

# Some Problems of the Present International Situation

By O. PIATNITSKY

## PART 2

### IV. FASCISM

**T**HE dominant bourgeoisie are increasing their offensive against the workers both economically and politically.

Side by side with the decrease in the material standard of living of the masses of the workers, the workers are being increasingly deprived of their rights and are becoming increasingly enslaved politically. Fascism is rife in a number of countries in Europe.

In Germany, the fascist dictatorship has deprived the working class of the remnants of all its political rights and liberties, won over decades by heavy class struggle, as well as the right to strike, to join trade unions and to conclude collective wage agreements, etc.

A very expressive picture of the rights of the workers in the U.S.A. is provided by the report of the commission appointed at the end of the year 1932 by President Roosevelt, to investigate the conditions in the American automobile industry. "An espionage system exists in the majority of enterprises." "The petty caprices of the foremen determine the fate of many automobile workers." As a representative of the union declared when examined by the commission: "Old and experienced workers are dismissed if they display the slightest signs of their active efforts to organize."

If this is the situation in a bourgeois "democratic" country, then what shall we say about countries where fascist dictatorship holds sway?

#### FASCISM IN ITALY AND POLAND

In April 1934, the fascist government in Italy, for the fourth time, reduced the wages of workers, office employees, etc., by 12 per cent. Unemployment benefits are being cut down, as is the number of people entitled to receive benefits, in spite of the fact that no small percentage of the wages of those employed are transferred to a fund for unemployment insurance. The peasants are driven off the land if they have nothing with which to pay their rents or debts. The dissatisfaction and wrath of the workers and peasants break out from time to time in isolated, and to a great extent, local actions, which are fiercely suppressed, but for the time being the Italian fascists are not receiving the necessary repulse from the working class.

In Poland, the new constitution which has just been published, and which fundamentally means autocratic rights for the President, completely deprives the masses of the workers of their political rights. The social rights of the workers, provided for in the previous constitution (the eight hour day, the right to social insurance), have been completely

wiped out by the new constitution (in actual fact they have been taken away from the workers long ago). Along with the complete abolition of social insurance, it is also proposed to unify (to merge and to give a fascist character to) all the trade unions.

In spite of the fact that a very big struggle is going on in the Polish bourgeois camp, and that the Pilsudski-ites are losing their mass basis among the petty bourgeoisie, the Pilsudski fascists and the "popular democrats" form a united front when it is a question of the struggle against the working class and against the oppressed nationalities in Poland. It is therefore premature to speak about the serious crisis of Polish fascism, in spite of the fact that the offensive of Polish fascism invariably meets with a powerful repulse from the working class (in recent years there have been two general strikes in Poland).

#### THE POSITION OF GERMAN FASCISM

German fascism is undoubtedly faced with very serious economic difficulties. For the two years of the fascist dictatorship (1933-34), German exports have declined by 1,500 million marks.

Germany's foreign debts amount to 35,000 million marks, but it has nothing with which to pay these debts. It is aiming at a moratorium, and arbitrarily does not pay its obligations, and this circumstance, along with many others, makes it difficult for it to receive new loans and credits.

The heavy financial situation of fascist Germany does not prevent the big firms from making profits.

In 1932 practically all the trusts showed a deficit, but now they all have profits running into millions. In 1932 Krupp had a deficit of 15 millions, but in 1933-34 they had a profit of two millions. In 1932 Gosch had a deficit of six millions, but in 1933 had a profit of one million. In 1932 the Dresden Bank had a deficit of 9.5 millions, but in 1933 had 11.6 millions profit. The Bemberg artificial silk company had a deficit of 5,324,000 in 1932, but a profit of 7,056,000 in 1933.

There is no need to prove that the profits shown in the balance sheets are much lower than the real figures, so as to conceal from the masses the fact that a handful of monopolists are getting rich while the poverty and privations of the masses are growing. The struggle among the various groups of the big bourgeoisie for the division of these profits is growing more intense.

Strong dissatisfaction with the fascists is increasing among the petty bourgeoisie, because the former have not fulfilled their promises.

Last year, the conflicts in the fascist camp grew so sharp that on June 30, 1934, one group of fascist leaders—Hitler, Goering and Goebbels—shot another group of leaders.

Hitler and Goering, in this connection, carried out the orders of the big bourgeoisie, who demanded an end to social demagoguery, *i.e.*, that the fascists put an end to their promise that they would put a limit to "interest slavery", *i.e.*, they would abolish or restrict the activity of the banks, and cut down the profits of the capitalists in the interests of the "nation", etc. The fascist demagogues had promised to exempt the

petty bourgeoisie from taxation, to destroy the cooperative societies which were competing with the small traders, and to close the big stores or even to divide their property among the small traders.

