TWENTY YEARS

The Policy of the Communist Party of Great Britain from its Foundation July 31st, 1920

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This booklet is in no sense an attempt to write, even briefly, an historical record of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The time for that has not yet come. What I have aimed at doing is to give an account of the policy *of the Communist Party on a number of the most important political issues of the past twenty years; and to show that many of these have a bearing on the situation to-day.*

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A century ago, the British working class, after two generations of struggle, founded its first organised party, to lead it in the fight for its liberation. The National Chartist Association, formed a hundred years ago this month of July, led the first great organised movement of the working class in Europe.

Our forefathers were defeated: but not before they had given a glorious example, not before Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, themselves linked up with the Chartists, had in their Communist Manifesto given a clear lead for the future.

In the half century and more that followed, attempt after attempt resulted in failure—including the failure of the Labour Party. Only in 1920 came the beginning of a party of a new type, combining revolutionary socialism with the Labour Movement—THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

To-day, in the midst of war, its accumulating miseries and horrors, the only hope of the working class lies in the revolutionary Marxist workers' party, out of whose experience of 20 years will grow the movement that can end the war and the break through to Socialism.

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The failure of the British Labour movement to achieve its fundamental aims, the failure of the Labour Party (MacDonald at its head) to fulfil the hopes of the workers and to lead them in struggle, was already clear by 1911. It was a failure that has cost humanity two world wars, the war of 1914-18 and the war of to-day.

Before the last war, Britain had become ripe for fundamental change. This was reflected by a deep dissension in the ruling class, the Ulster revolt, the formidable Suffragist agitation and, above all, the " Labour unrest." The " Labour unrest," caused by the worsening conditions of the workers, whose high hopes in the Labour Party had faded by 1911, was the workers themselves taking action.

The first national railway strike (in 1911) and the 1912 strike of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, showed a new spirit and stirred the whole working class. In the three years 1911, 1912 and 1913, the membership of the Trade Unions doubled, rising from two to four million. After long quietude, the workers were learning to fight, were realising their own strength. There were dockers' strikes, transport strikes, and, in 1914, a London Builders' strike; while in Dublin, the strike of the Transport and General Workers'

Union, led by James Connolly and Jim Larkin, marked the advance to revolutionary strike struggle.

The Miners' Federation, in 1914, proposed to the newly-founded National Union of Railwaymen and the new Transport Workers' Federation a plan for joint demands and united action and thus there came into being the Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen and Transport workers, embracing over a third of the organised workers, influencing the growing militancy of the workers in every trade, and threatening the old security of the ruling class.

Because of the " Labour unrest " a series of concessions were made to the workers, ranging from financial and social insurance legislation to special Acts for particular trades. Liberal England was in collapse from 1911 onwards; its echo was the Labour leadership, whose bankruptcy became visible to the workers labouring in the mines and factories. Neither concessions, Labour officials, nor even the r-r-revolutionary speeches of Lloyd George were able to overcome the critical situation within the British Isles.

This crisis was overcome by the outbreak of war in 1914—though that war of 1914-18 was the signal that capitalism, shaken to its foundations, had entered into the period of general crisis. The Executive Committee of the Labour Party gave full support to the capitalist war. " National Unity " became the slogan, together with " Business as Usual." The Trades Union Congress fell into line. A complete class truce was established.

The organ of Imperialism, *The Times,* wrote its editorial on " War and Class War," hailing national unity as the reality, and dismissing the class war that for years had haunted the minds of statesmen, as an evil but unsubstantial dream. Capitalism had been

saved by the Labour leadership's policy of collaboration with the capitalist class. The lack of an independent political party working for Socialism doomed the working class to four more years of mutual slaughter for the benefit of their masters.

The First Imperialist World War

The war of 1914-18, between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente (France, Tsarist Russia and Britain) was the outcome of the growing rivalries of the Imperialist powers. The coalition on the one side was headed by Germany, on the other by Britain. It became a world war, involving some thirty greater and lesser states. The slaughter was colossal. It ended in the defeat of Germany and her allies: but its chief outcome was the Russian Revolution.

The Imperialist war of 1914-18 had been long expected. Measures that would prevent the coming war, or " by opposing, end it," had been worked out at the Stuttgart International Socialist Congress as early as 1907.

> " If war should nevertheless break out, it is the duty of the Socialist Parties to work to bring it to an end as speedily as possible, and to make every effort to use the economic and political crisis created by the war to waken the political consciousness of the masses and to hasten the downfall of capitalist domination."

This was the policy of Socialism, repeated at the following Congresses of 1910 and 1912, subscribed to by the leaders of all Socialist and Labour Parties, and dreaded by the ruling class. Within a few hours in August 1914, the Labour Party had turned right round into a jingo organisation; and its leaders, pledged to carry on the fight against war, had become recruiting sergeants, hounding the workers into the slaughter-house. Pledged to " use the economic and political

crisis arising from the war," they did the very opposite. Most of the Socialist parties, corrupted through being confined in their activities to parliamentary bargaining, failed in their duty to the international working class and supported the war.

Alone in Europe, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (the Bolsheviks) remained true to Socialism, opposed the war, utilised the crisis, and in November 1917, brought about the downfall of capitalist class rule.

The war of 1914-18 ruined the country. A huge casualty list; widows and orphans bereaved; exhausting toil; trade union rights given up; small businesses wrecked; shortage of food, shortage of clothing, shortage of housing; malnutrition and disease. But on the other hand, war strengthened the capitalist class. There were high prices, high profits, high finance. War was a forcing house for the growth of trusts. They swelled; became bigger, stronger, more impudent. The small man went under or took a back seat. Through the growth of monopoly the most reactionary section of the ruling class got fatter and stronger through the war.

The power of the capitalist State increased enormously. Everywhere, in every industry, in the workshop as well as in the war machine, there came State control and sitting at the controls were—the monopoly capitalists. Lloyd George, already in 1915, in order to keep the workers quiet, was describing this as " Socialism." To-day, similar State controls: to-day it is the Labour Party (and for the same purpose) which terms it " Socialism."

Lenin, writing in the midst of it, gave a different description. He said:

" The Imperialist war has greatly accelerated and intensi-

fied the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the masses of the toilers by the state—which is becoming merged more and more with the all-powerful capitalist combines—is becoming ever more monstrous. The advanced countries are being converted—we speak here of their "rear"—into military convict prisons for the workers."

Exploited and driven by the ruling class, betrayed by their leaders, the working class began to take action. As early as February 1915 there was formed on the Clyde a Central Withdrawal of Labour Control Committee, which conducted a successful strike. As the Government got the leaders of the Trade Unions to surrender hard-won rights and workshop customs, so in each workshop, beginning with the munition trades, the elected shop stewards, themselves at the bench, voiced the demands not of this or that department or shop, but of the works or plant as a whole. Their organisation spread, and presently in each big centre of industry, like the Clyde or the North-East Coast, the engineering shop stewards were linked up. At the same time, as the employers and the Government threatened the shop stewards, so only the best and most militant workers were elected to fill these posts. But there was no co-ordination of the struggle of the working class, no lead such as a political party working consciously for a Socialist aim could give.

The fusion of the Labour Movement with revolutionary Socialism had not yet been achieved in Britain. The various Socialist parties were sects or opportunists. But as the war developed, so there developed in the Socialist movement a struggle for revolutionary Marxism, and revolutionary minorities began to be formed in the Socialist parties. Inside the British

Socialist Party, the jingo leader, H. M. Hyndman, was defeated in the spring of 1916 and the minority became the majority. Inside the I.L.P., which had pacifist tendencies, a revolutionary minority began to grow. The same struggle was going on inside the trade unions, and the smaller socialist organisations. Outstanding in this struggle was John MacLean; victimised and imprisoned again and again, this Scottish school teacher became the leader of the most advanced opinion amongst the working class. Under these conditions, the fight against the war began to grow in strength and effectiveness.

It was also going on in other countries. When the Russian workers and peasants were the first to carry the fight to a successful conclusion in the early winter of 1917, their victory stimulated and helped the fight in Britain as well as in other countries. But the Russians won their epoch-making victory through one essential condition that did not as yet exist in Britain. They were guided by a revolutionary Marxist party. The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (the Bolsheviks) had been founded at the beginning of this century, and under the leadership of Lenin, it had a grasp of scientific socialism, based on the teachings of Marx and Engels and reached through the experience of Chartism and other working-class struggles. By contrast, the British Labour Party, also founded at the beginning of this century, having Ramsay MacDonald as it leader, was influenced by capitalist ideas, scorned scientific socialism and handed over the workers to the mercies of the capitalists.

The failure of the Labour Party before the war, and the treachery to Socialism of its leaders during the war, left only one conclusion, that it was essential for revolutionary Marxism to be brought to the Labour

Movement—and brought by an organised revolutionary party of the working class.

The World after the War

The Imperialist world war of 1914-18 was followed by the Imperialist peace of Versailles which the Labour leaders acclaimed and voted for in Parliament. Versailles was a triumph, not only of the victorious capitalist powers against their defeated rivals, but of the power of capitalists over the working class and the colonial peoples. Precisely because the Communist Party has carried on from the beginning a fight for the power of the working class and against all oppression of peoples, therefore, from the beginning, the Communists of every country fought against the Treaty of Versailles which contained the seeds of future wars and conflicts and meant not only an attack on the German working class but on the workers of Britain and every other country.

In the years after Versailles, instead of the visionary peace and prosperity that was promised by the Lloyd Georges and echoed by Labour leaders, the Communists put the workers on their guard; they warned that capitalism, " shaken to its foundations by the war of 1914-18, was unable to provide Peace and Plenty " and that Peace, Freedom, and Bread could be secured only by the overthrow of the capitalist class and the building of Socialism. All the attempts made at Versailles and the litter of conferences following Versailles for the reconstruction of the decaying order of capitalism could take place only at the expense of the workers and would mean nothing but the prolongation of their misery and suffering. Actually, there came a degree of awakening to the meaning of Versailles and the doubts of Liberal capitalist

economists like Keynes were adopted by Labour leaders—yet that leadership did not gather the forces of the working class against decaying capitalism.

Meanwhile, during the short-lived artificial boom of 1919-1920 the old leadership of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions (numerically and financially reinforced by the gliding over of the Liberal leaders of the Co-operative movement to form the Co-operative Party) had been astounded and alarmed by the revolutionary spirit of the workers, had talked big and temporised and once more regained the confidence of the workers.

By the time all the Communists were gathered together into a united Communist Party in Britain, the revolutionary mood and energy of the masses had already been sapped by the false leadership, by inadequate organisation and the first beginnings of twenty years of unemployment. The Communist Party came into being too late to make an immediate effective change.

Unity: Formation of the C.P.G.B.

With the utter collapse of the Socialist International (usually called the Second International) in 1914, Lenin proclaimed the need for the rebuilding of the International on a basis of deeds, not words, for a new, third International. Gradually, the internationalists began to come together. From Britain delegates were appointed to an International Women's Conference at Berne in February, 1915.

By the autumn of 1915, the parties or groups in Europe that had refused to follow the jingo-socialists, came together in Switzerland while a more clear and definite revolutionary standpoint was reached some months later at Kienthal in the spring of 1916. In

1919 the revolutionary workers under the leadership of Lenin founded the Communist International.

In Britain this stage of clear understanding as to policy and organisation, as to the need for a revolutionary international and united working-class party in each country was not fully grasped until later. But, by the end of 1918, the movement towards unity of the Socialist and revolutionary workers on the basis of a single Marxist platform was gathering way. It was not easy to bring about unity, although the interests of the working class imperatively demanded it. The tendency to erect smaller questions of tactics into insurmountable barriers, had become deeply rooted amongst the small groups of revolutionary socialists. They had become sects, with Marxism distorted into a dogma that separated them from the life of the masses. Consequently, though the needs of the workers for a single party was acute, though the movement was there, the negotiations for unity dragged on for nearly two years.

Eventually, in the summer of 1920, the Communist Party of Great Britain was formed, and by the spring of 1921 practically all revolutionary parties and groups had gathered under its banner. The formation of the Communist Party was an event of the utmost importance because, for the first time in the history of the British working class, scientific socialism on the basis of the movement itself was set in growth. The British workers could take their place once more as part of the international working class movement. At this Conference, twenty years ago, the newly-formed Party decided on affiliation to the Communist International.

The Communist Party as Vanguard

Though the revolutionary mood of the masses had ebbed away, the fear of revolution remained in the

minds of the Labour leaders. Because of this, the infant Communist Party to them represented a danger. To stifle it was essential for them. They pursued methods varying from a pretence of ignoring its existence to a lively recognition of its existence by calling frenziedly on all Labour organisations to hunt down and expel any members of the Communist Party.

The ruling class also were quick to see the danger of a vanguard of the working class, of an organised section that could point the way of advance to the movement of the masses.

