Social-Democratic Party has lost more than one million workers' votes.* (The biggest S.D. losses are in the big industrial regions of the West — Düsseldorf East and West, Northern Westphalia, etc., where they lost one-quarter of their supporters.) It means that social-democracy in Berlin, the Ruhr, the Rheino-Westphalian region in general, Upper Silesia, Halle and other industrial districts—is politically weaker than the Communist Party. While throughout the whole of Germany the social-democrats have 4,000,000 more voters than the Communists, they have 100,000 fewer voters than the C.P. in the main industrial regions. This means that the process of the greatest historical importance is taking place, accelerating the release of the industrial workers from social-democratic influence.

Finally, there is *the fact of the decline of the old bourgeois parties.* If we except the Centre Party (which with the aid of religious dope and its tremendous church and trade union apparatus was able to recruit new supporters in the peasant districts, losing them in the industrial ones), nearly all the other bourgeois parties lost millions of voters. The *People's Party*, the main Party of monopolist capital, which for years had been able to hold sway over extensive sections of the salariat and urban *intelligentsia*, has now been relegated to the rôle of a secondary bourgeois party. It lost 25 per cent. of its voters. A still bigger drop was experienced by the *Nationalist Party* which lost a *half* (45 per cent.) of its voters.

The elections, the purpose of which was to create a normally-working parliamentary

machine for the bourgeoisie, have produced a Reichstag capable of appointing neither a stable grand Coalition Government, nor a stable Government of the present *bloc*.

The brilliant success of the Communist Party, the millions of National-Socialist electors voting for the anti-capitalist anti-Young slogans of the latter, the heavy defeat for social-democracy, the decline of the main bourgeois Parties—such is the picture of the elections as a consequence of a *year's* experience of the world economic crisis, six months' operation of the Young Plan—and two years of the Five-Year Plan of Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. Ahead is a further accentuation of the world economic crisis, and, particularly of the crisis in Germany with a further curtailment of production. Ahead is winter with *five millions of unemployed* (according to bourgeois economists), *i.e.*, approximately *two millions more* workers thrown on to the streets. Ahead are *wage-cuts* for millions more workers; already 700,000 metal-workers and miners are threatened! Ahead are new reductions in the bourgeois State expenditure on unemployed relief, war victims, etc. Ahead are new taxes on the workers and employees. Ahead is further ruin for the handicraft workers, a further increase of unemployment among farm labourers, greater impoverishment of the peasantry.

All these factors must soon cause a new wave of mass activity, an ever-increasing endeavour of the masses to ward off the attack and to start a counter-offensive, and an increase of the revolutionary mood of the masses.

*A revolutionary crisis is maturing in Germany; this is the chief indication given by the elections.* Decisive social movements are now taking place in Germany.

It would be incorrect to conclude that this revolutionary crisis is maturing "by its own momentum." The existing revolutionary upsurge in Germany can only turn into a revolutionary crisis in the event of our brother German Party being able to organise the masses to resist the capitalist offensive and to assume the leadership of the strikes that should break out in answer to the mass dismissals and wage-cuts. It can only be done if the Party is capable of taking the lead of the mass unemployed movement, insisting that the necessary

relief be granted by the bourgeois order that dooms them to impoverishment; it can only be done if the Party succeeds in rousing the masses for the struggle against the fascist course of the bourgeoisie and succeeds in heading the fight of the backward sections of the toilers.

The correct Bolshevik line of the Communist Party of Germany, which has been based on the decisions of the Comintern, has led the Party to great successes. The Party has never been in such close contact with the broad masses as it is now. But side by side with this fact is the fact of the successes of the Party of infuriated agents of capitalism—the fascists, who for the time being, have drawn away from the revolutionary path millions of toilers who could and should be in the army of the revolution. There also remains the fact that the social-democrats have a considerable influence among the working class. Of the 8,500,000 social-democratic electors, probably 5,000,000 are *workers*.

The successes of the Party must not lead to any head-turning. Defects in the fight against national- and social-fascism revealed in the elections must be singled out with Bolshevik courage. It is necessary that the whole Party, every rank-and-file member, learns the lessons of the elections and draws the practical conclusions.

We must realise the paradoxical fact that the Hitlerites, who are preparing a bloody fascist dictatorship for the operation of the capitalist offensive, and the carrying out of the Young Plan, are trusted by millions of toilers as *National-Socialists*! On the side of the Hitlerites was a handful of financial magnates and to a large extent, the State apparatus. But Bolshevik methods of self-criticism demand that we see not only the objective causes, but also our own weaknesses—and the weakness of us Communists consisted in our not having brought to the knowledge of *millions* our proletarian programme for averting the coming catastrophe.

One of the important, if not the most important, lessons of the elections is, therefore, that our Party, which entered the elections with a fine Bolshevik document—the declaration on the social and national liberation of Germany—must start exposing the swindling

slogans of the fascists and popularising our own Communist programme with an energy *multiplied tenfold*. Our Party must learn to utilise every concrete event in the class struggle in order to popularise our revolutionary programme; the mass dismissals and wage-cuts for thousands of workers, the increase in taxes, the throwing of thousands more farm labourers out of work owing to the agricultural crisis.

At all times and everywhere leading the day-to-day struggle of the masses, our Party should bring the masses to understand that other than in the proletarian revolution there is no radical way out, no salvation from the yoke of imperialism, of the Young Plan. The more profound becomes the crisis, the more the poverty of the masses increases, the more will millions of minds strive to seek a way out.

The task of our Party is and will be to show the masses, on the basis of the historic experience of the U.S.S.R., on the one hand, and of Poland and Italy on the other—by the experience of proletariat and fascist dictatorship—that outside of the struggle *for the proletarian dictatorship, for the power of the Soviets*, the toilers of Germany will not be able to break the chains of Versailles and the Young Plan. At the same time, it must be explained that the struggle for power and for proletarian dictatorship is not a task of some distant historic future, but is a decisive task of *historic to-day*.

The question as to a fascist or proletarian dictatorship, as to Fascism or Communism, irrespective of the desire of us Communists, is raised by the very process of the class struggle. It is raised by the German bourgeoisie itself. The bourgeoisie is preparing a fascist dictatorship at the same time as it prepares a blow against the living standards of the working class. The bourgeoisie is becoming more and more convinced that without a fascist dictatorship it cannot break the resistance of the many millions of German workers. The elections opened up a phase of direct preparation by the bourgeoisie for the establishment and operation of a fascist dictatorship, representing a danger which cannot be underestimated, for it means of policy of

bloody terror and the smashing up of the revolutionary movement.

In such a situation, our Party—which has had the experience of 1923, when opportunist strategists were not loath to postpone the struggle for power when faced with the attack of fascism—can only take one path, the path of mobilising the broad masses for the struggle against the *coming fascist dictatorship*, at the same time exposing the deceptive nature of the social-democratic slogan (and their Brandlerite mimics) “the fight for democracy.” Our Party must be able to utilise every new step of the bourgeoisie towards the establishment of the fascist dictatorship, in order to mobilise the masses, in order to lead them, through mass strikes, to the direct struggle for power. While persistently struggling against the fascist measures of the bourgeoisie, we, the Communists, should at the same time explain to the masses, and particularly the masses who follow the social-democrats, that outside of the fight for the proletarian dictatorship, the fight for the power of the Soviets, there can be no decisive success in the fight against fascism.

