

The Communist Crusade

BY HARRY POLLITT

THE COMMUNIST PARTY has launched its Crusade for the defence of the lives and livelihood of the British people at this serious moment in our destinies because we have unshakable faith in the common people—the men and women of the factories and offices; countryside, professions and trade unions—members of political parties and the Co-operative movement. We are confident they will yet unite their forces, and drive out Chamberlain and his Government which has led Britain to the edge of disaster.

We launch our Crusade because we know that the existing poverty, unemployment, low wages, speed up and high prices, growth in preventable sickness and undernourishment, alongside the piling up of armaments, rising profits and fear of war, are all the result of the National Government policy at home and abroad. We know that our country is dominated by a handful of bankers, landlords and profiteers, who have allied themselves with the fascist powers, in order to protect the maintenance of rent, interest and profit for themselves.

Our Crusade is a definite challenge to every vested interest of monopoly capital. It is a clear call to action to all men and women of good will—it is an urgent summons in the name of liberty to all lovers of justice, to improve the conditions of the majority of the people, to secure work for all, decent homes, to extend social services, strengthen the Labour movement and curb the greed of the rich so that health and happiness will be within the reach of everyone, at the same time as the mass movement towards Socialism is given a new impetus and force.

The defence of the British people against poverty and war, the opportunity for development—that is the keynote of our Crusade.

We are determined that the British people shall take its rightful place in all forms of social advance, extension of democratic rights and liberties, and in building up an indestructible peace alliance of all nations who have no interest in war, but desire, on the basis of collective security, to protect each other and live in peace. This is the object of our Crusade. Every man and woman who believes in reason and freedom, justice, liberty and peace can support us whatever their views may be on the ultimate development of the present system.

We have no illusions about the magnitude of the task, or of the confusion, difficulties and vested interests that stand in the way. But the moment is ripe for advance. The people are awakening as never before to an understanding of the full consequences of Chamberlain's policy. It is being realised that the fight against it is not only because of Munich and questions of foreign policy, but because the situation in Britain itself on all domestic issues facing the people is serious and is inevitably bound up with foreign policy as well. It is in fact a single fight against Chamberlain's policy as a whole.

It may be that questions of foreign policy have tended to assume major importance and publicity, but there is now a growing recognition that it is not a question of some "temporary weakness" on the part of Chamberlain, or that "Chamberlain is only wrong on foreign policy," that has brought Britain to its present position, but that it is the result of a consistent and determined pro-fascist policy as a whole, carried out by Chamberlain on behalf of monopoly capitalism.

The plain fact is that Britain to-day is ruled by a Government which prepares a way for the advance of fascism in Britain as well as supporting fascist aggression abroad. Chamberlain and the ruling gang of Britain are the enemies of democracy and the natural friends of fascism. For hundreds of years the people of our country have been fighting against the forebears of this clique to secure rights of free speech, free press and free organisation, the right to join trade unions and political parties.

Chamberlain and his Cliveden set—reactionary diehards to the core—are envious of Hitler's and Mussolini's successful destruction of the Labour movement in Germany and Italy. They would like to pursue a similar policy here, by purely "British methods" of course. They are the class enemies of the Labour movement and have always tried to restrict its advance and growth. They are alarmed at the growth of the liberation movement in the Colonies; they detest the Soviet Union, the forerunner of the new world social order.

The result of this policy of monopoly capitalism is seen in the situation in Britain and abroad. Millions of trade unionists and unorganised workers have to eke out an existence on a weekly wage far below the subsistence level defined by a capitalist economist as essential. Our Depressed Areas are forgotten areas. Men have to go to the length of lying down in the snow at Christmastime and carrying coffins in mock funeral processions, in order to arouse the social conscience of the people to the horrors of unemployment. Tens of thousands of mothers are driven distracted by disease and anxiety that could be prevented to-morrow if they were allowed adequate means of existence.

This is why everything that concerns the health and happiness of the people is subordinated in the interests of the monopolists—markets sacrificed, agriculture destroyed, so that the feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction in the countryside rises in volume every week. It is why prices and profits are high, alongside the declining manufactures and exports which have increased unemployment by half-a-million in a year. This explains why there is a demand from the monopolists for a further restriction in the social services, and continued attempts to restrict the democratic rights and liberties of the people, and why not a single constructive measure is brought forward to stave off the approaching trade slump.