The fascists, of course, did not carry out all these promises, and did not even intend to do so. They tried and are still trying by the use of this demagoguery to trick the masses of the petty bourgeoisie. But the petty bourgeoisie, who had come into the movement as the result of the lavish promises made by the fascists before they came to power, began to exert pressure and demand that the promises be carried out. The storm troop detachments that consisted of people of petty bourgeois origin had taken up a very sympathetic attitude to and had taken seriously these fascist slogans which were directed against the big bourgeoisie. Among them, discontent and unrest increased in proportion as fascism displayed itself as the open dictatorship of the big monopolists. Such a situation became dangerous for the real masters of the fascist regime, *i.e.*, for the powerful trusts and banks. They therefore demanded the disarming and disbandment of the storm troops. The carrying out of this demand was accompanied by the murder of a number of fascist leaders who were opposed to the disbandment of the storm troops. Then followed the "cleansing" and disarming of the storm troops.

But when the storm troopers who were connected with the petty bourgeoisie were disarmed, while the promise to exempt the petty bourgeoisie from taxes for 1934 was not kept, though the taxes on the big bourgeoisie were lowered, disillusionment with fascism began to grow stronger among a section of the petty bourgeoisie, and the petty bourgeois basis of fascism began to contract.

The fact that the anti-imperialist demagoguery of the fascists is on the ebb does not by any means signify that fascism refuses in individual cases to appear in the role of the "defender of the downtrodden". For example, some time after the events of June 30, the fascists began to make a big noise about a certain house-owner Schmidt who had evicted a worker from his house. It need not be said that such evictions in fascist Germany are a common occurrence. Hundreds and thousands of the unemployed are thrown out of their houses every day, and the entire legal press says nothing about these cases. But on this occasion the fascists developed a big campaign. The papers began to demand the arrest of Schmidt. He was arrested. A great fuss was conducted around him with a view to creating the impression that the fascist government is really anxious to guard the toilers from exploitation and oppression.

But the *chauvinist demagoguery of the fascists* is of a particularly frantic type. We know to what a degree the fascists were able to inflame chauvinist passions in connection with the plebiscite in the Saar.

Before the war, as is well known, the Saar district belonged to Germany. After the war it was temporarily made into a separate state under the control of the League of Nations. The coal mines of the Saar were given to France. At the expiration of 15 years the fate of the Saar was to be determined by a plebiscite in which the voters could vote either for the return of the Saar to Germany, or for its union with France, or for the status quo. In order to make the workers more disposed to vote for the union of the Saar district to Germany, the

fascists did everything possible to inflame the chauvinist sentiments of the population, and in particular the German managers of the biggest factories in the Saar displayed unexpected "generosity". To create the impression that the German fascist regime was very anxious about the needs of the workers, the German fascists long before the plebiscite granted millions to pay relief to needy workers in the coal mines and metallurgical plants.

As you are aware, 90.3 per cent of the population of the Saar voted for unity with Germany.

#### THE RESERVES OF GERMAN FASCISM

The success in the Saar was capably used by the German fascists to further inflame chauvinism in Germany.

Two months later—to a considerable degree with a view to freshening and supplementing the source of inspiration of orgies of nationalist passions, but mainly with the object of fulfilling the imperialist program of the fascists—the government of the fascist dictatorship exerted every effort and increased its armaments, and officially announced the introduction of general conscription in Germany, *i.e.*, the open violation of the Versailles Treaty.

The fact that the government openly violated the Versailles Treaty, by issuing a program of militant imperialism, raised the spirits of a section of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie and particularly of the youth, whose heads had already been turned by the success in the Saar.

They were intoxicated by the fact that Germany was at last entering the ranks of the great powers, obtaining equal rights with other countries in respect to armaments. It is true that this "greatness" increases the danger of war. But though that section of the population which experienced the horrors of the imperialist war understand what the war adventurism of fascism is leading to, the other section of the population, particularly the petty bourgeois youth who did not participate in the war, are still strongly affected by chauvinist intoxication. They hope that the war will be victorious and will bring back the days of the old pre-war Germany in which they lived more or less comfortably.

This chauvinist dope naturally makes revolutionary work more difficult in the country.

German fascism has already displayed its complete inability to lead the country out of the quagmire of great economic difficulties in which it is, and to save even the petty bourgeoisie from a further worsening of their conditions. In this respect the petty bourgeoisie are becoming convinced of the falseness of the corresponding promises made by the fascists.

Nevertheless, chauvinism, the influence of which was shown with special force in the Saar and when the introduction of conscription was announced, is the reserve which German fascism uses to strengthen its bankrupt social demagogy and to consolidate once more its somewhat shaken positions.

At the present stage we cannot as yet speak of a crisis taking place in German fascism.

