

## CLOSING REMARKS BY GOTTWALDT:

**I**N the discussion on the speeches of the Czecho-Slovakian delegation—on the speeches of Guttman, Schwermann and my co-report—there were various differences of opinion and misunderstandings. It is therefore necessary, in my closing remarks, to touch once again on some important problems, and to define our standpoint more precisely.

*The first question concerns the relation of the Communists to the masses, in particular to the working class.* The Communist Party is the most class-conscious part of the working class, its vanguard. The main task of the Communist Parties in capitalist countries to-day, is to win over and prepare the majority of the working class for the revolutionary struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The way to this is a decisive, self-sacrificing and consistent upholding and defence of their *daily* class interests.

Hitherto the situation has been such that the majority of the working class had been under the influence of the class enemy. This is not only on account of *terrorism*, but also on account of manifold *ideological* influences, and of different social gradations within the working class itself. The result of this is that there are many illusions, prejudices and petty-bourgeois views prevalent among the masses of the workers. Have we got to reckon with these things? Undoubtedly we have! We must be well acquainted with the state of feeling and the views of the masses, and must study them to determine the tactics and methods of our *approach* to the masses in each *concrete case*. Anyone who attempts to approach the masses without regard to the concrete state of feeling prevalent among them, will always be wide of the mark. Does this mean that we ought to *adapt ourselves* to the state of feeling among the backward elements or associate ourselves with their illusions? No! We must associate ourselves with their necessities, with their daily class interests. We must be acquainted with the state of feeling among them as it varies from time to time, *not* to adapt ourselves to this state of feeling, but to *overcome* it, by suitable means and methods, in so far as it is the expression of the influence exercised by the class enemy. And the best means for this purpose is the *self-experience* of the masses. In my speech I said that at the same time we must *learn* from the masses. Is that correct? Certainly! For tremendous revolutionary energies and revolutionary initiative lie vested in the masses, which we must unchain and guide. Anyone who regards the non-Communist workers as

a "reactionary mass," is on the wrong track, especially to-day, in the time of a revolutionary upsurge which is penetrating *all* sections of the working class. But does this statement of the necessity of learning from the masses mean that we must accept *everything* that the masses want, and put it into practice, that the masses are *incapable* of putting forward demands in contradiction to their general class interests? No! I have *expressly said* that it often happens in practice that the masses put forward objectively counter-revolutionary demands, which we must reject. I said, "Not all partial demands which come from the masses themselves, are correct or acceptable to us!"

In another connection, in connection with a *concrete* case of united action, I expressed myself as follows:

"It can, however, also happen that we fail because the masses in question do not fully understand us in a *given situation*, or because we make clumsy proposals. In such cases, especially when we are concerned with the working masses, we have to reckon with this fact, subordinate ourselves, or to put it still better—be elastic, make other proposals and use other forms which the masses will accept."

How is this to be understood? I will make this clear by giving an example. Let us say that we want to organise a struggle in a certain factory against wage cuts. At a factory meeting, we propose an immediate strike. The majority of the workers reject this proposal. What are we to do? Raise a hue and cry against the workers? No! We have to reckon with the rejection of our proposal, for without a majority of the workers we can certainly not lead the strike. But can we be content with this? No! We must *at once*, on the very spot where our proposal has been rejected, make *other proposals*, let us say for a demonstration, or for a demonstrative strike with a fixed time-limit, or for other forms of struggle; meanwhile, of course, we will not cease to carry on further propaganda for the strike, to make preparations for it, and do all we can to win over the *entire* body of employees for the strike. It is in this sense that the word "subordinate" is to be understood. Is the procedure which I have described correct? Yes! If, however, you have gathered the impression from the word "subordinate," that we are proposing to adapt and subordinate ourselves to the state of feeling of the masses *in general*, then I do not insist upon this way of putting it.

We must not press formulas too far, especially when they can be wrongly interpreted.

In this question, therefore, our logical conclusion is as follows: The Communists must take the masses *as they are* with all their merits and weaknesses. They must understand how to work among the masses *in all situations*, to develop their good qualities, and overcome their weaknesses, and thus to win over the masses to our side. This, however, cannot be done unless we are exactly acquainted with the changing moods of the masses and determine the concrete forms, methods and tactics of our *approach* to the masses accordingly.