It is because of this pro-fascist policy that the National Government has sabotaged every effort of other democratic nations to build up a common peace front, destroyed collective security in the self interests of reactionary imperialists and fascists, rendered the League of Nations impotent, sacrificed

small nations and proposed reactionary alliances that would give Hitler a free hand against the Soviet Union. They have joined in the fascist conspiracy to destroy everything the common people expect from life, and to crush every democratic and progressive movement among the masses.

It is this combination of facts which makes the organising of the defeat of Chamberlain the immediate supreme task for the Labour and democratic forces in Britain. Everything else in politics is not just secondary to this ; everything else in life and politics, a happy life, preservation of liberty, security of peace, and any real advance towards working class power and Socialism are all dependent and bound up with this.

It should be the proud privilege and duty of the official Labour leaders to be the foremost in now attempting to bring together all those of whatever party, grouping or movement, who are in opposition to the policy of Chamberlain. It is the refusal of the Labour leaders to do this that is Chamberlain's strongest capital, and why he continues to get away with it. Just as it is the division amongst the democratic states that is the strongest capital of Mussolini and Hitler.

If the people of all parties, groupings and classes, who are in opposition to the National Government ; if their minds, ideas, oratory, pens, power and organisations, were welded together in a common movement to fight poverty and unemployment, defend democracy and peace, we could really begin to transform conditions in Britain and open the way to peace and plenty, and at the same time this could play a leading rôle in a solid, impregnable peace front.

Instead of all this new political awakening and alarm on the gravity of the present position being welcomed and encouraged, stimulated and actively led by the dominant group of Labour leaders, it is either cold-shouldered, ignored, or the basest insinuations put forward as to what it is that really lies behind it. It would appear that only the dominant group of Labour leaders are possessed of honesty of purpose and sincerity of aim. It is time to end this. In my report to the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party in September

last, in this particular connection, we stated :

It is politically very short-sighted not to recognise these developments and to ignore the importance of bringing all these sections of the people and their organisations into co-operation with the Labour Movement. It is necessary to recognise that at the present decisive moment, neither the working class alone nor these other sections of the people are able by themselves, with their present divided forces, to bring about the immediate changes in policy that are required and that can lay the sure basis for defeating Chamberlain.

The ruling class in Britain has always carried through the policy of "divide and conquer." Once again the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital are trying to carry through this policy in order, gradually, to establish fascism in Britain.

The chief task of the moment is to put an end to the policy of the Chamberlain clique, and to reach an understanding over a common programme in the interests of all who are directly affected. We should regard them all as equal comrades in arms against the common danger, the common enemy, and in the struggle for their common interests.

The Labour Movement which is better organised than other sections of the population, is also more experienced in struggle and therefore should recognise as a duty the bringing together of all useful forces.

It is because we have confidence in the working class, know its capacities, its initiative, its genius for organisation and leadership, that we are not afraid to make our proposals for Labour taking the initiative in bringing together all the opponents of Chamberlain's policy, and replacing his Government with a Government pledged to the real defence of the people in every aspect of life, by carrying out a policy of social justice, democracy and peace.

We are confident that in such a Government, however broad its personnel, there will be no deflection of the aims of the mass movement or sidetracking of the needs and demands of the people, because its main power will rest on Labour—on Labour organised in the factories, Trade Unions and Co-operatives, which would be strong enough to ensure that the interests of the common people—the overwhelming majority of British citizens—came before the narrow vested interests of the reactionaries.

The situation is too serious to be content with propaganda

for the coming together of the people's forces. It can and must be done now, in every locality and district, as every opportunity affords, despite any official opposition to such forms of united action and co-operation.

We have had so many, many, examples of the effectiveness of campaigns when they are based on common co-operation and action. The successful Rent Strikes ; the campaign around the Youth Charter, and the prominence being given to the demands of Youth, as seen in the recent Youth Hearing ; the Foodships and the medical supplies for Spain ; the part played in Spain by the British Battalion, composed of men of all parties and sections of the population to whose deeds C. R. Attlee, M.P., has paid great tribute ; help for China—all these are the practical things that have been accomplished by men and women of all sections of the people, and that have helped forward the mass movement against Chamberlain as well as helping the Spanish and Chinese people to put up their marvellously heroic resistance to fascism.

