

THE ANTI-SOVIET POLICY OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND THE PROTEST MOVEMENT OF THE ENGLISH PROLETARIAT.

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THE National Government which came to power largely on the basis of its demagogic promises to provide work and wages for all British workers, has not only been unable to fulfil its promise, but every act of its policy has only served to increase the misery of the working masses, as the capitalists have attempted to find a way out of the crisis by their attacks upon the conditions of the working class.

Production does not show an increase in any of the basic industries, unemployment has steadily grown since the National Government came into power. Unparalleled mass misery is to be found everywhere. The large industrial centres, and mining districts are, in very truth, graveyards of capitalism.

So marked is the contrast between the conditions of the workers in the oldest capitalist country in the world, and the conditions obtaining in the Young Soviet Union, that, more and more, is this contrast serving to accentuate the radicalisation of the British working class, and develop a widespread realisation that the solution of the problems facing the workers can only be achieved along the path of the October Revolution.

All the efforts of the British capitalist class to solve the crisis by the usual peaceful methods, i.e., changes in monetary and fiscal policy, lowering of workers' standards, speeding up in the factories, have not enabled them to regain their lost markets or establish new ones. Therefore this whole policy to-day is one of feverish preparations for new wars and armed intervention against the Soviet Union.

There was never such a period of mass misery on the one hand, and such lavish naval, air and military displays, pageants and tattoos, on the other, as at the present time. The savage cutting down of all forms of expenditure on social service and increased expenditure on armaments; the character of the British "Disarmament" proposals at Geneva, all show the rapacious character of the war policy of the National Government as a burning reality.

But it is in relation to the Soviet Union that its war policy has perhaps been more openly expressed. The National Government has encouraged and supported every anti-Soviet manoeuvre and policy that has been sponsored by any imperialist Power. Every tendency to form an anti-Soviet bloc, has been warmly welcomed by the National Government. Any country, following a policy, the result of which may be either concealed intervention, or open war on

the Soviet Union, has received the complete endorsement and support of the National Government.

In this connection, its support of the policy of Japanese imperialism has been most marked and consistent. One has only to recall the comments on the events in the Far East of many important capitalist newspapers in Britain about "Japan being a bulwark in the Far East against Bolshevism" and "Japan fighting for civilisation against the barbaric menace in the East." These references are sufficient to indicate the mind of the diehards of the ruling class of Britain. The reception given, for example, to Von Papen's proposal for a bloc against the Soviet Union, when he came into power in Germany in August, 1932; the Four-Power Pact initiated by MacDonald and Mussolini in Rome in the early months of this year. Alongside these tendencies, of course, is to be noted the significant fact that, in Parliament, every encouragement was given to all kinds of insolent questions with reference to the Soviet Union by the diehard Tories. These things all show the strong anti-Soviet campaign being carried through under the leadership of the Tories, screened by the cloak of the National Government, a campaign which has assumed a stronger character than at any time since the period of armed intervention in 1920.

Then came the Moscow trial of the British engineers and, at once, the hounds of intervention were in full cry. The Tory papers and Tory clubs seethed with indignation at the so-called insult to British citizens, and demands flowed thick and fast from all bourgeois quarters, not only for the breaking of trading relations, but the severance of diplomatic relations. There was never a time, since the intervention period, when the anti-Soviet campaign reached such a strong point as during the period when the British engineers were under arrest and on trial. Day after day this anti-Soviet barrage was kept up. Every newspaper and avenue of public opinion was brought into play to support this campaign, but it had little effect upon the working class. Indeed, as a matter of fact, when the publication of the various interviews was made which had taken place between Comrade Litvinov and Sir Esmond Ovey, the British Ambassador in Moscow, and Comrade Litvinov informed the latter gentleman that "he was not talking to Mexico," it created a delight amongst the working class that it is difficult to recall any other expression having achieved. This expression is now known in every workshop, trade union branch and

workers' home in the country. It was realised that it expressed the strength of the Soviet Union and emphasised that there was one socialist country in the world which could speak without any diplomatic language to the oldest and most presumptuous imperialist country in the world.

Of course, it is now a matter of history that the National Government utilised the Moscow trial to put the anti-embargo measure through its packed House of Commons. A Government which had made play of its desire to find work for the unemployed, revealed its real face when, to carry forward its policy of preparing for armed intervention against the Workers' Socialist Fatherland, it deliberately resorted to the weapon of the embargo on trade with the Soviet Union, and placed 60,000 British workers out of work.