The tremendous successes of the National-Socialists demand that the struggle of the Communist Party of Germany to win the majority of the working class be combined with the fight to bring about the hegemony of the proletariat, and with the fight of the toiling masses to find a way out of the impending catastrophe.

In organising and leading the economic strikes (this task, as before, is of greatest importance), which should assume large dimensions in the coming months, in organising and leading the struggle of the unemployed, forming a united front of unemployed and employed workers, in leading the mass activities of the unemployed, and in trying to transfer the workers' strike struggles on to political lines, our brother Communist Party should at the same time fight for the realisation of the hegemony of the industrial proletariat in the movement of the backward sections of the toilers.

It is, above all, necessary to turn our face towards the agricultural workers, hundreds of

thousands of whose votes were caught by the fascists as a result of the latter's social and nationalistic demagogy. Our Party, which is faced with the task of creating independent organs of the trade union movement, should, in the first place, form these organisational starting-places among the agricultural proletariat who are devoted to the reformist T.U. bureaucracy. On the basis of the successful experience of the recent strikes of farm labourers, our Party should head the struggles of the latter for their day-to-day interests.

While making concrete the “programme declarations” for the social and national liberation of Germany, our Party should issue a programme of concrete demands in defence of the interests of the artisans, apprentices, employees, small farmers, etc., who are ruined by monopolistic capitalism.

The coming months in Germany will see the struggle of the masses against the capitalist offensive and against the fascist measures of the bourgeoisie and its Hitlerite and social-democrat lackeys. They will also be months of struggle to win the broad masses who are starting to move as a result of the crisis. They will predetermine the success of the struggle in the subsequent decisive fights between Fascism and Communism.

Not to lag behind the sweeping development of the class struggle, to take the lead of the mass movements against the capitalist offensive and the fascist course of the bourgeoisie, to get the millions of toilers to see in the Communist Party of Germany a Party capable of leading them in the decisive struggle for power, for dictatorship, for Communism—such is the world-historic task confronting our Communist Party in Germany.

The ten years' experience of revolutionary struggle, the Bolshevik steeling of the German Communist Party, serves as a guarantee that the Party will prove worthy of its historic rôle as leader of the German proletarian revolution.

Long live the C.P.G. — the fighting vanguard of the German proletariat!

Long live the impending proletarian revolution in Germany!

# THE SPECTRE OF PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IN HUNGARY

By BELA KUN

**I**N Budapesth, whose pavements already once have been shaken by the march of hundreds of thousands of armed workers, organised in Soviets, the masses have once more come out on to the streets in *hundreds of thousands*. The arms which, owing to our own errors, to the vile treachery of the social-democrats and to the overwhelming strength of the international imperialist counter-revolution, were snatched from the hands of the workers and poor peasants — these arms are now in the hands of Horthy's gendarmes, police and soldiers and are turned against the workers. *Nevertheless*—although the counter-revolution killed one out of every ten of the proletarian vanguard, although fascism and social-fascism have bound the workers hand-and-foot, although the working class is covered with gaping wounds, although it has no other weapon at present except the experience of the previous revolution — *nevertheless*, the Hungarian working class has once more carried its struggle *on to the streets*; it is preparing to come forward *into the front line of the international proletarian revolution*.

The Hungarian working class is not only capable of *resisting bayonets*, but is *fighting to take them into its own hands*. Although at present with bare hands, it is clutching at these bayonets and trying to tear them from the hands of the present bearers and the ruling class that commands them. In the September 1st casualties, the General Staff of the Horthy-Bethlen-Government was compelled to record not only the names of unarmed workers, but also the names of bloodthirsty policemen and social-fascist leaders who were armed to the teeth. Side by side with the martyrs of the first Soviet Hungary who were taken down from the gallows and entombed in pits in the cemetery, there now lie the new victims. But those who remain alive will reply to these murders with a renewed upsurge, with a new and greater determination, more and more strengthening their will to revolution.

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Not merely the Hungarian, but the whole European bourgeois press unanimously declared after the September 1st events: *On the streets of Budapesth a spectre of the past has appeared—the spectre of the proletarian dictatorship*. The fascist press is correct, provided it be added that this spectre of the past is *far from being intangible*, it has not just come out of nothing, nor will it vanish into the void. Indeed, what appears to the terror-stricken ruling classes as a spectre of the past, is to the workers and poor peasants of Hungary a *beacon of the future*, showing them the *path to liberation* from the awful conditions to which they are subjected by the fascist system, which is deeply shaken by the profound economic and already maturing political crisis.

The September 1st demonstration began under the slogan of the fight against unemployment and was directed against the immediate consequences of the terrible economic crisis. We will not be guilty of exaggeration in saying that in Hungary, which has less than nine million inhabitants, the *number of unemployed and partly employed is about a million*. Hungarian industry with its infinitesimally low wages extracts enormous profits, yet, nevertheless, reduces still more and more the already limited social expenditure, from the time of the accentuation of the crisis condemning about 250,000 workers to chronic unemployment, practically to starvation.

According to bourgeois sources the number of unemployed agricultural workers is from 500,000 to 750,000; these are confronted with the prospect of *permanent famine*, not only owing to the crisis in the marketing of agricultural products in connection with the international agrarian crisis, and the resulting unemployment, but also owing to the general crisis in the specifically Hungarian methods of agricultural production based on the distribution of landownership, and on the remnants of the feudal system of labour organisation.

Hungarian fascism has marched at the head

of the international fascist counter-revolution; in the sphere of tax and excise policy and also in reducing social expenditure, it has long ago put into force what the ruling classes of semi-fascist Germany, Czecho-Slovakia and the Balkan States are still only striving for. Only quite recently, a new duty on grain has been introduced, in the form of the new "boleta system," as a result of which grain prices have risen considerably. Unemployed insurance does not exist. The fascist governmental system is endeavouring to counterbalance the profound rift in its economic system by increasing the political oppression over the working class and poor peasantry.

September 1st, however, was not a mere *hunger-riot*. It was not just a rising of famished people, seeking alleviation in destroying the outward manifestations of the bourgeois system. The demonstration of hundreds of thousands which took place in Budapesth, and also found reflection in certain important industrial centres and among the labourers in certain small peasant towns, wedged in between semi-feudal latifundia, also cannot be gauged by the scale applied to the tremendous Vienna disturbances of three years ago, which signalled that the stabilisation of capitalism was foundering. The Budapesth demonstration on September 1st, which arose in connection with the world economic crisis of capitalism, and took place in a country where this crisis is growing into a political one, means the shaking of capitalist stabilisation in a country where capitalism, at the cost of suppressing the victorious proletarian revolution for more than ten years had strengthened the bases of its stabilisation with the aid of a bloody debauch of counter-revolution and the widespread development of the fascist system.

These circumstances leave a *special imprint* on the upsurge of the revolutionary working class movement. The indignation which broke out in the mass battles of September 1st was directed not only against fascism, but *also against its social-fascist props*. In certain respects these instinctive outbursts are on no lower a plane than the conscious will expressed in the courageous fights of the Hungarian working class in 1918, when it not only overthrew the Habsburg monarchy, but, despite all the resistance of social-democracy, by a still

more powerful onslaught of the movement, turned the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a proletarian revolution and created a Soviet régime in Hungary.