The masses must break through the barriers that have been erected to prevent the unity of all who want to fight Chamberlain, by leaders, who only see themselves, and not the people, by leaders who are afraid of either assuming direct governmental responsibility or sharing it with others in the present difficult situation, and who attempt to cover up their tracks by talking loudly about Socialism.

But the fight for Socialism is not conducted in a vacuum ; it is not an abstract thing. The advance to Socialism is only possible by the continuous fight against capitalism ; by being able to seize on the next link in the chain in any given situation ; by developing the class consciousness of the masses in struggle ; and by Marxist education ; by leading and uniting the struggle of the masses for higher wages, shorter hours, holidays with pay ; by actively fighting against unemployment. But where is there such a fight being led by the official labour leaders to-day ? The same leaders, now so loudly professing their loyalty to Socialism, are those most notorious in damping down any active united struggle to secure the demands of their own members.

The present position of the Labour movement, in which no

attempt is made to unite the struggles of three million trade unionists who are demanding wage increases, and the situation in many important areas in regard to Labour Party organisation, the divided counsels and leadership, the confusion, the refusal to give direct leadership to the daily fight against capitalism, are the self condemnation of the deliberately deceitful character of the present "socialist" posturings of so many of its leaders.

There is not a serious man or woman in the Labour movement who would not recognise in the defeat of Chamberlain a tremendous victory for the democratic forces in Britain and the world as a whole. Who would fail to recognise it as a big step forward, however broadly based the Government that succeeded it might be? *For it would be a victory over fascism.* In the conditions of the present moment this would be one of the most important contributions that could be made in the movement towards the future conquest of power and the establishment of Socialism.

Only fools will argue that it is now easier to realise socialism in Austria, Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia, than it was when they had a democratic régime. And yet the issue with which we are confronted in Britain is the prevention of the advance of fascism at home as much as it is to prevent an extension of fascist influence and territory abroad.

When the Chamberlain candidates are defeated now in any by-election, whether as at Dartford or at Bridgwater, it is hailed as a defeat for Chamberlain. This is true, but how much more important it is to organise and be sure of achieving the decisive defeat of Chamberlain at the next General Election. The tragedy of the present position is that it is recognised on all sides that this victory could be achieved if the whole forces opposed to Chamberlain were united on an agreed programme thus ensuring only one anti-Chamberlain candidate in every constituency.

A recent Editorial in the *Daily Herald* and an article by Mr. Marchbank in the *Railway Review* practically admitted this; only it was argued it would mean Labour losing its independence and socialist basis. It would not. And those who state this know it would not. Labour has established

its claim to an independent existence. Its programme and principles are widely known and adopted. But it has not reached that stage which would guarantee that it alone could defeat Chamberlain and form a Labour Government. Correct political leadership in the light of the actual facts and circumstances to-day will strengthen Labour's position ; for whatever agreements, alliances or programmes are adopted to meet the present terrible emergency—this new situation in Britain, where it is governed by men who want fascism and support it in every possible way—the main basis of the Labour movement is, and must always be, in the factories, trade unions, co-operatives, and local party organisations.

The fight for Socialism cannot be separated from the current struggle and situation, from the present relation of forces and issues. It cannot be placed in some watertight compartment divorced from all the objective facts of life at this moment when millions of our people are in want, when one-fourth of the world's people are engaged in a life and death struggle against fascism, and when millions in Britain fear that the flames and destruction of war may reach their own homes and families.

It is precisely because we also desire Socialism—and we think we may claim we desire it more earnestly and keenly than the Bevins, Marchbanks, and Morrisons—that we Communists are so insistent in the Labour movement taking the lead in organising, in a common movement and programme, all those who oppose Chamberlain. We, as Communists, as Marxists, are ready to co-operate with all, who at the present moment see that the ridding of this country of Chamberlain and his gang is the supreme political task that confronts every one of us, and that there can be no decisive advance of any kind until there is complete reversal of the whole domestic and foreign policy of this country. We are not afraid that the Labour movement "will lose its independence" or that "it will be compromised by entangling alliances" or "that the fight for Socialism will be retarded," or any of the other fatalist and defeatist phrases now so current in the Labour Party, just because we have faith in the working class ; just because we know that everything the

movement stands for, and has achieved by long years of struggle and sacrifice against capitalism now stands in danger from Chamberlain and fascism, and that the next stage in the struggle is to win the immediate victory over these forces.