The Communist Party had not been long in existence before it experienced the attacks of the capitalists. Within a few weeks, there was elaborated and passed the first Emergency Powers Act (1920) which was deliberately designed to hold down the British working class and to strike at its revolutionary leaders. In the spring of 1921, one leading Party member after another was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment, and in the summer of that year, an attempt was made to hinder the Party's activities by the arrest and sentence of its General Secretary, Albert Inkpin, and by a judicial condemnation of its chief publications. The attack was renewed in one form or another from year to year. Communist workers in the factories were victimised, Communist speakers were arrested—not seldom on trumped-up charges. In 1925-26, the arrest and sentence of twelve leading members on a main charge of " seditious libel " was an attempt to terrorise the militant movement, as part of Baldwin's and Churchill's policy to provoke and crush a general strike. All the time since its formation members of the Communist Party have been subjected to the attentions of the Secret Police and even before September 1939 the behaviour of Chief

Constables made it clear that the British ruling class regarded the Communist Party as its "Enemy Number One."

The attacks upon the Communist Party by the capitalist state were seconded by the corrupted Labour leadership, who had long ago abandoned the principles of democracy as well as of socialism. Every endeavour was made to isolate the Communist Party from the Labour Movement, of which it was a natural and essential part. Whereas up to 1920 it had been customary and usual to accept the affiliation, with full right of independent standpoint, of all working-class political parties who accepted the constitution of the Labour Party, the decision was suddenly taken to refuse this application for affiliation.

From this the gradual degeneration of democratic rights within the Labour Party set in, beginning with refusal of affiliation twenty years ago, going on to expulsion of people for their opinions and ending this year in the expulsion of a duly elected member of the Labour Party Executive, D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P., for having advocated close fraternal relations with the Soviet Union and for having exposed Chamberlain and the ruling class at a moment when the majority of that Executive were itching to become members of a Cabinet that would protect Chamberlain and keep the public in the dark about it.

Compare John Milton's remark about his visit to the astronomer Galileo who was threatened with excommunication "for thinking other than the Dominican licensers would have him do." Well, the "Dominican licensers" of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress have done lots more than that. They picked up any number of slanders and calumnies invented by the gutter press of two

continents and circulated them about the Communist Party.

By what, even for these lip-servants of Democracy, was an astonishing piece of effrontery, they tried to rule that the organised working class of this country should not be allowed to elect Communists to posts in the Trade Unions. This Black Circular, however—this ban on the working class " thinking other than Transport House licensers would have them do "—was not fully effective. In spite of all these attacks, from capitalist or corrupted Labour leadership, the Communist movement has grown, the Communist Party is strengthened and has rooted itself in the working-class movement.

The Communist Party Serves the Working Class

During its twenty years of existence, the Communist Party has brought the revolutionary teachings of Marxism and Leninism to the working-class movement, pointing the way in every phase of the struggle—against capitalist attacks on the standards of living, against reaction and war. It has assisted in organising the workers, has participated in all struggles of the workers. Above all, it has fought for the unity of the working-class movement and against the false leadership of the movement which now, once more, has led to disaster and war.

Every policy and action of the Communist Party throughout these twenty years, has been aimed at the winning of power by the workers for construction of Socialism in Britain.

CHAPTER II

TWENTY YEARS OF STRUGGLE

Britain emerged from the war of 1914-18 to find its industrial plants working under capacity, to find its total production far below the 1909-14 level, and its exports and imports enormously diminished. Added to this was a tenfold increase in the National Debt, with crushing taxation, unsettled currency and unemployment as never before. The war had solved nothing Nor could the peace bring economic and political stability. After the war, Britain was ripe for a fundamental change.

To meet the pressure of millions of workers and soldiers during the 1914-18 war, the Labour Party had adopted a Socialist statement of aim. But to carry this out in reality demanded the overthrow of the capitalist class. The Labour leaders, tied to Liberalism (they had become Liberal-Socialists) shunned the very thought of revolution; and chose instead to reconstruct capitalism with the promise to the workers that this would bring an era of peace and prosperity, out of which would grow Socialism.

The temporary reconstruction of capitalism from the post-war crisis, however, was not possible, *except at the expense of the working class, through wage cuts, speed-up, long hours and worsened conditions.* Therefore, the working class have had to go through a Calvary of twenty years, culminating in the slaughter of 1939-1940.

During these years of capitalist reconstruction up to 1929, and then of capitalist economic crisis leading to war, the workers did not take it all lying down. In strike after strike they fought against this " stabilisation " of capitalism. The years from 1920 to 1926 saw three national miners' strikes (there had only been one in the previous quarter of a century) the first national engineers strike for a quarter of a century, and the culmination of all these in the General Strike of 1926, followed by the seven months' heroic struggle of the miners. Never before had there been a coal strike of such a scale or lasting so long. Time after time the strikes were defeated. Yet, with unemployment rising from one million to two millions, with leaders that counselled a tame submission (for that was the essence of MacDonaldism, aptly translated in the trade unions as Mondism), the workers continued to struggle. The Communist Party struggled along with them, as part of the working class, and never failed to give a lead in the fight.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST VERSAILLES, WAR DEBTS AND INDEMNITIES

That the peace of Versailles was a peace of spoliation, that contained the seeds of future conflicts and wars, has been admitted in the last five years by all political parties in Britain; but twenty years ago it was very different. Then the Labour leaders even insisted on the reformist leaders of German Social Democracy subscribing to the war guilt clause of the Treaty.

From the beginning, on the other hand, those who were to form the Communist Party, and those who were members after it was formed, exposed and strove against the Versailles Treaty and all the plans to put

it into effect. When Anglo-American finance capital schemed to fix reparations payment from Germany at a point where the Allies could be assured of squeezing out the maximum amount without the danger of default in the so-called Dawes Plan, a pamphlet published by the Party at the time stated:

" The Dawes Report is the latest tremendous attempt of capitalism to re-establish itself in Europe by driving the workers down to lower and lower levels of existence. The proposals of the Report can only succeed if the German workers are compelled to work for starvation wages and for longer hours per week This means that the British workers, because of the competition of the goods produced by cheap German labour, will in turn be forced to work longer hours and accept lower wages. . . .

" The whole German working class become the coolie slaves of the Allies, and the German capitalists will be ready and proud to act as gangers and slave-drivers for the Allies. Furthermore, the products of this coolie labour, the coal the German miners dig, the cotton goods the German textile workers weave, the machinery made by the German engineers, will compete with the products of this country and other countries in such a way that the British employers will demand that the British workers shall work the German hours of labour and accept the German level of wages."

All of this turned out true to the letter. It was not long before the miners of Britain—as a result of the Dawes Plan, and the loss of British markets for coal—found the British coalowners driving to reduce their wages. It was not long before other predicted consequences began to show themselves.

What was the attitude of the Labour Party? The Labour Party was in favour of the Dawes Plan. More.

it was the first Labour Government, with Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister, that was instrumental in carrying through the Dawes Plan. The first Labour Government, with the full agreement of the Labour Party Executive, acted as the agents of the British and American finance capitalists, with disastrous consequences to the British working class. The Dawes Plan itself broke down in a little over four years and had to be patched up by yet another method of securing reparations and indemnities—this time called the "Young Plan." It fell to the second Labour Government—to Philip Snowden, Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer (afterwards Viscount Snowden of Ickornshaw)—to impose the Young Plan, and once more he received the backing of the leaders of the Labour Party. In addition, he received a banquet at the Guildhall from the delighted finance capitalists of the City of London.

The Communist Party gave the correct lead to the workers—the Labour Party misled the workers, and in the persons of MacDonald and Snowden (remember, with the full backing of the Labour Party Executive) became the agents and tools of the City of London and Wall Street.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE

The onslaught of the capitalist class on the standard of living and working conditions began in 1921. The leadership of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, deceived by the short-lived boom of 1919-20 had predicted prosperity. The working-class movement—although it had grown numerically, so that four million trade unionists in 1914 had become eight million in 1920—was unprepared to meet the attack. When the slump came, at the end of 1920, the effective resistance

of the workers to wage-cuts, was already undermined by the Labour leaders' support of the capitalist policy of reconstruction, with its slogans of "Peace in Industry" and "Produce More."

Nevertheless, pressure of the masses compelled the leaders to fight and to organise the ranks of the workers. The Communist Party called to the workers to resist the employers' offensive with all their might and maintain this resistance to the point where it could be developed into a struggle for power. The workers had to maintain, on all questions, their independent working-class policy; and to achieve complete unity and solidarity of all workers. The Party advised them to strengthen to the utmost degree the Trade Union Movement.

The Communist Party's lead was not drawn out of the air—it was on the basis of lessons learned by the working class in the struggles of 1918-20, when the submission to the employers, the lack of unity and the tame following of a capitulation policy by the Labour leadership (all in spite of the numerical increase of the Trade Unions) deprived the working class of the gains it had the right to expect, and prevented its advance to any struggle for the winning of power. It was this which made the Trade Unions weak, and the weakness was made more manifest by poor organisation. When the spring of 1921 witnessed the defeat of the miners and the collapse of the Triple Industrial Alliance in the betrayal on Black Friday by J. H. Thomas, Robert Williams and others, there was published that autumn a call by the Party entitled, "Trade Unionists, the Communist Party calls you to action."

The analysis given and the policy put forward are worth quoting at length:

"The Trades Union Congress meets at Cardiff on the 5th

of September. Never before has a Labour gathering been confronted with so grave and serious a situation as to-day. The working class of Great Britain is in a position bordering on despair. Divided into a multitude of unions, federations, loose alliances, committees, councils, parties, and devoid of unified and militant leadership the Labour Movement of to-day is in a state of confusion and chaos. Eight million organised workers, a mighty army, indeed, cannot point out a single victory won by Labour in recent years. The history of the Labour Movement, especially since the outbreak of the war and after the armistice, has been a record of blunders and defeats. Separate groups of workers, unaided and unsupported by the rest of the working class, have time and again put up the most stubborn and the most heroic fights, but the working class as a whole has repeatedly suffered itself to be tricked and fooled by the bourgeoisie and Labour politicians—has meekly and obediently accepted broken promises and downright betrayals—has submitted to threats and intimidations.

"To-day, after so many years of struggle, the British proletarian finds himself in constant dread of losing that little which is doled out to him in the form of wages by the employing class. The British working class, the largest and the strongest of all, the source and foundation of all the wealth and prosperity that the country possesses to-day, lies prostrate and helpless, a prey to the capitalist employers, and an object of intimidation by a capitalist class Government. How is it that the British proletariat suffers itself to be thus cowed and beaten into submission without putting up a united and determined fight to a finish?

Such is the foremost question which the workers must raise before the Trades Union Congress, and give a satisfactory answer. We, on our part, have this to say. The workers of Great Britain are organised in trade unions, but not organised as a class. *They posses no class organisation capable of leading the whole of the working class to victory.* The trade unions form federations and alliances, or belong to the Trade Union Congress or the Labour Party, but, in spite of this multitude of organisations, the proletariat is not organised as a class. The bourgeoisie looks to the British Federation of Industries for aid and action. When

in need, it has Parliament to fall back upon, and a National Government is always at its disposal. . . .

"Separate groups of the British proletariat have, in the past, engaged in some splendid skirmishes. They scored notable victories on isolated fronts, but it has never yet matched its whole strength in a general battle with the bourgeoisie. Labour, as a whole, has never yet presented an organised united front against capital. That's why it has been beaten time and again so badly. . . .

"We must never for a moment forget that the leaders, such as Thomas and his like, do not want a real union of Labour, for that means that large masses of the workers will be involved in a direct struggle with the capitalist class. This is precisely what the leaders do not want. Did not Thomas state that during the lock-out of the miners nobody could foretell the consequences of a combined strike of the Triple Alliance and the other bodies of Labour, and did he not say that whichever side would win, the nation would lose? That means that even if the workers won, the nation would lose. . . .

"To ensure ourselves against the tricks and machinations of the leaders who will make every attempt to reduce the whole question of the unification of the Labour Movement to a mere change in the names of the old organisations (for instance instead of the Parliamentary Committee, the General Council) leaving everything else as it existed heretofore, the workers must take the work of unification into their own hands and see to it that first of all the shops and workers are united along the lines of industry. The works committee is the foundation of working-class unity. It unites all the workers at the point of production irrespective of grade, craft, colour or sex. The works committee and the Trade Union must form the Local Trades and Labour Council with authority to act as General Staff of Labour for the given locality. Finally, the Trades and Labour Congress must be representative of the whole of the working class and responsible only to the working class. Unity in the factory, in the pit—Unity at the point of production, Unity in the locality, etc., working-class unity in the whole country. . . . (*The Communist*, September 10th, 1921.)

The fight of the Party was now to rally the working

class, who though driven back were resisting with strike struggle (e.g. National Engineers' Lockout in 1922 and the Dockers' Strike) in various industries. The slogan was " Stop the Retreat ! " The *Workers' Weekly* launched at this time as an agitational organ, as part of the turn to mass work, proved a powerful means of stiffening resistance and gathering the forces for advance.

