

# Practical Experiences of the Struggle of the Communists for the United Front

By O. PIATNITSKY

**B**EFORE the war, the question of the united front was never raised in the working class movement of the *biggest* capitalist countries of Western Europe. This is to be explained by the fact that at that time there were no two parallel political parties drawing their support from the proletariat, nor parallel trade union organizations in one and the same country. Prior to and during the war the working class movement of the West European countries were dominated by the Social-Democratic Parties and reformist trade unions which had the support of the majority of the working class.

In tsarist Russia, before the war, the united front was practised, although the term "united front" itself was not used. The united front was actually put into operation in the enterprises, factories and workshops, where the revolutionary parties which then existed carried on their work, or tried to. It was put into operation in the factories, although not as the result of agreements made between the organizations which existed in the enterprises. Usually, the workers of various political currents took part in all the strikes that took place. But when big events took place, the united front was operated not spontaneously but by means of definite agreements made between the different parties. I will give only a few examples. In Moscow on December 7, 1905, the call issued by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies for a general strike and uprising was signed by the Bolshevik, Menshevik, and Socialist Revolutionary Party Committees. The same thing took place in a somewhat different form in Leningrad, then St. Petersburg. The Executive Committee of the Soviet contained representatives of all the then existing revolutionary parties, and all the most important questions dealt with at the sessions of the Executive Committee and of its presiding council were discussed in the presence of representatives of these parties. Thus, many of these decisions were at bottom adopted on a united front basis.

In several towns, in 1905, the Bolsheviks issued the call for demonstrations and strikes together with the Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, the Bund and other parties which had influence of one kind or another over the workers.

## THE UNITED FRONT ON AN INTERNATIONAL SCALE

The united front tactics as a method of struggle in the capitalist countries began to be adopted by the Comintern and its Sections after the war; (1) when a split took place in the ranks of the working class in consequence of the treachery of Social-Democracy and the reformist

trade unions which took the side of the bourgeoisie during the war and supported the bourgeoisie after the war; (2) when Communist Parties and Red trade unions were formed in a whole number of countries alongside the Social-Democratic parties and reformist trade unions; (3) when after the revolutionary storms had abated (the revolutions in Germany and Austria, the huge strikes in France, England and in America, the unrest in the armies, the risings in the colonies, etc., after the war) the bourgeoisie took the offensive and began to deprive the working class of political rights and the economic improvements won by revolution.

Many Communists in a number of countries (Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Austria) did not understand these united front tactics: they declared that the revolutionary workers had left the Social-Democratic Parties and the reformist trade unions because the Social-Democratic Parties and the leaders of the reformist trade unions, by entering into agreements with the bourgeoisie, had betrayed the interests of the working class; these revolutionary workers joined the Communist Parties and the revolutionary trade unions; how then, they argued, can we now form a united front with traitors to the cause of the working class?

These Communists saw before them only the leaders, and not the masses of workers; they did not notice how the Social-Democratic Parties and the reformist trade unions had made advances to the Communist International and the Red Trade Union International during the stormy years of the first round of wars and revolutions under the pressure of their members and of the masses of workers who were against the policy of the leaders, the policy of conciliation with the bourgeoisie, and were in favor of the revolutionary methods of struggle employed by the Russian workers led by the Bolsheviks. It is common knowledge that the Second Congress of the Comintern and the First Congress of the Profintern were attended by representatives of Social-Democratic Parties and of reformist trade unions who were driven by their members to ask to be accepted into the Comintern and the Profintern—Frossard, Crispin, Dietman, Serrati, Daragona, Pestania, and others. (In order to safeguard itself against this influx of non-revolutionary parties, the Comintern was forced at that time to adopt its twenty-one points for acceptance into the Comintern.) These Communists did not understand that under the influence and pressure of the workers and members of the Social-Democratic Parties and reformist trade unions, the latter and even a section of their leaders would have been compelled to undertake joint united front action with the Communists and the Red trade unions, had the latter been successful in explaining clearly on a wide scale and in a popular manner the full importance and necessity of the united front.

Even before the Communist International issued its manifesto on the united front—January, 1922—the United German Communist Party (which originated out of the fusion of the “Spartacus” League and the “Left” Independents), on the instructions of the Comintern, addressed an “Open Letter” on January 8, 1921, to all the then existing trade unions, namely, the German National Organization of Trade Unions, the Association of Free Clerks’ Union, the General Labor Alliance, the Free

Labor Alliance (syndicalists), and to the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, and the Communist Labor Party of Germany, calling upon them to participate in joint struggle against the growing reaction and the capitalist offensive against the working class.

