

THE



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THE INSTIGATOR OF WAR IN EUROPE

STALIN-HOWARD\*INTERVIEW

THE DANGER OF FASCISM IN FRANCE AND THE STRUGGLE OF THE C.P. OF FRANCE - - - - - By MAURICE THOREZ

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE IMPERIALIST WAR OF ITALIAN FASCISM IS THE CAUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT - - - - - By ERCOLI

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ARGUMENTS OF THE OPPONENTS OF THE UNITED FRONT IN ENGLAND

By J. R. CAMPBELL

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# THE INSTIGATOR OF WAR IN EUROPE

**T**HREE years ago Hitler Fascism began its rule with the burning of the German Reichstag, and to-day it stands at the head of the German army as the instigator of war in Europe.

The provocative violation of the Locarno Treaty and the march of the German troops into the demilitarised zone on the French frontier have revealed to the whole world that the methods of banditry which the Hitlerites have till now made use of in the sphere of home policy, i.e., to suppress the German working class, are now being cynically transplanted by them into the arena of international relations.

This was to be expected, for in its home policy the Hitler régime is coming up against ever increasing difficulties. Three years have been long enough for them to bring things to such a pass in Germany that now there is no violence strong enough to enable the colossal sums of money to be extorted, which the Fascist régime requires to cover its expenditure. A food shortage has already set in. Unemployment is once more on the increase. The indignation of the people is sharpening. The Fascist government felt that German soil would soon begin to burn under its feet.

This circumstance helped to speed up the bold ventures of the Hitler government in the sphere of foreign politics. But this is not all. Japan, by its rapacious acts in China, and Italy by its war in Abyssinia, have made the international situation unstable. And it is in these troubled waters that German Fascism now hopes to fish. It sought for allies, and found them in Japanese imperialism and Polish fascism. Mussolini, apparently, promised the Hitler government to adopt an attitude of benevolent neutrality in the event of the violation of the Locarno Treaty. Moreover, we may take it for granted that Hitler was informed in advance of the plans for a state coup d'état by the Fascist military clique in Japan, and wanted to co-ordinate his action in the Rhineland with the events in Japna.

But most of all Hitler was spurred on in his adventurist plans by the fact that the League of Nations reacted so miserably to the military aggression of Japan and Italy, and that these examples encouraged the Hitler government with the idea that it could, almost with impunity, undertake similar action. These hopes of impunity were still further increased as a result of the action

of the Fascists in France, Czecho-Slovakia and other countries against the conclusion of pacts of mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. Moreover, the British Government in this connection showed its hand in a way which especially heartened Hitler, when it promptly concluded the naval agreement with Germany and thus legalised her previous violation of the Versailles Treaty by the introduction of universal conscription.

After all this there is nothing surprising in the fact that Hitler thought that he could do anything! And that which he has now done has caused a tremendous sharpening of the international situation and of the war danger in the heart of Europe. It has created a direct menace to France, Belgium, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, and particularly signifies the danger of an attack against the Soviet Union. But at the same time it signifies a tremendous danger for the German people who, no less than other peoples, are interested in maintaining peace. For Hitler is leading Germany headlong to a new military defeat, still more serious than the one which Wilhelm II. suffered.

## How Peace Can Be Kept

The further development of the international situation in one direction or another now depends to a high degree upon the *behaviour of England*. It is clear to the whole world that *joint action on the part of England, France and the Soviet Union against the aggressive policy of Hitler could ensure peace*. It is equally clear to the whole world that the U.S.S.R., as hitherto, will consistently struggle to maintain peace. France is also interested in actively defending peace. This must be our starting point if we wish to understand to what degree the maintenance of peace depends to-day upon the behaviour of England. But we do not know yet what England will do now. We only know that any kind of support for Hitler's policy and any kind of double-dealing on the part of the British Government is capable of encouraging and spurring on the violators of peace to be found in Berlin.

Public opinion in England made its desire for peace and its vigilance felt on the question of the Italo-Abyssinian war. This public opinion demanded the adoption of sanctions against the aggressor, and forced the British Government to



give up its plans for the division of Abyssinia. But can we assume that public opinion in England will react with the same vigilance and determination to Hitler's aggression to-day? It is not possible to say this. In any case, we see that in England the dark forces are at work doing their utmost to lull the vigilance of the masses of the people.

How much greater is the menace of a new world war to-day, in consequence of the steps taken by Hitler, than in consequence of the Italian attack against Abyssinia! Nevertheless, a section of the English press goes so far as to give an "optimistic estimate" of the situation for the express purpose of misleading public opinion. And some of the Labour newspapers (*The People* and *Reynolds's Illustrated News*) even hastened to advertise the obviously demagogic proposals made by Hitler as "arousing great hopes." This is absolutely unheard of! Is it conceivable that the editors of these papers have failed to see how clumsy was the trap set by Hitler in his proposal of "peace conditions"? It is inconceivable. Why, the majority of the world press immediately saw through the fact that his proposal to the countries neighbouring on Germany to conclude pacts of non-aggression for 25 years, is nothing but a flimsy covering for his brazen war policy. He needs some "pacifist" demagoguery when he is trying to collect all the reactionary forces in the world against the policy of collective security, against the peace policy of the U.S.S.R., and in support of his robber plans. Any Labour newspaper ought to have understood that immediately. But there are "Labour" newspapers in England which advance Hitler as the apostle of peace, instead of telling the workers the truth, namely: *Hitler is the chief enemy of peace.*

It must be stated that people who justify the foreign policy of Fascism by these means are in reality supporting the Fascist régime inside Germany. For there is no Chinese wall which separates the home and foreign policies of governments.

It is of the first importance for England, and not for England alone, to enlighten the widest masses of the people as to the real meaning of Hitler's demagoguery. This is the first, most elementary task of all sincere friends of peace.

The chief task to-day is to collect all available forces for the struggle for peace.

The united action of the working class has been tried out in the arena of home politics and found to be the mightiest weapon in the struggle against the offensive of Fascism. France and Spain are splendid examples of this. Through the united action of the working class, Fascism in these countries has been driven into a corner. On the international arena, united working class action would be a no less effective weapon in the struggle against Fascist aggression. But precisely because it has not been possible to create an international united front of the working class movement, Fascism has dared to take the offensive on the foreign political arena. The enemies of the people are making use of the split in the working class movement.

### Onward to Unity ?

The united front proposals made on the eve, and at the beginning of the Italo-Abyssinian war, by Comrade Dimitrov, General Secretary of the Communist International, were rejected by the E.C. of the Labour and Socialist International, together with the leadership of the International Federation of Trade Unions. Is it not clear that this refusal by both international working class organisations to fulfil their duty could only increase the insolence of the Fascist instigators of war?

Just imagine, comrades and workers of all countries, how different the international situation would have been to-day, had the Labour and Socialist International agreed to united action with the Communist International, had the Labour Party in England, the Social-Democratic parties of the Scandinavian countries, of Czecho-Slovakia, of Holland, etc., and the big trade union organisations of these countries formed an *international anti-Fascist united front* with the Communist and Socialist parties and the trade unions of France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, etc.? *It would have been a powerful barrier against Fascism and war.* Not a single government could have ignored it. The League of Nations would have had to act differently. Italian Fascism would have been at a deadlock. The Japanese military clique would immediately have become more cautious in their plans. And even the clumsy Hitlerites would have thought twice about the consequences of their adventurous acts.

This shows how heavy is the responsibility which lies upon the leadership of the Labour and Socialist International.

Last year the E.C. of the Labour and Socialist International, like the majority of the Social-Democratic parties, restricted itself to demanding sanctions from the League of Nations against the aggression of Italian Fascism. What are they now demanding against the aggression of German Fascism? What do they intend to do? The workers in all countries are awaiting a reply to these questions. Now more than ever before we must demand really determined measures from the League of Nations to put a check upon the militant aggressiveness of German Fascism, to support the consistent peace policy of the U.S.S.R., to guarantee universal peace.

But the most important, most urgent task is the immediate organisation of militant mass action by the working classes in all capitalist countries against the menacing war danger. The masses must be brought into this movement in their millions!

In France and Spain the mighty movement of the people's front has achieved great successes of late. These successes raise hopes among the friends of peace in all countries that the parties of the French and Spanish peoples' front will now march at the head of the international movement against the acute war danger brought about by Hitler Fascism.

The working class in other countries, first and foremost in England, Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, will demand of their biggest political and trade union organisations that they take an active part in this movement. And in each individual country it is the task of the leaders of the movement for peace successfully to find the correct, concrete, most urgent demands to be presented today to the rulers of their countries and the fulfil-

ment of which should be demanded and guaranteed by the movement for peace.

There are also grounds for anticipating that the women and the youth of the toiling classes will everywhere take part with tremendous energy in rallying together with this militant movement for peace.

Comrade Stalin was right when he said a few days ago, that: "*The position of the friends of peace are strengthening.*"

"*The friends of peace,*" said he, "*are able to work in the open. Their strength lies in the fact that their activities against war are supported by the will of the wide masses of the people.*"

"*There is no people in the world desiring war.*"

Yes, there is no people in the world desiring war. But there are Fascists. There are Hitlerites. There are warmongers. And there is also the fact of the split in the forces of the masses of the people. It is on the fact of this split that the Fascist instigators of war are building up their hopes.

So that the point now is to hammer out the people's front without delay, to rally the masses in their millions so that the peoples of the earth will prevent the Hitlerites from carrying out their criminal war plans.

The governments of the capitalist countries must be confronted by such a mighty movement of the people that they will be unable either directly or indirectly to support the war plans of Hitler or to play with the firebrand of war. Such a powerful movement of the people will constitute the decisive force to drive back all aggressors.

The chief slogan in this great struggle is: Down with Hitler—the instigator of war in Europe! Unite all forces for the maintenance of peace!

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(Continued from page 171)

is desirable from the viewpoint of the struggle for peace to have "Social-Democratic governments in other capitalist countries." If the English Labour leaders together with a section of the English bourgeoisie, are at the present moment in favour of maintaining peace, the leaders of other Social-Democratic parties may find themselves on the side of that other section of their own bourgeoisie, who support the warmongers. Does not Comrade Burns remember, for example, that in the Spring of 1935 it was precisely a representative of the Social-Democratic government of Denmark who refrained from voting for the resolution adopted by the League

of Nations, which condemned the introduction of universal conscription in Hitler Germany.

And so, not in all countries, and not in all circumstances does the formation of a Social-Democratic government coincide with the interests of peace, and not in all countries, and not in all circumstances will the supporters of peace give their support to such a government.

An essential condition for the successful struggle for peace is that the slogans be precise, the line of tactics clear. This is why we have considered it necessary to dwell on this wrong ending to what, generally speaking, is a good and valuable book.

# STALIN-HOWARD INTERVIEW

*Interview between Comrade Stalin and Mr. Roy Howard of the Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers, U.S.A.*

Moscow, March 5th.

*Howard:* What will, in your opinion, be the consequences of recent events in Japan in regard to the situation in the Far East?

*Stalin:* So far it is difficult to say. Too little material exists for this. The picture is insufficiently clear.

*Howard:* What would be the attitude of the Soviet Union if Japan should embark upon a serious military drive against the Mongolian People's Republic?

*Stalin:* If Japan ventures to attack the Mongolian People's Republic, seeking to destroy its independence, we will have to assist the Mongolian People's Republic. Litvinov's assistant, Stomon-yakov, has already informed the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow of the fact, after pointing out the invariably friendly relations which the U.S.S.R. has entertained with the Mongolian People's Republic since 1921. We will assist the Mongolian People's Republic in the same way as we helped it in 1921.

*Howard:* Would a Japanese attempt to seize Ulanbator necessitate positive action by the U.S.S.R.?

*Stalin:* Yes, it would.

*Howard:* Have there recently been any new Japanese activities in this region which are construed by the Soviet Government as of an aggressive nature?

*Stalin:* The Japanese seem to be continuing to concentrate troops near the frontier of the Mongolian People's Republic, but so far no new attempts at frontier clashes have been observed.

*Howard:* The Soviet Union appears to believe that Germany and Poland have aggressive designs against the Soviet Union and are planning military co-operation in the realisation of these designs. Poland has, however, protested its unwillingness to permit any foreign troops to use its territory as a base of operations against a third nation. How does the Soviet Union envisage such an aggression by Germany? From what position, and in what direction would the German forces operate?

*Stalin:* History shows that when some state is intent on making war against another state, even though it be not adjacent, it begins to seek frontiers across which it could reach the frontiers of the state it desires to attack. Usually the aggressive state finds such frontiers. It finds them either

with the aid of force, as in 1914, when Germany invaded Belgium in order to deal a blow at France, or it "borrows" such a frontier as Germany did with regard to Latvia, for instance, in 1918, when the Germans attempted to break through to Leningrad across Latvia.

I do not know what specific frontiers Germany could use for her purposes, but I think that those willing to "lend" her a frontier could be found.

*Howard:* Seemingly the entire world is to-day predicting another great war. If war proves inevitable, when do you think it will come?

*Stalin:* This is impossible to predict. War may break out unexpectedly. Nowadays wars are not declared. They simply start. But on the other hand I believe that the position of the friends of peace is growing stronger. The friends of peace are able to work in the open, basing themselves upon the force of public opinion. They have at their disposal such instruments as, for instance, the League of Nations. This is an advantage for the friends of peace. Their strength lies in the fact that their activities against war are based on the wide masses of the people. There is no people in the world desiring war. As regards the enemies of peace they are forced to work secretly. This is a disadvantage to the enemies of peace. However, there remains the possibility that on account of this very fact they may embark upon a military adventure as an act of desperation. One of the newest successes of the friends of peace is the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance by the French Chamber. This pact represents a certain obstacle to the enemies of peace.

## Where to Expect War

*Howard:* If war should come, where is it most likely to break out? Where are war clouds most menacing, in the East or the West?

*Stalin:* In my opinion, there are two focal points of war danger—one in the Far East, in the zone of Japan. What I have in mind are repeated statements of Japanese military men containing threats against other States. The second focal point is in the zone of Germany. It is difficult to say which is the most menacing war danger. They both exist and both are smouldering. Compared with either of these principal focal points of war



danger, the Italo-Abyssinian war represents an episode.

At the moment perhaps the situation in the Far East is the more menacing, but the centre of danger may shift to Europe. Evidence of this is provided, for instance, in Herr Hitler's recent interview given to a French newspaper. In this interview Hitler seems to attempt to say peaceful things, but this "peaceableness" of his he so thickly intersperses with threats against France and the Soviet Union that nothing remains of "peaceableness." As you can see even when Hitler desires to speak of peace he cannot dispense with threats. This is symptomatic.

*Howard*: What situation or condition in your opinion furnishes the chief war menace to-day?

*Stalin*: Capitalism.

*Howard*: In which specific manifestations of capitalism?

*Stalin*: In its imperialistic annexationist manifestations. You remember how the first world war broke out. It broke out as a result of the desire to redivide the world. To-day the background is the same. There are capitalist States which consider themselves cheated during the previous redivision of spheres of influence, territories, sources of raw materials, markets, etc., and which would again desire to redivide them to their own advantage. Capitalism in its imperialistic phase is a system which regards war as a legitimate method for settling international disputes — a method which is legitimate in fact, if not legally.

*Howard*: May there not be an element of danger in the genuine fear, existing in what you term the capitalist countries, of an intention on the part of the Soviet Union to force its political theories on other nations?

*Stalin*: There is no justification for such fears. If you think that the people of the Soviet Union have any desire themselves and moreover, by force, to alter the face of the surrounding states, then you are badly mistaken. The people of the Soviet Union naturally desire that the face of the surrounding states should change, but this is the business of the surrounding states themselves. I fail to see what dangers the surrounding states can see in the ideas of the Soviet people, if these states are really firmly seated in their saddles.

*Howard*: Does this statement of yours mean that the Soviet Union has to any degree abandoned its plans and intentions to bring about a world revolution?

*Stalin*: We never had any such plans or intentions.

*Howard*: You appreciate no doubt, Mr. Stalin, that much of the world has for long entertained a different impression?

*Stalin*: This is the product of misunderstanding.

*Howard*: A tragic misunderstanding?

*Stalin*: No, comic. Or perhaps tragi-comic. You see, we Marxists believe that revolution will occur in other countries as well. But it will come at a time when it will be considered possible or necessary by the revolutionists in those countries. Export of revolution is nonsense. Each country, if it so desires, will make its own revolution, and if no such desire exists, no revolution will occur. For instance, our country wanted to effect a revolution and did effect it, and now we are building a new classless society. But to assert that we desire to bring about revolution in other countries by interfering with their way of life means to speak of something that does not exist, and which we have never preached.

### Communist Propaganda

*Howard*: At the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., President Roosevelt and Litvinov exchanged identical notes concerning the question of propaganda.

Paragraph four of Litvinov's letter to President Roosevelt said that the Soviet Government undertakes "not to permit the formation or residence on its territory of any organisations or groups, and to prevent the activity on its territory of any organisations or groups or of representatives or officials of any organisation or group, which has as its aim the overthrow or preparation for the overthrow of, or the bringing about by force of a change in the political or social order of the whole or any part of the United States territories or possessions."

Why, Mr. Stalin, did Mr. Litvinov sign this letter if compliance with the terms of paragraph four is incompatible with the interests of the Soviet Union or beyond its control?

*Stalin*: Execution of the obligations of the paragraph you quote is within our control. We have been carrying out and will continue to carry out these obligations. According to our constitution, political emigres have the right to reside in our territory. We accord them the right of asylum in the same way as the United States accords the right of asylum to political emigres. It is perfectly

obvious that when Litvinov signed this letter he assumed that the obligations contained in it are of a reciprocal character. Do, you, Mr. Howard, regard it as conflicting with the Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement if there are Russian White Guard emigres in United States territory conducting propaganda against the Soviets and in favour of capitalism, and they are receiving material assistance from American citizens, and sometimes they represent terrorist groups?

Obviously these emigres enjoy the right of asylum which exists in the United States, too. So far as we are concerned we would never tolerate a single terrorist in our territory, regardless of the question of who he contemplates as the victim of his criminal attack. Apparently the right of asylum receives a broader interpretation in the United States than in our country. Well, we do not complain. Perhaps you would object that we sympathise with those political emigres who arrive upon our territory. But are there no Americans sympathising with White Guard emigres who conduct propaganda in favour of capitalism and against the Soviets? Then what is the point at issue.

The point is not to assist these persons, not to finance their activities. The point is that officials of both countries should not interfere with the internal affairs of the other country. Our officials are honestly carrying out this obligation. If anyone of them be guilty of not doing so, let us be informed. If things should go too far, and the deportation of all White Guard emigres from the United States should be demanded, this would be an attack on the right of asylum existing in the United States and the U.S.S.R.

Here we must recognise certain reasonable limits for claims and counter-claims. Litvinov signed his letter to President Roosevelt not in a private capacity but as the representative of our State, just as President Roosevelt did. Their agreement represents an agreement between two States. In signing this agreement, both Litvinov and President Roosevelt, as representatives of two states, had in mind the activities of the agents of their states who should not and will not interfere with each other's internal affairs. The right of asylum promulgated in both countries could not be affected by this agreement. Within this framework the Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement should be interpreted as an agreement between representatives of two States.

*Howard*: Did not Browder and Darcy, American

Communists, appearing before the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, last summer, appeal for the overthrow by force of the American Government?

*Stalin*: I admit I do not recall the speeches of Browder and Darcy. I even do not recall what they spoke about. It is possible they said something of this nature. But it was not the Soviet people who created the American Communist Party. It was created by Americans. It exists in the United States legally; it nominates its candidates at elections, including the presidential elections. Comrades Browder and Darcy may have made one speech in Moscow, yet at home in the United States they made similar and doubtless even more determined speeches hundreds of times. American Communists have the opportunity freely to preach their ideas. It would be absolutely wrong to hold the Soviet Government responsible for the activities of American Communists.

*Howard*: But in this instance is it not a fact that their activities took place on Soviet soil, contrary to the terms of paragraph four of the agreement between Roosevelt and Litvinov?

*Stalin*: In what do the activities of the Communist Party consist? How do they manifest themselves? These activities usually consist in the organisation of the working masses, in organising meetings, demonstrations, strikes, etc. It is clear that the American Communists cannot perform all this in Soviet territory. Here in the U.S.S.R. the American workers are not organised in the American Communist Party.

*Howard*: I take it that the gist of your thought, then, is that an interpretation can be made which will safeguard and continue good relations between our countries?

*Stalin*: Yes, absolutely.

### “State Socialism”

*Howard*: Admittedly Communism has not been achieved in Russia. State Socialism has been built. Have not fascism in Italy and national socialism in Germany claimed they have attained similar results? Have not both been achieved at the price of privation, and the sacrifice of personal liberty for the good of the state?

*Stalin*: “State Socialism” is not precise. Under this term many understand a state of society in which a certain part of the wealth, sometimes quite a considerable part, passes into state ownership or under its control, while in the great majority of cases the ownership of plants, factories and lands

remains in private hands. Many understand "State Socialism" in this way. Sometimes a system is concealed behind this term, under which a capitalist State, in the interests of the preparation or the conduct of war takes upon itself the maintenance of a certain number of private enterprises. The society which we have built can in no sense be termed "State Socialism." Our Soviet society is Socialist because the private ownership of factories, plants, land, banks, means of transportation, has been abolished in our country and replaced by public ownership.

The social organisation which we have created can be termed Soviet; the Socialist organisation is not yet quite completed, but in it is the root of the socialist organisation of society. The foundation of this society is public ownership, state ownership, namely, ownership by the entire people, as well as co-operative-collective farm property.

Neither Italian Fascism nor German National "socialism" have anything in common with such a society: primarily because the private ownership of factories, plants, land, banks and means of transportation remain untouched there, and therefore capitalism in Germany and Italy remains in full force.

Yes, you are right, we have not yet built a Communist Society. It is not so easy to build such a society. The difference between Communist and Socialist society is probably known to you. In Socialist society a certain inequality in regard to property still exists. But in Socialist society there is already no unemployment, no exploitation, no oppression of nationalities. In Socialist society everyone is obliged to work, even though he is remunerated for his labour, not yet according to his requirements, but according to the quantity and quality of labour expended. Therefore wages still exist, and unequal, differential wages at that. Only when we succeed in creating an order of society under which people receive from society for their labour, not according to the quantity and quality of their labour, but according to their requirements, will it be possible to say that we have built up a Communist society.

You say that in order to build our Socialist society we sacrificed personal liberty and suffered privations. In your question appears the notion that Socialist society negates personal liberty. This is incorrect. Of course, in order to build something new, one has to economise and accumulate means, and temporarily limit one's requirements, and borrow from others. If you want to build a

new house, you save money and temporarily limit your requirements, otherwise you will not build your house. This is all the more true when the building up of a whole human society is concerned. It was necessary temporarily to limit certain requirements, to accumulate the necessary means, to strain our forces. We acted precisely in this way, and built a Socialist society. But we built this society not for curbing personal liberty, but in order that the human personality might feel really free. We built it for the sake of real personal liberty, liberty without inverted commas.

It is difficult for me to imagine what "personal liberty" can be had by an unemployed man who goes hungry and cannot find a means of using his labour. Real liberty exists only there where exploitation has been annihilated, where no oppression of some peoples by others exists, where there is no unemployment, no poverty, where a person does not tremble because to-morrow he may lose his job, his home, his food. Only in such a society is a real, not illusory liberty in the personal and in every other sense, a possibility.

*Howard:* Do you view as compatible the coincidental development of American democracy and the Soviet system?

*Stalin:* American democracy and the Soviet system can exist simultaneously, and compete peacefully. But one cannot develop into the other. The Soviet system will not evolve into American democracy or vice versa. We can exist peacefully together if we will not indulge in too much mutual fault-finding in all kinds of trifles.

*Howard:* A new constitution is being elaborated in the U.S.S.R. providing for a new system of elections. To what extent can this new system alter the situation of the U.S.S.R., since, as before, only one party will come forward at the elections?

*Stalin:* We shall probably adopt our new constitution at the end of this year. The commission for elaborating the constitution is functioning and will soon finish its work. As has already been announced, the elections under the new constitution will be universal, equal, direct and secret.

You are misled by the fact that only one party will come forward at these elections. You do not see how there can be an election struggle under these conditions. But obviously election lists will be put out not only by the Communist Party but by all kinds of public non-party organisations. And we have hundreds of such. We have no parties standing in opposition to one another, just as we have not got a class of capitalists and a class of



workers exploited by capitalists opposing each other. Our society consists exclusively of free working people of cities and villages—workers, peasants, and intelligentsia. Each of these strata may have its special interests and express them through numerous existing public organisations. But as soon as there are no more classes, as soon as boundaries between classes are effaced, as soon as only a few but non-fundamental differences between various strata of socialist society remain—there can no longer be a nourishing ground for the formation of parties struggling among themselves.

Where several classes do not exist there cannot be several parties, since party is part of class. Under National "socialism" there is also only one party. But nothing will come out of this fascist one party system. The position is that in Germany capitalism remains, classes and the class struggle remain, and it will despite everything break into the open—and this means, too, the struggle of parties representing opposing classes—just as it broke out, let us say, in Spain. In Italy, too, one party, namely the fascist party, exists. But for the same reasons it will fare no better there either.

Why will our elections be universal? Because all citizens, with the exception of those deprived by the courts of the right to vote, will have the right to vote and the right to be elected.

Why will our elections be equal? Because neither the differences with regard to property (differences partly still existing) nor the differences of race or nationality will give any privileges or cause any disadvantages. Women will enjoy the right to elect and be elected equally with men. Our elections will be really equal.

Why will they be secret? Because we want to give the Soviet people absolute liberty to vote for those they want to elect, to elect those they trust to ensure their interests.

Why direct? Because direct election on the spot for all representative bodies, right up to the supreme representative bodies, are a better guarantee of the interests of the working population of our boundless country.

You think there will be no election struggle. But there will be. And I foresee a very animated election struggle. There are quite a number of organisations in our country which function poorly. Sometimes it happens that this or that local Government body does not know how to satisfy one or another of the many-sided and ever-increasing demands of the working population of town and countryside. Have you, or have you not built a good school? Have you improved living conditions? Are you not a bureaucrat? Have you helped to make our labour more effective, our life more cultured? Such will be the criteria with which millions of voters will approach the candidates, casting aside those who are unfit, striking them off the lists, advancing better ones, nominating them for election. Yes, the electoral struggle will be animated, it will proceed around numerous very sharp questions, mainly practical questions, having first rate significance for the people. Our new election system will spur on all institutions and organisations and will force them to improve their work. Universal, equal, direct and secret elections in the U.S.S.R. will be a whip in the hands of the population against poorly functioning organs of government. Our new Soviet Constitution will, in my opinion, be the most democratic institution of all existing in the world.

# THE VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S FRONT IN SPAIN

**I**N October, 1934, the Spanish workers took up arms to defend their rights and liberties against Fascism. They fought on the barricades to save the Spanish people from the fate which had befallen the peoples of Germany and Italy. They fought with amazing courage, but they lost the battle. It was a defeat, however, which contained the elements of future victory. Spanish Fascism tried to erect its terrorist rule on graves and prisons. But the victors did not feel they were out of danger. The Spanish proletariat lost the battle, but acquired new forces and won still more confidence and new sympathy among the broad masses of the people. Built up on the basis of joint action by the Communist and Socialist Parties, the anti-Fascist people's movement swelled into a rushing torrent, which eventually drowned the voice of the victors in its mighty roar.

This torrent of the anti-Fascist people's movement overthrew all barriers and obstacles in its path, and swept away the government of Fascists and reactionaries. The electoral victory of the Spanish people's front which has won an absolute majority in the Cortes, exceeded all the fears of the counter-revolution. Under the pressure of the people's movement in Spain, which has brought freedom to those held in prison, opened for the workers the doors of their people's clubs and reinstated the members of the municipal councils who had been dismissed from their posts, Fascism was forced at the first moment to give up the action it had prepared against the majority of the people, and many Fascists fled abroad. The government resigned and a new government was formed. A few days later it declared an amnesty for all anti-Fascist prisoners.

The speed with which all these events took place is an indication of the great scope of the people's movement, but the speed must be maintained by the movement if the victory is to be consolidated. The success is a tremendous one! It is a revolutionary event. But the dimensions of the success confront the people's front and the proletarian organisations, and, first and foremost, the Communist Party of Spain, with still greater tasks.

The people of Spain are expecting the victorious people's front to bring them rapid, radical and perfectly tangible changes in all the unbearable

conditions against which they have hitherto revolted repeatedly, though unsuccessfully. The Catalonians, the Basques and Galicians are expecting the immediate fulfilment of their national freedom and right to self-determination. The peasants, tenants, agricultural labourers and the proletarian and petty bourgeois masses who joined the people's front so as to bring about a radical transformation of Spain, a country of feudal land relations, clerical obscurantism and Fascism, are awaiting the immediate direct satisfaction of their needs.

But even those who to-day are still supporters of the clericals and Fascists will, as a result of the change in the mood of the masses, and the sudden shifting of forces, be ready to alter their line in favour of the people's front, if the latter actually does give them that which Fascism only promised, namely, a real, rapid, tangible improvement in their conditions.

The Spanish revolutionists correctly believe that the next few weeks will decide the situation. During these weeks, the proletarian organisations are called upon to perform miracles of political and organisational action, just as the workers displayed miracles of heroism during the October battles. The main thing that has to be achieved in Spain during the next few weeks is to bring about an immediate, tangible improvement in the living conditions of the toilers and first and foremost in the living conditions of the peasantry. A blow must be dealt at the roots of Fascism; the proletarian parties must consolidate the victory of the people's front politically and organisationally. The Communist Party will do everything possible to convince the Socialists and the workers organised in the syndicalist trade unions, of the decisive importance of these weeks, and, together with them, urge the people's front to take rapid, bold and consistent action.

## **The Basis of Fascism**

Fascism still constitutes a serious political force and a menacing danger. At the present moment it has retreated, but only to take up new positions, to mobilise all its reserves and to make a new, Fascist, counter-revolutionary coup d'état.