Beside carrying on a campaign for a general staff of Labour, etc., the Party also campaigned for increasing the fighting capacity of the locality. The Party led the campaign for strengthening of the Trades Councils in each locality as the local leadership. The Trades Councils hitherto had reflected locally the lack of leadership and direction that existed nationally. The National Federation of Trades Councils was brought into being, and at its Second Annual Conference, Harry Pollitt, who had become a leading member of the Communist Party, delivered a Presidential Address, in which he stated:

" The Conference meets at a time when two million of our class are out of work; when real wages are lower than they have been for a generation, when those who are working are doing more work for less wages than ever before; when the conditions under which we work are more unbearable than ever; and when workers are forced to grin and bear insults and indignities, because if they speak out they will be sacked. Those who are out of work are wondering when they are ever going to work again, and those in work are wondering how soon they will be out of work. Already the fourth winter of unemployment is upon us. Capitalist politicians are even now pointing out that their schemes of relief will not be applicable until next winter. . . .

" The workers find themselves absolutely at the mercy of the capitalists. There is no common policy or programme, no common leadership, nothing but confusion and disunity,

and the petty jealousies of leaders and sections of workers. There is no attempt to rally the forces of the whole working class in the common struggle."

He went on to say:

"On all the issues that confront the working class, the central need is united action which can bring the whole powers of the movement into play. For this reason, any programme that is to rally the working class at the present point must deal with the biggest weakness of the trade union movement—the lack of any central direction or authority.

"A real General Council must be established with power to direct the whole movement, and not only with power but under responsibility to Congress to use that power and direct the movement on the lines laid down each year by Congress. To effect this will mean, not only the extension of the powers of the General Council, but the reorganisation of the present trade unions to establish unity on the only basis on which it can be established—the industry basis—and to prevent the present overlapping and sectionalisation that bars the way to united action."

He put forward a proposal for re-organisation of the Unions on the one hand, and for turning Trades Councils into local centres that would co-ordinate every kind of local activity and would be linked up nationally in connection with the General Council.

The Minority Movement

When the leadership of the Trade Union Movement failed to gather the forces of the workers for struggle, the Communist Party put forward the demand (without which the other proposals would be mere changes in machinery) that it was necesary for the movement to find a new leadership and a militant policy. In order to drive forward this campaign and give it body, the Communist workers inside the Unions and inside the Trades Councils took the initiative in

forming a Minority Movement, of which Harry Pollitt became secretary.

In the autumn of 1923, following upon the unsatisfactory Plymouth Trades Union Congress, branches of Unions, District Committees of Unions, Trades Councils from all over the country began to affiliate themselves to the Minority Movement for bringing about the militancy that would render the Trade Union Movement powerful and able and willing to fight. So rapidly did the Minority Movement grow, so successful and widely attended were its Conferences that in the year 1924-25 there was great hope of a campaign for the strengthening of the Trade Union Movement being successful. It was as candidate of the Minority Movement that A. J. Cook was elected to the Secretaryship of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and from this, for a time, came to the miners a new leadership and a militant policy.

At its 6th Congress in May 1924, Salford, the Party passed the following resolution on the Minority Movement.

"This Conference of the Communist Party of Great Britain, notes with pleasure the growing revival of activity now taking place throughout the whole working class. It marks the first stage in the stemming of the capitalist offensive of the last three years, and the slow gathering of the workers' forces to go forward in a united attack against the capitalists.

The crisis which the workers' movement has passed through for the last years has openly betrayed the bankruptcy in ideas and leadership of the reformist elements directing the activities and struggles of the workers.

The existing organisations of the workers no longer respond to the new demands of the workers for united action to secure common demands. Hence the workers are forced into a struggle with the existing reformist leadership in order to realise their most immediate needs and demands.

The growing opposition movements now springing up in the leading trade unions, industries and the Labour Party. are the first expression of the concrete raising of the demands of the workers and of a definite challenge to the existing leadership.

The Communist Party welcomes these minority movements as the sign of the awakening of the workers.

The Communist Party will throw itself wholeheartedly into the struggles of the minority movements, and will do all in its power to assist them in their struggles.

The Communist Party, however, declares unhesitatingly to all the workers that the various minority movements cannot realise their full power so long as they remain sectional, separate and limited in their scope and character. The many streams of the rising forces of the workers must be gathered together in one powerful mass movement which will sweep away the old leadership and drive forward relentlessly to the struggle for power. Only so will the partial and sectional struggles around which the minority movements are grouped to-day find their realisation as their struggle unfolds itself."

But the leaders of the Trade Unions fought tooth and nail against the Minority Movement. Knowing that the democratic expression of views would sweep away their policy, they took the undemocratic and unprecedented step in the history of the British Trade Union Movement of placing the Minority Movement under a ban and threatening to break up any section of the organised workers who combined in this democratic way to achieve their own purpose.

The Labour Government

But, before this, the attempt of the Communist Party to " Stop the Retreat " had brought a rally of the workers, while a multitude of small local strikes showed the rising mood of the workers. The Labour Party leadership were carried forward on a wave of developing class struggle, and won many seats at the

General Election of December 1923. The Tories were the largest single party in the House of Commons, the Labour Party next, and then the Liberal Party. With the help of the bourgeoisie a Labour Government was formed, but included in it were Tories like the ex-Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, and the Liberal War Minister, Lord Haldane. The gulf between the MacDonald Government and the interests of the working class was speedily revealed. There was a strike of the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen: the Labour Government at once made use of the vicious anti-working class Emergency Powers Act Discontent amongst the workers with the Labour Government began to grow and was voiced by the Communist Party at its Sixth Congress.

"The rapid growth of the Labour Party and its parliamentary success, which led to the formation of a Labour Government, is a sign of the recovery of the working masses from the depression and demoralisation caused by the defeats between 1921 and 1923. It is a sign that the workers of Britain are developing a revolutionary class-consciousness for the first time, and breaking definitely with the old belief in the capitalist political parties. . . .

"The capitalist class retains its domination, thanks to its control of the means of production and its State machinery. . . .

"At home and abroad it [Labour Government] is doing their work. By approving the report of the bourgeois experts and endeavouring to apply the Treaty of Versailles, the Labour Government is continuing the capitalist policy of enslaving the German workers. In India the workers are officially denied a vote, forbidden political rights, shot down during their industrial struggles, bombed and starved. In the other colonial and semi-colonial countries—Egypt, Mesopotamia, Kenya—the same conditions prevail, and the toiling masses feel no change from the appearance of the Labour Government. In its negotiations with the Soviet Republics, the Government of Mr. MacDonald has

entirely adopted the claims and the phrases of its capitalist predecessors on behalf of the bondholders and factory owners. At home, every Trade Union dispute brings the intervention of the Labour Government to prevent a fight to a finish. The miners have been left without a minimum wage, without nationalisation of the mines. The London vehicle workers were openly threatened with military force. The unemployed continue to be starved, imprisoned and treated as outcasts. The Government spying on labour organisations continues. The army is still left entirely in the grip of the reactionary clique of aristocratic officers, and the worker loses all his rights when he enters its ranks."

The growing conflict expressed in this resolution between the interests of the working class and the policy of the Labour Government was suddenly brought to a head by "the Campbell case," a court prosecution of an anti-militarist article in the Communist Party's weekly organ. The conflict was dramatised in the persons of J. R. Campbell, then editing the *Workers' Weekly*, and J. Ramsay MacDonald, the then Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Widespread indignation in the Labour Movement forced the MacDonald Government to release J. R. Campbell. The capitalist circles now became indignant at the MacDonald Government, which hitherto had yielded to capitalist pressure, for releasing J. R. Campbell in response to working-class pressure; and when a Treaty with the Soviet Union was signed, also under pressure from M.P.s who represented a big mass feeling, the capitalists, without more ado, turned out the Labour Government.

But the workers' movement went on developing. Under its pressure the General Council of the Trades Union Congress presently entered a joint Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee. Meanwhile the plans of the big capitalists were maturing. The next step was the return of Britain to the Gold Standard.

carried through by Mr. Winston Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the spring of 1925. This was to be the climax of their six years' effort to bring about the reconstruction of capitalism, in which the capitalist offensive on hours and wages, the Dawes Plan for Germany, the repression of revolution, the loans to Central Europe, and the stabilisation of currencies were so many stages. The return to the Gold Standard entailed the lowering of the prices of British exports by a costs reduction of one-tenth or more; and this the capitalists proposed to secure by renewed attack upon wages.

The miners had to bear the brunt of the attack, but the other workers knew their wages would be cut also if the miners were defeated. The effect of the three years' activity of the Minority Movement now began to be seen. The workers insisted on a stand being made: and on " Red Friday " at the end of July 1925, when the mineowners sent their lockout ultimatum. an embargo was laid by the Transport and Railway Unions upon all movements of coal. The Baldwin Government surrendered immediately, offered a nine months' subsidy to keep up miners' wages, and used the breathing space to undermine the morale of the Trade Union leaders and for preparations to crush all resistance next time. Part of their preparations was to imprison twelve Communist leaders (Inkpin, Pollitt, Gallacher, Campbell, Rust and others).

When the nine months were up, the Baldwin Government, having already secured its Quislings inside the Labour Movement, hoped to compel surrender without a fight. Everything was arranged for this. But the class forces had reached the point of acute antagonism: and the inevitable conflict developed.

The General Strike

The General Strike of May, 1926, followed by the seven months' heroic struggle of the miners, was a landmark in the history of the British working class.

Not only was it the supreme example of class solidarity on a scale unknown since Chartist times, but it developed new forms of organisation, which have not been forgotten by the working class.

The standpoint of the Communist Party appears in the following, written by R. P. Dutt immediately following the General Strike:

"The British and international bourgeoisie are singing their song of triumph over the defeat of the British general strike. It is a song that will be short-lived. The British general strike is not only the greatest revolutionary advance in Britain since the days of Chartism, and the sure prelude of the new revolutionary era, but its very defeat is a profound revolutionary lesson and stimulus. Gigantic tasks await the working-class vanguard in Britain: but henceforth the old conditions can no longer continue; the old British social fabric of parliamentary and democratic hypocrisy has received shattering blows; and the British working class has entered into a new era, the era of mass struggle, which can only culminate in open revolutionary struggle. By their methods of suppressing the general strike, by their open dictatorship and display of armed force, by their ruthless prosecution of the struggle on the basis of war, by their transference at last of the methods of armed force from the colonies into Britain itself, the British bourgeoisie has taught the proletariat a lesson of inestimable revolutionary value. The defeat of the general strike is itself a gigantic piece of revolutionary propaganda.

Not the masses were defeated, but the old leadership, the old reformist trade unionism, parliamentarism, pacifism and democracy. The masses stood solid; these broke down; these were the real casualties of the fight; and the masses will learn to fling them aside when it comes to the future struggle. The driving home of this lesson, the shattering of the old traditions and leadership, the tireless preparation

for the future struggle, and above all the building up of an iron revolutionary vanguard of the workers and kernel of new leadership—these are the tasks that follow on the collapse of the general strike.

The general strike has brought the British working class face to face with the political issue of power, with the legal and armed force of the State. The old trade union tradition has been brought to its highest culminating point, only to have its complete impotence shown unless it can pass into this higher plane. The masses have entered into the full highway of mass struggle, and shown a solidarity, courage, tenacity and class-will, which affords the guarantee of future revolutionary victory This time they entered the struggle with the old traditions, apparatus, leadership, all fundamentally opposed to the struggle, and only dragged along with them by the force of their mass-will; their limbs were shackled by the myriad trade union-economic-pacifist-legalist-constitutional-democratic traditions, and under these conditions defeat in the first shock was inevitable But the positive lessons of the struggle are stronger than all the treacheries of the reformist leadership. The class character of the State has been exposed. The trappings of parliament, democracy, trade union legalism and economism have been torn aside, and laid bare the naked class-power opposition with its ultimate weapon of armed force. The future struggle in Britain can henceforth only be the revolutionary mass struggle with an open political aim. The bourgeoisie have themselves shown the way forward to the proletariat.

* * *

The general strike was proclaimed as an economic battle of the whole working class. Its advance was that it was the first attempt at a battle of the whole working class, without distinction of sectional interests, against the attack of the whole capitalist class. Its weakness was that it endeavoured to remain confined as a limited economic struggle, without recognising that such a confrontation of the strength of two classes becomes inevitably a political struggle, and in fact a revolutionary struggle. In consequence the Government was able to take advantage of the confusion of the Working-Class Movement and bring

every weapon into the field against it, while the Working-Class Movement remained uncertain in aim and completely taken aback by the methods of the Government. Under these conditions defeat was inevitable. These conditions of the struggle must not be repeated.

The collapse of the general strike was the final collapse of the methods of the old trade union economic struggle, as it has been fought in the past, which reached its extreme culminating stage in the general strike and can go no further. The workers are now face to face with the legal and armed force of the State. The future struggle can only be carried forward as the direct political revolutionary struggle with the State. The lesson of the defeat of the general strike of 1926 is not the failure and discrediting of the weapon of the general strike, but the necessity of carrying the general strike forward to the inevitable political revolutionary struggle.

