

## In the International

# The Achievements, Shortcomings and Tasks of the Communist Parties

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### I.

The successes which the Communist Parties achieved in the period between the two last Plenums of the E.C.C.I. were due in no small measure to the correct estimation of the political situation by the VIth Congress of the Comintern and the Xth Plenum of the E.C.C.I.

The VIth Congress of the Comintern took place before the world economic crisis, at a time of economic prosperity in the most important capitalist countries. It recorded that the stabilisation of capitalism was only temporary, partial and shaky; without denying the advance of technique in the most important capitalist countries, it further recorded that the capitalist stabilisation was being effected to a great extent by means of increased exploitation of the workers. The analysis given by the VIth Congress has proved to be absolutely correct.

The Xth Plenum of the E.C.C.I., which took place a year after this Congress, predicted the growth and strengthening of the revolutionary upsurge of the workers' and peasants' movement.

Later events have proved the correctness of the decisions of the Xth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. In the 3½ years of the world economic crisis, strikes have occupied a prominent place in the revolutionary upsurge of the workers' and peasants' movement in all capitalist countries.

The successes achieved by the Communist Parties between the last two Plenums of the E.C.C.I. consist in the following:—

1. More than before, the majority of the Sections of the Comintern, in spite of and against the will of the reformist trade union leaders and social democratic parties, conducted economic struggles by means of the Red trade unions and the R.T.U.O., which here and there developed into big political strikes.

In the last eighteen months the strike struggles have been under the leadership of (a) the Communist Parties, the Red trade unions and the Red Trade Union Opposition; (b) the revolutionary workers who took over the leadership of strike struggles; and (c) reformist and other anti-revolutionary trade unions, who acted under the pressure of the rank and file. In the strike struggles which were under the leadership of the revolutionary workers (Belgium), and in those the leadership of which the reformists took over under the pressure of the rank and file (Great Britain and the United States), the Communists, the members of the Red trade unions and of the R.T.U.O. played a not unimportant role.

2. As many Communist Parties formulated the demands of the unemployed and organised their fight in good time, the unemployed here and there obtained relief from the municipalities (Poland, Czechoslovakia, U.S.A., France, Germany). Millions of unemployed who had been evicted from their homes, unemployed, who along with their families were starving and freezing, refused to act as blacklegs in strikes, but, on the contrary, took part in the strike struggles of the factory workers (went on the picket line, distributed literature, carried on house agitation, etc.).

3. It was only in the last few years that the Communist Parties of Germany, France, America, Czechoslovakia, Japan, Holland, Hungary, Spain, Greece and China commenced a systematic work among the peasantry. The C.P. of Poland formerly worked mainly among the peasants of the Western Ukraine and Western White Russia through the medium of the Communist Parties of these national districts of Poland. Of late the C.P. of Poland has been conducting successful work among the peasants of Poland proper. The C.P. of China has commenced work among the peasants also in Kuomintang China. The C.P. of Bulgaria recently achieved extraordinary successes

in the country districts. At the last parliamentary and municipal elections the Communist Party increased its vote in the rural districts of Germany, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia.

4. Thanks to the good work of individual Party members and Communist Fractions, the Communist Parties in a number of countries are acquiring a leading role in the super-party mass organisations of the workers (Red Aid, Workers' International Relief, Sport organisations, Freethinkers, Ex-servicemen, Tenants', and anti-fascist organisations (Germany) and solidarity movements (Great Britain).

5. All these successes were bound to increase the number of votes received by the Communists at the factory council, parliamentary and municipal elections, and promote the growth of the membership of the Communist Parties themselves.

According to the figures of the Organisation Department of the E.C.C.I., the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries increased their membership by about 350,300 in the period between the XIth and XIIth E.C.C.I. Plenums (at the time of the XIth Plenum their membership amounted to 550,000, and in June, 1932, to 913,300).

