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FIVE CENTS

# THE SITUATION IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

By WILLIAM RUST.

THE Executive Committee of the Communist International recently discussed in considerable detail the situation in the Communist Party of Great Britain and together with the leadership of the Party worked out the step that must be taken in order that the Party can break through its present isolation from the masses of the working class.

To understand the present situation of the Party and the nature of the tasks standing before it is necessary to recall the recent history of the Party and the fight which had been waged against the opportunist elements in the leadership for the carrying out of the line of the Comintern. This fight came to a head at the Eleventh Party Congress in December which vigorously responded to the Open Letter of the E.C.C.I., emphatically laid down the policy of "Class Against Class" and elected a new Central Committee on the basis of the policy. Four weeks after the conclusion of the Congress the new leadership launched the *Daily Worker*, the first revolutionary daily newspaper in Great Britain and a most striking demonstration of the determination of the new leadership to independently lead the masses in struggle against the Labour Government.

The Party has many achievements to its credit. Standing on the line of the Comintern it has, in addition to the publication of the *Daily Worker*, independently participated in the great wool strike, bringing many thousands of workers under its leadership, carried on an energetic campaign in support of the national revolutionary movement in India and organised mass demonstrations in connection with the March 6th, May 1st and August 1st campaigns. These are achievements not to be under-rated, yet even so they in no way signify that the connection of the Party with the masses has been radically improved since the time of the Eleventh Congress. It must be frankly said that the contrast between the weak mass activity of the Party and the very favourable objective situation is extremely sharp and disquieting.

Therefore, the Comintern was absolutely justified in subjecting the work of the Party to a searching criticism, which resulted in exposing the causes of the present isolation and on the basis of the Bolshevik self-criticism enabled the Party to see clearly the tasks before it.

To speak of the isolation of the Communist Party from the masses of the working class is no exaggeration. Despite the economic crisis, the capitalist offensive and the growing radicalisation of the masses the membership of the Party has fallen in important districts. Although another million workers have been thrown on the streets since the advent of the Labour Government, the Party has not succeeded in organising a broad fighting movement of the unemployed, the Minority Movement has steadily declined, the initial circulation of the *Daily Worker* was not maintained and the Young Communist League remains in a catastrophic condition.

Such a situation in the Party is not only unsatisfactory, it gives grounds for serious alarm. Especially when we remember that the strike movement is growing, the workers' counter-offensive is beginning, the national revolutionary movement in the colonies is reaching great heights and masses of workers are rapidly losing faith in His Majesty's Labour Government and the Mondist trade union bureaucracy.

## TASK TO SMASH ISOLATION

What is the outstanding task before the Communist Party of Great Britain at the present time? That task is to smash through its isolation and to apply its correct line in daily work amongst the masses in the factories and at the employment exchanges, for although the leadership has fought for the line of "class against class," it has not succeeded in sufficiently applying it in a correct way.

Why must the question of the correct application of the line in everyday practice now be raised so sharply? Not only because of the strength of the main Right danger in the

ranks of the Party, but also because the work of the Party since its Eleventh Congress has revealed a growing volume of "left" sectarianism and frequent "left" distortions of the new line. Unless a consistent fight on two fronts is carried on, against the main Right danger and "left" sectarianism, the Party will not succeed in correctly applying the line and breaking through its isolation.

Numerous facts could be adduced to show the strength of Right opportunism in the Party and the extent of passivity, an inheritance from the old leadership, whose opportunist line had brought about a crisis in the Party. The lagging behind the masses was most clearly expressed in the exceedingly poor preparations for the strike of the wool workers and the neglect of the economic struggles and the fight against unemployment shown by the weakness of the Minority Movement and the failure to transform the unemployed organisation into a broad mass movement. The leadership did not carry on a vigorous struggle against opportunism in the practice, neither did it develop a widespread ideological campaign on the decisions of Leeds Congress and subsequent Central Committee resolutions. Consequently, passivity has not been rooted out of the Party, and there has been only a slight improvement in the methods of work. Because of the underestimation of the growth of social-fascism, the non-working out of a clear perspective of the favourable objective situation and the failure to keep step with the radicalisation of the masses, the Party has not been successful in sufficiently exposing before the masses the anti-working class policy of the Labour Government and the "Left" leaders.

The fight against the Right danger is one front of the struggle and what the E.C.C.I. now raises sharply before the entire Party is the necessity for a sustained fight on two fronts, to determinedly combat the widespread "Left" sectarianism, which results in the strengthening of Right opportunism. Without an energetic fight against the "Left" danger the isolation of the Party cannot be overcome.

The principal "Left" distortions of the new line have been as follows:—

- (a) In practice the new line has been interpreted as the abandonment of the united front tactics.
- (b) The independent leadership of economic struggles has been regarded as signifying the giving up of organised work in the trade unions.
- (c) A dreary repetition of general political slogans has taken the place of practical work amongst the masses and the advancement of suitable partial political demands.

A multitude of examples could be given of this growing sectarian tendency, the attempts to jump over stages of development which prevent a real turn to mass work. The present situation of the Minority Movement is the most glaring example of the disastrous results of "Left" sectarianism. The Minority Movement has lost its basis in the trade unions and has not succeeded in becoming a broad movement independently leading the economic struggles. Attempts have been made to politicalise the Minority Movement overnight by mechanically taking on general political slogans ("Down with the Labour Government," "Fight for the Revolutionary Workers' Government"), to all its statements and treating it as a shadow Communist Party. During the woollen strike it issued a membership card containing only political slogans and not a word about the immediate demands of the strikers or such immediate political demands as "Repeal the Trade Union Act," "Down with Arbitration," which would have been a means of developing the political character of the strike. The Political Bureau sharply criticised this mistake, but the leadership of the Party shared with the Minority Movement such mistakes as the indiscriminate use of the "Strike Now" slogan, the description of the wool strike as a revolutionary offensive against the Labour Government and the estimation that in this period all economic struggles automatically become political. After the wool strike the Party set itself the task of forming a mill committee movement, affiliated to the R.I.L.U. and thus tried to jump over the immediate task of building up the Minority Movement with a mass individual membership organised as groups in the mills and in the reformist unions.

Soon after the outbreak of the woollen strike the South Wales District Committee gave a classical demonstration of "Leftism" by issuing a call for an immediate political strike in support of the wool workers. This mistake was immediately corrected by the Political Bureau. The growth of the mood in favour of the premature formation of new unions was shown by the decision of the Central Committee in favour of the formation of a new revolutionary miners' union for Great Britain, despite the fact that there is no basis for it at the present time. This mistake was subsequently corrected.

An examination of the current literature of the party will show that phrasemongering is rampant, immediate demands not corresponding to the given situation are advanced or are mixed with transitional demands and that the Party has insufficiently understood how to rally the masses in action. Sectarianism is also sharply expressed by the *Daily Worker*, although it has succeeded in becoming more and more of a fighting Communist paper.

This description does not give grounds for satisfaction, but when the self-critical recognition of mistakes and weaknesses is combined with an understanding of what is to be done politically and organisationally it is a sign of health, not disease. The great wool strike was a testing time for the Party and it did not fail. The independent participation of the Party in this tremendous mass struggle marked a very definite stage in its development, for the Party acquired an exceedingly valuable experience in how to carry on mass work which enabled it to see errors, achievements and tasks in a much clearer light. In fact, the first meeting of the Central Committee after the wool strike was largely devoted to an exhaustive analysis of the situation and tasks of the Party, the main orientation being the necessity for mass work and the unceasing application of the united front tactics from below.

Together with the E.C.C.I. the leadership of the Party has now worked out in a much clearer form the tasks which stand before it in order that the Party can make a sharp turn to mass work and organise the counter-offensive of the working class against the bourgeoisie and develop the political character of

this counter-offensive as a fight against the Labour Government.

#### WORKERS' CHARTER

What exactly must the Party do in order to mobilise the masses for the struggle? It must place in the centre of its agitation a fighting programme of action round which the Minority Movement will be built up and a great mass movement organised. The Minority Movement has recently revised the old Unemployed Charter and issued it as a Workers' Charter, containing nine demands. This is an excellent step in the right direction, but this Workers' Charter remains essentially a programme of struggle against unemployment and is not broad and popular enough to appeal to all workers. The Workers' Charter should contain five or six popular immediate demands on unemployment, hours and wages, housing, the repeal of the Trade Union Act and withdrawal of the troops from India. Such a Charter would be a real programme of struggle, attracting masses of workers and awakening the finest traditions of the revolutionary Chartist Movement of the previous century.

What is the danger in the launching of this new movement in favour of a fighting Charter? The danger is that the Charter may be a still-born child unless the struggle for it is made the occasion for the widespread application of the united front tactics and a real daily fight against the "Lefts." To launch the Charter mechanically would be a fatal mistake. It must arise from the masses and not be imposed upon them. The Charter must be discussed and amended in mass meetings and demonstrations and finally brought forward by the Minority Movement as the platform of struggle only when the basis has been prepared amongst the masses. For the Charter the Communist Party and Minority Movement must organise a campaign comparable in its depth and energy to the great Chartist agitation nearly a hundred years ago. We must utilise these fighting traditions, study that Movement and adapt some of the methods of the Chartists to our present-day needs. For example, the mass collection of signatures is a popular method of agitation which should most certainly be employed.

The campaign for the Charter should be carefully worked out and tirelessly carried through. The Charter campaign must find its biggest response in the factories and the Party must seize upon this campaign in order to break with its present bad methods of work and to establish itself in the factories. Everywhere mass meetings and demonstrations for the Charter! Meetings at the factory gates for the Charter! Resolutions in trade union branches, co-operatives and local labour parties for the Charter! Special conferences for the Charter! Every day the *Daily Worker* will be for the Charter! And as the campaign develops form committees to fight for the Charter!

The fight in the principal industries against the capitalist offensive must be linked up with the fight for the Charter. Not mechanically, of course; ramming it down the throats of the workers or allowing it to replace the industrial programmes of demands. For the most important industries (mining, textile, transport and metal) the Minority Movement must prepare such programmes as the basis for rallying the workers and setting up committees of action.

There will probably be some comrades who will feel rather afraid of the Charter and fear that we are forgetting our revolutionary principles. But is it not a revolutionary principle to work out strategy and tactics according to the given situation with the object of getting the masses into action against the class enemy? The fight for the immediate demands of the working class on the basis of the united front from below in no way contradicts the organising of a revolutionary struggle against the Labour Government, but is, in fact, an essential part of that struggle. The substitution of general political slogans for these immediate demands makes it impossible to organise a general class fight against the Labour Government. This by no means implies that there should be any hesitation in linking up of our immediate demands with general political struggles. On the contrary, the Party must do this with ever greater courage and skill.

This linking up is in no way achieved by the mere tacking on of general political slogans to programmes of demands, as was

done during the wool strike. The Party must skilfully utilise all issues of the class struggle, advancing political partial demands which correspond to the situation and bring to the workers an understanding of their broader class tasks on the basis of their own experience. Especially is it necessary to establish the common front of the British workers and colonial masses. It is hardly necessary to add that the Party must unceasingly propagate its final demands and connect up the daily fight with them.

The struggle for the Charter will result in the unmasking of the "Left" leaders, and this is one of the most important reasons for advancing it at the present time. As the mass feeling against the Labour Government grows stronger, so do the "Lefts" become all the more dangerous, resorting to the boldest phases and demagogic tricks (*e.g.*, stealing the Mace), in order to hold the workers attached to the Labour Government. So far, however, the Communist fight against the "Lefts" has been largely confined to denunciation, which does not convince the workers.

In 1928 the Communist Party tried to manœuvre in connection with the Cook-Maxton movement, but fell in behind the "Left" leaders because it based itself on the united front from the top. The tactic was wrong, but the principle of manœuvring is correct and it is a weapon which must be restored to the armoury of the Communist Party. We have got to out-manœuvre the "Left" leaders and the Independent Labour Party as a whole and prove before the masses that they are traitors and cheats, the most dangerous enemies of the working class. What stronger weapon is there for exposing the "Lefts" than the Charter and the application of the united front tactics from below?