* * *

But a struggle of this character is in fact a completely new type for the English Working-Class Movement; and the question therefore inevitably arises whether the apparatus of the movement is fitted for such a general struggle. The experience of 1926 throws an important light on this. The trade unions proved able to assemble the masses and to call them to battle upon a broad economic issue. But as soon as the struggle became political in character, it passed beyond the possibility of trade union direction. Such a struggle demanded a single unified direction and movement, with a single aim, a clearness of objective and outlook parallel to that of the Government, and a readiness to lead in every field of the struggle. But such a lead can only be the lead of a political party. The Labour Party, however, could not provide such a political leadership required, not only because the existing leadership of the Labour Party is rotten to the core with reformism and parliamentarism and therefore incapable of giving any leadership to the class struggle of the workers save to betray it, but also because the Labour Party itself is a loose federal body of exactly parallel character to the trade unions, and therefore incapable of uniform centralised direction. Only a centralised revolutionary political party

can have the necessary unity, concentration, single aim and rapid adaptation to all the needs of the struggle. This iron necessity to the working class of a revolutionary political party to lead their struggle is a central lesson of the present crisis for the whole English Working-Class Movement. It is the central need for the trade unions at the present stage. Only a mass Communist Party, acting in conjunction with the trade unions as the mass organisations of the workers, can lead the whole working class to victory."

After the General Strike the Baldwin Government imposed the Trade Union and Trades Dispute Act of 1927. Against this the Communist Party led a campaign and continued that campaign at a period when the Trade Union leaders were counselling capitulation. Sir Walter Citrine and others took up the attitude which they hoped or pretended would enable the Government to feel at some point that it could safely render back to the Trade Unions the powers stolen from them in 1927. The capitalists were delighted. Now, thirteen years later, when the General Council mildly asked Mr. Chamberlain to consider the repeal of the Trade Union Disputes Act, they got a reply that they would consider it—after the War.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE UNEMPLOYED

Twenty years of capitalism, twenty years of unemployment! In 1921 nearly two million workless, in 1932 nearly three million, to the end of 1939 never less than a million. At no time in history has there been anything like it. Men and women whose nimble fingers and brains could have been making and building are condemned to idleness, malnutrition, a life empty of meaning. Capitalism for a whole generation has been wasting these productive forces of Britain. Were there no other proof it would be sign enough that

capitalism, decadent and rotten, is more than ripe for revolutionary change.

The Labour leadership could neither see or foresee. They spread illusions of peace and prosperity, they warned the workers against revolution, they promised to fight for reforms, but as the years went on they ceased to fight even for reforms. They were helpless, blind to what was happening. When the Communists predicted that decaying capitalism would enter the world economic crisis, the Labour leadership of Britain paid no heed but nosed after the capitalist economists who were predicting an era of continuous prosperity.

The Communist Party, while fighting against capitalism, never ceased to fight for the immediate interests of the unemployed workers. Under the leadership of the Communist workers, at the end of 1920 there was set up the unemployed organisation which has grown into the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. The Communist Party backed the demand for Full Maintenance for the Unemployed at Trade Union Rates of Wages.

Under the pressure of this first campaign, the Labour Party summoned a special conference in January, 1921, where Full Maintenance of Trade Union Rates of Wages was put forward. How was it to be brought about? The Conference threatened to take drastic action, strike action if this demand was not accepted by the Government, and adjourned for one month. The Government refused, the adjourned Conference met on the 27th February, 1921, and decided—to do nothing.

In *The Communist* it was stated:

"The adjourned Conference was not merely a fiasco. *It was an abdication.* The Labour Party formally and irrevocably decided that it would not function in the matter

of the unemployed. It formally and irrevocably decided that it would abandon the workers, the unemployed and the about-to-be unemployed, to the mercies of class government and capitalism. . . . The Labour Party will never recover from this colossal confession of its cowardice, its incompetence, its ignorance, its brazen apathy. The Labour Party has abdicated. What then?

To reorganise, to revivify the workers' movement of Great Britain becomes the urgent and instant task of every Communist. Its old reformist outlook must be swept away. The workshops and pits must become the units from which spring both the initiative and the control. Throughout the length and breath of the land the fiery cross must be carried by the Communist Party, and the watchword of those whose aim is a new order of society, whose method is the dictatorship of the proletariat, must be 'All power to the Workers.' "

Through all the years that followed, amid partial struggles and in the time of the resistance to the Means Test, the Party has always stood for this demand of Full Maintenance at Trade Union Rates of Wages.

The Communist Party campaigned for the recognition of the unemployed movement by the trade union and Labour movement. The campaign began in 1920. For a time the Trades Union Congress General Council entered into relations with the organised unemployed movement, but it presently became clear that it had done so not with any intention of undertaking the bold policy that was necessary, but only to meet the strong pressure from its members. At an opportune moment the leaders of the trade union and Labour movement broke off relations and forsook their plain duty of recognising the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and giving it all assistance and the backing of the organised Trade Unions.

The Communist Party fought for the Unity of Employed and Unemployed Workers. Mass unemployment during the whole period was ever present as

a threat to the wages of the employed workers. Employers relied upon this and used it as a menace. The only way to combat it was by establishing full unity of the employed and unemployed workers. It was due to the campaign of the Communist Party that the employers found that they could not use this menace to the full and that a degree of solidarity developed between employed and unemployed.

The book "Unemployed Struggles 1919-1936," by Wal Hannington, tells something of how the fight was carried on and in the next chapter mention is made of the 1934-35 campaign. What is important is to realise that this three-fold Communist policy would have saved the unemployed from semi-starvation; would have prevented the weakening of forces by separation of the unemployed movement from the trade union and Labour movement; and would have made the workers, employed and unemployed, feel their unity as a class. On this basis the capitalist attack could have been withstood and in the common struggle the workers would have advanced to the taking of power.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE UNITY OF THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT

From the very beginning of the Communist Party, it has led the struggle for the unity of the working-class movement.

Relations with the Labour Party

For this purpose at its opening Conference, it took the decision to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party, in order within the Labour Party to strengthen the militant and fighting elements and to expose the treacherous, misleading elements such as Ramsay MacDonald, J. H. Thomas, Philip Snowden, and in

order that the Labour Party should organise the mass of the workers for struggle. This aim was clearly put forward in every application for affiliation. The Labour Party Executive, led by Arthur Henderson, were in a dilemma, because the Labour Party had been built up on the basis of willing acceptance of any affiliation of a working-class body that had Socialist aims, and for this reason they had accepted the British Socialist Party, which was one of the main constituents of the new Communist Party. The decision was taken to refuse affiliation and was ratified only by a narrow majority at the Labour Party Conference in 1921.

Successive applications for affiliation to the Labour Party were rejected and, under the leadership of MacDonald, Snowden, Henderson and Thomas, the Labour Party entered into its policy of betrayal, which entailed expulsion and repression of the democratic activities of its members.

Ten years after the Labour Party Conference had first rejected the affiliation of the Communist Party, MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas—whom they had hugged to their bosom and for whose sake the Communists had been rejected and the ranks of the working class divided—passed over openly to the ranks of the capitalists. MacDonald went, but MacDonaldism remained. Endeavours of the Communist Party from 1935 onwards, with applications for affiliation, were renewed and were defeated by the leaders in the full spirit of MacDonaldism. The progressive degeneration of the Labour Party is closely linked up with its rejection of the Communist Party's appeal for affiliation.

In the period of the last few years, when the movement to help Spain was being led by the Communist Party, the powerful united activity of the British working-class movement (which would have saved

Spain and prevented the present war) was broken up by the Labour leaders rather than enter into association with the Communist Party.

United Front

The employers' offensive developed throughout the year 1921; the world economic crisis deepened; unemployment increased. Under the blows of the capitalists there had arisen amongst the workers an irresistible impulse towards unity; irrespective of the attitude of the leaders, many who had not outlived their faith in the reformists nevertheless desired a common front of the workers against the employers' attacks.

The Communist Party in 1921 called for the formation of a United Front of the workers who had the will to struggle against capitalism, no matter to what party they belonged, and ceaselessly agitated for it.

In 1923 the Communist Party addressed the following Open Letter to the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party, the General Council, the Trades Unions and all Socialist Groups:

> The life of the workers is worsening from day to day. New attacks are threatening from every side. Wages are already down to starvation level, and now comes the attack on hours. The homes of the workers are threatened by the campaign to raise rents, and evictions are already frequent. The unemployed are treated with open indifference and subjected to a new gap [waiting period] which leaves men stranded for months. The burdens of taxation and the payment of debt falls unendurably upon the workers in the form of high prices for the elementary necessities of life and sinking wages and employment.
>
> The Government is seeking to fix the subjection of the workers by special legislation and drag the workers into the horrors of a new war.

Against all these attacks, the workers are unprepared. Their attempts at resistance have been disorganised and ineffective. The heroic struggle of the miners and the engineers have been wasted by the lack of a common stand.

A united stand by the working class together against the capitalist attack is the first need of the workers to-day.

For this purpose the Communist Party puts forward the following definite proposals as a basis on which all sections of the workers, whatever their political outlook, can unite:

1. WAGES. United resistance to all wage reductions.
2. HOURS. United resistance to all extension of hours.
3. UNEMPLOYMENT. Work at Trade Union rates or full maintenance as a national charge, and no gaps.
4. WORKSHOP CONTROL.
   (a) No tying agreements.
   (b) Protection of right of shop stewards by Union guarantee against victimisation.
   (c) Shop committees guaranteed against victimisation by all the Unions concerned.
5. HOUSING
   (a) Back to pre-war rents.
   (b) No compromise on back rents.
   (c) No evictions.
   (d) Clearing of slums and temporary accommodation for those dishoused.
6. COST OF LIVING
   (a) Government action to bring down the price of the elementary necessities of life.
   (b) Formation of Housewives Committees to struggle against high cost of living.
   (c) Full maintenance for expectant mothers, eight weeks before and eight weeks after confinement.
7. TAXATION
   No reduction of taxation for the rich.
   Removal of all taxation on food.
8. WAR. Organisation of working-class action against war.

These demands are the immediate, everyday demands and needs of the workers. They are the demands which the widest masses of the workers can most easily under-

stand and unite on. The Communist Party fully supports and is prepared to fight for these demands, while at the same time carrying on its agitation for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only solution to the present situation

Therefore, the Communist Party puts the following question to all working-class organisations:

Will you join us in a common agitation and action for these demands?

It had not been easy for Communist workers who had had the experience of betrayal after betrayal by the Labour leaders to consider working closely with some of their supporters. But the reformist leaders of the Trade Unions and of the Labour Party rejected all the proposals for a United Front, either nationally or internationally. Fifteen years later, they were equally obdurate in refusing the United Front nationally or internationally to save the working class and the people of Spain.

Charter Campaign, 1931

After the outbreak of the world economic crisis, the effects of it began to be seen in this country. In 1930 the new employers' offensive began. The figure of unemployment leapt upwards to its highest mark. The Labour Government committed the care of the unemployed to Mr. J. H. Thomas. Mr. Thomas—like his capitalist friends—was unable to put forward any solution by the summer of 1930, and the spectacle was seen of a Hunger March from Scotland and Wales to London taking place with a Labour Government in power.

In the meantime, the working class, exposed to the employers' attacks, were doubly disarmed, for they had been unprepared by their leadership to meet the new conditions following the crisis and in addition there was a mistaken tendency to look to the leadership now

functioning as the Labour Government, in the hope that it was bound to come to their aid. The pulse of the Labour Movement sank very low in the last months of 1930. It was then the Communist Party sought to rally in a United Front the whole force of the working class around a series of demands which were immediately practicable and would enable them to press forward to still further advances.

For this purpose the Communist Party launched the Charter Campaign. The Charter contained the following demands:

1. Increased unemployment benefit and abolition of all disqualifying restrictions and task work. Benefit for each unemployed day.
2. Against speed-up, dismissals, overtime and the spread-over, and for seven-hour day.
3. Against increased insurance contributions and for non-contributory social insurance.
4. A guaranteed week and a national minimum wage of £3 a week.
5. Repeal of Trades Disputes Act.
6. Against Imperialism and tariff attacks upon workers' standards.

United Front Movement, 1934

The seizure of power by the German Fascists in 1933 was a shock to the workers of every country. In Britain, as in other countries, the advance of Fascism was seen in connection with the strengthening forces of reaction in the National Government, in manifold ways through wage cuts, Means Test, reduction of social services, etc., etc., depressing the standard of living of the workers.