At once this Act aroused a storm of protest throughout the working class movement. The Communist Party initiated a big campaign against the embargo. The United Front Agreement reached between the C.P. and the I.L.P. contained an important point on the need for organising the fight against the embargo, and proposed to organise a national campaign for the withdrawal of the Embargo Act. The Friends of the Soviet Union, which had been rapidly growing in influence and strength for a long period, played a very important rôle in the anti-embargo campaign, which also reflected itself in the composition of the May Day delegation to the Soviet Union, which included a worker from Metro-Vickers.

Meetings, conferences, demonstrations, etc., were organised all over the country. The Friends of the Soviet Union issued a special leaflet for distribution at 105 factories which had either worked on orders for the Soviet Union in the past, or were actually doing so at the time of the embargo. The following extracts will show the character of this leaflet, which had a signal effect in many of the factories, leading to the workers holding meetings and passing resolutions, demanding the withdrawal of the embargo :—

"The 'National' Government has put an embargo on Soviet imports. In reply, the Soviet Government had stopped all trade with this country. That means millions of pounds worth of orders and business lost to Britain."

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"You have worked on Soviet orders. You know that they have kept scores of works and mills open, and given employment to thousands. Now all this has been lost. More must go on the dole. More children must go hungry."

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WHY THE EMBARGO ?

"They tell you it is 'to save the British prisoners in Moscow.' A LIE ! An innocent British girl

was hounded to suicide by the third degree methods of the American police (in the Lindbergh baby case). The British Government did nothing."

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"They tell you it is 'to stand by innocent men.' A LIE ! Thornton and Macdonald have confessed they were guilty of wrecking plant, bribery and spying."

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"They told you 'the sentences are brutal.' A LIE ! Thornton and Macdonald will be able to work at their profession at trade union rates. Every day's work will mean a day's remission. And what about the Meerut prisoners sentenced to ten and twelve years' transportation for the 'crime' of organising the Indian trade union movement ?

"Thornton and Macdonald are only a pretext. The capitalist class of this country seize on any pretext for attacking the first workers' republic."

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"They broke off the Trade Agreement last October. When their spies and wreckers were arrested they broke off trade negotiations. When the sentences were barely announced (not yet confirmed), they imposed the embargo. Thus they carried out their pledge to the big Canadian wheat, timber and fur trusts—and to the British bankers and merchants interested in Canadian business—which was made at Ottawa. The next step will be to break diplomatic relations, a prelude to WAR."

A further letter issued by the Friends of the Soviet Union in 100,000 copies also clearly explained the meaning of the British embargo on Russian trade.

"The Government has put an embargo on goods coming from the Soviet Union. None of the chief imports, such as timber, petroleum, butter and grain, are to be allowed into the country."

This means that all exports from Britain to the U.S.S.R. will also stop. Soviet Union, in her own interests, must buy where she can sell. So the Soviet Union have replied to the embargo with a counter-embargo.

That is to say, trade with the U.S.S.R. amounting to £29,000,000 last year, will come to a complete stop.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT YOU ?

It will mean *Higher Prices*.

It will mean *More Unemployment*.

It will mean *increased Danger of War*.

THE EMBARGO MEANS UNEMPLOYMENT.

Example No. 1.

More than half of the total exports of British machinery tools go to the Soviet Union. This

industry will thus be cut in half. The Government are deliberately throwing thousands of engineers out of work.

Example No. 2.

Every ton of machinery exported from Britain means more than a ton of steel has been smelted, giving employment to blast furnacemen, steel smelters, etc. To make a ton of steel nearly four tons of coal have to be used, and the mining of the coal means employment for miners. All this work is lost by the embargo.

The Government is thus throwing tens of thousands of steel workers, engineers, miners and transport workers on the streets.

The Communist Party issued leaflets, many of our local organisations displayed considerable initiative in getting out special types of leaflets, in accordance to the concrete situation in their localities, which played an important part in the mobilisation of the working class against the embargo.

As a result of the campaign thus started, working class organisations began to adopt resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the embargo, all revealed the growing indignation of the workers.

Up to date, we have record of over 300 such resolutions being adopted, and of course, this excludes those which were sent to the *Daily Herald*, Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, and these can certainly be recorded in some hundreds. It is interesting to note the character of the organisations which adopted resolutions of protest. For example, the Scottish Trade Union Congress, at its Congress in April, representing all the organised trade unionists in Scotland, passed the following resolution:—

"This Congress registers its emphatic protest against the action of the National Government in placing an embargo on the import of U.S.S.R. products, realising that this means, (1) depriving thousands of workers of employment in this country, (2) it is a deliberate attempt to destroy Socialist development in Russia, (3) it is dictated by the decisions of the Ottawa Conference rather than by the trial of the British engineers.