The Spanish revolutionaries know that Fascism

still constitutes a serious political force. Wherein lies the source of this strength?

1. The coalition policy of the Socialist Party begun in April, 1931, and continued for two and a half years, did not, and could not, lead to the satisfaction of the chief demands of the toilers, and, primarily, of the peasants. It scarcely touched upon the material base which ensures the domination of the landlords, the churches, and the finance capitalist magnates, leaving them their privileges and monopolies. Thus, it caused dissatisfaction and disillusionment among the masses of the people, and allowed the reactionary Fascist demagogues to make use of this dissatisfaction and to increase their influence over the masses.

2. The Fascists were able to base themselves upon the Catholic co-operatives, the agricultural syndicates, and the agricultural credit societies, to convert them into a tool for directly influencing the peasants, and thus subordinating over two million peasants in need of credits to their influence.

3. The Fascists, relying on the great economic and political influence of the Church, obtained the organisational force and the material means they required, precisely through the churches and monasteries and Jesuit orders, all of which gave them the opportunity of abusing the religious feelings of the masses of the people and of using these masses against the Republic.

4. The Fascists made use of the power in their hands, in particular during the period after October, in order to strengthen their positions in the state apparatus and, primarily, in the army and the civil guard.

5. The Fascists were in constant receipt of financial assistance from the banks, big landlords and finance capitalist magnates.

6. The working class—the vanguard of the anti-Fascist people's movement—have still by no means overcome the split in their ranks.

From this analysis of the sources of the strength of Spanish Fascism, the Spanish revolutionaries determine the immediate, most important and most urgent, tasks of the anti-Fascist people's front and of its leading force, the working class.

The working class must link up in the closest fashion the struggle for their specific class interests and the struggle for the interests of the whole people, for the complete development of the democratic rights, for the speedy liberation of the peasant masses and the national minorities, for

the complete destruction of Fascism. In the daily struggle for their economic demands, for improvements in living and working conditions, higher wages, sick insurance and unemployment benefits, and for the maintenance of the 8-hour working day, etc., the working class is acting as the champion of the whole people.

They will strive to secure that the strong majority of the people's front in the Cortes will immediately proceed to fulfil these tasks and not waste its strength on fruitless, formal arguments and boring legal discussions. They will support the majority of the people's front in the Cortes with all their weight and all their fighting power outside Parliament, they will support the Left government when it puts through the programme of the people's front, and on all determined measures adopted against Fascism, and on behalf of the demands put forward by the masses of the people.

The working class demand that the government will ensure the unhindered development of the anti-Fascist struggle and not undermine this struggle like the first government of Azana, which gradually adopted the position of alliance with the reactionary groups of the bourgeoisie. The working class will subject the government to criticism if it begins to waver. They will frustrate all Fascist plots against the republic, against the fulfilment of the programme of the people's front, and will not allow the Fascists to mislead and provoke the masses into premature action.

Only in the closest alliance with the peasantry will the working class be able to ensure victory over Fascism and the counter-revolution. It would be a fatal mistake to disillusion the peasants again, who experienced such bitter disillusionment after the victory of the Left parties in January, 1931.

### **Land, Church and State**

As the experience of the revolution in Spain has shown, the great task facing the toiling masses is the solution of the land question. While declaring themselves in favour of increased agitation on behalf of confiscation without compensation of *all* big estates, the Spanish revolutionaries are demanding that the Cortes immediately and without compensation divide among the peasants the landed estates of at least the aristocratic landlords. This will deliver a devastating blow at Spanish Fascism and is the real, economic, and political guarantee



of the existence of the democratic republic. This and this alone will convert the mass of the peasants into faithful allies of the working class in the struggle against the common enemy.

But this is not all: the workers of Spain are demanding the re-election of the boards of management of the peasant co-operatives and that the enemies of the peasants be driven out of them, that speculators and middlemen be eliminated, and the peasants guaranteed more satisfactory prices for their agricultural products. The burden of taxation upon the peasantry must be immediately lightened, the wages of the agricultural workers must be raised, and the latter united into a strong organisation, while social insurance must be extended to the villages, and measures adopted to defend the interests of tenants and to satisfy a number of other demands of the peasantry. If the people's front quickly and energetically lightens the position of the peasantry, they will link themselves up closely with the cause of the people's revolution and be prepared to defend it as their own cause.

The revolutionary workers respect the religious feelings of the broad masses of the people. But they consider it unjust for the Church in Spain to control such enormous wealth while the masses are perishing of hunger and want. They consider it an insult to the religious feelings of the masses that the churches so stubbornly cling to their own earthly wealth, while the peasantry are dying under the burden of poverty. The churches, the monasteries, the Jesuits, who are not ashamed to sit on the money-bags, while the people labour on empty stomachs, will be forced by the pressure of the masses to give up their riches to mitigate the want of the people. Therefore, the workers are fighting to secure that an auxiliary fund is created for the needy peasants and unemployed out of the treasures of the church.

So as to frustrate Fascism which, with the help of its agents, will lay plots in the state apparatus, and, first and foremost, in the army, against the republic, and will make use of the civil guard and the courts against the anti-Fascist fighters, the toiling masses, with the active assistance of the Republican soldiers and the government employees, will drive all monarchist and Fascist elements out of the state apparatus, while tried, absolutely reliable Republicans and anti-Fascists will take their places. The workers are correct in considering it an absolutely inadequate measure

to give these monarchist and Fascist elements inferior jobs or to dismiss them with pensions by way of "punishment." They demand that these gentlemen be finally driven out of the state apparatus. They demand that relentless measures be adopted against financial plots organised by the counter-revolution in respect of foreign currency and the export of money abroad, and that the property of those found guilty be immediately confiscated.

Finally, the Spanish revolutionaries demand that the new government immediately satisfy the national demands of the Catalonians, the Basques and the Galicians, and create a strong alliance of free nations to defend the republic and democratic liberties.

It is essential for the consolidation of the victory and the final overthrow of Fascism that these demands, linked up with the economic demands of the working class, be fulfilled.

### **The United Front**

In order to carry out these tasks and endow the movement of the people with growing fighting power, the proletarian organisations call for the stronger consolidation of all the forces of the people's front and the creation of a strong organisational base. Only if the workers' and peasants' alliances cease to be scattered, narrow, anaemic organisations, and become the living organs of the people's front, elected by the masses and living the same lives as the masses, will they, in practice, ensure that a united struggle of the masses of the people is carried on against Fascism, and serve as the guarantee for the further unfolding of the people's revolution.

However, the proletarian organisations are at the same time confronted with the task of mustering their own ranks more closely, making every effort to still further consolidate the united front, to make it invincible, and once and for all to overcome the ruinous split. The united front not only with the Socialists but with the Syndicalists, who, in spite of the negative position adopted by their leaders, voted for the people's front and are taking part in the anti-Fascist people's movement; the rapid creation of a united trade union organisation, which the Socialist, Communist, Anarchist, Syndicalist and non-Party workers will join.

The Spanish proletariat have done great deeds. Their October battles deeply wounded Fascism in Spain, and the wound has not healed up. Their

purposeful, people's front policy, undermined the government of the Fascists and set huge masses of the people into motion. But the Spanish proletariat are faced with a task of much greater dimensions. They have to double their efforts, to combine revolutionary courage with political wisdom and organisational firmness in order to have the opportunity of continuing the road they have taken.

The victory of the people's anti-Fascist front in Spain calls forth joy and enthusiasm among the working masses throughout the whole world. The news of the great successes of the anti-Fascist movement in Spain will arouse the desire to resist and to fight against Fascism among all workers.

"Fascism is a ferocious, but unstable power." Events in Spain have most convincingly confirmed these words used by George Dimitrov. "To vote for the people's front is to vote for Dimitrov," shouted the agitators of the counter-revolutionary bloc during the election in Spain, striving in this way to scare the people. And the toiling masses replied: "We are voting for the people's front, for the cause of Dimitrov." *The events in Spain are a brilliant confirmation of the new tactical line of the 7th Congress of the Comintern.*

Spain has shown that there is only one force that can check the Fascist offensive and hurl it back. *This force is the movement of the masses in the united working-class front, and in the anti-Fascist people's front. This force can, and will, conquer Fascism.*

Reactionary Social Democrats are trying to pass over in silence or even to distort this most important lesson of the Spanish events, which are of

exceptional importance for the entire course of the class struggle in the capitalist countries.

The Bulletin of the Socialist International and a number of leading organs of the Social Democratic Parties prefer to pass over in silence the fact that *the united proletarian front and the people's anti-Fascist front exist and are being victorious in Spain.*

The reactionary elements of Social Democracy will be as little able to conceal or distort this historic fact as to conceal and distort the other fact that Fascism has been delivered a determined blow in just that country where the Communist and Social Democratic workers offered up resistance to the onslaught of Fascism in a joint armed struggle. "There was no need to take up arms," wrote the "Neue Vorwaerts," the Brussels "Peuple," and other Social Democratic newspapers at that time, in justification of the capitulatory policy of the leaders of German Social Democracy. Eighteen months have not yet passed, and the same Bulletin of the Socialist International has been forced to admit that "where the working class offered fighting resistance to the offensive of reaction, a rapid upsurge is possible even after defeat."

Facts are stubborn things. The world proletariat, in spite of all the efforts of the reactionary circles of Social Democracy, are drawing their own conclusions from the Spanish events. And they will be in favour of the united working-class front, in favour of the anti-Fascist people's front, in favour of a joint, decisive struggle against Fascist barbarity, against imperialist war, and against the capitalist offensive.

# THE DANGER OF FASCISM IN FRANCE AND THE STRUGGLE OF THE C.P. OF FRANCE

By M. Thorez

**O**N January 22nd-25th, 1936, there took place the VIII. Congress of the Communist Party of France, in Villeurbanne, a working-class district of Lyons.

*Not a single one of the Party's Congresses which have taken place in the past attracted the attention of the whole of France, both friends and enemies, to such a degree as did the recent congress of the C.P. of France which has become a most powerful political factor in the life of the country.*

*The rich experience of the C.P. of France in the struggle for the united proletarian front and the people's anti-fascist front, summed up at this Congress, is of international significance.*

*Below we publish an abbreviated report of the speech made by Comrade Thorez, Secretary of the C.P. of France. We shall return again to the results of the Congress.*

"Twelve years ago, in the town in which we are meeting to-day," began Maurice Thorez, delivering his report to the Eighth Congress of the C.P. of France which recently took place, "the Fourth Congress of our Party was held. Suddenly the awful news reached us: Lenin had died! The brilliant teacher, the founder of the Communist International was no more. A tremendous feeling of emptiness seized us.

"Lenin is dead, but Leninism lives!"

True to the teachings of Lenin, the French Communists have applied all their strength to bring about working-class unity. And the Communist Party of France, said Thorez, may be proud of its victories in this sphere.

In the first part of his report the General Secretary of the C.P. of France gave an exceptionally clear picture of the riches of France.

"France," he said with pride, "is not a backward country. It possesses great natural wealth and an up-to-date, powerful industrial apparatus. The geographical position of France, the navigable rivers which irrigate the land, the fertility of its lands, the mild climate, all make it a country possessed of rich and varied resources."

The speaker then gave a detailed description of the wealth of France, its tremendous possibilities

in the sphere of agriculture and industry. A terrible economic crisis, however, is raging in this country, with all its tremendous opportunities. The speaker introduced a great deal of data to show the full depth of the crisis: the number of unemployed having increased from 312,000 in December, 1933, to 419,000 in December, 1934 . . . foreign trade declining, the budget balance being violated, and the national income having decreased between 1929 and 1934 by 30 per cent.

What is the explanation of such a deep crisis raging in such a rich country? And Thorez replied:

"It is very simple. It has come about because the riches created by the labour of many generations of French workers and peasants have been appropriated by a handful of parasites, who use this wealth exclusively for their own gain."

Thorez showed that there are two hundred families in France who dominate affairs in politics and economy. These two hundred families are the force leading the country to destruction, the force which inflicts upon the people of France a government acting in the interests of capital.

Thorez analysed the conditions of the working class and other toiling sections of the population, and dwelt in special detail on the ruin in the villages, after which he drew a picture of the consequences of the crisis in all branches of public life.

"Not only is the population not increasing," said Maurice Thorez, "but it is declining. If this alarming state of affairs continues, our country will be on the verge of catastrophe. In a few decades, we shall become a nation of old men, our people will degenerate, will decline in numbers, and will gradually die out . . . The workers and peasants are afraid of burdening society with helpless beings who will drag out lives of misery, or who, one fine day, will go into the field of battle to die in defence of the coffers of their masters."

Hence the conclusion—give the parents of these children work, raise their wages, give them more healthy homes, and organise the protection of their children's health.

France, famous as a land of science, literature



and art, is undergoing a terrible decline in these spheres.

The speaker introduced figures illustrating how expenditure on public education and scientific institutes has been curtailed, and how the theatres and cinemas are vulgarised. The French bourgeoisie are turning their backs upon the cultural traditions of the country; they are leading the people to the same degree of cultural decline, as of moral degradation and material destruction.

Then Thorez dwelt in detail on the foreign policy of Laval who tried to come to an agreement with Hitler, was a direct accomplice in the rapacious war conducted by Mussolini, and did his utmost to prevent the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact. Said Thorez:

"The policy of Laval is a menace to the safety of the country. It is leading to the isolation of France. It inspires the fascists—the instigators of war—and calls forth the astonishment and just dissatisfaction of the nations striving for peace, including those which are in the closest degree connected with France. The policy of M. Laval leads to war."

Thorez analysed the different forms of reaction and fascism, and presented a plan to save France, drawn up by the Communist Party, and also discussed in detail the problems of united action by the working class and the anti-fascist people's front, explaining the Communist Party's plans and methods.

We give below, in detail, that part of the report made by Thorez in which he speaks of the onslaught of reaction and the danger of fascism in France.

### The Onslaught of Reaction

At one time the picture presented to the world by France was that of a land of liberty. "The classic country of revolutions, each of which was carried through to the end," wrote Engels.

The fierce struggle which was waged for whole centuries against the forces of reaction and oppression imbued the people of France with a love of freedom.

From the communes and Jacquerie\* of the Middle Ages to the first French Revolution, from the uprisings of the people in 1830-1848 to the Paris Commune—one and the same striving after social justice, one and the same thirst for freedom, inspired and aroused the people of our country to struggle. Corresponding to the level of development of the productive forces of society, each

upheaval, each tremor, which threw off the chains of the past, was the guarantee for new successes in both the economic and political spheres.

The working class of France, from the days when they first came into being, have played a big rôle in battles for progress and liberty. Over 100 years ago the workers of Lyons, where we are assembled to-day, undertook their first proletarian battle in the interests and for the aims of the proletariat. In 1832 they inscribed on their banners: "Live working, die fighting."

During the first revolution, the workers of Paris were already fighting on the side of the handicraftsmen of the outlying districts, were the firmest supporters of the Paris municipality and its sections, which, after August 10th, 1792, achieved the overthrow of the power of the monarchy and declared the Republic. The same Paris proletariat again declared the Republic in 1848, and by organising the Paris Commune, prevented the establishment of the power of the Monarchy after the fall of the Empire.

The working class and the people of France achieved the establishment of the Republic, won universal suffrage, freedom of the press and of trade union organisation, freedom of assembly and demonstration.

It goes without saying that the workers know how relative and unstable are these liberties. If women, soldiers, immigrant workers and those of colonial origin are deprived of the right to vote, if the electoral system, based on arbitrariness, deprives our Party of the representation in parliament to which it has the right by virtue of the number of votes cast in its favour, then this means that there is no true universal suffrage in France. If the paper factories and print-works are in the hands of a small group of capitalists who exploit the people of France, then there is no freedom of the press. If the radio is the monopolist possession of reaction which is in power, then this means there is no freedom of opinion. If meeting-halls are controlled by the enemies of the people—then there is no true freedom of assembly.

But the workers are prepared to wage a struggle in defence of these scanty, curtailed liberties: they fight against all incursions upon them. The governments which have been formed after February 6th brought the country to dark reaction.

The practice of emergency legislation, apart from the harmful consequences it has had upon the economic life of the country and on the fate

\* Jacquerie—peasant uprisings in France in 1357.

of the toiling classes, is in addition an incursion upon the prerogatives of parliament, and, consequently, is a blow at universal suffrage. A number of emergency laws still further restrict freedom of opinion and freedom of the press: punishment can be meted out for insults directed against the heads of foreign states. Thus, it is henceforth prohibited for anyone to say that Mussolini incited the murders of Matteotti or that Hitler set fire to the Reichstag and wants to behead Thaelmann!

Other emergency laws have to the same degree violated communal liberties, calling forth a reasoned protest from the last Congress of the Mayors of France. At the same time, detachments of the state police have been sent into 180 working-class municipalities in the departments of Seine-et-Oise and Seine-et-Marne.

Reactionary ministers have considerably curtailed the right of officials, teachers and postal employees to have their own trade unions or to take strike action. This affords direct encouragement to the employers who fight against the workers organised in trade unions. The government persecutes teachers, while at the same time encouraging clerical demonstrations.

Thirty years after the passage of the law separating the Church from the State, a Cardinal, the Pope's Legate, is received with pomp and is accompanied in all his travels by Ministers, Prefects, Generals and Admirals. When the Cardinal passed through Lourdes, young soldiers were made to stand guard. And yet the fathers of these soldiers at one time marched into battle against the priests, to force them to submit to the laws of the Republic!

At the same time Laval and Pagmanon refused to allow the people of Paris to pay homage to the memory of Victor Hugo, their great poet. The government not only tolerates, but encourages reactionary demonstrations against Professor Jese. It closes down the law faculty and makes a mockery of the students, instead of rendering a few fascists harmless, and depriving them of the opportunity of undermining the prestige of our university.

The bourgeoisie are striving, by the most varied means, to strengthen their rule over the toiling masses of our country, they are establishing special laws for immigrant workers, depriving them of the most elementary rights in a country which

used to be proud of being a refuge for all those who were outcasts, and unmasked all tyrants.

The government is more and more increasing the oppression of imperialist rule over our brothers in Alsace-Lorraine, and over the colonial peoples. The native population of Algiers, Tunis and Indo-China are subjected to cruel repression; the same repression is exercised over the French, who, either in these colonies or in France, remain true to the spirit of the French revolution which liberated the black slaves in the Antilles, and made them free citizens on an equal footing to their French brothers.

### **The Danger of Fascism**

By persecuting the working class, and curtailing the rights of the people, the reactionary bourgeoisie are hoping to check the just indignation of the masses against the policy of starvation and war.

The workers, unemployed, clerks, ex-servicemen who served in the imperialist war, peasants, shopkeepers, intellectuals—in fact, all toilers are extremely dissatisfied with the present state of affairs.

The workers are beginning to strike so as to prevent further reductions in wages, to get increases. The dockers of Rouen and Marseilles, the metal-workers of Saint-Chamont, the miners of the Loire and Izer, the tramwaymen of the Lisle district have waged fearless battles.

The government employees have also undertaken action on several occasions. The workers of the state arsenals in Toulon and Brest frustrated the foul provocations of the government, and fought determinedly against the emergency laws. The war invalids and ex-servicemen have been protesting indignantly against the emergency decrees which provide for reductions in their pensions and benefit payment. On November 11th of last year they marched to the grave of the Unknown Soldier, their brother—the memory of whom is only insulted by the constant processions of the hangmen—so as to prevent the destruction of their rights, which were once so triumphantly secured for them.

The unfortunate, ruined peasants defend themselves against the confiscation of their property, resist the sale of their property by auction, and collect together on the market grounds. Once they even occupied the building of the Prefecture in Chartreux.

The toiling masses of the country are protesting

and fighting against the policy of poverty, reaction and war, conducted by the Laval government.

Is it not true that M. Laval, the President of the Council of Ministers, and Paganon, the Minister of Home Affairs, made a proposal on July 14th, 1935, to the leader of the "Croix de Feu" to arrange a review of their forces on the Champs Elysees, while the people of Paris demonstrated at the Place du Bastille and the Place de la Nation? And is it not true that on November 11th, during the procession of true participants in the war, under the leadership of Republican reserve officers, the Jeunesse Royal, the Francists and other fascist bands marched in front of the procession and brought up the rear?

The imperialists of France, the two hundred families which rule France, want to lay the burden of the economic crisis upon the shoulders of the toiling masses. They want to support the military and political hegemony of France in Europe; they want to maintain their domination over the enslaved colonial peoples; they want to avert action by the masses of the people and to safeguard their own outrageous privileges.

*This is why they are dreaming of fascist dictatorship.*

Last year M. Andre Tardieu, former President of the Council of Ministers, arch-enemy of the working class and the Communists, and open opponent of the Soviet Union, gave an interview to the official organ of the "Croix de Feu." I will quote from his interview as published in *Le Jour* of April 18th, 1935:

"And if you were offered all power?" "Nothing can be done until the country understands, and it will understand only when the active minority is able to open its eyes."

There can be no two opinions on this question. Since the people "do not understand," i.e., have no desire to allow themselves to be enslaved, and even permit themselves the use of the ballot box to remove M. Tardieu from power, the latter foretells that the dictatorship of two hundred families will throw off its democratic mask and come forward openly as the *active minority*.

### Economics of Fascism

Fascism does not confront the toiling masses in its true colours as the weapon of finance capital. Even when it resorts to violence in order to come to power, or when it applies terror after it has already seized power, even then fascism resorts to the most vulgar, unbridled demagoguery. It tries to

veil its true nature and its own class aims. It tries to deceive the poverty-stricken toiling masses, and especially the unemployed and impoverished peasants, the government employees who are uncertain of the morrow, the ruined small shopkeepers, the disillusioned ex-servicemen and all who are dissatisfied.

Fascism seeks to find a mass basis on which to establish the dictatorship of capital, cynically and hypocritically making use of all the poverty and the scandalous affairs, which inevitably accompany the régime of capitalist exploitation. The fascist leaders use expressions directly borrowed from the vocabulary of the working class and their organisations. For example, Hitler christened his organisation "national-socialist," while the largest daily fascist newspaper in France is called *The Friend of the People*. What an insult to the memory of the great revolutionary, Marat!

However, the real masters of Colonel de la Rocque are de Wendel of the "Comite des Forges" and of the state Bank of France, Pozza du Borgo, Lehideaux, and other magnates of capital. The masters of the fascist newspaper, founded by Coty and guided to-day by M. Taittinger, are the leaders of the largest banks and oil companies. Taittinger, the President of the "Jeunesses Patriotes" (Young Patriots' League), is at the same time the leader of numerous capitalist undertakings, including also the Vienne Energetics Amalgamation, which is connected with the big German A.E.G. trust (the German Electrical Company). The fascist magazine *Gringoire* is financed by the bank of the brothers Rothschild and the firm of the "Grandfils de Wendel," who have two directors in the Bank of France.

It is therefore understandable that the fascist leaders, in spite of their anti-capitalist phraseology, always oppose the demands of the toiling people. Colonel de la Rocque opposes social insurance in the following way:

"Interference by the state in charitable works renders the latter unpopular, unnecessary and harmful, however noble the considerations guiding it. Social insurance is a typical example in this respect. The guidance of insurance provided by the mutual help societies of the trade unions was based upon charity: when the Ministry of Labour swallowed up this work, it led to demoralisation, prodigality and impotence." (Interview of De la Rocque published in the "Paris Midi.")

A short time ago the "Croix de Feu" issued a

poster approving of the emergency decrees dealing with pensions, and called upon ex-servicemen to submit to the emergency decrees.

The masses of the people feel more and more strongly that "this must all be changed." Then the fascist leaders come out with their programme of so-called "corporativism."

The corporativists affirm that they can abolish the "excesses of capitalism" and ensure to every toiler "the just enjoyment of the fruits of his labour." Actually, however, the sharp edge of their policy is directed against the working class and against their emancipation, and is hidden behind phrases about solidarity between labour and capital, and hypocritical accusations concerning the abuses of capitalism. At the congress of the "Jeunesses Patriotes" which took place on April 5th, 1935, the speaker made the following declaration:

"That liberalism is bankrupt is a fact recognised by the whole world to-day. Since we are at the same time determinedly hostile to international Marxism, we must find some third formula and this is the system of controlled economy."

Here we recognise the lying phrases of Mussolini about "third economics." De la Rocque declares: "*I am a supporter not of regulated, but of controlled and sanctioned economics.*"

The fascists declare that "corporativism will take the place of incompetent, irresponsible, corrupt parliamentarism." They want to destroy all that is left of parliamentarism. They want to destroy all that is left of parliamentary democracy. They are fighting to destroy the workers' trade unions. It is to be regretted that corporativism sometimes enjoys sympathy in circles which pretend to belong to the working-class movement, for example, the "planners" and their "leader," De Man. Traces of corporativism can be found in the plan drawn up by the General Confederation of Labour.

### Demagogy of de la Rocque

The masses of the people are indignant at the corruption among the ruling classes. The fascists, profiting from this corruption and being the agents of those who receive bribes, are trying to use the just indignation of the masses for their own ends. The fascist leaders cry out "Stop thief," they talk about purity of morals, about virtue. De Wendel, Nikola, Rothschild and Mercier, all mercenaries, write that after their

advent to power, "*the French people will no longer be enslaved by the magnates and feudal lords of finance and industrial capital. The end of the magnates and plutocrats will at the same time be the end of inhuman speculation. This will be the end of the ancient tyrants, the tyrants who worship the golden calf.*"

The masses of the people are irritated by the group struggle which is tearing the country to pieces and weakening it in the face of the surrounding countries. Fascism, which mainly sows strife among the people, is trying to pretend that it is a uniting, reconciling factor.

Colonel de la Rocque, who is organising stores of weapons with which to murder Frenchmen, declares:

"It is painful to see how the blood of the French people is being shed in fratricidal battles." (Interview given to the "Petit Journal," June 28, 1935.)

However, we know that 23 workers have been killed by fascists during the last eighteen months.

"I love the people, the peasants and workers of France first and foremost," said the leader of the Croix de Feu. "When they are as bloody as beef-steaks," Jules Guesde would have added.

The fascists are trying to distort the national feelings of the people, which the Communists share, to convert them into a feeling of hatred towards other peoples. This does not prevent the fascist leaders from receiving orders from Berlin and Rome. A short time ago Bucard was photographed with Mussolini and at the time declared: "Salvation will come from Rome."

Academician Bertrand was present at the Hitler Congress in Nuremberg, and on October 6th, 1935, he wrote the following in the *Franciste*:

"In the hotel where we stayed, long rows of top boots stretched along the corridors as far as the eye could see."

No doubt this sight forced from him the subsequent exclamation:

"I can say quite sincerely that never in my life have I seen anything finer!"

The masses of the workers are suffering from poverty and are demanding bread, assistance and support during the heavy misfortunes they are living through. Fascism is trying to abuse the desires of these unfortunate people by resorting to social demagogy.

The miserable attempts of the "Croix de Feu" to organise people's dining-rooms even in the Com-

munist districts of Paris are not yet forgotten. Incidentally we can call to mind how the unemployed reacted to this: every day they calmly presented themselves at the dining-room, ate their portions, and afterwards demonstrated, singing the "Internationale," and with cries of "To the gallows with De la Rocque!" The "Croix de Feu" very soon dropped these dining-rooms.

The "Croix de Feu" made their debut on the political arena by breaking up a pacifist meeting organised in the Trocadero Hall on November 28th, 1931, where they were not sparing in their insulting attacks against Herriot, chairman of the meeting.

Chopine, one of the former leaders of the "Croix de Feu," tells in his book, "Ten Years Among the 'Croix de Feu,'" how De la Rocque entrusted him with the task of organising a "spontaneous" expression of welcome at the St. Lazare Station, when Laval returned from America in 1931. The fascists shouted: "Long live Laval! Down with Briand!"

Under the wing of the government armed bands have been afforded an opportunity of collecting together and arming themselves. They practised shooting and then began to arrange real civil war manoeuvres. The "Croix de Feu" transport their detachments in lorries and motor-cars, and even by aeroplane.

The fascists are guilty of the murder of a number of workers, including Albert Perdreaux, killed by the "Jeunesses Patriotes" on February 12th, 1934, in Chaville; Joseph Fontaine, killed by the "Camelots du Roi" on April 11th, 1934, in Hénin Letiard; Jean Lamy, killed on May 15th, 1934, by the "Jeunesses Patriotes" by order of the mutineer Trochu, leader of the National Front in Montargis; Paul de Jean, also killed in May, 1935, by the "Camelots du Roi" in Toulouse; Marcel Cayla, killed in June, 1935, by the "Croix de Feu" in Moissac. And the murderers of these comrades were either acquitted or sentenced to scandalously small punishments.

Many republicans have been insulted and a number dangerously wounded. One hundred and forty-two Members of Parliament, including all the members of the Communist fraction, figure in the fascist list of those "sentenced to death," who are liable to be killed.

Without doubt the activity of the working class and the pressure of the people have made it possible to achieve definite successes in the struggle against the fascist civil war leagues; we have in

mind the laws passed whereby the Republican government has the right to dissolve these leagues; but we also know that we must not fall victims to any illusions on this score.

*Only the activity of the masses can help us to secure the actual disarmament and dissolution of the fascist leagues.*

### What Would Fascist Victory Mean ?

The victory of the fascists in France would mean the economic and political destruction of the toiling masses. For the workers it would mean starvation wages, the prohibition and suppression of all resistance to the offensive of capital, the prohibition of strikes, the crushing of all our trade unions, and the dissolution of our co-operative societies; for office employees the victory of fascism in France would mean colossal reductions in wages, dismissals and arbitrary treatment by boards of management. For shopkeepers and artisans the victory of fascism would mean that they would be helpless in face of exploitation by big capital, the masters, trusts and transport companies, Messieurs Mercier of the electrical industries, and De Wendel from the Comite des Forges. For the peasants it would mean the sacrifice of their interests to those of the privileged sections of capitalist society — the monopolists and financial magnates; it would mean the complete ruin of their farms. The intellectuals would be persecuted; great scientists like Perrin and Langevin are already being outrageously attacked. On the lines of Hitler Germany, the victory of fascists would be the signal for a medieval auto-da-fé, the destruction of all liberties, the institution of bloody terror, the complete enslavement of the population; the fascists would imprison and kill working-class fighters; they would persecute Communists, Socialists, Republicans and Democrats. As in Germany, the persecution of Jews would be followed by the persecution of Catholics and Protestants. The victory of fascism would be a catastrophe for the country and would strengthen reaction in Europe. The victory of fascism would mean war between peoples and the invasion of the Soviet Union.