In this "Open Letter" it was proposed that

"(1) a joint economic struggle be undertaken to raise wages, benefits, and pensions; (2) a struggle be undertaken to secure that measures be adopted to reduce the cost of living, of distributing cheap foodstuffs to workers and clerks . . . and that a census be taken of all living apartments with the right to cut down surplus living space and to evict; (3) that control be instituted through factory committees over the stores of raw materials, coal and fertilizers and over the production of foodstuffs and articles of prime necessity; (4) a joint struggle be undertaken to bring about the immediate dissolution and disarmament of the bourgeois defense organizations, and the establishment of proletarian self-defense organizations, as well as the declaration of a universal political amnesty, and the abolition of the prohibition of strikes; (5) that a struggle be developed for the immediate establishment of trade and diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia."

The attitude of all the parties and trade union organizations to whom this "Open Letter" was addressed was a negative one, but the workers' meetings held in several towns of Germany approved of it.

The draft theses on tactics presented to the Third Congress of the Comintern contained the following statement regarding this first united front appeal:

"German Communism, thanks to the tactics of the Communist International (revolutionary work in the trade unions, *open letters*, etc.) [my italics—O.P.], has been converted from the political current which it was during the January and March battles of 1919 into an important revolutionary mass party."

The German, Italian and Austrian delegations to the Third Congress demanded that no mention of the "Open Letter" issued by the United German Communist Party should be made in the theses. Comrade Lenin strongly objected to this line in his speech of July 1, 1921, delivered in defense of the theses on tactics introduced on behalf of the Russian delegation to the Congress. Lenin objected to a number of amendments made by the above-mentioned three delegations, and in connection with their amendment concerning the "Open Letter", said the following:

"Then comes the following amendment: [he quotes the amendments of the three delegations—O.P.] On page 4, column 1, line 10, the words 'Open Letter' should be deleted. I have already heard a speech today in which I found the same idea. But there it was quite natural. That was the speech of Comrade Hempel, member of the German Communist Labor Party. He said: 'The Open Letter was an act of opportunism.' But when at the Congress . . . the Open Letter is declared to be opportu-

nist, it is a shame and disgrace! And then Comrade Terrachini appears on behalf of three delegations and wants to delete the words 'Open Letter'. . . . The Open Letter is an exemplary political step. . . . It is exemplary as the first act of the practical method of drawing in the majority of the working class."\*

At the First Enlarged Plenum of the E.C.C.I. which took place in February, 1922, the French, Italian and Spanish delegations voted against the resolution on the united front.

In connection with the ever-growing intensity of the capitalist offensive against the conquests of the working class, during the economic crisis which had begun, the Comintern and the Profintern at the suggestion of Lenin, made a proposal in January, 1922, to the working men and women of all countries that a united front be established against the capitalist offensive, war and war debts. In this manifesto we read:

"The Executive Committee of the Communist International and of the Red Trade Union International (Profintern) has examined . . . questions connected with the conditions of the international proletariat and with the world situation in general, and has arrived at the firm conviction that these conditions demand that all the forces of the international proletariat be united, that a united front be established of all parties which derive their support from the proletariat, regardless of the differences which exist among them, in so far as they desire to fight in unison for the immediate, urgent needs of the proletariat. The Executive Committee of the Comintern . . . calls upon the proletarians in the ranks of all other parties to do all within their power to influence their own parties in the interests of common action. . . .

"The Communist International calls upon all Communist workers, all honest workers in general, everywhere—in the workshops, at meetings—to unite into one single family of toilers which will be capable of standing up for itself and repulsing all the attacks made by capital at every difficult moment. Forge the iron will for proletarian unity, against which every attempt to disunite the proletarians will smash to smithereens, from whatever quarter it may come. If you, proletarians, grasp hands in the workshops and in the mines, all the parties that draw their support from the proletariat and make their appeals to you will find themselves compelled to unite for joint defensive war against capital. Only in this case will they be compelled to break off the alliance with the capitalist parties."

The Second and Two-and-a-Half (the so-called "Vienna") Internationals did not respond to this appeal of the C.I. and the R.I.L.U.