The second question concerns the rôle of the Communist Party as leader in the formation of a united front. I emphasise in advance that in all our speeches we have spoken of the united front *from below*, and it goes without saying that we reject the idea of replacing the united front from below, by a policy of coalition with the Social-Democrats. This, therefore, does not enter into the discussion at all. What we must discuss, is the question of *how* we can realise the rôle of the Party, as leader in the united front from below.

In order to take over leadership in the united front at all, the united front must first be created. How is the united front to be created? By associating ourselves with the daily necessities of the masses, calling them to wage a common struggle, mobilising them and organising the struggle. The united front thus comes into being *in the process of struggle*. Without struggle there can be *no* united front. Can we make our leadership in the united front an *a priori* condition? No! How then are we to tackle the problem of leadership? We must face this question on the basis of proletarian democracy. *The workers themselves, all workers*, must elect their organs of leadership for an action, for a strike, etc. And in these organs we must fight for the leadership; through these organs we must realise our leading rôle. Is this practicable? Yes it is! We can cite hundreds of examples, and in those cases where *we* have taken the *initiative* in struggle, in those cases where the masses *actually*, from the start, saw us at the head, there our task was even comparatively easy and simple, our tactical leadership was accepted, nay welcomed, by the whole of the masses as a matter of course. Take the miners' strike in north-west Bohemia\* as an example; all the tactical measures in this strike were decided upon in the Political Bureau. But, before they were put into execution they were first mooted by the Communists in the democratically-elected organs, conferences and strike com-

mittees; the Communists put the measures before these organs, and the latter decided upon them, so that they became measures taken by the *whole mass of workers*. Thus, in this miners' strike we *realised* our leadership in *actual fact*, although the Communists were in a minority on the strike committees. Or take another case: We are leading an unemployed movement, in which hundreds of thousands of unemployed participate. In the spring, when this movement was at its height, there were 15,000 action-committees of the unemployed, on which the Communists were in a minority. And despite this fact, we, and we only, are leading this great united front, which has involved great struggles and which was also able to win great material and political successes. The Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia is the acknowledged leader of the unemployed of Czecho-Slovakia. Everybody knows this. The sparrows whistle it on the roof. And how have we realised our leadership? Through the democratically-elected organs of the unemployed. Again, we have a great peasant movement in the Carpathian Ukraine. Who is leading this movement? We are. How? Through the democratically-elected organs of the peasantry, on which the Communists form an infinitesimal minority. Did the masses know, in the miners' strike, in the unemployment movement, in numerous other strikes and in the Carpathian Ukraine, that we, the Communists, were the leaders? Yes, they did! And they showed that they knew it too. Immediately after the miners' strike, municipal elections were held in the important miners' districts of north-west Bohemia and Ostrau, and in these elections we attained a smashing success. We are rapidly winning votes at the municipal elections in the Carpathian Ukraine. There are a large number of places where we had almost nothing in 1929 and where we have now won a clear majority of the votes. At the elections, in general, we are winning on an average, 46 per cent., as compared with 1929 in the Carpathian-Ukraine, 56 per cent. in Slovakia, and 34 per cent., on an average, throughout the whole country. That is how the masses acknowledged our leadership in their struggles. In addition to this, I can quote an eloquent passage from the bourgeois press, in regard to the miners' struggle of north-west Bohemia. The bourgeois paper, the *Brüxer Zeitung*, published the following estimate of the results of the struggle in a leading article written on April 20, the day the struggle was broken off:

"This strike was not a Communist strike. It originated in full-blooded unrest and indignation, and was international and non-political. A real genuine miners' strike, for which the

\*See No. 11/12, "Communist International" (1932).

organisations also, had no decisive importance. But the Communists are vigilant people, and awaiting their opportunity. It would be childish to close one's eyes to the astounding phenomena, which were apparent to anyone who had eyes to see. The Communists were fanning the flames, but the fire broke out without their help. They were at the head, but the whole district marched behind them. Twice the workers entered Brůx, and their militant attitude has probably not yet been forgotten. When their opportunity arrived, the Communists did not hesitate to take their place at the head of the movement — a place which all others were avoiding—and they maintained it to the end. However, among those who followed them, were many whose names are on the lists of other trade unions, German and Czechish, Marxist and National, many who will now have to seriously reflect where their allegiance lies, and of whom, it is uncertain under what banner they will fight, if there is another strike . . .