"Congress therefore pledges itself to work and fight for the raising of the embargo as speedily as possible."

The following trades councils also adopted similar resolutions: Manchester and Salford Trades Council; Deptford; Croydon; Newcastle; Grangemouth; Bradford; Middlesbrough; Liverpool; West Ham; Leicester; and Farnsworth.

In the trade union branches, resolutions against the embargo were passed by the following organisations: Textile Workers, Boilermakers, Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, Furnishing Trades Association, Transport and General Workers' Union, including

Busmen and Dockers, the National Union of Railwaymen, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engine-drivers and Firemen, the Lightermen's Union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the Building Trades Federation, Electrical Trade Union, General and Municipal Workers' Union, the National Society of Painters, Chemical Workers' Union, the National Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, representing the whole membership organised in the Amalgamated Engineering Union, Shop Assistants, Clerical Workers, Distributive Workers.

In addition, the following organisations at various meetings had resolutions adopted of a similar character: National Unemployed Workers' Movement, I.L.P., Labour Party, Communist Party, Friends of the Soviet Union, Co-operative Guilds, Labour Women's Guilds, the Congress of the Co-operative Union, and at mass meetings all over the country similar resolutions of protest were recorded.

The Women's Co-operative Guilds Jubilee Congress, attended by over 1,600 delegates from every part of Britain have unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the embargo "as a step nearer to war."

It is a very significant fact that an analysis of the whole of the resolutions shows that the embargo is recognised as a step towards armed intervention and war.

It is interesting to note that in certain bourgeois circles hostility was manifested to the breaking of the trade agreement and important town councils, like Cardiff and Oldham, went on record against it, and in other areas, local chambers of commerce demanded the withdrawal of the embargo.

It is very significant, in connection with the campaign of the British working class against the embargo, that the stronger the diehards organised their campaign, the stronger became the working-class reply. But, as usual, the reformists of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress helped the diehards in their demand for the release of the British engineers, as can be seen in the following telegram, which was sent to the Soviet Government by the Joint Council of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress:

"British organised labour, industrial and political, appeals to the Soviet Government for the immediate release of fellow countrymen in the interests of friendly relations between Great Britain and Russia."

(Signed) Walter M. Citrine, Arthur Henderson, George Lansbury.

But this infamous telegram did not represent the opinions of the British working class. Their opinions are recorded in resolutions which were immediately adopted on the publication of the telegram of the Joint Council of the Labour Party and

Trades Union Congress. For example, the Nottingham Trades Council declared :

"This meeting raised strong objections to the actions of the National Joint Council in asking for the release of the British engineers guilty of attempting to ruin the work of Socialist construction.

"This action misrepresents the opinion of the organised workers.

"If Thornton and Macdonald were released, it would serve to encourage parties interested in destroying workers' dictatorship in the U.S.S.R. We uphold the findings of the Soviet court."

The Newcastle Labour Party declared :

"That this delegate meeting entirely dissociates itself from the decision of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress requesting the release of the British prisoners in Moscow, who were charged and found guilty of wrecking and sabotaging socialist construction in Soviet Russia."

"We declare that such enemies against Socialism in any country are deserving of the utmost punishment. In endorsing such acts, the Executive Committee does not reflect the general membership."

These are the expressions of opinion which can be accurately stated to reflect the real opinions of the workers of Britain. In point of fact, it would be impossible to discover anyone in any factory, trade union branch, or travelling in bus, tram or tube, during the proceedings of the Moscow trial, who heard British workers defend the British engineers. On the contrary, it was common to hear such expressions as : "They're guilty all right," or "The Soviet Government would not dare to have arrested these engineers unless they had the goods on them." And when the trial itself began, and the concrete facts of the wrecking activities were published, then the class instinct of the British workers was strongly displayed. So much so, that when the actual sentences became known, the general impression in working class circles was that the British engineers had got off very lightly, and in many meetings questions were asked by the workers, in which they protested against the light sentences that had been inflicted. On many, many occasions, workers very pointedly asked why "There had been any differentiation made between the sentences of the Russian and British culprits."

There can be no doubt that the strength of the working class fight against the embargo has made itself felt.

The Communist Party has set itself the aim of still more intensifying the anti-embargo campaign, so as to bring in wider circles of the working class, and to get the campaign organised to take a more definite and concrete form. Particularly significant is the intensification of the struggle in the localities and districts,

so that the opposition to the policy of the embargo and armed intervention can be brought home to every section of the ruling class and their supporters.

