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THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

MAY 1950

1. THE FIGHT FOR PEACE

Because the Party has "lagged behind in placing the defence of peace as the central task", the Executive Committee has decided to issue a Political Letter on the peace campaign to all Party members. Three main political weaknesses must be overcome: the underestimation of the war danger, which, as a result of the decisions taken recently by the Foreign Ministers of the Atlantic Pact countries, the Party considers to have grown considerably; the tendency to regard war as inevitable, whereas "if the people are brought into action, peace can be defended"; and the failure to see peace as the central issue, with the result that the fight for living standards is "posed by some comrades against the defence of peace". All Party members must develop the campaign for the peace petition on the widest front and strive to make a success of the British Peace Conference in July.

Special steps are being taken to exploit the peace campaign among women. In a letter from Party headquarters to all Districts, branches and units it is stated that the desire for peace among women has been evinced by the growing anxiety of mothers of young children and conscripts, the action of the women who "broke into" the Army recruiting parade in London, and those who demonstrated outside the American Embassy with the slogans "Our sons are not for Export". These actions should be developed all over the country, but the central task was to obtain millions of women's signatures for the peace petition, for "without the support of the women there cannot be a mass peace campaign".

Discussions have been held between members of the National Peace Council - a purely pacifist organisation - and the British Peace Committee to explore the possibility of joint activity. The Peace Council has decided that no formal association is possible, but several of its members feel that a useful purpose would be served by occasional informal meetings and an exchange of news and views. The Peace Committee has taken the opportunity of the presence in London of members of the World Bureau of the Partisans of Peace to arrange a lunch party for them and members of the Peace Council. The Peace Pledge Union will consider whether its members should speak on Peace Committee platforms after they have received from the Peace Council a report on their discussions.

2. MAY DAY DEMONSTRATION

Echoing a statement issued by the World Federation of Trade Unions which named May Day as "International Peace Day", the Party's manifesto called for "a mighty demonstration of the determination of the workers of Britain, in solidarity with their class brothers in every country of the world, to end the wars now taking place, prevent a third world war and ensure lasting peace".

Originally, arrangements had been made by the London District of the Party for contingents to march to Trafalgar Square from assembly points in London. But, as a result of the reimposition of the ban on political marches and the refusal of the Home Secretary to meet representatives of the London Trades Council who wished to protest against the ban, London District called on the workers to demonstrate in force. Five protest meetings were held at 1.30 p.m. on 7 May at Hyde Park, St. Pancras Arches, St. George's Circus, Latchmere Road Baths and Stepney Green. Later attempts were made to organise marching columns to Trafalgar Square, but these were dispersed by the police.

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A total of 7,000 people congregated at the Square, where Communist and trade union banners were exhibited. The meeting was addressed by E.D. SHEEHAN (chairman), J.R. SCOTT, E.J. HILL, Julius JACOBS and Claude BERRIDGE. They spoke on the resolution:

"This demonstration of London's workers, which was organised by the London Trades Council, celebrating May Day, sends warm, fraternal and comradely greetings to fellow trade unionists all over the world, and with them we pledge ourselves to strive unceasingly to preserve peace and to outlaw atomic warfare so that the working people of the world can go forward in their own way to Socialism and the brotherhood of all who work. We protest at the action of the Home Secretary in banning our traditional march and determine that next year this shall not recur. We demand that the Government take action to reduce the high prices of essential commodities and the swollen profits that are being made. We support the actions of the Trade Union Movement in their just claims for a higher standard of life for all workers. We protest at the proposed increases in London's fares and resolve to offer the utmost resistance to them. Finally, this demonstration pledges itself to rebuild the unity of the International Trade Union Movement, so necessary to our struggle against World Capitalism. Only the unity of the Trade Union Movement can ensure victory for the working class".

70 persons were arrested, of whom 61 were known Communists. A "May Day Defence Fund" has been set up to defray the legal costs of those arrested. The treasurer is E.J. TURNER (a Communist and London area secretary, E.T.U.). An appeal for donations has been issued by Mark BASS, Claude BERRIDGE, Rev. Jack BOGGIS, Freda GRIMBLE, J.H. HAYWARD, Julius JACOBS, D.N. FRITT, K.C., Tom SULLIVAN, Ted TAYLOR, Joan B. THOMPSON, J.P., E.J. TURNER, L.C. WHITE.

Party headquarters has expressed the opinion that the Home Secretary's ban on the processions contributed to the Party's success. Had there been no ban, trade unionists would not have been involved in any disorder. As it was, many non-Party trade unionists joined in the demonstrations in a manner which they would not have adopted but for the ban. The Party is extremely displeased with the manner in which Communists gave evidence in Court. They were intended to make a plea from the dock for world peace but only about three complied with Party instructions.

3. MALAYA WEEK

The Party's Malaya Week will start on 3 June with the object of intensifying the campaign to stop the war in Malaya, and as part of an independent peace campaign to stimulate the collection of signatures for the peace petition. The programme includes poster parades and meetings, and Party branches have been instructed to "conduct activities" at Labour Exchanges on 3 June, where conscripts will be enrolled. Attempts are to be made to induce the mothers of conscripts to participate in these demonstrations.

4. LOCAL ELECTIONS

The results of the local elections, in which not one of the Party's 353 candidates for Borough Councils was successful, reflect, according to Party headquarters, a very serious situation for the Party, which is to be the subject of discussion by the Political Committee.

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5. COMINFORM JOURNAL

Because of the small circulation in the United Kingdom of the Cominform Journal, the Executive Committee has passed the following resolution.

"The Executive Committee draws the attention of all comrades to the importance of the weekly journal of the Communist Information Bureau - FOR A LASTING PEACE, FOR A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY. The journal contains articles by leading Communists throughout the world on the situation and policy of the Communist Parties in their countries, and on the general strategy of the working class in the struggle for peace, in defence of living standards, and for Socialism.

