

## THE WORK OF THE C.P.G.B. SINCE THE 6<sup>TH</sup> WORLD CONGRESS

THE period in Britain since the 6th World Congress of the Communist International held in the autumn of 1928 has been one of the most important in the history of British politics. Many fundamental and far-reaching changes have taken place in the policy of the British ruling class in this period; changes brought about by the economic and political developments, strikingly foretold in the analysis of the international situation made by the 6th Congress.

As was common to other capitalist countries in 1928, the capitalists and reformist leaders in Britain were confident that a new era of ever-expanding capitalist prosperity was at hand. The improvement in the trade position of Britain, largely brought about by the betrayal of the General Strike in 1926 by the reformist leaders, the subsequent defeat of the miners, had been followed by heavy attacks on the workers' standards, intensive application of rationalisation, and on this basis there had been a certain revival of production. But it was a revival brought about by a lowering of the workers' standards, and the most intense forms of exploitation in the factories.

These facts, of course, were not considered relevant to the "new perspectives for organised capitalism" being dangled before the eyes of the British workers.

Labour leaders paid visits to America and came back drugged with Fordism. "Ford was superseding Marx," we were told by the theorists of the Labour movement.

The I.L.P. was busy with its glowing promises of "Socialism through capitalist prosperity," to quote the words of its theoretician, Brailsford, at that time. "Socialism through the adoption of the Living Wage Policy" was the slogan of the I.L.P.

The Labour Party was busy preparing for future General Elections and compiling its programme, "Labour and the Nation," which was to give every section of the community a square deal, and injure the interests of none.

The capitalists were busy proclaiming the need for more permanent and closer collaboration with labour. There was to be compensation for those displaced by rationalisation, the workers were to have more recognition in the factories, and a real place in the Sun of Capitalist Industry.

This was Britain in the autumn of 1928. No thought or belief in any coming economic crisis, ever onwards to more and better forms of organised capitalism. Like their counterparts on the Continent, the British Labour leaders were tireless

in their talk of "the new situation" and "the need for a new and more statesmanlike approach to the problems that modern capitalism has brought forward."

Recalling these facts, it is important to again note the perspective given by the 6th Congress in the autumn of 1928, and we shall see at once the correctness of the Communist International's analysis, how totally wrong the reformists were, and the bitter price the workers under their influence have paid.

The thesis of the 6th Congress stated:

"Therefore, the development of the contradictions of capitalist stabilisation inevitably leads, in the final analysis to the present 'Stabilisation' period growing into a period of gigantic cataclysms."

It is worth while drawing the attention of the reformist workers time and time again to the above quotation, because they know only too well how deadly true the "period of gigantic cataclysms" has turned out to be. Germany, Austria, Spain are very pertinent to point out just now. In America, the classic land of Fordism and The New Deal, we have had and are still witnessing some of the greatest conflicts between labour and capital that have ever been known. It will greatly enhance the authority of future Congresses of the Communist International if we recall these quotations.

In regard to fascism, the 6th Congress theses stated the following:

"Fascist tendencies and the rudiments of the fascism movement exist in a more or less developed form in nearly all countries. The ideology of class co-operation — the official ideology of social democracy — has many points of contact with fascism. The employment of fascist methods in the struggle against the revolutionary movement is observed in a rudimentary form in the practice of numerous social democratic parties, as well as in that of the reformist trade union bureaucracy." (*Theses on International Situation, 6th Congress, C.I.*)\*

At the same time as the 6th Congress of the Communist International was making its analysis, the British Trades Union Congress was meeting. The main issue before this Congress was that popularly known as Mondism. The General Council of the Trades Union Congress submitted a report, which was accepted by the Congress, in which were analysed what should be the future methods of policy for the Trade Union movement of Britain. It was stated there were three courses open for adoption. Firstly, the path of revolutionary struggle, which was "decisively rejected as futile, certain to fail, and sure to lead to bloodshed and misery." (Shades of Germany and Austria.)

Secondly, for the Unions to stand aside from

\* Obtainable from Workers' Bookshop, Ltd.

present developments and tell the "employers to get on with their own job," while the Unions would pursue the policy of fighting sectionally for improvements. This course was also described as "futile."