We fight for the Charter not merely in order that certain demands shall be achieved, but in order to lead the workers forward in struggle for the Revolutionary Workers' Government and to demonstrate before the workers the difference between the Communist organisation and leadership of the daily struggle and the empty words and promises of the "Lefts." The Communist Party and the Minority Movement will fight for the Charter and the workers will demand to know from

the "Lefts" where they stand. Many "Lefts" try to identify themselves with the Charter, especially if the movement for it grows very rapidly. But the workers will demand not promises but deeds. If a "Left" is for the Charter let him prove it by fighting for it. Let him use the parliamentary tribune and submit a Bill embodying the Charter, and when the Bill is rejected call on the workers to strike for it. In this way we will expose the heroes of the "Left" and at all these meetings of the "Lefts" the militant workers should be present in force and demand direct answers to their questions.

Around the fight for the Charter the mass Minority Movement will be built up, but this can only be done if there is clarity regarding its rôle as a broad mass organisation "leading the economic struggles of the workers, mobilising the masses around a programme of immediate demands and linking up these demands with the struggle on the fundamental political issues of the British Labour Movement. The Minority Movement must not be a mere duplicate of the Party; it must be a broader organisation than the Party, embracing the opposition in the old trade unions, the struggles of the factory committees, the unorganised, the unions, the unemployed, etc. The Party must be the driving force in, and the inspirer of the Minority Movement; the latter must be the medium through which the Party maintains contact with and exercises leadership of the masses of the working class (Open Letter of the E.C.C.I. to the Eleventh Party Congress).

The renunciation of systematic activity within the reformist unions is chiefly to be explained by the marked tendency to regard the Minority Movement not as a united front organisation, but as a duplicate of the Party and the tendency not to differentiate between the leaders and the rank and file. The building up of a revolutionary opposition in the unions must be immediately recommenced, for this work is an essential part of the independent leadership of the economic struggles and the winning over of masses of workers. The fact that revolutionary workers hold many of the lower posts in the unions and can organise a good following (e.g., Comrade Hoyle's 10,000 vote in the ballot for the

secretaryship of the Amalgamated Engineering Union) proves that revolutionary work in the unions can be quickly developed and posts captured providing it is combined with activity in the factories. The giving up of the slogan "Make the Leaders Fight" in no way signifies that we abandon our efforts to bring mass pressure on the bureaucrats so as to make it more difficult for them to betray the struggle. Such slogans as "Drive Out the Bureaucrats" and "Fight for Trade Democracy" must be popularised, not discarded.

**IT CANNOT BE TOO STRONGLY EMPHASISED THAT THE MINORITY MOVEMENT MUST MAKE A REAL TURN TO SYSTEMATIC ACTIVITY IN THE REFORMIST TRADE UNIONS.**

The work in the trade unions is also important from the standpoint of strengthening the fight against the Labour Party. Although the Labour Party has been transformed into a Party of social-fascism and the footholds for Communist work within it destroyed, the fact that the trade unions are affiliated and pay their fees through the medium of the political levy must not be overlooked. Trade union branches discuss Labour Party matters and have the right to place resolutions on the agendas of the local labour parties and trades and labour councils. This is a channel which we should utilise in order to penetrate amongst the masses under the influence of the Labour Party. In this connection the fight for the local control of the political levy must be carried on as a systematic campaign.

While carrying on the work in the trade unions the Minority Movement must make the factories its basis and carry on a continuous agitational and organisational work for the setting up of factory committees. In this work the revolutionary shop stewards can play a great part. The fighting traditions of the shop stewards' movement, which was extremely active during and immediately after the war, must be revived and steps taken by the Minority Movement to organise a big revolutionary shop stewards' movement and to capture the union posts in the factories. Every revolutionary shop steward should have the task of forming a Minority Movement group.

The Minority Movement must organise the fight against unemployment and together with the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement work to place the unemployed organisation on a broader basis, to set up committees of unemployed in the localities, including representatives from the factories. Only in this way will it be possible to organise a fighting mass movement of the unemployed. The situation is ripe for a great campaign amongst the unemployed, and during the autumn hundreds of thousands must be rallied on the streets against the Labour Government and behind the Workers' Charter.

#### WORKING CLASS YOUTH

The Party must win the working class youth for the Workers' Charter, but that is only possible through the building up of the Young Communist League, whose situation has but slightly changed for the better during the recent months. Can the youth be won? Without doubt. The splendid activity of the boys and girls during the great wool strike is convincing enough proof of the militancy and spirit of the young workers. But the youth do not come to the Y.C.L., or if they do, soon leave it. This is because the Y.C.L. does not carry on real youth activity and its methods of work are in no way adapted towards attracting and holding the youth.

The Party must play a decisive part in changing these methods of work and hammering out a youth policy. To effectively lead the League is one of the foremost tasks of the Party. In the immediate future the activity of the Y.C.L. should be along two main roads (a) a big drive for the organisation of a broad workers' sports organisation, such as will give the Y.C.L. contact with masses of young workers, (b) the working out of a youth programme of demands which can possibly be put forward and campaigned for in the form of a Youth Bill, containing four or five essential points.

#### THE "DAILY WORKER"

The *Daily Worker* will fight for the Workers' Charter every day; it will become the collective propagandist, agitator and organiser for the Charter, the most powerful

weapon we wield in the fight for it. To become this it must greatly increase its circulation immediately, which is chiefly a question of making it much more popular. Naturally the life of the paper is bound up with the activity of the Party and the *Daily Worker* will win new readers to the extent that the Party succeeds in the application of the united front tactics. But it must be emphasised that the way the paper is written will have a determining effect on the Party's work amongst the masses. The *Daily Worker* must become a daily newspaper of the united front, written for the masses in a popular manner and grasping those events which make it possible to convince the workers that the Communist policy is correct. One aspect of this popularity is the inclusion of more general news, especially by the way of effective contrasts between riches and poverty. This, of course, does not mean that the *Daily Worker* sets out to compete with the capitalist press. On the contrary, it must consistently work to destroy the rotten taste created by the capitalist press. The *Daily Worker* must be a fighting paper of the class struggle and builder of the Communist Party. In short, the *Daily Worker* must take *L'Humanite* as its model.

One of the chief means of developing the popular character of the paper and binding it close to the workers is the extension of the worker correspondence movement. "In every large factory a worker correspondent" must be the slogan and in order to realise this aim a detailed programme must be worked out.

From the very outset the *Daily Worker* has had a very hard fight and has been confronted with powerful enemies. Its continued existence, in face of the boycott of the wholesale agents and the attacks of the Labour Government has been made possible only by the devotion and self-sacrifice of the Party members and sympathisers who have improvised distribution machinery and up to date collected over £4,000. The collection of this sum is a record in the history of the C.P.G.B. The hard fight for the existence of the *Daily Worker* has shown that the question of distribution is of first-rate political importance and must be regarded so by every member of the Party. The building up of the *Friends of the*

*Daily Worker* is one of the most effective ways of mobilising the readers in defence of the paper, for a mass circulation and an ever-growing Fighting Fund, the iron wall around the paper against which the attacks of the capitalists will be hurled in vain.

The recruiting of new members must go hand-in-hand with all campaigns of the Party, especially the campaign for the Workers' Charter. Recruiting must be combined with systematic endeavours to overcome the heavy fluctuation in membership and to hold in the ranks every new recruit. This is a problem of organisation and methods of work, the question of the organisational content of the united front work, which must be treated as urgent and outstanding. The essential steps are a real turn to the factories and the building of cells, the strengthening of the district committees, the careful planning of all work and the introduction of a regular system of checking up.

Mass self-criticism is the most important method of correcting mistakes and consistently carrying out the line of the Comintern and this method has already become a regular part of the work of the Party. But it is necessary to strike a note of warning against the danger of distorting this revolutionary method. The mere cataloguing of mistakes is not self-criticism, for it is necessary to combine the admission of errors with an explanation of the causes of the mistakes and an understanding of what must be done in order to correctly carry out the tasks of the Party.

#### IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN

The carrying through of a widespread ideological campaign is an essential part of the turn to mass work and the fight for the Workers' Charter. This campaign must not be limited to a general popularisation of the new line and its practical application, but must also be directed towards exposing every

example of opportunism in practice and Left sectarianism. The *Daily Worker* must play a big part in this campaign and really carry on a fight on two fronts so that the isolation of the Party can be overcome. This ideological campaign must be bound up with the systematic bringing forward of new cadres, one of the most vital needs of the Party. Much conservatism is still displayed in the Party on developing new cadres and placing them in responsible leading positions and a final break must be made with this reactionary spirit. In the Central Committee the new comrades in the leadership must be systematically encouraged to play a more active part and in the Political Bureau the consolidation of collective leadership is an urgent necessity. The weakness of the cadres is to be seen most clearly in the district and lower organisation. Therefore, the Party must organise a school immediately and select for it the active Party workers in the factories, trade unions, locals, cells and districts. This school is long overdue and must not be delayed.

There are, of course, many other tasks of the Party which could be enumerated, especially the colonial work, but these are well known, and the important question is not the elaboration of all tasks, but the taking of these steps that mean a real turn to mass work and the ending of the isolation of the Party.

In gathering the forces of the Party for the correct daily application of the new line the Central Committee, with the full support of the E.C.C.I., will stubbornly resist any attempt to step backward to the old line pursued by the opportunist majority of the previous Central Committee which brought the Party into a crisis. The Communist Party of Great Britain is fighting for the line of "class against class" and for the leadership of the masses in the fight for the Revolutionary Workers' Government.

# THE STRIKE STRUGGLE IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

By KELLERMANN

**A**N analysis of the strike movement in Czecho-Slovakia clearly reveals that despite the leftward trend of the working class, in the past eighteen months' strike movement strikes were of a very disjointed nature, while from the *numerical* standpoint they have decreased considerably. Since this phenomenon is not limited to Czecho-Slovakia alone, but is repeated in several European countries, we think it will be useful to deal with the strike movements both in their quantitative and their political aspects.

Statistical data on the strike movements in Czecho-Slovakia during the last few years gives us the following picture:—

|   | 1926 <sup>(1)</sup> | 1927 <sup>(2)</sup> | 1928 <sup>(1)</sup> | 1929 <sup>(1)</sup> | 1930 <sup>(1)(3)</sup> |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Number of strikes .. .. .                               | 163                 | 278                 | 410                 | 300                 | 48                     |
| Number of strikers .. .. .                              | 49,220              | 188,898             | 177,195             | 83,657              | 15,619                 |
| Number of working days lost .. .. .                     | 734,907             | 1,138,709           | 1,818,808           | 695,270             | 218,995                |
| Average number participating in each strike ..          | 302                 | 700                 | 432                 | 279                 | 326                    |
| Average number of working days lost per striker .. .. . | 14.9                | 6.0                 | 10.3                | 8.3                 | 14.0                   |

The year 1926, which may be regarded as the concluding year of the last economic depression in Czecho-Slovakia, and as the commencement of the situation that set in on the basis of the relative stabilisation of capitalism, shows numerically a comparatively weak development of the strike movements, which, however, as is seen from the average number of days lost, is distinguished by the long duration of the economic conflicts. The years of the favourable economic situation (1927-1928) show quite a different picture. The characteristic feature of 1927 is the large number of workers involved in strikes (188,898), then the high average number participating in each strike, while there was a relatively *small* average number of working days lost per striker (6).

Despite the fact that since the commencement of the capitalist stabilisation of 1928 a more intensive development of strike movements is revealed, in that year there already appeared the tendency for them to become disjointed. The number of strikes exceeded that

of 1927 by one-third, while the number of workers involved was 6 per cent. and the average number participating in each strike almost 40 per cent (432 as against 700) less than in the preceding year. The higher number of working days lost and the larger average figure of strike-days per worker (10.3) are explained by the sharpening of contradictions between capital and labour arising from the incipient decline of stabilisation (particularly at the end of the year) and the greater intensity of the conflicts arising therefrom. Examples of this are the miners' strikes in the spring and autumn of 1928, the big building workers' movements, which in places lasted

ten weeks, the strike of glass workers at Gablontz, etc.