German fascism, however, cannot get along very long on chauvinism alone. The fascists must somehow or other relieve the unbearable situation of the masses of the petty bourgeoisie, and of course they cannot do this. I do not need to mention that not only have the 15 millions of the German working class refused to go over to the side of fascism, but that the German working class is its irreconcilable enemy. This cannot cause us any doubts whatsoever. This is shown by the work of the heroic German Communist Party precisely after the fascists seized the power.

It is true that the numerical strength of our German Party fell very much after the fascist coup. This is easy to understand, in so far as legal conditions of existence gave place to deeply illegal ones. The Party has at present about 40,000 paying members. There are about 35,000 Communists in concentration camps or abroad, and not less than 25,000 Party members have either temporarily lost contact with the Party organizations or do not pay membership dues owing to unemployment. Thus the Party has now about 100,000 members. This is much less than before the fascist coup. But the influence of the Party over the working class has very much increased. Its authority has risen high. The Social-Democratic groups which exist in Germany and fight against fascism are forming a united front with the Communist Party.

Hatred towards fascism among the working class, among part of the intellectuals, and among part of the petty bourgeoisie, who have left it, is accumulating and intensifying ever more strongly. In the conditions of bloody fascist terror the revolutionary crisis is maturing in Germany. War will naturally accelerate this process. When the workers get rifles and machine guns in their hands, the days of the fascists will be numbered!

#### THE SITUATION IN SPAIN

Revolution is taking place in Spain. An ever fiercer and bloody struggle is taking place between revolution and counter-revolution, a struggle between the proletariat and the peasants, on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie on the other.

In October, 1934, the government provoked the proletariat to premature action, with a view to dealing a death blow at the revolution. When ministers belonging to the fascist-clerical party "Action Populaire" entered the Lerroux government, the workers replied by a general strike, and some of the workers—the Communists and the revolutionary-minded Socialists—began an armed struggle against fascism, in spite of the fact that the armed uprising had not been prepared politically or organizationally. After a stubborn and heroic struggle on the part of the workers, the rising was crushed. Though the bourgeois landlord reactionaries strengthened their positions, the proletariat have not been beaten and continue their struggle against the fascists.

#### THE FRENCH PROLETARIAT DEFEATS THE FIRST ATTACKS OF FASCISM

In France the fascist gangs are undoubtedly growing. The French proletariat has twice beaten back the attacks of the fascists.

On February 6, 1934, the fascists succeeded in overthrowing the Daladier government, and if the workers had not come into the streets to resist them, it is difficult to say how far the fascist offensive would have gone. The fascists made their second effort on February 6, 1935, but the working class members of the Socialist Party, together with the Communist workers, defeated this attempt by the united front.

In Great Britain our Party is a small one, but on September 9, 1934, it succeeded in bringing 100,000 workers out in a counter demonstration against the fascist rally in London. There were 5,000 in the fascist parade. Although they were guarded by twice that number of police, they lost their heads at the sight of the huge Communist demonstration and were forced to disperse.

*Conclusions.* We cannot as yet speak of the crisis of fascism, but the lessons learned by the working class from the fascist coups and from their own struggle against fascism have greatly increased the urge for unity among the workers and assist the struggle of the working class in many countries (Austria, Spain, France).

#### V. WHAT IS NEW IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE?

The masses of the people have not arrived at the point where they are ready to storm capitalism, but "the idea of storming capitalism is maturing in the minds of the masses".

The fascist offensive continues. *But the consciousness of the need for revolutionary struggle is growing among the working class.* The reformists had a theory to the effect that strikes were impossible during the crisis. The present economic crisis has thrust aside this theory of the reformists. Never before during crises have there been so many strikes throughout the world as during the present economic crisis, which has developed on the basis of the general crisis of capitalism.

In the course of the first three years of the crisis, 20,900,000 working days were lost during strikes in America, 20,300,000 in England, and 17,000,000 in India. It is a fact that *the proletariat are trying to protect themselves against a reduction of their standard of living, by every means possible including strikes during the crisis.* What is new is that in spite of the colossal unemployment, *the unemployed have not come forward as black-legs during the strikes, they have not been taking the jobs of those on strike. This new phenomenon in the working class movement is of enormous importance.*

In Germany the advent to power of the fascists, and the pogrom campaign of the latter against the organizations of the working class caused great alarm among the workers of all countries, and undoubtedly, made their resistance to fascism more active. The Austrian Social-Democratic workers, the Schutzbundlers, undertook an armed struggle against fascism, although they had avoided even strikes prior to the open onslaught made by the fascists. There is also something new in the fact that in Spain the workers—members of the Socialist Party—with arms in their hands fought side by side with the Communists, against the advance of fascism and the bourgeois-landlord reaction.