Finally, there was a third course, and this was the course adopted at the Swansea Trades Union Congress in 1928:

"The third course is for the Trade Union Movement to say boldly that not only is it concerned with the prosperity of industry, but that it is going to have a voice as to the way industry is carried on, so that it can influence the new developments that are taking place. The ultimate policy of the movement can find more use for an efficient industry than for a derelict one, and the unions can use their power to promote and guide the scientific reorganisation of industry as well as to obtain material advantages from that reorganisation." (*Report of General Council to Swansea Trades Union Congress, 1928.*)

#### "Organised" Capitalism.

Therefore we can see how in 1928 the whole policy of the Trades Union Congress, Labour Party and I.L.P. was based upon an entirely false perspective, i.e., there are no further crises of capitalism, but there is organised capitalism leading to socialism, on the basis of class collaboration. But at the same time as this was taking place a fierce drive was also commencing against the revolutionary workers both in the Trade Unions and the Labour Party to try to remove all obstacles that aimed to prevent this policy being operated.

In May, 1929, came a General Election, and the return of a second Labour Government. Reformist illusions at this time were very strong, and strong beliefs existed amongst the masses that now a real new era was going to open. The first shock was not long in coming. In July, 1929, there was a big cotton strike in Lancashire, and through the medium of Labour Government intervention and arbitration heavy wage cuts were inflicted upon the cotton workers.

This gave the clue to all that followed during the existence of the second Labour Government. What happened to the Lancashire cotton workers happened in the same way to the Yorkshire woollen workers and South Wales miners. The Anomalies Act of the Labour Government was the father and mother of the Means Test. Its repression of the colonial peoples has not been improved upon, even by the present National Government.

When the economic crisis in the winter of 1929-30 drove Britain into its vortex, the Labour Government excelled itself in its efforts to assist the capitalists to solve the crisis at the expense of the workers, i.e., the May Economy Commission, Special Cabinet Economy Commissions. At this time there was also a rising militancy amongst the workers, big strikes were taking place, there was a rapid growth in the disillusionment of the

workers with the Labour Government, revealed in the loss of votes at every by-election which took place.

With the deepening of the crisis, unemployment figures steadily rising, the competition for the dwindling market becoming fiercer and fiercer, the ruling class, in spite of the Labour Government's willingness to carry through their demands for further attacks on the employed and unemployed workers, decided in view of the whole situation that extraordinary measures were necessary to save British capitalism, and in August, 1931, they kicked the Labour Government out of power.

A National Government was formed, headed by three principal Labour leaders, Mac-Donald, Snowden and Thomas. Immediately the fiercest attacks were begun on the whole working class, and at the same time plans were laid for an intensive attack upon Britain's trade rivals.

Britain went off the gold standard. The Englishman's proud boast, "As safe as the Bank of England," was not sounding so proud as formerly. The century-old policy of Free Trade was abandoned for one of protection. Currency was devaluated, and an elaborate system of Trade Pacts, Quotas and Tariffs worked out. The famous Ottawa Agreement was put through, and the most open attacks, hostility and war preparations made against the Soviet Union, so that it soon became possible to describe the National Government as replacing France as the organiser of a counter-revolutionary war against the Soviet Union.

But the attacks on the workers were meeting fierce resistance. The attempt to cut the wages of the Navy led to a mutiny in the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon, an event which astounded the world. The attacks on the unemployed led to great class battles in Belfast, Birkenhead, Liverpool and Bristol, and great mass demonstrations were the order of the day throughout Britain.

#### 1931 General Election.

A General Election took place in November, 1931, and the ruling class utilised every conceivable weapon of propaganda and lies to stampede the country to return a National Government. As was only natural, it was the Labour leader, Snowden, who was chosen to play the leading rôle in attempting to deceive the workers. His famous wireless broadcast on the eve of the election, that unless a National Government was elected the workers' Post Office Savings would be in danger, will long be remembered in "Democratic Britain."

The treachery and betrayal of the Labour Government and the disillusionment it had caused amongst the workers greatly facilitated the return of a National Government.

The offensive against the workers went on

unabated—wage cuts, Means Test, Unemployment Benefit Cuts, carried through by Orders in Council, and Parliament told about it afterwards, but still the figures of unemployment continued to rise. Chamberlain held out no hope for ten years. MacDonald spoke about big sections of the unemployed being superfluous scrap.

The workers continued to fight heroically against the capitalist attacks. The big demonstrations, hunger marches, the big Lancashire cotton strike in the summer of 1932, all show this.

Alongside all this, great ferment was expressing itself inside the ranks of the trade unions and the Labour Party. The reformist leaders were bitterly criticised and forced to all sorts of subterfuges to explain away the record of the Labour Government. It found strongest expression inside the I.L.P., which culminated in July, 1932, by leaving the Labour Party. The minority in the I.L.P. formed the Socialist League in England and the Socialist Party in Scotland, both organisations remaining affiliated to the Labour Party.