The year 1929, at the end of which, marked signs of an *acute* economic crisis were already discernible, gives, as a whole, a falling curve of the strike movements with a simultaneous considerable increase in their disjointedness. The number of workers involved does not even reach 50 per cent. of the previous year's figure, while the number of working days lost barely exceeds one-third. The scattered nature of the strike conflicts is shown by the fact that with a comparatively small number of strikers and low average figure of those participating in each strike (279) there was a *relatively large number of strikes* (300, as against 278 in 1927 and 410 in 1928).

Our statistical data only goes as far as January and February, 1930, during which months the results of the acute economic crisis

(1) "Communications of the Statistical Department."

(2) "Communications of the National Bank."

(3) The figures for 1930 refer to January and February only.

in Czecho-Slovakia begin to be more and more sharply revealed. These and the subsequent months also show the strike movements to be of a disjointed nature. The general numerical diminution in the strike movement in Czecho-Slovakia this year is mainly due to the fact that this spring we did not have the strikes of agricultural workers which have recurred regularly during the last three years (1927-1929).

The same thing was to be observed in regard to strikes of building workers, which this year did not take place. Nevertheless, in the winter of 1929/30 and during recent weeks, a number of symptoms of a new wave of economic struggles is to be observed.

#### WHY LESS STRIKES ?

Why has this considerable fall in the curve of strike movements in 1929 and their disjointedness, continued to the present day? How can one connect these apparently "negative" phenomena in the conducting of the class struggle in Czecho-Slovakia, with the shifting to the left of the working masses? It is all the more necessary to provide the answer to these questions, since the reformists as also the Czecho-Slovak liquidators advance the view that it is a hopeless business to conduct economic struggles during periods of crisis.

These traitors to the working class, on the one hand reduce the whole matter to the objective factors of the economic crisis while on the other hand they shoulder the workers with the responsibility for the decrease in the number of strike movements. But they do not say anything about their open strike-breaking. They do not tell how, during the economic fights they have themselves attacked the struggling workers in the back.

We must most clearly disclose the real reasons for the numerical decrease of economic struggles in Czecho-Slovakia during the last eighteen months because we have here years of a favourable economic situation (1927-1928) followed by a period (1929 and commencement of 1930) in which the crisis begins and becomes more acute, which might cause the impression that in Czecho-Slovakia the crisis is the main cause of the numerical diminution in strike movements.

We cannot, of course, get away from the fact that the crisis and the unemployment *as such* represent a retarding factor in the development of the economic strike struggles. We must, nevertheless, reject the theory of the reformists and liquidators concerning the "strike backwardness" of the masses in the present period and the "impossibility" of waging economic struggles in a period of crisis. This anti-class theory serves merely as a justification for the policy of "economic peace" conducted by the reformists and liquidators. The experience of Czecho-Slovakia shows that precisely in the present period, and particularly under the conditions of a growing economic crisis, there are a whole number of objective factors which are impelling the masses to the economic struggle and which are relegating to the background the retarding influence of the crisis and of the mass unemployment. One of these factors is the ruthless attack of the bosses on working class wages, with the object of lowering the standard of wages by 20-25 per cent. We have been able to observe how in Czecho-Slovakia this attack has had a determining influence on the nature of the economic fights during the transition from the favourable situation to the crisis. We will cite a few facts concerning this:

Out of the total number of strikes, the aims were as follows:—(1)

|                         | 1927 | 1928 | 1929 | 1930 <sup>(2)</sup> |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|---------------------|
| Against wage cuts . . . | 3.7% | 1.5% | 9%   | 19%                 |
| For higher wages . . .  | 88%  | 64%  | 50%  | 48%                 |

The results of the strikes, in relation to the total number of strikes, give the following picture:—

|                         | 1927  | 1928  | 1929  | 1930  |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Completely successful   | 0.5%  | 11.5% | 12%   | 22.8% |
| Partly successful . . . | 64.5% | 63.5% | 47.4% | 25.8% |
| Unsuccessful . . .      | 35.0% | 25.0% | 40.6% | 51.4% |

#### SUCCESSFUL STRIKES

These figures show the rapid increase at the beginning of 1930, in the percentage of strikes

(1) "Communications of the Statistical Department."

(2) For January and February.

ending in complete success, which cannot be explained any other way than by the stubborn and active resistance to the capitalist attack on wages. The increase in the number of strike movements ending either in complete success or complete defeat, clearly reveals the relentless nature of the economic conflicts of recent times.

A further objective factor that is now impelling the working masses to the economic struggle is the results of *capitalist rationalisation and the fascist régime inside the factories*. It is not by accident that in January and February, 1930, of the total number of strike movements (48), in no less than eleven cases the reasons for the action were *motives of working class solidarity, protests against the repressions heaped upon the revolutionary workers, and mass dismissals*. During the preceding months and years such cases were met with much less frequently. In this connection we might refer to the present mass movement among the Ostrava district metalworkers, to the miners' strikes, to the fight of the textile-workers in Fridek, in which nearly all the actions were marked by the fight against dismissals and to an extent against the persecution of revolutionary workers.

It is clear from the above that the decrease in the number of strike movements cannot be explained exclusively by the commencement and sharpening of the crisis, and that this economic crisis actually produces factors stimulating the leftward tendency of the masses and creates a broad basis for economic struggles. It seems to us that besides the influence of the crisis, the decreased number of strike movements during recent years in Czecho-Slovakia should be explained mainly by the changes that have taken place in the sphere of the *subjective* factors of the labour movement—the *change in the rôle of reformism, the merging of the latter with the employers' interests and with the bourgeois state apparatus, the need for an independent leadership of the economic struggles by the Communist Party and the Revolutionary Trade Union movement*.

As, in view of the shattering of capitalist stabilisation and the commencement of a new revolutionary wave, any considerable economic struggle would easily develop along poli-

tical channels and acquire revolutionary significance, the attitude of the reformists to the economic struggles of the masses has radically changed. The more the class antagonism between proletariat and bourgeoisie are accentuated the more openly and energetically do the reformists act as strike-breakers. In the economic fights of 1927, in the miners' struggle in the spring and autumn of 1928, in the Brünn metalworkers' strike in April, in the agricultural workers' strike in the spring, and the big builders' strike in the summer of the same year, the Czecho-Slovak reformists played the part of concealed traitors. In the main these struggles still take place under the leadership of the reformist trade union apparatus. The fact that during the more favourable years of 1927-1928, the reformists, under pressure from the masses, were often compelled to resort to the strike weapon shows that the strikes took place *with the participation of large masses*.

The change over of the reformists to *open* strikebreaking did not take place until the autumn and winter of 1928. It was first of all disclosed during the miners' struggle in the Kladno districts and became wholly manifested during the textile-workers' strike in Northern Bohemia and the agricultural workers' strike in Czecho-Slovakia in the spring of 1929. In the autumn of 1928 the social-fascist newspapers started an ideological campaign against economic strikes. This campaign was conducted with particular energy in connection with the Kladno miners' strike. Here an attempt was made to represent the workers as being "incapable of a strike," and to explain this away demagogically as being due to the absence of unity in the Trade Union movement. At the time of the textile-workers' strike in Northern Bohemia in January, 1929, which was the *first* strike to be led independently by the Red Textile Workers' Union and the Communist Party, the German reformists tried to conceal their open blacklegging by spreading savage slanders against the strikers and their leaders. As this economic conflict marked a break with the opportunist tradition of obeying the will of the reformist trade union bureaucracy, this strike was one of the main reasons for the revolt of Hais & Co. in the International Trade

Union Federation, after which the open strike-breaking already began to be operated jointly by the reformists and Hais with most complete unanimity during the strike of agricultural workers in Slovakia.

#### WEAKNESS OF RED UNIONS

We consider, nevertheless, that a serious obstacle to the development of mass economic struggles during the last year and a half is *the political and organisational weakness of the Red Trade Unions and the unsatisfactory work of our Party on the T.U. front, in particular its feeble work among the masses organised by the reformists, and among the unorganised workers.*

Even the bigger economic struggles that have taken place since the winter of 1928, under the leadership of the Red Trade Unions and the Communist Party, have, in the main, remained restricted to the organisational sphere of influence of the Red Trade Unions. For example, in spite of the favourable objective situation, we did not succeed in extending last year's agricultural workers' and miners' strikes to the spheres in which the reformists have more or less strong influence. Similarly, it has not yet been possible to extend to a wider plane the metal-workers' struggle which has been going on for nearly a year, nor to attack seriously the strong reformist positions among the metal-workers. During the present year action by the agricultural workers and builders has not taken place, in spite of the existence of favourable objective prerequisites.

It is true, the social-democratic working masses have learnt during the last year and a half from the clear lessons of the reformists' open betrayals, but that is by no means sufficient. The feeble mass work among the unorganised factory workers, the neglect of the new strata of workers and of the working class youth, the opportunist running away from work in the factories by Party members, opportunist resistance by the T.U. functionaries to the reorganisation of the Red Trade Unions on the basis of the factories—these are further reasons why the masses do not yet see the main distinction between the reformist and the revolutionary trade unions.

It is obvious that the fighting capacity of the Red Trade Unions and the Communist Party has been considerably raised as a result of their being cleansed of the liquidators and that by this means they have become a great deal more adapted to the present tasks in the sphere of trade union work and the organisation of economic struggles. *In spite of these successes, the important tasks of independent leadership of the economic struggle and of applying the new strike tactics, as laid down by the Fourth Congress R.I.L.U. and Sixth Congress Comintern, have been carried out quite unsatisfactorily by the Red Trade Unions and Communist Party.*

#### STRIKES UP . . .

The last three months covered by our statistical data—December, January and February, 1929-1930—are the winter months, in which the smallest number of economic conflicts is usually observed. However, the respective figures as compared with those of the preceding year, not only reveal no "quietening down," but even emphasise new factors testifying to an accentuation of the conflicts, to the considerable readiness for sacrifice, and persistence of the masses during the struggle, *i.e.*, to the raising up of the mass strike movement to a higher political plane.

The following figures are for the three winter months referred to (1):—

|   | 1927-28 | 1928-29 | 1929-30 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of strikes ..                                  | 48      | 37      | 64      |
| Number of strikers ..                                 | 32,286  | 17,620  | 20,146  |
| Number of working days lost .. ..                     | 432,286 | 84,053  | 277,571 |
| Average number participating per strike               | 672     | 476     | 315     |
| Average number of working days lost per striker .. .. | 13.4    | 4.8     | 13.8    |

The comparatively high figures for the three winter months 1927/28 are explained by the fact of the big miners' strike in Northern Bohemia which involved 22,056 miners and lasted 21 days. During the winter of

(1) "Communications of the Statistical Department."

1928/29 there was the textile-workers' strike in the Reichenberg district, in which more than 5,000 workers participated. This strike lasted eight days. As far as the winter months of 1929/30 are concerned, we cannot allude to any big strike. These were months of small scattered conflicts, in which, however, workers of the *mining industry* and of practically *all branches of light industry* participated. The fact that here it was mainly a question of a defensive struggle against the capitalist offensive in light industry indicates the influence of the economic crisis. The considerably scattered nature of the strikes in the 1929/30 winter is revealed from the average number participating in each strike (315). On the other hand, the relatively high number of strikes (64 as against 48 in 1927/28 and 37 in 1928/29), and the relatively large number of working days lost is a proof of the fact *that the wave of strike movements in Czecho-Slovakia is once more beginning to rise.*

#### IN SPITE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

This phenomenon occurs in months of acute economic crisis, when 400,000 workers are vainly seeking work, when strikers in every factory are threatened with the danger of dismissal, which, under the *Gent* system of unemployment aid, is tantamount to being starved to death, and when the conditions of struggle have been rendered much more difficult, as we have already shown above. Very significant is the high average number of working days lost per striker (13.8) in the winter of 1929/30. If we connect up this fact with the accentuated political forms in which the present strike struggles in Czecho-Slovakia are proceeding (Falkenau, Remerstadt, Moravian Ostrava, etc.), it is clear that the economic struggles in Czecho-Slovakia have risen to a higher plane and are growing into political struggles. Our experience in Czecho-Slovakia during the last few months completely confirms the estimation of the present disjointed economic conflicts given in the theses of the Sixth Session of the Central Council of the R.I.L.U. in December, 1929. In Chapter II. of these theses it states :—

“What is new in these (smaller) strikes is the accentuation of both sides, the direct transformation of the strikes into fights against the class of capitalists, the bourgeois state of the latter and against social-fascism, the new methods of struggle applied by the workers, and the readiness of the broad mass of workers not to retreat before the greatest of sacrifices.”