District conferences are being organised by the Friends of the Soviet Union. The delegation of workers who visited the Soviet Union in connection with the First of May celebrations, are already engaged in a wide reporting campaign, which is receiving the greatest attention and support.

In London on July 30th, 1933, there is to take place a great national anti-war demonstration. In this demonstration the question of the fight against the embargo was to occupy a prominent place.

After this article had already been written, it became known that the undertaking of the British Government of the embargo on imports of Soviet goods had ended in failure. The Government found itself compelled to raise the embargo, and to propose the resumption of negotiations for the conclusion of a new trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. The causes of the retreat of the British Government are three-fold. In the first place, the Soviet power exhibited in this conflict a stability and firmness which was not anticipated by the diehards, who had already miscalculated in regard to the Soviet power more than once. In the second place, the British bourgeoisie suffered a much greater loss as a result of the embargo, to which the Soviet power responded by counter-measures, than did the Soviet power. In the circumstances of the sharpening economic war between Great Britain and the U.S.A., and also that between Great Britain and Japan, business circles in Britain began to increasingly express their dissatisfaction at the additional difficulties created their trade by the embargo. In the third place, and this is of decisive importance, the protest of the mass of British workers against the embargo increased continuously.

The Communist Party has done, and will do, everything possible to assist in the development of this broad movement of working class protest. There have been many weaknesses in the campaign, such as not reacting quickly enough to the menace offered by the Tory diehards, and perhaps in not explaining the significance of the breaking of the trade agreement with the actual preparations for armed intervention, and in not having harnessed the resolutions of protest into more concrete forms of mass action.

The question of the embargo has now been removed by the British Government itself. But this by no means removes the question of the organisation by the British Government of intervention against the U.S.S.R.

The Four-Power Pact, which is directed against the Soviet Union ; the friendship and admiration which is being expressed in many official quarters for the bloody regime of Hitler ; are also important indica-

tions that the ruling class will give full support to all those plans of Hitler's, designed for the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, and the giving of new territory to Germany at her expense. Significant enough, in this respect, was the attempt made by the more responsible capitalist newspapers to minimise and disguise the significance of the demand made by Hugenburg, the representative of Hitler at the World Economic Conference, for a more active policy against the Soviet Union, and particularly its claims for the seizure of Soviet territory.

The British workers understand the international significance of the policy of the fight for peace conducted by the Soviet Union. They note with pride and enthusiasm that the toilers of the Soviet Union utilise every day of the breathing space to work upon the solution of the great historical task of building the Socialist society. In the fact of the conclusion by the Soviet Union of pacts of non-aggression with a series of countries they perceive, above all, her growing strength.

The speech of Comrade Litvinov at the World Economic Conference, in spite of its boycott in the capitalist Press, is reaching larger and larger sections of workers, and the contrast between the positive and constructive character of this speech and those of delegates of capitalist countries, in which is sharply revealed the differences that exist between the dying capitalist world and the advancing world of Socialism, has made a very deep impression.

This amazing contrast between the country which was anxious to place orders for millions of pounds worth of goods, as compared to all the capitalist countries who, as a result of the impoverishment of the mass, could not find markets for their goods, has been very quickly reacted to by the British working class.

Perhaps it would be as well to close this article with two quotations, because they indicate, not only the desire of the British working class for the resumption

of full and unconditional trading relations with the Soviet Union, but are of more deeper revolutionary significance. They are a real appreciation of what the Soviet Union means to the working class not only in Britain, but all over the world. In the declaration of the First of May delegation on its return to Britain, we read :

"The idea sedulously circulated by the Press that the (Metropolitan-Vickers) trial was held for the purpose of diverting attention from the alleged economic failure of the Soviet policy, we can only characterise as arrant nonsense."

* * *

"The success of the Five-Year Plan is plain for all to see. This is a fact of which every Soviet citizen and every unbiased visitor to the U.S.S.R. is aware.

* * *

"We are satisfied that in the Soviet Union the real power resides in the hands of the workers—politically, culturally, economically and socially.

* * *

"We shall work to build up the organisation of a fighting united front of the working class under a militant leadership for the purpose of transforming the defensive struggles of the workers into a struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a Soviet Britain."

And the quotation from the resolution adopted at a meeting of London Boilermakers where it declared :

"We send greetings to our Russian comrades and pledge ourselves to fight against this war policy of the National Government and for the fullest possible trading relations between Britain and the Soviet Union."

These are the expressions of opinion that represent the indissoluble bonds of international class solidarity between the Russian and British workers which will enable them jointly to overcome all their class enemies.