The Labour Party leaders were replying to the discontent inside their Party with promises, "it would be different next time; let us all work now for a third Labour Government." New programmes were worked out, differing in no essentials from the Liberal-Labour platform of 1929. The Trade Union leaders were pursuing to the fullest limits the policy of Mondism. No attempt to organise united resistance or common action. No working out a common lead or strategy, the standing argument of political and trade union leaders was "you cannot fight during an economic crisis; wait till the next General Election."

The National Government went ahead with its policy of lowering the workers' standards at home and in the colonial countries, every conceivable measure was resorted to in an endeavour to gain trade advantages, at the same time in line with other capitalists it steadily increased its war preparations.

In the last quarter of 1933 a slight improvement could be noted in the trade position of Britain. This improvement continued until June, 1934, but has not been maintained since then. The speeches of National Government Ministers, like Runciman, now begin to reveal some anxiety about the future. In his speech in Parliament on July 27th he stated:—

"There were signs that the home market was nearing saturation point. He had already drawn attention to the fact that it could not be expanded farther without unduly endangering our export trade . . . They must rely on an improvement in world trade for an improvement in the employment figures. World trade unfortunately was still paralysed in many regions, and the best that could be said was that there were indications that the tendency of international trade to decline was being restricted, although there were as yet no signs of any marked im-

provement. I do not believe there can be any very great improvement in the trade of the world until we reach somewhat calmer times."

A few days later the Federation of British Industries issued its Quarterly Analysis of the Economic Situation, and amongst other things had the following to say:—

"It is, however becoming increasingly clear that so far from British trade being, as many still believe, at the beginning of a recovery, it is probably already back to normal, having regard to the limitations of the international situation, that situation shows few signs of improvement, and in some directions has deteriorated. Apart from the many outbreaks of social and political unrest, and the exacerbation of trade and exchange restrictions, the condition of certain of the countries still on an operative gold standard is giving cause for anxiety."

In August there was held a special meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, at which a discussion took place on the situation in Britain and the next tasks of the Party. The resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee showed how life itself overthrew the hopes and aims of the capitalists to return to "stabilisation." It showed how barefaced was their attempt to conceal the real situation behind the boast of "recovery." The resolution further showed that the necessity for the revolutionary socialist solution of the crisis stands out ever more sharply, and it summed up the policy of the National Government as follows:—

In this situation the policy of the National Government becomes more and more openly based, not on a perspective of stabilisation and successful conquest of the economic crisis, but on a perspective of rapidly increasing imperialist antagonisms, and sharpening the class struggle at home.

In the field of foreign policy, the break with America over the debts, the military conversations with France, for an eventual alliance in war, the support of German rearmament and the encouragement of Japanese aggression in the Far East against the Soviet Union, are now followed by the open advance to the full armaments race, as shown in increased armaments expenditure, new enlarged naval demands for the Naval Conference next year, and a new air building programme for 42 additional squadrons.

Not only in Britain, but in the Empire, the National Government war preparations directed against the Soviet Union are going forward, as for example, the rapid mechanisation of the Indian Army, the development of the Air Bases in Iraq, the survey of the Soviet frontiers, under the guise of scientific expeditions.

In internal policy, the increasing drive towards preparatory measures of a Fascist type against the workers is seen in the Unemployment Act and Police Act already carried, in the Sedition Bill, in the new legislation under preparation for the police control of meetings, in the numerous prosecutions of militants, as well as in the direct assistance and protection given in practice to the open Fascist movement of Mosley.

At the same time, the National Government presses forward its economic policy of tightening of the grip of monopolist capital under direct State leadership in all branches of economy by promoting the formation of State-aided cartels and price-fixing combines, by subsidies to industry, and by quota systems and artificial price-raising in agriculture for the benefit of the landlords and big farmers.

All these policies are directed to increase the domination and profits of the ruling bourgeoisie at the expense of the workers and petty-bourgeoisie. These economic policies are at the same time closely linked with the advance to Fascism, and the strategic preparation for war.

This sketch of the main developments that have taken place since the 6th Congress, can now form the basis of considering the work of the Communist Party during this period, and will perhaps help in the important discussions that are taking place in all sections of the Communist International.

#### Work of the C.P.G.B.

Before the 9th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. there had been important discussions in the C.P.G.B. on the line of Class Against Class, and the need for openly fighting the Labour Party in elections, and for independent leadership of the economic struggles. There was a division on this issue in the Central Committee of 1928 and at the 9th Plenum the British question occupied an important place in the discussions.\*

The issue was fought out and agreement reached on fighting for the new line. But it soon became clear that in some cases it was only agreement on paper, and not in deeds, for in the intervening period before the 6th Congress there were many hesitations and mistakes in carrying out the line.