From the point of view of the prospects of development of class struggles in Czecho-Slovakia it is of the greatest importance to obtain a proper estimation of the economic struggles, not only of the past winter months, but also of the last few weeks, as the objective precursors of gigantic mass fights.

We see in Czecho-Slovakia a tendency of development towards these gigantic mass struggles in the metal-workers' movement in the Ostrava district and in the symptoms of an incipient movement in the entire metal industry, among miners and other strata of the working class.

A factor particularly characteristic of these struggles is that here the interests of the employed workers are merged with the interests of the unemployed masses. But most significant of all in the development of the strike movements in 1929/30 is the fact that these movements have been conducted almost entirely in defiance of the open strike-breaking of the reformists and have been led by the Communist Party and Red Trade Unions. These movements are thus quite *different in quality* from the preceding year's fights. During the struggles of the last few months and weeks we also find a definite positive factor in so far as the Red Trade Unions and Communist Party have strengthened their leading rôle among the unorganised masses.

These recent examples show that the objective process of shifting to the left, on the part of the Czecho-Slovak working masses will facilitate the task of the C.P. and Red Trade Unions in winning the confidence of the majority of the working class, which confidence will be won by a Bolshevik change of front in the leadership of economic struggles; it will facilitate their becoming the real leaders of the masses. But the effecting of this change of front is still a matter of the future.

# THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE SOCIAL INSURANCE ACT IN FRANCE

By M——r.

**T**HE struggle against the Social Insurance Act in France has developed on an enormous scale and been transformed into a class battle of first-rate importance. More than 200,000 workers entered upon the struggle against the law, which was the joint production of the bourgeois parties and reformist leaders. These workers are waging war on capitalist government; it is not this particular measure which they are fighting, but the administrative committee for capitalist affairs, and this fact gives the struggle an undeniably political character.

Let us now consider the nature of this law dealing with social insurance which has called forth so much indignation and resistance from the workers. Up to the present France has never had a system of social insurance unless we count as such the law dealing with workers' and peasants' pensions which did not benefit the working class. It is only to-day, in the third period of post-war capitalism, the period of the sharpening of class contradiction, of the "fascisation" of the apparatus of government, that the French bourgeoisie have hatched out this precious scheme after several years of preparatory work and parliamentary debates on the subject. The law and the resistance with which it has been met reflect from the one side the intention of the bosses to smother the discontent of the workers and imprison them within a system of apparatus of "government which is the workers' guardian" and from the other side bears testimony to the lack of results of their gesture of "reconciliation and social solidarity" at the very moment when mighty waves of class struggle are shaking bourgeois society to its foundations. At the moment of writing it is possible to assert that, even with the help of the Socialist leaders, Tardieu has failed in his Bismarckian attempt to consolidate capitalist dominion by the development of a system of social insurance.

The basic principle of the act is the creation of a social insurance fund made up from equal

contributions from the employers and work-people alike, amounting jointly to 8 to 10 per cent. of the wage of the insured worker. The Socialists justify the deduction of contributions from wages as "affording a moral right to participation in the administration of the insurance funds, which right the working class purchases by this means." However, the act is so framed that the participation of the workers in the administration of the funds is simply used as a bait; in actual fact the power is completely in the hands of the bosses and government officials. Already some local savings funds (the first step) organised by the workers themselves are administered by joint commissions, half the members of which are representatives of the bosses.

The insurance benefits which the law provides in case of sickness, old age, incapacitation, etc., are totally inadequate. For example, sick benefit consists of six months on half wages, and in addition to this the insured person is expected to pay 20 per cent. of any expenses he may incur for medical attendance and drugs. The conditions of unemployment insurance are perfectly scandalous. The unemployed worker gets 10 per cent. of his wages for three months, and after that, not a halfpenny.

The law is aimed against strikes and strives to make them impossible by fixing Draconian regulations—which have to be strictly observed before benefits can be received—as regards the dates on which contributions must have been paid. It is enough that a worker should cease his contributions temporarily as the result of a strike for him to become ineligible for benefit.

The iniquitous character of the law is most clearly revealed by its attitude to the foreign workers who compose nearly 20 per cent. of the French proletariat. These pay as much as the French workers, but get considerably less in the way of benefits.

For example, they get no unemployment benefit though they have to pay 1 per cent. of

their wages into the unemployment benefit fund.

According to the act, every insured person has to have a special booklet in which are recorded the places where he worked. By this dodge the bosses can keep track of suspects and undesirables and prevent them from obtaining work. The law is simply organised espionage disguised as social solidarity.

The act came into force on July 1st. The French Communist Party and the C.G.T.U. (Confédération Générale de Travail Unitaire, Communist T.U. Federation) led an energetic agitation against the law making use of the excellent slogan: "No contributions from the workers!" This call, based on the direct demand of the workers who wanted to make a stand against wage reductions in the form of insurance contributions, made it possible to develop a wide political struggle against the law. On this occasion we were presented with a magnificent opportunity to organise mass political strikes throughout the length and breadth of France for, after a few days or a week had elapsed, every French worker was affected by the wage reduction through a rise in the cost of living. In addition to this, the reduction of wages was called for by a law voted for by the bourgeois parliament and consequently bound up with the whole machinery of government. On the basis of a fight against contributions from the workers, there was the prospect of a magnificent struggle against the law, involving a million workers, a living example of the mass political strike.

It must be admitted that the Party missed this opportunity. When it was time to go beyond abstract algebraical formulæ and translate them into life, to cease merely general propaganda and get down to brass tacks and direct organisation of the struggle, the Party showed itself incapable of seizing the moment and estimating correctly its chances, putting into organised form the readiness of the mass of the workers for the fray. Like the prince in the story who wasted his whole life looking for happiness beyond the clouds and missed it when it suddenly appeared within an inch of his nose, the Party, after chatting for several months about "Politicalisation" of strikes in its documents, neglected the chance of getting on with this

"Politicalisation" in the given concrete case. Up to the very day on which the law came into force, the Party confined itself to appeals to the workers to fight and did not consider the question of the concrete forms which the struggle should take (except in one or two articles); it neither popularised nor prepared actual strikes against the law as an active form of struggle in themselves. There was not even a committee of action formed against the insidious clauses discriminating against foreign workers and organising espionage. The Party concentrated too much on propaganda and the legal aspects of the act, and neglected the essentials of the moment. Our Party and the working class entered upon the struggle without preparation, without clear ideas of what they wanted to do; the Party hesitated with the masses of the workers and obscured its rôle as organiser.

In spite of all these deficiencies, we must attribute to active members of the Party the fact that it foresaw the mass movement, opened the campaign against the law and was able to concentrate the activity of the masses of the workers on the struggle against contributions from the workers. If it did not know how to organise the struggle as it should have been organised, it is beyond doubt that its agitation was a factor of primary importance as the occasion of the strike outburst. While the struggle was actually in progress, the Party conducted a wide agitation by means of meetings and literature and succeeded in exposing the manœuvres of the reformist leaders. Notwithstanding all its weaknesses, it was the only Party which was able to animate and act as the mouthpiece of the warring workers and be the only central force in the leadership of the struggle. Nevertheless, a series of grave mistakes were made in the course of the campaign.

In some localities the workers began the fight before the law came into force. This went on without the intervention of any organisation. The workers' initiative took various forms: a refusal to fill in the entry forms, the collection and destruction of contributors' books, petitions and lists of protesters, etc. Cases occurred where the workers burnt or threw into the sea entry forms which had been filled in, etc. Sabotage forced the govern-

ment to send out tens of thousands of copies of instructions to insured persons in the Parisian district.

The strike movement blazed up after the law came into force, generally and naturally on the eve of the first deduction of contributions. This movement caught the Party napping. "The first wave of the movement against the insurance act overwhelmed us" as one of the members of the C.E. described the position at its last session. (*l'Humanité*, July 26th.)

Very varied groups of workers began the fight. In Armentières, working peasants on their own initiative proposed a united front to the C.G.T.U. In Lille, the Municipal Workers' Union affiliated to the C.G.T. (Confédération Générale de Travail, Reformist T.U. Federation) was the first to call a strike against the deductions of workers' contributions and for an increase in wages. The movement spread swiftly, but remained concentrated in definite districts. The Nord became the centre of the movement. About the end of July, 60 per cent. of the strikers hailed from this district. Two other important districts were the Seine-Inférieure and the Somme. Finally, in the Parisian district, nearly 20,000 metal workers started the battle against the law, but suffered defeat after a few days. As is generally the rule, the movement blazed most fiercely where wages were lowest and where the exploiters were the most insolent and where, consequently, the wage reductions were most keenly felt.

The trade unions played second fiddle in the leadership of the struggle. This is evidenced by the case of the Seine-Inférieure and the Somme, where workers' organisations were almost non-existent.

Let us consider the attitude of the reformist leaders in relation to the struggle. Incapable of preventing it or limiting its extent, they put themselves at the head of the struggle with the fixed intention of breaking it. They also tried to outbid the Communists and, for example, at Halluin Rouge, called for a general strike, profiting by some vacillations in our midst. They defined their position as follows: "We accept the law, including the clause relating to contributions from the workers. The working class welcomes its advent and only

by the purest chance has this coincided with the moment at which the workers decided to fight for an increase in wages. Thus, in spite of this coincidence, the movement is in no wise directed against the application of the Social Insurance Law." (*Populaire*, August 13th.) Léon Blum declared that wages were too low to admit deductions from them. It was necessary to raise them at the same time by the sum deducted from workers' contributions and then all would be in order. In this event the reformist leaders are giving a brilliant example of attempts to "depoliticalise" a strike having a political character and transform it into a purely "economic" struggle. On this basis they are developing a consistent capitalistic policy, addressing themselves to the government with a demand for mediation, breaking the workers' fighting front by calling upon those workers who have had their demands satisfied to return to work. At the head of the police and gendarmes or in close collaboration with them, they are protecting scabs and at the same time persecuting Communists in complete complicity with the bosses. The adoption of these tactics does not, however, restrain them from playing at left manoeuvres and on several occasions they have even succeeded in drawing our comrades into their toils.

Thus, in the department of the Somme, our comrades made serious mistakes in the application of the tactic of the united front. This latter was achieved by an agreement between the revolutionary and reformist organisations and furnishes a classic example of the united front from above. Our comrades accepted the conditions that nothing should be said about social insurance either at the strike committee or at meetings and that active comrades from the central organisations should not be included in the personnel of the strike committee or take part in the meetings. An agreement was also concluded not to recruit members to the unions till the end of the struggle. In the lower Somme district: "The Strike Committee in session at Flixécourt has decided unanimously that in the interests of the trade union character of the movement, August 1st should be considered as a holiday for the strikers. This decision means that no demonstration can take place on August 1st, under

the auspices of the Strike Committee and trade unions affiliated to the C.G.T. and C.G.T.U. and connected with the Strike Committee." (*Peuple*, July 31st.) In the department of the Nord, the reformist leaders in the name of the "independent conduct of the struggle," proposed to confine the movement to the limits of the fight for an advance in wages and exclude "politics and the adoption of C.G.T.U. and C.P. methods" from the activity of the strike committees and meetings. In the name of the unity of the workers, this proposal was accepted by several C.G.T.U. unions. Some of the responsible comrades were against the project of going to C.G.T. meetings with the purpose of exposing the reformist leaders.