At all costs we want to avoid these horrors, to prevent them from coming to our country and spreading throughout the world.

Thorez set forth a plan to save France, drawn up by the Communist Party. He dwelt in detail on the Party slogan: "Make the Rich Pay!" Further, Thorez said:



"The Party has never ceased fighting for the direct demands of all toilers—except during that period when the ruinous influence of the Barbe-Celor group operated in our ranks . . . While the fascists only pretend to care about the everyday interests of the masses, the phrasemongers from the so-called revolutionary Left wing of the Socialist party are repeating the sectarian formula which we have already rejected: 'The time of the struggle for beef-steaks has passed!' Marceau Pivert writes that 'he no longer believes in the possibility of any sort of improvement while the forces of revolution do not hurl themselves against the foundations of capitalist society.' ('Populaire' of December 13, 1934). The 'leftist' chatterboxes do not know that under the leadership of Lenin, the Bolsheviks led the working class to power, the first slogan on their banner being the word 'Bread!' . . . The Communist Party makes the defence of the bread of the toilers the basis of its plan to save France."

"The Communists want to force the rich to pay. The two hundred families that rule France do not want to pay, and therefore they are sowing strife and conflict among the French people. The Communists are striving to unite the people of France, to secure real unity among all sections of the nation against these two hundred families."

Comrade Thorez said that the declaration made at the Party Conference at Ivry, "We love our country," was greeted with jeers and attacks against the Communist Party. Doriot set the tone for this concerted attack, having in a very short space of time travelled far along the road of out-and-out treachery. The Communists have rejected internationalism, these people declared. Passionately repulsing these calumniators, Comrade Thorez said:

"We are internationalists and remain so. We are, and will remain, the brothers of Thaelmann and Gramsci in the fight against the Hitlers and Mussolinis and against the two hundred families who are plundering, ruining and disgracing our country. But must we just because of this suppress within ourselves the love we feel for our splendid country, must we relinquish the profound just attachment we have for the agelong past full of battles, suffering and glory? No, we are proud of the past magnificence of our country; we are proud of our great forefathers of the year 1793; we are proud of the February and June fighters of 1848, and we are proud of the heroes of the Commune." Traitors of France are to be found among the

ruling two hundred families and among those who serve them. The Communists are in favour of uniting the French people against these two hundred families and their fascist agents. The true reconciliation of the French people can be achieved only in the struggle against these two hundred families. The Communist Party is organising this struggle.

Then Comrade Thorez described the history and the present situation of the working-class united front and the people's anti-fascist front.

The last section of his report was devoted to the question of the situation of the Party.

We give here somewhat abridged the last three sections of Comrade Thorez' report.

### The Struggle for Unity

In formulating its programme of national unity, its plan to save the country, our Communist Party is not losing sight of the fact that the realisation of this plan requires the unification of the forces of the working class first and foremost.

The French Communists always remember the words of Lenin:

*"Unity among the proletariat is their most important weapon in the struggle for the Socialist revolution."*

The Communists have never reconciled themselves to the split in the working class resultant upon the position adopted in December, 1920, by the minority of the Congress in Tours.

With the agreement of all its sections and federations, the Party by a majority of 3,208 mandates against 1,022, with 397 abstentions, then passed the decision to join the Comintern. At the same session of the Congress, immediately after the results of the voting had been declared, the leaders of the minority, the present leaders of the Socialist Party, invited "all delegates not in agreement with the resolution of the Tours Congress" to participate in another Congress. This was the cool manner in which the split was organised. Our Communist Party has fought incessantly to liquidate the split and once again unite all the toilers in a united fighting front. For 13 years we have vainly made proposals to the Socialist Party and its leadership. But hope has never left us. We have sincerely supported all attempts at unity. In 1932 we responded to the moving appeal of Henri Barbusse, whose death we now mourn, and Romain Rolland. It was with enthusiasm that we collaborated with the mighty

Amsterdam "Pleyel" movement, whereby for the first time the united front of the working class was organised on a big scale, and which rallied round itself the best representatives of the intellectuals and the middle sections of society.

We were patient and insistent, thus, as Blum put it, making the formation of the united front "inevitable." I would say—"making dangerous" any further refusal to form the united front.

We were able to make concessions like desisting from criticising those socialist organisations and their leaders who were loyally taking part in joint activities; we did this in order to overcome the last obstacles, and to bring about that for which we had been striving for 13 years.

### **The Working-Class United Front**

The united front, the united struggle of the working class have already brought the toilers a great deal. They should enable us to achieve still greater results.

Above all, the united front must be universal and active. It must be established throughout the whole country, just as much in places where the Communists are still weak as where they possess leading influence and have strong organisations.

The united front must not limit its work to organising meetings. It must be based chiefly upon the struggle for the daily economic and political demands of the toilers. The united front must also include the organisation and conduct of the most modest measures, and at the same time it must also afford an opportunity of raising the struggle of the working class to a higher level, it must lead the workers to new forms of struggle and especially prepare for *a mass political strike* both with a view to resisting possible new attacks by fascism, and to secure satisfaction of the demands of the workers.

Finally, the united front must possess a firmly grounded organisation if it is to be effective. The co-ordination committees should have been organised everywhere by the local and departmental organisations of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. Moreover, the Communists must not drop their work of building up or consolidating united front committees which unite all the workers, organised and unorganised, in the rank and file organisations, and, chiefly in the factories.

As the initiators and organisers of working-class unity, the Communists must *on no account, under no guise*, reject the independent work of the Com-

munist Party of spreading the propaganda of its views and slogans, or cease their own efforts to mobilise the toilers against the bourgeoisie and fascism. On no account must the Communists cease their criticism of viewpoints which are harmful to the interests of the working class, or of positions which contradict the spirit of united action.

Thus, for example, it would be causing harm to the working class, to the united front, and also to our Socialist comrades, if we did not unmask the splitting, counter-revolutionary, undermining, calumnious work of the Trotskyists, if we did not condemn the violations of the agreement, committed by the Socialist newspaper in the town of Roubaix, if we did not condemn the anti-Communist coalitions and blocs concluded in Alfortville and in Bourget.

In just the same way, our Party cannot hide from the working class the serious responsibility falling on the Socialist International for refusing three times in the course of three years to organise the united front on an international scale; the first time when Hitler came to power in Germany, the second time when Cachin and I went to Brussels to negotiate with Vandervelde and Adler, at the time of the fascist drive in Spain and the uprising in Asturias; and the third time, on the eve of Mussolini's aggression against Abyssinia.

It is to be deplored that the most reactionary leaders of the Second International were successful in forcing the majority of the Socialist Parties, who express sympathy towards the united front, to reject the proposals of the Comintern.

Incidentally our Party is striving for something more than united action. On December 2nd, 1935, at a meeting in the Salle Bullier, I announced a formula on behalf of the Central Committee, which fully expresses our will: "One class, one trade union, one party."

To those who previously rejected the united front under the pretext that first Party unity should be restored, we replied:

*"We shall establish the united front, without demanding that each of us should reject those ideas which we consider just. Let us secure agreement for restricted action, pursuing restricted aims. United action frankly achieved will lead to complete unity."*

To-day there is not the slightest doubt that in their struggle the Socialist workers have come closer to their Communist brothers.

On many questions the Socialist workers and some of the more prominent Socialist functionaries share our views to-day. First and foremost they are convinced supporters of united action. They categorically reject collaboration between classes and the "sacred alliance," they recognise the struggle for proletarian dictatorship; they declare themselves in favour of democratic centralism; they declare their sympathy for the Soviet Union, the fatherland of the toilers of the world.

Since last year our Party has taken upon itself the initiative of discussing the problem of a united working-class party. Eight months ago, we even elaborated and handed the Socialist Party our draft charter of unity.

In this we were guided by the two-sided experiences of the international proletariat: on the one hand by the bitter experiences of the toilers of Germany and Austria, the majority of whom were under the influence of social democracy, and are now under the yoke of fascism—on the other hand by the splendid experiences of the toilers of the Soviet Union, led by the Bolsheviks in their struggle to win power and to build up Socialism.

We consider that the united party should declare itself completely independent of the bourgeoisie and their parties, and should reject any support from the bourgeoisie, both in times of peace and in time of imperialist war: it must recognise the need for the violent overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of proletarian dictatorship *in the form of Soviets*; it must be organised on the lines of the great Party of Lenin and Stalin.

Unfortunately, the administrative commission of the Socialist Party has not uttered its opinion on this question. Only yesterday we heard from an article by Leon Blum written in a somewhat irritable tone, that our draft is not "a charter of a united party." But at the same time we know that many workers and Socialist functionaries approve our draft.

In the *Populaire* of June 10th, 1935, Comrade Ziromsky's declaration at the Socialist congress was given in the following way:

*"The Communist Party has drawn up a draft Charter. Ziromsky does not give it his support without some objections. But he recognises that this programme is a big step forward, that the principles embodied in it do not contradict Socialist theory."*

Ziromsky spoke on behalf of the Socialist Party

at a big joint meeting of Communists and Socialists of the Paris region, at which Jacques Duclos represented the Communist Party. For over a year now, we have been proposing that similar meetings should be arranged, as well as joint meetings between the Socialist sections and the Communist groups. All meetings of this kind have been splendid demonstrations of unity, which bring us closer to the creation of the united party of the working class than all the conversations among those at the top, the contents of which, in spite of our insistence, have not even been published.

We shall do everything to arrive at a united working-class party capable of assuring the victory of the toilers.

We are supporting the efforts of the Young Communist League to create a united league of the toiling youth. In this connection we have pointed out that the Y.C.L. would maintain complete freedom quite independently to continue its work of mobilising and organising the youth.

### **The People's Front**

On October 9th, 1934, two days after the first round of the Cantonal elections, the representatives of the Communist Party, at a session of the co-ordination committee, after examining the first successful results of the agreement for united action, proposed to the Socialist delegates "to extend the agreement, to bring in fresh forces, and to work jointly to obtain trade union unity."

It cannot be said that we were given a particularly warm welcome. The next day, however, at the meeting in the Salle Bullier, at which Comrade Ziromsky was present, we explained our viewpoint to the workers gathered together in the hall, in the following form:

"We, Communists, are prepared to conduct this struggle in alliance with all those who put in the foreground the defence of the interests of the toiling masses in town and country.

"We are prepared to help and support all real efforts directed towards the defence of democratic liberties, towards organising resistance to the attacks of the fascist bands. We put forward the idea of widespread unity among the people.

"We made a proposal to the Socialist Party to draw up a programme of the united front demands of the people. Ziromsky said that this was possible. All the better. *This will enable us to consolidate the alliance between the middle sections of society and the working class.*"

Fifteen days later, on the eve of the Congress of Radicals in Nantes, at a meeting which took place in the same town, I publicly repeated the following Communist Party proposal:

“The action by the people which they are proposing with a view to barring the way against fascism, can give rise to a might wave of enthusiasm throughout the country. We are prepared to apply all our strength to this task, and to support these demands so energetically that they will reach their goal even in the parliamentary sphere. Convinced of the fact that the thesis of a government of National Unity is in direct contradiction to the convictions of all the toilers, we are prepared to set everything in motion to obtain the firm organisation everywhere down to the smallest villages, of a broad people’s front, led by the committees elected by the toilers, and making it possible to guarantee the victory of the cause of liberty and peace.

“Our loyal appeal to all supporters of liberty will not remain without a response from the toilers following the Radicals as well. This is the wish we express, and we are sure that events to-morrow will, in the face of the front of reaction and fascism, make possible the formation of the people’s front of liberty, labour and peace.”

The people’s front of liberty, labour and peace! Nine months later Comrade Delmass, secretary of the Teachers’ Trade Union, who declared his adhesion to this “great formula of the Communists,” showed the Congress of Educational Workers which met in July, 1935, the degree to which this formula had taken its hold on the masses, and what fresh energy it had communicated to them.

The radical newspaper *La Republique*, estimating the importance of this historic union between the proletariat and the middle section of society in their struggle against fascism, wrote the following on January 7th, 1936:

“The future generation should be grateful to the Communist Party for the tremendous rôle it played in forming the people’s front.”

It is well known that the people’s front, which is being joined by many of those who were against it yesterday, met and still meets many opponents on its road. It is well known, for example, that the leaders of the Socialist Party, after a discussion which lasted for several months, rejected the programme of immediate demands which we proposed. Trotskyist groupings are to this very day openly against the people’s front, and, we say this

frankly, they meet with no resistance on the part of some of the Socialist leaders.

However, the initiative displayed by our Communist Party, the campaign organised by it in the press, on posters, at meetings, from the platform of the Chamber of Deputies during big public discussions, and, finally, during the municipal elections, has met with the support of the workers and the toilers engaged in a small way, who hail the people’s front as the road to their emancipation.

As far as the Communists are concerned, the people’s front is not a case of accidental, temporary tactics.

This is one of the reasons for the toleration and persistence with which we have explained, argued and convinced, trying to overcome difficulties and obstacles on the road, and to achieve our goal. We shall continue in the same spirit, rejoicing even at the belated arrival of those workers who come to us at the last minute.

### Our Petty-Bourgeois Allies

We are the Party of the proletariat, which can achieve its emancipation only by completely transforming the social structure of society. Our Party, armed with Marxist-Leninist theory, is alone capable of pursuing a consistent policy, the splendid results of which can be observed in the Soviet Union. It is quite another thing with our friends and allies. The small trading and agrarian bourgeoisie hate capital and, chiefly, the bankers who dispense credits: however, they believe in the eternal existence of their property. The representatives of the liberal professions, the middle and higher officials have prejudices and illusions of another kind. They think that modern society can be improved gradually and by peaceful means.

“The whole essence of the class position and strivings of the petty bourgeoisie consists in the fact that they want the impossible and strive after the impossible, i.e., after such a ‘middle course.’” (Lenin, Vol. xx., p. 537.)

The Parties and groupings which base themselves upon the middle classes, inevitably reflect the illusions and prejudices of the latter. They cannot conduct a consistent policy. They are constantly wavering. We must try to prove to them that the success of the people’s front can be assured only to the degree that the toiling non-proletarian masses rally round the working class.

Our Communist Party, trained in the school of Lenin and Stalin, made it possible for the working

class of France to avoid the dual mistake committed by Jaurès and Guesde during the period of the Dreyfus case.

Indeed, Jaurès, who was under the thumb of petty bourgeois democracy, did not sufficiently care for the direct interests of the working class and the independence of their party, and supported the liberal bourgeoisie in the struggle against the reactionary bourgeoisie, which based itself upon the Church and Army Headquarters.

As for Guesde, who lacked tactical flexibility, he kept somewhat aloof from the struggle which set considerable masses of the people in motion.

Our Communist Party refuses to regard all petty bourgeois elements as a single mass of reactionaries, refuses to consider that on the chessboard of modern society there are only two forces confronting each other, two big armies, the army of the bourgeoisie and the Socialist army. This would be a simplified view of things.

The people's front is an organisation of all toilers who are exploited by capital and menaced by fascism. The people's front, under the powerful influence of the Communist Party, has gone into battle so as to bar the way against fascism, untiringly drawing into this struggle ever new masses and sections of society even though they do not belong to the proletariat, but are drawn to the latter because it is the force uniting all the anti-fascist forces and the organiser of the victory of the people over their enemies.

Our collaboration in one people's front has brought forth fruits, and enables us to nourish great hopes for the future. The discordant voices of a number of Radical leaders and parliamentary deputies, as, for example, Malvy, Potu, Martinaud, Desplat, could not weaken the good state of harmony between the Communist workers and the Radical peasants.

The people's front is the working class, influencing the toiling middle sections of the population, by their activities, and drawing them into the struggle against the bourgeoisie, against capital and fascism.

### Will we "Collaborate" ?

Some of our Socialist comrades think that our Party would be inclined to take part in governments like those which we have seen in Austria and Germany, and the results of whose period in power are well known to us.

Let us repeat once more that as far as we are concerned, in conditions when there is an intensi-

fication of political crisis and there is a development of the activity of the masses, a government of the people's front will be a government which will liquidate the fascist menace by disarming and securing the real dissolution of the armed bands, a government which will make the rich pay and put bounds upon the dictatorship of the big banks; a government relying for the realisation of its two-fold task upon the activities of the masses outside parliament, upon the organisation of the people's front committees. This government will provide full possibilities for agitation and propaganda, and for the organisation and activity of the working class and its Communist Party.

To those who consider that the people's front tactics must lead us to a vulgar policy of governmental collaboration, we reply most definitely as follows: *We are not a party of the bourgeoisie, but the Party of the working class. We have never promised to participate in a bourgeois government. We are fighting for Soviet Power.* We have said—and our actions confirm and will confirm our words —“*that we are prepared both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the country to support all measures capable of saving the franc, to ensure the energetic suppression of speculation, to support the interests of the toiling population, to defend democratic liberties, as well as the disarmament and dissolution of the fascist leagues, and the maintenance of peace.*” (Declaration made by the representatives of the Communist Group at a meeting of the Left fraction in the Chamber of Deputies, held in June, 1935.)

This means that as long as conditions do not allow of the formation of a government of the people's front—in the way we understand it—we have decided to give our votes in support of any Left government which puts into practice a programme corresponding to the interests and the will of the French people.

To-day the people's front unites considerable masses of workers and peasants, government officials and intellectuals, but its organisation is still extremely weak. Often only committees exist consisting of representatives of the different groupings belonging to the people's front. In collaborating with our Socialist comrades, we must secure everywhere the election of rank and file committees at mass meetings of the people. To-day there are 1,500 “Amsterdam-Pleyel” committees in being, about 1,000 women's committees and several sufficient. What is needed is that a stable organi-



sation of the people's front of labour, liberty and peace should be set up in every village, and in every enterprise.

With the collaboration of the Laval-Fabry government, the fascist groupings are developing a systematic offensive with a view to using the army for its own bloody purposes. Reactionary Royalist and fascist elements are squeezing out the Republican officers at army headquarters and among the senior officers. In the barracks, as Dewez pointed out from the platform of the Chamber of Deputies, the fascist organisations spy on the sons of workers and peasants.

The people's front must take up the defence of the Republican officers and soldiers, sons of the people. It must support them against the Generals and Royalist and fascist officers. It must support the Committees set up in the army to defend the Republic and the Constitution.

As for us, we, obviously, remain determined opponents of militarism. We are fighting to secure the satisfaction of the demands of, and in defence of the rights of the soldiers, sailors, non-commissioned officers, and officers who are true to the Republic. We fight against the agents of reaction and fascism. During the last debates in the Chamber of Deputies, we alone protested against the restoration of the two-years' term of army, while the Socialist orators kept silent.

### **The Party**

We know full well that the French working class would never have had an agreement on united action, that the people's front would never have been created, that fascism might have set up its foul dictatorship if, during our 15 years of work and struggle, we had not succeeded in organising a Communist Party sufficiently strong and sufficiently worthy of the ever-growing confidence of the vast masses, by virtue of its political acumen, its ability to fight and its enthusiasm.

To-day the Party has trebled its membership, has almost 100,000 members, and has become one of the basic factors in the political situation of France. It is becoming to an ever greater and greater degree the leader of the working class, being the recognised inspirer of the broad anti-fascist movement. Now all friends and opponents, allies and enemies, listen attentively to the Party, its leaders, its organisations and its newspapers.

All this did not come about of itself. We had to work and carry on a fight even in our own ranks in order to make the Party capable of carrying

out its historic task of uniting and organising the toilers.

Many questions which seem simple enough to-day were far from clear to everybody at the time when the Central Committee of our Party first raised them.

The united front, the people's front, the feeling of attachment for our country, the true unification of France—all these questions, already old or still quite new, had to be explained and interpreted by the Central Committee, without permitting any distortions or opportunist interpretations.

On the ideological front, we boldly deprived our enemies of the things which they had stolen from us and trampled under foot. We took back the "Marseillaise" and the tricolour banner of our fathers—the soldiers of the year II. We have taken back the lines about freedom and turned against the fascists—the enemies of the French people—the words of Rouget de l'Isle:

"Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras

Egorger nos fils et nos compagnes."\*

The operation of our general political line required constant vigilance on the part of the Party and its Central Committee. The constant struggle on two fronts has become more and more fierce, for the danger of deviations has grown.

Of course, the general conditions which guarantee the rise of the mass movement and the success of the Communist Party are characteristic of the whole of France. In a number of regions, however, a special situation may and does exist, and this obliges us to apply the general line of our party thoughtfully and flexibly, to fight against stock arguments, against ready-made schemes and empty formulas. It is clear, however, that our policy is true on the whole for the whole country.

### **Our Party in the Provinces**

However, it should be stated that our successes are extremely uneven in different regions and counties.

Take, for example, the Marseilles district, which is one of those areas where the Party has gained the greatest successes. And yet the situation was hopeless in Marseilles for many years. All the efforts of the Central Committee led to no change. We were told: "You don't know Marseilles. Marseilles is the French Chicago. The port brings into existence so much that is rotten that, like gangrene, it corrodes everything, including the

\* "They approach us in order to put our sons, our friends, to death."

working class." Of course, we refused to agree to this. We sent Comrade Billoux there. You know the results: the proletariat of Marseilles are always in the front ranks of the anti-fascist struggle, and tens of thousands take part in the demonstrations there. The dockers have conducted a number of big strikes which finished in victory. Thanks to the Communist Party which obtained 16,000 votes in Marseilles at the municipal elections against only 6,000 in 1929, the position of Mayor of the town of Marseilles has been wrenched away from the adventurer, Sabiani.

The Party achieved considerable successes throughout the district during the Canton elections, and afterwards — during the municipal elections. Our candidate was elected for the first time in one of the cantons of Marseilles. The workers of the Toulon arsenal elected Bartholini to the Chamber of Deputies. The weekly newspaper, *The Red South*, appears in three editions with a circulation of 14,000 copies. The membership of our Marseilles organisation has increased from 1,500 to 6,000, including, in the town of Marseilles itself, an increase from 200 to 1,000. There are 2,000 members of the Young Communist League, where, two years ago, there were only 500.

We all understand that this is the result of the work of Comrade Billoux and the faithful band of active workers whom he was able to draw into the work.

Take another example. For a long time now the Party has been enjoying considerable influence in Ivry. For over ten years we have held the mayoralty in Ivry. A number of good comrades, including, for example, Comrade Marrane, worked there faithfully. However, there were less than 200 members in the Ivry Party organisation, although the Party could mobilise 6,000 votes there.

The district committee elected a new secretary, Comrade Mabile. Before a year had passed, the membership had increased to 670. The collection of funds towards the "Soldiers' penny" amounted to 6,700 francs in a town numbering only 50,000 inhabitants. Our little weekly newspaper has a circulation of 5,000 copies, almost all of which are sold in the canton, which has a total number of only 130,000 inhabitants.

But let us look at another type of work. In St. Etienne the influence of our Party has grown considerably as a result of the successful work of our active Party members led by Comrade Ramier. We have in mind the *help for the unemployed, defence of the soldiers, and the anti-fascist struggle.*

At the municipal elections, 15 of our comrades were elected on the people's front list, which, thanks to our tactics, met with complete victory. However, the local Party organisation has not, as yet, grown to correspond with its influence. Its numbers are increasing very slowly. The circulation of the weekly paper there has even decreased, and *L'Humanite* is not read there. Is it not clear that the theory of letting things slide has the upper hand here, and that (despite the valuable advice and assistance offered to the local organisation by Comrade Frachinas) there is not carried out in a Bolshevik manner the organisational work without which the successes we have achieved cannot be consolidated, nor any new successes achieved? Here we find a weakness which is extremely widespread in our Party organisations.

We, French Communists, are obliged, especially in the organisational sphere, to apply all our efforts and, literally, to perform miracles in order to liquidate the chief weakness of our working-class movement. This obligation is especially emphasised in the greetings of the Communist International to our Congress.

Let us examine, finally, a last example referring to Party organisations. As far as we can see, this is the most lamentable example. Our organisation in the lower Seine region is making very little progress. And yet the conditions of the working class there, and their militant past, permit us to demand more. At the session of the Central Committee in February of last year, a devastating picture was unfolded of the poverty of the toilers in that district. Strikes frequently break out there, distinguished for their militant character. A short time ago the dockers of Rouen won a victory after a courageous struggle.

In Havre the anti-fascist struggle has always been waged with great enthusiasm. However, the size of the Party organisation, and the influence of the Party, do not grow or grow very little. Forty-five delegates were present at the regional conference. The small county of Picardy, which formerly was so weak, held a brilliant conference attended by 150 delegates. More than one district of average importance held a conference attended by more delegates than were present at the regional conference of the Lower Seine, where the Party organisation still adheres to its sectarian line, and where petty feuds and quarrels have not yet been successfully lived down.

What is the explanation of such a situation in

a county where a member of the C.C. is at work? *Merely that Comrade Courtade has not yet organised his own work and still less the work of his comrades, and herein lies the main task of the present leader.*

### **Training and Propaganda**

The question of cadres is of decisive importance. Without doubt our Party has achieved successes in the training and selection of its active workers. In the C.C. we have learned how to become better acquainted with people. We have made a systematic study of our cadres, and this has enabled us not only to discover the best of our active Party workers, but also to expose class enemies and provocateurs, who have managed to worm their way into our ranks.

However, not only the Central Committee must occupy itself with this work. The whole Party, all its committees, all its organisations must ensure the training and selection of cadres.

If the comrades are inadequately experienced, insufficiently trained to fulfil the tasks which confront every Communist, then it is our duty to train them, and we are responsible for this work. The Party has many new and young members. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of questions get repeated and are raised anew. We must, therefore, know how to answer questions, to explain the Party policy, and not hurry to label as opportunist or sectarian, any comrade who allows himself to indulge in criticism. The life of the Party, its daily bread, lie in criticism and self-criticism. There must be no whimpering or false mutual condemnation, but Bolshevik publicity of what is good and what is bad in our work. It is important openly to recognise mistakes, and what is most important, to know how to correct them, by seeking out the deep inner causes, in order to avoid their repetition.

Our *educational work* must be increased. Numerous schools are already training our active Party members. However, in view of the fact that many comrades cannot attend school for a number of reasons, we must improve other forms of educating and theoretically training our cadres. We should arrange exchanges of opinion on definite questions, and distribute our literature widely. The Party has *published*, or rather *re-published*, the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. We have printed a large number of books and pamphlets. We must welcome, as a

great event, the appearance of the book entitled "A la Lumiere du Marxisme" (In the Light of Marxism), in which a group of scientists, including Professor Langevin, tell us of how they are pushing science forward on the basis of their knowledge and study of the works of Marx and Lenin.

Of all French political magazines, the circulation of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" alone exceeds that of the "Cahiers du Bolchevisme," of which 4,000 copies are regularly sold.

The magazine "Commune," the groups of friends of the "Commune," the House of Culture where Aragon is working with such success—all these are successful and fruitful beginnings.

*L'Humanite* enjoys deserved authority. Under the leadership of our dear Marcel Cachin, who is assisted by Vaillant-Couturier, it has become the largest newspaper of the people's front, one of the sharpest weapons of the working class and the Communist Party.

*L'Humanite* can be proud of the variety and high level of the contents of its pages, devoted to general political questions and international life, of its workers' department, of the different questionnaires it runs, of the quantity and quality of its collaborators, of its Sunday literary page, which is an honour to our Party. Yes, and how can the Communist proletariat fail to be proud when they read Andre Gide in their newspaper, a man who has achieved the heights of bourgeois art, and is now seeking, and finding, in Communism the answers to questions which have tortured him in the past?

The greatness of *l'Humanite* lies in its militant contents, its imposing circulation, the quality of the editorial work and the experience of the leaders, but to an equal degree also it lies in the number of its voluntary contributors—workers and peasants, in the multitude of its propagandists and salesmen, who are examples of such valuable and moving loyalty. The Congress must express its heartiest thanks to the members of the "l'Humanite Defence Committee," the leading members of the Party cells, who—often at the cost of big sacrifices—succeed in distributing, and contribute to the success of our *l'Humanite*.

We are also witness to a splendid advance in the Young Communist League. The policy of the Barbé group reduced the League to the level of an impotent sect. The Young Communist League, which in the first years of its existence was able to lead a courageous and fruitful struggle

against imperialism and militarism, and in defence of the toiling youth, weakened considerably during this period. The Young Communist League, which the Central Committee and the Party are assisting, and which Guyot, a tried and capable comrade, is now leading, has become a big organisation. Its membership has increased from 3,500 to 30,000. Its weekly newspaper *Avangarde*, with its circulation of 40,000, is the only paper of its kind in existence. It does honour to the Young Communist League and the whole of our Party. The Young Communist League has grown in the anti-fascist struggle, in the struggle for the future of the French youth, exploited by two hundred families, in the struggle for unity among the toiling youth, in the struggle for the triumph of the principles of Lenin and Stalin. The Y.C.L., an organisation independent of the Party, is educating its members and active workers in the spirit of complete confidence in the Party and its C.C.

### Election Prospects

The Party achieved big success at the Canton elections in 1934 and at the municipal elections of last year. The Communists are at the head of one-third of all the communes of the Seine department, which is among the most densely populated, and at the same time among the poorest.

In Seine-et-Oise, in the North, in the Pas de Calais, in the Gard, and in a number of other departments, the number of Communist mayoralties has considerably increased. Our banner now waves over big towns, for example over the town of Villeurbanne, with its 80,000 inhabitants, and which has offered its hospitality to the present Eighth Congress of the Party. Villeurbanne has been won for the party as a result of the loyalty and faithfulness of our deceased comrade, Grand Clement. Our banner waves over many towns and villages in France.