The lessons of the struggle and experience of the workers and Communist Parties in other countries, are of the greatest importance for us, and this journal should be obligatory reading for the cadres and active members of our Party. To increase its circulation, both in the Party and in the militant Labour Movement, is a most important political task, and we therefore call on all District and Branch Committees to take measures to make it known and to encourage comrades to subscribe for this valuable weapon in our struggle".

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6. THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND TRADE UNION CONFERENCES

The Communist Party achieved a fair measure of success at trade union conferences held in April and May. At the conference of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers in April a motion moved by a member of the Communist Party condemned the Executive Committee for supporting the T.U.C. wage restraint policy. This was carried on a show of hands. The Executive of the Clerical and Administrative Workers Union, however, obtained, despite Communist opposition, endorsement of its policy to prevent Communists from representing the union on any other bodies to which it was affiliated. At the conference of the National Union of Agricultural Workers at which Jack DUNMAN, an official at Communist Party headquarters, spoke, the proposal that the Executive press the Government more vigorously for the nationalisation of land was defeated by the slight majority of 68 - 66. Members of the Communist Party were not prominent at the annual conference of the Railway Clerks Association. But although it had hitherto strongly supported the T.U.C. wage restraint policy, it instructed the Executive, by 43,025 to 35,825 votes, to consider urgently the problem of obtaining improvement of salaries for clerical and supervisory staffs.

Several resolutions at the annual conference of the Electrical Trades Union reflected the policy of the Communist Party. The Communist President, Frank FOULKES, urged union members to vote for strike action in the Engineers' £1 ballot and this was almost unanimously supported by the conference, as was a call to increase wages out of profits. The conference in general, and Walter STEVENS, General Secretary and a member of the Communist Party, in particular, supported a resolution to increase trade and friendship with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, although there was a large minority which disagreed with the implications of the resolution. Frank HAXELL, the Assistant General Secretary and a member of the Communist Party, demanded greater union and workers' control of nationalised industry. The Party received a rebuff in the defeat of a resolution on re-affiliation to the World Federation of Trade Unions; instead, the newly formed International Confederation of Free Trade Unions was welcomed. Party initiative was regained by FOULKES, who deplored American "domination" of the I.C.F.T.U., and an amendment was passed giving

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support instead to "all the national and international bodies whose policy it is to build and maintain trade union organisation free and independent of Government domination". Alexei FODUSHKIN, President of the Electrical Power Workers of the Soviet Union, was present as a fraternal delegate, and added his contribution to the general call for peace, condemning opposition to the Soviet Union as reactionary.

7. THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND AFRICAN STUDENTS

Communist Party headquarters has recently paid considerable attention to its work amongst Africans in this country, particularly West African students, many of whom are contacted as soon as they arrive from abroad. The Party has found, however, that coloured visitors do not benefit from routine branch meetings of the Party, where the proceedings usually mean little to them and British Party members do not always treat their guests sympathetically. To remedy this, Party headquarters is trying to arrange for coloured people to form their own groups and branches which will be affiliated to the local Communist Party branch; the "Paul Robeson Branch" in St. Pancras and a group of Nigerians which meets at the house of a Party member in Chelsea have recently been formed.

8. VISITS ABROAD OF PROMINENT PARTY MEMBERS

Emile BURNS, a member of the Political Committee, travelled to Prague by air on 5 May to represent the British Communist Party at the celebrations of the 5th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia. Edward (Ted) DICKENS, a member of the London District Committee of the Communist Party, visited Prague on 5 May to represent the Committee at the liberation celebrations.

George ALLISON, Industrial Organiser of the British Communist Party and a member of its Executive Committee, left Northolt Airport on 15 May for Budapest where he attended meetings of the World Federation of Trade Unions. On 19 May, George William SINFIELD, an industrial reporter of the Daily Worker, travelled to Budapest to attend the meetings of the W.F.T.U.

9. THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE 17th NATIONAL CONGRESS

The 17th National Congress of the Young Communist League took place in London at the Beaver Hall, Garlick Hill, on the weekend of 20 - 21 May. 266 delegates attended the Congress and 183 branches of the Young Communist League were represented. Fraternal delegates included representatives from the All India Student Federation, Malayan Youth, Spanish Republican Youth, World Federation of Democratic Youth, Greek & Cypriot Youth, International Youth Council, Student Labour Federation, Youth Section Irish Workers League, Labour Youth League of U.S.A., Young Workers League of Northern Ireland. 20 delegates also attended from the Communist Party.

A new National Committee of the Young Communist League was elected as follows:

Vic ALABASTER.	Walter DAVIS.	Dick NETTLETON.
Desmond ATKINSON.	Vic EDISFORD.	Jimmy OATES.
Bill BROOKS.	Jack EVANS.	Valerie POTTER.
Ben BIRNBAUM.	Roy GADSBY.	Bill RIACH.
Ron BOSLEY.	Jock GLENN.	Jim STAFFORD.
Bill CARRITT.	Rufus GODSON.	Frances SCHWARTZ.
Joe CLARKE.	Jack HENDERSON.	Bob SEABROOK.
Les CANNON.	Joe HARRIS.	Peter THOMPSON.
Monty COHEN.	Sid KAUFMAN.	Doug WHITFIELD.
Ivy COOPER.	John MOSS.	T. WORDS.
		Betty WILKINS.

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The main theme of the Congress was the importance of assisting the peace campaign, which, as with the parent organisation, is the central task of the Young Communist League for the coming year. The numerical weakness of the League, particularly in industry, which had been emphasised at the 16th Congress, was again deplored.

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