The 6th Congress affirming the slogan, "class against class," discussed the tasks of the C.P.G.B. and the resolution that was adopted instructed

"the Party to initiate a wide discussion on the tactical change in the Party policy and on the methods of carrying out the new tactics." (Sixth Congress Theses on Tasks of C.P.G.B.)

With this guide the Party endeavoured to popularise the 6th Congress decisions and discussion, and to concretely apply them to the situation in this country.

Wide discussion took place in the Party, and good sales were secured for the various pamphlets containing the Congress decisions.

A big campaign was organised against Mondism; conferences, meetings were held all over the country, great support was won for our policy, but the gravest mistake was made in this situation by the Party actually slackening off work in the Trade Unions, a mistake which we paid dearly for in subsequent years. The new line was quite wrongly interpreted to mean there was no longer anything to be gained by working in the reformist unions, and more stress was placed upon the rôle of the unorganised workers.

The new line was also not concretely applied in every phase of Party activity, especially in our concrete exposure of reformism. The result was that in the General Election of 1929 there was a

minority of comrades on the Central Committee, who, whilst in favour of putting forward Communist candidates where possible, in other places were for supporting the Labour Party.

This attitude not only affected the electoral policy of the Party, but had its political repercussions in every phase of Party activity, considerably retarding the full force and authority of the Party being mobilised to carry out the decisions of the 6th Congress.

Nevertheless, the Party was very active amongst the unemployed and took an active part in strikes, especially the cotton strike of 1929, but the outstanding weakness of this work was that we only took part in the strikes after they had broken out and were looked upon in many instances as "outsiders." This situation was undoubtedly due to our bad methods of work in the factories, and the criminal neglect of work in the trade unions.

The Party gave full support during this period to the struggle of the revolutionary miners of Scotland, who were fighting against the splitting policy of the reformist miners' leaders. The split which was forced brought about the formation of the United Mineworkers of Scotland Trade Union, which in spite of terrific obstacles to-day is playing a leading part in the life and activity of the Scottish miners.

By taking the work of the Party as a whole in this period, we can say that in spite of certain achievements, in the MAIN THE PARTY WAS DEEPLY SECTARIAN in its methods (mainly not in the sense of "left" doctrinarism, but in the sense of being closed in and in its ideological-political narrowness) and isolated from the mass movement, and not able to organise the growing mass discontent that was developing in the trade unions and Labour Party against the Labour Government and against the results of the Mondist policy of the Trades Union Congress.

In November, 1929, the 11th Congress of the Party was held, to which the E.C.C.I. sent a special Open Letter, which naturally became the background to the whole Congress discussion. The Open Letter played a decisive part in the history of our Party, and all of us may profit by reading and studying it again.

#### Open Letter of E.C.C.I.

We will quote from the Open Letter to refresh our memories as to what was the situation in our Party at that time:

"Your Congress must mark a turning point in the determined application of the new line, and the radical transformation of the form of organisation and methods of work of the Party in order that it may play the leading rôle in the growing class struggles.

"Your Congress is called upon to make a final and decisive break with the opportunist hesitations and vacil-

\* See *Communist Policy in Britain*, obtainable from Workers' Bookshop.

lations of the past, to put an end to the present internal situation in the Party which is hampering its activities, and to bring it out on the broad road of becoming a mass organisation, the vanguard of the working class in the fight for the overthrow of capitalism.

"The E.C.C.I. is confident that the Congress will approach its tasks in a Leninist manner and enable the Party in the shortest possible time to become a decisive factor in the class struggle.

"The Communist Party of Great Britain must definitely understand that it is useless talking about a mass Bolshevik Party, about the leading rôle of the Party in the class struggle, unless it has close contact with the masses, unless it closely studies the mass economic and political struggles, unless it actually organises and leads these struggles, and unless it systematically, day in and day out, exposes the treacherous social-fascist rôle of the 'Labour' Government and its henchmen.

The Communist Party must become the focus, the political expression and the organiser of the growing mass protest movement and struggle, against the 'Labour' Government. The Communist Party must become transformed from a merely propagandist organisation into the independent leader of the economic and political struggles of the working class."\* (Open Letter of the E.C.C.I. to the Eleventh Party Congress, C.P.G.B.)

But there was also another important political question the Open Letter took up. It was the question of a daily paper. For years the C.I. had insisted upon a daily paper in Britain, but the difficulties had always been exaggerated, and few concrete steps taken to make a Communist daily a possibility.

The Leeds Congress elected a new Central Committee, and an immediate improvement in the work of the Party became evident. The whole Party was now firmly united on the line of the C.I. On the first of January, 1930, we launched the *Daily Worker*. The daily has played a tremendous rôle in every working class struggle since that time. Its continued existence has been described as "a working class miracle." It has gathered to its support thousands of workers who consistently support the paper, by the heaviest financial sacrifices. In the four years of its existence it has been subject to continual attacks by the Government, Employers and Labour leaders. But it lives, it pays its part, and in spite of its shortcomings and weaknesses, it undoubtedly wields a political influence, that has greatly strengthened the mass influence of the Party in every phase of the class struggle.