All these facts bear witness to the enormous confusion prevailing in the Party and C.G.T.U. on the question of the united front and also the strength of opportunism in practice, which has led to fraternisation with treacherous reformist leaders and the breaking up of the movement. The achievement of the united front at the price of the blurring of the political character of the struggle, of the refusal to allow the movement to take part in the struggle against imperialist war, must be condemned in no indecisive fashion. On the contrary, the task of the Party is to raise the level of the struggle, underline its political character, to conduct in the course of the struggle, and while preparing for it, a merciless fight against the reformist leaders and their attempts to confine the struggle to "purely T.U. questions." Further the Party and the C.G.T.U. must exploit to their fullest capacity this campaign for the purpose of broadening their ranks and strengthening and consolidating under their leadership the militant workers' organisation: they must oppose the fighting united front of all who labour, whether workers connected with the C.G.T. or C.G.T.U. peasants, or any other kind of worker to the caricature of a purely trade union united front, preached by the reformist agents of capital.

We must admit that the leadership of the Party and the C.G.T.U. have rectified their line during the course of the struggle, corrected and admitted their faults and by these means developed a clear-cut campaign which

has had the result of strengthening numerically the revolutionary organisations during the progress of the strikes. The special weakness of the movement from the point of view of organisation lay in the elementary character of the strikes and in the absence of satisfactory organisation of the united front from below and lack of attention to the problem of material support for the strikers. The strike committees were not wholly dependent on the strikers. The central strike committee in the Roubaix-Tourcoing district was not elected by the workers, but consisted of delegates from the factories who had shown personal initiative. In many places the C.G.T.U. unions refrained from recruiting during the strike and refused to take in the unorganised workers so long as the fight was on, as they held that they could only do this when victory was obtained, an extremely false and erroneous idea. All these mistakes made it easier for the reformists to land home their treacherous blows which finally resulted in the partial defeat of the workers, in spite of their magnificent example in trying to prevent scabbing, mass picketing, etc.

Incorrect guidance at the outset of the campaign was the cause of a lack of clear perspectives on the part of the Party, and the absence of a general investigation as to the methods necessary to get control of the movement and how to handle it when this was done. The Party put too much trust in elementary measures and did not present decisively to the workers the ends for which they must strive and the concrete methods by which they may get the upper hand of this social insurance act, with its tendencies to divide the workers and establish a system of espionage over them.

These mistakes were closely connected with those incorrect ideas which were prevailing in the Party about the impossibility of importing positive slogans into the domain of social insurance and about the unfavourable influence which the exaction of contributions from employers will have on the cost of living (we will devote a special article to this question).

The first stage of the fight against the social insurance act, of which the main factor was the great strike in the Nord, is now drawing to its close. This does not mean that the problem is solved; far from it. The struggle against

the law has as yet only begun. The Party is now faced with the difficult task of correcting its mistakes and organising a further struggle of the mass of the workers against this law and for a real scheme of social insurance.

The Party must work out concrete demands useful for rallying the mass of the workers and mobilising them under its leadership.

Our programme of social insurance must be based on the experience of the U.S.S.R., which has not been used enough for propaganda purposes up to now. The soviet system of social insurance ought to be made quite concretely the centre of our campaign, which is not to say that its details must be mechanically applied to the very different conditions prevailing in France.

We must call on the workers to fight for a system of social insurance based on the following principles:—

1. The funds must be composed exclusively of contributions from the employers and the government.

2. Benefits for all kinds of disability must be equal to the full wage earned by the insured person when in active work.

3. Limited dates for payment and other obligatory conditions controlling the right to the receiving of benefit must be abolished.

4. The law must embrace all workers without exception (men workers, women workers, agricultural workers, seasonal workers, foreign workers and those from the colonies) and let them have an equal right to benefit; the abolition of workers' books and domiciliary control.

5. The administration must be entirely in the hands of the workers; there must be constituted a general fund for all sorts of disability (sickness, old age, incapacitation, unemployment, etc.).

Based on these principles, concrete detailed demands must be elaborated dealing with the different kinds of disablement and other partial questions which are of interest to one or other section of the workers (e.g., foreign workers, seasonal workers, etc.). It should be said that up till now the problem of the foreign workers whom the act places in a disadvantageous position compared with that of the French workers, has not been sufficiently considered; the Party is not mobilising these

workers on a basis of special demands for foreign workers, it has not sufficiently occupied itself in rallying foreign workers for the struggle on the basis of a united front for French and foreign workers. In exactly the same way must be concretely viewed and considered the methods of rallying the unemployed for the fight.

It is essential to develop a wide campaign about the advantages of a Communist Social Insurance Act, and it is needful to make it clear to the workers that only the revolutionary road, with the Communist Party as a guide, leads to the achievement of the aims for which they are striving. The workers must be organised for the struggle against the insurance act, which is closely linked up with the fight for an advance in wages, which struggle is now our central task in view of the considerable increase in the cost of living. This struggle must be closely connected with the popularisation of the soviet achievements. The whole campaign must be widely utilised for making recruits for the Party and the C.G.T.U.

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**THE**

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**WORKERS**

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# CHARTER

**HARRY POLLITT**

16 pages ½d.

THE HUNT IS UP —

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# ALL SECTIONS OF THE C.I. CAN AND MUST BECOME REALLY MASS PARTIES

By O. PIATNITSKY

**W**HAT are the main reasons for the *weak growth* (C.P. of Germany, C.P. of U.S.A., C.P. of Austria) and in certain sections of the C.I. (C.P. of France, C.P. of Czecho-Slovakia, C.P. of Great Britain) even *the loss of membership*?

This question is being debated in the Comintern and its sections. Many comrades, while agreeing that the causes of weak growth and even of loss of membership by the C.I. sections in the capitalist countries are the bad work of the sections and their incapacity to *reinforce organisationally their growing political influence*, demand proofs that these are the *main* reasons and that there are not other still more weighty causes, which, however, they are unable even to name.

We will endeavour to prove on the basis of facts, that *it depends only upon the Comintern sections themselves to increase the membership, to retain the new members made, and thereby to reinforce their political influence organisationally.*

When the C.I. sections organise campaigns that can be understood by the masses, at the same time mobilising all Party organisations to carry them out, they will encounter the resolute support of wide sections of the masses. Look at the facts:

(a) The *C.P. of China* has had and still has to work in the industrial centres under the unprecedented terror of the Kuomintang and the Imperialists, and despite this, there has not been a single case where the masses have not followed the Party when it has organised anti-Kuomintang or anti-Imperialist demonstrations that have been well-prepared. On May 30th, 1929, the anniversary of the 1925 shootings, the C.P. of China organised strikes and demonstrations in Shanghai. The Kuomintang and Imperialist authorities mobilised all their forces to prevent the Communist Party carrying through this campaign; the entire police force was standing ready; demonstrations and strikes were forbidden under pain of death. Under cover of a semi-legal

committee of representatives of social organisations, organised in connection with the murder of a Chinaman by a British soldier, the Communist Party convened a conference of the delegates of 60 Trade Unions, students and Communist organisations which prepared the May 30 strikes and demonstrations. The working masses rallied. Mass demonstrations in which scores of thousands took part were held in the main streets of Shanghai. The demonstrations lasted several hours, and two Kuomintang newspaper offices were smashed up. The dockers, many textile mills, the postal workers and students struck work. The Kuomintang Postal Workers' Union and the universities, whose students struck on May 30th, were dissolved and closed down by the Kuomintang. This action, prepared energetically and competently, in Bolshevik fashion, by the C.P. in Shanghai, after a long absence of open activity, immediately raised the authority of both the Communist Party and the Red Trade Unions throughout the whole of China. New members joined both the Party and the Red Unions. (Up till then, the latter had an even smaller membership than the Party organisations.) The May, 1929, demonstrations in Shanghai were thus to a certain extent a turning point in the extension of the activities of the C.P. and the Red Trade Unions in all spheres of Party and Trade Union work in China.

(b) On the eve of May 1st, 1930, the Calcutta Committee of the C.P. of India got out several leaflets, appealing to the workers in the Party's name. It called upon the workers to strike on May 1st. A handful of Party members carried on energetic activity among the workers of the factories and mills. As a result the workers of the biggest factories in Calcutta came out on May 1st.

(c) The C.P. of Poland has to work under the very difficult conditions of Fascist Terror. Working in the Secret Police are members of the P.P.S. (Polish Socialist Party) who, knowing the active workers of the C.P. of

Poland in person, betray them to the police. The Polish prisons are filled to overflowing with members of the C.P. of Poland. In spite of this, during big campaigns, such as the elections of factory delegates, sick-fund committees, municipal councils or Sejm deputies, or campaigns for strikes and demonstrations, if the Party organisations are very active, the workers not only vote for the C.P.P. candidates, but take part in the demonstrations. And they do that despite the fact that nearly all demonstrations end by demonstrators being arrested, beaten up or shot by the P.P.S.-ites or the police.

At the big "Parovoz" works in Warsaw, where the C.P.P. had strong influence, Party work at one time for various reasons became very feeble and the P.P.S.-ites succeeded everywhere in squeezing out the Communists and their sympathisers. The Warsaw organisation of the C.P.P. gave attention to the "Parovoz" works, strengthening the Party activities there. As a result, the Socialists were very soon swept out of all their positions and our Party not only won back its old positions, but strengthened its influence.

Facts concerning the activities of the legal Communist Parties testify to the same thing. We need only refer to a few examples.

(d) The small C.P. of the U.S.A. (after the expulsion of the Rights it had 8,000 members), freed from the opportunist leadership of the Lovestonites, carried on widespread and energetic activity in all spheres of Party work. The Communists, along with the members of the Trade Union Unity League, organised new class Trade Unions, prepared and led strikes of miners, dockers, textile workers, etc. At the call of the C.P. of America and the T.U. Unity League, following the preparatory work undertaken by the latter, 1,250,000 workers in all industrial towns of the U.S.A. came out on to the streets on March 6th, on the International Day of Struggle against unemployment. In the process of organising class trade unions, leading strikes and preparing demonstrations, the C.P. of America has had some success in recruiting new members. According to information not yet verified by the E.C.C.I. the Party increased its membership by 100 per cent. during these campaigns.

(e) In Czecho-Slovakia, at the very height

of the inner-Party crisis, when the Rights openly revolted against the Party, mobilising their supporters in the Trade Unions, co-operatives, Parliament, Senate, municipalities, newspapers, etc., the C.P. developing an extensive electoral campaign in 1929, directed against all bourgeois and social-democratic Parties as well as against the Right renegades, received 750,000 workers' votes. Some semi-social-democrats and passive elements left the Party, but in exchange a large number of revolutionary workers flocked to the Party and helped the C.P.Cz. to operate the policy of "class against class."

(f) In all campaigns conducted by the C.P. of France, active assistance is rendered by hundreds of thousands of non-Party sympathisers. Last year, when the French bourgeoisie tried to lay their hands on *l'Humanité*, believing that the C.P.F. would not be able to pay at once all the debts to the Workers' and Peasants' Banks, workers collected several million francs in support of the paper within two to three months. Thousands of non-Party workers organised "*l'Humanité* Defence Committees," chiefly in the factories. The bourgeoisie retreated. It had not expected such an outburst of indignation amongst the workers throughout the whole of France.

The Red Trade Unions in France, which are under the influence of the C.P., have prepared and led several thousand strikes during the last two years. When the unorganised workers become convinced that the Red Trade Unions are really leading the class struggle, they will willingly join these trade unions. In Belfort, where 13,000 metal-workers and textile-workers were on strike, 2,400 new members joined the Metal-workers' and Textile-workers' Unions after the end of the strike. In Gise, after a strike in which 1,100 metal-workers had participated, 90 per cent. of the strikers—about 1,000 workers—joined the Metal-workers' Union.

