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1. Van Sardine ontvangen wij bijgaand maandoverzicht om te behouden.



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THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

AUGUST 1950

1. The Fight for Peace.

The All-Britain Peace Conference organised by the British Peace Committee was held at the Holborn Hall, London, on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 July 1950. Its main object was to launch a nation-wide drive for signatures for the Peace Petition. The conference was attended by 804 delegates, 5 fraternal delegates and 42 observers and special guests. J.G. CROWTHER presided over the meeting, during the course of which the main speakers were L.C. WHITE, general secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association, James ALDRIDGE, the Australian author, Abbe BOULIER, member of both the French National Committee of the Partisans of Peace and the World Peace Committee, Mrs. Jessie STREET, Vice-President of the Australian Soviet Society and secretary of the Australian Peace Council, Mrs. Margaret FAIRLIE, Vice Chairman of the Toronto Peace Council and member of the Labour Progressive Party of Canada, Ilya EHRENBURG, Soviet writer and propagandist, member of the Supreme Soviet and Soviet Committee of the Partisans of Peace, and a prominent member of the World Peace Committee, Professor J.D. BERNAL, Gilbert de CHAMBRUN, member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Chamber of Deputies and the World Peace Committee, Mrs. Joyce SMITH, secretary of the British Peace Committee, Arthur HORNER, general secretary of the National Union of Mine-workers, Colonel Vladimir PENIAKOFF ("Popski"), Ivor MONTAGU, member of the executive committee of the British Peace Committee, Sam AARONOVITCH, member of the executive committee of the British Peace Committee and assistant national education organiser of the British Communist Party, and D.N. PRITT, K.C.

The Conference was divided into three sessions, one being held on Saturday morning, one on Saturday afternoon, and the final session on Sunday morning. On the evening of Saturday 22 July, a "Service for Peace" was held at the Church of St. George the Martyr, Queen's Square, W.C.1. and on the afternoon of Sunday 23 July a rally in Trafalgar Square, organised by the British Peace Committee, was at one time attended by nearly 7,000 persons.

Most of the leading speakers at the Conference also spoke at this rally.

The British Peace Committee is not entirely satisfied with the success of the Conference; first it considers that the following sections were poorly represented, and special efforts are to be made to intensify the campaign in this direction,

- (a) youth
- (b) the Church
- (c) women's organisations
- (d) co-operative Societies
- (e) professional workers, and

secondly it considers that there was insufficient publicity about the Conference. It is interesting to note that in the arrangements the Committee is now making for holding the next World Peace Congress in the U.K. in November, it is proposing to spend a very large sum of money on advertising alone.

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The Committee has tried, without success, to hire a holiday camp for one week in which to hold the World Congress. The idea was to house all the delegates and their families in this camp, and call it "The Peace Village". The present plans are to hold the Congress either in London or a large holiday resort such as Blackpool.

Mrs. Joyce SMITH is resigning from her position as secretary of the British Peace Committee, but will continue to work there until a relief has been appointed. It is not yet known who will be selected for the post.

2. The Communist Party and Trade Union Conferences.

At the conference of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, held in July, there was no great support for resolutions reflecting Communist Party policy, and delegates made it clear that the majority were not in favour of Communist Party members holding senior executive positions in the Union. In the preliminary ballot for the post of general secretary, H.J.O. WEAVER, the Communist London Divisional Secretary, polled only 5,712 votes against the 11,442 of his non-Communist rival.

The disruptive effects of Communism in industry were strongly criticised at the Annual Conference of the National Union of Mineworkers, whose delegates pledged support to the Labour Government. A resolution in the terms of the British Peace Committee's Stockholm Appeal was rejected, after some hesitation, on a card vote of 421,000 to 261,000. The Communists John WOOD (Scottish Area) and Thomas William PAYNTER (South Wales) were prominent among the supporters of this resolution. Stefan BEDKOWSKI, Secretary of the Polish Miners' Union, present as a fraternal delegate, also spoke.

3. Miners' Strike.

On 3 July 1950 nine Lanarkshire pits came out on strike in protest against the National Coal Board's rejection of the miners' claim for increased wages for lower paid workers. The stoppage extended to sixty-five pits, but most of the strikers had returned to work by 24 July.

The national headquarters of the Communist Party were apparently not prepared for the strike, although Michael MCGAHEY, a member of the Lanarkshire Area Committee of the Party, was quoted by the "Daily Worker" as the strike leader. The Party did not instigate the strike, and its chief problem was to gain and retain the leadership, while trying to co-ordinate action in the various coalfields, even though it was considered that the strike would not spread beyond Lanarkshire. Another problem which faced the Party was the fact that a number of its leading members are also prominent officials of the Union and therefore bound to some extent by Union policy. Abe MOFFATT, President of the Scottish Area of the Union, himself urged a return to work two days after the outbreak of the strike, and it was apparent that the liaison between National and Scottish Headquarters and the Communist officials of the Union on the spot was not as close as might have been desired.

The Party's first endeavour was to arrange for a general declaration against the rejection of the wage claim and for a deputation to be sent to the Annual Conference of the National Union of Mineworkers then in session at Llanudno. It was there that the Scottish Union officials made their first appeal for a return to work. In fact, the attention paid by the strikers to the Union officials' advice was slight, and the Party persisted in its efforts to keep the strike going, though support was forthcoming only in the Scottish Area since in other areas holidays intervened and sympathy was lacking.

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In Yorkshire, for example some feeling was at first reported to have been roused by the Party, but it was quickly dispelled by the situation in Korea. In South Wales, however, there was a short strike at Fernhill which, although there was support for the Communist Party, was called off due to lack of general support over the wage issue involved.

In face of this apathy the Party was forced to follow the recommendations of MOFFAT that the miners should return to work and to await the results of negotiations between the Union and the National Coal Board. Meanwhile Scottish District of the Communist Party, at the instance of National Headquarters, were to try to keep the issue alive and to get expressions of opinion from the coalfields in order to influence the negotiations while they were in progress. The comparative lack of success gained by the Party during this strike, even taking into account the absence of some Party leaders and of large numbers of miners on holiday, does show the difficulty encountered by the national leadership in organising concerted action over widely dispersed areas and in trying to keep a dispute in existence on lines favoured by itself.

Messages of support were sent to the Scottish miners by the Hungarian Miners Union and by the Miners Trades Union International (Trade Department of the World Federation of Trade Unions.)

4. Report on the Delegate Conference of the Glasgow Area of the Communist Party.

A Delegate Conference of the Glasgow Area of the Communist Party was held on June 30 1950, at which it was decided, inter alia, that the present organisation of the Party was inadequate to perform the duties required of it and in particular that the present strength of industrial branches was insufficient to maintain and fully co-ordinate the peace and anti-wage freeze campaigns.

As a result it was proposed at the Conference that the Glasgow Committee be increased to 29 to include a further 11 members, who had wide contacts in the trade union movement; that 5 new sub-area committees should be set up in Glasgow consisting of secretaries of the respective branches in the sub-area plus members from the Glasgow Committee; and that when important decisions were taken, all the Glasgow Committee would attend a sub-area committee meeting.

The object of these new sub-committees, which represent a departure from standard organisational practice, is to co-ordinate the activity of residential and industrial branches together with womens' sections and Y.C.L. branches in the locality; they would also be empowered to transfer members from residential to industrial branches when this was considered advisable.

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