Without these serious, bloody lessons that the workers of all coun-

tries learned when they saw the outcome of the capitulation of German Social-Democracy before fascism, such tremendous demonstrations and strikes as those that took place in France on February 9 and 12, 1934, would not have been possible. Four million workers took part in the strike. This shows that the French proletariat were already well aware of how great was the danger represented by fascism and by capitulation to it.

Had the Austrian and German events not taken place, it is possible that a section of the English workers, whom in general it is somewhat difficult to rouse, would never have taken part in the demonstrations against fascism organized on a united front basis, whereas now, tens of thousands of workers attend these demonstrations, despite the fact that the Laborites and the trade union bureaucrats forbid any participation in them. The German events influenced the working class movement in America: the big strikes which took place in 1933 and 1934, the joint struggle of the Communists and the workers who support the reformists, the struggle which in some countries to a certain extent took place under the leadership of the Communists. This is what is fundamentally new. After the lessons of the German events, the possibilities for the Communists to carry on a successful struggle to establish a united front have been considerably broadened. It is this that is valuable, important and new.

#### WHAT IS NEW IN THE COLONIES?

An independent working class movement, one which was not there before, has appeared in the colonies.

If economic struggles took place in the colonies previously, they did so under the leadership of the reformist, national bourgeoisie. Now on the other hand, we can record the textile workers' strike which took place in Bombay in May, 1934, led by the Red Textile Workers' Union. The latter was successful, in the beginning, in drawing the other two Bombay textile workers' unions into the strike. We pointed out above that India occupied the third place in the world during the first three years of the crisis as regards the extent of the strike struggles. This is new, something that did not take place immediately after the war, not to mention the fact that still less did it take place before the war.

Despite the increasing terror, great unrest still continues among the peasantry as well, who are rising against extortionate taxation and usury. In the colonies the peasantry in particular suffer at the hands of the imperialists, landlords and usurers. In India, indebtedness which amounts to a total of 270 million pounds sterling, weighs heavily upon 240 million peasants. The peasantry have to pay from 12 to 36 per cent per year on this indebtedness (*Indian White Book Report of the English Parliamentary Commission, 1934*).

#### KUOMINTANG CHINA AND SOVIET CHINA

As is well known, a Soviet government has already been set up in one part of China. While the other part of China is governed by the Kuomintang (the Kuomintang is the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie

and landlords and is at the head of the Nanking government, formally the central government of China).

In Kuomintang China there are constant strikes against the worsening of the conditions of the workers which are sufficiently bad as it is. The strikes take place in extremely hard circumstances for the proletariat. In the big towns in China, there are not only the Kuomintang police, but the police on the foreign concessions; and the most important factories are situated in the English, French and Japanese concession areas. This being the case, the strikes are invariably accompanied by conflicts with the police, and there are not infrequent cases of the strikers seizing Kuomintang institutions and raiding them and disarming the gendarmes.

As we know, Soviet China covers several districts already. The Chinese Red Army has its political departments, its Young Communist and Party organizations, etc. Of the rank and file in the units which form the main forces of the Chinese Red Army, 52 per cent are from the Young Communist League and from the Party.

Not so long ago the chief Soviet region was in the province of Kiangsi (the Central Soviet Region). Here the land was taken from the landlords and transferred to the peasants, the eight hour day was established by law (the average working day in Kuomintang China is not less than 11 hours), schools and clubs were founded, the Young Communist League and Pioneer detachments were organized, work was being conducted among women. The Chinese peasants for the first time in their lives saw that life was possible without extortionate rents, without the despotism and rapacity of the landlord; they saw that it was possible to have a government of toilers, a Soviet government, distinguished from the government of the generals as the sky is distinct from the earth. A world was created unprecedented in Chinese conditions!

Even now that the troops of Chang Kai-shek have succeeded in driving the main forces of the Red Army out of the Central Soviet Region in Kiangsi, they have not succeeded and will not succeed in exterminating the colossal influence of the Soviet movement there.

The Nanking government tried six times to crush the Central Soviet Region by armed force. Five campaigns met with failure. Only after the sixth campaign, after a year of severe fighting and the use of bombing planes and gases, after roads had been built in order to bring up artillery, and after a whole system of fortifications had been built under the guidance of the German, General Seekt, a well equipped White army, 800,000 strong, drove the Red Army out of the Central Soviet Region. However, its attempt to surround and annihilate the main forces of the Red Army met with complete failure.