We are on the eve of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies. A big political fight is ahead, between the two forces which divide France, between the people's front on the one hand, and the front of reaction and fascism on the other. The Communist Party hopes to play an active part in ensuring the victory of the people's front.

To this end, in the first round of elections the Party will conduct a struggle for its own programme, for its own candidates. In general outline, the draft of our programme, presented for confirmation to the Congress, has been expounded

in the present report. It will be the Communist programme of struggle for bread, peace and liberty; the Communist programme of national reconciliation in the struggle against the financial oligarchy and its fascist bands; the programme to save the country, something which we shall achieve by making the rich pay; the Communist programme of struggle for a strong, free, peaceful France.

In the second round of the elections we shall vote, on the basis of mutual support, for Socialist candidates in those cases where, in the first round, they receive a larger number of votes than our own candidates; and if necessary, then, in order to defeat the representatives of reaction and fascism, we shall vote for those Radical candidates who sincerely adhere to the people's front.

It must be said that on no account shall we vote for people who gave their votes to Laval. In our opinion this, as a general rule, should be observed in Alsace as well.

The election campaign must lead to new successes in recruiting new members, and *in our party* and mass organisational work. In order widely to spread our programme and manifesto to get posters up, prepare meetings, support our propagandists and candidates, and collect money, we must arouse great organisational activity, boldly drawing sympathisers, women and the youth, into the election committees of the Communist Party. In order to ensure the success of the candidates of the people's front in the second round, we must create united front organisations and people's front committees in the factories and villages.

Our Party has proved that it *knows what it wants*. It has also proved that it *does what it says*, and says what it does.

On the way to Lyons yesterday, Cachin and I stopped at a little place called Morvan. We noticed that the new leaflets of our party had been stuck up on the walls. Hardly had we seated ourselves in one of the restaurants when we were given a note in which was written: "Comrades, can you see the secretary of our cell just for a minute?"

There were Communists who recognised us even in such a distant corner of the country. They told us with what joy they are conducting their work and raising the virgin soil in the villages. They distribute leaflets and post up manifestoes; they showed us the last parcel they had received

that morning. They had already organised one cell and were now organising new ones on the outskirts of the village. They intended forming a group of Young Communists.

We were happy and proud, Marcel and I. There are thousands and tens of thousands of people in the country who, unnoticed, faithfully carry out their party work. The thoughts and the gratitude of the Congress should be turned to them at the present moment.

### Our Leadership

Never before has the Party leadership had at its disposal such a constellation of tried fighters, beloved of the working class.

Marcel *Cachin*, our respected leader, whose words are ardent, whose pen is courageous, is a living example for us of loyalty to the party and the Communist International.

Andre *Marty*, the hero of the Black Sea, now called upon to fulfil honourable duties in the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

Jacques *Duclos*, the best propagandist and leader of the Communist agitators—the author of our manifesto and of our leaflets which enjoy such great success.

Marcel *Gitton*—although a young leading member, yet still with a wealth of experience—who has been chosen by the Communists of Paris to lead their organisation.

Benoit *Frachon*—pioneer and fighter for trade union unity, who enjoys the deserved confidence of the united trade unions and will become one of the leaders of the united General Confederation of Labour.

*Monmousseau, Midol, Semard, Racamond* — old fighters, tried in trade union battles, the pride of our Communist Party.

*Ramette*, Secretary of the Northern regional committee and inspirer of our parliamentary fraction.

*Ferrat*—leader of our party's colonial work.

*Billoux, Dacaux, Rosenblatt*, secretaries of regional committees, who are equal to their honourable task as organisers and leaders of masses.

*Fajon*, who leads our party schools with such success.

And how many more names! It would take too long to enumerate them all.

Allow us to greet the oldest members of our Party present in this hall from among those who took part in the Tours Congress and were among the majority who passed the decision to affiliate to the Comintern: *Nicod*, Mayor of d'Oyonnax, former Deputy; *Gourdeaux*, Secretary of the United Postal Workers' Union; *Renaud Jean*, who will make a report on the peasant question from this platform; *Daniel Renoult*, whose speech at the Tours Congress played such a great rôle.

But in the long run the working class of France owe their great success in the struggle against reaction and fascism to the Communist International of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

Our Party owes its successes and its growth to the Comintern and its general staff.

We, who have come together at Lyons once more, 12 years after the death of Lenin, wish on behalf of our great party, to express our liveliest thanks to the Communist International and to assure it once more of our unshakable loyalty.

The Seventh Congress of the Comintern did our party a great honour when it approved and praised its policy. This puts obligations upon it. We *must* do more and do still *better*. We must go further ahead and more rapidly. We must carry on our work until we achieve the complete unity of the working class, unity in the struggle of the French people.

By *making the rich pay*, we must lessen the want of the poor, give work and bread to the workers and their families, save French agriculture, and secure prosperity and happiness for our country. We must give assistance to children in need, free women from their slavery, open up before the French youth new vistas of a life of labour and joy in the future.

We must check the decline of French culture and make possible a new blossoming of literature, art, and science in the service of the people.

We must defend the people's liberties, we must fight for peace and in defence of the Soviet Union against fascism and reaction.

In a word, we must secure the salvation of our country.

We must, and shall, do this, if we pursue our policy of *unity* persistently, and in particular if we can better and better organise the recruiting of new members, organise the united front, organise people's front committees, organise ever broader masses and bring them into our work.



# ROMAIN ROLLAND

**R**OMAIN ROLLAND, the great writer, fighter, thinker, friend of toiling mankind, enjoys the most profound love of the masses of the people throughout the world. Millions of workers took part in the celebrations on the recent occasion of his 70th birthday.

"I am happy to be in one great army with you," writes Romain Rolland to Comrade Dimitrov. All the best elements of mankind, all real supporters of progress, all really honest people who do not want to reconcile themselves to the barbarity of decaying capitalism, are coming over to the side of the army of the revolutionary proletariat. The working class of the world already count quite a few allies among the best brains of the intellectuals. One of the oldest and most faithful of the creatively thinking allies of the proletariat is Romain Rolland.

The world proletariat remember how in the heat of the imperialist war of 1914-1918, Romain Rolland was one of the first and one of the few among the intellectuals who was not afraid to raise a fearless voice in protest against the rapacious war. Over all the post-war years, Romain Rolland never ceased to sound the alarm, exposing the intrigues of the imperialists, uttering warnings as to the danger of a new war, rallying together the active friends of peace, helping honest pacifists to achieve the clarity of their views, without which it is impossible to fight consistently against the instigators of war. A burning hatred of exploitation and oppression brought Romain Rolland in the course of the struggle over to the enemies of the capitalist system, which is based upon exploitation and engenders war.

For many years he has been waging an irreconcilable struggle against fascism, against terror, wars and militant obscurantism. In 1926 he was one of the first European intellectuals to raise his voice with a merciless indictment against Italian fascism. In the days when the Japanese fascist militarists began to seize Manchuria, his cry of "Stop the Murderers!" resounded throughout the whole world. In the days when German fascism, by its feverish armaments, began to menace Europe with war, Romain Rolland called upon the people to undertake the struggle against German fascism, a struggle which is at the same time the fight for peace, under the slogan, "Peace is Death to Hitlerism." Dispersing the misunderstandings of his pacifist friends, who sometimes in the name of an abstract love of peace do not want real barriers to be placed in the way of the fascist aggressor, Romain Rolland called for the setting up of a front of all those countries which for different reasons are interested in maintaining peace: "Countries of Europe, let us join hands and form a ring! A Ring of Peace! And woe to him who encroaches upon it!" wrote Romain Rolland in his recent article, "For the indivisibility of Peace."

Over all his many years of active struggle to unite the scattered efforts of all the opponents of war and fascism, to whatever party they may have belonged, Romain Rolland has been one of the ideological founders of the anti-fascist people's front. Together with Henri Barbusse, he convened the Amsterdam Anti-War Congress, which laid the foundations of a great movement of the masses against war and fascism. This movement, which has been prepared by Romain Rolland with a youthful enthusiasm, for all his seventy years, paved the way for the people's front, which has now won a victory in France, Spain and a number of other countries.

In spite of his serious illness, Romain Rolland in his 71st year continues, with inexhaustible energy, his many-sided ardent activities as a writer, social worker and politician. Quite recently, he, an old friend of the Soviet Union, visited for the first time the country where his dreams are coming true of a free and just order of society. On leaving the U.S.S.R. he wrote the following words to Comrade Stalin: "The only real world progress is indissolubly linked up with the fate of the U.S.S.R. . . . the U.S.S.R. is the flaming heart of the proletarian International which the whole of mankind must and will become."

The name of Romain Rolland is the banner of the anti-fascist people's front, the banner of struggle for peace and liberty. The revolutionary workers of all countries offer warm greetings to their comrade-in-arms and friend, whose high conscience and clear brain has put him in the front ranks of the fighters for the cause of liberating mankind.

We publish below an exchange of letters between Comrades Dimitrov and Rolland on the occasion of the latter's birthday.

## TO ROMAIN ROLLAND

Dear Comrade,

On the occasion of your 70th birthday I send my best wishes to you, world-famous writer and artist, true friend of the Soviet Union and of the toilers throughout the world, tireless fighter against war, against fascism and reaction, and indomitable defender of the victims of capitalist oppression and slavery, whose great name is pronounced with love and hope by Thaelmann, Ossietsky and Ludwig Renn, Gramsci and Terracini, Racoszi, Antikainen and Itsikawa, who are languishing in fascist dungeons, and thousands of other prisoners of fascism and reaction in the countries of capitalism.

I myself always remember with a feeling of profound gratitude, the powerful influence which your noble voice, raised in defence of the accused Communists at the Leipzig Trial, had upon saving my own life from the hands of the German fascist butchers.

I warmly shake your hand, dear friend, and from the bottom of my heart wish you the best of health, good spirits, and strength in your further creative work, and in your courageous struggle in the front ranks against the dark forces of reaction, fascism and war—for liberty, peace, culture, and the bright ideals of Socialism.

G. DIMITROV.

Moscow,

February, 1936.

## REPLY

Dear Comrade Dimitrov,

Few of the congratulations I have received have been of such value to me as yours. For your works are not books, but deeds; and they have been written down in history; they constitute a part of the epic of revolution.

I am happy to be in one great army with you. When, from the height of my 70 years, I look back over the road that stretches behind me, I am astounded at the immense distance over which humanity has passed during this period. It has not been without its difficulties and suffering. But none of these have been in vain. And whatever suffering may yet confront us in the near future, we are sure that it will be redeemed by the victory of the great cause which we are serving. For reason is fighting on our side. Such is the law of human development. It can be delayed, but not halted.

Let us congratulate ourselves, then, that in spite of the dangers that threaten us, we are living in such a powerful and fruitful epoch.

I should like the unprecedented awakening that is taking place in the U.S.S.R. to meet with a similar awakening in the West. For a year or two I have been joyfully observing the beginnings of it in France. I am only sorry that the bad state of my health prevents me from taking an active part in it. But my voice is engaged in the struggle, and will, I hope, continue to do so after my death. Whether I am alive or dead, my name will serve as a banner among other banners.

I sincerely shake your hand, dear Comrade Dimitrov.

ROMAIN ROLLAND.

Villeneuve (Vaud),

February, 1936.

# THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE IMPERIALIST WAR OF ITALIAN FASCISM IS THE CAUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT\*

By Ercoli

**A**LMOST a year has passed since Mussolini began open preparations for war against the Abyssinian people.

Now, the Italian Dictator, who was urged on to war by the increasing difficulties facing Italian Fascism, without doubt from the very first prepared for a world war. The extent of the war preparations during the years 1934 and 1935 are sufficient to prove this. Military specialists were at a loss to understand why Mussolini concentrated troops and ammunition on the frontiers of Abyssinia of a scale hitherto unheard of even during the period of the preparation of the very biggest colonial expeditions. At the same time a powerful army was concentrated in the Italian colonies in North Africa, and considerable reserves in the basin of the Aegean Sea. This is proof of the fact that from the first Mussolini wanted to secure himself the possibility of waging war in other countries as well by bringing up considerable forces in case of war in Egypt and the Sudan, and also in the British colonies of Central Africa.

The chief cause urging Fascism on to war was the aggressiveness of Italian imperialism itself which had been driven to the extreme limit by the economic situation resulting from the world economic crisis, and also by virtue of the fact that Fascist dictatorship means the unlimited domination of the most chauvinistic and most imperialist circles of finance capital. Italian Fascism could not but understand that in setting itself the task of conquering Abyssinia, it at the same time raised the problem of a new division of the globe between the imperialist brigands, i.e., the problem of a new world war.

From this point of view the war in Abyssinia is the culmination of the entire foreign policy of Fascism, which has always been a policy of provoking war, even when Mussolini particularly excelled in pacifist demagogy; even when, influenced by the menace of German imperialism, Italian Fascism declared itself in support of the system of collective security.

The most reactionary circles of the international bourgeoisie strove to help Italian Fascism to find a way out of the difficulties by means of colonial adventures. But things turned out otherwise. And now the adventure in which Italian Fascism hoped to find its salvation, may serve as the beginning of its ruin.

The Italian dictator failed to bear in mind, on the one hand, the desire for peace which reigns among the working class and the toiling masses of Europe and the whole world; and, on the other hand, the resistance which its aggression would call forth among the imperialist rivals of Italy, and in particular among the English bourgeoisie.

It was the desire for peace of the broad masses of the toilers which to a large extent contributed to the isolation of the Fascist aggressor. Thanks to this desire for peace, the first draft of the solution of the question, drawn up by Laval and Hoare, in favour of Italian Fascism and at the expense of the Abyssinian people, died an inglorious death.

These unforeseen difficulties are driving Fascist Italy into fresh, even more serious acts of provocation leading to world war.

Therefore, after the attempts to use the reactionary French parties for its own purposes, *Italian Fascism is to-day establishing direct relations with the states which are provoking war on a world scale.*

## Danger in the East

The attention of the working class has not been drawn to a sufficient extent to this side of the Abyssinian war. The greatest responsibility for this lies, undoubtedly, with the reactionary elements of Social-Democracy, with the policy which the biggest international Social-Democratic organisations and reformist trade unions have been conducting under their influence.

These organisations have restricted the anti-war struggle to the problem of supporting the policy of the League of Nations, of supporting the measures, in particular, sanctions, recommended by the League and applied by different governments. *As a result, the attention of a considerable section of the working class has been diverted from the menace of war that is growing in Europe itself, and especially the menace of*

\* From the speech delivered by Comrade Ercoli at the Session of the Presidium of the E.C.C.I., held on February 5, 1936.

*"The Struggle for the Defeat of Italian Fascism is the Task of the International Proletariat."*

*war on the Far Eastern frontiers of the Soviet Union.*

In the Far East, a plan of aggression by the Japanese imperialists against the Soviet Union is being systematically prepared and developed. After Manchuria, the Japanese generals have seized almost the whole of North China, and at the present moment are preparing to convert it into a jumping-off ground for an onslaught upon the U.S.S.R. The constant, incredibly brazen attacks upon the Mongolian People's Republic are direct provocation against the Soviet Union. One after another frontier incidents break out; they are becoming more and more frequent, and we already know that the Japanese generals are specialists in the art of passing from frontier incidents to a developed offensive and open war. Any day war may break out in the Far East. The working class must be prepared for this, and the working class organisations must know the responsibility which rests upon them in this event.

We know that if the Japanese militarists have not till now taken the step of attacking the Soviet Union, it is because they know too well the resistance which will meet them; they are afraid of the growing military might of the U.S.S.R. And to-day this fear is still having its effect upon the Japanese generals. But on the other side, it is driving them to search for allies in Europe, with a view to organising a simultaneous attack on the Eastern and Western frontiers of the U.S.S.R.

The following facts require no comment, viz.: the strengthening of contacts between Japan and Fascist Germany, the conclusion of a military alliance between these two enemies of peace against the U.S.S.R., and the participation of Poland in this plot against peace. It is precisely at this moment that Italian Fascism joins the front of the instigators of counter-revolutionary war against the U.S.S.R.

The Italian Fascist press is now competing with the Hitler press in foul inventions and slander against the Soviet Union. However, it is not a question only of the campaigns carried on in the press. It is a question of the action organised by Italian imperialism to find a way out of the difficulties with which Fascist Italy is fraught to-day, in an attack upon the Soviet Union. It is a question of the provocation of world war, provocation which has reached its limit. Fascism is prepared to set alight the fire of world war, if only to save itself from catastrophe.

The enemies of peace—the Fascist brigands—are thus linking hands over the frontiers. Our task is to secure that the workers and toilers, the friends of peace, also join hands and offer active resistance to Fascism.

These are the reasons why *the struggle against*

*the war begun by Fascism in Africa, the struggle for the military defeat of Italian Fascism, is of first-class international importance. The defeat of Italian Fascism in Africa is to-day the chief link in the chain of the struggle for peace which we are waging. If we succeed in putting a stop to the Abyssinian war, in securing the defeat of Italian Fascism, we shall deliver a mortal blow at the enemies of peace in all countries. We shall frustrate the criminal plans of Japanese Fascist militarism and the German National Socialists, we shall be taking a tremendous step forward in the struggle against Fascism on an international scale.*

### **The Second International in the Crisis**

In 1934-35, the difficulties facing Fascism increased in other countries as well as Italy. The anti-Fascist struggle of the masses is the chief cause of a certain delay in the Fascist offensive in a number of countries. At the same time, the Fascist dictatorships in Italy, Germany, Austria and Poland are confronted with new and ever-growing difficulties.

The reactionary leaders of Social-Democracy and of the Social-Democratic newspapers have begun a campaign in this connection, the aim of which is to weaken the vigilance of the working class, to put a check upon the development of united action, to overcome the tremendous influence exerted by the decisions of the 7th Congress of the Comintern upon the toiling masses. The reactionary Social-Democratic leaders are declaring that the struggle against Fascism has already ended in victory. They assert that a new era of peace and democracy has begun. This wrong estimate can only mislead the masses, and engender in them a feeling of passivity.

The problem of the relation between the development of the forces of Fascism and the mass anti-Fascist struggle must be most sharply raised. The successes achieved in the struggle against Fascism in the recent period, are first and foremost the result of the application of correct united front tactics, of which we were the initiators. These successes are mobilising and rallying the forces of the working class, and raising them to new struggle, but at the same time they are causing alarm in the ranks of the bourgeoisie and inspiring the more reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie to unite and better organise their forces for a new offensive, they are driving them to mobilise anew the forces of the fascist parties, of the instigators of war and the enemies of liberty and peace.

In not a single country in Europe has the Fascist movement yet been delivered a mortal blow. On the contrary, the danger of Fascism and its aggressiveness, are growing in the leading

European countries. We are witnesses of the fact that the most reactionary forces of the international bourgeoisie are striving to unloosen a world war.

Consequently, at the present time more than ever before, we must wage a struggle for the fulfilment of the decisions of the 7th Congress of the Comintern, in order to smash the resistance of the enemies of the united front and organise the international struggle against Fascism and the warmongers. It is in the light of these tasks that we must explain the international importance of the struggle to secure the military defeat of Italian Fascism in Africa. In calling upon the workers and the Communist Parties of all countries to *secure the military defeat of Italian Fascism in Africa, we are not simply confronting them with an ordinary task of international solidarity. It is a question of solving a problem which is of vital importance for the whole of the working class and the toilers of all countries. Every step forward, every victory of the people's front in France has meant mighty support for our party in its struggle to defeat Mussolini. At the same time every failure on the part of Mussolini means a victory for the French people in their struggle against the reaction which threatens them in their own country.* It can be said that the task of securing the military defeat of Italian fascism is being raised in a number of countries as a "national" problem, on the solution of which depends the fate of the peoples. On the day that Mussolini is defeated, new perspectives will be opened up for the revolutionary struggle of the masses throughout capitalist Europe, and in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The day that Mussolini suffers a military defeat, will signify the beginning of the end of all régimes of fascist dictatorship. When that day comes, the decisive stage of the struggle for bread, peace and liberty will have been passed.

In this light the historic meaning becomes clear of the united front proposals made by the Comintern to the Second Labour and Socialist International at the end of September of last year, on the eve of the military operations in Eastern Africa. It is precisely for this reason that we talk of the responsibility which rests upon international Social-Democracy, and especially upon its reactionary wing, which is preventing the establishment of united working class action in the struggle against war.

The leaders of the Right wing of Social-Democracy have unsuccessfully tried to belittle the meaning of the united front, have tried to scorn our struggle for it, asserting that a conference between a few Communist and Socialist leaders in some European town or other, can on no account influence the trend of the conflict in which such

important forces as English and French imperialism, are taking part. But it is precisely because such tremendous forces are taking part in this conflict that the task of bringing about united working class action against war has never before required such rapid solution, brooking of no delay. Never before have circumstances been so favourable for bringing about a united struggle. Never before have our united front proposals been so imbued with a firm desire and will for united action. However, it has once more become quite clear that united working class action cannot be achieved without breaking down the resistance of the enemies of unity who still lead a section of the big mass organisations of the proletariat. The majority of the Socialist Parties, which have declared that in principle they agree to accept our proposals, capitulated before the reactionary elements of Social-Democracy. By rejecting our united front proposals, the E.C. of the Second International, the leaders of the Socialist Parties and big trade union organisations adopted a position on the struggle against the Abyssinian war which paralysed the forces of the working class and objectively encouraged fascist aggression.

While not refusing to use all forces which at the given moment are interested in maintaining peace, our united front proposal at the same time showed the workers the way of class struggle and independent action, calculated to isolate and defeat the aggressor. The Executive Committee of the Second International, in rejecting our proposals, took the beaten track of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. This road can only lead the proletariat to passivity and defeat. The Executive Committee of the Second International declared that it would be sufficient if we put the forces of the working class at the disposal of the League of Nations and its policy. What was the result of this position? Inside the League of Nations, only one country, the U.S.S.R., adopted a definite position of struggle against the aggressor. The speeches delivered by Comrade Litvinov in Geneva showed the profound difference in principle between the consistent peaceful policy of the Soviet Union and the policy of all the other countries.

A few of the small countries, which, out of fear that they may lose their independence, are pursuing a policy of peace, have grouped themselves round the U.S.S.R. But England and the other big capitalist countries fought, and are now fighting to defend their own imperialist interests, and have shown that they are prepared to give up all opposition to the aggressor if only they can defend their own positions.

### **Role of the I.F.T.U.**

Facts have shown that we were absolutely right when we opposed the Social-Democratic leaders

who tried to make the international working class dance to the tune of British imperialism. Ruling spheres in France went still further in their support of Italian fascism and sabotaged all struggle against the aggressor, until the resistance and indignation of the French workers and peasant masses forced them to change their position. The sanctions recommended by the League of Nations, have as yet had no decisive influence upon the train of events. Firstly, Italy stored up quite large reserves of raw materials, necessary for the conduct of the war, by increasing imports during the first half of last year. Secondly, facts show that all the materials, ammunition and even raw materials, mentioned in the decision concerning sanctions, are still being supplied to Italy either directly from countries not taking part in the application of sanctions, or through the medium of these countries. The countries taking part in sanctions, beginning with France and ending with England, are violating the Geneva decisions and supplying Italy in a round-about way. Thirdly, oil sanctions, which are the most effective, and might immediately influence the state of affairs, are not being applied at all. These sanctions have been under discussion for months, and actually no decision is being arrived at. The capitalist countries are hardly applying sanctions at all, and all the decisions which have been adopted on this question at Geneva are more in the nature of solemn acts than a real struggle which aims at putting a stop to fascist aggression.

In the face of these facts, the leaders of the International Federation of Trade Unions still dare to boast that they have conducted an international campaign against war. Actually they have only given support, by the whole authority of a big labour organisation, to the hypocrisy of the representatives of imperialism in session at Geneva. The leaders of the International Federation of Trade Unions are daring to rebuke the Soviet trade unions by saying that they alone have refused to carry out their instructions about supporting the Geneva decisions, whereas actually the only state which is conscientiously and strictly applying the measures passed by the League of Nations is the U.S.S.R.

In the face of these facts we have the right to put the following question to the leaders of the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour and Socialist International:

“Where is your struggle against war? What have you done to hold back the hand of the aggressor, to put an end to the conflict and hasten the defeat of Italian imperialism?”

It is our prime duty to ask the leaders of the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour and Socialist International: “Why

do you not utter a single word against the Japanese aggressor which is menacing the Soviet Union? Why are you silent about the real menace of the war being prepared by Japan on the Far Eastern frontiers of the U.S.S.R.?” It is our direct duty to raise these questions most determinedly before the whole working class movement to-day. It is our direct duty to sound the alarm. If we want to avoid world war, we must isolate the fascist aggressor, we must deprive him of the opportunity of conducting the war, we must encourage his defeat. This is the task confronting the working class. It can only be solved by quitting the road of class collaboration and marching determinedly along the road of independent action by the working class organisations. If the bourgeois states do not apply sanctions, the working class organisations must do so!

### **The Communist Parties**

But the Communist Parties and the trade union organisations led by the Communists, must set themselves the task of organising proletarian sanctions in the most concrete fashion.

In the majority of cases the Communist Parties have waited and are still waiting until the leaders of the Socialist Parties and the leaders of the reformist trade unions agree to conduct joint action to stop the war, and to prevent the transport of cargoes of munitions for Italy, instead of using every slightest opportunity of mobilising the masses for the struggle against war, and by launching a mass campaign and mass action, striving in every possible way, to secure joint action with the toilers of all currents, and with their organisations, with a view to preventing the transport of arms and war supplies to Italy and isolating the fascist aggressor by applying proletarian sanctions.

We know that in the majority of capitalist countries, the majority of the organised workers are in trade union organisations affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions, and that it is extremely difficult for us to organise real mass action if we stand aloof from these masses. But the refusal of the Labour and Socialist International to accept our united front proposals has never meant that we cannot come to agreement with the rank and file trade union and Socialist organisations, and with the individual Socialist Parties, concerning the concrete operation of the policy of isolating the fascist aggressor and boycotting fascist Italy, which policy the Social-Democratic leaders have not openly rejected. In this respect we must increase our own initiative.

The Communist Party of Italy, together with the Socialist Party of Italy which is in favour



of the united front and is directly interested in dealing a mortal blow at fascism, must display special initiative on an international scale to organise proletarian sanctions. The Communist and Socialist Parties of Italy must make their appeal to all Socialist, Communist, trade union, national-revolutionary, pacifist and anti-war organisations, to all organisations which have any kind of even limited opportunity of preventing the transport of cargoes of munitions to Italy, in order to help defeat Mussolini.

It is obligatory upon all the Parties of the Comintern to make a most concrete and detailed study of the problems of the application of proletarian sanctions, using even the smallest opportunities of bringing about the blockade against the fascist aggressor, putting forward concrete proposals to the Socialist Parties, to the reformist trade unions, to the organisations taking part in the people's front, and to the "Amsterdam Pleyel" movement, with a view to conducting mass campaigns and undertaking action against war, at the same time indicating, in each individual case, the concrete measures to be adopted, the place (port, railway, etc.) where special attention should be concentrated, the meetings, demonstrations and other mass activities that should be organised. The political and trade union organisations of the working class must especially increase their mass work and control of transport in ports like Marseilles, Havre, Antwerp and Port Said, on important lines like Simplon and St. Gothard. We must concentrate attention upon these points and launch such action there as, being of direct importance, will serve as an example for mobilising other working class organisations in all countries.

### **The Internal Situation in Italy**

There is not, however, the slightest doubt that the most important task in the struggle to achieve the military defeat of Fascism confronts the Communist Party of Italy. It is obvious that the centre of the struggle for the military defeat of Mussolini must be Italy itself, the Italian army, and the masses of workers and peasants under the heel of the Fascist dictatorship. We must speak of this precisely when we talk about the international importance of the struggle for the defeat of Italian Fascism. We must emphasise this as decisively as possible, particularly because there are some tendencies among Italian Social-Democrats and Democrats abroad, to consider that a mass struggle against war in Italy is impossible, and to preach passivity and patience to the masses. We must also emphasise this in view of certain political hesitation dis-

played in the Italian Party at the beginning of the war.

There is no doubt that Italian Fascism to-day is in the throes of tremendous contradictions; there is no doubt that to-day the elements are maturing of a deep crisis of the Fascist régime. This is the second time since it came to power that Italian Fascism has fallen into such a situation; the first time was after the murder of Matteoti, but circumstances were quite different then.

Firstly, during the Matteoti crisis, the economic situation in the country was favourable: then the country was on the threshold of a period of relative stabilisation. Now the economic situation in the country, not to mention the consequences brought about by the war, is quite difficult. Before the war was started, certain steps were taken along the road to overcoming the crisis, but these were extremely insignificant. Unemployment is very high. The poverty of the masses has reached extraordinary dimensions. Thus, a number of objective conditions make it easier to mobilise the masses of the people against Fascism.

Secondly, at that time, the Socialist Party was closely linked up with the bourgeois reactionary parties, and hampered the development of the class struggle of the workers, did its utmost to sabotage the united front policy. To-day, thanks to the struggle which has been going on for years, we have been successful in arousing the Socialist Party to conclude an agreement on the united front; moreover, our Party has won extremely great authority in the anti-fascist organisations, something which it did not enjoy formerly.

Thirdly, the masses were at that time partly unorganised, and partly members of reformist trade unions, political parties and other anti-fascist organisations. To-day, the masses of the workers and peasants are in the fascist mass organisations.

This circumstance forces our Party to adopt special tactics in order to bring about united action by the working class and the masses of the people, for the purpose of stopping the war.

We must, however, admit that the Communist Party has done little as yet to solve this problem.

From the very beginning, the war against Abyssinia was unpopular among the broad masses. But mass movements against the war have not yet been launched. A large number of small facts are to be noted which show that the dissatisfaction felt at the war policy of fascism is growing, and that anti-war sentiments are growing among the masses. It would be a mistake, however, to overestimate the importance of these facts, especially once we know that the influence of our Party and of its defeatist position is not yet

reflected in the feelings of the masses in a direct fashion.