6. The successes of the individual Parties are as follows:—

The C.P. of **Japan** commenced a correct Leninist and energetic fight against war already before the campaign of the Japanese militarists against Shanghai and Manchuria. It is issuing a great deal of illegal, semi-illegal, and even legal literature. The best revolutionary elements of the Japanese people have gathered round the C.P. of Japan.

The C.P. of **China** is leading the fight of the Red Army against the Kuomintang militarists and playing a leading part in the organisation of the Soviet districts. The C.P. of China is taking an active part in the boycott movement against Japan. It is the only consistent fighter against the imperialists, against the foreign occupation, especially in Manchuria. The C.P. of China conducted a number of big strike struggles through the medium of the Red trade unions. In spite of the counter-revolutionary white terror, the Communist Party of China is giving out large quantities of leaflets on all important political and economic questions. It issues illegal newspapers and the theoretical organ "Bolshevik." The C.P. of China has in the course of eighteen months increased its membership from 192,300 to 280,000.

At the time of the proclamation of the Republic (April, 1931), the C.P. of **Spain** numbered only a few hundred members. Its influence in the trade unions was quite insignificant. In many towns the Party organisations and individual Communists employed incorrect tactics; when the masses poured into the streets in order to celebrate the proclamation of the Republic, the Communists cried: "Down with the Republic," together with the monarchists, and thus isolated themselves from the masses. With the aid of the Comintern the C.P. of Spain corrected its errors. It became a strong factor of the revolution. The Communist Party of Spain organised and led actions of the workers and peasants (strikes, demonstrations, armed revolts, seizure of the land, the harvest and property of the big landowners). The Party now has 17,500 members. Trade union organisations with a total membership of about 200,000 are under the influence of the C.P. The Party Congress of the C.P. of Spain condemned sectarianism and completely endorsed the line laid down by the Open Letter of the Comintern.

The C.P. of **Poland** has been better able than any other Party in Europe to organise and lead all forms of the fight of the working and peasant masses of Poland. The C.P.s of Western White Russia and Western Ukraine are part of the C.P. of Poland. They lead the national revolutionary fight of the Ukrainian and White Russian masses against Polish imperialism. A few years ago, the C.P. of Poland was completely isolated from the urban petty bourgeoisie and the state, municipal and private employees and from the free professions.

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All these strata were until recently convinced Polish chauvinists; now, however, the Communist Party of Poland enjoys great authority and influence in their ranks. The elections in the unions of the railway workers which are under the influence of the P.P.S. resulted in the C.P. of Poland obtaining the majority of the delegates.

The **Communist Party of Poland** has increased its membership in the period from the X to the XI E.C.C.I. Plenum by 10,000 (from 7,000 to 17,000), without counting the 10 to 12,000 members who are in prison.

The **C.P. of Czechoslovakia** has achieved big successes of late. After the Rights split off, after the Red Trade Unions were split off by their former leader Hais, after the expulsion of the "Left" Trotzkyists (Neurath and Co.), the C.P. of Czechoslovakia and the Red Trade Unions recruited thousands of new members. The C.P.Cz. commenced the fight against the offensive of the capitalists and big landowners, and in this is energetically supported by the social democratic workers, the Czech and German workers, and by the workers in the Czech national socialist parties of Benes and Klofac. The C.P. of Czechoslovakia, which after the various fractions split off, numbered 22,000, to-day has 75,000 members. The membership of the red trade unions, which had greatly declined as a result of the split, had increased already in 1931 to 60,224, and in February, 1933, to 75,000.

The **Communist Party of Italy**, working under conditions of fascist terror, has recently succeeded in penetrating the mass organisations of the fascists and organising work there.

For the first time for many years strikes and demonstrations of the workers and unemployed in the industrial centres of the country (Turin, Milan, etc.), have taken place under the leadership of the Communists. In the period between the XI. and XII. E.C.C.I. Plenums, the C.P. of Italy more than doubled its membership (from 3,000 to 8,000).