The direct force with which the Budapesth workers, totally unarmed, opposed the police swords, the gendarmes' bayonets and armoured cars, contains the elements of *strong class-consciousness*. These are the very same elements which first broke through to the surface in the Revolution of 1918-1919 and which underwent further development after the defeat of the Revolution, when the vanguard of the Hungarian working class, and the working masses under their influence, came to recognise and learn from the errors made by the Communist Party during the proletarian dictatorship. This consciousness was further developed and deepened when the workers were able to compare the position they had enjoyed under the proletarian dictatorship with the times when the representatives of capitalism, hand in hand with the remnants of feudalism, drove class-consciousness into their heads with the fascist cudgel and the sharp edges of the cross.

That is why the demonstration of hundreds of thousands on September 1st cannot be regarded merely as a hunger-riot which flared up suddenly and quite spontaneously among the masses. This movement, which emerged from deep down among the masses, reflected a high revolutionary class-consciousness, which the Horthy-Bethlen-Gembesh fascist system was unable to smother, and the Hungarian social-democrats have vainly attempted to besmirch. In doing this, the social-democrats have frequently employed the method of pointing to the defeat of the Revolution, but recently have used the method of "left manœuvres." And this is the Party which degenerated into social-fascism earlier and more completely than any Party in the Second International.

The spectre of the past that appeared on the streets of Budapesth, is the already tangible spectre of Communism, which now, more fearful than ever, is stalking about Europe at the time of the world economic crisis of capitalism. This *newly-risen wave of the Hungarian proletarian Revolution is the gleaming beacon of the proletarian dictator-*



*ship, lit by the twelve years' work of the Communist Party of Hungary and by the class-consciousness that has been aroused as a result of this work and the eleven years' struggle of the Communist International.* This beacon will illumine still more brightly the consciousness of the workers and will light the path still more clearly for them than in the days when the first proletarian dictatorship was established and destroyed through the fatal error of merging with the Social-Democratic Party.

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What has been said above is in no way contradicted by the fact that the working class of Hungary was formally called out in a general strike and to the September 1st demonstration by the social-fascists. The "left" manoeuvre of the social-fascists, consisting in an appeal for a general strike and street demonstrations, was a result of the inescapable pressure of the working masses and was in substance directed against them. The social-democratic leaders, Ernst Garami and Co., on returning from emigration, were horrified to find that *the social basis and the organisation of the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party and of the reformist unions connected with it was shattered to the utmost limits.* The Social-Democratic Party and the trade unions not only totally lacked the younger generation of workers, who, although unorganised, are, nevertheless, under the political influence of the Communists, but even lacked representatives of the older generations of workers, who are gradually turning away from these organisations. The workers in whole branches of industry have left the trade unions.

In virtue of the special agreement concluded by the social-fascist headquarters with the Horthy-Bethlen Government, the social-democrats have not even tried to organise the numerically strongest section of the Hungarian proletariat—the agricultural workers. As a result of this same agreement, the Party and social-fascist trade unions have not even touched the railwaymen. The miners, of their own accord, quit the Social-Democratic Party and its trade unions as one man. Up to now, the social-democrats have not even been able to form an organisation in the constituencies, which their social-fascist confrères do succeed in doing in other countries.

In its report to the Stockholm Congress of the Amsterdam International, the Hungarian Council of Trade Unions claims a membership of 120,000. It is doubtful, however, whether half that number pay membership dues. Social-democracy is not even helped by the *monopoly of legality*, even though the entire apparatus of the fascist power and the general staff of the fascists by joint efforts, using every method of terror and demagoguery, defend this right of monopoly, against the Communist Party of Hungary, which is driven right underground.

The Social-Fascist Party and trade union bureaucrats have not been able to deceive the working masses by proclaiming the slogan "fight for the secret ballot." The big social-democratic campaign on behalf of their press and their recruiting, a campaign undertaken with the object of drawing the young workers into their net, also proved a complete fiasco. They tried to get hold of the leadership of strikes which broke out against their will and despite their sabotage, purely in order to crush such strikes. As a matter of fact, their opportunities for manoeuvring were extremely limited. The big strike at the Hanz-Danubius shipyards, which was aimed against one of the most ruthless methods of rationalisation, the Bedaux system, was allowed to collapse by the social-democrats with cynical shamelessness, as also were many other strikes, large and small.

Finally, when at the end of the winter, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Hungary, a widespread unemployed movement began, the social-fascist bureaucracy tried to get it in their grasp in order to divert it from the revolutionary path. Meetings of unemployed, organised by the social-fascists throughout the country, openly pursued the object of preventing the unemployed movement from growing into a revolutionary one. In close collaboration with the police, and in agreement with the employers' associations, they organised a "dumb demonstration" on the streets of Budapest on May 1st, in order to draw the workers away from the path of the class struggle. In the meantime they continued by every means at their disposal to betray Communists and sympathisers to Horthy's police.

The fierce onslaught of the capitalists, the endless wage-reductions, carried out with the active support of the social-democrats, *drew the interests of the employed nearer to those of the unemployed.*

The Communist Party of Hungary had planned a *nation-wide hunger march* for November 1st. All these things taken together led to the social-fascists coming to a decision to take some kind of measures for averting a revolutionary mass demonstration. Therefore, they announced a general strike and mass demonstrations throughout the country on September 1st, with slogans aimed against unemployment. Everything goes to show that this decision was arrived at by arrangement with the Fascist Government. The Government looked calmly on at the preparations, and it was only a day or so before September 1st, when it realised that the demonstrative strike and procession could not be kept under the leadership of the social-fascists and confined in the bonds of a "dumb demonstration," that it decided to prohibit the demonstration.

As a matter of fact, the social-democrats evidently underestimated the anger of the masses and the influence of Communist agitation, and overestimated their own strength and influence with the masses. They decided, despite the prohibition, nevertheless, to carry out the demonstration *peacefully and silently*. It is true, even after the veto, they tried at all costs to preserve contact and collaboration with the police, so as to retain, with their aid, the leadership of the procession in their own hands. The demonstration was banned by the police, all the same. Not having, after that, despite their own wishes, any opportunity for beating a retreat prior to September 1st, they decided to carry through the demobilisation of the masses on September 1st itself, during the actual demonstrations.

The social-fascists *reckoned without their host*. The mass of hundreds of thousands of workers that surged on to the Budapest streets not only refused to keep silent, but was also not content with the mere demand for unemployment relief alone. The crowd caught up the slogans that were issued in the proclamations of the Communist Party of Hungary. It shouted in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat and demonstrated for a new Soviet

Hungary; it offered resistance to police and gendarmes armed to the teeth, and even to the armoured cars sent out against the workers. The police of Horthy-Bethlen fascism quickly took the opportunity to make bloody mounted charges against the workers and to shoot them down ruthlessly. At the same time the police could not avoid *exposing their allies*, the social-fascist general staff, in order to make them still more obedient and render service for a smaller wage. It did this by proving it was impossible for social-fascism to exist in Hungary without direct police assistance. The *Budapesth Hirlap*, a government organ, removes the mask from the Social-Democratic Party leadership in its issue of September 2nd:

"The Party leaders are not freed from responsibility even by the fact that actually they met with a scandalous failure and that their complete helplessness was revealed; this helplessness was expressed in the fact that *they were themselves compelled to resort to armed force against those very same masses whom they had always proclaimed as their own masses*; one of the Party leaders was even compelled to feel on his own back the weight and volume of his own influence over the masses."