Moreover, fascism is developing a big demagogic, chauvinistic, campaign. This campaign had, and still has, an influence upon the masses, especially in the degree to which it is directed against the big imperialist countries which are rivals of Italy. Finally, the masses are influenced by those elements in the fascist organisations who are still actively working among the masses, people who themselves originated among the toilers, and are connected with them. But hesitation is to be noticed even amongst these elements, although it has not yet assumed big proportions.

A military defeat could be of decisive importance if it were to take place in dramatic circumstances and unexpectedly, as in 1895 (the first expedition of the Italians into Abyssinia), or if this defeat took the form of a series of failures one after another. It is for this reason that Mussolini and the High Command of the Italian Army are striving to avoid such failures at all costs. Here we find yet another reason for the tremendous concentration of armed forces on the Abyssinian front. The fascist Command regard this concentration as the guarantee against a sudden defeat and a series of failures; but concentration of this kind at the same time creates constantly growing difficulties for the whole of the expeditionary corps, to be explained by the inadequate lines of communication and means of transport, and the fact that as compared with that of the Abyssinian troops the mobility of the Italian forces is poor.

From the economic point of view, the only form of sanctions which is more or less effective is the prohibition of Italian exports. This has created an extremely complicated situation for a number of branches of Italian industry which are losing their foreign markets, and also for some parts of agriculture, especially in the South and in Sicily. The contradictions among the bourgeoisie are increasing, and a number of groups of the bourgeoisie are beginning to harbour doubts about the correctness of the fascist policy. The financial problem is extremely serious; almost half the gold reserves are already exhausted, and the whole monetary system is now menaced with collapse.

### **The C.P. of Italy**

Thus, there are a number of circumstances which favour our activities, but on the other hand, our Party is faced with extremely complicated problems of policy, tactics and organisation. Our chief difficulties are that we must urge the masses, who for a number of years have been under the influence of Fascism, and are still so to-day, to take up a defeatist position. In order to secure

the solution of this question, the Communist Party of Italy must first of all explain its line of tactics to the broad masses. *We are fighting for the military defeat of Italian fascism. But this is a struggle to save the Italian people, to save our country from ruin, from the catastrophe to which the fascist policy is leading it.* We must make this basic truth accessible to the masses. And bearing this need in mind, our Party must talk in a language understandable to the masses, who are still in the grip of fascist demagoguery; our Party must carry on its agitational work in such a manner as will make it penetrate deep into the heart of the fascist organisations, and force the masses and the rank and file of these organisations to listen to it. Our struggle, our work, must be directed towards breaking the connection which exists between the rank and file of the fascist organisations and the upper strata of the fascist dictatorship. This is the weak spot of the enemy; and it is in this direction that we must direct our efforts. The successes we achieve in this sphere will allow us to move forward more rapidly in all spheres of our mass work. But in order to secure results in this sphere, the whole line of the Party in regard to its organisations, the use of legal opportunities, etc., must be subjected to certain changes. We must take a few more steps forward in comparison with what the Party has already done.

In summing up the first results of the activities of the Communist Party of Italy during the past months of war, it must be stated that:

The Communist Party of Italy, despite its self-sacrificing and heroic work, has not up to now succeeded in making real use of the war, so as to mobilise the proletariat and the whole of the people, and, first and foremost, the masses belonging to the fascist organisations, for the struggle to stop the war and to shift the burden of the war on to the shoulders of the rich.

In the work of our Party after the 7th Congress of the Comintern, there were manifested hesitations and political weakness which prevented our Party from immediately and energetically setting about the fulfilment of the tasks indicated. We noticed among the Italian comrades the same tendency to interpret and apply the decisions and slogans of the 7th Congress in a schematic manner, as exists in a number of other Communist Parties. Our comrades did not from the very beginning make sufficient effort to make clear to themselves the forms and methods by which unity of the working class and of the toiling people in Italy could be achieved in the struggle to defeat fascism. Our comrades were somewhat carried away by all kinds of hypotheses, by abstract discussions about the government and

régime that would be set up after the overthrow of Mussolini, and about the position that the working class and the Communists should adopt in the future towards this or that government or this or that régime.

While, on the one hand, these tendencies were the consequence of the fact that the centre of our Party was somewhat isolated from the actual situation inside the country, on the other hand, it was also the result of a certain overestimation of the degree to which the revolutionary crisis had matured, and an underestimation of the forces which the fascist dictatorship still has at its disposal.

The Communist Party of Italy has successfully concluded a united front agreement with the Socialist Party, and this without doubt, is a considerable achievement. The Socialist Party, however, has not yet realised that this agreement must find application first and foremost inside Italy, that it must be a means of hastening on the mobilisation of the workers, peasants and intellectuals inside the fascist organisation and in the army. The Communist Party of Italy must remind the Socialist Party of this, otherwise the Communist Party will not only run the risk of

being, to a certain degree, drawn into the passivity and wait-and-see attitude prevalent in the ranks of Social-Democracy, but will also not be sufficiently able to help the Socialist Party and the Socialist workers to leave the old road of class collaboration and launch an effective struggle against fascism.

Although we can record certain positive examples and certain progress in the development of legal mass work in the fascist trade unions and partially in the army, which prove that such work is both possible and fruitful, nevertheless the Communist Party of Italy has not yet brought about a change in reorganising the Party's mass work on legal lines.

In recording these shortcomings, it should at the same time be mentioned that of late the Party has made efforts to turn to the masses in the fascist organisations, and has displayed initiative in developing legal mass work. The Party must march with still more determination along this road. What the Party requires is not only great authority, but also very strong links with the masses, in order to lead the working class of Italy into decisive battle against the fascist dictatorship.

## A BOOK ON THE ITALO-ABYSSINIAN WAR

By K. Henry

**T**HE Italo-Abyssinian war involves world-problems outside the scope of its immediate incidence, and daily reports on the war are not sufficient material for the large public interested in its cause and effects. Emile Burns' careful analysis is therefore extremely opportune.

Burns first exposes the lying character of Fascist propaganda; he reveals Italy as the undoubted aggressor, striving to take possession of the Abyssinian market and to secure control of the internal wealth of Abyssinia.

This is how Burns sums up the history of the struggle for Abyssinia:

"All three (England, France, Italy,—K.H.) had agreed among themselves at various times to a division of Abyssinia into 'spheres of influence'; each was trying at every opportunity to double-cross the other by separate approaches to the Abyssinian Government." (p. 49).

After this the author analyses the events which impelled Italy to make a direct attack upon Abyssinia and enabled it to do so:

"Thrown back in Arabia, hemmed in in Libya, and not too successful in its diplomatic penetration of South-Eastern Europe, the Fascist Government of

Italy was therefore more and more compelled to look to Abyssinia as the only practicable outlet for its colonial ambitions." (p.53).

The policy of the British National Government which openly encouraged the arming of Germany and thus threw France into the arms of Italy—as a potential ally against Germany—is regarded by Burns as the decisive fact which impelled Italy to take such energetic action.

The author then establishes the fact that the League of Nations, in connection with the Italo-Abyssinian War, for the first time opposed an aggressor, in spite of the fact that the imperialist interests of one of the big powers was at stake. The author explains this by the fact that the character of the League of Nations itself has changed in connection with the exit from it of the most aggressive imperialist powers, and first and foremost, in connection with the entrance of the U.S.S.R. into the League of Nations. It should be noted, however, that the importance of the U.S.S.R. as a fighter for peace, is insufficiently dealt with in the book, and consequently the chapter on the League of Nations is not quite convincing.

The chapter on "Abyssinia and Italy" is very

\* Emile Burns: "Abyssinia and Italy." Gollancz. 1935.

good. In it the author dissects all the demagogic arguments with which the Italian Fascists want to justify their campaign against Abyssinia. Burns emphasises the fact that to support Abyssinia in her struggle against Italy by no means signifies support of the existing social conditions in Abyssinia:

"And the question of Italy's future is therefore more urgent and vital for the progress of humanity than the question of how rapidly and by what means feudalism can be abolished in Abyssinia." (p. 175).

Burns points out that the opportunity is open to Abyssinia and other countries like her to take the non-capitalist road of development along which many of the backward peoples of former tsarist Russia have progressed.

An examination is made in the book of the position of those elements in the British working-class movement (the Independent Labour Party, and the Socialist League led by Stafford Cripps), which, allegedly in the interests of peace, were against the application of sanctions against Italy. Burns points out that their arguments are absolutely abstract, because they do not bear in mind the present character of the League of Nations, and do not take account of the fact that the struggle to maintain peace in the present case coincides with the struggle against Italian Fascism. Analysing the position of the Labour Party, Burns criticises the one-sidedness with which the Labour Party relies upon sanctions, while rejecting any independent action by the working-class. It is precisely this conduct of the Labourites which made it possible for the "National Government" to create a halo for itself as the true defender of peace, while in actual fact England was only in favour of sanctions on account of her own imperialist interests.

After this Burns describes the numerous protests in Europe and America against Italian imperialism, and condemns the reactionary leaders of the Second International for refusing to accept the proposal of the Comintern to undertake united action. The chief slogans of the Communist Party of England in the struggle against the rapacious Italian war are: to stop the transport of arms for Italy, to apply proletarian sanctions, and to demand that the League of Nations adopt a consistent policy of sanctions against the imperialist aggressor.

### "Progressive Governments"

Speaking of the perspectives of the struggle for peace, the author once more dwells in detail on the importance of the League of Nations, pointing out that

"although the League of Nations cannot eradicate the causes of war, it can at least be of very real service in the preservation of peace." (p. 219).

Hence he draws the correct conclusion: all supporters of peace are interested in as large a number as possible of the governments represented in the League of Nations being in favour of maintaining peace and of adopting collective action against war. But we can on no account agree with Comrade Burns when, in conclusion, he calls upon all opponents of fascism and war

"to secure progressive governments, which in the present state of things means a Labour Government in Britain, a 'Peoples' Front' Government in France, and Social Democratic Governments in other capitalist countries." (p. 223).

It is clear that the Communists are not at all indifferent to the question as to what section of the bourgeoisie will be in power. But, on the other hand, Comrade Burns is wrong in throwing into one heap, and uniting under the heading "progressive," a word which may mean anything, such heterogeneous conceptions as "a Labour Government in Britain, a 'Peoples' Front' Government in France, and Social Democratic Governments in other capitalist countries." (p.223).

Comrade Dimitrov in his report at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern pointed out the difference between a Social-Democratic government and a government of the united front or the anti-Fascist people's front, in the following words:

"While the Social-Democratic government is an instrument of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie in the interests of the preservation of capitalist order, a *united front government* is an instrument of collaboration between the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat and other anti-fascist parties, in the interests of the entire toiling population, a government of struggle against fascism and reaction. Obviously there is a *radical difference* between these two things."

It is true that at the present moment, a government of the people's front in France and a Labour Government in England could encourage the maintenance of peace. But if the French Communists consider it possible, under definite conditions, to declare for the establishment of a government of the people's front, and particularly because such a government, pursuing a policy "in the interests of the whole of the toiling people," would be able *firmly and consistently* to defend peace, the attitude of the English Communists to the slogan of a Labour Government is different. At the General Election they supported the slogan of a Labour government as a slogan of struggle in a united front against the reactionary National Government, but the Communists made their support of a Labour Government, had it come to power, conditional upon a number of special demands, in particular the demand for the struggle of peace.

There are even less grounds for the manner in which Burns raises the question of whether it  
(Continued on page 136)

# HEROES OF THE ANTI-FASCIST STRUGGLE IN ITALY

By Giuseppe Amoretti

SIXTEEN years have passed since various participants of the revolutionary movement of those days, led by Antonio Gramsci, gathered together in a little room in the House of Co-operation in Turin, where the daily newspaper of the Turin proletariat was being printed. The best elements of the toiling masses of Italy rallied around Gramsci, whom they saw as their teacher and leader. At the table where keen political articles were written for the "Ordine Nuovo," against the bourgeoisie and the treacherous trade union officials who subsequently went over to Fascism, the departmental representative of the factory committee took his turn behind the young intellectual still not sure of the road he ought to choose; the political leader of the Party organisation rubbed shoulders with the young inexperienced Party member from the countryside; the Marxist enthusiast, the reader of the first translated works of Lenin, sometimes found himself side by side with a young legionary from the d'Annunzio detachments, whom the empty rhetoric of the Fascist poet had disgusted. Thus it was that our best Party cadres passed through the "Ordine Nuovo," which linked together Gramsci, Ercoli, Terracini and others in the hard everyday work of creating the Italian Communist Party.

Gramsci was a talented agitator and political leader, and could talk with anybody. All were attracted by the simplicity and originality of his speeches, and the conviction of his arguments. He was extremely cultured, possessed great political acumen, and knowledge of the masses, and an ability to approach the masses and lead them.

Gramsci had the great intellectual force which is combined with tremendous revolutionary passion and unflinching revolutionary will.

Gramsci arrived in the big industrial town of Turin, from one of the most backward Italian provinces. And although he first became acquainted with Marxism among intellectuals, he finally came to Marxism only through a profound study of the experiences of the working class movement in Italy. At that time already, Gramsci was the embodiment of all that was most advanced in Italy. This extraordinary man was shaped as a result of constant study and of his struggle for the cause of revolution. While still very young, Gramsci was the editor of the newspaper known as "The Cry of the People,"

After the war he edited the newspaper "Forward." Together with a group of his comrades, Ercoli, Terracini and others, Gramsci founded the theoretical magazine, "Ordine Nuovo," and later the mass daily newspaper of the same name. This "Ordine Nuovo" group, was at that time already before the formation of the Italian Communist Party, closest to the Bolsheviks.

Gramsci was the first in Italy to make a profound study of the Revolution in Russia and the works of its leaders, and fought to apply the lessons of the Socialist October Revolution to actual life in Italy. In his conversations with workers, even the most backward, Gramsci taught and at the same time learned himself: through these workers he found out the moods and requirements of the masses, and at the same time cured these workers of all belief in outward appearances, of all narrow, sectarian ideas. A few years ago Comrade Ercoli wrote:

"Among the leaders of our Party, who have come from non-proletarian circles, many possess an ability to speak with the masses. But very few, perhaps only one of us—Gramsci—knows how to talk with the worker individually, simply, not like a teacher, not like a 'leader,' but like a Comrade, I would even say, like a pupil . . . collaborating with the workers, in order, together with him, to find the road open to his class, to test the correctness of this or that line, of this or that slogan. And these precisely are the signs, first and foremost, which make us recognise in him the leader of the working class, able to express, to give form to the thoughts, the longings and needs of the whole class—a leader capable of finding that slogan in the depths of the consciousness of the masses, which exactly corresponds to what the masses as a whole know, want and can achieve, at the given moment."

## The Party under Fascism

Thus it was that Gramsci, together with Ercoli, worked stubbornly to create the Party and its cadres. These cadres soon had to undergo serious revolutionary trials, then to experience police reaction and the prohibition of the Party, to suffer long terms of imprisonment, to carry on illegal work in the difficult underground conditions of Fascism, and to overcome the difficulties of mass work. We call to mind how Gramsci used to come night and day to the factories that had been seized by the workers. It was as though the proletariat, armed with rifles and machine-guns, had seized the town in an iron ring; they vigilantly guarded the factories confiscated from the capitalists, while continuing to work at full

speed. This was the moment when, in the centre of the town, the royal guards carefully searched the streets in anticipation of advance by the workers. The opportunist bureaucrats who led the trade union, co-operative and other mass organisations, conducted secret negotiations with the government in order to find some compromise solution, while many revolutionaries quarrelled about the project to set up Soviets, not noticing that the Soviets had already sprung up and were on the verge of being destroyed.

In 1923-25, when our Party had not yet recovered from the cruel blows of reaction, and had no correct political line, when it had not yet freed itself from the influence of Bordiga and was in a state of great disorganisation, Gramsci and Ercoli, with the support now not only of the old "Ordine Nuovo" group, but of all the best Party comrades, Terracini, Scoccimarro, Grieco, and many others, set about their great creative work of Bolshevising the Party. Gramsci conducted an energetic struggle against Bordiga, then leading the still young Party and the theoretician of "the pure, courageous minority" who ended in the camp of the Trotskyist counter-revolution. It is the merit of Gramsci and Ercoli that in their struggle against Bordiga, they consolidated the ranks of the Communist Party, trained its cadres and led the Party along the road of the Communist International. The financial magnates, the big factory owners, and their agents, the Fascists, did their utmost to hamper the struggle of Gramsci and his comrades-in-arms to emancipate the masses from the Fascist yoke. Fascism declared the Communist Party illegal, and in November, 1926, arrested Gramsci, confined him in the Turi di Bari prison for many years, and only as a result of the pressure of the toiling masses later substituted his prison confinement for exile in a prison hospital. Gramsci is now isolated from the Party: he is

seriously ill in consequence of the sufferings he has experienced during his long self-sacrificing struggle, but he remains as formerly, one of the most beloved leaders of the Italian proletariat.

Umberto Terracini, one of the youngest (in years) of the organisers of the "Ordine Nuovo" group, is one of the most popular agitators and propagandists of this group among the Turin workers, among the Italian working youth. During the Bologna Congress of the Italian Socialist Party in 1919, Terracini, as representative of the Left Wing, was elected to the Central Committee, where he continued to fight untiringly for the

carrying out of the line of the Comintern, for the creation of the Communist Party of Italy. From the moment when the Communist Party was formed, until his arrest in 1925, Terracini was a permanent member of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau of the Italian Communist Party.

During the early years of the existence of the Communist Party, Terracini went over to the platform of Bordiga, but, influenced by the criticism levelled by Lenin at the Third Congress of the Comintern, he quickly overcame his wavering, and then, together with Gramsci and Ercoli, conducted the struggle against Bordiga and to Bolshevise the Commu-

nist Party. Right until his arrest, Terracini untiringly fought to convert the Party into a mass Communist Party of the Italian proletariat, to establish a broad anti-Fascist front. During this period, Terracini particularly distinguished himself in the trade union movement and the leadership of "Unita," the central organ of the Party.

The name of Umberto Terracini is closely connected with the trial of Gramsci. Terracini spoke before the special tribunal as the open, bold defender of our Party during the trial of the leaders of the Party. Arrested at the time when the Party had not yet been declared illegal, Com-



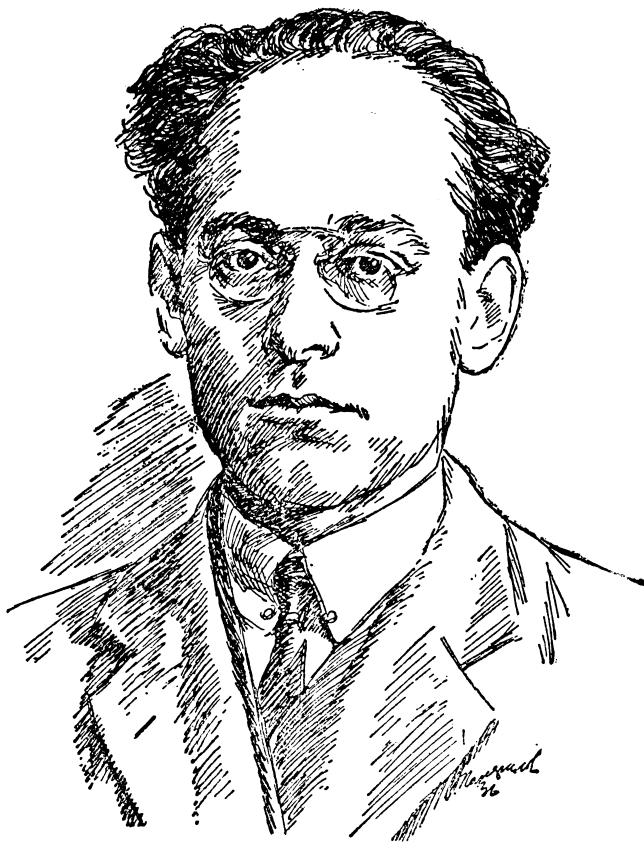
ERCOLI

rade Terracini was condemned, along with Gramsci, Scoccimarro, Roveda, Bibolotti, and many other comrades, to a long term of imprisonment, amounting to almost 23 years. In spite of the conspiracy of silence which surrounded the trial of Gramsci, the speech delivered by Terracini before the court, filled exclusively with policemen, was carried through the thick walls of the court to the masses and became fixed firmly in the minds of the most advanced sections of the toilers. Terracini's speech exposed the real character of the totalitarian state, which had arisen then for the first time, armed to the teeth, recognising that its only danger was from the Communist Party, the best people of which had already been killed or arrested. And it is no accident that the hatred of the Fascist hangmen is particularly concentrated upon Comrade Terracini, who is still in prison. In spite of the fact that he is extremely exhausted as a result of the strict régime in the Santo Stefano prison—he has been in solitary confinement and has frequently been subjected to an especially strict régime in consequence of his tireless work inside the prison itself — our Comrade Umberto has been able to preserve his former unbending spirit, iron will and energy. As such we met him in prison, where he is patiently working on the political education of the young comrades imprisoned, giving himself wholly to the party, in spite of his low state of health.

### Prison Years

With insignificant exceptions, all the old leading Party members who came at that time before the special tribunal suffered the same fate as Gramsci and Terracini. In consequence of our lack of experience during the early days of Fascist dictatorship, the heroism of many of our comrades

was not displayed in extensive mass work, but was expressed in resistance to the police, in stoic behaviour before the special tribunal. Our comrades courageously suffered persecution and torture, and always tried to show their hatred towards the class enemy. The only thing which we can lay at the door of this phalanx of faithful Party comrades is that during the early days they had more enthusiasm than critical perspicacity, their fighting spirit was greater than their political training and the Leninist method of working. The Party and the masses were not always aware



TERRACINI

of the sufferings and the struggle of the revolutionaries confined in prison; many episodes of the life in prison never reached them. Let us relate some of these episodes, and speak about the numerous modest, courageous heroes of the anti-Fascist struggle in Italy. The comrades were confined in the big Rome prison waiting trial, and there was an atmosphere of open, unrestrained good spirits. Despite the strict discipline, every revolutionary holiday, especially the anniversary of the Revolution of 1917, was commemorated by meetings and demonstrations. When exercising in the prison-yard, they would shout "Long live the Comintern!" "Long live the Soviet Union!" Every evening the prison van brought a fresh party of condemned comrades from the enormous court situated on the banks of the Tiber. Those who were acquitted by the court always arrived with bowed heads, depressed, almost crying with anger because they had been acquitted against their will and contrary to their desire. Those who received long term sentences, were filled with joy and looked contemptuously at the prison warders! This was a peculiar kind of sectarian heroism, against which at that time already Gramsci, Terracini and other leaders of the Party,



and especially Comrade Scoccimarro, who was in the same prison, warned our comrades. Only gradually, very slowly, were we successful in outliving this attitude. The realisation that everything has to be done in the interests of the Party and the toiling masses, that our cadres must not be wasted in vain, that events must be looked at soberly, that we must learn how to defend ourselves by attacking, but to act so that the masses will understand our behaviour and support us—this realisation gradually began to make headway.

After the trial, comrades condemned to long years of imprisonment are put in solitary confinement for a definite term. This is a most difficult period of isolation: a hungry existence, solitude, and by way of "spiritual" food—Fascist or Catholic books and magazines. But there is no brutality of Fascist torture that can break the steadfastness of our comrades. When, after their term of solitary confinement had expired, these comrades—the majority of whom are rank and file members of the lower organisations, almost all workers whose families were doomed to starvation—were sent to places of collective confinement, they took food only once a day, so as to save a few pence to buy, more or less secretly, Marx's "Capital" the only one of our books which was on sale. It was their dream during the long months of voluntary starvation to acquire a copy of "Capital." The receipt of the book caused them feverish enjoyment, they stroked its pages and carefully put paper covers on the outside to protect it. And then they began to read it—and they read it over and over again.

It was a great event when Stalin's book "Problems of Leninism" was received in prison. This book armed us with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, equipped us with a knowledge of the strategy, tactics and organisational principles of Bolshevism. During the course of one year, the entire group of comrades armed themselves with the knowledge and will to fight and conquer.

### The Fate of Heroes

The fighting spirit among the constantly changing mass of political prisoners grows, their political training improves, their firm will to conquer grows. New prisoners arrive with fresh experience, the old ones leave promising to renew the struggle, while those who have already served terms of imprisonment, return again, enriched with new experiences, and having gathered strength in their work. Those who have sat in the prison cells will never forget those departures and returns. Among the prisoners there is one comrade from the province of Ferrar, suffering from tuberculosis, he has six children and a sick wife, and the whole family live in dire need. He has come up before the

special tribunal for the third time. The first time he was given two years, the second time four years, and the third time 16 years.

There are the "nomads," who leave only to return again. But there are those who never leave and have been waiting for release for 10, 12, 15 years. These are the old comrades, the members of the "arditi del popolo" ("people's shock-brigaders"), who fought against the Fascists and the armed guards of Blackshirts in 1920-22. Today they still live on the memory of past battles. The struggle then was long and ferocious; in it thousands of workers and peasants perished. In every town there were those of our Party who fell in action, *the heroes of those armed battles*; and the names of many of them remained unknown. How many had their heads broken open on the banks of the canal! How many were dragged out of their beds before the eyes of their horrified wives and mothers, and shot far up in the mountains! The old, condemned comrades constantly call to mind such heroes of the armed battles as Lavagnini, Berruti and Berci.

Imprisoned Communist women have also written many glorious pages in the history of the struggle of our Party. In the prisons of Perugia and Trani, Party women condemned for many years of imprisonment and who constitute a much smaller percentage than the male political prisoners, while the discipline in the women's prisons is much more strict, have nevertheless displayed great steadfastness and courage. Old Party leaders, leading active women, have all—during the long years of confinement in prison, displayed the same courage and self-sacrifice as distinguished them during their Party work and, after their arrest, in the court. Our dear Comrade Adele Bei, before the special tribunal, behaved in a manner worthy of a real Communist, and was an example of courage. Here are some extracts from the dialogue which took place between the President of the Tribunal and Adele Bei:

"President: Why did you return to Italy, what were your aims in Italy?"

"Adele Bei: Those which a member of the Communist Party should have, i.e., to be at the head of the workers and toilers in their everyday struggle.

"President: And in doing so, you did not think that you were violating your duties as a mother, because you neglected your children?"

"Adele Bei: By trying to help the proletarian struggle against Fascism, by giving my experience as a revolutionary and Communist, I was doing my duty as a mother as well, because my Party is striving, through the proletarian revolution, to improve the living conditions of the

toilers, to secure a joyful life for proletarian children, who are now dying of hunger.”

The whole session consisted of a duel between the President and the accused. Adele Bei's concluding words so filled the tribunal with indignation that she was deprived of the right to make a statement and was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment. However, Adele Bei's speech met with a wide response from the people. She said:

“I have always known and still know that the work of the Communist is not directed against the toilers, but against those who exploit them.

I have always known and still know that my activities help to bring about the destruction of the régime of oppression and starvation, to which Fascism has subjected the workers, the peasants, and all toilers.”

Communists who can fight like this, can also courageously face death. One day a dying comrade was brought into the hospital. He knew that not far from the hospital was a big cell of political prisoners and he sent them a note. He wrote in this note that, feeling his militant life was nearing its end, he was satisfied and proud that he had fulfilled his duty. He called upon the comrades to continue along the hard, common road of struggle, for victory is inevitable!

The Italian Communist Party knows tens and hundreds of its members who courageously, without any fear, have marched forth to be shot, or to the gallows.

### Bacci and Montanari

While some comrades are engaged in active mass work, others conduct work which is more modest, but which is also fraught with big difficulties and dangers. We call to mind the tragic episode connected with the anti-war Congress in Brussels. The Italian delegates made their way to this Congress secretly, illegally crossing the

frontier over the Alps. But the Congress did not receive one of the delegates . . . The old leader of the Young Communist organisation—Bacci, who had served a term of imprisonment and suffered from tuberculosis—was frozen to death in the Alpine glaciers. This historic Congress will remain indissolubly connected with the name of Comrade Bacci.

Our well-known comrade Camillo Montanari perished in another way, he was killed by the counter-revolutionary Trotskyists, who follow in the footsteps of the Fascists. Our Comrade Mon-

tanari was very much loved in the Party for the great demands he always made upon himself and upon others. An old member of the Party, he had been working for many years in the Party apparatus. Simple, extremely hard-working, very capable, he gave every moment of his life to the Party. And he demanded the same thing from everybody. He defended the Party against all enemies inside the Party, against double-dealing Trotskyists, against all who tried to use the Party for their own personal ends, and against those whom the Party from time to time exposed and threw out of its ranks. These enemies of the Party have no intention of laying down their arms, they



GRAMSCI

are organising into an armed band, in order to attack the loyal sons of the Party. And it is clear that the hatred of this band of Trotskyist traitors was especially strong against the one who was always fighting for the purity of the Party line. He worked right up to the last minute. A few hours before his death from the bullet of a Trotskyist scoundrel, in the darkness of the Paris underground railway, Montanari said to us: “My wife and child are waiting for me at home, but I want to see X, because I have not yet settled a question with him.” A few hours later death overtook him.

The iron cadres of the Italian Communist Party, examples of whom we have in our comrades and leaders Gramsci and Terracini, are being forged in a stubborn, self-sacrificing struggle, and at the cost of countless sacrifices. By their example of heroic struggle against the exploiters and oppressors of the Italian people, the cadres of our Party

are being educated in the spirit of self-sacrificing loyalty to the working class cause, to the cause of Communism. Under their leadership, the proletariat and the toiling masses will advance to the storming of Fascism, to the decisive struggle, to victory.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MENSHEVIKS

By P. Lang

*On whose side did the Mensheviks fight during the Civil War?*

### The Anti-Soviet Campaign in the Socialist Press

AFTER listening to the claims made by the Russian Mensheviks on the Soviet Government, the January Session of the Bureau of the E.C. of the Labour and Socialist International decided "to give the fullest publicity to the information concerning the persecution of Russian comrades."\* Accordingly, the Bulletin of the Commission of the E.C. reprinted a leading article from the Menshevik *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, adding the following heading: "Instead of the United Front, a fresh wave of terror in Soviet Russia." Thus, the campaign against the united front has begun under the guise of a struggle against Soviet terror.