(g) The C.P. of Great Britain, during the General Strike and Miners' Strike, carried on energetic work and therefore succeeded in recruiting more than 6,000 members for the Party (increasing the membership by more than 100 per cent.) In many mining districts the Party organisations during the strike could

not keep pace with all the applications for membership. After the defeat of the strike, the number desiring to join the Party decreased. During the recent woollen strike and lockout, in which the C.P. of Great Britain, creating Committees of Action and Strike Committees, energetically fought the employers and the reformist trade union bureaucrats, many men and women strikers joined the Party.

(h) The C.P. of Germany at the 1928 Parliamentary elections received 3,230,000 working class votes, while the paying membership of the Party was 130,000. This gives on an average 25 votes for a Communist candidate, for every one Party member. It is to be hoped that at the coming elections in September of this year, the Party will receive about 4,000,000 votes.

In 1929 the C.P. of Germany for the first time began to apply the tactics of independent leadership in the economic struggles, defeating the strike-breaking efforts of the trade union bureaucrats and putting forward its own independent candidates at the Factory Committee Elections (up to 1929 at the Factory Committee Elections the Communists fought inside the trade unions to get their own candidatures included in the lists put forward by the trade unions). In 1929 the C.P.G. put forward its own independent candidate lists in more than 120 average-sized and large enterprises, and received in these places almost as many votes as were received by the social-democrats, viz.: In 104 factories the reformists received 121,236 and the trade union opposition 116,730; in the same factories in 1930, the reformists received 106,902 votes (14,334 less than in 1929) and the Communists received 110,028 (6,702 less than in 1929).

In 1930 the C.P. of Germany already put forward its own lists in more than 1,200 average-size and large undertakings employing a total of two-and-a-half million working men and women; at the same time in 700 of these factories the Party received more votes than the social-democrats, and in many of these 700 received an absolute majority over the votes given for all lists. The number of votes won by the Red lists from the social-democrats and reformists in one group of fifteen factories alone—in the Ruhr, Rhine and Upper Silesian

areas, amounts to 12,667. (In 1929 the reformists received 23,390 votes in these factories, while in 1930, when the C.P.G. put forward its own lists, they received 13,403.) The C.P. of Germany altogether had 7,000 members of factory committees and 4,000 candidates.

There was not a single revolutionary campaign (parliamentary and municipal elections, demonstrations, factory committee elections, calls for strikes, etc.), that was not able to rally large numbers of the masses, once the Communist Party had made preparations in good time and sufficiently skilfully arranged for the participation of all the auxiliary organisations. All the revolutionary campaigns, particularly the strikes led by the Communist Party (beginning with the Ruhr strike struggle at the end of 1928 right up to and including the Mansfeld strike) have been accompanied by the recruitment of new members to the Party and Trade Union Opposition.

As is known, the workers of the whole world warmly responded to the call of the C.I. to demonstrate on the International Day of Struggle Against War (August 1st, 1929 and 1930) and on the Day of Struggle Against Unemployment (March 6th, 1930). What is more: it is characteristic that the "class against class" tactics, as expressed in the Communist Parties coming out against all bourgeois Parties, including the "Socialists," was supported energetically by the workers of Germany, France and other countries, whereas the operation of such tactics met with resistance on the part of some of the leading members of the C.P.s of Germany, France, Great Britain, America and other countries. It would be possible to cite many other facts from the life of all sections of the C.I., confirming the assertion that when the Communist Parties prepare and lead revolutionary campaigns, the working masses actively support them and the best elements of the working class make endeavours to join the only working class Parties—the Communist Parties.

#### WHY DO WE LOSE RECRUITS?

Unfortunately, it must be admitted that the C.I. Sections often not only fail to retain new members, but also lose old ones. Why? We will try and explain the reasons for this.

(1). The Party organisations in all sections of the C.I. in capitalist countries develop their activities from one campaign to another, instead of carrying on steady systematic work among the masses.

(2). The Party organisations do not pay sufficient attention to the training of new Party members. In the majority of cases they are not drawn into Party work, because the cell bureaux, the secretariat and bureaux of district committees and of other local Party organisations seldom function as permanent Party organs and general meetings of the cells and local Party organisations meet very seldom and when they do they are as a rule badly prepared. Even plenums of Party Committees are a very rare occurrence. All these meetings are substituted by meetings of the local and district active functionaries, which, moreover, are summoned insufficiently frequently and which, in fact, replace both the meetings and conferences of district and local organisations. As a result, such an important institution in Party structure as the meeting of the active functionaries, instead of bringing questions already discussed before the cells, meetings of district or sub-district Party organisations, for further elaboration, and thus livening them up, making them permanently functioning organs — actually replace them.

(3). But so long as the Party Committees and the general meetings of cells and local Party organisations do not function, it is quite easy to understand why the factory cells have not yet become the basic Party organisation in the factories and works. There are many factories and works where there are Party members, who do not form factory cells. Moreover, not all Communists are members of the factory cell already existing in the factory where they work, but belong to the residential Party groups. This even continues at the present time, in spite of the fact that the social-democrats, for whom the residential basis is the main form of Party organisation, as also the national-fascists, are beginning not by words, but by deed, to transfer their operations to the factories, in order to combat the Communists. (They are organising their factory cells and publishing factory newspapers.)

(4). In the absence of permanent activity by the cell bureaux, the secretariats and the bureaux of Party Committees, in the absence of collective guidance and control of the work by the local and district Party organisations, it is inevitable that insufficient attention is paid to the work of the existing factory and street cells. It also means insufficient attention to factory newspapers and to the local Party press in general, as also to the work of the Red Factory Committees, the revolutionary and trade union delegates. Furthermore, the Communist fractions in the factory committees, and in the reformist and Red Trade Unions, and in general all Communist fractions in mass workers' organisations are left without Party guidance. If we add to that the absence of proper self-criticism, it becomes clear why red tape and very often bureaucratic practices develop in local and district Party organisations.

(5). It is only by such abnormalities in the work of the local Party organisations that we can explain the cases, to be observed everywhere in all sections of the C.I., where Party Committees find out about economic conflicts in the factories, when they are already ended, as in the majority of cases the Communists working in these factories either pay no attention at all to what is going on in the factories, or else act on the off chance without the guidance of the various Party organisations, which often leads to various forms of opportunism in practice.

We will illustrate this by facts cited from the practice of our sections. On January 26th, 1930, the Marx cell of a provincial organisation of the C.P. of Poland passed a resolution in which it states:—

“We, members of the C.P.P., lodge a complaint about the dilatoriness of our leaders, who have forgotten about our cell for several months now and it has not been assisted by anyone. We categorically demand some sort of guidance for a definite period, otherwise we will have to abandon our fighting position, which we have been using up till now to fight for a workers' and peasants' Government.

“We demand that this resolution be sent to the C.C. . . .”

“At the time of the ‘three L’s’ campaign (Lenin-Liebkecht-Luxemburg) our cell was

assisted by a member of the District Committee, Comrade X., who instructed us to hang up our banners during the 'three L's' campaign and to write up slogans on the houses, which we did.

"... However, when we asked Comrade X. to teach us what to do, and to speak to us on the subject, he said he would willingly help us, but he had nothing new for us, as the District Committee had not met for more than three months. Therefore, we ask, already for the second time, that greater attention be paid to our training, so that we can really represent our Party . . ."

"... You should teach us how to become experienced and to adapt ourselves to the struggle. We are already quite well aware how to hang up flags on telephone wires and how to chalk slogans on walls. But we not only do not know how to beat our opponents at meetings and conferences, as we do not know what their Parties stand for, but we do not even know the aims of our own Party . . ."

"... We demand that we be given systematic guidance and not as before once a month or once every three months."

The resolution cited above, unfortunately, is not a peculiarity of the provincial organisation of the Polish C.P. referred to. The same inattention to party cells, the same absence of guidance of the lower Party organisations, particularly the factory cells, on the part of the higher Party Committees is a frequent occurrence in both the legal and illegal Communist Parties in all capitalist countries.

Many Party organisations of the C.P. of France learnt only from the Party newspapers how many groups of workers, from what factories and towns in France had contributed to the *l'Humanité* fund, and in which factories the workers had formed *l'Humanité* Defence Committees.

Furthermore, many Party organisations of the C.P. of France saw in the *l'Humanité* Defence Committees the danger of the formation of a Labour Party which the renege groups (the "Workers'-and-Peasants' Party"-ites, excluded from the C.P. the Trotskyists, etc.), could utilise against the C.P.F. instead of taking into their hands such a remarkably broad mass movement, organising it, and directing it along correct

channels; instead of, on the basis of this movement, getting into contact with the factories (where the C.P.F. has very poor contacts) turning these committees into permanent organs informing *l'Humanité* what is going on in the factories, increasing our circulation through them, and, finally, drawing the best elements of these committees into the Party and the Red Trade Unions—instead of doing all this, many local Party organisations did not pay sufficient attention to the *l'Humanité* Defence Committees, despite the fact that instructions were issued about this in good time. As a result, these committees began to disappear just as spontaneously as they sprang up. And *l'Humanité*, instead of extending its circulation after such a mass response among the working class, lost many readers as compared with those it had before the campaign. Not only the circulation of *l'Humanité* was diminished, but the membership of the Party also decreased as a result of such a passive and inept approach to the mass movement.

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## PIATNITSKY'S

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## COMMUNISTS

## IN ACTION

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The central organ of the C.P. of France, *l'Humanité*, is once more experiencing financial difficulties. We are convinced that the workers of France will rally to the appeal of the C.C. of the C.P. of France and *l'Humanité* to support the paper. Permanent committees for assisting, defending and informing *l'Humanité* should be formed in the factories, and the local Party organisations and Red Trade Unions should be instructed as regards the formation and direction of such committees.

In the Lower Reichenau and Blaistadt, in the Teplicsk district of Czecho-Slovakia, the owners of two glass factories employing 2,400 workers, informed the factory committees that they would have to dismiss a section of the workers temporarily as they wanted to repair the glass baths. One of the factory committees in Lower Reichenau agreed to the dismissal of the workers, who were not members of the Red Trade Unions (in these two factories 1,600 members of the Red Glassworkers' Union were at work). Without preparing a strike, the local leaders of the Red Glassworkers' Union commenced negotiations with the bosses for the liquidation of the conflict, thus sowing confusion among the workers. When it transpired that the bosses would not make any concessions, the Red Glassworkers' Union declared a strike, without having made any preparations, and, without asking the strikers, the strike-leaders gave orders for the furnaces to be extinguished, which played into the hands of the owners, who were interested in the works being temporarily brought to a standstill. The strike lasted six weeks and was lost.

As a result of this strike all the members in these two factories left the Red Glassworkers' Trade Union: 700 of them went over to the Fascists and 120 joined the Catholic Trade Unions.

The German social-democrats and the reformist trade unions have betrayed the interests of the working class during the 1914-1919 war and also since the war right up till now. They shot the revolutionary workers in 1919-1921 on a larger scale than in 1929. But then, while taking vengeance against the vanguard of the working class and its Party (the murder of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxembourg,

Tyschko and other Communists and revolutionary workers) the social-democrats and reformists maintained their influence over a considerable section of the workers, hypocritically posing as the defenders of their every-day interests, passing, under pressure from the masses, of course, and with the object of retaining influence over them, the law on the eight-hour day, on factory committees, on improved social insurance, and in the first years following the war the trade unions sometimes even declared strikes (the general railway strike at the beginning of 1922, etc.). During the last two years, however, the social-democrats have exposed themselves as the *open* betrayers of the working masses, as the direct agents of the bourgeoisie also in the sphere of the attacks on the standard of living of the workers. While in power, the social-democrats, and hence, also the reformist trade union bureaucrats, openly worsened all the social insurance laws, particularly the law on unemployment insurance. In 1930 they exempted the bourgeoisie from payment of taxes on milliards of money, at the same time assessing the broad masses of toilers with millions in the form of indirect and direct taxes, and the introduction of high duties on food products. The social-democrats and the reformist trade unions assisted the bourgeoisie in carrying out rationalisation at the cost of the working class, in increasing not only the intensity of labour, but also in lengthening the working day, in lowering not only real but also nominal wages. The social-democrats closed down revolutionary mass organisations and shot down unarmed demonstrations of workers and unemployed. To expose the leaders of the reformist trade unions and social-democrats in 1929-1930 was, therefore, much easier than in 1919-1921, for, during recent years their treacherous and counter-revolutionary policy has become more and more frank, more and more clear to the broad masses of workers.