From 1930 the Party, with the help of the C.I., has earnestly striven to improve its work and overcome some of its greatest defects and weaknesses. It has participated actively in every economic struggle, and made improvements in the work of preparation for the economic struggle. It launched a big united front movement in 1930-31, around the demands of the Workers' Charter.

It fiercely fought against the whole policy of the National Government from the day of its in-

ception. The comrades associated with the *Daily Worker* were sentenced to penal servitude for the work of the Party in supporting the Invergordon Mutiny. In the big unemployed battles of the autumn of 1931, the Party played a big part, both in its support of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and its independent agitation. Scores of our members were arrested in this period, but the work of the Party became increasingly respected, as a result of the activities that were being carried out.

But the Party was still unable to win decisive sections of the reformist workers, we were still unable to convincingly prove there was an alternative both to the National Government and the propaganda for a Third Labour Government. This fact was brought out in an alarming manner by the General Election results of 1931.

#### The "January" Resolution.

The National Government swept the country, the Labour vote very heavily declined, but the Communist vote was practically stagnant. This gave rise to serious discussion in our Central Committee and the Communist International. In December, 1931, there was a special discussion with the C.I. on the British situation. This discussion was reported to the Central Committee of the Party, and on its basis, a resolution was drawn up, which is popularly known in our Party as the January Resolution.\* We consider this resolution one of the most important Party documents, and one that can be accepted now as an indispensable guide to the whole party. We will quote from the Resolution because it expresses so clearly what at that time (and to some extent still) were the chief shortcomings of our Party:

"At the same time it must be stated that though the Labour Government for years past has carried out a policy opposed to the interests of the working class it was still able to rally the bulk of the British proletariat (6½ million votes). Our Party, however, did not even succeed in winning over in elections those sections of the workers who were disillusioned with the Labour Party and withheld their votes. We did not understand how to expose before the eyes of the workers the Labour Party's pretence that the policy of British Reformism is a weapon in the struggle against the offensive of the British bourgeoisie and a buffer against the attacks on the British working class."

"During the past months the Party has shown considerable activity in some fields of mass work (unemployed movement and mass demonstrations). But it cannot be sure of any solid influence among the masses unless it sees to it, first, that throughout all its mass work the demarcation in principle between its line and the reformist line is expressed in the clearest terms, and, secondly, that its mass influence is rooted above all in the factories and trade unions."

"The greatest defect in the Party's work during the

\* Published in the Report of the Eleventh Congress C.P.G.B., obtainable from Workers' Bookshop.

\* Resolution of C.C. Workers' Bookshop, Ltd.

past few years is that it has not carried on any systematic revolutionary mass work in the reformist trade unions."

"An end must be put to this situation immediately by making a decisive change in our work. The necessity for this change must be hammered into the consciousness of every Party organ and every single Party member. Without a determined buckling down to the daily systematic struggle with the masses against the reformist trade union bureaucracy in all trade union branches and factories the Communist Party can never become a real mass Party."

"The entire daily work of the Party, as well as all political and economic movements of the workers under the leadership of the C.P. must be conducted from the standpoint of continual concrete explanation to the workers of the revolutionary way out of the crisis. For this purpose, the Party must make a thorough study of the problems of the revolutionary way out." (C.C. Resolution, January, 1932.)

A big effort was made to get the entire Party mobilised to carry out this resolution, and whilst we did not succeed in this entirely, wherever the Resolution was applied, immediate gains were recorded and many invaluable experiences were gained. In particular, it became noticeable that in those meetings where serious efforts were made to show what concretely the revolutionary way out of the crisis for the British workers meant an entirely new meaning and understanding of Communism and the Communist Party became evident. There was a keen desire to discuss the question, good sales of pamphlets, manifestoes, etc., dealing with this were secured.

In trade union work, where it was carried out, successes could be achieved, which only emphasised what could be done if the line of the January resolution was really put into operation by the whole Party. Significant movements were taking place amongst rank and file trade unionists. There were tremendous opportunities before the Party, if there was a really serious effort made to overcome this refusal or reluctance to take part in revolutionary mass work in the trade unions.