It is, unfortunately, a fact that Communism, which had greatly diminished, in importance, in the mining district of north-west Bohemia, has been unimaginably regenerated, and extended by this strike, and has once again become a power. Communism is the real victor in this struggle. This fact will make itself felt, both politically, and perhaps also in other respects."

It may perhaps be objected that in our leadership of the united front *through* the democratically-elected organs of all militant workers, the personality of the Party is too much obscured and veiled, that it does not find clear expression. Is this correct? No! The very facts which we have quoted prove this. Do we perhaps conceal our revolutionary Communist views and principles from the masses? Are we ashamed, so to speak, to appear before the masses as Communists? No, on the contrary! In the elected organs of mass action we make proposals and uphold them *as Communists*. We speak at their meetings, gatherings and demonstrations *as Communists*. We seek, by word and deed, to convince the masses of the correctness of *all* our views, up to and including the doctrine of the armed struggle for power. To be sure, in our *concrete* struggle, in our concrete proposals for struggle and action, in individual cases of separate concrete action, we adjust ourselves to the given *concrete* degree of maturity, which has been reached by the masses, whom we want to lead to *concrete* struggle. Is this procedure correct? I hold—absolutely! One comrade has stated here that the obscuring of the face of the Party found its expression in the fact that,

during the strike in north-west Bohemia, and in Brůnn, recruiting for the Red trade unions and the Party was avowedly forbidden by us, in order not to split the united front. This is *not* true. The fact is that we rejected a proposal that the *strike committees* should be asked, at the beginning of the strike, to recruit members for the Party, and the Red trade unions. We may be told that we were wrong to reject this proposal. Besides this, we published an appeal at the united conference which took place in Brůx at the end of the strike, in which the conference called upon the miners to enter the Red miners' union. And, at this conference, we proposed and *carried through* something else, namely the resolution that all miners should take part, as a body, in the *Communist May Day Demonstration*. The result was that the other May Day demonstrations, of our opponents, either had to be called off altogether, or came to nothing, whereas the masses took part in our demonstration; this includes several Social-Democratic and Czechish Socialist organisations which took part in a body behind their banners. Recruiting *was* of course carried on for the Party, and the trade unions. In Brůx we were able to enroll over a thousand new members in the Red miners' union, and as many again in Ostrau (there being some 85,000 miners in the whole of Czecho-Slovakia). Of Party members we enrolled 705 in Brůx during April and May, 1932 (i.e., during and after the strike), 411 in Ostrau, 256 in Kladno (where there was also a strike) and 333 in Brůnn. This is, to be sure, a very small number, but that is to be attributed to a neglect of recruiting as such and belongs to another chapter.

Our conclusion in this matter must therefore be: our actual leadership in the united front is not to be forcibly foisted upon the masses, it will not be attained by declamations, it must be fought for, on the basis of proletarian democracy, it must be attained by a stubborn, patient, self-sacrificing upholding of the class interests of the proletariat, in a concrete struggle for these interests.

The *third question* is concerned with the *struggle in principle against Social-Democracy*. It has been said, during the course of the discussion, that our proposals have the effect of weakening the struggle of principle against Social-Democracy. This is, of course, far from our thoughts, and represents a violent distortion of our ideas. This assertion is based on various formulations of ours, in regard to the question of *how* one is to approach the Social-Democratic workers in the formation of a united front. I said, for example, that we could address Social-Democratic workers as follows:

"Social-Democratic workers, we hold different views, but we are agreed on one point: that the distress is intolerable, and that we must fight against it. Let us unite on this common issue, and fight together. And if you believe that we are wrong in other questions, you will be able to see if this view is correct, on the basis of your experience."