The main body of the Red forces broke through the White front, leaving behind in the rear of the enemy leaders for partisan detachments and some regular units. In November, 1934, the Red troops evacuated Kiangsi and passed through several provinces, Kwantung, Kwanksi, Kweichow. In two and a half months, they covered 1,400 kilometers in dismounted formation and engaging in battle. This was indeed a legendary campaign! On their way, they went into battle against the armies of Chiang Kai-shek and routed all the troops of the local generals that



they encountered. (Every province of China has its own army.) They seized towns, replenished their food supplies, collected arms and ammunition, destroyed the documents of the landlords concerning peasant lands, left comrades behind to carry on work for the Young Communists and the Party and for the guerilla warfare detachments, and marched on further. After all these battles, the main forces of the Red Army arrived at Szechwan province.

In Szechwan there is a proletariat. There are salt mines there where about 300,000 workers are engaged. There are oil, coal, ore and cotton. There is an arsenal, guns and airplanes. Szechwan, moreover, is the granary of China. The population there is sixty million.

The Chinese Red Army, whose main forces are now being reorganized, is still faced with a serious struggle, but there is every chance that it will come out victorious.

#### VI. THE UNITED PROLETARIAN FRONT AND THE FRATERNAL COMMUNIST PARTIES

I will now deal with the last question: what is the idea of the united front tactics and what achievements have been reached through it?

Before the war there was no such term as "united front". The working class organizations, the Social-Democratic Party and the trade unions in Western Europe were, on the whole, not split. The struggle between the revolutionary and opportunist tendencies took place inside the Social-Democratic parties.

What is this united front? Actually, the united front means joint action on the part of workers organized in different political and trade union organizations.

Unlike the countries of the West, in former tsarist Russia revolutionary Social-Democracy, on the one hand, and opportunist Social-Democracy, on the other, were organized in different parties. In actual practice, the united front was adopted in Russia, although I do not remember that the term itself was ever used.

Then in Russia, besides the Bolshevik Party of the working class, there were many parties which laid claim to being working class parties and endeavored to gain influence over the working class: the Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bundists.

This being the case, joint action was inevitable at definite periods in the struggle against tsarism. And there were actually joint activities of this kind. As for the factories, the workers in them always acted together in a united front, during strikes, without entering into any special agreements.

During big events, demonstrations were sometimes organized jointly. During the armed uprising in Moscow (December, 1905) the call to revolt was signed by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the parties represented in the Soviet. In Leningrad (then St. Petersburg) the Soviet of Workers' Deputies was in actual fact an organ of the united front. I, myself, during the 1905 revolution, had to take part in meetings in Odessa together with Bundists, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolu-

tionaries, at which a contact commission was formed to struggle against the pogrom instigators, etc., and which included, besides the organizations already enumerated, representatives of other organizations which at that time were fighting against tsarism. During this period, these organizations in Odessa sometimes arranged joint demonstrations. This was actually a united front.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE STRUGGLE FOR THE UNITED FRONT

After the war when each of the Social-Democratic Parties and the trade unions had openly supported their own bourgeoisie, the formation of revolutionary working class organizations to carry on the class struggle against the bourgeoisie became inevitable. The treacherous policy of the reformists made a split in the working class inevitable. The revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat organized itself into Communist Parties. In consequence of the fact that the trade union bureaucrats began to expell the revolutionary workers and whole organizations from the reformist trade unions, revolutionary trade unions also came into being.

After the war, as soon as the bourgeoisie had recovered from the first revolutionary storms, and began to take back all the gains which the workers had won during that period, the Communist International appealed to the Second International, to all the existing Social-Democratic Parties and workers' organizations, with the proposal to set up a united front of struggle against the capitalist offensive. This was in the autumn of 1921.

In 1922 negotiations were opened. But the conference of three Internationals (the Third, Two-and-a-half and Second) which took place on the question of the united front brought no practical results, for Social-Democracy rudely refused to carry out the obligations it had taken upon itself, and soon afterwards the Second and Two-and-a-half Internationals united on the platform of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and a denial of the revolutionary struggle.

During the period of the relative stabilization of capitalism, the Social-Democratic Parties continued to sink to a still lower level in their policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. To all the proposals of the Communists for a united front of struggle against the bourgeoisie, they either gave their refusal or gave no reply at all. They continued the same tactics of openly refusing to go into the joint struggle, at the beginning of the crisis.

But the situation changed; the proletariat began to listen more and more to the criticism levelled by the Communists against the Social-Democratic Parties. In many countries the workers—members of Social-Democratic Parties—joined in strikes which were headed by Communists and the revolutionary trade unions. The Social-Democratic leaders were no longer able to limit themselves to merely refusing to join the united front. The situation compelled some of the Social-Democratic Parties to try to solve this problem in a roundabout way and to raise conditions for the united front which they considered totally unacceptable to the Communists. They considered the condition about concluding a pact of

non-aggression (cessation of mutual criticism) between Communists and the Social-Democrats to be a demand of this kind.