The campaign is now being carried on in both the Socialist and bourgeois press. Even Hearst, the international gangster, has recognised the advantage of taking part in the crusade to "liberate Socialist ideas in the Soviet Union." And for the purpose he is using the services of Trotsky.

Of course, the whole aim of the campaign is being hidden from the masses by its organisers. For the reactionary leaders of Social-Democracy can hardly say to the workers: avoid the struggle against the offensive of capital and fascism, and against the war danger, and occupy yourselves with the task of transforming the Soviet government into a government that the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Trotskyists, etc., will approve of.

In words these leaders declare that their aim is to "create favourable conditions for the possibility of setting up the united front." But who is shouting louder than anybody else about this? Precisely the Right Social-Democratic leaders who are well known to be the most malicious opponents and saboteurs of the united front!

And can anyone at all imagine that the bour-

geois press of all currents, including the Hearst press, would have responded so unanimously to the call of the Bureau of the Second International, if the call had in any measure in view the interests of the working class, and was aimed at strengthening unity in their ranks?

There are two articles which point to the way preparations for the campaign were carried on among the Social-Democratic leaders, namely, the leading article in the November issue of the *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, and an article written by Kautsky entitled "Reflections on the United Front," printed in the November-December issue of the organ of the German Social-Democrats, the *Zeitschrift fur Sozialismus*.

### Preparations for the Campaign

The leading article in the *Socialistichesky Vestnik* explains how it came about that it was precisely at the end of 1935 that the Mensheviks once more became the object of the particular love and care of the leaders of the Second International. Magdeline Paz, a Socialist woman with Trotskyist sentiments, made an attempt to disorganise the united front at the June World Congress of Writers held in Paris, on the pretext "of defending freedom of thought and speech in the Soviet Union." The attempt was a failure. Paz, according to the *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, made a "fiery protest," she displayed "noble courage," but "the audience was completely under the influence of the Bolsheviks," and the Trotskyist intrigue was unanimously rejected. Then Paz resorted to the press, to the Menshevik Peskin: "Do you know," she asked, "any comrades who could help me—who could give me names, facts, dates, figures, geographical points?" . . . The *Socialistichesky Vestnik* replied that it would be glad to be of service to her.

"We have an abundance of facts," the Mensheviks assured her. But about three months passed, and it was clear to everybody that they

\* "Socialistichesky Vestnik," No. 1, 1936.

were not in a position to fulfil the order placed before them. The opponents of the united front needed to stage a "wave of Red terror," but the *Socialistichesky Vestnik* could not give them more than about a dozen names of alleged victims. They needed a new wave of terror, but the *Socialistichesky Vestnik* hadn't a single *new* name of any Menshevik who had been arrested, exiled or in any other way hurt. The Mensheviks even dragged Kranichfeld into the campaign, as "a prominent member of the youth league," although, according to their own words, he had tried to penetrate the youth movement 15 years ago.

The Right leaders of International Socialism remind one of Gogol's hero "Chichikov": they buy up "dead souls" from the Russian Mensheviks.

"For many years now we have *refrained* from publishing these facts and figures," writes the *Socialistichesky Vestnik*. But why is it that during the last few years the Mensheviks have "refrained" from spreading their gossip? Because, replies the *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, the Second International ceased to react to their reports "with powerful protests by the parties, unions, congresses, and the press." "Thus the silence of international socialism was and is the inevitable cause of our silence as well." In other words, when the demand drops off, fabrication is curtailed. This applies to all anti-Soviet fabrications. This also applies to the Menshevik legends about Soviet terror.

Indeed, from the year 1932 until the last few months in 1935, the Second International displayed a certain amount of caution—if we exclude a number of outbursts like the campaign in defence of the murderers of Comrade Kirov — as regards openly supporting the counter-revolutionary work of the Mensheviks.

What directly forced it to act in this way?

### **The downfall of the Sponsors of the Mensheviks in 1931**

In the spring of 1931 the case of the Menshevik underground organisation, the so-called union centre, was heard in the Supreme Revolutionary Court of the U.S.S.R. It revealed before the eyes of the workers of all countries, a picture of the criminal wrecking activities of the Mensheviks and their political bloc with the interventionist kulak-Socialist-Revolutionary and big capitalist parties.

Before this trial, approximately since 1929, the E.C. of the Second International had been conducting an almost unbroken unbridled campaign in defence of the kulaks, the wrecking specialists, and later the arrested Mensheviks. At that time the slogan under which the campaign was conducted was "Against the new wave of Stalinist

Terror."\* The E.C. of the Second International engaged in particularly feverish activities during the trial.

It tried to prevent the case being heard. In a telegram addressed to the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., Vandervelde declared: "I am instructed by the E.C. of the Labour and Socialist International to lodge a most energetic protest against this violence."

It tried to bring disrepute upon the evidence given by the accused during the preliminary investigation. "The E.C. of the Labour and Socialist International," it stated in the same telegram, "has received very serious information concerning the bad treatment meted out to the accused in the prison in which they are confined."

He went finally even so far as to run the risk of openly lining himself up in the face of the whole world, with the actions of the accused. "The very fact," ran the telegram, "that persons, whose entire previous behaviour protests against the indictment levelled against them, have been brought before the revolutionary court, is a scandalous abuse of force."

Despite all the efforts of the E.C. of the Second International, the trial, as we know, went on to the end. In the public sessions of the court, all the accused without exception, old, well-known Menshevik leaders, confessed themselves guilty of the indictment made against them of carrying on wrecking and interventionist work, on the instructions received from the Menshevik centre abroad. They confessed their serious crime against the Land of Soviets and the international labour movement.

Is it surprising, then, that after such a political scandal, the leaders of the Second International preferred, at least for a time, "to lie low"? Is it surprising that they ceased to "react" so thoughtlessly and incautiously to the Menshevik gossip?

### **To Crush the United Proletarian Front**

But if the campaign "against Soviet Terror" failed so disgracefully in 1929-31, what can the organisers of the campaign expect now, in 1936? Can they repeat the same arguments as they put forward *then*, to widen the breach among the international proletariat?

*At that time* they wrote:

"Socialist workers of all countries are seized with alarm for the fate of the Russian revolution. They hear about *the starvation which is rife in your towns, they know that often your working condi-*

\* The then Chairman of the E.C. of the Second International published an article in "Vorwaerts" in January, 1930, under this heading.

tions are worse than those of the workers in capitalist countries.”\*

Can the organisers of the campaign repeat these words *now*, when the new socialist life in the Soviet Union is blossoming forth as never before in the history of mankind on the basis of a radical improvement in the material and cultural conditions of the working class? Can they do so now, when even such an individual as the Menshevik leader, Abramovich, has been compelled to declare that he refuses to continue the “historic discussion that has been going on now for eighteen years between the Bolsheviks and their Socialist opponents” on the question of the standard of living of the masses in the Soviet Union.

At that time they wrote:

“They (the Socialist workers) are aware of the bankruptcy of the *violent methods of collectivising* the peasantry... The Labour and Socialist International fears that if this fatal policy is continued, *a breach will be formed between the two classes* upon which the Russian revolution is based, namely, between the workers and the peasants.”†

Can they repeat these words *now*, when the news of the victory of the collective agriculture of the U.S.S.R. is being carried through the whole world, when as a result of this victory of social ownership, both in town and country, the Soviet state has become stronger and more powerful than any other state can ever be, under any other social system?

At that time, they wrote in defence of the wrecking specialists as follows:

“A panic has taken hold of the masses of the intelligentsia in the service of the Soviets. They are more and more coming to the conviction that *the Soviet Government aims at destroying all the former ‘specialists’ who are of any importance at all and of dooming the others to slow death in prisons and exile.*”‡

Can they repeat these nonsensical assertions now that at the same time as there is to be seen the growth of Soviet industrial and technical intellectuals, the old technical specialists in the Soviet Union have determinedly taken their stand for honest collaboration with the Soviet Government, and are working along with the working class.¶

They threw these slanderous accusations up in the face of the Soviet workers at that time, declar-

ing in official documents that they were doing so on the direct instructions of the Social-Democratic workers.

Can they do this again, now, when in consequence of the heavy experiences of the working class in the capitalist countries, and the victorious experiences of the construction of Socialism in the U.S.S.R., the differentiation in the ranks of Social-Democracy itself is becoming deeper, and an ever larger number of the members of the Social-Democratic parties are beginning to adopt a negative and indignant attitude towards such statements by their leaders?

No, the organisers of the slanderous campaign in 1936 cannot count on bringing into the campaign even those sections of the workers, peasants and working intelligentsia who are still under their influence. They have still less grounds for hoping that by their “moral and political intervention” they can force the proletarian dictatorship to alter its policy to any degree whatsoever to suit the miserable remnants of the anti-Soviet parties who live in emigration by grace of the bourgeoisie.

What the organisers of the campaign hope to do is to introduce some confusion into the ranks of the supporters of the united front, to suppress the desires of the working masses for united action, and to conceal their own stubborn sabotage of the proposals of the Communists for joint struggle against the danger of war and fascism.

### The Aims of Kautsky

That the present campaign aims at disrupting the united proletarian front is very convincingly proved by Kautsky’s article. The old renegade and falsifier of Marxism enjoys the sorry reputation among working class circles of being a vindictive, blind enemy of the great proletarian revolution, an individual who has more than once openly declared for the violent overthrow of the workers’ and peasants’ government. The attacks upon the dictatorship of the proletariat repeated in his last article, and his demand that the enemies of the Soviet Union be given freedom to carry on their counter-revolutionary work there is nothing new at all. The only thing that is new is that this time Kautsky directly links up these demands for “freedom for everybody” in the Soviet Union, with the struggle against the united front in the capitalist countries.

\* Appeal of the E.C. of the Labour and Socialist International “to the Soviet Workers,” May, 1930.

† Ditto.

‡ Vandervelde: “The New Wave of Stalinist Terror.”

¶ It is well known that some of the wreckers of yesterday have proved in their work that they have repented, and they have accordingly been amnestied. In particular, Ramzin and a number of his collaborators in wreck-

ing work, and whose fate especially deeply alarmed the former Chairman of the Second International, have just recently had all political and civil rights restored to them, as people who have fully repented and have conscientiously fulfilled a number of most important technical tasks. A number of other specialists, at one time wreckers, particularly distinguished themselves during the construction of the White-Sea Baltic Canal, and were awarded the Order of the Red Banner.

Kautsky recognises that there is a desire for unity among the working class to-day. But he does not like it, and he openly says so. "All the same," he writes, "I cannot be glad about the present desire to restore the 'united front.'"

But why is Kautsky displeased about this desire? Because the aim of the united front is to increase the struggle against fascist, and not Bolshevik, dictatorship. Monstrous though it be, Kautsky nevertheless produces this argument, and, what is more, without any sign of embarrassment, and on the pages of the organ of German Social Democracy.

"In the fascist countries," he writes, "the champions of the united front hope that it will strengthen the opposition to the dictatorship. But in Soviet Russia the united front is to have just the opposite effect. Here it is to result in the Socialists giving up their opposition. In this way certain Mensheviks hope to earn the goodwill of the Communist dictatorship, a tolerant attitude to themselves and, finally, liberty."

Kautsky sees "certain Mensheviks" prepared, in the name of a united struggle against fascism, temporarily to give up the struggle against the Soviet Government. And so he raises the alarm on that account. If the united front cannot lead to increased opposition against the Soviet Union, then, in Kautsky's opinion, it is harmful, and must be rejected. In that case, what sort of "united front" is Kautsky prepared to support? It is clear that he is ready to support joint action with those forces which are conducting a struggle against the Soviet Government, to collaborate with the white guards.

We shall see below that the Mensheviks have really on more than one occasion concluded counter-revolutionary blocs of this kind with capitalist and kulak parties at different stages of the Great Proletarian Revolution.

But Kautsky also knows that such a conception against the united proletarian front, in such a pure and unconcealed form, cannot fool the workers. Even the backward sections of the workers, who do not yet understand that true democracy for all the toilers, for all the Soviet people, exists in the Soviet Union, will nevertheless refuse to agree to fight against the Soviet Government. And even less will they, in the interests of this counter-revolutionary struggle, reject the united front against the economic and political offensive of capital and fascism which directly menaces them to-day, against the intolerable fascist dictatorship, and against the world war which may break out any day.

Therefore, Kautsky adds two subsidiary argu-

ments against the united front, to his chief anti-Soviet argument, viz.:

"The united proletarian front, he asserts, is not necessary for the struggle against the war danger and war; the united proletarian front is not necessary for the struggle against the offensive of fascism and the fascist dictatorship;

"The split between the Social Democrats and Communists," writes Kautsky, "*least of all constitutes a menace to universal peace.*"

If this is so, it is clear that, according to Kautsky, the abolition of this split in the ranks of the working class does not lessen the war danger, and will not make it easier to utilise the revolutionary crisis caused by imperialist war, to overthrow the ruling class of capitalists.

During the world imperialist war, Kautsky, as we know, put forward the theory that the Labour and Socialist International should stop functioning during the war; thus he gave the Social Democratic parties in each country permission to serve, unrestrictedly, the war interests of "their own" imperialism. To-day, on the eve of a new imperialist war he goes further. Now he declares that the Labour International *cannot be an instrument of peace*, that the elimination of the split in the ranks of the working class is not one of the mightiest factors in the struggle for peace. Kautsky's "theory" serves entirely the interests of the fascist governments and the most aggressive circles of the imperialist bourgeoisie in all the countries which are kindling the flames of a new imperialist war.

Do we need the united front for the struggle against fascism? No, says Kautsky, it is not required for that either.

"This also" (united working class action) exclaims Kautsky with irony, "must be the road of Democracy! This road having been proclaimed, fascism must apparently be crushed everywhere. But it must still be proved that there is no other road, if they want to establish the united front of the Communist International with the whole of the Labour and Socialist International."

What other road does Kautsky know besides the united working class front by which to organise the forces of the working class and to rally to them the broadest masses of the toilers, to resist the offensive of fascism, and to overthrow the fascist dictatorship? He does not consider it necessary to disclose his secret. He does not recognise that the fascist danger is a real one. There is no need to hurry either with the struggle against the terrorist dictatorship in the countries of fascism. What really cannot be postponed, what really cannot be slackened, in Kautsky's opinion, is the struggle against the Soviet Government.

The most intimate connections always existed

and still exist between Kautsky and the Mensheviks. The Mensheviks supply Kautsky with material for his interventionist activities; Kautsky, on his part, has blessed, and continues to bless, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries for their counter-revolutionary adventures.

The article entitled "Reflections on the United Front" supplements the Menshevik article entitled "The Liberation of Socialist Ideas." Both these articles leave no doubt about the aim of the present campaign. And none of those who in one form or another, or to one degree or another, take part in this campaign, can have, or will have, the right to claim that he was unable immediately to see the aims and the character of this campaign.

The campaign is one of the usual manoeuvres adopted by the reactionary wing of Social Democracy to smash the united front.

### The Mensheviks in February, 1917

Let us examine the arguments usually put forward by the defenders of the Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, etc., in their attempt to obtain freedom for anti-Soviet action in the Soviet Union. In this article we shall dwell upon one of the most widespread sophisms, based upon the appeal to the allegedly revolutionary past of these parties.

The sponsors of the Mensheviks assert that during the October Revolution they disagreed with the Bolsheviks in that they "were trying to set up a united front in Russia, instead of a dictatorship of one party." (Norman Thomas: Speech at a Debate with Comrade Browder, November 27, 1935.) The Socialists persecuted in the U.S.S.R., it is alleged, proved "their revolutionary solidarity in practice during the struggle against the whites." (See Zhiromsky, "Revolutionary Defence and Democratic Liberty," in the *Populaire*, February 5, 1936.)

But what do the facts tell us?

It is true that the Mensheviks (and also the Socialist Revolutionaries) conducted a struggle against the autocracy, were persecuted, and served terms of punishment in Tsarist prison and in exile. But in their fight against Tsarism they made their starting point the view that the revolution in Russia could not go beyond the confines of the bourgeois revolution, while in their opinion, *only the bourgeoisie* could lead the bourgeois revolution.

And so they tried to persuade the working class that it was not their historic task to overthrow the Tsar by an alliance with the peasantry, and isolating the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie, but to urge the bourgeoisie gradually into the struggle against the Tsar and the landlords.

At the first stage of the revolution, 1903 to

February, 1917, the Mensheviks behaved as revolutionaries in the struggle against the Tsar, but as *petty bourgeois revolutionaries*, who lag behind the bourgeoisie. This was the difference in principle between their position and the position of the *proletarian revolutionaries*, the Bolsheviks. The struggle of principle on questions of programme and tactics, which went on between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, did not cease during the whole of this period. Nevertheless, at that time the Bolsheviks were able to set up a *united front* with the Mensheviks (as well as with other *petty bourgeois revolutionaries*), and even, for a definite period of time, to be in one united party with the Mensheviks.

Why was this possible? Because, with all their fundamental errors, the Mensheviks declared that they were prepared to fight together with the Bolsheviks against the immediate common enemy—Tsarist autocracy and the landlords and for bourgeois-democratic liberties.

During the *February* (March) revolution, the Mensheviks of all currents (and the Socialist Revolutionaries as well), despite all their revolutionary phraseology, continued to take as their starting point the view that the bourgeoisie were capable of waging a real struggle against the autocracy. These social-conciliationist parties, in the persons of Chkheidze and Kerensky, implored the bourgeoisie—the Committee of the State Duma—to *take over the leadership* of the movement of workers, soldiers and peasants which had seized the whole of the country, in order to avert the revolutionary storm. While the toiling masses, tortured by the war and thirsting for peace, were brought close to the proletarian revolution, by the very development of events, as the only way out of the war and inevitable catastrophe, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries continued to insist that the victory of Socialism in Russia was impossible, and strove to preserve capitalism by "improving" it.

In the circumstances when the proletarian revolution was developing, they fought against the programme of the Bolsheviks, which demanded the overthrow of the bourgeois power, the transfer of all power to the Soviets, immediate democratic peace, immediate confiscation of the estates of the landlords in favour of the peasantry, the nationalisation of factories, works, banks and railways.

For precisely this reason, the workers and the poor peasantry, who in February followed the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, began to pass over to the side of the Bolshevik programme. They began to break away from these social reformist parties and to join the ranks of the political army which the Bolsheviks had created in the course of the struggle and the con-



licts between the classes from April to October, 1917.

### **The Mensheviks and the Bourgeoisie**

In the spring of 1917, as everybody is well aware, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries had a majority in the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasant deputies. This did not prevent the Bolsheviks from advancing the slogan "All Power to the Soviets," which, at that stage, signified the demand that the social-conciliationist parties reject the idea of a bloc with the bourgeoisie (the Constitutional Democrats), that a Soviet Government of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries be formed, that the opposition be given the right to free agitation and that all parties should carry on the struggle freely *inside the Soviets*. In putting forward this slogan, the Bolsheviks based themselves upon the view that the free struggle inside the Soviets between themselves and the Mensheviks, would lead to the victory of the Bolshevik programme of the socialist transformation of the country, over the Menshevik programme to save capitalism. "The Bolsheviks would then have won the majority in the Soviets and changed the composition of the Soviet Government by way of free development inside the Soviets. This plan did not as yet mean the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it undoubtedly facilitated the preparations for the conditions necessary to ensure that dictatorship."

The Bolsheviks did not consider it permissible to call for the overthrow of the Provisional Government as long as this slogan had not gained a majority in the Soviets. They did their utmost to ensure united working class action in the struggle against the class enemy, and carefully avoided everything that might introduce a split into the struggle.

How did the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries act at this stage? Being parties in favour of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, they stood for *the split* in the ranks of the working class, for the split in revolutionary democracy, headed by the revolutionary proletariat.

Having a majority in the Soviets, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries rejected the slogan "All Power to the Soviets," in the interests of the bourgeoisie and Entente imperialism. During the July days, for example, instead of conducting a free struggle against the Bolsheviks inside the Soviets, they used the whole apparatus of the government and all the measures of compulsion which, in consequence of their bloc with the bourgeoisie, they had at their disposal for the purpose, against the Bolsheviks, and the revolutionary

workers and peasants. As a result of the July defeat of the Bolsheviks, the reformist parties, the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, were thrown into the arms of the counter-revolution of the Generals and Constitutional Democrats."

This Kerensky period, a period of coalition between the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries and the bourgeoisie, the refusal of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks to confiscate the estates of the landlords, their struggle to continue the war "to a victorious conclusion," the June offensive at the front, the application of the death sentence against the soldiers, and the Kornilov uprising—all this decided the fate of the Menshevik Socialist-Revolutionary programme of the defence of capitalism, and decided it in favour of the Bolshevik programme of the overthrow of capitalism, the programme of the proletarian revolution. The overwhelming majority in the Soviets took the side of the Bolsheviks.

Now the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," began to signify the transfer of power to the Bolsheviks, the direct advance of the proletarian revolution towards the dictatorship of the proletariat through an uprising against the Kerensky government.

How, at the time of the October Revolution, did the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries reply to this slogan which had now become the slogan of the Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasant deputies? By remaining faithful to their bloc with the bourgeoisie, who took up arms against the Soviets.

### **"To Arms Against the Soviets"**

On November 9, when it was clear to all — friends and enemies alike—that the whole of the proletariat, at any rate of Petrograd and Moscow, were on the side of the October Revolution, the C.C. of Mensheviks issued a manifesto to the Petrograd workers which stated that:

"And at such a critical moment . . . in this ruined country, in which the working class constitute as yet an insignificant minority of the population . . . the Bolsheviks have thought fit to undertake their crazy experiment of seizing power, allegedly for the Socialist revolution. Only seekers after adventure or traitors to the revolution could do such a thing. The working class have taken no direct part in this insane enterprise . . . A government which relies upon bayonets is doomed to destruction . . . The defeat of the Bolsheviks is inevitable." ("Rabotchaya Gazeta," organ of the C.C. of the Mensheviks, Nov. 11, 1917).

But the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries did not limit themselves to mere words about the inevitable destruction of the Soviet Government. They feverishly *prepared* it.

It is a lie to assert that the Mensheviks and

Social-Revolutionaries refused to recognise the Soviet Government in consequence of the fact that they wanted to avoid "a fratricidal struggle in the ranks of revolutionary democracy"! That was not the case at all! Striving to regain power for the capitalists and landlords, they threw themselves headlong into a whiteguardist adventure, hoping to set alight an internecine struggle in the ranks of the proletariat. In the resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Mensheviks of November 10, 1917, it says:

"From now onwards until the complete liquidation of the Bolshevik adventure, *no agreement is permissible with the Bolshevik Party concerning the organisation of a government jointly with them . . .* The All-Russian Committee To Save the Fatherland and the Revolution must make the proposal to the Military-Revolutionary Committee that it immediately lays down its arms, gives up the power it has seized, and calls upon the military units under its influence to subordinate themselves to the authority of the Provisional Government . . ."

To whose mercy according to the demand of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries was the already victorious proletarian revolution to surrender? What was the All-Russian Committee To Save the Fatherland and the Revolution? In the manifestoes which it issued during this period, we find the following:

"Do not recognise the authority of the violators! Do not carry out their orders! Stand in defence of the Fatherland and the Revolution!\* *Take up arms and fight against the crazy adventure of the Bolshevik Military Committee!*"†

These were not mere words. The day following the establishment of the Soviet Government in Petrograd, these parties equipped the Krasnov Cossack regiment against it. The Commissar of the first regiment to attack the Soviet capital was Voitinsky, a Menshevik.

### During the Civil War

Before the February revolution, the Mensheviks were petty-bourgeois revolutionaries; after the October Revolution they began rapidly to change into petty-bourgeois counter-revolutionaries. During the Civil War they were on the other side of the barricades. Having lost their connections with the masses of workers and poor peasants, the remnants of the Mensheviks began to link themselves up with the counter-revolutionary actions undertaken by the kulaks, to enter into blocs with the supporters of Kolchak and Denikin, and to render service to the Entente.

Was it possible, in such circumstances, even to think of establishing a united front with them.

\* "Rabotchaya Gazeta," Issue No. 199.

† From appeal by the All-Russian Committee for the Salvation of the Fatherland and the Revolution.

Of course not. *This would have meant a united front with the class enemy.*

During the Menshevik trial in the Spring of 1931, numerous documents were published in the international Communist press, exposing the part played by the Mensheviks in the whiteguard uprisings against the Soviet Government, and proving that they had collaborated with governments, set up by the imperialists.\* What could the Mensheviks and their sponsors answer in reply?

They could not refute these facts. They could only make an effort to belittle their importance.

In reply to these documents which accused the Menshevik organisations of taking part in the whiteguard government in Archangel, the *Populaire* wrote:

"You cannot make the Menshevik Party and its leaders responsible for the behaviour for a few people who, in 1918, were entirely out of touch with their party centre in Moscow."

The *Vorwaerts* at that time published the declaration of the Menshevik centre abroad (the so-called delegation), in which it said:

"Individual members of the party or individual groups, who, during the years of civil war and unrest, conducted a policy different from that of the official party, have now left the party or been expelled from it."

But of what avail are the evasions and attempts to evade responsibility for the heaviest of crimes, as against the indisputable facts which the Soviet people know and will never forget, and which the toilers of the whole of the world should also never forget?

### The Mensheviks and Intervention

It is not true that the Mensheviks in Archangel who openly and officially entered into a bloc with the English troops of occupation, had no connections with other Mensheviks, and did not know what they were doing. They were *informed* of the fact that the Czech mercenaries of French imperialism, who, in alliance with the Whiteguards were out to crush the Soviet Government, were also enjoying the support of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries.

"Siberia, the Urals, the Volga region, have all long ago revolted under the slogan of a united democratic, independent Russia. Now the struggle has begun in the North as well . . . Russian needs an alliance with the enemies of Germany, namely, England, France, America and so on. They are interested in an alliance with the Russia that is being emancipated, and are compelled to offer her assistance."

These are the words of the *Severny Luch* (Northern Ray) which officially called itself the "organ of the Archangel Committee of the Social Democratic Labour Party," and indicated the regions seized by the Czech legions and the slogans under which they were fighting.

\* See "Inprecorr," 1931.

"Siberia, the Urals, the Volga Region . . ." the Archangel Menshevik Committee enumerated these places. And in all these regions the Menshevik organisations which at that time displayed any activity at all supported the uprising against the Soviets.

The Archangel Menshevik interventionists met with a response among the Menshevik interventionists in the South of Russia. True, the response was somewhat belated, arriving when the Archangel whiteguard government had already been swept away.

"The activities of the Allies on Russian territory are an event of great political importance which can have the most favourable consequences in regenerating our native land."

This is how the *Yuzhny Rabochy*\* (*Southern Worker*) greeted the French occupation troops (on the eve of the arrival in Odessa of the French squadrons). The *Southern Worker* was the organ of the Odessa Committee of the Mensheviks, and the editor was Peter Harvy, the same Harvy who to-day is the permanent editor of the *Socialistichesky Vestnik* and is the heart and soul of all the slanderous campaigns directed against the Soviet Union.

The leaders of entire Menshevik organisations—regional, provincial, and urban committees, in the regions seized by whiteguards and occupation troops, defended and pursued the policy of a bloc with the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and the imperialists. Was this an accident? Was this a deviation from the official Menshevik policy?

No, this was the Menshevik policy in fact. This policy, as we shall see below, accelerated the exit from the Menshevik party of the honest elements which had remained in it. Why did the Mensheviks put forward the slogans of the Constitutional Assembly and bourgeois democracy? It was precisely under these slogans that were directed against the Soviet Government in the interests of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie that the Mensheviks led the workers and peasants into bloody, whiteguard terror.

Near to Samara, the Socialist-Revolutionaries shot down several hundred workers of the Ivashensk works. Similar bloody reprisals against the workers took place in the Urals. When the action of the workers and soldiers in Kazan against the whiteguard authorities was put down, the Menshevik Committee made the following declaration in one of its proclamations:

"The authorities have enough forces to destroy traitors, and they *have destroyed them.*"

\* Issue dated August 11, 1918, in an article entitled "National Tasks and the Working Class."

## Hatred of the Soviets

In the Ukraine, the possibility of experiencing the domination of the Hetman and volunteer counter-revolution in 1918 and the beginning of 1919, urged the urban petty-bourgeois masses in the direction of the Soviet Government. Nevertheless, when Denikin succeeded in the second half of 1919 in over-running the Ukraine for several months, for the last time, the Menshevik organisations once more failed to resist the temptation of avenging themselves against the Soviet Government. The old disgraceful story was repeated. In all the towns where the Denikin troops allowed the Menshevik organisations some breathing space, they collaborated with them in one way or another.

In Kharkov, the Menshevik newspaper, *Nachalo* (*The Beginning*), persuaded the workers that the Denikin government was superior to the Bolshevik "dictatorship" as it was a "democratic" government. Their magazine, *Mysl* (*Thought*), among the leading writers of which were Martov, Dan and Abramovich, wrote that with the advent of Denikin "Something that appeared to be in the nature of a national holiday had been established." The new government, wrote the magazine, although "it has anti-Socialist aims, can play a revolutionary rôle in the circumstances we are living through to-day."

In Kiev, the Mensheviks took part in the town council appointed by the Denikin Command; they and the trade union bodies under their leadership worked in the closest contact with the employers' organisations. The Mensheviks made use of the "freedom" and international contacts allowed them by Denikin, to address a manifesto to the workers of the capitalist countries which foully slandered the Soviet Government and sought to persuade the international proletariat not to support the latter in its struggle against the bourgeoisie.