The supreme police authority officiating during the bloody battle of September 1st, Stats-Sekretar Straniavski, states in his official report concerning the social-democratic leaders:

"The leaders of the demonstrators themselves demanded the assistance and interference of the police."

The "leader of the demonstration," the old hangman of the Hungarian workers, Karl Peyer, who, on his own face and his own back had to feel proofs that the masses were demonstrating against the social-fascists, hastened to supplement the statement of the Fascist Government and its State Secretary:

"We surrounded a group of roughs by a cordon," states Karl Peyer, "*and only after this did the police appear* and the group ran away from them and hid in the garden of the Central Pavilion; the sword attack and shooting took place there. The roughs were in all probability hooligans from the slums who were joined by a group of Bolsheviks who have their headquarters at No. 7 Remete-Gasse and in the inn at No. 19 Istvanstrasse . . . . The damage that was done in the town was the work of youths and 'lumpenproletarians,' whose conduct we condemn in the most thoroughgoing manner. With these people we have absolutely nothing in common."

This scoundrel Peyer actually gives direct information to the secret political police, indicating the addresses and calling for police action :

"The demonstration was participated in by such huge masses of people, that *even for us it was quite unexpected*. The demonstration was *absolutely necessary*: the abject conditions of the working class had reached such limits, *that if we had not taken matters into our own hands, after one or two months the discontent would have found an outlet through different channels*, and the workers would have found themselves in the hands of people who would have utilised their feelings for their own ends."

That is the real meaning of the "left" manoeuvres of the social-fascists, which is of international significance !

The September 1st demonstration clearly showed that the crowds of hundreds of thousands, in their overwhelming majority, only utilised the social-fascist appeal for a general strike and demonstrations, and their preliminary arrangement with the police, in order to *break through on to the streets*. The masses made use of this opportunity to break the bounds of legality which already so long had prevented them from fully developing their demonstrations for the Revolution, for the proletarian dictatorship, for Communism. In this demonstration social-fascism played the part of a sluice-gate which has given way and opens the channel to broad lakes . . .

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On September 1st, the slogans of the Communist Party of Hungary were taken up by bigger masses of workers than at any time since the defeat of the Revolution. September 1st proved that Communism has such deep and spreading roots among the Hungarian working masses that it cannot be destroyed either by the terror of fascism, or by the demagogy of social-fascism, or by the joint rabid actions of both against every manifestation of the revolutionary labour movement. The September 1st demonstration clearly revealed the exceptional popularity of the Communist Party of Hungary which, from its position far underground, was able by its illegal proclamation to inspire large masses of workers and rally them around its slogans. The Communist Party proved that it possessed sufficient authority and will in order once more

to stand at the head of the broad masses of the working class, for the struggle for the second and VICTORIOUS proletarian dictatorship.

This confronts the Communist Party with new tasks for the new period. Even before these events, the Party had already effected a change which had brought it nearer to direct leadership of the workers' struggle. This change must be extended. It is necessary to extend and make still more active the young cadres of the Communist Party of Hungary, who have growing fighting experience. It is necessary to carry out in practice the resolution of the Second Congress on the transfer of Party work to a factory basis. On the basis of the resolutions of the Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U., it is necessary to get right down to the every-day interests and every-day struggle of the proletarian masses, and on this basis, to establish the closest possible organisational contact with the factories and workshops.

The social-fascist traitors and the hangmen of Soviet Hungary, who have once more shot down the brave Budapest workers, must be nailed to the pillory. Any possibility of "left" manoeuvring must be wrenched from their hands, and it must be made clear to *every Hungarian worker* that these "left" manoeuvres are an inseparable and organic part of the fascist terror.

The Communist Party must also get into the closest possible contact with the peasant masses. The new rise of the revolutionary labour movement brings up very sharply the question of the revolutionary alliance of the working class with the basic mass of the peasantry. The peasant movement and the movement of agricultural labours must be *brought into line* with the proletarian vanguard in the towns. Our fatal error during the first proletarian dictatorship in Hungary must not be repeated.

The events of September 1st are of *international* importance. The experience of Budapest should be utilised by the whole Comintern, and above all, by those sections which are fighting in countries of open fascism. What happened in Hungary may happen to-morrow in *any* fascist country. And the Communist Parties of these countries must not be taken unawares.

# PROSPECTS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN INDIA

By W.

ON the basis of the growing economic crisis there is taking place in India a wide upsurge of the revolutionary emancipatory struggle. All the facts go to show that the extent of the struggle will increase, that it will embrace new forces of the toiling population and that simultaneously with its development there will develop new and higher forms of struggle.

The character, content and forms of mass activities show a number of peculiar features, which sometimes make it difficult to discern exactly what is actually taking place in the different strata of the population, what is the true relationship of the class forces in the country and along what lines changes are taking place.

The absence of a mass Communist Party gives its impress to the degree of political development of the working class, to the level of development of the class struggle and to the consciousness of the working masses. It also makes more difficult the task of a correct estimation of what is taking place inside the working class.

In 1930, as a year of new upsurge, there began in the history of the Indian movement for liberation a new stage of revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses. This new stage was bound to reveal, and did reveal, the strong and the weak sides of the Indian Labour Movement, it revealed the degree of political independence of the working class and demonstrated the elemental processes taking place in the proletarian movement.

The first conscious attempt on the part of the working class to mark itself off as a separate class independently from the Indian bourgeoisie occurred in 1927-29 in the form of the creation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, of textile strikes in Bombay and political demonstrations.

The Workers' and Peasants' Parties arose, firstly, as a result of a portion of the revolutionary petty-bourgeois intellectuals passing over from the National Congress; and, secondly, from the political emergence of leading strata of the working class which understood the necessity of working class political

struggle. The Workers' and Peasants' Parties in their organisation represented purely leading, and mostly intellectual, elements. In different parts of the country they reflected the interests of different classes; in Bombay the working class, in Calcutta and Lahore the peasantry.

The Workers' and Peasants' Parties were not capable of carrying through to the end the line of separation from the National Congress. They remained, as a whole, political organisations of two classes—the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. During 1927-29, they continued to remain politically and organisationally inside the National Congress, that is they continued to remain under the extreme flag of the National bourgeois front. This position had its effect on all the activities of the supporters of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties, especially in their relation to the Communist Party. The *Workers' Weekly*, the organ of the Indian Marxists, in its eighth number, characterised the Workers' and Peasants' Parties in the following words:

“The Movement of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties, in its basic fundamental theoretical principles, was a Congress Movement. It did not advocate the hegemony and leadership of the working class in the National struggle. It conducted its criticism while remaining on the basis of the platform of the Congress. It took part in the Congress apparatus. Its organisation was constituted on the basis of Congress principles, its programme was not a Communist programme, it reflected the petty bourgeois Socialism of the Indian petty bourgeoisie.”

This characterisation is entirely correct, and has been confirmed by the practical activity of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties. This can be seen by examination of a whole series of strikes and mass actions undertaken in these years, particularly the strikes in Bombay.