In February, 1933, the Second International proposed on its own behalf to the Comintern to conclude a pact of non-aggression on these lines. On March 5, 1933, the Communist International replied that the Communists were prepared to refrain from criticising those Social Democratic Parties that agree to participate in joint action against the fascists, but only if the Social-Democrats carried on a real struggle against the fascists. If the Social-Democrats failed to fulfill their obligations which the parties take upon themselves concerning joint struggle, then the Communists would criticise them mercilessly and show them up as blacklegs.

On the instructions of the Communist International, all the Communist Parties made proposals to the Socialist Parties to conclude a pact on these lines. But the Social-Democratic Parties rejected the Communist Parties' proposals. It was not the united front they wanted! Since the workers had begun to listen more and more to the criticism made by the Communists, the Social-Democrats merely wanted the Communists to drop their criticism. Of course, the Communist Parties would not agree to this.

But this does not mean that the necessary persistence, flexibility and skill were displayed by several of the Communist Parties and local organizations at that time in the struggle on behalf of the united front, which fact increased the opportunity of the Social-Democratic leaders to get out of our proposals for joint struggle. Several Communist Parties, underestimating the extreme importance of the united front, especially in the face of the fascist offensive, put forward such conditions for concluding a united front, which at times were not sufficiently understood by, or those close to the masses of the, Social-Democratic workers to make them ready either to force their leaders to accept the united front proposals or undertake joint struggles with the Communists over the heads of their own leaders.

Side by side with these mistakes in the work of the Communists, there were other mistakes of quite the opposite kind: readiness to accept any conditions, to cover up the face of the Party, if only they could get formal agreement from the Social-Democratic leaders to undertake joint action. And not always, by a long way, did the Communists carry on broad systematic, persistent agitation among the masses on behalf of their own proposals for a united front.

Both the sectarian and Right mistakes, which greatly hinder the correct struggle for the united front, are being overcome in the practical work of the sections of the Communist International though not without great difficulty and vacillations.

The fascist coup d'etat in Germany (January 30, 1933), and the disgraceful capitulation of German Social-Democracy called forth indignation against the latter and a desire for the united front among the working masses.

Before the coup d'etat, German Social-Democracy had a membership of one million, had mighty organizations at its disposal, and controlled the trade unions. The state police apparatus of Prussia was in

the hands of its most prominent representatives. It had at its disposal the widest opportunities for struggle against the preparations for the fascist coup d'etat.

The German Communist Party appealed three times to the Social-Democratic Parties and the reformist trade unions, proposing that they jointly organize a general strike. This was on July 20, 1932, when the fascists overthrew the Prussian Social-Democratic government, on January 30, when Hitler came to power, and on March 5, 1933, after the burning of the Reichstag.

But the Social-Democratic leaders persistently rejected these proposals.

True, despite the fact that the Social-Democratic leadership and the trade union leaders sabotaged the united front, the united front of Communist and Social-Democratic workers began in several cases—not long before Hitler's advent to power—to be operated from below, in joint demonstrations, defense of workers' clubs, print-shops, newspapers, etc. However, the extent of these joint activities was far from sufficient to mobilize the broad masses of the Social-Democratic workers and the reformist trade unions for the struggle against fascism. At the same time the Social-Democratic Party itself did not even attempt to make use of the enormous forces at its disposal against fascism, and thus paved the way for fascism.

This capitulation to fascism could not fail to cause dissatisfaction among the masses of the rank-and-file members, not only of German Social-Democracy, but in the other parties of the Second International. The growing, immense disillusion in the policy of the Social-Democratic Parties led the masses of their rank-and-file members to begin to listen attentively to the proposals for the united front, and to raise the question in their organizations of united action with the Communists.

#### THE UNITED FRONT IN FRANCE

I have already mentioned the influence that the lessons of the German events had upon the mass movement of February 9-12, 1934, in France.

On February 7-8, the French Communist Party called upon the proletariat to reply to the fascist demonstrations by coming out on the streets on February 9 all over France. In order to prevent the workers from participating in these demonstrations called by the Communist Party for February 9, the Socialist Party of France appealed to the workers to "down tools" in a general strike on February 12. Without withdrawing its call to demonstrate on February 9, the Communist Party joined in the appeal of the Socialists to call a strike on February 12. But unlike the Socialists, the Communists proposed that on February 12 there should be not a "down tools" strike but a strike combined with demonstrations.

On February 9, the proletariat came out on the streets. It was the first time in France that such huge masses were set in motion by an appeal made by the Communists. Taking into account the influence of this tremendous demonstration and the strike of February 12, in which

about four million workers took part, the anti-fascist congress which took place in Paris a short time after these events, made a proposal, at the instance of the Communists, to the congress of the French Socialist Party which was taking place at that time, to set up a united front.