On April 10, 1922, the International Economic Conference opened in Genoa to discover means for the "economic restoration of Central and Eastern Europe", but chiefly, of course, to solve the "Russian" problem. In the minds of the imperialist sharks, this conference was to thrust a system upon Soviet Russia that would convert it into a colony of Western European capital.

The Communist International proposed to the Second and Two-and-

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\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 442-43. Russian, Third Edition.

Half Internationals that, as against the Genoa conference, an international labor congress of all working class organizations be called to establish a united fighting front against the capitalist offensive. The representatives of the three Internationals came together in Berlin at the conference held between April 2-5, 1922, to discuss the questions of the possibility of calling such a congress.

As soon as the conference opened a struggle began about the agenda. The representatives of the Comintern proposed that the following questions be placed on the agenda: (1) defense against the capitalist offensive; (2) the struggle against reaction; (3) preparations for the struggle against new imperialist wars; (4) help in the restoration of the Russian Soviet Republic; (5) the Versailles Treaty and the restoration of the devastated areas.

The Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals proposed that the question of Georgia be included in the agenda. The point was that the Socialists of all shades who supported the Russian, and in particular, the Georgian Mensheviks, advanced the slanderous accusation against the Bolsheviks of "annexing" Georgia. In their efforts to use the united front for the purpose of legalizing Menshevik and S.R. (Socialist-Revolutionary) organizations on the territory of the U.S.S.R., they proposed that the question of the trial of the Central Committee of the S.R. Party who had made an attempt on the life of Comrade Lenin and had murdered Comrades Volodarsky, Uritsky and others, should also be discussed at the conference. They demanded that the death sentence should not be brought in against the accused, and insisted upon representatives of the Second International being allowed to act as counsel for the defense to the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Finally, they raised the question of the impermissibility in general of arresting S.R.'s and Mensheviks in Russia, people who with arms in hand were engaged in struggle against the Soviet Government.

After long altercations as to the agenda, the conference nevertheless passed a resolution which called for mass demonstrations during the sessions of the Genoa conference in the following terms:

"The conference calls upon all toilers in all countries to undertake united mass demonstrations during the Genoa conference, namely, on April 20, 1922. Where this is impossible for technical or organizational reasons, there should be demonstrations on May First on behalf of the eight-hour working day, for the struggle against unemployment, which has increased without measure thanks to the reparations policy of the capitalist states; the demonstrations should also be in support of the Russian revolution, for starving Russia, for the restoration of political and economic relations between all states and Soviet Russia, and for the creation of a common proletarian front on a national and international scale."

Then it was decided to set up an organizational committee of nine members to prepare for a broader conference.

However, despite the fact that the representatives of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals voted for the resolution that was passed,

the parties of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals neither on April 20, nor on May 1, demonstrated together with the Communist Parties. The Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals did their utmost to hinder the preparations for the calling of a broad international labor conference. What is more, the French, Belgian and British Social-Democratic Parties decided on May 21, 1922, to call an international congress in The Hague in which the Communists would not participate.

The Social-Democratic Parties replied in the negative to all the proposals made by the Communist Parties regarding the operation of a united front during the relative stabilization of capitalism. Social-Democrats in all countries helped the bourgeoisie to carry through capitalist rationalization. They were too full of solicitude about their own bourgeoisie to compete against other capitalists.

When rejecting the proposals made by the Communist Parties that the united front be operated during the strike struggle in the period of the economic crisis, the Social-Democrats pointed, incidentally, to the alleged fact that during a crisis it is altogether impossible to wage a strike struggle. But practical experience showed that during the last crisis, there were no fewer strikes in many countries than there were prior to the crisis. During that period, approximately 20 million persons took part in strikes, and together about 300 million working days were lost.

The difficulties which the Social-Democratic Parties and the leaders of the reformist trade unions actually placed in the way of the establishment of the united class fighting front called forth dissatisfaction among the members of the reformist trade unions and of the Socialist Parties. They were gradually drawn into the strike struggle led by the Communists and began to listen to what they were told by the Communists and the revolutionary workers supporting them.