As relics of the old standpoints of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties, there remains the actual lack of faith in the active workers, the putting of the centre of gravity and leadership in individual leaders without attempting to

create a mass organisation, to attract workers into the Party and to carry on a struggle against the National reformist Gandhist stream which maintains its ascendancy over the workers in Ahmedabad, defending strike-breaking and not making any attempts to extend and develop politically even the strikes in Bombay itself. All this is primarily the result of lack of faith in the forces of the working class and in a narrow economic approach to the strike movement.

Even in the best of these parties, the Bombay organisation, this lack of faith in relation to the active workers was demonstrated. Even the best elements of these parties, who were supporters of revolutionary Marxism, did not understand that without drawing in the active workers it was inconceivable that it could be possible to create real mass red trade unions, to create a Communist Party and to lead the struggle of the toiling masses. They did not believe in the organising capacity of the leading workers, they did not see that this relationship to the workers was one of the most important obstacles to the development of a revolutionary proletarian movement.

The actions of the workers in various parts of the country, *e.g.*, the strike in Jamshedpur, testified to the enormous confusion created by the reformists. A struggle for leadership took place between two reformist cliques and finally the strike was betrayed by both of them; the workers were still so weakly organised that their struggle against one reformist was adroitly exploited by the other. The strike was not accompanied by the coming forward of the active workers and, in spite of all the sacrifice made by the strikers, it did not destroy the position of the reformists in the trade unions.

The most important political actions of the workers during this period were the First of May demonstrations, the demonstration against the Simon Commission and the demonstration in connection with the session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta (December, 1928). This last was a huge step forward. But even this step reflected the political dependence of the labour vanguard on the Congress. The workers' demonstration marching on the Congress in Calcutta and forcibly taking up their place there dispersed

peacefully after listening to the speeches of the members of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, Gandhi and other Congress leaders. The vanguard of the proletariat still cherished illusions in regard to the National Congress.

The end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 led to something new in the Labour Movement on which it is necessary to speak in more detail. The first thing that must be noticed is the beginning of the growth of a Communist Movement. For the first time in the history of the Indian Labour Movement there appeared on the scene a Communist organisation with its own press, illegal leaflets and demonstrations, in which it clearly and definitely marked itself off in opposition to national reformism.

With the disappearance of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties from the arena of the national emancipatory movement there begins the emergence of Communism. The link connecting the labour vanguard with national reformism began to break through. The proletarian vanguard began to put itself in opposition to the National Congress, to carry on a struggle for the leadership against them. This fact is of enormous significance. It marks a step in advance.

The growth of Communism represents the reflection of the growth of political independence of the Indian proletariat. As a matter of fact, the position is seen to be that the growth of Communism lags strongly behind the growth of class-consciousness and readiness for revolutionary struggle on the part of the Indian working class.

The working class struggle in 1930 shows a number of new features; firstly, that new wide forces of the working class began to be drawn into the struggle; and, secondly, in the number of political demonstrations and strikes which reached enormous dimensions.

Working class actions took place in a series of new districts; there were strikes in Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, Madras, Delhi, Kolaba, Ahmedabad, Benares, Nagpur, Sholapur, Kharagpur, Lucknow and other places. The strikes were for the most part of short duration, came to an end and then again began anew, as, for instance, in the Kharagpur railway workshops. It is of interest to note that a very large number of strikes took place on the

railways, particular in the railway workshops.

Even more important, very many of these strike actions took on a political character, in a number of cases leading to armed conflicts with the police and troops. This had never occurred before on such a scale in India, testifying to the growth of political activity on the part of very wide strata of the workers.

A few examples may be given, characterising the growth of political activity and political independence of the working class. The strike on the Great Indian Peninsular Railway in the early part of 1930 was both in character and in class relationships a very important step in advance in the development of the Labour Movement. In the course of it, a struggle was conducted not only against open strike-breakers of the Joshi type, but also against the "left" Gandhists, like Ruikar and Ginwalla (the first of whom led the demonstration in Nagpur against the Whitley Commission, and the second voted for a general strike), who enjoyed enormous influence in the trade unions and from whom the Workers' and Peasants' Parties in their time were not capable and not desirous of separating themselves.

The proletarian vanguard consciously endeavoured to politicalise the strike. At the beginning of the strike the workers followed these "left" National reformists and avoided the revolutionary agitators. At the end of the strike, demonstrations of railway workers with 5,000 or more took place under the slogans and leadership of the proletarian revolutionaries. For the first time in the history of the Indian Labour movement, the proletarian revolutionaries came forward openly before the workers against the "left" National reformists, against the young Nehru and his like, and against their "economism" and treachery. As a result of the strike there was built up a mass basis for an active left wing among the railway workers. The proletarian revolutionaries not only exposed the "left" National reformists, but also developed their own programme and measures, raised the political consciousness of the railway workers, the effects of which will be seen in further actions on the part of the railway workers and the workers in general.

This strike was the first big railway strike which covered not only the workshops but the

whole line, testifying to the growth of class-consciousness and organisation of the workers. Previous strikes had only taken place in isolated centres and never included all the workers of the whole region. This is one of the distinguishing features of advance of this railway strike, even in comparison with the second Bombay textile strike.

As a second example, we may take the demonstration on April 16th in Bombay in connection with the shooting down of railway strikers, a demonstration called by the Secretary of the All-Indian Trade Union Congress. The *Workers' Weekly* of April 23rd in Bombay gives the following account:—

"The tramway workers and workers in the railway shops on the line Bombay-Baroda-Central India already came out on strike in the evening. On April 16th, 25,000 textile workers struck, who came out and demonstrated with red flags and slogans such as 'Down with Imperialism,' 'Long Live Revolution,' 'Long Live the General Strike,' 'Down with the Murderers of our Comrades,' etc."

An enormous mass meeting took place in the evening which adopted a resolution denouncing Imperialist repression and calling on the workers and peasants to carry out a general strike on a national scale, to organise a campaign for refusal of payment of taxes and rent, and warning the masses against the attempts of the bourgeoisie to sabotage and surrender the struggle for complete Indian independence. This demonstration took place in spite of the sabotage and betrayal on the part of the Congress leaders.

In Calcutta, the beginning of the mass movement was connected not with the "salt campaign," but with the demonstrations of the dockworkers, who demonstrated against attacks by the police and who even built barricades from their handcarts. After the shooting down of the dockworkers, leaflets and proclamations were issued by the proletarian vanguard to the workers and a meeting was held, attended by many thousands, at which resolutions were passed calling for a general strike, agrarian revolution and struggle against Imperialism.

These leaflets and meetings condemned the treacherous tactics of the Congress leaders

and gave an impetus to the broad, popular anti-Imperialist movement in Calcutta. The bounds of the "salt campaign" were broken before the latter had formally begun. It was the workers and student youth who broke these bounds.

The demonstration on May 1st, organised on the appeal of the Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party, included a strike which embraced not only factories and workshops, but actually led to a cessation of the whole industrial and commercial life in the town. Leaflets were issued in all languages. The May 1st demonstration and strike in Bombay, although smaller in extent, bore the same political character. All these actions were organised under the leadership of proletarian revolutionaries and were conducted under proletarian slogans. There was a sharpening of the struggle against the National reformists.

Besides these working class demonstrations, politically entirely independently organised, there took place a whole series of political demonstrations of workers and peasants throughout the entire country. The demonstrations of the toiling masses from the very beginning went contrary to the plans of the National Congress and in their content and character broke with the influence of the bourgeoisie, although, owing to the weakness of the revolutionary leadership, they were in a number of cases "exploited" by the reformists.