The leaders of the Socialist Party rejected this proposal.

But this time there was a strong opposition at the Socialist Congress, which reflected the pressure of the masses and demanded that the Socialist Party meet the proposal of the Communists. And although the congress declared that the Socialist Party would not make a permanent united front, it was compelled to decide that the C.C. of the Socialist Party could enter into agreement with the Communist Party on separate questions. The Communist Party of France used this decision to propose that the Socialist Party organize a joint campaign to release Thaelmann. The Socialist Party once more refused.

Then the Communist organization in Paris put the same proposal to the Paris organization of the Socialist Party which, in view of the moods of the Parisian proletariat, decided to enter into a united front. This decision on the part of the Paris organization, the most important in the whole of the Socialist Party, compelled the C.C. of the Socialist Party to enter into negotiations for a united front with the French Communist Party. Thus, agreement was arrived at in France between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party for the united front of struggle against fascism, which has brought such big results. Communists and Socialists have jointly convened big mass meetings and joint demonstrations. This has considerably increased the power of the working class of France to resist the offensive of the fascists, and has had a great influence upon the struggle for the united front in many other countries as well.

#### THE UNITED FRONT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

In England, the Labor Party (which is affiliated to the Second International) and the leaders of the trade unions are against the united front. But the Communist Party of Great Britain is not infrequently successful in getting a united front with a section of the Labor Party and trade union organizations. A short time ago events of very great importance for England took place on this basis. When the law was passed in Parliament curtailing unemployment benefits by 30-50 per cent, the Communist Party of Great Britain together with the Independent Labor Party and some of the local labor and trade union organizations called the unemployed out in mass demonstrations. The demonstrations of unemployed, which took place partly as a result of this appeal and partly spontaneously, covered all the most important districts of the country and assumed such dimensions that the government was compelled to retreat; the law is at present no longer being operated!

In several towns in Poland—Warsaw, Lodz and others—the Communist Party of Poland has been successful in establishing the united front with local organizations of the Polish Socialist Party and the Bund (the Jewish Social-Democratic Party). Recently in Warsaw a conference of workers took place, which was convened without the Com-

munists. The leaders of the Polish Socialist Party tried to prevent Communists from taking part in it. Nevertheless, the Communists had about 60 delegates at the conference, representatives of whom it was not possible not to include in the governing body of the conference and in the commissions which worked on the resolutions. The Conference passed a decision which contradicts the line of the Polish Socialist Party, namely in defense of the Soviet Union and against the alliance of Poland with Germany. Thus, in Poland as well, the pressure from below (from the masses) is such that it forces the leaders of the Polish Socialist Party to enter the united front in some places.

In the United States of America big strikes have been conducted on the basis of the united front.

In October, 1934, in connection with the armed fighting which had taken place in Spain, the Comintern made a proposal to the Second International for the joint organization of assistance to the Spanish workers—victims of Spanish fascism. The Second International refused to accept the Comintern proposal, but their refusal caused strong dissatisfaction among the members of the reformist trade unions and the Social-Democratic Parties.

The Conference of the Second International which took place soon after also rejected the proposal of the Communist International, but at the same time was compelled to abandon its previous decision prohibiting Social-Democratic Parties in individual cases from concluding separate united front agreements with the Communists. The Conference decided to grant the Social-Democratic Parties the right to conclude agreements for a united front with the Communists on their own responsibility.

At this conference the representatives of six parties, among them the French Socialist Party, the Spanish, Italian, Swiss and Austrian Social-Democratic Parties and the Polish Bund, voted in favor of joint action in defense of the Spanish workers, as proposed by the Communist International.

How are we to explain this increasing desire of the workers for the united front?

Since the beginning of the economic crisis, the economic conditions of the working class have worsened considerably: wages have been cut, the productivity of labor has been increased at the expense of the workers, conditions of work in the factories have been worsened, at the same time, the net profits of the big concerns and trusts have grown to a colossal extent. Unemployment has, in the main, not changed, and has become chronic. Unemployment insurance has been reduced in those countries where it exists at all. In the remaining countries, the insignificant assistance to the unemployed, afforded previously by benevolent societies, has been reduced or stopped entirely. In all the capitalist countries the elementary political rights of the workers are either entirely abolished (in the fascist countries) or are being curtailed.

The worsening of their political and economic position has affected the broadest masses of workers. Consequently, of late the desire for trade union unity and the united front of struggle has increased also among the workers belonging to the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals.

The Communist International made a proposal to the Socialist Labor International to celebrate May First jointly. The Second International rejected this proposal.

A deep crisis is taking place inside the Second International.

In several countries (France, Spain, Austria) the Social-Democratic Parties, under the influence of their members, have been compelled to set up a united front with the Communist Parties.