Amongst the unemployed the Party was very active at this time, and in particular during the great Hunger March on London in November, 1932, if the same activity could be got in the trade unions, freed either from right opportunism, legalism or left sectarianism, then it was clear our Party could lead the way for the formation of effective rank and file movements in the unions, and the broadening of this work in such a way as to open up splendid prospects for the development of a nation-wide opposition movement that could exert a powerful influence inside the reformist trade unions. It could lead the way in the unification of wage struggles, shorter hours movement, and for the working out of a common lead, policy and strategy, such as would command the support of big sections of trade unionists in every industry.

Accordingly this question was made one of the main ones prior to the Twelfth Party Congress in

December, 1933, together with the fundamental questions that arise from the popularisation of the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

The Twelfth Congress gave a clear decision on these questions, and serious efforts have since been made to carry the decisions into practice, and good results have been achieved.

The Party has carried out consistent efforts to develop united front activity. The German events in 1933, made a great impression on the British working class. The Party addressed an appeal for united action to the Labour Party, Trades Union Congress, Co-operative Party and I.L.P.

This appeal was distributed in mass quantities all over the country. There was good support amongst the rank and file, but only the I.L.P. responded to our appeal. The other organisations refused. The Party and the I.L.P. carried out a number of united front demonstrations which met with a warm response.\* At the same time, many members of the Labour Party began to take part in united front activity, especially in connection with the campaign for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism, for the Release of the Reichstag Prisoners and for the Release of Comrade Thaelman.

But the weakness of our united front activity then and now is that not sufficient persistent efforts are made to make contacts with the local Labour Parties, trade union members, Co-operative Guilds, and endeavour to draw them into various forms of mass activity that can lead to wider developments of united front work.

The great possibilities in this direction, were strikingly revealed during the Hunger March and Campaign for the United Front Congress at Berrymondsey this year.

In spite of the ban of the reformist leaders, there was a splendid response by the rank and file of the reformist organisations, in town after town working class organisations gave the Marchers a welcome, supported them, appointed delegates to the Unity Congress. The Congress itself was a triumph.

The Party had consistently given a lead both to the March and to the Congress discussion. It issued a manifesto to the Congress, that was warmly received, and in this campaign our Party undoubtedly played a leading rôle and won big influence.

During the March and Congress campaign, Local Unity Committees, Solidarity Committees were being set up everywhere, and there existed tremendous possibilities for the wide extension of the united front. But after the Congress and March was over, in spite

\* N.B.—We are not dealing in this article with other questions of the Party and the I.L.P., as they have been the subject of many recent articles in the C.I. Magazine.

of a good reporting campaign that was carried out the typical mistake that has been made time and time again in Britain has been made again, namely, to look on the Congress as a thing in itself, and not as the beginning of the campaign that could lead to a united front movement firmly based in the factories and local working-class organisations.

#### United Action.

Our Party must take its share of responsibility for this situation. The situation was such that if there had been consistent leadership of the campaign to carry out the Congress decisions, nationally, in the districts and localities, I am convinced that by now we will have developed such a movement for united action that, after the united front agreement in France that has been reached and the general desire there is amongst the masses for united action, it would have been much more difficult to reject our last appeal for united action made in July to the reformist leaders.

One of the most important tasks now before our Party is to at once remedy this weakness and get the campaign going as never before, especially against the New Unemployment Act, which is such a menace to the unemployed and employed workers. And if this is related to the fight for the winter demands of the unemployed, a new impetus can be given to the whole campaign.

But not only that. Our Party's last United Front Appeal to the reformist organisations must not be allowed to remain a paper appeal. Because of the refusal of the Labour leaders to take part, this is not to mean the end of the campaign. Their refusal and its implications must be ceaselessly explained to the reformist workers. Close personal contacts should be established with them in the factories, trade unions, local Labour Parties and Co-op. Guilds. These workers can be won for united action, especially can they be won for united activity against fascism.

The events in Germany and Austria have left a lasting impression on the British workers. There is deep resentment at the spineless attitude of the reformist leaders, both in their refusal to actively fight by every weapon of mass action, the fascist trend of all National Government legislation and repressive acts, and the fascism advocated by Mosley. Against Mosley's Blackshirts there is the bitterest hostility which is manifested in every town in which he appears, which reached its high-water mark in the anti-fascist demonstration against Mosley on September 9th in London.

The last meeting of our Central Committee gave this question great attention, as we believe the Party has an opportunity of leading the anti-fascist struggle in such a way as can and will lead to the development of the most powerful and effective

forms of united action. We will give the main points of the C.C. resolutions dealing with these questions, as they represent the line which the Party is now actively endeavouring to carry out. The resolution shows the menace of fascism in England as follows:

"Since the events at Olympia the whole working class movement, as well as wide strata of the petty-bourgeoisie, have awakened to the menace of fascism in Britain, of which in the initial stages only the Communist Party gave warning.