Monstrous though it was, after the experiences of Denikin's rule, the Menshevik organisations tried similarly to stab the Soviet Government and the Red Army in the back on the territory occupied by the whiteguard Poles. Thus, in *Zhitomir*, after the Pilsudski troops had occupied the town, the local organisation of the Mensheviks published the following in its newspaper, the *Volynskaya Zarya* (the *Volynsk Dawn*):

"We have experienced eight months of *hard slavery*, spiritual and physical (they are referring to the eight months of Soviet government — P.L.) and our common *resurrection* (the arrival of Pilsudski—P.L.), in circumstances of a more or less full life, will be welcomed by our readers as well as by us."

What can the Mensheviks and their sponsors offer against this fact? The resolution of the Moscow C.C. of the Mensheviks, which promised the Soviet Government participation in the struggle against Pilsudski? Why, that paper resolution, adopted in circumstances when the European proletariat, irrespective of their political tendencies, took up the defence of the Land of the Soviets against the attacks of Polish imperialism (e.g., councils of action in England) did not as a matter of principle stand for the unreserved defence of the Soviet Union against all kinds of intervention.

### Differences among the Mensheviks

It is true that in the civil war years, there were some differences of opinion among the Menshevik authorities concerning the question of the expediency of relying upon imperialist intervention. Undoubtedly, besides the "activists," i.e., those of the Mensheviks who openly steered a course for the victory of whiteguard counter-revolution and foreign imperialism, there were others who made their starting point the view that the Soviet Government would fall even without intervention, that its downfall must be accelerated and the Soviet Government overthrown, relying upon the forces inside the country. This was the view of the moderate or "Left" Mensheviks.\*

But how are we to explain the fact that among the Menshevik authorities, not only did those who accepted and those who rejected intervention work peacefully side by side, but that all their differences of opinion in actual practice were settled in favour of intervention? By the fact, firstly, that both wings of Menshevism were striving to restore capitalism, to liquidate the Soviet Government. And, secondly, by the fact that not a single Menshevik current, including the "Lefts" (Martov), really rejected the tactics of violently overthrowing the Soviet Government—for reasons of principle. The disagreement between them was merely a question of the expediency of using these tactics in the existing circumstances, with the existing relation of forces, etc.

Thus, the "denial" advanced by the Menshevik foreign delegation, and published in *Vorwaerts* in 1931, was a lie from beginning to end.

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\* The All-Russian Conference of Mensheviks, which in the summer of 1918, passed a resolution proposed by Martov, against appealing to the Entente for assistance, had three months previously expressed their confidence that "the Soviets, during the six months which had passed since the October Revolution, had succeeded in becoming the embodiment of the most intolerable tyranny, in the eyes of the broad masses of the population" . . . and that "among the working class there is a more and more marked desire to be observed to throw off the yoke of the clique that has seized the Soviets."

Firstly, not "individual members of the party or individual groups," but entire Menshevik organisations in all the regions seized by the whiteguards and occupation troops in 1918-1920, pursued a policy of entering into a bloc with the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and the imperialists.

Secondly, not a single individual who supported intervention in theory or in practice was ever expelled from the Menshevik party. On the contrary, such honoured interventionists as Peter Harvy, the agent of French imperialism, and Kephali, the Denikinist, are now at the head of the Menshevik delegation abroad, and write theses as to how the workers of the Soviet Union and of capitalist countries should behave in the event of an armed attack upon the U.S.S.R.

Thirdly, the interventionists did not "themselves leave the Menshevik party," but, on the contrary, the interventionist practices of Menshevism accelerated the flight from the party of all honest elements who still remained in it.

### Honest Mensheviks

This process of differentiation in the Menshevik organisations on the basis of the refusal, not only of the rank and file members, but also of a number of functionaries, to subscribe to the interventionist practices, or even to tolerate them, took on such enormous dimensions in the Spring of 1919, that Comrade Lenin specially pointed to the need of taking it carefully into account.

The resolution of the Moscow Soviet and the theses of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. adopted in April, 1919, on the proposal of Lenin, during the most serious moment of the Kolchak menace, called for the need of making a differentiated approach towards the Mensheviks.

The resolution of the Moscow Soviet reads:

"it declares that it is the task of the Soviet Government to-day to carry on a *merciless struggle* (my italics P.L.) against those Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who like the 'Vsegda Vpered' and 'Dielo Naroda' literary and political groups are really hindering our struggle and are the allies of our sworn enemies." (Lenin, Vol. xxiv. p. 221).

The newspaper *Vsegda Vpered* was the official organ of the Menshevik Party, under the editorship of Martov, Dan and Abramovich; the second, the *Dielo Naroda*, was the official organ of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, under the editorship of Chernov. The resolution emphasises the fact that official Menshevism, "while aligning itself with the Soviet Government in words and protesting against the military interference of the Entente . . . is an ally of our sworn enemies."

"But," it states in the theses of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, "there are people among the Mensheviks and

*Socialist-Revolutionaries who are prepared to offer such assistance* (assistance to the Soviet Government in the struggle against Kolchak (my italics—P.L.)). These people must be encouraged, by giving them practical work, primarily in connection with technical assistance to the Red Army in the rear, a strict check being kept on their work." (Volume XXIV., p. 226.)

This was the attitude adopted by the Bolsheviks towards the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who honestly took the first step towards the Soviet Government and were prepared to fight against the whiteguards. They were given confidence in advance, as the resolution of the Moscow Soviet demanded. They were encouraged by being afforded work which immediately brought forth positive results in the struggle against the whiteguards, and drew them to further work. They were given work corresponding to their political level, the degree of firmness they had already achieved, and their revolutionary readiness to fight for the Soviet Government. They were tested and educated on this work.

In the course of the struggle against the whiteguards, and on the basis of the experience of this struggle, those Mensheviks who were inclined towards the Soviets were further freed from the influence of their own party. Simultaneously, the double-dealing elements for whom declarations of loyalty were merely a cover for wrecking activities, exposed themselves in the course of the practical struggle.

It was impossible to fight against Kolchak and remain a Menshevik, for the Kolchakists themselves had grown up out of the collaboration against the Soviet Government between the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, on the one hand, and bourgeois counter-revolution on the other. The struggle against Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel, and Pilsudski, showed clearly to all who took part in it that support of the Soviet Government was absolutely incompatible with Menshevism. And former Mensheviks openly broke away from their party: they fought against it.

The transition of former Mensheviks to the ranks of honest citizens of the Soviet Republic took place chiefly on the basis of the experiences of the civil war. They became members of the family of workers and peasants engaged in building Socialist society in the land of the proletarian dictatorship.

Those of the former Mensheviks who sincerely broke away once and for all from the theory and practice of Menshevism, who proved their loyalty to the proletarian revolution, to the Soviet Government, and to Communism, became worthy of being taken into the ranks of the Communist

Party. They are conducting the line of the party to-day as Communists in all branches of party and Soviet work.

Particularly prominent among them is the name of Comrade Martinov, who, by his loyal, untiring work as a true soldier of the proletarian revolution during the course of the last twelve years of his life, proved worthy of the confidence and respect of the proletariat, not only of the Soviet Union, but of the capitalist countries.

We know how irreconcilable and staunch in principle Comrade Martinov proved himself as a Communist, in exposing Menshevism and all varieties of it. In his characterisation of Menshevism, which stopped at nothing in its struggle against the Soviet Government, Comrade Martinov wrote the following in an article on the Menshevik trial in 1931:

"These prostituted people were prepared to hide the foulest dealings behind 'Marxist phraseology' . . . We have no doubt that the Social Democratic workers of the capitalist countries, who have not yet lived down their old, washed-out, Social Democratic traditions, having become more closely acquainted with the physiognomy of these living Mensheviks who now stand before the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., will turn from them away with disgust, loathing and anger."

### **The Georgian Interventionists**

The national Menshevik parties, the Georgian, Ukrainian and Armenian Dashnaks, went still further than the Russian Mensheviks in their struggle against the Soviet Government. And not because they were worse than the others. But because the robber hand of the imperialists was especially greedily stretched out towards the Caucasus and the Ukraine (in consequence of their geographical situation and natural riches), and the working class and the poorest peasants in these countries could not immediately organise their forces and offer real resistance to the foreign robbers and their agents.

After the victory of the October Revolution in Russia, Georgia experienced almost three years of the rule of the Menshevik nationalists. The government of the Georgian Mensheviks, like the Ukrainian Rada, in which the Ukrainian Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had seats, invited German troops to enter the country. For what purpose? To "defend the borders of the Georgian Democratic Republic," was the official declaration of the Menshevik government. But revolution broke out in Germany, and "independent Georgia" could not hold out without imperialist sponsors. And the place of the German troops who departed was taken by British occupation troops. And the Mensheviks accepted their help as well. Why? To maintain power against the will of the toilers.

Noy Jordania, an old Menshevik and head of the government, formulated the essence of the interventionist policy, not only of the Georgian, but of all Mensheviks, when, from the platform of the Georgian Constituent Assembly, he declared:

"I know that our enemies will say that we are on the side of imperialism. Therefore I must say quite definitely here that I *prefer the imperialists* of the West to the fanatics of the East."

But the Georgian "Socialist" Republic was the object not only of the special care of the imperialists, but of the special love of a number of former, aye and present, leaders of the Second International. During the period of Menshevik rule in Georgia, Kautsky, MacDonald, Snowden, Vandervelde and others visited the country.

How did the toiling masses live in this "Socialist" paradise? The oppression of the bourgeoisie, the princes, the nobility, the landlords was not abated. The working class and the toiling masses of the peasantry were doomed as before to heavy suffering and exploitation. The Georgian Mensheviks used fire and sword to suppress the revolutionary activities of the workers and peasants.

Backed up by foreign bayonets, the Georgian Mensheviks, together with the Armenian Dashnaks, converted the Trans-Caucasus into a jumping-off ground for foreign intervention and the bourgeois whiteguard counter-revolution against the Soviet Government.

But the toilers of Georgia, despite all the different forms of assistance afforded to the Menshevik government, succeeded in freeing themselves from it. Supported by the Russian proletariat and the Workers' and Peasants' Army, the Georgian people, 15 years ago, overthrew the rule of the Mensheviks and set up a Soviet Government. Did the Georgian Mensheviks capitulate, even after that? No. Driven abroad, the remnants formed a "Georgian Government abroad." It is kept by Deterding and other arch-enemies of the working class, and is fed by them as a body provoking a new counter-revolutionary war.

In 1929, i.e., eight years after the establishment of Soviet Georgia, I. Tseretelli, the representative of the Georgian Menshevik party in the E.C. of the Second International, made a public declaration exposing the leaders of his party, accusing them once more of preparing an uprising in Soviet Georgia with the support of the bayonets of the imperialists.

"The Georgian people are being persuaded," wrote Tseretelli, "that the possibility of an imperialist, world conflict, offers favourable prospects for their emancipation. If war breaks out, Georgia may be driven to rise at the call of and 'with the permission' of its government abroad."\*

Tseretelli sounded the alarm about the interventionist adventure being prepared by the C.C. of the Georgian Mensheviks. And yet Tseretelli himself is not too timid to fight against the proletarian revolution. As a member of the Kerensky government he showed that he was not very particular about the means to be used when it was a question of fighting against the Bolsheviks.

Did Tseretelli's exposure force the Georgian Mensheviks to give up their hopes of an imperialist war against the Soviet Union? Were the international friends and sponsors of the Georgian interventionists at all embarrassed? Not at all. Tseretelli's exposure resulted in his being recalled from the E.C. of the Second International by the Georgian Mensheviks and being replaced there by an open supporter of intervention, Gvardajaladze.

As far as we know, the E.C. of the Second International did not object to this "substitution."

### Conclusion

These are the irrefutable, historical facts which characterise the rôle of the Menshevik party during the civil war. The Menshevik organisations fought side by side with the whiteguards and imperialists against the Soviet Government. Individual Mensheviks came over to the side of the Soviet Government and took part in the struggle against the whiteguards only in so far as they left the Menshevik party, broke off all connexions with it and fought against it. To assert that the Mensheviks "proved their revolutionary solidarity in actual practice in the struggle against the whites," is sheer distortion of historical facts, and mockery of the revolution.

No. No, by their practical policy during the civil war, the Russian Menshevik Party and the national Menshevik parties proved the contrary: they proved their actual solidarity with the whites and with world imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.

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\* Tseretelli: "The Fundamental Questions of our Tactics." Quotation taken from the official report of the Secretariat of the Labour and Socialist International, Fourth Congress, Zurich; 1932, p. 259-260.

# ARGUMENTS OF THE OPPONENTS OF THE UNITED FRONT IN ENGLAND

J. R. Campbell

THE official Labour Party in Great Britain is still strongly opposed to the United Front, both nationally and internationally. It is therefore of importance to analyse the objections which are being put forward against the United Front.

One of the arguments which was most frequently put forward during the General Election was that a united front with the Communists would definitely antagonise the "floating" vote. The "floating" vote was the vote of electors who in previous contests had voted Liberal, but who in the absence of a Liberal candidate might vote either for the National Government or for the Labour Party. Most of the people, it was contended, were opposed to Revolution. If the Labour Party and the Communists were united, then the opponents of the Labour Party would contend that a vote for Labour is a vote for revolution. This, at any rate, is what the candidates of the National Government would say.

Our reply is that first of all we do not consider that such an "accusation" is a disgrace to the Labour Party. On the other hand, we assert that the National Government will always, *in all circumstances and by every means*, try to frighten the electors, not even stopping at downright lies. There is no means whereby we can prevent it having recourse to this misrepresentation. All that can be done is to ensure that this misrepresentation is exposed. The only proper reply to this is to give a more detailed explanation to the people of what is the programme of action of the United Front.

A large part of the ex-Liberal voters are workers. They cannot be won by attempting to make the Labour Programme resemble the programme of the National Government as much as possible. Any attempt to do this will only facilitate the task of the National Government in winning over these wavering elements. The policy of the reactionary Labour leaders led to precisely this, as the 1935 election results have shown.

For the greater part of the year 1935 the Labour leaders had been following docilely behind the Government on the burning questions of war and peace. As regards the struggle to improve the conditions of the workers and of the middle class here also the official policy of the Labour leaders actually hardly differed at all from the policy of the National Government. On all these questions the Labour Party made no clear challenge to the

Government, which was therefore able to win a good number of the wavering voters.

If the Labour Party had sponsored a line for the maintenance of peace, as against the imperialist line of the National Government, if it had supported the peace policy of the Soviet Union, if it had supported the organisation of a united front around these questions, then the results would have been quite different. But actually the wavering elements of the population saw that the Labour Party had no clear line at all.

The National Government talked much about how it had aided "prosperity." There were still, however, 2,000,000 unemployed in the midst of this prosperity. The Labour Party had an unprecedented opportunity of showing how the Government was obstructing "prosperity" — how it was refusing to embark on large-scale work schemes of social utility, how the abolition of the housing subsidy had held up the building of working class houses. Had the Labour Party taken part in organising a powerful united front on the question of constructive work schemes, it could have shaken the Government to its foundations. But the Labour Party had refused to build a united front, and as a consequence it was helpless when the Government came out and extolled its arms policy as a means to providing work for the depressed trades of the country.

*It was the refusal of the Labour Party to build the United Front on the questions of Peace and Work which enabled the Government to retain the wavering elements on its side.*

## The Middle Class

Another argument of Labour Party workers is that the building of a united front with the Communists will antagonise the middle class.

Our reply is that a united front for peace, against the Fascist menace and against the robbery of the workers by monopolist capital would have been a big point of attraction for the middle strata. A comprehensive works programme sponsored by a united movement which looked as if it meant business, if it had incorporated some popular middle class demands, would have won the sympathy of the middle class. That is the clear lesson of France and Spain, and this experience could have been used in Britain if the Labour Party had taken part in forming a united front



around a fighting programme instead of giving a spectacle of impotence disguised as moderation.

Bearing that in mind, let us pass to consider the Labour leaders' policy in relation to winning the middle class. Has the Labour Party ever sought to investigate the problem of the toiling middle strata, with a view to formulating a concrete programme which would win those wavering sections to the side of the workers? No, it has not. The Labour Party's sole means for winning the middle class is to make itself look like an ordinary "honest" capitalist party. Its candidates before the late General Election were told to "make no rash promises"—indeed the distinguishing feature of the Labour Party's electoral programme was that it was much less specific as to what the Labour Party would do in the event of its being returned than the election programme of the National Government was. Thus an attempt was made by the Labour Party to win the middle strata by "moderation," but the "moderate" manifesto and the "moderate" Labour speeches did not deal with any of the specific problems of the strata that such "moderation" was designed to win.

The Webbs' book on the U.S.S.R., where Communism is depicted as the new civilisation which will spread throughout the world, is the best reply to those who think that Communism is the bogey of the English intelligentsia. Amongst many of the professional organisations of the British middle class there is considerable interest in developments in the Soviet Union. In addition, the world economic crisis unleashed amongst the British intellectuals a wave of anti-capitalist criticism. It is true that the entire strata have not been affected in the same way. Nevertheless, it is nonsense to suggest that the middle strata can be "scared" by Communism as was the case a few years ago, that "Communism" is the bogey of the middle strata. Communism is gradually winning the middle strata of our country to its side, attracting them and not driving them away. This is the actual truth and not an imaginary state of affairs.

### The "Daily Herald"

Let us now turn to the arguments put forward by the *Daily Herald*, the herald of the reactionary leaders of the Labour Party, who are out at any cost to find reasons against the united front, against the affiliation of the Communist Party to the Labour Party.

The first reason put forward by the *Herald* is the inconsistency of the Communist Party.

"A certain record of consistency is essential before co-operation can be profitably discussed. The madly swinging variations of Communist Policy since 1934 give the impression that the

Party leaders are fickle, dunderheaded and unashamedly opportunist."

The pseudo-left I.L.P. is touchingly at one with the organ of the reactionary leaders of the Labour Party, the *Daily Herald*, in its attacks on the Communist Party. Our reply is that the Communist policy in the recent years has been directed in one direction—namely, *breaking down the barriers to working class unity in Great Britain*. The *Daily Herald* apparently forgets that the Communist Party of England has never for a single moment ceased to strive to achieve this goal.

Every worker in the Labour Party knows of the numerous appeals for unity made by the Communists to the Labour leaders, and to separate local Labour Party organisations. All know of the struggle of the Communists to organise the National Unemployment Movement. All know of the struggle of the Communists for unity during the last General Election. But the *Daily Herald* does not understand this question. The reactionary Labour leaders saw the "inconsistency" and the "swinging variations" of the Communist Party in other questions. On which questions? The following excerpt from the *Daily Herald* gives the reply.

"For fourteen years the Communists decried the League and with arid stupidity tried to persuade the British working class to distrust and boycott it. Now they ask the workers to support the League."

Our reply is: the League of Nations before 1934 and the League of Nations after 1934 are *not one and the same thing*. Before 1934 the League of Nations was an institution of capitalist states alone, whose chief aim was to prepare an anti-Soviet bloc, to suppress all movements for the independence of the small and oppressed peoples. The exit from the League of Nations of Japan and Fascist Germany and the entrance into the League of the U.S.S.R., made it possible, under *certain definite conditions*, for the League of Nations to play the rôle of "an obstacle to the war danger," as Comrade Stalin put it.

The *Daily Herald* evidently considers it its merit that the Labour leaders supported the League of Nations when it was the centre of anti-Soviet interventionist schemes. We, on the contrary, consider that the workers should have fought against these plans at that time.

Thanks to the entrance of the U.S.S.R. into the League of Nations, and because of its changed composition, it is possible for the workers, by developing the United Front, by building a broad peace movement to make of the League a certain obstacle—albeit very unstable and inconsistent—against the aggressive plans of the war-mongers.

But it is an unforgivable mistake to lay all hopes upon the League, which is composed in the majority of capitalist powers. It can play a certain positive rôle, only on condition that the struggle of the toiling masses for peace is developed, and that the broad people's front in all capitalist countries gives constant support to the peace policy of the U.S.S.R. Those who, like the *Daily Herald*, describe an imperialist Foreign Minister's speech as the "voice of Britain" (the *Herald's* description of Hoare's speech at Geneva last September) and who oppose the development of united action against the war policy pursued by the National Government are wrecking, sabotaging the struggle for peace. Their past support of the League when it was a centre of anti-Soviet intrigue, was a disservice to the working class. Their present refusal to support the Peace forces of the League, expressed in refusal to develop the united front struggle for peace, is a still greater disservice.

### Parliamentary Democracy

"For fourteen years they attacked democracy as unreal and Parliament as worthless. Now they wish to enlist in the ranks of the defenders of democracy," screams the *Herald*.

Now when did the Communists declare Parliament was worthless? Worthless for what? *The Communist Party has always striven for representation in Parliament*, because it has always recognised that Parliament can be used in order to fight against the policy of the capitalist class, to rally the mass movement outside Parliament in defence of the interests of the toilers and considered that by means of the mass movement concessions could be forced from Parliament, as was the case in the great unemployed agitation at the beginning of 1935.

*A considerable number of Labour leaders have, however, not infrequently, preached the worthlessness of Parliament and the impossibility of winning concessions from it, in the absence of a Labour majority.*

The Communist Party has never preached the worthlessness of Parliament in general, but we have always declared and do so to-day that Parliament is not as the Labour leaders declare it to be, the means by which the transformation can take place of capitalism into Socialism. The Communists see no reason for assuming that the ruling class will surrender their privileged position without a violent struggle, and the transfer to the fascist policy by a definite section of the capitalist class in recent years proves this up to the hilt. But that is something quite different from accounting the "worthlessness" of Parliament in general.

When the Communists say that Parliamentary

democracy is "unreal" for the workers, they have in mind the indisputable fact that the suffrage under bourgeois Parliamentaryism does not give the majority of the people, the workers, a real opportunity of making use of democracy, of exercising control over the mechanism of the bourgeois parliamentary state. This control is exercised by the class of capitalists, which controls the key positions in the state machine; the Monarchy, the key positions in the Navy, the Air Force, the Army, the Judiciary, the key positions in the bureaucracy, not to mention capitalist control over all the economic life of the country.

In that sense capitalist democracy is "unreal," i.e., control of the state does not really rest with the "people," but with the capitalists and their agents.

But Communists have always opposed to the unreal democracy of capitalism the real democracy of the Soviet system, based on the fact that the land, the banks and the key industries are social property, a democracy in which the key positions in the state apparatus, no less than in the economy of the country, are in the hands of the working class (and not monopolised by the exploiting class as is the case with capitalist democracy). This is a democracy in which the workers and the toilers generally, led by their revolutionary party, really lead the whole of the political and economic life of the country.

While comparing bourgeois democracy with true democracy, Soviet democracy, the Communists at the same time emphasise the fact that it is not a matter of indifference to the proletariat, whether a fascist dictatorship or bourgeois democracy exists. Under bourgeois democracy the workers have opportunities, even though limited, of organising, of holding public meetings and writing in the press. They have a certain opportunity of defending themselves against the arbitrary use of the state power (though most capitalist states have on their statute books emergency acts which deprive the workers of this opportunity in time of crisis).

There is nothing illogical therefore in criticising parliamentary democracy from the standpoint of Soviet democracy, and yet being prepared to cooperate in the defence of parliamentary democracy—which cost the workers many sacrifices and many years of struggle—against fascism.

While the Labour leadership have always the phrases of "democracy" on their lips, they have, instead of protesting against the feudal, anti-democratic "honours system," willingly participated in it. And it is not the first time that the *Daily Herald* allies itself with reactionary popularisation of the Monarchy.

*The Labour leaders who constantly spread all manner of illusions about parliamentary democracy not only do not defend it, but help to undermine it, while the Communists who understand its limitations and its values, do in every way, rally the forces to its defence against Fascism.*

### **Communist Affiliation**

"For fourteen years they tried to smash and supplant the Labour Party and to discredit the trade union leadership. Now they apply for affiliation," cries the *Herald*.

The *Daily Herald* does not want to speak about how from 1920 to 1927 the Communist Party persistently applied for affiliation to the Labour Party; that until 1925 individual Communists were allowed to be members of the Labour Party and that affiliation was refused and that the Communists were driven out of the Labour Party so as to make it possible for it to continue peacefully in its non-working class, anti-working class policy.

That the Communists fought against the Labour leadership as bitterly as the Labour leadership fought against the Communists goes without saying. That was the case all over the world. Nevertheless, many of the Communist Parties and Socialist Parties who fought each other in the past have now built the United Front in the face of the menace of Fascism and War. If Socialist Parties in other countries which in the past fought might and main against Communism are now in the United Front with the Communist Party, why not in Britain? Many Labour Party workers recognise the justice of this. They are coming to see to an increasing extent that there can be no defence of peace and democratic liberties and rights without co-operation with the Communists inside Britain.

The *Herald's* argument can only have one meaning, namely, that the reactionary Labour leaders want the split in the working class movement to continue further.

This can be seen especially clearly from the reply of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party to the Communist Party's application for affiliation.

"After full consideration the National Executive Committee came to the conclusion that no circumstance had arisen to justify any departure from the decision registered by the Annual Conference

at Edinburgh in 1922, when after a lengthy discussion, a similar application for affiliation was rejected by 3,800,000 to 261,000."

"No circumstance has arisen!" Yet 1922 was a year when the world was just entering the period of the partial stabilisation of capitalism, when Social Democratic parties were everywhere talking about an "era of peace and democracy," when they looked to the gradual attainment of a parliamentary majority to lead inevitably to the triumph of Socialism ("the inevitability of gradualness" was what the Chairman of the 1922 Conference, Mr. Sidney Webb called it). Compare that with the situation to-day, when Parliamentary democracy has disappeared in a number of European countries, when the Fascist states are rushing mankind headlong into a new war, and when many Socialist parties, realising the terrible dangers of this situation, are entering into a United Front with the Communist Party. "No circumstance has arisen!"

"The National Executive Committee is firmly convinced that any weakening in the Labour Party's defence of political democracy, such as the affiliation of the Communist Party would imply, would inevitably assist the forces of reaction, would endanger our existing liberties and would retard the achievement of Socialism in this country."

The National Executive Committee asserts that to have a united front with the Communists for the defence of democracy would prove that the Labour Party's defence of political democracy was weakening.

On the contrary, it would prove to millions, including many Labour Party workers, that the Labour Party is really prepared to defend political democracy, instead of letting it be undermined.

The rank and file of the Labour Party must realise where the policy of the reactionary leaders will take them. It will lead them to passivity in the struggle to maintain peace, to a refusal to beat off the attacks by bourgeois reaction and Fascism against democracy, to demoralisation in the ranks of the Parliamentary Party and outside in the constituencies, to the complete impotence of the Labour Party.

That is why the rank and file of the Labour Party must defeat this iniquitous policy.

# THE UNITED FRONT IN GERMANY

By Walter

(Reply to the Prague Leadership of the Socialist Party of Germany).

COMRADE DIMITROV'S report at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern is helping wide sections of the Social-Democratic workers to understand the need for the united front with the Communists. On the basis of the line given by Comrade Dimitrov, the Fourth Brussels Conference of the Communist Party of Germany made a proposal to the Social Democratic Party leadership and to the Social Democratic organisations and functionaries, to set up a united front for joint struggle against Hitler fascism on the basis of equal rights and equal responsibilities. During the negotiations with the Prague leadership of the Socialist Party of Germany, which took place on November 23, 1935, the representatives of the Communist Party of Germany recommended that the following proposal be made to the organisations and functionaries of the Communist and Socialist Parties of Germany inside Germany itself:

*"To ensure the vigorous conduct of the struggle of the proletariat, we propose to the Communist and Social Democratic organisations, groups and functionaries, that they establish contacts with each other for the purpose of jointly discussing the tasks which arise at each given moment in the struggle against fascism, and to come to agreement and make conditions concerning forms of permanent collaboration."*

The Prague leadership of the S.P.G. replied with a lengthy decision in which they based their rejection of the united front on the following grounds:

1. The process of overcoming the 17 years' struggle between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party of Germany, has not yet been completed.

2. The Communists must prove by making an unambiguous statement in favour of democracy, i.e., bourgeois democracy, that they seriously accept the united front and the struggle for democratic liberties.

3. In case of agreement between the Socialist Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Germany, fascism "would once more be able to make use of the Bolshevik bogey," and thus once more drive to the right those sections of the people who are ready to give their confidence to Social Democracy, which unconditionally aims at democracy.

4. The majority of the Social Democratic functionaries in Germany are against the united front.

Summing up, the Prague leadership of the Socialist Party of Germany writes the following in its decision:

"For all these reasons we consider it inexpedient in the present situation for both Party leaderships to issue a joint declaration, and we must also reject the other proposal made by the Communists to the effect that the leaderships of both Parties should conclude an agreement now concerning joint action on a number of urgent political questions."

While the Communist Party of Germany, in giving grounds for making its united front proposal, and in its negotiations, indicated such further steps in the sphere of joint struggle, as that of affording assistance to prisoners, the struggle for adequate food supplies and wage increases, joint action against Hitler's war policy and methods of struggle for democratic liberties, the representatives of the Prague leadership of the Socialist Party of Germany on the other hand, refrained from making any concrete declaration whatsoever concerning the tasks in the sphere of the struggle against Hitler fascism. The Communist Party of Germany set no conditions before the Socialist Party of Germany, and was prepared to agree to concrete Social Democratic proposals of struggle which can weaken Hitler fascism, for the Communist Party of Germany *subordinates everything to the task of overthrowing Hitler fascism and emancipating the oppressed German people*. The Communist Party of Germany declared that in the event of the establishment of the united front, it was prepared to conclude an agreement for the cessation of mutual attacks. Such an agreement would not at all have prevented the Parties from defending their views on questions of principle and their respective tactical lines.

The active Social Democratic Party workers in Germany cannot understand why the Prague leadership of the S.P.G. did not enter into an agreement even for joint assistance to prisoners. Such an attitude to this question can only encourage the fascists further to increase their terror.