The fascist coup d'etat in Germany introduced severe changes into the ranks of the working class. The fact of the betrayal committed by the biggest Social-Democratic Party which was actually in power in Prussia and which handed over the reins of power to the fascists without a fight, called forth still stronger discontent and alarm in the ranks of the members of the reformist trade unions and of the Social-Democratic Parties. The united front proposals which the Communist systematically made in different countries, the partial realization of the united front against the will of the leaders of the Social-Democratic organizations and the reformist trade unions, the growing understanding among the Social-Democratic workers, alarmed at fascism, of the correctness of the criticism levelled by the Communists of the rejection of the united front by the Social-Democratic leaders—all this compelled a number of the parties of the Second International and some of the Socialist Parties not affiliated to the Second International, in reply to the proposal made by the Communist Parties that a united fighting front against fascism be established, to make proposals to the Communist Parties that "pacts of non-aggression" be concluded (that the Communists should cease to criticize them).

This was the main theme of all the demands made by the Socialists,

and exposed the true reason for their proposals. Even the Second International was compelled to resort to the same proposal regarding the cessation of possible attacks by the Communists. The following was stated in the manifesto of the Second International addressed to the workers of all countries on February 19, 1933:

"We call upon the German workers, the workers of all countries, in view of the tragic danger which confronts them, to cease all possible attacks and to fight together against fascism! The Labor and Socialist International is always ready to enter into negotiations with the Communist International concerning such unity of struggle, as soon as the latter expresses its readiness to do so."

To this manifesto, the Comintern replied on March 5, 1933, in a manifesto which pointed to the need for a united fighting front against the offensive of capital and fascism, and to the fact that it was prepared to cease attacks against the Socialists if they, together with the Communists, would fight against the offensive of capital and fascism. Here are the three chief points in this manifesto:

"1. The Communists and Social-Democrats commence at once to organize and carry out defensive action against the attacks of fascism and reaction on the political, trade union, cooperative and other workers' organizations, on the workers' press, on the freedom of meetings, demonstrations and strikes. They shall organize common defense against the armed attacks of the fascist bands by carrying out mass protest, street demonstrations and political mass strikes; they shall proceed to organize committees of action in the workshops and factories, the Labor Exchanges and the workers' quarters, as well as to organize self-defense groups.

"2. Communists and Social-Democrats shall commence at once to organize the protest of the workers, with the aid of meetings, demonstrations and strikes, against any wage reductions, against worsening of the working conditions, against attacks on social insurance, against the cutting down of unemployment benefit, against dismissals from the factories.

"3. In the adoption and practical carrying out of these two conditions the E.C.C.I. considers it possible to recommend the Communist Parties, during the time of common fight against capital and fascism, to refrain from making attacks on Social-Democratic organizations. The most ruthless fight must be conducted against all those who violate the conditions of the agreement in carrying out the united front, as against strike-breakers who disrupt the united front of the workers."

The Second International very quickly, three days later, responded to this manifesto in order to reject it. In the reply of the Secretariat of the Second International it says that what is lacking in the manifesto of the Comintern is a readiness to negotiate on an international basis, for the Comintern appealed not directly to the Second International, but gave instructions to its Sections in all countries to begin negotiations with

the Social-Democratic Parties as to the establishment of a united front on the basis of these three points. The Second International saw in this clear and definite proposal a "maneuver" on the part of the Comintern. Here is an exact excerpt from their reply:

"This readiness to negotiate on an international basis is lacking in the manifesto of the Communist International. It is satisfied merely to recommend that negotiations be carried on in individual countries. But experience unfortunately shows that the Communists find no difficulty in endowing such negotiations in separate countries with the character of maneuvers, thus bringing about a worse situation, and that they do not lessen, but deepen the distrust in the ranks of the working class movement. Therefore we consider it our duty to propose that the Parties affiliated to the Labor and Socialist International refrain as far as possible from discussing this sort of Communist proposal in individual countries until the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International states its opinion concerning the new platform of the Comintern."

Thus, the proposals which the Communist Parties made to the Socialist Parties, on the basis of the manifesto of the Comintern, were rejected by the Social-Democratic Parties on the pretext that the Comintern had not appealed direct to the Socialist International. Yet the Second International itself in its manifesto of February 19, 1933, did not appeal to the Comintern, but to the workers of all countries!

As shown by the experience of the subsequent appeals of the Comintern to the Second International regarding the establishment of the united fighting front on an international scale this was merely the prelude to the rejecting of the united front.