There is still, however, widespread confusion on the issue of fascism in Britain."

This confusion follows from the lack of understanding the two-fold character of the fascist attack in England.

"Finance capital at present backs the National Government as its main weapon for fascisation, like Brüning in Germany; but at the same time gives Mosley lavish support, and utilises his gangs as a subsidiary weapon, which will be rapidly brought to the front, in proportion, as the National Government, proves insufficient and if the workers' upward movement continues.

"The National Government offensive and the Mosley offensive supplement each other; the Blackshirts can only operate under the protection of the police, but at the same time can be used, and subsequently disavowed, where it would be inconvenient to use the police."

The resolution states that it is essential to make clear to the workers this two-fold character of the fascist offensive in order to destroy

"the 'democratic' illusion, the illusion of the possibility of legal bourgeois-democratic opposition to fascism."

Further, the resolution points out concretely the character of the social-fascist rôle of the reformist Labour leaders, that is not yet sufficiently clear to the workers. The resolution states that

"the British Labour Party remains as the only leading party of the old Second International which still maintains the old reactionary policy and prevents the united front of the working class."

Concerning the methods of struggle with fascism the resolution states:

"It is not yet widely enough realised that the line of passivity, of trust in legal defences, of trust in the capitalist state, as preached by the Labour leaders and as was preached by German Social-Democracy, is fatal and can only lead to the victory of fascism; and that only active mass opposition can defeat fascism, already in the early stages, before it is strong.

But it is no less important for it to be understood that this active mass anti-fascist movement must be a political movement, not merely a specialised defence force, but a political mass movement and campaign, exposing the claims of the fascists, enlightening opinion as to their true character, at the same time as resisting and defeating their violence.

The immediate demands and slogans of the fight against fascism at the present stage must be: dissolution of the Blackshirt Army! No toleration for Blackshirt hooligan gangs! No extended police powers over meetings and demonstrations! Withdraw the Sedition Bill!

The resolution points out that

"the real struggle against capitalism to-day, both in the economic and in the political field, against the offensive of fascism and war, requires not passive hopes in future electoral victories, but the MASS UNITED FRONT OF ALL THE WORKERS for the present struggle.



This is the central question confronting the British working class to-day."

The resolution calls the workers' attention to the lessons of the events in Germany and Austria, calls upon them to follow the example of France, where the pressure of all active workers (Socialist and Communist) destroyed the resistance of the Social-Democratic leadership for the formation of the united front.

"The example of the French working class is a model to the workers of the world."

The resolution states:

"The resistance of the reformist Labour leadership must be and can be overcome by the pressure of the entire working class. The united front must be achieved in Britain. The entire future of the British working class struggle hangs on this.

"The new appeal of the Communist Party to the Labour Party and to the Trades Union Congress and to all working class organisations for the united front against fascism and war initiates the most important campaign of the present period. All forces must be thrown into this campaign, into tireless all-pervading agitation for this demand, especially to bring mass pressure to bear on the coming annual conferences of the Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, which must be led to victory by the universal pressure of the working class."

"The aim of the united front campaign must be, not merely the holding of joint demonstrations and agitation, but the building of a mighty all-embracing mass organisation capable of fighting the offensive of fascism and war.

"This mass front against fascism and war must embrace, not only the working class organisations as the central core, but all unorganised workers, and all elements of the petty-bourgeoisie, employees, small traders, technicians, professionals, intellectuals, students and even bourgeois liberal elements that are prepared to enter into the common fight against fascism and war under the leadership of the working class."

"The existing wave of feeling must not be allowed to ebb away, but must be utilised to lead to lasting organisation."

"The anti-fascist front should be built up at a wide all-embracing anti-fascist Congress, uniting the political working class parties, the trade unions, the co-operatives, the unemployed organisations, the working class youth organisations, the working class women's organisations, progressive women's organisations, students' organisations, professional groupings, Jewish anti-Hitler groupings, previously existing anti-fascist and anti-war organisations, progressive anti-fascist organisations, etc.

"The core of the anti-fascist front should be built up in the localities, in the factories and in the streets."

We believe that the experiences gained in the period since the 6th Congress of the C.I. will enable our Party to adequately carry out this line, and at the same time eradicate some of the existing weaknesses of our Party work. To make a final break with being closed in and with our ideological and political narrowness, to strive for more effective preparation and participation in economic struggles. To achieve a quicker reaction to all political events and give the correct and timely lead to the workers on these events. To improve the content and circulation of the *Daily Worker*, and to transform our agitation and propaganda

into the most powerful weapons for winning the workers to the Communist Party.