The Communist Party, on March 11, 1933, published a letter addressed to the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P., the General Council of the Trade Union

Congress and the Executive Committee of the Co-operative Party. After showing the readiness of the workers for struggle, the letter went on to say:

"In view of the present situation of unprecedented gravity and menace to the working class, and in line with the practical proposals contained in this Manifesto for the building up of the united front of mass action in the struggle against the attacks of the capitalists and Fascism, we propose to your organisation that an immediate meeting should take place between the Communist Party, the I.L.P., the T.U.C. General Council and the central organs of the Co-operative Movement, with the object of achieving agreement on a campaign for united action on the basis of the following proposals:

(1) *Immediate joint action in support of the German and Austrian working-class fight against Fascism.*

(a) by a series of mass meetings and demonstrations to demand freedom of meeting, freedom of the workers' Press, the return of the confiscated buildings and printing houses of the Communist, Socialist and trade union organisations of Germany and Austria; the right to strike; the release of all political prisoners; the immunity of the elected representatives of the workers, and the right to carry out their working-class duties in the Reichstag.

(b) the organisation of all forms of practical aid to enable the German and Austrian workers to carry on more effectively the fight against Hitler.

(c) the definite assurance that the full weight of the united organisations will be used to prevent blacklegging in this country if strikes take place in Germany and Austria in defence of the conditions and liberties of the German working class.

(d) an active fight for the repudiation of the Versailles Treaty.

(e) Exchange of speakers between the working-class organisations of Britain and Germany to help in building up effective international action between the workers of both countries.

(2) *The fight against the National Government and the employers' offensive in Britain.*

The organisation of meetings, demonstrations and strikes.

(a) Against wage-cuts and dismissals through rationalisation schemes, such as the railway pool, the London Passenger Transport Act, etc.

(b) To protect existing unemployment benefits from further attacks, and to secure the abolition of the Means Test and full maintenance for the unemployed.

(c) Against speeding-up and abolition of systematic overtime.

(d) For the forty-hour working week without wage reductions.

(e) As an immediate step, the organisation of mass support for the Irish rail strikers.

(f) The organisation of a great mass movement against the proposed taxation of Co-operative Societies.

(g) United and resolute action to secure the repeal of the Trade Union Act and in defence of the freedom of the Press and speech in matters affecting the working class, whether in industry, among the unemployed or in the armed forces.

(h) For the release of all political prisoners in Britain, the Meerut prisoners in India, and all political prisoners throughout the Empire.

(i) For full support for the decisions of the Bermondsey Anti-war Conference, and the full strength of all working-class organisations to be used to prevent any munitions going to the Far East.

(j) For the Trade Agreement with the Soviet Union, the extension of credits and the abandonment of all discriminatory clauses.

(k) For the fullest support to the International Anti-Fascist Congress now being organised to take place in April.

As an immediate measure we propose the convening without delay of mass demonstrations in London and every provincial city in support of the German and Austrian

workers' struggle against Fascism, and against the attacks of the capitalists on the working class of Britain, to be organised by the joint efforts of all working-class organisations.

Finally, we propose that as one of the most effective means of organising working class mass action to fight for these demands, a joint call should be made for the greatest demonstrations, in support of such a programme, to take place on May 1, the historical international day of struggle, which in this period of ruthless attacks on workers' conditions, Fascist terror and imperialist war, now takes on greater significance than ever before."

These proposals were considered by the I.L.P., in which at this time there were two tendencies. The rank-and-file were demanding a united front. The leaders were old skilled opportunists, who, without losing their rooted standpoint, could yield to pressure as willows bend before the wind. So the I.L.P. welcomed the proposal for a United Front and shortly afterwards came to a certain agreement on it. But the Labour Party, T.U.C. and Co-op. rejected the proposal of the United Front, thus immediately exposing their attitude within the Labour and Socialist International an attitude which was later to be decisive on the question of Spain.

The United Front nevertheless began to develop in country after country, though hindered not only in Britain but throughout Europe by the attitude of the British Labour Party. The Communist Party and the I.L.P. issued a joint statement for a United Front Campaign against Fascism, War and the attacks on the conditions of the employed and unemployed workers by (a) resistance to wage cuts; (b) abolition of the Means Test; (c) Housing and rent demands; (d) 40-hour week without wage reduction; (e) Free speech and release of political prisoners throughout the British Empire.

In practice, however, there was a resistance inside the I.L.P. to the full carrying out of the United Front in action in the workshops and Trade Unions. The establishment of an agreement on the United Front had served only to reveal that the I.L.P. itself was torn between reformist and revolutionary views in its membership.

At the same time, the Youth organisations such as the Young Communist League, the I.L.P. Guild of Youth, and the British Federation of Co-operative Youth, entered into a United Front agreement which was to be " based upon the struggle for the advance of the interests of young workers in factories, Labour Exchanges, Training Centres and Trade Unions, against the capitalist offensive, Fascism and war preparations."

In Union Conferences, the proposals of the Communist Party for the United Front were taken up and in some number of cases were carried through. For example, the Annual Conference of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers instructed its Executive Committee

> " to take every step that will assist in building a strong United Front of all working-class organisations for action against the drive to Fascism and war of the British Government.
>
> " We declare that the best support for our German comrades is a militant front against every form of capitalist attack on the working class in this and other countries."

Similarly a resolution was carried at the Jubilee Conference of the Women's Co-operative Guild: and at a Labour Women's Conference it was urged that if the Labour leaders could appear on the same platform with Liberals and Conservatives for one or other pur-

pose, they could work along with the Communist Party against Fascism.

By spring 1934 the campaign for the United Front was growing against the "New Poor Law," the Unemployment Bill of the National Government A considerable number of Trade Union Executive leaders and Labour Members of Parliament, the Independent Labour Party, the Communist Party and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement combined forces to call for a march of the unemployed and a National Congress. For Ramsay MacDonald in his speeches was making it clear that he looked forward to the National Government developing in a totalitarian direction corresponding to the advance of Fascism in Germany.

Against this United Front movement which was to be found in every country, the British Labour Party led the opposition within the Second International. Old Emile Vandervelde said in the autumn of 1934 at a joint meeting with representatives of the Communist International that "we very much wish to organise this co-operation as quickly as possible, but we would be disavowed by those we are representing and who would make very lively opposition to us," and again he said that while they wished for nothing better than a United Front they knew very well that "if we were to do this, we would come up against lively opposition in Holland, England and the Scandinavian countries." It was the Socialist and Labour Parties of these countries led by the British Labour Party which refused to take the necessary measures for the fight against Fascism at home and abroad.

In February 1935, a tremendous storm of mass demonstrations swept the country against the operation of the 1934 Unemployment Act. On February 6th, a

demonstration of 35,000 Sheffield workers marched on the City Hall to demand that the Public Assistance Committee immediately make up the cuts. 60,000 marched in the Rhondda, 40,000 in Dowlais, 20,000 in Pontypridd, 30,000 in Aberdare, culminating in the United Front Conference in South Wales with its sixteen hundred delegates brought together under the auspices of the South Wales Miners' Federation. It was a demonstration of the power of the mass movement and it had followed upon the joint call of the Communist Party and the I.L.P. for a United Front struggle issued on January 3, 1935. During this glorious struggle, the Labour Party leadership and the Trade Union Congress General Council reiterated their ban on the United Front.

United Front Against War and Fascism

From 1935 onwards the fight against war and Fascism dominated every other issue. With the advance of Hitler these issues became clearer to wider sections, with the result that the United Front assumed new forms and reached new stages of development

THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM AND REACTION

Fascism, the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital, has been fought against from the beginning by the Communists. They saw Fascism as the attempt of a decaying social order to organise that decay, to pickle it at the stage when it is ripe for socialism, and so to hold back the advance of mankind to a new social order. The Communists saw in Fascism the state forms needed by decaying capitalism to arrest its final dissolution, including the violent subjection of the working class and the growth of State monopoly capitalism.

Under State monopoly capitalism the wage-earners are compelled to labour for the profit of the capitalists —in what trade or under what conditions being decided from above—while the right to strike is abolished and the State controller (who may by a savage irony be a " Labour man ") settles disputes by compulsory arbitration from above. This is what some thirty years ago was described as the Servile State: and in its present stage in the belligerent countries contains features not then anticipated, such as the welter of demagogy to persuade workers to its acceptance.

To render the workers aware of this peril, to awaken them to resistance, to show as a vivid and real alternative the advance to working-class power that can build Socialism, was the task of the Communists. They were fighting through all those years for the very soul of the working class. They had to fight not only against the capitalists but against the enervating policy of the Reformists that was paving the way for the success of Fascism and reaction.

Mussolini, 1921-1922

When the Italian Fascisti began their rise to power as agents of the big capitalists of Italy and the Italian General Staff, it was customary to " pooh-pooh " the importance of this new development and to pay no attention to the possibility of its extension to other countries. The Communist Party from the very beginning warned the British workers that the British ruling class regarded Mussolini as the saviour of Italy from the power of the working class. Mr. Bonar Law, then Prime Minister, hastened to take up good relations with the Fascisti in Italy. The Communist Party urged the British workers to realise that the fight was

against Fascism *and* reaction: whilst every support must be given to the Italian working class, most important for the British workers was the struggle against " their own " reaction in Britain. When Sir Austen Chamberlain (half-brother of the present Neville Chamberlain) as Foreign Secretary, negotiated in 1925 an agreement with Mussolini by which concrete aid was given to Italian Fascism with the object of building up in the West of Europe a Four-Power Grouping of capitalist Britain, France, Germany and Italy against the Socialist Soviet Union, this " spirit of Locarno " was greeted by the Labour Party as a step forward towards the maintenance of Peace. The Communist Party showed what friendliness between British reaction and Italian Fascism meant and predicted that, far from leading to Peace, this type of capitalist grouping would be bound to result in war.

Growth of German Fascism, 1923-1933

The growth of German Fascism brought the peril nearer. For the class-struggle developments in Germany were the mirror of Britain's future. The Communist Party which painstakingly, thoroughly and unceasingly exposed the developing danger from Fascism, showed that so far from Britain being the soil in which Fascism could not flourish (" it cannot happen here ") there were, in the specific features of British Imperialism, all the potentialities of Fascism.

" What," wrote R. P. Dutt in his book, *Fascism and Social Revolution,* " are the general conditions for the growth of Fascism? " He listed them as follows:

(1) Intensification of the economic crisis and of the class struggle.

(2) Widespread disillusionment with Parliamentarianism.

(3) The existence of a wide petty-bourgeois intermediate strata, slum proletariat, and sections of the workers under capitalist influence.
(4) The absence of independent class-conscious leadership of the main body of the working class.

To the question whether these conditions were present in Britain and France, and the United States, the answer was given that they are all strongly present. Take only the last and consider the Labour Party and the Trade Union leadership. By their denial of the class struggle and preaching of the " community above class," by their alliance with the employers (Mondism) and by their ban on the United Front, the independent class action of the workers has been disorganised and the way paved for Fascism. It was pointed out that the famous " unwritten constitution " of Britain was very easily adaptable for the purposes of Fascism. Further, the British ruling class, trained for generations on its rule of Ireland and India to methods of viciousness and despotism, at the same time is adept in Parliamentary and electioneering humbug and the whole technique of deception of the masses: these two were the perfect combination for the purposes of Fascism. Mr. W. E. D. Allen, one of the most cunning supporters of Mosley, in his book written in 1933, claimed that the Ulster Movement of 1914 " was, in fact, the first Fascist Movement in Europe."

What has been here quoted from R. P. Dutt is a standpoint shared by every Communist and is expressed time and again in the pronouncements of the British Party. Therefore, during the whole period of the development of Fascism in Germany from 1923-1933 the Communist Party called the workers to be on the alert against it in Britain also. The Labour Party, on the other hand, had a simple explanation—that

Fascism was a consequence of Communism. This view was also expressed by the leaders of the Conservative Party. Mr. Baldwin made it clear that he shared the view of the Labour Party (or was it the Labour Party shared his view?) in 1932, while in 1935 at the General Election, Mr. Baldwin advanced to ruling out Fascism in Britain unles there were "a peril of Communism or crude Socialism." It was taken as a reassurance, but it was really a threat!

Actually, of course, the reformist Socialists in Italy were defeated, not because of the Communist methods but because they refused to adopt Communist methods. The only country where Communist methods were fully used—namely, the Soviet Union—is the one completely free from Fascism. In this country, the only Party which remained fully alert and strove to arouse the workers to the dangers of Fascism was the Communist Party.

Beginnings of Fascism in Britain (1931 and Mosley)

British imitators of Mussolini were to be found in this country very soon after the end of the last war. Moreover, various other groupings and organisations of Fascist character were to be found in 1925-26, but the beginnings of British Fascism in its most serious forms, date from 1931. For, at the beginning of that year Mosley left the Labour Party to form his own organisation on what were presently clear Fascist lines, and in the latter part of 1931 the coming to power of the National Government exhibited the rapid development towards totalitarianism—towards Fascism.