All the more unexpected, then, were the results of the election of the factory committees in 1930 in a large number of big enterprises in Germany. In twenty large undertakings, employing about 200,000 workers, in fifteen of which there were formerly Red factory committees, the C.P. of Germany lost 22,379

votes (38,743 in 1930 as against 61,122 in 1929), while the reformists gained 1,990 votes (52,944 in 1930 as against 50,954 in 1929).

In the nine Berlin undertakings included in this group, eight of which formerly had Red factory committees, the C.P. lost 11,599 votes (18,467 in 1930, as against 30,066 in 1929), while the reformists gained 2,719 votes (24,762 in 1930 as against 22,043 in 1929).

An examination of the reasons for the loss of votes by our Party and the gain of votes by the reformists and social-democrats in these twenty large undertakings will enable us to determine the cause why the C.P.G. does not increase its membership and does not check the fluctuation in membership. What are these reasons?

(1). At the Opel Works, in which 7,000 workers are employed, a strike broke out at the beginning of 1930 which created a great deal of noise in the German and Soviet press. The Workers' Factory Committee at the works was in the hands of Communists (in Germany the workers and the employers have separate factory committees, the works committees of the employees and of the workers forming a general factory committee). The workers of the Opel Works were very discontented with the wage rates and with the sweated conditions of labour (Americans had become proprietors of the works, and the American method of intensified labour was introduced, while the low German wages were retained). The management sacked 200 workers, afterwards recruiting 50 new workers. Upon the protest of the workers' committee against the dismissal of these workers and the taking on of new ones, the management dismissed the chairman of the workers' factory committee. The workers in some shops, incensed by this provocation of the management, downed tools and come out into the factory yard. A meeting was started which continued a long while and the workers of other shops also gradually began to join in the meeting. No guidance whatsoever by the cell nor by the workers' factory committee was felt. The speakers said a great deal, and in general quite correct things about the Young Plan, the internal and international situation of Germany, etc., but did not provide any answer to the question which urgently

confronted the workers of the factory: What practical steps should be taken now, this very moment? Instead of taking the leadership into their hands, instead of providing slogans of action to the masses awaiting such leadership, the workers' factory committee went off to negotiate with the management of the works. Is it surprising, after that, that the management succeeded in bamboozling the workers, dragging out the negotiations, under various pretexts until such time as permission was received from the Franco-British Occupation Commission to occupy the works with German gendarmes (the locality in which the Opel Works are situated was then still occupied by the Allied troops)? The meeting continued to go on after the arrival of the gendarmes, who, after surrounding it, began to seize various active workers out of the crowd. The workers were in a fighting mood, but there was an absence of leadership and of slogans comprehensible to the masses. One worker suggested pushing the gendarmes outside the gates and his proposal was taken up by the whole mass of workers, who immediately began to use pressure and pushed out the gendarmes who had wormed their way in among the workers around the meeting, and among those emerging from the shops. After the appearance of the gendarmes, the works management broke off negotiations with the factory committee, but the latter, instead of steering the workers' indignation in a correct direction, and indicating how they should act, began to persuade the workers "not to allow themselves to be provoked." The majority of the workers went home to dinner without receiving any indication as to what they were to do. They came to work the next day. When the factory committee began to appeal for a strike, the workers stated that they could not count on there being a leadership for this strike. One-and-a-half months after this "strike" the elections to the factory committee in the Opel Works took place, giving the C.P.G. a decrease of 1,804 votes, while the social-democrats and reformists gained 419 votes as compared with 1929.

(2). In the Berlin Transport Society (trams, 'buses, etc.), in which 24,922 workers and employees are employed, the C.P. received an absolute majority of votes in the factory com-

mittee elections of 1929 (10,747 votes, as against the 5,934 of the social-democrats and reformists). The social-democratic management began dismissing the revolutionary workers and taking on their own supporters in their place. In doing this they did not encounter any real protest on the part of the factory committee. It was as a result of this that at the elections to the factory committee in 1930 the reformists received 10,147 votes, while the C.P.G. lost 4,430 votes.

#### RED UNION ERRORS

(3). The C.P.G. lost many votes in the twenty factories enumerated above, for exactly the same reasons. The Red factory committees in these works did not carry out a correct Party line; their activity represented a striking example of the Right deviation in practice: they not only failed to organise a struggle against dismissals, wage cuts and longer hours, but, in certain cases even gave their assent to dismissals of workers. As a matter of fact the Red factory committees in these enterprises did not differ very greatly, in their work, from the reformist factory committees. The reformists, in taking part in the dismissals of workers, tried to get the unorganised workers sacked along with the revolutionaries, as these were the least desirable from the point of view of the trade union bureaucrats. The Red factory committees agreed to the dismissal of those with small families only instead of organising the masses for a systematic and resolute struggle against dismissals of the workers in general. In particular, in agreeing to the dismissal of organised workers, but objecting to the dismissal of the unorganised, the Red factory committees drove the organised workers into the arms of the reformist trade union bureaucrats.

In one very substantial respect the practical work of the Red factory committees did differ from the Reformist factory committees and trade union bureaucrats in many of these twenty enterprises. The reformist factory committees and functionaries conducted a savage campaign against the Communists; the Red factory committees, cells and individual Communists, on the other hand, did not carry on a systematic, resolute, and intransigent campaign against the reformists and

social-democrats, although the Communists had an abundance of popular literature, exposing the social-democrat traitors, while the latter only had falsehood and slander to use against the C.P.G. The errors of the Communists, their passivity and bad work in the factories—opportunism in practice—were utilised by the reformists and social-democrats, who, moreover, in order to draw the workers over to their own side, carried on detailed routine work visible and comprehensible to the masses. But these errors of the Communists were not only exploited by the social-democrats; they were also made use of by the open fascists of all shades, who had, of course, the full support of the social-democrats, in the fight against the revolutionary workers. At many factories and works where the C.P.G. lost votes at the factory committee elections, the fascists gained. The latter, with the aid of the terrorism of the Government and the employers, are beginning to get an ever stronger hold on the factories, issuing factory papers and forming their own cells, through which, by means of vile demagoguery and slanders against our Party, they lead astray the non-class-conscious workers.

We do not doubt that in the coming Reichstag elections campaign the C.P.G. will carry on a vigorous campaign against the social-democrats and national-socialists (fascists), but that is not enough. It is necessary that the Communists and the revolutionary workers, under the leadership of the C.P.G., carry on a continuous, energetic and many-sided fight in all working-class organisations, particularly in the factories and in the unemployed organisations, not only against the social-democrats, but also against the fascists.

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The question is being debated in Party circles as to what was the nature of the errors committed by the revolutionary T.U. opposition and the Party cells, which led to the loss of votes in a number of big undertakings in Germany during the recent factory committee elections—were they political or organisational errors? There must, of course, be a proper study of the causes of the errors made in order to rectify them and avoid them in the future. But it seems to us that the very way the question is presented is incorrect. Policy is in-

separable from organisation and vice versa. Certainly, in the factories mentioned above the Red factory committees, the cells and individual Communists have not carried out the correct Party policy (it is very significant that that C.P.G. achieved the greatest successes in those factories where the Red factory committees, the cells and individual Communists carried out uncompromisingly the Party tactics of class against class); thus the errors committed are of a political nature. Would these errors of the Red factory committees in the large factories have helped to bring such losses of votes to the Communist Party, and consequently a weakening of the C.P.'s position in these factories if the Party cells had done good organisational work, if they had guided the Communists in the Red factory committees, and the Communist T.U. and revolutionary delegates in these factories? There are factories where Red factory committees already exist, but where the Communists are not yet organised into Communist cells. For factories of that category this question should be formulated: could such errors have been committed by the factory committees if properly functioning cells had existed? Of course not! For the cells would either have compelled the Party members belonging to the Red factory committees to correct their line and carry out the Party tactics or else they would have informed the workers that the Communists in the factory committees were conducting not the Party but reformist tactics, and the authority of the C.P.G. would then by no means have suffered in the eyes of the workers, despite the gross errors of individual Communists. The errors of the Red factory committees were not committed on the last day before the elections, but many months earlier. Why were they not rectified in time, or else why did not the cells or the local Party organisations dissociate themselves from them? Here the fault mainly lies in the bad organisational system, the organisational form of the Party organisations and sections of the C.I. Up to now the Communists working in the factories are not everywhere organised in cells, and not even all the Communists in factories where cells exist, are members of these cells. As a rule the cells in the factories carry on their work among the working

men and women badly, they do not distribute the work among their members and in the majority of cases do not organise into fractions the Communists in the factory committees or in the revolutionary delegates' organisation—and as a result of this they either have no control over them at all, or else control them badly. Could the factory cells work so badly if the district committees or Party committees with which they are connected (or should be connected) paid more attention to them, instructed them, controlled their work, in other words led the work properly? Of course not. It is clear, therefore, that the organisational system that continued to be in practice is useless. It must be changed. Certainly, to carry on Communist work among the masses in the factories, in the face of growing rationalisation, decreased production and mass dismissals, in face of a savage police espionage system in which the social-democratic bureaucrats take part, in face of steadily growing unemployment—is very hard. This is particularly so where the old social-democratic traditions are preserved, where the Party organisation is on the residential basis and not according to the place of work of the Party member. Proofs exist, however, that these difficulties can be totally overcome. Indeed, there are cells even in the biggest factories and works, which work very well and which consequently carry the majority of the workers with them. Indeed, the C.P.G. was able to mobilise at the last factory committee elections an army of 12,000 Communists and revolutionary workers and employees, working in more than 1,200 big and average-sized factories to put them up as candidates for the factory committees (of these 12,000 candidates only 300 deserted, 7,000 being elected as members of the factory committees and 4,000 as substitutes). If the work is organised competently the factory management and spies need not know all the members of the factory cell, but the candidates put forward for the factory committees on behalf of the C.P.G. or the trade union opposition are bound to be known to the entire counter-revolutionary band, for their names are displayed openly. Our candidates thus risk losing their jobs at a time when unemployment is rampant, risk

being expelled from the trade unions, etc.; nevertheless, the C.P.G. was able to participate in a most important campaign, putting forward its lists in more than 1,200 factories. Does this not prove that with resolute desire, with adequate skill and with correct leadership, the existing difficulties can be overcome? Of course no struggle, least of all the class struggle, can avoid sacrifices. But the workers of the whole world, particularly the Communists, have proved more than once that they are not afraid of sacrifices. Until such time as the Communist Party transfer the centre of gravity of all their Party and T.U. work right into the factories, they will not be able to liberate quite large sections of workers from the influence of the reformist trade union bureaucrats and the social-democratic party, and here and there from the influence of the national-fascists; in other words, they will not be able to win the majority of the working class.

The Social-Democratic Party of Germany up till now has been organised on the residential basis. Only during the last few years, in order to fight the Communists, has it begun to form cells in factories and to organise factory newspapers. But in spite of this, and even with the residential basis, the S.D. Party has strong connections with the factories through the "free" Amsterdam trade unions, the leaders of which are social-democrats. The reformist "free" trade unions have their delegate-representatives in all factories. These delegates are elected in the factories and work by the members of the trade unions. The trade unions put forward their own panels. At the elections of the factory committees, the reformist trade unions, in putting forward their own panels, appeal for the support of their own members among the workers and employees, who number a total of nearly six millions. If the figures published by *Vorwaerts* are correct, the S.D. Party had 1,032,119 members on March 31st, 1930. Even if we reckon that of this number only 300,000 members of the S.D. Party work in factories, the reformists still have an adequate number of candidates for the elections of the factory committee and T.U. delegate-representatives. The social-democratic and reformist trade union press, the T.U. apparatus, the appara-

tus of the insurance funds—all composed of members of the S.D. Party, the factory committees and T.U. delegates, also comprising mainly members of the S.D. Party, confuse and deceive large numbers of workers in the factories, at trade union meetings. Here they do not immediately encounter the necessary, systematic and organised retaliation of the Communists, as there are either no Party cells at all in the factories, or else they are badly working. The position is no better in regard to the work of the Communist fractions and the trade union opposition inside the reformist trade unions.