In those countries where the Social-Democratic Parties have held the reins of power (the Labor Party in England), or are in the government (the Social-Democratic Parties of Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Sweden), the Social-Democratic Parties are definitely against the united front of struggle, for this struggle must be directed against the governments which they are leading or of which they are members. And these governments pursue the policy of the bourgeoisie. The Swedish, Danish and Norwegian Social-Democratic governments, besides giving big grants to factory owners, landlords and bankers, have actually abolished the right to strike and are introducing a law making the trade unions financially responsible for strikes (in Denmark, the court has already awarded costs to the extent of 20,000 Danish kronen against the seamen's union for their strike). They have reduced wages, increased the prices of foodstuffs and articles of universal consumption, reinforced the police and increased expenditure on armaments. The Social-Democratic ministers in Belgium and Czechoslovakia are doing the same. Some of the parties of the Second International, under the pressure of their members, are in favor of the united front, the other parties of the Second International, which are in the governments, are against the united front. Therefore the leaders of the Second International are not in a position to issue a decision either for or against the united front at present without increasing the crisis inside the Second International. When, on March 5, 1933, the Comintern advised its section to make proposals to the Social-Democratic Parties for joint struggle against fascism, the Second International forbade its sections to accept the proposal, giving as its motive the line that the united front must be established on an international scale. When in October, 1934, the Comintern made a proposal to the Second International to form a united front on an international scale to help the Spanish fighters, the leaders of the Second International rejected the proposal, declaring at the time that it is the business of the individual parties affiliated to the Second International.

The same reply was given by the leaders of the Second International in connection with the Comintern proposal to celebrate May First jointly.

#### OF WHAT IMPORTANCE IS THE UNITED FRONT?

If the workers—members of the parties of the Second International—fight together with the Communists, will the working class as a whole gain thereby?

Of course they will. If the Socialist leaders refuse to make a united front, the Communists will appeal to the national parties of the Second International, and if they refuse, then to the local organizations, and, if

they in their turn refuse, then to the members of the Social-Democratic organizations, and will establish the united front over the heads of the Social-Democratic leaders and this in turn, will not fail to compel some of the obstinate Social-Democratic Party officials to give up their policy of openly breaking the united front. Thus the workers will be shown in actual practice that only the revolutionary road of struggle leads to victory. In conducting the united front, the Communists have an opportunity of drawing into the struggle strata of the workers whom the reformists have been holding back from the struggle. This is very important for the further struggle of the proletariat and for increasing the influence of the Communist Party over the masses.

Connected with the question of the united front, there is the *question of trade union unity*. Our Red trade unions are fighting for unity and meeting with stubborn resistance on the part of the reformists. A short time ago the Profintern made a proposal to the Amsterdam International to organize a joint demonstration on May First, to assist in unifying the trade unions in Spain and in France, in restoring the German trade unions destroyed by fascism, and in beginning negotiations for trade union unity on an international scale. The reply received was in the negative. In spite of this, the question of uniting the trade unions is on the order of the day, and the Communists will urge it forward and try to get it solved quickly, because only the bourgeoisie stand to gain by the split in the trade union movement.

If the trade unions unite, the revolutionary workers will have an opportunity of fighting inside them for their own proposals. In so far as the members of the reformist trade unions undoubtedly are disillusioned in the former policy of their leaders, it will be easier for the revolutionary workers by their tireless efforts to direct the trade unions along the road of the class struggle.

AGAINST FASCISM, AGAINST THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE.  
AGAINST WAR AND IN DEFENSE OF THE U.S.S.R.

The development of events is proceeding along the lines laid down and foretold in the works of our leaders, Lenin and Stalin, in the leading documents of the Comintern.

The special kind of depression is not solving a single one of the contradictions sharpened by the economic crisis, in the throes of which the capitalist world is grappling today.

The consciousness of instability, alarm as to what tomorrow will bring, is characteristic of the mood of the leading upper strata of capitalism. The financial magnates are seizing upon the bloodstained weapon of fascism, they are preparing a new world bloodbath, they are seeking a way out in crazy, adventurist plans for attacking the U.S.S.R.

The special kind of depression does not lessen the contradictions between classes and states. "The world is squarely approaching a new round of revolutions and wars" (Theses of the Thirteenth E.C.C.I. Plenum). The world is on the eve of revolutionary battles against war, against fascism, against capitalist dictatorship and for proletarian dictatorship.



And in these battles, the land that is victoriously building socialism, the mighty socialist fatherland of the working class of the whole world, shines out as the guiding star of the world proletariat. Each of its achievements, every new factory, every new victory in mastering new technique, in raising the productivity of labor and in building the new socialist culture, is of ever greater decisive international importance.