The Mosley movement originated from within the Labour Party. A member of the Executive of the Labour Party and Minister in the Labour Government, he resigned in 1930 on the grounds of its failure to deal

with unemployment. As Minister he had produced the Mosley memorandum which was openly non-Socialist. a far-reaching policy of capitalist reconstruction. It was, in fact, the first sketch for a Fascist policy. The I.L.P. welcomed the Mosley memorandum and Mr. Fenner Brockway stated that " in the ideas of the I.L.P. group and the smaller Mosley group, there is a good deal in common." The Communist Party, on the other hand, exposed Mosley's Fascist tendency, which Mosley himself tried to deny. By 1931 the intermediate stage was passed and as the Communists had predicted, the Mosley group became openly Fascist, closely imitating the whole apparatus and organisation of the Italian Fascisti and the Hitler Fascists of Germany. Thus it was from the Labour Party and with the backing of the I.L.P. that Mosley made his first steps in the direction of Fascism, while the Communist Party, fighting against Fascism and reaction, keenly aware of every move of the enemy, gave warning to the British workers.

The National Government, formed in the autumn of 1931, was a very distinct step in the direction of Fascism in Britain. Witness the concentration of capitalist forces in the crisis; new lines of economic policy (tariffs, quotas, import boards, drive to Empire economic unity), together with rapid increase of war preparations; overshadowing of ordinary Parliamentary methods with increasing power to the Executive (e.g., Economy Cuts and the Means Test put through as Orders in Council); reorganisation, extension and militarisation of the police by the National Government; encroachments on civil liberties (e.g., Lord Trenchard's activities as Police Commissioner. reactionary legislation such as the Incitement to Disaffection Act, imprisonment under an Act of 1346 of

Tom Mann, who was not even charged with crime or offence of any character); finally, the Act bringing the unemployed under the three dictators of Whitehall, the Unemployment Assistance Board, an autocratic authority with power to establish concentration camps for the unemployed. The Communist Party explained the significance of this, drawing attention to the way in which Fascism and reaction were gaining ground. It was thanks to the Communist Party's fight that the mass of the people were roused within the next few years for mass struggle against the National Government and all its supporting groups.

Coming to Power of Hitler, 1933

When Hitler came to power in Germany our Communist Party from the beginning strove to rouse the strongest opposition to Fascism and reaction. They not only called for support of the German working class against Hitler, but they pointed out how the National Government was favouring and fostering Hitler Fascism and called for an attack on the National Government as the ally of Hitler Fascism. The stand of the Communist Party in this country received great reinforcement from the heroic behaviour of Dimitrov at the Leipzig trial in 1933. He spoke as a Communist and was able to turn the Nazi court into a trial not of himself on a trumped-up charge, but of the Fascist régime. It was clear then that Communism was at the opposite pole from Fascism and reaction. All the silly-clever pretences by the writers in the Right-wing Press, the Labour Press, and recently in the so-called "Left" Press that Communism and Fascism were allied in their nature, disappear on reading of the standpoint taken up by the Communist Party towards

Fascism and Fascist tendencies, whether in Germany or in Britain.

The Government had shown that it was supporting and building up German Fascism and at the same time preparing for war. In the General Election of 1935 members of the Labour Party were hocus-pocussed into support of Sir Samuel Hoare and of the National Government because their leaders did not expose the hypocrisy of the Foreign Secretary and capitalism. The result was a foregone conclusion—with criticism withheld the National Government obtained a sweeping electoral victory in November 1935. Both before and after the General Election (at which William Gallacher was elected Member of Parliament) the Communist Party gave a clear lead, while the Trade Union Congress was praising Sir Samuel Hoare for his speech at Geneva and offering to back the National Government's policy with armed force, while Lansbury and Cripps were resigning from their positions as leader and deputy-leader of the Labour Party because they, too, believed in Sir Samuel Hoare's sincerity but did not hold with all his proposals. The Communist Party alone denounced the British Government's policy as insincere and hypocritical and warned the movement that so far from supporting the National Government in the fight against Fascism and war, they must turn the edge of their attack against the National Government. Within two months, the correctness of this standpoint was proved by the signing of the Hoare-Laval Pact; this proved the Labour leadership (whether bellicose or pacifist) to have been either dupes or agents of the National Government.

The Communist Party did not allow the matter to rest, but urged with all its might the formation of a United Front against war and Fascism. Thereafter,

through the whole of 1936 when the Spanish Popular Front in February and the French Popular Front in May demonstrated the enormous power of a United Working Class to rally around itself all the elements of the population oppressed by finance capital, the Communist Party insistently and repeatedly strove to build a United Front in Britain. The danger of war and Fascism could no longer be ignored or denied by the most wilful ostriches in the Labour leadership. But all the time the advance towards a United Front had to take place in face of the heaviest opposition from the Labour leadership.

This attitude was not confined to resolutions by the National Executive. The Labour Party's administrative machinery, built up with a view mainly to electoral contests, functioned between elections largely as a sort of Holy Inquisition, searching out amongst the membership of the Labour Party any words or deeds that might seem to show sympathy with the notion of a workers' United Front or a United Front of the whole mass of the people.

Spain

When the Spanish Fascist rebellion and Fascist invasion of Spain began in July 1936, the Communist Party at once issued the most urgent call for united action of the workers to help the people of Spain. The Party did everything to help the people of Spain and took immediate action itself towards this end. Here, if ever, was the opportunity of the Labour leadership with their repeated protestations of belief in democracy to show their mettle. The Labour Party, together with the Trades Union Congress and the Co-operative Party had on March 25, 1933, said: " Political events at home and abroad impel the British Labour Move-

ment to reaffirm its beliefs upon a fundamental principle of Government." Then, after it explained that Fascist dictatorship was due to fear of the dictatorship of the working class, it drew the conclusion that " to-day as in the past, British Labour must reaffirm its faith in Democracy and Socialism. . . . to-day in a world that is being driven by capitalist ruthlessness into dictatorship, British Labour stands firm for the Democratic Rights of the people."

Now these declarations were to be put to the test. The Spanish Government was a legally constituted Government arising from a regularly democratically elected Parliament. Here there was no possibility of evasion or of any pretence that democratic principles had not been fully observed. By International Law, the Spanish Government was entitled immediately to purchase arms and munitions to maintain itself against a Fascist rebellion. In the upshot, it was not the Labour Party but the Communist Party which proved to be standing for " the democratic rights of the people."

What did the Labour Party do? At the Trades Union Congress in September 1936, at the Labour Party Congress in October 1936, following the lead of the miserable Blum, it proclaimed its solidarity not with the Democracy of Spain, but with its own capitalist government. It supported the National Government's policy of alleged " non-intervention " which was, in fact, a policy of allowing the Fascist invaders from Germany and Italy free play while putting every obstacle in the way of the Spanish Republic. For fourteen months this remained the policy of the Labour leadership. By their opposition inside the Second International to the formation of a United Front internationally and nationally, the leader-

ship of the Labour Party had opened the gates to Fascism and War. They now took the further step of shutting the gates upon help that should have been given to the Spanish people's struggle for Democracy, help that if given in that first fourteen months would have sufficed to end the fascist rebellion.

The heaviest responsibility for the betrayal of Spain and for all that has happened since lies upon the leadership of the French Socialist Party and the British Labour Party.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party throughout that winter of 1936-37, strove in every way to build a united front movement and round it a whole movement of the mass of the people, " Aid Spain to save Democracy." It was they who were foremost in organising the International Brigade. The Communist Party, by the lead it gave, saved the people of Britain from lasting dishonour and the infamy of those first fourteen months attaches solely to the leaders of the General Council and of the Labour Party.

The unity of the working-class movement that was actually achieved, and to the degree it was achieved, was due to the intense struggle of the Communist Party on one issue after another. Many members of the Labour Party, and not a few local Labour Parties, in spite of the threats from Transport House, joined the United Front and remained steadfast (even with the menace of expulsion and disaffiliation) to the lead given to the working class by the Communist Party.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE COLONIAL PEOPLES

The greatest disaster of the British working class has been its identification with the interests of British Imperialism in the Empire. From the super-profits

wrung from the colonial peoples, the ruling class have spared crumbs for a section of the British proletariat. On this reformism, opportunism has flourished within the British Labour movement: but the working class has thereby been hindered in its struggle for emancipation. The enslavement of Britain, it has been said, is rooted in the enslavement of India. The common struggle of the British working class with the colonial peoples fighting for liberation is a necessity for the conquest of power by the working class.

The reformists argued that because capitalism in Europe was economically more developed than the countries of Asia and Africa, its subjugation of the colonies therefore signified an " advance." At the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart in 1907 the standpoint that capitalism had a " civilising mission " received a considerable minority vote. It was supported by Ramsay MacDonald amongst others; it was the standpoint of the Fabian Society; when the war of 1914-1918 began it became clear it was the standpoint of the majority of the Labour leadership. The right of self-determination of nations had been proclaimed as far back as 1896 at the International Socialist Congress. During the war of 1914-1918 it became clear that in the mouths of the so-called " Socialists " of Germany and Britain, it meant that this slogan was valid only for the nations oppressed by their opponents. The British " Socialists " demanded self-determination of the nationalities oppressed by the Germans but they did not apply it to India, Ireland and Egypt. To-day it is the same story: and the Labour Party is partner in a Government that includes Lord Lloyd as Colonial Secretary and Mr. Amery as Secretary for India.

In the twenty years since the formation of the Communist Party the differences between those who were

true to the old policy of socialism and those who supported their own capitalist Government, their own capitalist ruling class, became sharp and clear. When in 1924 the Labour Government had to deal with the Colonies and dependencies, its behaviour was quite satisfactory to its capitalist masters. When in the autumn of that year Sun Yat Sen, the leader of the Chinese Revolution, head of the Canton Government, appealed to MacDonald as a Socialist against the activities of counter-revolutionaries (supported by British capital) he received a reply which made it clear that the policy of MacDonald had no relation to Socialist colonial policy; but MacDonald was backed by the Labour Party. In the second Labour Government of 1929-31, its " Socialism " was exhibited in the most reactionary, repressive and murderous treatment of the Indian people that had taken place for seventy years. Between fifty and one hundred thousand political prisoners at one moment or another during the Labour Government were confined in the Indian gaols.

The Communist Party on the other hand, developed its policy from the Stuttgart Resolution of 1907 and enlarged it on the basis of Lenin's teachings. The policy of the Communist Party has been to assert the right of the colonies to self-determination up to and including separation from the British Empire. In pursuance of this in each case (Ireland, India, Egypt, etc., etc.) it has carried on a persistent agitation for their rights. Wherever any people have made unmistakably clear their desire for independence, the Communist Party has supported that demand.

In a Resolution to the Sixth Party Conference in 1924, held in Salford, it was stated:

" The Communist Party in Conference assembled greets

the workers and labouring masses throughout the colonies and dependencies of Great Britain now struggling for freedom and independence. Their cause is our cause. The division amongst the oppressed masses is a source of power to the oppressors. Only the united forces of the enslaved masses of the colonies and dependencies with the wage-slaves of Great Britain can secure victory. . . .

"The British bourgeoisie is making frantic endeavours to retain its economic and political control of the resources of the Empire and to develop the Empire as a wider basis of their power and as a field for the investment of their capital as the industrial supremacy of the home country becomes threatened. Both in the political and economic sphere, no effort is being spared to consolidate the Empire into one homogeneous whole. All these attempts are bound to be shattered upon the growing independence of the colonial bourgeoisie and the growing awakening and unrest of the colonial masses. In Egypt, India and South Africa, the last twelve or eighteen months have been marked by intense industrial and national struggles all of which indicate the growing consciousness of these workers. Strikes against working conditions and wage rates are becoming common, particularly in India. The growth of working-class organisation, both trade union and political, is the best definite manifestation of the growing interest of the colonial masses in their own working-class struggle. Upon this awakening must be based the one hope of emancipation both for the workers of Britain and for the subject population of the Colonies."

The resolution went on to say:

"This Congress, therefore, renews its pledges of solidarity with the struggling colonial workers and promises the fullest possible assistance in the development of their struggle for freedom. It appreciates it as an immediate duty to denounce and expose the treacherous conduct of the Labour Government in this country. This Government has since its accession to office not merely allowed but actually excused and condoned the shooting down and massacre of colonial workers. Thousands of workers are in gaol in Egypt and India and the Labour Government does nothing.

Not only that the Labour Government actually initiates the persecution of the pioneers of Communism in India and Egypt, in order to make the Communist Party in India and Egypt illegal. The Congress sends its fraternal greetings to those workers in gaol, and struggling to set up a working-class movement in the colonies and pledges itself to render every possible assistance in their work."

The struggle of the Communist Party against imperialism was not limited to declaration of policy but practical assistance was given to the colonial peoples struggling for their liberation. The organisation of textile workers in the Girni Kamgar Union was helped by two British Communists. When after a strike of the Bombay Textile Workers, the Indian Legislative Assembly refused to pass into law a Bill directed virtually against these members of the British Communist Party, the Viceroy issued the Bill as an Ordnance. Before, however, it could be put into force, the decision was taken to direct a still heavier blow and the leaders of the Indian Trade Union Movement were arrested and there began the trial of the Meerut prisoners.