At the same time as we fight for the carrying through of such a policy as this, it is necessary to emphasise time and time again, that the greatest stimulus which could be given to this movement would be if the working class itself were united. This is one of the great weaknesses of the present position which leads to such great divergence of effort and activity, to so many misunderstandings, that tends to spread confusion. Whereas if the Labour movement itself were united, the existing political situation could be changed in a week.

Added urgency is given to this precisely because of the growth of the opposition to Chamberlain in the historic parties of capitalism—the Liberal and Tory parties. The Sinclairs, Edens, Churchills and Duff Coopers, have fundamental aims different and opposed to those of the Labour movement. But they are also the expression of political unrest and disquiet amongst sections of the population, who, for the first time, are finding themselves in opposition to long and cherished political beliefs and traditions. The stronger, more confidently and resolutely Labour leadership expresses itself in such a situation, the more this differentiation will increase, the more people will be attracted to the Labour movement, the stronger its organisation becomes in the factories and localities, so that its whole mass basis is strengthened in such a way as enables it to prevent any distortion of the programme of a People's Government which replaces Chamberlain or any strengthening of Imperialist aims.

The fear on the part of some Labour leaders and their supporters that the Tory opposition to Chamberlain is only making certain manœuvres to defend their class interests at the expense of the working class, is a confession of lack of faith in the working class and its organisations.

Unless such steps as we suggest are taken there will be a growth of the present dangerous feeling of resignation to the inevitability of war; that nothing can now be done to improve

the social position of the people or fight unemployment. Such feelings breed demoralisation and impotence, they strengthen the position of Chamberlain who has a definite political line—a pro-fascist line. Such feelings can, and must, be dispelled by clear political leadership and unity of action on the part of those opposed to Chamberlain.

The people need to be put on their guard against the very clever attempts that will undoubtedly be made for Chamberlain to manœuvre in such a way as still to deceive sections of the population into believing that he has all the time, in his negotiations with the fascist dictators, only been activated by the desire to prevent war. The peoples fear war so much, that there is always a danger of deceiving them into believing that they have been saved from war, as after Munich, when the actual facts are that they have only been taken a little nearer to war, in more dangerous and isolated circumstances. Under no circumstances can Chamberlain become the custodian of the defence of the British people, either in home or foreign questions. The group he represents will as surely betray Britain as the Fifth Column in Spain have betrayed the Spanish Republic.

As the war crisis grows, the questions of defence are recognised on all sides as ever more urgent. But the first necessity for the real defence of the people is the defeat of the Government of Chamberlain and its support of fascist aggression. Who bears the heaviest responsibility for the foul hot breath of war now fanning the cheeks of millions of people? Undoubtedly it is the Chamberlain Government. An effective policy of defence of the British people requires the defeat of Chamberlain as the essential condition for making any other measure of defence effective.

The main failing and danger of the present policy of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress in relation to defence, is that they approach it as if technical questions of defence could be separated from the political question, and so become involved in these in such a way as to create the impression of complete identification with Chamberlain's policy. This largely arises out of fear of being accused of not wanting Britain to be strong in its defensive forces.

Chamberlain and the engines of propaganda he controls have not been slow to accuse those who oppose his policy, and who are for collective resistance to fascism, of "wanting war." In this he is seconded by Hitler and Mussolini who have exactly the same line.

In my report to the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party, we stated :

But where does Chamberlain's policy really lead? He claims that it ensures peace, "that it keeps Britain out of war." Never was there a greater lie, and this great lie must be exposed.

The seven years' record of the National Government shows a steady assistance to the growth of Fascist economic and military power, and an expansion of war all over the world, until now war involves one-fourth of the human race.

Chamberlain, like Baldwin before him, deliberately lies to the British people about the tempestuous rate of Germany's war preparations. He refuses to disclose what he knows of Hitler's strategical plans against France, and about which the Nazis in their military journals speak openly.