#### THE UNITED FRONT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

*France.* The events in Germany, the armed struggle of the workers and of the Schutzbundlers in Austria, the united front of the Communists, Schutzbundlers and members of the Social-Democratic Party during the armed struggle in Austria, were of tremendous importance for the working class of all capitalist countries. These events showed the workers that Communist criticism of the reformist tactics is well-founded. It helped the Communists to come closer to the Social-Democratic workers and the members of reformist trade unions, and lightened the task of establishing the united fighting front in a number of countries. Under the influence of the economic crisis and of these events, the desire for unity among the working class for the struggle against fascism has increased, and above all this desire has manifested itself among the French workers.

During the period which passed between November, 1922, and the time when the united front agreement was signed on July 27, 1934, the Communist Party of France made united front proposals on twenty-six occasions to the French Socialist Party. In 1923 it proposed that they should act jointly against the occupation of the Ruhr. After that it

proposed that a joint amnesty campaign be organized, that an agreement be arrived at during the second round of the elections, and that a joint struggle should be conducted against Italian fascism, etc. Finally, it proposed that a joint struggle should be waged for the disarmament of fascist bands. All these proposals were invariably rejected by the Socialist Party of France.

In May, 1932, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland made a proposal to the Socialist and Communist Parties of other countries to take part in the anti-war and anti-fascist congress convened by them. The Communists, of course, immediately agreed to take part in the Congress, but the Socialists replied to this proposal by later excluding from the Party all members of the Socialist Party of France who subsequently took part in this Congress.

Thus, so long as the German fascists had not crushed the political and economic organizations of the working class, so long as the workers of France were not convinced of the fact that the Socialist Party of Austria was following in the footsteps of the German Social-Democratic Party in capitulating before fascism, the united front in France between Communists and Socialists was not established.

In February, 1934, the French fascists made their first serious sally by organizing a demonstration to parliament on February 16, 1934, demanding the resignation of the government. The fascists made use of the hullabaloo that was raised at the time in connection with the Stavisky financial affair, and demagogically demanded that all the corrupted, all the thieves, etc., should be punished, knowing full well that their leaders were also mixed up in the affair. The so-called "Left" government of Daladier sent troops against the fascist demonstration. They fired on the fascists. When the workers heard of the fascist demonstration to parliament, they also went to parliament, in the majority of cases on their own accord, and in some localities at the suggestion of the local organizations of the Communist Party, and demonstrations began throughout the whole of Paris.

The Communist Party of France took account of the mood of the working class. On February 7, 1934, it called upon the French proletariat to demonstrate on February 9. When the manifesto of the Communist Party containing the call to demonstrate was published, the Socialist Party called for a general strike of "folded arms" on February 12 (*i.e.*, a strike to cease work without any demonstrations, meetings, etc.). The Socialists intended by their appeal to prevent the workers from taking part in the February 9 demonstrations. The reformist trade unions at one with the Socialists proposed to the workers that they should not demonstrate in response to the appeal of the Communist Party because, they said, there would certainly be bloodshed. The reformist leaders of the trade unions even had big notices pasted around the town to this effect.

The Communist Party of France acted correctly when it declared that it would also call upon the workers to take part in a general strike, but not in a "down tools" strike. It called upon them to go on strike and demonstrate. But at the same time the Party did not give up its call to

demonstrate on February 9. The workers of Paris demonstrated on February 9 at the call of the Communist Party. The Place de la Republique in Paris was occupied by the police and the troops, but the demonstrators were successful in breaking through to the streets bounding the square and thus won the streets for themselves. Usually it is not allowed to arrange street demonstrations in Paris and in the majority of cases they take place out of town, primarily in parts where there are Socialist or Communist municipalities. But broad sections of the masses joined the demonstration on February 9, 1934, at the call of the Communist Party alone, against the will of the Socialists and the leaders of the reformist trade unions, and not only in Paris, but in all the industrial towns of France as well. The strike on February 12 was very successful also; about four million workers took part in it. This strike, which was called separately by the Socialists and the Communists, did much to establish the united front in France.

On May 21, 1934, the French anti-war and anti-fascist congress took place in Paris. At the same time, in Toulouse the Congress of the Socialist Party of France took place. The anti-fascist congress made a proposal to the Socialist Party Congress that it should join in the anti-war and anti-fascist movement. The press at that time wrote much about this proposal and about the position of the Socialist Party. The proposal of the anti-fascist and anti-war congress was put to the vote at the Socialist Party Congress, and rejected by a majority of votes. There were 2,437 votes cast against the proposal of the anti-fascist and anti-war congress and 1,286 votes in favor (in the Socialist Party of France there is a system of representation by which one delegate can have several mandates). After the proposal had been rejected, one section of the delegates to the Socialist Congress, with 1,301 mandates at their disposal, made a proposal that "a delegation be sent to Moscow to discuss with the Comintern the conditions for unity of action between the Socialist and Communist Parties". This proposal was rejected by a majority of 2,324 votes.