The Meerut trial proceedings dragged on from March 1929 for four years and concluded with savage sentences upon those who had built up Indian Trade Unionism. The fact that in the dock at the Meerut trial Englishmen and Indians stood together on this charge was a symbol of the solidarity that could be built up between the British working class and the Indian working class. At the same time, the fact that the Englishmen in the dock should have acted under the inspiration of the Communist Party of Great Britain was a tribute to the practical assistance it was prepared to give.

What was the attitude of the Labour Party? The

answer was given at its 1929 Conference, when the platform spokesman replied:

> "The prisoners in the Meerut Case were arrested in March, before the Labour Government came into office, *but the Government accepted full responsibility for their present position.*"

Full responsibility was accepted for the policy of capitalism: and the message sent from the Labour Party to the Indian workers was " Chains and Slavery."

The Communist Party from the beginning insisted that it was necessary for the British working class, for its own liberation, to separate its interests from the colonial monopoly of the ruling class, to break with the Imperialists whose struggle for domination over other peoples would ultimately bring ruin to the people of Britain. Only then would the working class be able to end its own slavery, only then, independently of the ruling clas, in a common struggle with the colonial peoples against the ruling class, would it be able to secure peace and realise its socialist aims.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WAR

Born from the struggle of the workers against the war of 1914-18, the Communist Party for twenty years has fought for peace and has given the lead for the working-class struggle against war. The whole fight of the Communist Party in all fields of its activity, leading up to the struggle for power, has been directed towards peace for the working people.

Within a year of the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles the danger of war once more arose before the working class. The widespread illusions over the peace settlement and the League of Nations collapsed. Under the pressure of the masses, the reformist International Federation of Trade Unions called a con-

ference of trade union, Co-operative, pacifist and educational bodies at the Hague in December, 1922, to consider what measures to take against war.

Fifteen years after the Stuttgart decisions that were abandoned in 1914, the question—how to combat war?—had once more to be faced. For the Soviet trade union delegates present at the Hague Lenin wrote an instruction; in this, after dealing with those reformist leaders who misled the masses by the "simple" assertion that "we shall retaliate to war by a strike or revolution" (such people, he said, were "most stupid or hopelessly false"), he stressed the need of explanation again and again.

> Particularly must it be explained that "defence of the fatherland" becomes an inevitable question which the overwhelming majority of the toilers will inevitably settle in favour of their bourgeoisie. Therefore, first, explanation of the question of "defence of the fatherland." Second, in connection with the latter, explanation of the question of "defeatism." And finally, explanation of the only possible method of combating war, *viz.*, the preservation and formation of illegal organisations in which all revolutionaries taking part in the war shall carry on *prolonged* work against war.

The Soviet trade union delegates accordingly proposed concrete measures necessary in order to organise international working-class action against war. The Chairman (Mr. J. H. Thomas) refused to put the resolution of the Soviet trade unions to the Conference, which passed resolutions advocating prevention of war by an international general strike (this was on the motion of the British Trades Union Congress!), education in peace ideals, disarmament, and League of Nations.

In 1935, thirteen years after the Hague, the 7th World Congress of the Communist International dis-

cussed its tasks in connection with " the preparations of the Imperialists for a new World War," and set forth concretely what had to be done " in the struggle for peace and against imperialist war " by Communist Parties, revolutionary workers, toilers, peasants and oppressed peoples of the whole world. These decisions were based on the teachings on war of Marx, of Engels, of Lenin and of Stalin. They included the united people's front in the struggle for peace and against the instigators of war; the struggle against militarism and armaments; the national liberation struggle and the support of wars of national liberation.

In Britain the Labour Party, as the " new World War " came nearer, made ready for its support of the National Government in war. Once more a " general strike against war " resolution was passed at Hastings Conference (1933); to be immediately " interpreted " as meaning support of a " legal " war waged by British Imperialism.

The Communist Party, on the other hand, carried out the decisions of Congresses.

The Peace Policy of the Socialist State

During this whole period the one big power that was not a signatory of either the Versailles Treaty or the Washington Treaties, carried on a consistent policy of peace. At the Conference of all the powers (except the U.S.A.) at Genoa, in the spring of 1922, the Soviet delegation proposed to put disarmament on the agenda. No great power would support this proposal; the French Government said that they would rather break up the Conference than consider disarmament. Year by year thereafter, the Soviet Union steadfastly pursued its policy of peace. In 1927 there was held (after eight long years of delay) a preparatory commission for the

Disarmament Conference agreed upon in the Treaty of Versailles. Alone amongst the powers, the Soviet Government brought forward a proposal for Immediate, Complete and Total Disarmament. The representative of the British Foreign Office (Lord Cushendun) was foremost amongst the assembled diplomats in rejecting it with scorn. Afterwards, during the sessions of the Disarmament Conference in 1932, the Soviet Government proposed partial disarmament—this was rejected and amongst those rejecting were some who said they preferred the American partial disarmament proposal, suggested by President Hoover. Thereupon the Soviet Government moved that the American proposal be adopted. This, too, was rejected by the delegates of the great powers—including the U.S.A.! In 1933 the Soviet Government concluded a series of non-aggression pacts with neighbouring states and thereafter put forward detailed proposals designed to prevent aggression. These too were not acepted by the other powers. From this time onwards the Soviet Peace proposals were devoted to the establishment of collective security; for this purpose it was willing, in 1934, to enter the League of Nations if it so be that that organisation (originally a group of imperialist war-mongering powers) might be turned into some sort of instrument for preservation of peace. Inside the League of Nations the U.S.S.R. strove to build up collective security. It was willing to enter into pacts of mutual assistance with France and Czechoslovakia—pacts open also to Poland, Germany and Britain. These three powers refused to participate. Again and again in these last years the Soviet Union put forward proposals for the maintenance of peace: again and again the National Government cold-shouldered the Soviet proposals.

What was this Soviet peace policy, in essence? It was the victorious working class of the Socialist State, of the Fatherland of all workers, leading the peoples of all countries in the struggle against war. It was not only defending Socialism in being from the peril of war but also the Socialism that was yet to be. It was protecting the lives of the workers of all countries, the lives of all that are exploited. It was the champion of all human culture against war and its barbarities.

Year by year, from 1934, the workers and peasants of the Socialist State saw war rushing upon mankind. All the more they strove by every means to ward it off They were straining every nerve to avert war, to do everything to get the peoples moving, to gain time time for the working class in each country to mobilise, time to call forth its resources and muster its reserves. To help Spain was to help the cause of peace, that most just and most Socialist course. The workers and peasants of the Socialist State led the struggle to aid the Spanish Republic.

Our Communist Party of Great Britain fought along with the workers and peasants of the Socialist Soviet Republic. The Communist Party was at one with the Soviet peace policy. It strove to bring into one front of peace all enemies of war, the forces of the working class, the masses of the people, the intellectuals, the threatened national minorities, the states that were at the moment interested in the preservation of peace. The flag of the Communist Party of Great Britain was the flag of the fight for peace.

The Communist Party led the fight for Spain in this country. From that day when Harry Pollitt wrote his burning appeal in the last week of July, 1936, our party gave of its best for the cause. Its members thronged the ranks of the International Brigade, whose glorious

history is told by William Rust in his *Britons in Spain* Many of them gave their lives, and left a memory that is an inspiration to their comrades.

The Communist Party fought for support to be given to the victims of aggression in the last ten years—in China, Spain, Abyssinia, Austria, Czechoslovakia.

Amid that heroic struggle, our party's policy was repeatedly urged here, as in the Resolution on the Fight for Peace at the 14th Congress of the C.P.G.B.. Battersea, May, 1937:

"In order to defeat the war offensive, it is necessary to realise working-class unity, and a broad popular front which will fight for a positive policy of collective peace.

While using every means to enforce such a policy by the power of the mass movement on the National Government, we declare that we can under no conditions have confidence in the National Government to carry out such a policy.

Therefore, the aim of the fight for peace must necessarily be directed to defeating the National Government and its replacement by a Labour Government, which will carry out a positive peace policy along the lines:

1. To unite with all countries supporting collective peace for the maintenance and fulfilment of the Covenant of the League of Nations.
2. To sign a Pact of Mutual Assistance with France and the Soviet Union and all states ready to support a collective peace policy.
3. To nationalise the arms industries and to carry through measures inside the armed forces for the removal of reactionary pro-fascist elements in the leading positions, for the abolition of class barriers to promotion in the armed forces, and for full civil rights for soldiers, sailors and airmen.
4. To raise the ban on the supply of arms and passage of volunteers to the Spanish democratic Government, and to ensure similar support to all peoples engaged in the struggle against the Fascist offensive.
5. Full publicity for all State construction of armaments and munitions.

6. The establishment of elected workers' control commissions in the armaments factories, and a central workers' control commission elected from the working-class organisations with full powers of inspection and calling for documents to check execution of these provisions and issue periodical reports.

Such a policy would win the support of the overwhelming majority of the population and bar the road to war.

For the success of such a policy, it is further essential to work for international working-class unity and for the realisation of an international People's Front, for the defence of peace and democracy in the greatest possible number of countries."

The Resolution went on to deal with the pacifist illusions and, while welcoming the peace movement it issued a warning against all the abstract propaganda which in the name of supposed " pure Socialism " opposed the people's front and the fight for collective defensive peace. It went on to deal with the propaganda which proposed to meet the war danger by a supposed peaceful re-division of the colonies, amongst the imperialist powers or by the extension of the mandate system to all colonies. " Such a policy," it said, " is both a betrayal of the fight of the colonial peoples for independence from Imperialism and, at the same time, would only whet the appetites of the Fascist powers and strengthen their strategic resources and increase the war danger. The fight for peace is inseparably linked up with the fight of the colonial peoples for independence from Imperialism.

Finally it said:

" Such a positive policy of active struggle for peace can still bar the road to the Fascist war offensive. In this way it will assist the peoples in the Fascist countries to overthrow their oppressors. By holding in check the menace of a new world war, it can win time for the strengthening and advance of the working-class movement to power, and to the realisation of Socialism, which alone can finally

eliminate war by destroying its cause, capitalism.

Should the mobilisation of forces for the realisation of this policy be delayed, and should imperialist war in consequence none the less break out, despite the struggle for peace, the Communist Party bases itself upon the decision of the Stuttgart Congress of the pre-war Second International, re-affirmed by the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. [See page 7.]

Munich

Munich, from which Mr. Chamberlain brought "Peace in our time," was the culmination of a process. The Anglo-German Naval agreement of 1935 legalised the construction of the German submarines The Mussolini-Chamberlain friendship of 1939 blossomed into the Anglo-Italian agreement. The National Government held back the French Government from acting against the militarisation of the Rhineland in 1936.

Each successive step to Munich and to the present war was hailed by the Labour Party as a stage to the maintenance of peace.

At the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the lead given a year before was repeated with the greatest urgency, the means by which alone peace could be preserved. This was the theme of Pollitt's speech. It was urged by delegate after delegate, and was summed up by R. Palme Dutt, who spoke these warning words against the "War Scare":

> No one who has followed the events of the past week can fail to see that the Government has been deliberately encouraging a certain war atmosphere, an atmosphere similar to that of 1914. The war crisis is real enough. The Government is playing a double game in this. It is using the war crisis to stage a deception in order to build up the strength of Chamberlain in Britain. They are

spreading everywhere a picture that the issue of war is the issue, that tomorrow we may find Britain, France and the Soviet Union at war with Germany. That is the picture being put in the minds of the people. Speculation spreads as to what will we do then, and has also affected members of our Party.

Why is the Government concerned to spread this? Is it because they intend to make such a united stand? That is the last thing they mean to do if they can help it. It is the last thing Hitler wants to put himself up against. If there were such a united stand, that would mean, not war, but peace.

But their aim is on this basis, to smash the idea of the Peace Front by associating it in the minds of the people with war. Their aim is on this basis, to put across their policy of breaking the Peace Front, betraying Czechoslovakia, betraying peace, and to put it across in such a way that it is received as a triumph for peace, that Chamberlain is the saviour of peace.

If Chamberlain wins, if he succeeds in breaking the Peace Front by putting forward his policy for the triumph of peace, then when the bells of peace are ringing over his victory the real menace begins. If Chamberlain's policy, which will be celebrated as a policy of peace, goes through, then Fascism, enormously strengthened in Europe, will at last be able to turn its forces upon the democracies, and the British people will then have to fight all the same, but under immeasurably worse conditions.

These are the frank realities of the situation as against all speculation. (*September 18th*, 1938.)

Finally, on that 28th of September, when Chamberlain told a hysterical House of Commons that he was going to Munich, when the leader of the Labour Party joined in the acclamation, when Liberals, I.L.P-ers and everyone else were cheering Chamberlain and bidding him " God-speed! ", William Gallacher alone spoke for the workers and the mass of the people of Britain against the disastrous policy of its ruling class.