In this regard, the demonstrations in Sholapur were very characteristic. The textile workers of Sholapur paid no heed to the call of the National Congress to cease the hartal on the second day, and in spite of Congress condemnation took possession of the streets, burned down the Law Court buildings and, in fact, temporarily drove out the British from the town. In Karachi, after the firing on the demonstration during the hartal (which the Congress volunteers unsuccessfully attempted to disperse as soon as its revolutionary character was evidenced) the dockers and municipal workers answered by a political protest strike which lasted several days. In Madras there was the same picture of firing on the workers, the same disorganising activity of the Congress leaders, in spite of which the workers carried on their demon-

stration involving conflict with the police and troops.

In the gold mines of Mysore, 15,000 miners refused to submit to the order of the police and administration requiring the taking of finger-prints and went on strike. The strike was accompanied by armed attacks from the police and troops. As a result, the police had to abandon their demands. In a number of the hartals of the National Congress in Bombay the participation of a large portion of the workers took place on the call of the red trade unions. In Bombay, the National Congress issued an appeal to come out on May 6th, but the workers did not respond, although they came out on May 7th after an appeal of the Girni Kamgar Union. The weakness of the revolutionary leadership was particularly expressed in the fact that it was unable to organise and mark off the independent rôle of the workers in this demonstration and to oppose them in fact to the Congressmen, although in its appeals and agitation the revolutionary wing criticised and exposed the bourgeoisie and Congress leadership.

An open struggle with the National Congress for influence over the mass of the workers has begun. Lack of experience, the enormous weakness of organisation of the Communist Party, inability to utilise all legal possibilities and inability to carry through this struggle in practice has in a number of cases been an obstacle to the solution of this task. New strata of the working masses are being drawn into the revolutionary struggle, strata which have not yet lost their illusions and faith in the National-reformist leadership of the National Congress. Already, however, wide masses of workers are freeing themselves from this influence, as can be seen clearly from the facts already mentioned. We are suffering now for the belated appearance of a mass Communist Party.

The weakness of the Communist Movement reveals itself now with especial sharpness, in spite of the present growth of Communism, when the development of the revolutionary upsurge of the Indian proletariat sets before it new and extraordinarily complicated tasks both in regard to the transition to new forms of the movement and in regard to the struggle for the leadership over the mass of

the workers who have now entered the political arena. This is the cause of the terror of the British and of the cunning hypocritical policy of the Indian bourgeoisie. The "salt campaign" and the independence resolution are consequences of the National reformist attempts to seize the initiative for themselves, to deceive the masses and to disorganise the revolutionary struggle. The "left" National reformists, the younger Nehru, etc., have for the first time come into the open with a programme of demands for the workers and peasants.

The younger Nehru has begun to speak of the liquidation of big estates by purchase, of liquidation of indebtedness by partial compensation, of nationalisation of British factories, etc. The Bombay Committee of the National Congress has adopted a resolution declaring that the Socialist form of society is the only one suitable for India.

Recently, the Bombay Committee of the National Congress has taken in hand the practical task of organising the Bombay workers, has been propagating entry into the National Congress and has declared that the Congress represents the interests of the workers and fights against the capitalists. The struggle for the mass of the workers has entered a new and sharper phase, a circumstance to which the Communists must pay special attention.

The proletarian vanguard has made use of the fact that the younger Nehru and the All-India Working Committee of the National Congress, when invited by the workers to support the strike on the Great Indian Peninsular Railway and to transform it into a general strike, made a negative reply and proposed arbitration and reference to the British Government. The leaflets and agitation of the proletarian leadership were of important significance for the exposure of the treacherous rôle of the National reformists. There is no doubt that the latter will attempt to "radicalise" their promises still more in order to strengthen their positions inside the working class and peasantry.

It is possible that on this basis new petty-bourgeois political groupings will arise. One thing, however, is already clear, viz., that the struggle for the working masses is becoming

intensified and is taking on new forms. In this respect, it is significant that revolutionary organisations have arisen among the youth, of which the Bombay Youth League is the most important.

Recently (July and August) a number of political demonstrations of workers have taken place in Bombay, under the leadership of the Girni Kamgar Union and of the League of Working Youth. Two meetings and demonstrations, at each of which five to six thousand persons were present, took place in connection with the imprisonment of one of the chief leaders of the Bombay proletariat, and a third demonstration of over five thousand took place in protest against the scandal of the arrested workers' leaders. These demonstrations were carried out under revolutionary slogans. The revolutionary youth is beginning to take up its rightful place.

One of the characteristic features is that the advanced section of the workers is beginning to occupy itself actively with organisation and leadership of the proletarian movement. Workers are beginning to take part in the leadership of the Girni Kamgar Union, in the editing of workers' papers, etc., and in spite of their deficiencies in knowledge of grammar and so on, they are making great progress in this work.

Here we have one of the best possible guarantees for a successful struggle against the petty-bourgeois influence in the proletarian vanguard and for the creation of a proletarian revolutionary mass movement. The following quotation from the Bombay *Workers' Weekly* of May 20th on "The significance of the Meerut Trial," gives some indication of the political awakening of the Indian proletariat:—

"It is especially the wide masses of the Indian proletariat who are going through a rapid process of revolutionary education, and what is particularly important, revolutionary education based on experiences of everyday life and struggle. In India, unlike in many European countries, such as Russia, etc., efforts to bring Socialist ideas into the masses and work and carry on propaganda among them were insignificant. In India, the working class was compelled to get its revolutionary education only from



the bitter experience of its struggle.”

The process of the political development of the Indian proletariat is going forward with giant strides. The marked intensification of the economic crisis, the closing down of a number of factories and the threat of further stoppages, the extraordinary unemployment, all demand higher forms of economic struggle, incomparably higher organisation and heightened class-consciousness. The struggle for the leadership of the wide masses newly drawn into the struggle, who will only in the process of the struggle free themselves from the influence of the bourgeoisie, demands skilful and determined tactics. The revolutionary vanguard is welding its ranks ever firmer together in the prosecution of heavy struggles, is bringing forward the best elements of the working class and preparing itself for victorious struggle for hegemony in the Indian revolution.

More than ever before, the Indian proletariat must exert all its forces to extend its vanguard and to strengthen it, in order to create a Communist Party, in order to extend the Communist fractions in the trade unions, and to establish new proletarian mass organisations. (Trade Unions, Factory Committees, Committees of Action, Unemployed Committees, etc.).

At the present time, the material position of the workers is becoming worse. Wages are being reduced, the intensity of labour is being increased, various minor gains are being taken away. The economic activity of the workers

is increasing, further growth of the strike struggle of the working class is inevitable.

The working class is always ready to support the creation of mass trade unions. The will to organise itself is strong; the chief obstacle is the weakness of revolutionary leadership. In a number of places, the monopoly of leadership in the hands of the National reformists is not even challenged, although this leadership does not enjoy any great influence among the masses of the workers.