The **C.P. of the U.S.A.** succeeded in the last 18 months in organising and leading big strikes of the miners and textile workers. In a number of towns it organised big demonstrations of the unemployed. About a million workers took part in the demonstrations which were held on May 1 and August 1. Unfortunately, the C.P. of U.S.A. has not organisationally consolidated this ideological influence.

Up to recently the **Communist Party of Great Britain** appeared to be an incidental element in the strikes, which in most cases were led by the reformists under the pressure of the working masses. The Party appeared on the scene only when the strikes were already proceeding. The only more or less broad organisation of the unemployed, the N.U.W.M., which the Communists created already in 1921, represented up to the XIth E.C.C.I. Plenum a closed union of the unemployed, which mainly voiced the interests of its members but not those of the masses of unemployed, numbering millions.

The situation has now changed. In the recent strikes of the textile workers the C.P. of Great Britain took a big and active part. At the meeting which the C.P. convened in Burnley already before the strike, there were present about 5,000 people. The C.P. organised a night march of 15,000 weavers from Burnley to Nelson in order to exert pressure on the district leadership of the trade unions. The 15,000 workers demanded the declaration of a weavers' strike. During these strikes, which embraced some hundred thousand workers, the C.P. of Great Britain organised a broad solidarity movement. Following this, the C.P. of Great Britain took part in the strike of the Lancashire spinners. As regards the unemployed, one can say that also in this connection the C.P. is able to record an improvement and that the unemployed movement has now quite another character. Already before the carrying out of the reduction of all unemployment benefit by 10 per cent., all unemployed organisations took up the fight against this measure. The demonstrations organised by the C.P. of Great Britain before and after the elections were mass demonstrations, in which hundreds of thousands of workers and unemployed took part. These demonstrations, as well as those which have been held quite recently, the hunger marches and meetings, which were likewise led by the unemployed organisations under the slogan of: "Down with the Means Test," were of a very stormy character and repeatedly led to collisions with the police, the erection of barricades, etc. The whole British organisation of the unemployed collected more than a million signatures to a petition for the abolition of the Means Test.

The C.P. of Great Britain possesses all the prerequisites for becoming a mass party.

The **C.P. of France** succeeded in conducting a big and broad campaign against the Russian white guardists in connection with the murder of the President of the French Republic by the white guardist Gorguloff. The C.P. of France has conducted, and is conducting, a successful fight against war and the preparations for war by French imperialism. Broad circles of workers of all tendencies have been drawn into this fight. The C.P. of France and the C.G.T.U. have been able to penetrate deeply into the movement of the State and municipal workers and employees against the reduction of salaries. In many towns of France this movement developed into demonstration strikes of the postmen and sorters, the telegraphists, telephone operators, wireless employees, motor-bus drivers, teachers, and workers in the gas and electricity works.

After long and persistent work on the part of the Communist Parties, the working masses in all capitalist countries are beginning to compare and examine the words and deeds of the social-democratic parties on the basis of their own experience and are rapidly turning away from these parties and rallying round the Communist International. The Communist Parties are setting themselves the task of accelerating this process more and more and consolidate it organisationally.

## II.

The Communist Parties have completely neglected work not only in the proletarian mass organisations, which are under the leadership and influence of the social-democrats, but also in the reformist trade unions, which still number millions of members. Therefore, the mass organisations, which could have been converted into real fighting organisations of the proletariat, mostly played the role of passive spectator of the treachery of their leaders.

The mass basis of the social-democratic parties in Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Austria, Holland, and France, is the reformist trade unions. But in the majority of these countries there are hardly any Communists in the reformist trade unions.

This assertion is, unfortunately, no exaggeration.

In Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Austria, Holland and other countries there exist revolutionary trade unions whose tasks consist in the following:—

- (a) To work in the reformist and other non-revolutionary mass trade unions.
- (b) To organise the unorganised together with the members of the reformist and other trade unions.
- (c) To organise and lead strikes.
- (d) To build up organisations of their own alongside of the non-revolutionary mass trade unions in order, at the necessary and suitable moment of a special act of treachery of the reformists, to be able to become the leading centre of the economic struggles of the proletariat.