We say to them further:

"You should not trust your leaders," . . . but it does no harm if we say to them also: "It is not necessary, nor do we demand it of you, that you trust our word. View us not according to what we say, but according to what we do, and so you will convince yourselves."

Does this mean that we refrain from criticising the policy of Social-Democracy before Social-Democratic workers? Does this mean that we hush up our fundamental differences of opinion with Social-Democracy, before these workers? By no means. And once again I will base my remarks on our practice. *Never before* have we carried on so many and such thorough discussions, on the fundamental problems of the class struggle, with the Social-Democratic workers, as at this moment when we are approaching them in the way described above and fighting shoulder to shoulder with them in many struggles. These workers come to us *of their own accord*; they come to our meetings, to the conferences of action committees, to united front conferences, they write to us personally, or address letters to our newspapers and ask questions themselves about our views, on the rôle of the state, on the revolution, on participation in bourgeois governments, on the Soviet Union, etc., etc. I repeat: *Never before* have we approached the Social-Democratic workers so closely; *never before* have we carried on so much discussion with them. We hold, for example, special study evenings together with Social-Democratic workers and their lower functionaries. Can this be described as a weakening of the struggle in principle against Social-Democracy? No, it is a strengthening of the struggle in close connection with a bold use of the tactics of a united front from below. What is the artistry demanded for a struggle against Social-Democracy? Does it consist of shouting "traitors!" from morning till night? No, it consists in bringing the Social-Democratic workers to the point where *they themselves* hurl the word "traitors," in the face of their leaders. And this is the result which we actually attained to a great extent in the miners' strike at Brne. Have we in practice had weaknesses and opportunistic mistakes in this sphere? Yes, even very many of them. One important

opportunistic mistake occurred, for example, in Ostrau, before the strike, when our comrades, at first, permitted themselves to be taken in tow by the Social-Democrats. Do we criticise such mistakes, do we exert ourselves to eradicate them? Certainly. The IV Plenum of the C.C. of the Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia even criticised the mistakes made at Ostrau, *before* the strike began. In the resolution of the C.C. we read:

"The C.C. notes that there have been expressions of fundamentally incorrect views, within the Party, on the character of "Left" Social-Fascism, and its manœuvres. These incorrect views estimate the "Left" manœuvres of Social-Fascism as an objective underestimation of the process of radicalisation going on among the masses. Such views inevitably lead to serious mistakes in the tactics of the united front—mistakes which have been committed recently at Ostrau, in particular. Though such mistakes as those committed at Ostrau have been recognised and corrected in good time, they yet constitute a serious impediment to the process of the Socialist workers' transition, from their Social-Fascist leaders to the revolutionary front and to Communism."

The Party leadership, of course, did not content itself with making these remarks, but interfered *immediately* on the spot, and in the very heat of battle, during the preparations for the strike, conducted an inner-Party campaign, right down to the bottom, down to the individual members in the factories. Furthermore, it must be known that the workers in Ostrau *did strike*, even three times in succession, despite the most rabid terrorism; and in the third strike over one half of the whole district was involved. And during the strike, in Ostrau, we succeeded in dealing an especially hard blow to the *Fascist* trade union. This, then, is our attitude to the mistakes we make. We see them, and make serious efforts, often with success, to correct them.

Our conclusion in this question is: Taking the feelings and the prejudices of the Social-Democratic workers into account in our approach to them *does not* mean a weakening of the struggle in principle against Social-Democracy. On the contrary. Not until we get into close touch with the Social-Democratic workers, and fight together with them, is it easy for us to strike a blow at Social-Democracy.