The problem of the organisation of the working class and of its proletarian vanguard has been thrust into the foreground and demands a solution. The upsurge of the workers' movement in the conditions of a general upsurge of the National revolutionary struggle, of sharpening crisis and of an ever-clearer exposure before the masses of the treacherous rôle of the National bourgeoisie and of reformism, puts before the revolutionary proletarian vanguard in India the immediate task of developing revolutionary mass action under its own slogans, of developing the strike struggle and of political strikes and the creation of mass trade unions, factory committees and organs of mass struggle. It sets them the task of drawing into the struggle ever new regions and wider strata of the working class and of the toilers generally and, on the basis of a determined and merciless struggle against National reformism, of passing from isolated mass actions of the working class to the general railway strike and the political general strike in India.

# MASS WORK AMONG WOMEN WORKERS

By V. MOIROVA

THE conference of leaders of the departments for work among women of the European Communist Parties gave some indication of what work had been accomplished by them in the period under review. A certain advance has been made in this sphere, but it is absolutely insufficient. In the first place it was brought to our notice that, as yet, the Parties do not all understand the importance of using the women's departments to organise the broad masses of the workers round the tasks facing the Party as a whole. For this reason the general problems of the Party are hardly reflected at all in the activities of the women's departments and cases are by no means rare when work among women has ceased to proceed with the necessary intensity at moments when every ounce of energy was needed for the class struggle and when an approach from different angles to the various groups and strata making up the working class was particularly valuable as a means of enabling the Party to get the leadership of the workers as rapidly as possible.

Until now, the campaign against the new Social Insurance Act in France (in spite of the fact that it strikes directly at the interests of working women and workers' wives) has found hardly any reflection in the work of the women's department of the French Communist Party. Questions connected with the Workers' Charter which will have to play a very important rôle in the mass work of the C.P.G.B. have been discussed without any reference to work among women, except for one or two slogans dragged into the Charter specially addressed to women workers.

The struggle against anti-Communist elements, social-fascists and fascists, has been very inadequately treated in work among women, and any efforts made to get women workers and workers' wives who are in Christian and other enemy organisations under the influence of the Party have been extremely limited. It is not an isolated incident that the French Communist Party did not find space in its press for a not uninteresting discussion on methods of work among women which took place at the Social-

ist Party Congress. Not one worker in the women's department considered it necessary to communicate to the Party the decisions of the Socialist Party on this score. The women's department of the C.P.G.B. also paid no attention to the Conference of Labour Women.

General organisational problems, the organisation of Communist cells in industrial undertakings, seeing to it that the members of these cells are active, spurring Local Party Committees to action, the reorganisation of trade union work on the new principles, the organisation of factory and works committees and trade union cells, the initiating of Councils of Action, all these forms of work are not, as it were, regarded as direct work among women.

Women's departments meekly wait till organisational problems have been settled by the Party over their heads and then settle down to their own work.

It is clear that these striking deficiencies must be remedied. To a far greater extent the women's departments must be drawn into general Party life and trade union work and become a far more integral part of the Party apparatus in the general work of the Party among the masses of the workers. The Party must push the women's departments into the execution of Party activity generally, especially in these factories and mass organisations where women are in the majority.

Women's departments linked up by their own forms of organisation with the masses of working women must blaze the trail for the organisation of general Party cells in factories where women are in the majority. Women's departments must make a beginning with the organisation of the trade union opposition (Minority Movement) groups or cells in the trade unions in such factories with the help of the most active of the women workers. This is not merely possible; it must be done if the Parties and the red trade unions are to succeed in consolidating themselves in industry.

The women's departments and the editorial staffs of women's papers and periodicals must help as organisers to convert the Party organisations into apparatus for recruiting masses

of workers permanently to our side. From morning till night the women workers and workers' wives must have access to the women's department and the leading comrades must have corresponding contact with the workers. Anything less than this and the women's departments will suffer from bureaucracy and be content with drawing up fine schemes on paper and mechanical work.

It is self-evident that the women's departments can only give adequate help to the Party if they take part in Party life as a whole and if there is regular control and guidance of their work by the leading Party organs. This is something which must be brought into being. The comrades leading the work of the women's departments must be responsible workers, must take an active part in general Party life and the solution of Party problems and must be chosen with the possibility in view of getting them to serve as members of committees.

The conference revealed that the Parties had on more than one occasion led strike movements of women workers, but that gains from this, so far as strengthening their connections with the industrial women workers is concerned, were absolutely negligible. It is time to stop once and for all the recital from one year to another of the "objective" causes resulting in the decline of the influence of the Parties over women in industry. This problem must be solved in the very near future. If, in the course of a winter of struggle, one or other of the women's departments fails to establish strongly organised connections with working women in certain definite industries, especially big undertakings having decisive importance, then that women's department will have failed to accomplish its task and will undoubtedly require a change of leadership and the selection of more responsible workers.

Together with this serious failure in work among women in general, there must be reported an almost complete lack of influence by the Parties over unemployed women, although unemployment among women is everywhere increasing. In England more than fifty per cent. of the textile workers (chiefly women) are unemployed as the result of the unprecedented depression in the textile trade. We can say almost the same about Poland (Lodz). Germany also has an in-

creasing number of unemployed women. This state of things calls for co-ordinated efforts among the unemployed, men and women, paying special attention to questions of burning interest to the masses of unemployed women workers.

In spite of this serious condition of things, in England, for example, there was actually a dispute as to whether there was any place for a committee of unemployed women in the N.U.W.M. Instead of welcoming the women into the unemployed movement with the purpose of making them more revolutionary, there was a dispute about the rights of members of such a committee. It is clear that this sort of thing will not make for a mass movement, but is unprincipled sabotage of it. The C.P.G.B. must put the leaders of the Unemployed Movement on the right track.

It would appear that strong connections had been made with the workers' wives last year by the women's departments. As a matter of fact the women's departments have not recruited from the masses of housewives sufficiently or in the right way. Moreover, even where this work was being done, it was often not carried out in such a way as to bring mass results; for example, in Scotland twelve Miners' Wives' Guilds have a membership of only eighty. As the cause of the non-entry, or more accurately, the exodus of workers' wives from the Guilds, the comrades in charge alleged the "political backwardness" of the housewives. If such an explanation be accepted, it is very unlikely that the work can be carried on successfully. The position is the same in other women's organisations which depend on women workers taking part in them *en masse*.

At the same time there are beginning to appear suggestions to liquidate mass organisations formed specially for women on the pretext that there is no need for them on account of the increasing intensity of the class war. There is little doubt that these ideas are similar to others which underestimate the importance of special organisational measures. The task of the existing women's revolutionary organisations is to get hold of those masses of working women who cannot be reached by the existing general organisations. It is our duty to give these organisations a mass character and not

make them sectarian groups, sometimes consisting merely of Communist women. Special organisations of Communist women are not required.

Up to now, women's departments have not learnt how to get hold of the home workers. This type of work, it is clear, has not only not lost its importance, but, on the contrary, has actually increased in some types of industry (*e.g.*, the tailoring trade). The revolutionary mass women's organisations can be made an invaluable means of getting hold of the home workers. By means of these organisations we can get into touch with masses of working women whom the trade unions cannot reach, as well as the poor and better-off peasant women. In some places we have a very unsatisfactory state of things. In the north of France, there is in existence a fairly strong organisation, "The Fraternal Union of Women and Girls Against Imperialist War," but it consists entirely of women workers already organised in the red trade unions. In Alsace-Lorraine, this organisation consists of housewives, although in this district there are important industrial undertakings crammed with unorganised women workers, among whom no work is being done for the Party or red trade unions.