The trade union opposition has least fulfilled the first of these tasks: work in the reformist unions. The Red Trade Union Opposition and the Communist Parties work either not at all or inadequately in the reformist and similar trade unions in countries like France (not at all), Czechoslovakia (badly), China (badly), Poland (badly), Japan (badly), Rumania (badly), India (almost not at all), etc., where there are red trade unions alongside of the reformist or other non-revolutionary mass trade unions.

What are the causes? They are to be sought in the down-right opportunist and sectarian underestimation of the importance of this work not only on the part of the ordinary party members, but also on the part of leading comrades of the Communist Parties.

All the "theories" of the sectarian attitude not only hold the revolutionary workers back from entering the reformist trade unions, but they promote the withdrawal of the revolutionary members from these organisations. Nay, more, not all Communists are members of the reformist trade unions. They thereby weaken the Communist work within these trade unions. It was not without reason that the C.C. of the C.P. of Czechoslovakia instituted an inquiry regarding the participation of Communists in trade union work, which inquiry embraced 26,094 members of the Communist Party. Of these, 14,753, i.e., 56 per cent., were not members of the trade unions. To the under-estimation of work in the reformist trade unions there is added the circumstance that up till now there has remained in the Communist Party a certain social-democratic separation between economic struggles and political struggles; the Party engages in politics, and the trade unions in the economic struggles of the proletariat. Here and there the Communist

Parties still leave the economic struggles to the Trade Union Opposition, they themselves not only not competing with them in this work, but not dealing even with the most important questions of the trade union movement. This, too, conduces to an under-estimation of the work of the reformist trade unions. The task of all Communist Parties in the capitalist countries, apart from whether there are or are not Red trade unions existing alongside of reformist and other trade unions, consists in uniting and organising all oppositional and revolutionary elements within the reformist and other non-revolutionary mass unions (in fact not only in the trade unions but in all proletarian mass organisations), in order to carry on revolutionary work in these organisations.

In those countries in which, alongside of the reformist trade unions, there exist red trade unions, these latter are not yet adequate mass organisations; they have not learnt to work more energetically and better than the reformists. Therefore, apart from a few exceptions, they have been unable to weaken, still less overcome the local reformist unions.

The task of the Communist Parties consists in improving the work all round and bringing the red trade unions nearer to the factories (at present they have no basis of their own in the factories). For this purpose, the methods of the leadership which the Communists have to carry on in the over-party mass organisations must be altered and improved. It is necessary for the Communists to concern themselves with all questions of the class struggle, and not only exclusively with political questions; it is therefore necessary to put an end to the practice of leaving entirely to the Red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. the task of carrying out economic struggles.

The mass work in the Communist and revolutionary organisations is carried on badly and with little understanding.

In addition to an incorrect estimation of the situation, such as occurs now and again, in addition to false tactics which are employed now and then, which lead to the putting forward of incorrect slogans which hamper the approach to the broad masses, the press and the oral agitation of the Communist Parties and of the revolutionary organisations are unpopular, abstract, dry and tedious.

In addition to agitation in the press (newspapers), the Communist Parties and revolutionary organisations arrange big meetings which are sometimes attended by many thousands. The audience, however, consist mainly of those who sympathise with us, who read our press, through which they also get to know of the holding of the meeting in question. Far too little agitation is carried on in the factories, at the factory gates, in the street cars and on the underground railways, at the labour exchanges, among the proletarians waiting in queues at the relieving offices and casual wards (where the unemployed have to stand for hours in order to obtain a plate of soup or a lodging for the night), in the streets, in the courtyards and dwellings of the working men and women.