That it was possible for the Prague leadership of the S.P.G. so stubbornly to reject the united front proposed by the conference of the C.P.G., is to be explained, first and foremost, by the fact

that the formation of the united front in Germany, in the factories, in the localities and in the mass organisations, has not met with sufficient success to exert a powerful pressure upon the central authorities of the S.P.G. The weakest spot in the group of revolutionary Socialists and other Left Social Democrats is that although they have declared themselves in favour of the united front and against the splitting policy of the Prague leadership of the S.P.G., they nevertheless do not give the Social Democratic functionaries concrete instructions *as to how and for what purpose the united front is to be set up.*

### The Siemens Works

In Germany to-day the united front chiefly takes the form of affording joint assistance to prisoners and their families, of struggling against wage-cuts, for so-called food allowance, and for wage increases. Different activities in connection with the food shortage and wage conflicts, reveal new methods, but, at the same time the weak spots in establishing the united front. A characteristic example is *the struggle for the restoration of weekly wages in the Siemens works.*

In September of last year, Siemens works changed over from the weekly wage to calculations on a monthly basis, payment to be made every ten days. This new method of payment called forth strong indignation, since it only brought inconvenience to the workers, and advantages to the bondholders. In the works' newspaper, *Siemens' Loud Speaker*, a number of comrades explained the adverse side of the new system of wage payments, and reminded the workers of how, previously, they used to defend their rights before the board of directors, and how, then, the factory committees had always fought in the interests of the workers. The workers began to bring pressure to bear upon the members of the "factory committees"\* and the functionaries of the "Labour Front," insisting upon them lodging a complaint with the regional bureau of the "Labour Front" and demanding the calling of meetings to discuss the system of ten-day wage payments. However, the workers were denied this as well: it is not for nothing that the "Labour Front" itself defended the monthly basis of calculating wages, seeing in it an expression of the "deproletarianisation" of the workers. Then the workers proposed the following way out: if the committeemen hadn't the courage to go to the regional bureau themselves, then let them take comrades with them from the different departments. And this they did. They were promised,

\* So-called "Council of Trustees," elected under the influence of the management.

in the regional bureau of the "Labour Front," that a meeting would be called.

It was the working women who began the movement. Finding themselves in receipt of only 9-12 marks, when the first wages were paid, they immediately, without any previous agreement, *went to the board of directors* themselves. A few days later they were paid in addition all the wages due to them. Even the fascist *Angriff* had to admit that the women had made a demonstration.

In connection with the new system of paying wages, the workers said: "Here's Dr. Ley's fair wages for you!" The increased cost of foodstuffs and the butter shortage still further increased the indignation. Suddenly the tool-makers in one department demanded one day, before work began, that their "committee-man" *immediately enter into negotiations with the works management concerning the restoration of the old system of wage payments.* A general discussion broke out: the foreman demanded that the workers start work, for if they didn't, they would be regarded as saboteurs, hampering the construction work that was being carried through by the "leader." He was laughed to scorn. Soon after this, the Gestapo arrived and arrested a worker who had had a row with the foreman. Other workers protested and the Gestapo arrested two more. *Then the remainder ceased work, without leaving the building.* The three arrested men had to be released. A rumour of this incident immediately spread throughout the works. The news began to pass from mouth to mouth through the departments that the *toolmakers had gone on strike.* Immediately the toolmakers in another department declared a stay-in strike. During the dinner interval, the workers in one of the departments began a discussion about wages, and one of those present asked: "Well, and you, Max, you, Paul, do you support the ten-day system of paying wages?" They all, of course, replied "No." The number of those opposed to the new system of payment increased more and more, until at last the workers asked those who supported the ten-day system to express their views. But none such were to be found, at which one of the workers said: "Well, boys, if this had been the election to the 'committees,' the Nazis wouldn't have received a single vote." The rumour of this improvised voting spread throughout the works. The stay-in strike spread to other departments, and began to be carried out by the most varied methods. When the "Labour Front" called a mass meeting of the Siemens' workers in the Deutschlandhalle, the men would not accept invitation tickets to the meeting. Under the pressure of the workers, the "Labour Front" gave orders

for signatures to be collected in a number of departments *against the monthly basis of calculating wages*. The management and the regional bureau of the "Labour Front" consulted together, and called a meeting of "Labour Front" officials, which came to the conclusion that the "Labour Front" would have to ask the management of Siemens' works to abolish the ten-day system. This system of payment was henceforth abolished.

This struggle in one of the biggest works in Germany is a confirmation of the correctness of the tactics proposed by Comrade Dimitrov. The experience of this struggle should be borne in mind when setting up the united front. When the movement began, what stood out was the exposure of the disadvantages to the workers of the ten-day payment system and its advantages to the employers.

The preparation and organisation of the struggle by the issue of an illegal works' newspaper, slogans written in chalk wherever possible and passed on by word of mouth, *the use of all legal possibilities*, and first and foremost, *bringing pressure to bear upon the "factory committees"* and the "*Labour Front*," all this made it possible for the active vanguard of the revolutionary workers to influence the mass of the workers. *But the decisive rôle was played by the initiative of individual workers*, upon whom the actual course of the work in the factory depends. This example shows that where there is a mass movement, the fascists are not in a position to carry on their terror. The fact that they combined the demand for weekly wages with the exposure of the "national unity" and "fair wages," about which Ley is always talking, shows how the movement should be used for the struggle against Nazi demagogy. In the process of the movement itself, the anti-fascist functionaries among the workers acted jointly, but things did not go so far as *permanent collaboration and the joint organisation* of the struggle by Communist and Social Democratic workers.

Here is another characteristic case. It was announced at one of the big metal works, that a Nazi minister would speak at a factory meeting. The functionaries of the Communist Party of Germany and the Socialist Party of Germany thereupon agreed to organise joint action under the slogan, "During the meeting the workers leave the hall." And, in actual fact, 2,000 workers left the building during the meeting. This is how the basis of the united front is being laid down in the factories.

Information from the factories and from a number of towns shows that the workers are dis-

playing ever greater solidarity, and that the functionaries—Communist and Social Democratic—are coming to agreements in advance as to what sort of action to organise on this or that account, and what slogans to put forward. Moreover, frequently skilful use is made of the legal opportunities in the ranks of the "Labour Front" and in the "Strength in Joy" organisation, etc. Thus, they have begun from below to apply various methods of the united front, and to set up new relations between the Communist and Social Democratic functionaries.

### The Prague Manifesto

If no really important results have been obtained in this sphere as yet, it is only because the Communists inside Germany are still not sufficiently informed of the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, and still do not know the decisions of the Brussels conference of the Communist Party of Germany. Functionaries and groups of the Communist Party frequently limit themselves and their work to safeguarding the organisations and general agitation. Therefore the most important thing is to give assistance to the Party cadres, actively to organise the struggle for the daily interests of the workers, to persuade the workers that the most important task to-day is to *bring into action the Social Democratic workers with a view to establishing the united front*. We shall only be able to set up the united front in the factories, mass organisations and localities, if we make our starting point the everyday questions which are worrying the masses of the workers, overcoming at the same time the illusions regarding spontaneity in the ranks of the Communist Party of Germany and the working class as a whole.

The Prague leadership of the S.P.G. knows full well that the majority of the active Social Democrats inside Germany are in favour of the united front. But the leadership of the Socialist Party of Germany hopes that in consequence of the fascist terror and the fact that the forces of Social Democracy in Germany are scattered — a fact which prevents the supporters of the united front from jointly expressing their common opinions—this desire for the united front in the Socialist Party of Germany will not get the upper hand. How should the members of the S.P.G. regard the refusal of the leadership of their Party to set up a united front with the Communists to fight for the demands which the Prague leadership itself included in its manifesto of January 28, 1934? Incidentally, we find the following in this manifesto:

*"To speed up to the utmost the struggle to*

*safeguard the standard of living of the toilers, and to include the unemployed in the productive process; to extend the front of fighting workers; to explain to those engaged in the struggle, that it is necessary to closely link up all these struggles with the aim of overthrowing the dictatorship—this is one of the primary tasks of revolutionary work... There can be no freedom of coalition without freedom of assembly, freedom of the unions, and freedom of the press. Out of the immediate requirements of the workers there arises, therefore, the demand for political rights, there arises the struggle for their democratic liberties."*

And further:

*"Unity among the working class is becoming the urgent necessity dictated by history itself."*

Anybody who takes this Social Democratic manifesto seriously should, without delay, demand the immediate establishment of the united front in the factories, mass organisations, localities, and between the Central Committee of the C.P.G. and the leadership of the S.P.G., for there are no differences of opinion concerning the partial demands included in the manifesto regarding the struggle against Hitler fascism. The conference of the C.P. of Germany made this same proposal to Social Democracy. *But the Prague Party leadership now reject the joint struggle for the very demands they put forward themselves.* Do not such tactics on the part of the Prague leadership offer grounds for the members of the S.P.G. to ask whether the Social Democratic leaders are serious about their own demands?

It states, further in the manifesto, that: "It (implying the victory over fascism—W.) can only be the work of the masses themselves," and also that "the struggle against the dictatorship and for its overthrow cannot be conducted except by revolutionary methods."

How does this declaration in the manifesto fit in with the refusal of the Prague leadership to express an opinion on the proposals of the C.P. of Germany concerning immediate measures for joint struggle against fascism? Both in the reply of the Prague leadership to the proposals of the C.P. of Germany for the united front, and in the oral explanations given by Vogel and Stampfer, the question of the joint defence of the interests of the workers and toilers are not touched on at all, nor is any indication given as to how to conduct the fight to-day against fascism. And yet a force like Hitler fascism certainly cannot be overthrown by mere general agitation or information concerning the situation inside the country.

Under the influence of the growing opposition in the S.P.G. to the Prague leadership, consequent

upon their rejection of the united front, the illegal organ of the S.P.G., the *Sozialistische Aktion* wrote:

"Wherever collaboration with other groups is carried on in well-thought out, underground forms, and with people who have the confidence of the people, and wherever it serves the purpose of mutual assistance, of an exchange of information and experience, and helps to improve methods of work and elucidate the aims and methods of both sides, it must be welcomed as one of the roads leading to the desirable co-ordination of illegal work."

### Left Social Democrats

This recognition of the need for collaboration is an illustration of the growing change for the better in the united front movement. But in sabotaging the united front, the Prague leadership is relying upon the still passive sections of Social Democracy, which still do not consider that it is possible to organise resistance to Hitler. As against this, we have the "revolutionary Socialists" who obviously base themselves upon the active Social Democrats. The "revolutionary Socialists" have put forward their own platform against the position taken by the Prague leadership, and in it they declare themselves in favour of the united front, against the policy of class collaboration, and against the reformist policy. They declare that it is their task to unite all the revolutionary Socialists who are members of the S.P.G. If they have not yet succeeded in doing so, it is only because they have not yet developed their position in favour of the united front, have not yet raised it to the level of an *active policy* in respect of slogans and tactics on questions which are agitating the masses, the fight for which must constitute *the contents of the militant united front*. Their weakness lies in the fact that they are only as yet beginning to prepare the establishment of the united front in Germany. In January, 1935, when the Prague leadership replied to this with organisational measures, the leaders of the "revolutionary Socialists" separated themselves from those workers in their group who were determinedly in favour of the united front. Thus they connived in the resistance offered by the Right Social Democrats to the united front. Instead of declarations to the effect that the "revolutionary Socialists" are just such a group as the Prague leadership, and instead of holding out hopes of support from the Second International, it would have been better actually to organise the united front and thus prove that the Social Democratic functionaries and groups really are under the influence of the "revolutionary Socialists."

Influenced by the behaviour of the "revolutionary Socialists," the "New Beginning" group



is also beginning to declare itself against the tactics of the Right Social Democratic leaders. This group declares itself in favour of a "united will," but does not state what are the immediate tasks for the solution of which joint action must be organised. At bottom, this group limits itself to general propaganda, and is waiting for a rise of the mass movement which it then wants to unite, and in which it hopes to set the tone. Generally speaking, a strong line in favour of spontaneity is to be noted in the various Social Democratic groups, and this, apparently, is the chief reason why the varied groups are in favour of the united front in words, but do very little to bring about the united front in practice.

### The Question of Democracy

During the negotiations with the representatives of the C.P.G., the Prague leadership of the S.P.G. demanded first and foremost that the C.P. of Germany reveal its attitude towards bourgeois democracy. It is clear that as far as the representatives of the S.P.G. were concerned, the most important thing was a discussion of the differences between the C.P.G. and the S.P.G. as to what régime should follow after Hitler. However, this is how the Prague leadership of the S.P.G. expressed its opinion on this question in its manifesto (January, 1934):

"But it (the S.P.G.) refuses to tolerate the debate (disputes concerning what régime should be set up after Hitler—W.) which, in the name of using the fruits of a victory not yet won, wants to eternalise what is the most reliable support of the Hitler dictatorship, namely, the split in the ranks of the working class."

In formulating its reply to the proposal of the Communist Party of Germany for the united front, the Prague leadership apparently forgot its earlier statement. In agreement with the opinion of the Prague leadership quoted above, we are also of the opinion that it would be a crime against the toiling people of Germany to postpone the immediate, joint struggle against Hitler fascism, because of disputes about what should follow Hitler. We must first of all do everything to overthrow Hitler. Otherwise it may happen that our best plans about Hitler's successor will be shelved. *The question as to what will succeed Hitler depends first and foremost upon the present anti-fascist struggle in Germany.* It is precisely in the struggle for democratic liberties today that we see most clearly who is really fighting for the freedom of the people, and who thus proves that after the overthrow of Hitler he will be able to do everything to ensure the people an opportunity of freely expressing their will.

The Communists made proposals to the Prague leadership of the S.P.G. as to how to fight concretely, to-day, for democratic liberties (for example, during the elections of the factory committees, by means of joint action in the fascist mass organisations). Contradicting the declarations they had made in their own manifesto, the Prague leadership did not agree to this proposal, but considered it necessary to bring to the forefront the question of the attitude in principle to democracy and dictatorship. The only explanation for this is that they are afraid of the oncoming mass movement for freedom, and that they place their hopes on negotiations with and promises from the representatives of the bourgeoisie. This is the method by which a number of Social Democratic leaders reckon to achieve definite freedom of action for Social Democracy in Germany. *It is no accident that Social Democracy has been silent about its own manifesto of January, 1934,* since the time when, on the eve of June 30th and later, negotiations with the leaders of the Reichswehr and of a number of currents among the bourgeoisie, and the declarations made by these people, raised the hopes of the S.P.G. that, as a result of changes in the composition of the government, it would be possible to obtain a number of concessions from fascism in the sense of extending the freedom of action of Social Democracy.

The fact that the Prague leadership has no desire whatsoever to express its opinion concerning practical questions of the struggle against Hitler fascism, and puts to the forefront the question of democracy as the form of government it desires after the overthrow of Hitler, shows that the Prague leadership of the S.P.G. now considers its task to be *to rally all the opponents of the united front together under the slogan of democracy and to justify the former Social Democratic policy of coalition.* Olenhauer, a representative of the Prague leadership, expressed himself on these lines at a meeting of members of the Social Democratic Party:

"Let the Communists prove their sincerity as regards democracy in the countries with coalition governments, let them act as honest democrats."

Olenhauer asked the Communist Party of Germany the question as to whether, after the overthrow of Hitler fascism, it would continue "as regards the S.P.G., the sort of policy of exposure as conducted now by the Communist Party in countries with coalition governments?"

The *Neuer Vorwaerts* on December 29, 1934, writes the following in an article headed "The Great Lesson of Democracy":

*"If after three years of Hitler despotism you ask us: 'And what after Hitler?', we reply: 'Look at England, look at the living democracy in England.' There is an example of what shall take place after Hitler!"*

This wave of exultation at the British bourgeois democracy of His Majesty the King, at the Conservative government, which by its naval agreement supported the war policy of Hitler fascism, and wants to direct the military aggression of fascism into channels of war against the Soviet Union—these bursts of delight signify the desire of the Right Social Democratic leaders to adopt the rôle of foremost fighters on behalf of reformism in Europe.

### **Past and Future**

"Democracy not Dictatorship" — demand the Social Democratic leadership, totally divorcing these conceptions from their class content. The U.S.S.R. is showing that only in the land of proletarian dictatorship is there real, consistent democracy for the toiling masses, namely, Soviet democracy, while the dictatorial measures of the capitalist governments in the countries of bourgeois democracy, and first and foremost the German experiences which led to fascism, expose the essence of bourgeois democracy as a form of bourgeois class domination. We, Communists, are fighting for democratic liberties because they give the working class and their organisations greater freedom of action and opportunities for preparing the masses for the struggle for Soviet power. Certain anti-fascists have their doubts as to the correctness of such a revolutionary mass policy, as they see in it the Social Democratic policy of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, of the Weimar days. Then, under the slogan of Weimar democracy, all the forces of counter-revolution mustered together in order to gradually abolish all the revolutionary gains of 1918. What did the reformist policy, prior to the advent of Hitler to power, actually amount to? It amounted to the policy of "the lesser evil," to making gradual concessions to the reactionaries and fascists, under the alleged excuse of averting what might be worse. And as a result fascism won ground, step by step. *The historical responsibility for the victory of fascism falls upon Social Democracy with its policy of class collaboration.* At that time, the Communist Party fighting against the policy of emergency decrees, against fascism, against what had the support of Social Democracy, namely, the withdrawal of all the social conquests, and the gradual introduction of restrictions upon freedom of organisation, assembly and the press, was in this way defending the democratic liberties and rights gained in 1918.

The final and irrevocable victory of Socialism in the U.S.S.R., where the inspirer and organiser of all victories is the Bolshevik Party, on the one hand, and the advent of Hitler to power in Germany, where Social Democracy not so long ago held the reins of power, on the other hand, have demonstrated that the great historic conflict between Bolshevism and Social Democracy, and the theory and practice of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, has been finally solved in favour of Bolshevism. The "democratic road" to Socialism advocated by German Social Democracy led to fascism. The German workers have least of all any grounds for hesitation in their choice between bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Now, however, the question above all is not what will happen the day after Hitler is overthrown — to achieve which the Communists will call upon the masses of the German people—when these masses win for themselves an opportunity of freely expressing their will. The question to-day is to organise the successful struggle for the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship.

The Prague leadership of the S.P.G. has refused to conclude a united front agreement, on the additional grounds that the united front allegedly drives to the Right those elements who want to place their confidence in Social Democracy. It is obviously more important for the Prague leadership to consider the feelings of a number of people from bourgeois circles who are favourably inclined towards them, and who are opponents of the united front and the people's front, than to set up a united front with the anti-fascist fighters in Germany.

As for the attitude of the C.C. of the Social Democratic Party to the bourgeois, there has been some experience in this sphere. When, for example, on January 30, 1933, the Social Democratic leaders spread information through a telegraphic agency, to the effect that the rumours about the negotiations between the S.P.G. and the C.P.G. on the question of the united front did not correspond to the actual facts, these tactics, true, did not drive any bourgeois sections away from Social Democracy, but made it possible for Hitler to inflict defeat on the working class, whose ranks were torn as the result of the split. And what did Wels' declaration in May, 1933, in favour of Hitler's foreign policy, lead to? We do not think that the members of the Social Democratic Party would like to continue this policy. On the contrary, the example of France shows how the formation of the proletarian united front creates a centre which draws to itself and stirs to action broad masses of the workers, and thus sharpens the differences among

the bourgeoisie as well, a situation which can be used by the proletariat in their struggle.

The creation of a fighting united front in Germany depends upon the initiative of the Communist organisations in the struggle to organise joint assistance for prisoners and in defence of the economic and democratic demands in the factories and mass organisations. Through persuasion, by stimulating the Social Democratic functionaries,

and especially by collaboration with the Left Social Democrats, the united front will be set up first in the factories. The rate at which the united front will be set up depends primarily on the correct conduct by all functionaries and members of the Communist Party of the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, and of the Brussels Conference of the Communist Party of Germany.

## LOUIS CARLOS PRESTES

### A National Hero of the Brazilian People

**T**HE butchers of the Brazilian people have thrown into prison one of the best men in Brazil, Louis Carlos Prestes, indefatigable fighter for the national liberation of Brazil. He is threatened with cruel punishment by the bourgeois-feudal clique in power.

Prestes is the embodiment of the will of the Brazilian workers, peasants, farm labourers, handicraftsmen, radically inclined intellectuals, the overwhelming majority of the masses in Brazil, who are striving to free their country from the foreign dependence and medieval obscurantism which are preventing the development of the productive forces of this enormous, potentially wealthy country, and which are dooming the majority of the 45 millions of the population to the misery of poverty and oppression.

This "Knight of Hope," as the people themselves have christened him, as a young man of twenty-four, prepared and organised the first anti-imperialist movement in the capital of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, and in the state of Matto Grosso, in 1922. This first movement was suppressed. However, it did not weaken Prestes' determination to continue the struggle. His belief in the national liberation of his country only gathered strength.

In October, 1924, at the head of insurgent detachments of soldiers and officers, Prestes led the movement which had grown in the country for the national independence of Brazil. For a long period of time, the revolutionary detachments, led by Prestes, successfully resisted the government forces which were many times superior to them in numbers. The famous insurgent detachment, which has gone down in history as the "Prestes column," continued its revolutionary march through the country, breaking through the front of the government troops in spite of the defeat suffered by the other section of the insurgents which was surrounded on all sides by government troops and had capitulated.

Despite privations and misfortunes, Prestes, a

brilliant, talented young captain, with an assured future and career ahead of him, filled with an ardent love for his people and his country, preferred rather to fight than to surrender, and led the column through forests and over mountains, traversing the vast territories of his country.

The popularity enjoyed by Prestes' march among the people, and his own personal qualities of courage, determination, boundless loyalty to the cause, and military knowledge, rendered it possible for "Prestes' column," pursued as it was by government troops, to pass through ten states in Brazil, covering a distance of 25,000 kilometres. On every side the local population gave "Prestes' column" the most enthusiastic support.

Worn out by a struggle which was beyond its strength, the "Prestes' column," aware that defeat awaited it, for the enemy was considerably stronger, found itself forced to cross the frontier into Bolivian territory.

Despite the fact that the "Prestes' column" was forced to retreat, its march has gone down in the history of Brazil as an epic story of revolutionary heroism unequalled in the whole of the preceding history of the people of Brazil, as an unforgettable page in its anti-imperialist struggle.

The march of the "Prestes' column" facilitated the awakening of national consciousness among the broad masses of the people of Brazil. Passing from one state to another, and maintaining contacts chiefly with the masses of the peasantry, the "Prestes' column" did not a little to foster the growth of the anti-feudal movement of the peasants. The experiences of the march were used and studied by the *foremost elements among the Brazilian proletariat*, who drew lessons from this march for their future struggle.

### Prestes the Communist

Despite the fact that at the time when he led the courageous struggle of his rebel column, Prestes did not follow to the end a *consistent* anti-

imperialist and anti-feudal fighting programme, yet the logic of the very struggle for the national independence of Brazil drove him to take the road of organising the masses, the road of drawing the widest sections of the population into their country's liberation struggle, the road of struggle and not of capitulation. And herein lies the historic importance of the march of the "Prestes' column." Here is the reason why it was that Prestes himself, a true friend of the people, a man bound to them by indissoluble ties of struggle and suffering, rapidly overcame the petty-bourgeois illusions of the first stage of the struggle and came over to the side of Communism; this is the reason why, when the wave of the revolutionary, anti-imperialist movement reached new heights hitherto unprecedented in the country, the masses of the people of Brazil put forward Prestes as their popular leader.

In Brazil, a land where economic life is at a semi-colonial level, the crisis made itself felt in an extremely acute form and assisted in bringing about a sharp intensification of the social contradictions inside the country, and a growth of political consciousness among the people.

The Vargas government still further intensified the discontent among the people by its policy of selling, "lock, stock and barrel," all the national wealth of the country to the magnates of the City and Wall Street, by its open support of the Fascist elements inside the country, by its merciless suppression of the struggle for independence and for even the most elementary demands put forward by the people, by intensifying economic oppression and exploitation, and by stirring up internecine strife between the different nationalities in Brazil. These were the circumstances in which, especially in 1934 and 1935, the revolutionary movement and the desire of the people to unite all their forces in the fight for national liberation increased throughout the country.

An extensive wave of strikes broke out, in which over one and a half million people took part. Street demonstrations and armed conflicts became more frequent. In different states the peasants fought against the high tariffs and taxation, and against the confiscation of their lands by the landlords because of inability to pay their rent.

Cases of the peasants giving their support to strikes became more and more frequent (in the state of San Paulo and Rio Grande del Norte the peasants and small traders gave their support to the workers on strike on the English railway). The traders and handicraftsmen have not infrequently given their support to workers on strike. In the army, not only among the junior and middle officers, but also among the high army officers, dis-

content grew at the behaviour of the reactionaries.

At the same time the insolent policy of the Brazil Fascists (the Integralists) aroused anger among wide masses of the people.

### **The National Liberation Alliance**

It was in these circumstances of growing discontent that a broad anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movement came into being, and a people's front and its organisation, the National Liberation Alliance, were established.

The latter grew up in the heat of the struggle, in the process of strikes and demonstrations, of the peasant movement and the movement among the soldiers and officers. It grew up and developed as a protest against the growth of the Fascist movement inside the country, and the increase of oppression and enslavement; it originated as a weapon of struggle against the treacherous, anti-popular, anti-national policy of the Vargas government. It grew up out of the vitally urgent tasks facing the national liberation movement of Brazil.

All those hostile to the national enslavement of Brazil joined the National-Liberation Alliance. Well-known social workers from various sections of society, fought in its ranks. Professors, scientists, doctors, lawyers, parliamentary deputies from the opposition parties, important military authorities from the Brazilian army have declared themselves in sympathy with the cause of the National-Liberation Alliance. Generals Miguel Costa (revolutionary leader in 1924-1926) and Manuel Rabelo (Commander of the North-East region), Major Barat (ex-Governor of Para) and others, have not disguised their sympathy for the cause of the National-Liberation Alliance.

The efforts of the workers, peasants, students, advanced intellectuals, and military and all other social strata, who are in opposition to the treacherous anti-national policy of Vargas, have all joined in one common torrent of opposition in the struggle for the national independence of Brazil.

Wide masses of the people, taught by the bitter experience of constant betrayal in the course of the preceding struggles, now understand that the all-round development and victory of the people's front can be guaranteed only by an organisation which has a clear fighting programme and is led by a man who has shown in deeds that for him the interests of the people stand above all else, and whose courage, determination, and honesty have won the love and respect of the whole of the people.

In Brazil, only Louis Carlos Prestes could be this man.

This is why Louis Carlos Prestes was chosen as

the honorary president of the National-Liberation Alliance, when it arose in the beginning of 1935. The members of the alliance in their manifesto declared Prestes to be the man whose talent, experience and loyalty will ensure that the programme of the National-Liberation Alliance is carried out.

"Prestes was elected honorary President of the N.L.A. because, despite the fact that he has been driven out of the country, the people consider him their hero, and see in him the embodiment of the most irreconcilable, sincere determination to fight for our national emancipation."

So said Vale Cabrol, one of the leaders of the N.L.A. Prestes himself regarded his election to the position of honorary president of the N.L.A. as an endeavour to endow the movement with a truly popular, truly anti-imperialist character. In his letter to the President of the N.L.A., he wrote that his name was indeed put forward spontaneously by the masses themselves who wanted, apparently, to endow the N.L.A. with a fighting, revolutionary, anti-imperialist character.

Prestes, as the inspirer of the National-Liberation movement in Brazil, has pointed out more than once that the strength of this movement is determined by the degree to which the broad masses of workers and peasants partake in it, and by the extent to which the proletariat and its revolutionary party influence this movement.

By all the experiences of his struggle, Prestes has demonstrated to the oppressed peoples of the whole world, and especially of the semi-colonial and colonial countries, that on becoming a Communist he not only did not cease to regard himself as the representative of the interests of the broadest masses of Brazil, but, on the contrary, by arming himself with the theory of Marxism he has become imbued with a still greater consciousness and understanding of the fact, that, as a revolutionary fighter in a dependent country like Brazil, he can and must be the defender and leader of the whole of the people.

### **The Advance of Reaction**

As leader of the people, he followed the development of the N.L.A. movement with the greatest sympathy and attention. The popularity of the N.L.A. grew to such a degree that the government decided to prohibit it several months before it began officially to exist.

On July 12th a decree was published disbanding the N.L.A. This action called forth the indignation of very wide masses of the people of Brazil,

who saw in this new proof of the treacherous anti-popular policy reigning in the country.

Protest strikes broke out directed against the prohibition of the Alliance. The government replied to these strikes with a wave of repression. The fascists grew more audacious, and declared that they were preparing to seize power.

The situation in the country became more and more tense. The intensification of reaction, the acts of mass repression, the closing down of the foremost newspapers and of working class organisations, etc., operated by the Vargas government, provoked spontaneous action by the toilers in the north of Brazil, in the states of Rio Grande del Norte and Pernambuco. This action was suppressed by government troops. After the suppression of the movement in the north, a movement began among various troops in the Rio de Janeiro garrison. In order to cope with the movements which the government itself provoked by its reactionary policy, it declared that the uprisings in the north and among the troops in Rio de Janeiro were inspired by the Comintern, and that Louis Carlos Prestes was their organiser.

Having drowned this spontaneous movement in blood, it set going the whole of its political apparatus so as to lay its hands on Prestes. For four months, the police of Brazil and other South American states hunted after Prestes. And at last they seized hold of him . . . The leader of the people of Brazil is in jail. But this does not satisfy the Vargas government. A few days ago, news came by telegraph, the character of which leaves no doubt whatsoever that it has been fabricated in the offices of police headquarters. The news reads that Prestes was betrayed to the police by an American Communist, Victor Allen Baron, who committed suicide after doing so.

There can be no doubt that no one will believe this brazen slander directed against a Communist tortured in a Brazilian jail.

It is an old and tested trick to torture a revolutionary, and to declare that he committed suicide as a result of the pangs of conscience . . . and then to wash their hands!

We repeat once again that no one will believe this story. This news not only does not cast a shadow on the memory of one of the many who are being tortured, but on the contrary will give rise to a new wave of indignation and resentment at the provocatory policy of the Vargas government, against which we must direct every enlightened opinion throughout the world. We must procure the release of Prestes and all other champions of Brazilian liberty.



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