No one, he stated, desires peace more than I and my party, but it must be a peace based upon freedom and

democracy and not upon the cutting up and destruction of a small State. I want to say that the policy of the National Government has led to this crisis. (Hon. Members: "No!") Yes, and if there is peace at the moment it is the determined attitude of the people that has saved it. Whatever the outcome the National Government will have to answer for its policy. I would not be a party to what has been going on here. There are as many Fascists opposite as there are in Germany, and I protest against the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

1939

The war which the Communist Party had so long foretold and striven so hard to prevent broke out eleven months after Munich. On October 7th, the Central Committee issued the manifesto in which it declared its policy, in unison with all it had stood for for twenty years of struggle. On June 22nd, 1940, the nine-point manifesto pointed the way to the working class by which to get a People's Government, without friends of Fascism or friends of Imperialism. And here, as at all times, the Communist Party is seeking to build Socialism, based upon the unity and power of the working class.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE LAND OF SOCIALISM

Ninety-two years ago Karl Marx and Frederick Engels published the Manifesto of the Communist Party that ended with the slogan—

"Proletarians of all lands, unite!"

To-day, the Communist Parties, united in the Communist International, are carrying these words on their banner. Capitalism, in its final stage of Imperialism, is in its death-throes.

For a generation mankind has been passing through an epoch of wars and revolutions. The forces of revolution are becoming stronger and stronger. Not

only the working class in the home countries of Imperialism, but around them the mass of the people oppressed by monopoly-capitalism: not only the half of mankind, the masses of the colonial peoples struggling for liberation; but also, strongest of all, the victorious workers and peasants of the U.S.S.R., the builders of Socialism in the fortress of World Revolution.

In the midst of this second Imperialist war that spells the doom of world capitalism, the Communist Party has striven to build up the solidarity of the British working class with the workers and peasants of the land of Socialism, as it has done for the last twenty years. The first Congress on August 1st, 1920, passed a Resolution sending greetings and demanding " immediate recognition of the Soviet Government and Peace with Russia to be concluded at a general peace conference held in full publicity; and calls upon the organised workers in their forthcoming ballot to show that they are prepared to compel the fulfilment of these demands by direct action."

In a draft programme of the Communist Party the rôle of the U.S.S.R. is set forth thus:—

> In contrast to the economic chaos, unemployment, poverty and oppression of the capitalist world during the years since the war of 1914, stands the victorious building of the new Socialist society in the Soviet Union. The victory of Socialism in one-sixth of the world has given hope and inspiration to oppressed people all over the world. The rapid construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union, at the very same time as capitalism was plunged in the worst crisis in history, has opened the eyes of people in all countries to the contrast between Socialist advance and capitalist decay.
>
> The Socialist State has no economic crises; it has abolished poverty, illiteracy and unemployment; it has won security and abundance and a full cultural life for all; it has made it one of the foremost industrial countries; it

has established powerful defence forces against attacks from the hostile capitalist world and to help forward the working-class struggle for world Socialism. On the basis of this achievement the new Constitution of the Socialist democracy has been established, which for the first time ensures real democracy for all.

All this the Socialist revolution has been able to accomplish in a few years in what was an extremely backward country. This has been an object lesson to the working people of all countries of the capacity of the workers to build Socialism and has spread the conviction of the need for the Socialist revolution.

The victory of Socialism in the Soviet Union represents not only the victory of Socialism in one country, but the most powerful pivot of advance of the world Socialist revolution.

The division of the world into a capitalist section and a Socialist section is the most important fact of the world situation; it is the greatest weakness of capitalism and governs and increases all the other contradictions of capitalism. The class struggle is now being conducted on a world scale. The international working class has its own State, which is able to act with increasing power and initiative in the world situation. Every increase of strength of the first Socialist State increases the strength of the working class in all countries, increases the balance of forces on the side of the working class and weakens Imperialism.

APPENDIX

TWENTY YEARS AGO

The Negotiations to Form a Communist Party

In the latter stages of the war and especially in 1917 and 1918, there had grown up considerable joint activity of the shop stewards and the revolutionary Socialist groups, including many of those who were regarded as having an anti-war standpoint. In December 1918 negotiations were begun between the British Socialist Party, the I.L.P. (each affiliated

hitherto to the International Socialist Congress) and the Socialist Labour Party (followers of the American Daniel De Leon) for the formation of a united Socialist party. The negotiations went on for several months (it may be noted that the representatives of the I.L.P. were Philip Snowden and F. W. Jowett) but had broken down, partly on questions of organisation, before Midsummer, 1919. Meantime, other negotiations had begun which included the Workers' Socialist Federation. This organisation, headed by Sylvia Pankhurst, had developed from an earlier suffragist body and had been very active in the " Hands Off Russia " movement of 1918 onwards.

To a letter from Sylvia Pankhurst expressing their views, Lenin replied on 28th August, 1919, as follows:

" I have no doubt at all that many workers who belong to the best, most honest and sincerely revolutionary representatives of the proletariat are enemies of parliamentarism and any participation in Parliament. The older capitalist culture and bourgeois democracy are in a given country, then the more comprehensible this is, since the bourgeoisie in old parliamentary countries has excellently learned the arts of hypocrisy and fooling the people in a thousand ways, passing off bourgeois parliamentarism for ' democracy in general ' for ' pure democracy ' and so on, cunningly concealing the million threads which bind parliament to the stock exchange and the capitalists, making use of a prostituted, corrupt press and with all its power setting into operation the power of money, the strength of capital. . . .

What is the position if in a given country, Communists by conviction who are ready to carry on revolutionary work, sincere partisans of the Soviet Power (the ' Soviet system ' as non-Russians sometimes call it), cannot unite owing to disagreements over participation in Parliament?

I should consider such a disagreement immaterial at present, for the struggle for the Soviet Power is the political struggle of the proletariat in its highest, most conscious,

most revolutionary form. It is better to be with the revolutionary workers when they make a mistake over some partial or secondary question, than with the 'official' Socialists or Social Democrats, if the latter are not sincere, firm revolutionaries, if they are unwilling to undertake or are incapable of undertaking revolutionary work amongst the working masses, but have a correct tactic in some partial question. And the question of parliamentarism is at present a partial, secondary question. Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht were, in my opinion, correct when they defended participation in the elections for the bourgeois German parliament, for the 'Constituent Assembly' at the January, 1919, Conference of the Spartacists in Berlin against the majority at this Conference. But, it follows, they were still more correct when they preferred to remain with the Communist Party, which made a partial mistake than to go with the direct traitors to Socialism, like Scheidemann and his party, or with those servile souls, doctrinaires, cowards, spineless assistants of the bourgeoisie and reformists in practice, such as Kautsky, Maase, Daumig and the whole of this 'party' of German 'independents.'

I am personally convinced that to renounce participation in the parliamentary elections is a mistake for the revolutionary workers of England, but better to make that mistake, than to delay the formation of a big workers' Communist Party in England out of all the tendencies and elements listed by you,* which sympathise with Bolshevism and

* Sylvia Pankhurst in her letter to Lenin (printed in No. 5 of the *Communist International*) outlined the following seven groups in the British Movement: (1) Non-socialist trade unionists of the old type. (2) Members of the I.L.P. partly bourgeois, partly religious. (3) Members of the B.S.P. many of whom Sylvia Pankhurst considered more "hopeless" than the I.L.P. (4) Revolutionary industrialists, believers in direct action. (5) The S.L.P. which was losing the confidence of many workers owing to its participation in elections. (6) The Socialist Workers' Federation (Pankhurst's own organisation). (7) The South Wales Socialist Society.

stand sincerely for the Soviet Republic. If, for example, among the B.S.P. there are sincere Bolsheviks who refuse because of differences over participation in Parliament, to merge at once in a Communist Party with the tendencies 4, 6 and 7, then these Bolsheviks, in my opinion, would be making a mistake a thousand times greater than the mistaken refusal to participate in elections for the bourgeois English Parliament. It follows that, in saying this, I presume that tendencies 4, 6 and 7, taken together, are really connected with the mass of workers, and do not represent simply small intellectual groups, as so often happens in England. In this connection, probably the Workers' Committees and Shop Stewards are particularly important, since we may assume them to be closely connected with the masses.

Continuous connection with the mass of workers, the ability to agitate unceasingly among them, to participate in every strike, to respond to every demand of the masses—this is the chief thing for a Communist Party, especially in such a country as England, where until now (as by the way is the case in all Imperialist countries), participation in the Socialist Movement and the Labour Movement generally, has been confined chiefly to a narrow upper section of the workers, representatives of the Labour aristocracy largely, thoroughly and hopelessly spoiled by reformism, captives of bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. Without a struggle against this section, without the destruction of every trace of its authority among the workers, without convincing the masses of the complete bourgeois corruption of this section, there can be no question of a serious Communist workers' movement. That is so for England, for France, for America, for Germany."

Meantime, negotiations for Communist Unity had been going on between the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the Workers' Socialist Federation and the South Wales Socialist Society. There was agreement on fundamental principles, but not on tactics. The main difficulty arose on what should be the relation of the Communist Party to the Labour Party and to the trade unions.

Eventually, after many months of negotiation, a Joint Provisional Committee of these bodies was formed to hold a Communist Unity Convention. Meantime, the majority of the S.L.P. Executive had held aloof: and in June 1920 the Workers' Socialist Federation broke away from the Joint Provisional Committee. This was the occasion of a message from Lenin, which was reported to the delegates when the Convention met on July 31. It ran as follows:

"Having received the letter of the Joint Provisional Committee of the Communist Party of Britain, dated June 20th, I hasten to reply in accordance with their request, that I am in complete sympathy with their plans for the immediate organisation of a Communist Party in England. I consider the policy of Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst and of the Workers' Socialist Federation in refusing to collaborate in the amalgamation of the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party and others into one Communist Party to be wrong. I personally am in favour of participation in Parliament and of adhesion to the Labour Party on condition of free and independent Communist activity. This policy I am going to defend at the Second Congress of the Third International on July 15th, at Moscow. I consider it most desirable that a Communist Party be speedily organised on the basis of the decisions and principles of the Third International, and that that party be brought into close touch with the Industrial Workers of the World and the Shop Steward Committees in order to bring about their complete union." (Lenin, Moscow, July 8th.)

The report of that meeting twenty years ago opened with the words:

"The National Convention to establish the Communist Party of Great Britain was held on Saturday, July 31, 1920, at the Cannon Street Hotel, London, E.C., and on the day following at the International Socialist Club, 28 East Road, London, E.C.

"The Convention was summoned by the Joint Pro-

visional Committee of the Communist Unity Conference, representing the British Socialist Party, the Communist Unity Group and the South Wales Communist Council."

There were 152 delegates exercising 211 mandates. The majority were from the British Socialist Party, about one-sixth from the Communist Unity Group that had broken from the Socialist Labour Party, with the remainder from miscellaneous groups.

Greetings came from Socialist and Communist Parties of other countries, from the Left Wing of the I.L.P., and from Clara Zetkin, and Tom Mann.

The Resolution for the formation of the Communist Party, and its adherence to the Third International was moved by A. A. Purcell—afterwards Chairman of both the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and of the International Federation of Trade Unions.

Other Resolutions were on the question of tactics laying down the need for revolutionary Parliamentarism. This received a vote of 186 to 19. The question of the relation of the Communist Party to the British Labour Party was discussed for the greater part of the second day of the Conference. The policy of affiliation in the end was carried by 100 votes to 85.

The Conference closed with an appeal for bringing the boys and girls into the movement, made by the Secretary of the Young Socialist League.

The first Central Committee, called the Provisional Executive Committee, was constituted of eight, previously agreed upon in the course of the negotiations for unity (four from the British Socialist Party, and four from the Communist Unity Group, formerly of

the S.L.P.), together with six directly elected from the Convention. The list was as follows:

THOS. BELL
W. J. HEWLETT
J. F. HODGSON
ALBERT INKPIN (*Secretary*)
ARTHUR MACMANUS (*Chairman*)
WILLIAM PAUL
A. A. WATTS, L.C.C. (*Treasurer*)
F. WILLIS

GEORGE DEER
C. L'ESTRANGE MALONE, M.P.
WILLIAM MELLOR
DORA B. MONTEFIORE
FRED SHAW
ROBERT STEWART
} *Elected by the Convention*

After the Communist Party was thus founded, there was still a process of unification to be carried through in the next few months. William Gallacher has told that part of the story in his book "Revolt on the Clyde" and in his article in the *Labour Monthly*.

By January, 1921, at the Leeds Congress, the Shop Stewards Organisations (Gallacher and Campbell), the Communist Labour Party (mainly associates of John McLean) and the Workers Socialist Federation had reinforced the new Party. By the spring of 1921, with the adhesion of the Left Wing of the I.L.P., the process of unification was complete. The new process of building the Party was ready to begin. Years of clarification, of learning from experience of struggle now lay before it; but with the ever-widening grasp of Marxism and Leninism it was bound to grow in these twenty years that lay ahead until it would be equal to its part in the second Imperialist war.

FINIS