In this connection we believe the Party programme that is now being drafted and discussed will fulfil a big omission in our Party work and that its publication and popularisation will be the means of clearly demonstrating that there is an alternative to the policy of the National Government and of the Labour Party, that the revolutionary way out of the crisis is the only concrete and practical solution of the problems facing the workers to-day.

In the fight against imperialist war and for the defence of the Soviet Union the Party has carried out a consistent struggle to rouse the masses for action. It has given the fullest support both to the Friends of the Soviet Union and the anti-war movement. In the campaign and war of Japan in Manchuria and China the Party has shown the meaning of this predatory action, not only as the beginning of the revision of the world markets and the opening of a new imperialist war, but as constituting the most deadly menace to the Soviet Union, in which Japan has been acting in the closest conjunction with the National Government.

Against the war preparations of the National Government the Party has been active, but after reviewing all that has been done by meetings, conferences, *Daily Worker*, leaflets and pamphlets, it all falls far short of what the acute war situation demands.

#### Anti-War Action.

WE HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN GETTING ONE SHORT PROTEST MOVEMENT IN ANY MUNITIONS FACTORY, AT ANY RAIL DEPOT OR SEAPORT, HANDLING MUNITIONS. We have seen splendid anti-war conferences such as Bermondsey in 1933, and the Youth Anti-War Conference in Sheffield in 1934, but the above outstanding fact of our inability to get a single stoppage of munitions, especially those going to the Far East, is a disquieting fact when one remembers the speed and rapidity with which war is being prepared by the National Government, and the present provocative acts of Japan in the Far East, against the Soviet Union.

Such a situation must spur the Party to redouble its efforts, especially in the munitions and transport centres to rouse the workers to an acute realisation of the war danger, and the need of knowing how to fight war before it breaks out. In this connection there is a great need to obtain better and more concise information on what is going on in the war factories—where the munitions are going to, what they consist of, their death-dealing capacity, so as to maintain a constant fire of publicity on this question, and also afford more concrete opportunities of concentration at particu-



lar factories and transport depots. It is necessary to stress the experiences of the last war time and time again; the international effects of the stopping of the Jolly George in 1920, and how such a repetition to-day would have the most tremendous effects throughout the world.

A ten-minutes' protest stoppage in a war factory making munitions for Japan, or a short hold-up on the railways or at the docks, would have incalculable effects and soon lead to more effective forms of action in the fight against imperialist war and in defence of the Soviet Union. Such forms of action would be worth a hundred meetings and conferences, and to achieve this is now one of the most urgent tasks before our Party and the anti-war movement.

There must also be a better popularisation of the Peace Policy of the Soviet Union, this enormous weapon in our hands which is the chief factor in the international situation retarding war, giving the whole working class the badly needed time to prepare to meet the deadly menace of war.

But the biggest and most serious weakness of the Party must also now be resolutely overcome; this is the slow growth of the Party. The problem is not the hostility of the masses to Communism, is not the obstacles and difficulties placed in our way by the existence of reformist illusions, the slow growth of the Party is our responsibility. Until, from top to bottom of the Party, there is the convinced determination and desire to recruit for the Party, then no progress will ever be made.

As it is, recruiting for the Party seems to always be an afterthought, even if that. We don't feel sufficiently alarmed at the numerical weakness of the Party. This is all the more serious when there is such an interest in Communism, when the influ-

ence and prestige of the Party stands higher than at any time since its formation. When our meetings are well attended, financial response is good, our leads being carried out by an increasing number of workers, when in important districts like London, Glasgow and South Wales our Party is now a definite political factor in the life of these places, it is a matter of grave and serious concern that the membership does not increase by leaps and bounds in these circumstances.

The fault is entirely ours. The coming discussions must sharply emphasise that an end must be put to such an intolerable situation at all costs. Once inside the ranks of the Party itself, THE WILL to recruit out of every phase of daily activity is there, then the recruits will speedily be found, and the Communist Party develop into a real mass Party heading the whole struggle of the working class.

The resolution of our August Plenum represents a really serious effort to give a clear lead on the present situation and some of the most important problems that face the Party. Let us note its concluding words:

"The entire work of the Party is directed towards development of revolutionary leadership and mass organisation in preparation for the decisive revolutionary issues which we know to be in front.

"For this reason all the work of the Party, both great and small, must be imbued with this understanding and perspective, with awakening the workers to the necessity of the revolutionary path as the sole solution to the crisis, the path of the working class revolution and Soviet Power.

"The united front, which is the necessary next stage in the advance of the working class struggle in Britain, is itself only a stage to the further mass advance to the overthrow of capitalism in Britain.

"To this developing battle, leading to the final victory of Socialism, the Communist Party calls the working class."

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## Thirteenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I.

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