However, under the influence of the somewhat strong minority which made itself felt at the congress and demanded that a united front be set up (this minority consisted primarily of delegates from industrial centers), the Congress of the Socialist Party empowered its Central Committee (administrative commission) to establish a united front with the Communists, but only for a definite time and only on one question. The Communist Party of France made use of this decision and on May 27, 1934, proposed that the Central Committee of the Socialist Party of France organize a united front for the defense and release of Comrade Thaelmann. No answer was forthcoming to this proposal of the Communist Party. On June 5, 1934, the Communist Party repeated its proposal and this time it was met with a refusal. Then the Paris organization of the Communist Party approached the Paris organization of the Socialist Party on June 22, 1934, with the same proposal, and it was accepted. Thus, an agreement was arrived at in the Paris region between the regional organizations of the two parties for joint action in defense of Comrade Thaelmann.

In June, 1934, the Party Conference of the Communist Party once

again proposed to the Socialists that they should conclude a united front pact. Taking into consideration the fact that the representatives of big industrial regions at the congress were in favor of establishing a united front, and that the Paris organization, one of the biggest, had concluded a united front with the Communists over the heads of the Socialist Party leaders, the Central Committee of the Socialist Party was compelled to declare that it would call the National Council (conference) of the party to discuss the proposal made by the Communists. In July, 1934, a united front pact was concluded between the Communists and Socialists. The Communists proposed that the platform for the united front should be the struggle against the fascists, against war, and assistance in organizing the economic struggle. The Socialists agreed to the first two points, but refused to conduct a united front on the question of the strike struggle, because, as they said, it was not a question within their competence, but was the business of the trade unions. This, of course, was simply an excuse, as the Socialists are actually against the strike struggle. For their part, they put forward a third point demanding that the Communists declare that they would fight for and defend all democratic rights. The Communist Party of France agreed to this demand.

From this time onwards the united front has been officially established in France. In what way has it been expressed hitherto, and what are its results? It has been expressed chiefly in the organization of joint demonstrations, meetings, indoor meetings against the fascists and against the emergency decrees of the government. On the anniversary of the events of February 6, a fascist attack was repulsed by the Communists and Socialists. When the Communist and Socialist Parties discovered that the fascists had occupied the Place de la Concorde in Paris, they put forward the slogan that everybody should go to the same place. From all corners of Paris, from all the subway stations, the workers came in masses to the square and forced the fascists out of it. This was a big event for France.

The united front in France was furthermore expressed in the fact that during the second round of the municipal and canton election, the Communists and Socialists supported each other. If a Communist in any locality obtained more votes than the Socialist during the first round of voting, then the Socialists voted for the Communists in that place, and vice versa. This gave some positive results. There were places where the Communists and the Socialists were successful by this means in defeating the candidates of the fascists, and in winning new seats and even whole municipalities.

A national French anti-war and anti-fascist committee was formed which organized 1,400 local committees; a women's national committee was also formed for struggle against war and fascism, covering about 500,000 members, affiliated through their organizations, according to official data. This figure is very likely an exaggerated one, but even if the committee covers only half of the number given, the result is a good one; a vigilance committee of the anti-fascist intelligentsia has been organized, to which about 6,000 professors, lawyers, writers and

other intellectuals of the liberal professions belong; there has also been organized the Paris regional committee of unity of action against fascism, which covers about 500,000 members affiliated through their organizations. The Socialist and Communist sports federations of labor have joined forces. This already is not a united front, but organic unity; a united Central Committee of ex-service men has been formed, which covers 28 organizations; an agreement has been arrived at between the General Confederation of Toiling Peasants (Communist) and the National Confederation of Peasants (Socialist) on the subject of unity. Negotiations are going on at present and it is possible that in the near future these bodies will unite.