*The fourth question is concerned with the revolutionising of the economic struggle, or the uniting of the economic with the political struggle.* In my speech I said that this problem cannot be solved, by mechanically attaching any

political slogans to the economic demands. Was I right in this? I think I was. For the problem is a complicated one, and it consists, generally speaking, in this, that we, first of all, know how to put forward such political slogans during the economic struggle as have immediate connection with the conduct of the economic struggle; secondly that we employ such political slogans as are directly connected with the economic struggle (e.g., in the present struggle in Germany against the economic emergency decrees, the slogan of the overthrow of the originator of these emergency decrees, the Papen Government). But the *most important thing* is the use of *revolutionary forms of struggle*. I once again base my remarks on our practice. Take the case of *Freiwaldau*. That was originally an economic struggle of the workers, both employed and unemployed. The state power opposed this struggle. It forbade strikes and demonstrations. The workers would not submit to this, they went on strike and demonstrated under our leadership, despite the prohibition. It came to shooting. Eight workers, men and women, were shot by the gendarmes. What was the answer? Political mass strike throughout the whole district, lasting for three days. The whole district stopped work, until the burial of the workers, who had been shot. Throughout the country, there was a wave of over 150 political protest strikes, hundreds of demonstrations, thousands of protests and proclamations from all sections of the working population. This happened under our leadership, in response to our appeal, under our slogans. And the result? A respite in the terrorism, throughout the whole country, for a certain period. *Freiwaldau* became an affair of high political importance. Or take the case of the *Carpathian-Ukraine*. This was originally an economic movement of the working and peasant masses—for bread, for corn, for work, for relief, against taxes, etc. At the same time there were also national political and political slogans. However, the economic demands preponderated. How did we begin? We went about literally from house to house, presented concrete demands literally for every workers' and peasants' family, collected more than a hundred thousand signatures for these demands, and then formulated the demands concretely for each individual village, had them confirmed at village meetings, presented them to the local authorities, backed up by the entire mass of village workers, united several villages together, and brought the demands before the district authorities at the head of a thousands-strong mass of villagers; waited a little, until we had collected even greater masses and then marched into the district centres.

Meanwhile, we began chasing away the bailiff's officers from the villages; the people stopped paying taxes, even if they did have a couple of *kronen* left in their pockets, great masses of them started going into the forests, and getting themselves wood, driving their cattle on to the landlords' pasture lands, clearing the forest from the meadows and pastures which had been enclosed, etc., etc. All this could not be done with kid gloves on, either by the state power; or by the workers and peasants. Again and again, there was shooting, and sometimes the military had to be called in. At the same time, a great campaign of protest and solidarity went on throughout the whole country, accompanied by political protest strikes and demonstrations, not only in the Ukraine, and in Slovakia, but also in the Czechish and German districts. And the results? A temporary frustration of the attempt to pacify the Carpathian-Ukraine with Pilsudski methods, an actual cessation of distraints of property in individual districts, the actual utilisation of the forests, the actual *non-payment* of lease-rent and debts, a certain amount of material relief, and a 46 per cent. rise in the votes cast for Communism. In all this we, *the Party*, were the leaders from beginning to end, step by step, from one stage to the next. I will not say any more about north-west Bohemia. I have already told in my speech how we there answered the terrorist methods of the government step for step, blow for blow, from beginning to end in conjunction with the broad masses, from the first demonstrations right up to the general strike in the whole district, ending in a wave of actions of solidarity, and protest throughout the whole country. It is *thus*, then, that we have led the economic struggles, and combined them with the political struggle. Anyone, who wants to, can call this "economism."

Our conclusion in this question must therefore be: It is not by mechanically foisting on political slogans that we can revolutionise the economic struggle, but by organically combining economic and political questions, and *above all* by employing *militant measures and militant methods*, in carrying through both political and economic demands.

*The fifth question is concerned with the content of our work in the reformist trade unions, and the methods of this work.* A directive of our Red trade unions has been quoted here, in which it was impressed upon the Red trade union groups, that they must try to win over the reformist trade union *groups* for their participation, en masse, in actions for various partial demands of the workers. This directive has been described as a mistake. Is this correct? I think

not. Let us consider the matter. First of all, is it possible to win over *whole* groups of the reformist trade unions for the class struggle, and for united front? Yes, it is. For, at the present time, the process of radicalisation has penetrated deeply, not only into the ranks of the organised reformist members, but also into the ranks of the functionaries. Secondly, does this in any way mean that we are ready to capitulate to the rotten and incorrigible elements, who are working hand in glove with the employers, and their lackeys, and of whom there is no small number even among the leaders of the various groups? No. In the directive referred to above we read:

"The mobilisation of the broad masses of workers in the various enterprises and localities, the comradely but clear criticism of the failings and inhibitions in the procedure of the reformist trade union groups, an open struggle against the reformist leaders, and corrupt worker—functionaries who represent the open enemies of working class unity, these are the basic principles in accordance with which we must direct our whole procedure."