The problem of mass work requires from the Party an overhauling of all its methods of work and control of the daily work among the masses of workers. To this end the connections between the Party and the Y.C.L. must be strengthened. The work of the Y.C.L. among working girls is of increasing importance, but this problem is almost untouched by the Communist youth movement. The fascists and social-fascists have special organisations for young girls and count them by tens of thousands as members, but our youth organisations consider it beneath their dignity to appoint a special comrade who would be responsible for such work and get sections of the Y.C.L. to occupy themselves with the questions of the

interests of working girls, and develop special measures for getting hold of them. The Y.C.L. has not undertaken special work for recruiting working girls into the League and has not provided suitable conditions for the political development of those in the Y.C.L. One can affirm without fear of contradiction that it is very doubtful whether the British Y.C.L. knows that there are in England 3,000 clubs specially founded by the bourgeois organisations for working girls, that these clubs have got hold of more than 200,000 girls and that there is hardly a working girl who does not come under the influence of bourgeois organisations through these clubs. In any case neither the Y.C.L. nor the women's departments attempt any work in these clubs. And this position is not typical of England only. The Y.C.I. must rid itself of this "archaic" conservatism.

In general, as a result of the conference which discussed these questions, it can be said there is to be a recognition that work among women is such an important part of the general mass activities of the Party that it must have far more serious consideration. For this purpose the leadership of the women's departments must be overhauled from top to bottom, there must be much more attentive control of the work of the women's departments and in all Party organisations there must be an examination of the best methods of consolidating and strengthening this work. In the course of building up a systematic leadership for this work, we must root out the old idea of those working among women that all the deficiencies in the work arise exclusively from the lack of attention of the Party to it.

The work must proceed more rapidly, be more widely developed and enlarge its content by the inclusion of those problems which every Party and every red trade union movement has to face.

# REPORT OF COMRADE ERCOLI TO THE ITALIAN COMMISSION OF THE C.I.

(Concluded)

It is evident that Santini's article is also an article written to hide what Santini thinks, but all the same what Santini thinks shows up fairly obviously. The problem he touches on in this article is this: how the Communist Party must lead the fight for the immediate demands of the workers. What, then, is his thesis? His thesis is this: "It is a serious deviation and one which must be thoroughly fought to *subordinate* the struggle for immediate demands to the struggle for the final revolutionary aims of the working-class and the Party." What is said in the programme of the C.P.? All comrades know the paragraph, it is said: the fundamental rule of the C.P. in the region of immediate struggles is this, that the immediate struggles of the working-class must be *subordinated* to the struggle for the final aims of the Party and of the working-class. There is in this matter a complete break with the Communist position. There is complete acceptance of the menshevik position, of the opportunist position, and an attempt to show the Communist position as a deviation, as a serious error which must be fought in the ranks of the Party.

Now what is the position on the problem of the mass political strike? The position in Santini's article is very sharp: to-day, to speak of a mass political strike is madness. To-day, we must struggle for immediate demands and not speak of the mass political strike, not to mention it. And what says the social democrat Modigliani? He says the same, "the political strike and the general strike are things of which we must not speak to-day." The positions coincide; Santini, while making an effort to hide what he thinks, says the same thing as Modigliani.

In the journal of the old leaders of the *Confederation du Travail*\* have been published two articles in which is mentioned the crisis of the C.P.I., the position of the opportunists in the Party is explained fairly accurately, and what conclusion is drawn? They say: Here are a group of Communists, who, after having

always fought us, the reformists, comes to-day to our position, admits that we are right. And so these elements have only one thing more to do: to draw the organisational consequences of their political position and go back to the old C.G.P., i.e., join up with the bureau of Buozzi.

What did Santini answer to that? He answered with a public attack on the Red C.G.P. He answered by accusing the Red C.G.P. of being nothing but a doubling of the Party. At the moment when Buozzi says "You agree with me, you must come with me" this politician knew nothing better to do than to attack the Red C.G.P., and he never said a word to answer the reformists, to state exactly if he is not in agreement with them. The logic of his position prevented his making this declaration.

Why have the opportunists fallen immediately to the side of the Trotskyists? There is, before all else, a reason of astuteness of elementary political cleverness. In our Party, any group which presents itself as a Right-wing group is condemned in advance. There is no possibility in our Party of a Right-wing fraction from the very history of the Party, from the very Leftist origins of the Party. The word "opportunist" in our Party is considered a personal insult.

MANUILSKY: Not only in the Italian Party!

ERCOLI: But more than elsewhere. Why was Tasca unable to form a fraction? Because it was impossible for an element such as Tasca who stands openly on the Right and says: I am a Right-winger. So "the three," if they wished to have the possibility of doing work of some sort in the Party or on the fringe of the Party, had to find a Leftist mask which makes them out to be interesting fellows. It's this mask that Trotsky was to give them: a Left phraseology and alliance with the old Bordighist group. It is clear that the alliance is an alliance without principle. It cannot be allowed that comrades who have never criticised either the political line of the C.P. or the fight which has been fought against Trotsky and Bordiga should in two weeks join Trotsky and Bordiga. The alliance is without principle, but it is not

\* Labour Union

unnatural, because at bottom the position of Trotsky and the Bordighists on the present problems of the labour movement and of the Italian revolution coincides with that of the opportunists. What is the position of the Bordighists on the Italian situation? Their outlook is as follows: to-day, in the international movement, there is a defeat; this revolutionary wave of which the C.P. speaks of folly; the tactics of the C.P. are the tactics of adventurism. As to the Italian situation, the position of Bordiga and the Bordighists is this: there is a fairly widespread stabilisation of fascism, on the basis of this stabilisation there will be a return to a democratic system, it is therefore absurd to-day to talk of a revolutionary wave among the masses, of a turn, etc.

The position of the Bordighists is therefore the same as that of the opportunists. The alliance was prepared by a coincidence of position. The alliance is an alliance without principle but not an unnatural alliance, it is an alliance according to the nature of opportunism.

But there are also other reasons which explain why Trotsky has fallen on these fellows and has tried to rapidly attract them. It is because there is a fairly obvious, fairly open disagreement between Trotsky and the Bordighists. Comrades know the exchange of letters which has taken place between Trotsky and the Bordighists. Trotsky criticises the Bordi-

ghists as being a fraction with a sectarian bureaucratic mentality, for not having given their adhesion to the international conference of the opposition and for attempting to keep an isolated position, a "national" position.

Trotsky says to them: You are good-for-nothings. And, in fact, through the mediation of the Bordighists, Trotsky could do nothing in the Party. The expulsion of Bordiga did not have great repercussions in the Party. When he saw that three members of our Political Bureau were in opposition, Trotsky fell upon them. There is logic in what Trotsky did. It is the logic of the making of an alliance without principle for the struggle against the C.I.

The last thing I wished to say is that with which I started my report. In judging what we have done, you must take account of the situation in which we work; we have no big newspapers like the C.P.F., by means of which the Party can be mobilised in twenty-four hours. We speak to the Party by leaflets, little things.

The organisational situation is still serious. And this whole situation imposed an especially energetic tactic if we wished to beat the inner enemy and at the same time not stop working. Have we succeeded in attaining this result? We believe that in great measure we have succeeded. We must still develop our work, but one of the conditions of doing it was to clear the field of the inner enemy, otherwise we should not have succeeded.

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