In Toulouse a national committee was created to render assistance to the victims of Spanish fascism. The committee covers nine Socialist departmental federations, nine regional organizations of the Communist Party of France, seven reformist trade union organizations, fourteen unitary trade unions, five federations of the League of the Rights of Man and Citizen, etc. This "popular" committee is a broad organization connected with the masses. At the congress organized by this committee 800 delegates were present representing 300,000 anti-fascists. Finally, there is a central anti-fascist committee in Lyons, which unites 31 organizations, committees of united anti-fascist action; in the department of Cher (20 organizations), in the department of Herault (20 organizations), and in several other departments and towns. There is also a National Committee of Struggle of the Youth against war and fascism (350 local committees).

It should be noted that the united front against war and fascism was conducted by some organizations apart from and against the will of the leaders of the Socialist Party (anti-war and anti-fascist committees, women's national committees, etc.).

The existence and functioning of such comparatively mass organization which in the majority of cases were created on the initiative of the Communist Party of France, thanks to the popularization and application of the united front tactics in the struggle against French, German, Austrian and Spanish fascism, could not but raise the authority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of France in the eyes of the workers, clerks and peasants, and increased its influence over them. This has inspired some of the leaders of the Socialist Party to seek reasons for breaking down the united front with the Communists.

On February 20, 1935, a session of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party of France took place. As has transpired, the question of the united front called forth differences at this session. Several members of the Central Committee demanded that the united front be broken, while members of the Central Committee from the big industrial centers, more closely connected with the working masses, declared that if the united front were broken down, it would still be carried on over the heads of the party committees of the Socialist Party. We find the following in the decision passed on this question at the session of the Central Committee (as we learn from well informed circles in the Socialist Party):

1. To propose that the Communist Party call a conference of all

proletarian parties [with the participation of the right wing Papists and the followers of Doriot—O.P.], to discuss questions of organizational unity.

2. To demand that the Communist Party cease all criticism not only of the Socialist Party but also of the Second International.

3. To get closer to the Radicals in view of the coming municipal elections, so as to show the Communist Party that the Socialists can manage quite well without it.

4. To demand that the Communist Party dissolve its auxiliary organizations like, for example, the Amsterdam Committee Against War, etc., with an indication that the committee to coordinate action between the Communists and Socialists is enough for the anti-fascist struggle.

5. To demand that the Communist Party make a declaration of neutrality both as regards the C.G.T. [reformist trade unions—O.P.], as well as in respect to the G.T.U. [revolutionary trade unions—O.P.].

By their last point the Socialists wanted to get the Communist Party to make a declaration agreeing to relinquish the leadership of the revolutionary trade unions.

These decisions of the Central Committee were to have been proposed to the National Council (conference) of the Socialist Party. But at the conference the mood of the delegates from the localities was apparently such that the leaders did not risk insisting upon these proposals. The conference passed another resolution by means of which they nevertheless hoped to break the united front. This resolution of the conference runs:

“The National Council recognizes that the political conditions which at one time justified the conclusion of unity of action with the Communist Party still exist today, and, consequently, unity of action should continue. . . .

“The National Council, anxious to obtain the maximum chances of the workers being successful in their struggle against capitalism and bourgeois fascist reaction, is convinced that the surest method of achieving their ends is to bring about organizational unity to the utmost. . . .

“1. The organization of the proletariat into a class party for the conquest of power and for the socialization of the means of production and trade, *i.e.*, for the reorganization of capitalist society into a collectivist or Communist society.

“2. The actions of the party will be determined by the party itself at its national congresses, after consultation with its organizations in the localities and in the districts.”

Some of the leaders of the Socialists reckoned that the Communists would give a refusal to this proposal to unite, and that they would then have an excuse for breaking the united front. It was clear to the Socialists that the Communists would not agree to unity with the Socialists without the necessary pre-conditions. They reckoned, therefore, that the Communists would reply refusing to open negotiations on the subject of unity, and that then they, the Socialists, would be able to launch a demagogic campaign against the Communists by speculating on the

desire of the workers for unity. They would then depict the Communists as splitters of the working class, etc.

But the Communist Party of France upset all their calculations. It agreed to send its representatives to the commission to discuss the question of organic unity. Moreover, the Communist Party of France put forward a Communist program—the most important points in the program of the Comintern—as the platform around which unity should take place. It has become possible for broad sections of workers who are carefully following the correspondence between the two Parties on the question of the united front, and the demands they put forward, to acquaint themselves with the program of the Communists, with which they have not hitherto been acquainted.