The Social-Democratic Party efficiently and skilfully manoeuvres both at the centre and in the localities. While at the head of the German Coalition Government it prepared all the financial legislation which shifted on to the shoulders of the masses all the unbearable weight of the Young Plan, the responsibility for the acceptance of which lies entirely with the social-fascists. Even after the bourgeois parties became strong enough to get on without the participation of the social-democrats in the Government, the social-democrats actually continued to collaborate with the Government in the offensive against the workers' living conditions. Both in their speeches and in Parliament they opposed the Government, but in practice they kept away from the Reichstag a certain number of S.D. deputies to make sure that although having verbally opposed it the law would not fail to get passed at the time of voting. Now, when the S.D. Party realises that the workers are beginning to understand these treacherous games (in the elections to the Saxon Landtag, the S.D. Party recently lost 51,000 votes) and when the Brüning Government will not make any concessions to the Party, it has tried another trick. The social-democrats tabled a motion in the Reichstag for the abrogation of all the financial legislation that had been introduced on the basis of paragraph 48 of the Constitution by the President of the German Republic. By this gesture they assured for themselves a platform for deceiving the workers at the forthcoming elections when they would say: You see how we, the social-democrats, defended the interests of the masses. The active social-democrats in the factories act in exactly the

same way. As soon as they see that the workers, despite their resistance and sabotage, are beginning to fight, the social-democrats immediately try to get hold of the leadership of the movement, drawing up corresponding demands, while at the same time their colleagues in the central and region trade union headquarters either openly betray the strike or else quash it by an arbitration decision, the arbitrators in most cases, also being social-democrats. Such hard-baked politicians, who, unfortunately, still retain influence over large numbers of the workers can only be fought successfully by flexible, well-functioning Communist fractions in the trade unions and Party cells in the factories, strongly connected, permanently guided and controlled by the district committees and Party committees.

#### CUT OUT "SPHERES OF INFLUENCE"

The Party organisations of the C.I. sections should at all costs put an end to social-democratic traditions in the sphere of "dividing the spheres of influence" between the Party and the trade unions. According to them the Party is engaged in the political struggle and the trade unions in the economic struggle. The social-democrats and reformists can indulge in such a system because the S.D. politicians and the reformist T.U. bureaucrats are so remarkably unanimous in the sphere of betraying working class interests and are assured the full support both of the State apparatus and of the whole administrative apparatus of the factories and works. It is quite a different matter with the Communist Party. Just as it is harmful to separate politics from organisation and vice versa, one cannot divide the sphere of influence between Party organisations and the trade union opposition or the Communist fractions in trade unions. The Bolshevik Party organisations can only successfully win the majority of the working class and become its leaders, when every Party member, no matter where he works or to what workers' organisation he belongs, carries out the policy and decisions of the Party, according to the plans drawn up by the Party organisations. For this it is essential that all fundamental questions, including the trade union question (the conducting of strikes, drawing up of demands, conclusion of

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wage agreements, etc.) be discussed by Party organisations, so that all Party members, no matter where they are working are able to carry on work on the basis of these decisions, making them concrete, in accordance with the conditions in which they have to work. For the better putting into effect of Party decisions, and successful work, Party organisations, above all factory cells, should distribute the work among all Party members in such a way that all Party members who are in unions, on trade union committees, on factory committees, who are T.U. delegates, get together into Communist fractions which should work under the guidance and control of the corresponding Party organisations (fractions of factory committees, fractions in the institution of T.U. or revolutionary delegates in the factories, factory cells, etc.).

That work can only be carried on successfully in that manner is proved by an analysis of the last factory elections and the collective-agreement campaign in Germany. Many Party organisations of the C.P.G. were overconfident in the ability of the trade union opposition to prepare for the conclusion of new collective agreements in the most important industries (engineering, textiles, etc.), as also the ability to lead the work in the Red factory committees, and what is more left the T.U. opposition without adequate control on the part of the Party organisations. What kind of election results were obtained in a number of big factories and how the Red factory committees worked, we have already shown above. The trade union opposition prepared for the

conclusion of the new collective agreements very late in the day, and in a very inefficient manner. This German experience—and not only the German — clearly demonstrates the need to put an end to social-democratic traditions in the sphere of dividing the work between the Party organisations on the one hand and the trade union opposition and fractions in the trade unions on the other.

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Ever since the Third Congress (1921) the Comintern has been fighting for the carrying out of the Bolshevik organisational principles in the Party structure of the C.I. sections. Since 1924 the C.I. sections have had undoubted successes in this field. The danger of imperialist wars and of attacks on the U.S.S.R., the collapse of the precarious capitalist stabilisation owing to the world economic crisis, the rise of the revolutionary movement—all these things make it essential for all sections of the C.I. to increase their membership, to retain and train the newly-made members, to stop the fluctuation of the membership, to intensify the fight against the reformists and the fascists, and to secure better preparation of the independent leadership of all activities of the workers, in spite of and against the reformists. For this it is necessary to liquidate the social-democratic traditions remaining in the Communist Parties, to reinforce the work in the reformist, Catholic and other mass reactionary trade unions, and to transfer the centre of gravity of Party and trade union work to the factories, forming new factory cells and improving the work of the existing ones.

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

(Continued)

Has the organisational work which we have accomplished been one of surface extension or of depth? Partly it is a work of surface extension; it consists in new contacts, but it is yet an important matter to have made them. For instance, we are to-day in contact with peasant districts with which we had no contact. Partly, it is also a work of depth, i.e., the recruiting of new members.

To sum up, during these last three to four months, we have not only led the fight to expel three opportunists, but we have done a great work of organisation. I wish to add that this organisational work has required a very large mobilisation of the Party functionaries. With the state of mind which reigned in the Party functionaries six months ago and even still in January, we could not have obtained these results. We were obliged to make a political mobilisation of the effective strength of the Party, this required a political struggle, and this struggle has been the struggle against the opportunists. It is because we have fought with such determination against the opportunists that we have obtained such results in our work. If we had wavered in the struggle against the opportunists, we should not have obtained the result of success in mobilising the Party functionaries for the organisational work in the present situation and in the difficulties under which the comrades must work.

If we consider the balance sheet of the achievement of the turn in general in respect of the Party Centre we have obtained the result which we proposed to obtain. There has been a dismissal, some people have fallen, so much the worse for them, but the turn in the Party Centre has been *in great part achieved*. We have to-day a situation at the Centre which is quite different from that of six months ago. We have complete agreement on the line of the C.I. and the Party. Among the Party functionaries we have had enormous results, there is no longer that lack of confidence towards the Party directive which existed six months ago. But if we go to the rank and file the results are still very small. The rank and file comrades in general have welcomed

the turn with enthusiasm, because they thought it was only the Centre which had to accomplish it, whereas the turn has to be made by the Centre, the functionaries and the rank and file through an intensification of all their work.

As to the general political line of the Party—the general line fixed by the February-March Conference has shown itself to be completely correct, i.e., struggle for the conquest of the majority of the working-class on the basis of the struggle for the immediate demands of the workers, but linking this struggle with propaganda, agitation and organisational preparation of the mass political strike. This general line has shown itself to be completely correct, but in the execution of this line we can note a few mistakes. The most serious mistakes are those made by the youth—which have brought out before the Party the need for struggle on two fronts. It must be said that in the February Conference we had not fully seen the need for the struggle on two fronts, i.e., the struggle against so-called Leftism, exaggeration in the estimate of the situation, etc., The mistakes made by the Youth have been to exaggerate the estimate of the situation, to under-estimate mass work, to posit as the immediate task of the moment that of the immediate preparation of insurrection, to put in the background the tasks of agitational and organisational mass work for the economic struggle, etc. It was a deviation characterised as Leftist, which fortunately the Youth Centre recognised fairly quickly, which it corrected fairly quickly with the help of the Y.C.L. and the Party, but which showed the need for continuing the struggle on two fronts. Why? Because in the rank and file itself, there are comrades who are not willing to do mass work, who say: “Yes, the revolution, insurrection, but not the organisation of a trade union branch, not the organisation of a strike, not the organisation of committees of action, etc.” That is a Leftism which covers passivity, the Left mask of Right tendency.

That is why there is the need of struggle on two fronts, of continuing this struggle especially among the rank and file of the Party, to succeed

in destroying all roots and signs of opportunism.

A few words on the orientation of the rank and file of the Party. In general, it made no resistance against the decisions of the March C.C. These decisions were even greeted with enthusiasm. The comrades said it was time to make this turn. But when it is a question of the consequences for themselves, for their work, then things begin to go slower, i.e., the comrades are in agreement with the general direction, but in the matter of the practical consequences and the practical work there is much opportunism in practice which must be unmasked and fought. For instance, I should like to say something on the orientation of the rank and file of the Party in the matter of social democracy. When we make the general statement that social democracy is social fascist, the rank and file comrades make no opposition, they say: it is true. But in practice we have two well marked deviations: on the one hand, there is the deviation of the comrades who do not believe that the social democrats are social fascists, or even think they are anti-fascists like ourselves. It is the provincial outlook; they go together with the social democratic leaders who are still there; they speak together about fascism, they meet every evening to blabber against fascism; they do no work, and so they do not meet the social democrats against them in their work. It is a well marked opportunist deviation against which we must struggle. The other deviation of which we have had some fairly obvious manifestations, is the deviation which consists in saying: "the social democratic and Maximalist workers will always be social democratic and Maximalist." There has been a case where a rank and file organisation refused to distribute Party material to the Maximalist workers who asked for them, saying "You will always be Maximalists." It is a very serious deviation because it leads to giving a basis to the Maximalist Party, and to failure to conquer the Maximalist workers, whereas we must start from the conviction that we are the Party of all workers. This attitude of the comrades gives our enemies a basis in the working-class. It is a Leftist deviation which shows itself in a fairly obvious manner and against which we must struggle.

I am coming to the last part of my exposition:

the struggle against the opportunists. This struggle has become extremely sharp. I should like to try to be precise on the causes of this sharpening. The principal cause and the cause on which we must concentrate the attention of the Party is *the depth of political differences*. It is obvious that our opposition hasn't a complete platform, declaring everything that the opposition thinks: that does not exist. Our opposition has followed the line which Stalin has said the Right-wingers have been following in the Russian C.P. "Leave no documents to show what you think." But if we judge from what the opposition have done from the moment when they broke with the Party, when they developed the struggle against the Party within the Party, we must reach this conclusion that the problems on which the opposition broke with us are the most important problems of the Communist movement, the problems of the function of the Party, of the relations of the Party with the working-class, of the relations of the directing organs of the Party with the rank and file of the Party.

What is the fundamental problem of our January discussion? It is this: is the Party the vanguard or the rearguard of the working-class? It is the most important problem that can be discussed in the Communist Party. The idea of the opposition, of the Right, was at bottom this: we must stay in the rear otherwise we liquidate ourselves; our position was: we must be in the van otherwise we are no longer the C.P. The problem which is here in discussion is the central problem of the Party, is the problem of problems of the Communist Party. And all the half sentences or the complete sentences or the half statements which we find in the various documents of the opposition comrades and which are made not to say what the comrades think but to hide it, reveal nevertheless in the clearest fashion this fundamental discord on the function of the Party. I should like here to call the attention of comrades to a document in which a member of the opposition has said more openly what he thinks, on the article of Santini which appeared in the organ of the C.G.P. I was saying just now that the position of the Right social democrats is identical with the position of Santini. I shall show it to be the case.

(To be continued).