Since that was said, Munich and the invasion of Czechoslovakia has occurred. No one dare deny that as a result the whole military and economic basis of German fascism has been strengthened. What is the earthly use of calling for increased armament production in Britain one day, when the next day you hand to Hitler thousands of aeroplanes, tanks, heavy artillery, a defence line that cost £100,000,000 to construct, thousands of conscripts, important war industries like Skodas, vital chemical factories, and create a situation where Hitler is able to remove 25 Divisions of his Army from the Czech frontier to the French, and which allows him to establish Air bases in Spain.

The key to the question of defence, either against poverty or war, is policy. If that policy is strengthening fascism, you are simply betraying the defence of the British people both in regard to social conditions and war. The people realise more and more that concessions given to the fascists only whet their appetite for more. Abyssinia, Saar, Austria, Danzig, Czechoslovakia, Memel, China, Spain—a sequence of betrayals which have struck the words "reason" and "negotiation" out of the language. A series of outrages which represent the darkest pages in modern history. Is it

surprising that in the minds of millions "whose turn next" looms large? "Can Britain go on betraying every other democratic nation without reaping the inevitable nemesis"; "When shall we feel the rod on our own backs?"

The people of Britain must be made to realise that the attempts to buy immunity by reactionary four-power pacts will never bring peace. If we go on throwing morsels to the wolves whose hunger is insatiable, one day we will be presented with a bill of costs. In order to check the spread of war we must, and without delay, build up an unbreakable common front of the peoples who want peace, strengthen the League of Nations and unite in a common pact for Peace all States which are prepared to maintain peace against fascist aggression. But to do this we must defeat the Chamberlain Government and replace the Munich policy of alliance with the fascist war-makers by standing firmly for a policy of collective maintenance of peace. Only in this way can we ensure a real defence of the people.

Bound up with this same question is how we can best help the people of Germany and Italy in their struggle against fascism. It must be surely clear that the stronger and more united the movement against fascism is in the democratic countries, the greater encouragement there is for the development of the mass movement inside the fascist countries themselves. This is always the Achilles Heel of Fascism. But if the peoples in Britain and France for example, continue to allow their Governments to support fascist aggression, to give away key defensive positions, it is inevitable that a feeling of isolation should develop and the mass movement of the people be damped down inside Germany and Italy.

The coming together of all the Labour and democratic forces in Britain would act as such a stimulus to the anti-fascist movement in fascist countries, as to be worth many aeroplanes, tanks and Army divisions. That is why we repeat that the main issue now before the British people is how to defeat Chamberlain, how to save Britain and its people from having to undergo the horrors that people like us in Spain and China are undergoing.

Let the great Labour movement of Britain, confident of

its strength and sure of its purpose, co-operate with all opponents of Chamberlain's policy to sweep the miscalled "National " Government out of office and replace it by a Government pledged to the defence of the people, against poverty and war, against attacks on democratic rights and liberties. A Government which would, under the pressure of the mass movement, provide work and wages for all the workers; help the Distressed Areas, the agriculture and fishing industries; extend the social services and schemes of housing and public works; assist the old age pensioners ; give the young people a real chance in life, in education, in technical training. A Government that would end profiteering and corruption in the supply of Britain's arms by the nationalisation of the armaments industry ; that would restore the political rights of the trades unions, remove bans on free speech and demonstration ; that would extend the present democratic rights we have won to the colonial peoples. A Government that would really defend the British people from fascist aggression by joining hands with the people of France, the Soviet Union and the United States of America; that would bring peace to Spain by restoring the international rights of the legal Spanish Government; that would act in concert with other democratic nations in securing the integrity and independence of China.

And now, while fighting and organising to form such a Government, a united Labour movement could be recruiting and strengthening the Labour Party, Trade Unions and Co-operatives ; uniting the trades unionists to secure their wage demands ; uniting the employed and unemployed, in a common fight against Unemployment ; leading the revolt in the countryside ; intensifying in every possible way socialist propaganda and education, so that a new impetus is given to the whole movement.

This is the way forward. This is in the interests of the common people, who await such a lead, who want to fight, who will never tolerate the coming of fascism to Britain, if those whose duty it is to lead will really lead. The time is ripe for such forms of action to be taken now. The taking of this action is the essence and test of Labour leadership to-day.