Not so long ago, during the recent municipal and canton elections (May 5 and 26, 1935), the Communist Party of France was able to test the attitude of the workers towards itself. These elections had two rounds. The first round of the municipal elections took place on May 5, and the Communist Party of France took part in them quite independently in the main, with its own program; the second round took place on May 12, and in the second round the Communists entered into an agreement with the Socialists. Although the Central Committee of the Socialist Party had decided on February 20 to participate in the municipal elections together with the Radicals, which was far more advantageous to them than to come to an agreement with the Communists, the workers brought such pressure to bear upon the leading organs of the Socialist Party that they were forced, with heart-pangs, to come to an agreement with the Communists, and only in a few unimportant regions did the Socialists enter into a bloc with the Radicals.

As a result of the municipal elections, the Communists obtained a majority in 52 new municipalities, losing the majority in nine municipalities out of a total of 47. The Communist Party of France now has a majority in 90 municipalities (the Socialists in 168 instead of 175 as formerly). In the Seine department, the number of municipalities led by Communists has increased from 9 to 26. In the Seine and Oise districts, the Communists obtained a majority in the municipalities of over 20 industrial towns. In the North and the Pas de Calais region, the number of municipalities won by the Communists increased from 17 to 50. In the Paris municipality, the Communists were only represented by Comrade Marty previously, whereas now the Communist Party of France has secured the election of eight comrades.

The Communist Party of France adopted flexible tactics at these elections. In Bondé, the Communist Party included Socialist workers in its list and defeated the joint lists of Socialists and anti-Communists.

In Saint Victor (part of Paris), the reactionaries were 20 votes short of an absolute majority. The Communist Party obtained 700, the Radicals, 600, and the Socialists 500 votes. The Communist Party proposed that an anti-fascist candidate be put forward against the reactionary candidate. The Radicals and Socialists agreed to the proposal made by the Communist Party, and as a result of the united anti-fascist front, 150 votes more were cast for the anti-fascist candidate than the three

parties received altogether in the first round of elections. The reactionaries thus lost 150 votes.

The Communist Party was the only Party that won at these elections. All the remaining parties lost the majority in several municipalities. The majority of the municipalities were won by the Communists from the bourgeois parties. Only in the textile and coal districts were they won from the Socialists.

No less important was the victory of the Communists at the canton elections in the Paris region. Hitherto the Communist Party of France has had four councillors in the Paris region; now it has 25. Together with the eight Paris councillors, the Communist Party of France now has 33 representatives out of 140 in the General Council of the department of the Seine (this General Council is composed of 90 councillors of the Paris municipality, and 50 councillors elected in the areas around Paris). The Communist Party of France, the Socialists and the Radicals have 73 councillors together, the reactionary parties—67, whereas hitherto over a period of 50 years, the latter have had the majority in the General Council of the Seine department.

The results of the elections testify to the success and the increasing influence of the Communist Party over the masses.

On May 19, 1935, the anniversary of the fall of the Paris Commune, a tremendous demonstration of the Paris workers took place in the Pere la Chaise cemetery. These demonstrations have been usually arranged for May 26, but in view of the fact that the canton elections were taking place, the Communist Party called the demonstrations for May 19. The Communist Party of France did not consult the Socialist Party concerning its appeal, and the latter objected to the demonstration being arranged at the Pere la Chaise. It proposed that the demonstration be organized in another place against the fascist who were celebrating Joan of Arc day. The Socialist organization of Paris agreed to demonstrate with the Communists, and afterwards, the next day, the *Populaire* also was compelled to call for a joint demonstration with the Communists. The demonstration lasted for five and a half hours, and about 250,000 persons took part. When the demonstrators passed the Central Committee of the Communist Party, near which the Socialist leaders were standing, they greeted it with "Long live Comrade Stalin, long live the French Communist Party, long live Soviets everywhere!"

This demonstration showed that in Paris the Communist Party is already a big force. The same cannot be said of the North or of other industrial centers of France, where the Communist Party of France is weaker than the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party has about 100,000 members. The trade unions which support it unite about 600,000 members. The Communist Party now has 53,000 members, and there are approximately 220,000 members in the revolutionary trade unions.

Thanks to the work of the Communists in conducting the united front, broad masses are now aware that the Communist Party is not only fighting actively against fascism and war and for democratic liberties, but that it is heading this struggle.

Tremendous tasks face the Communist Party of France connected with the task of consolidating its growing influence.

(To be continued)