Thirdly, how can the workers organised in reformist unions be best won over in order that the reformist trade union groups may also be won over? By defending the day-to-day class interests of these workers. But from this it follows that the *content* of our work in the reformist trade unions must consist precisely in this defence of the interests of the workers organised in those unions, the defence of their interests against the employers, against the state, and of course also against the trade union bureaucrats. The struggle against these last forms an integral part of the entire class struggle.

As regards the *methods* of our work in the reformist trade unions, what has been said about the united front, applies here also, in its essence, *mutatis mutandis*: To take up *all* points, which arouse dissatisfaction, among the workers in the reformist trade unions; to utilise *everything* in order to organise an opposition to the treacherous leadership; to be acquainted and take cognizance of *everything* which goes on among the masses. While preserving the greatest clarity in regard to aims and principles, there is the greatest need for *elasticity* here in the putting forward of concrete demands and slogans, as also in the employment of organisational methods.

One more point: Does the broad movement of opposition within the reformist trade unions form an integral part of the Red trade union movement? In so far as *we* lead this opposition, of course it does! Does this need to be *formally* declared, and is *this* the main point? No, the formal uniting of an opposition movement with

the Red trade union movement, is first and foremost, a question of the *degree of revolutionary maturity* in one or another opposition movement.

Our conclusion in this question is therefore as follows: The *content* of our work in the reformist trade unions is the defence of the daily class interests of the workers organised in those unions, not only against the employers, but also against the state, and the trade union bureaucrats. The *methods* to be employed in this work are essentially the same as we employ in the movement for the united front in general. The *aim* of the work is to win over a majority of the workers organised in the reformist trade unions. With or without subscriptions is a question of secondary importance.

*The sixth and last question is concerned with the relation of the leadership of the Czechoslovakian Party with the Communist Party of Germany and its leadership.* We have taken concrete examples from the practice of the German Party, and subjected them to criticism. In this, we want to say expressly that the line of the German Party is correct, and we have declared that, in agreement with the Comintern and with all other Parties of the Communist International, we are supporting the leadership of the German Party with all our power.

We are not so naïve, or frivolous, that we are not able to see what tremendous difficulties the German Party has to fight against, what great obstacles it has to overcome. And we are of the opinion, that, despite all these great difficulties, the German Party is on the way to fulfilling its great revolutionary tasks.

The sense of our criticism was to assist our German comrades on this path. The merits of the content of this criticism can, and ought to, be discussed. We do not insist on any formulations which may be bad or not free from reproach, or which are subject to false interpretation. This applies in particular to two questions: to our formulation on the character of the struggles going on in Germany, and on the prospects for the development of Fascism. It must be clearly stated that: in Germany the economic struggles are in a high degree interwoven with the political mass struggle, that they influence one another reciprocally, and assume ever higher forms. However, it is impossible to skip over the stage of economic struggle. National Fascism will break up in proportion, and with the same rapidity, as we are able to lead the masses of the *working class* in great mass struggles. We should not, however, reckon on an *automatic* collapse of the National-Fascists. At any rate, we say: We will fight most determinedly against any attempt to misuse our criticism, as a weapon,

against the line of the German Party, and the leadership of the German Party.

Our conclusion in this question is therefore: We are in solidarity with the German Party and its leadership.

I conclude. Comrade Lozovsky has given us two pieces of advice: Not to lose our heads in the hour of success, not to get

swollen-headed; and to be always ready to learn. Certainly! We are in perfect agreement. And that is what we are doing. We know our weak points and are working consistently to overcome them. And we are learning, too. We have proved that, and will prove it again in the future.

Our Party *will* lead the Czecho-Slovakian proletariat to victory.