The members of the Communist Parties and of the revolutionary organisations make great sacrifices: they go to demonstrations, take part in strikes; they fight against the fascists and repel their attacks; they prepare and distribute prohibited literature, etc. All this often ends with arrests, dismissals from work places, wounds and even death. The trouble is that these comrades do not receive correct instructions. The press does not offer them any material for convincing agitation. The newspapers either write a complicated, learned language and not about things that interest the broad masses at the given moment, or they consider it beneath their dignity to reply to the base inventions of the renegades, the social-democrats and the fascist press. They thereby fail to give the Party members and the members of the revolutionary organisations any arguments for their agitation and talks on political themes with non-party workers and workers of other political beliefs.

The factory newspapers have up to now for the greater part been got out by the district party committees according to a scheme for a whole number of factories, without taking into account the peculiarities of each individual factory and without describing the life of each individual factory. The workers do not buy and read such factory newspapers; and vice-versa, the factory newspapers containing material dealing with the factory in question, sell like hot cakes. In various countries there are cases where, in order to

meet the desire of the workers, it was necessary to print five new editions of the same number of the factory newspaper. Such issues of the factory newspapers contained contributions from non-party workers, and sometimes contributions from reformist and other trade union members and from members of the social-democratic party. For these workers, too, read the good factory newspapers. But these facts, which are known to the C.C. and the party committee, do not lead to an increase in the publication of such papers in place of the standardised types of factory newspaper.

The press and the oral agitation of the Communist Parties and of the revolutionary organisations in general do not penetrate into the masses, but remain on the surface.

Broad masses of the people are opposed to war. The danger of new imperialist wars and of an attack on the Soviet Union is very great. The war in the Far East is in full swing. The Communist Parties and the revolutionary organisations have not succeeded in explaining in a popular manner the danger threatening the masses of the people. Therefore they have not succeeded up to now in preventing the transport of munitions and weapons to Japan.

The facts show that it is necessary to approach the workers in the same way as the Bolsheviks approached the Russian workers in the time of the Tsar: they explained to them who is exploiting them, how their lot could be bettered, what demands must be put forward, what connections existed between the employer for whom they were working and the government which supported him.

The Bolsheviks formulated the demands of the workers for hot water, for lavatories with flushing cisterns, for window panes in the factories, for the abolition of fines, for reduction of the working day and increased pay, up to the slogan "down with the autocracy" up to the demand for the freedom of combination and strikes; for as soon as the workers went on strike, the police and gendarmes were sent against them, just as is the case at the present time in the democratic countries of Europe and America.

The analysis of the good work performed by the factory nuclei and groups of the Red Trade Union Opposition proves once again the correctness of this assertion.

The Communist Parties must change their methods of agitation; the press must become more popular; they must place material at the disposal of the Party members and revolutionary workers which will help them in their agitation and to carry on discussions with their opponents. The members of the Party and of the revolutionary organisations, especially of the R.T.U.O. and of the Red trade unions, must, in addition to popular agitation, perform daily detail work in the factories and in the trade unions, at the Labour Exchanges—and then they will soon be on the way to winning the majority of the working class.

If the Party and trade union organisations function better, then there will be no such fluctuation in all Party, trade union and other revolutionary organisations in all countries as is actually the case at present. These organisations do not know how to consolidate the ideological influence they enjoy in the capitalist countries.

The Communist Parties of the capitalist countries undoubtedly achieved remarkable successes between the XIth and XIIth Plenums of the E.C.C.I. Their influence is growing. Huge masses of toilers have come into movement. Under these circumstances it must be recorded that in comparison with the events which have occurred, and in comparison with the existing revolutionary upsurge of the workers and peasants, the Communist Parties are still behind with their work and their achievements.

The end of the relative stabilisation intensifies all the antagonisms between the imperialists and also between the classes in each country. The revolutionary crisis is maturing in a number of countries (Poland, Germany, Japan).

The task of the Communist Parties consists in successfully carrying out the decisions of the XIIth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. in accordance with the conditions in their country, extending and strengthening their influence, organising and leading the fight of the masses, and guiding them to the successful proletarian revolution. (To be continued.)

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