

02/1593

NOTA

Van: KA-R.A.

Aan: Hoofd B

No. E 1081

ONDERWERP: Overzicht van Communistische Activiteiten in het V.K.

- 1) SARDINE doet U ter bestudering toekomen het Overzicht over Febr. 1951 betreffende de Communistische Activiteiten in het V.K.

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## THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

February 1951

### General

This has been a month of intense activity by the British Communist Party following the issue of their long-term programme "The British Road to Socialism" and in continuation of their Peace Campaign. There has been the National Women's Conference on 3 and 4 February, the first ever held, the Annual General Meeting of the British Soviet Friendship Society on the 3 February, the All Wales Peace Congress on the 17 February and the Scottish Peace Conference on the 18 February. Delegations have also been organised by the Communist Party to the W.I.D.F. Meeting in Berlin on 1 February and to the World Peace Council in Berlin from the 21 to the 25 February.

Ivor MONTAGU has been selected as prospective Communist Party candidate for the next General Election for North Hammersmith. This makes a total of 29 prospective Communist candidates.

Harry POLLITT launched a new campaign against the Labour Party with an article in the "Daily Worker" on the 10 February, calling for local Labour parties to show their strength and demand an emergency Labour Party Conference to establish a new policy. This is being followed up as opportunity offers.

### The Party Programme

"The British Road to Socialism" was issued on the 1 February and has aroused great interest, unexpected even by the Communists themselves. By the 16 February 109,000 copies had been definitely ordered and 190,000 copies were in the process of being printed. The Party looks on the programme as being quite the most important document that they have ever published and says that a close study of it will reveal many new formulations which arise directly out of the changed conditions under which the Communists now have to work. In explaining the programme to Party members, particular emphasis is placed on the fact that it is a long-term programme and that in the short-term peace is still all important. The programme has been printed in full in "For a Lasting Peace; For a People's Democracy" and in Pravda, so it is certain that it has Cominform and Russian approval. The main points of interest are as follows:-

- (a) The new programme is markedly different from the programme on which the General Election in February 1950 was fought. This stressed the revolutionary aspect of Communism, while the new programme is at great pains to discount the violence which has always been attributed to Communist methods.
- (b) There are, however, several indications that workers will be expected to use force. The principal one is that it says "big Capitalists must be expected to offer active resistance to the decisions of the People's Government and to fight for the retention of their privileges by all means in their power, including force". Obviously if Capitalists use force this can only be overcome by more force.
- (c) The programme rejects the view that their aim is to destroy the British Empire and the Party has been in some difficulty in reconciling the older members to this policy, as they understood that the British Empire was an example of Imperialism and would certainly go with the introduction of a People's Government.

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- (d) The programme appeals to clerical and professional workers, teachers, technicians and scientists, working farmers, shopkeepers and small businessmen, which is a new departure. They are, however, referred to in general as the "middle section of society", presumably because in the past the "middle class" has been scorned. *middlesland!*
- (e) There have been complaints from older Party members that the programme has been issued without opportunity for full discussion and preferably should have been held up until after the National Congress to be held in November 1951. It is of interest that, unlike most Communist documents, the final version is very much the same as the first draft, and although it has been considered nominally at several meetings of the Political Committee and the Executive Committee criticism has not been encouraged.

## Sub-Committee of the Political Committee

*know this person met me Aug 1951*  
*W. J. Hill, Arch and ...*  
A sub-committee of the Political Committee has recently been formed and is composed of Harry POLLITT, George MATTHEWS, Peter KERRIGAN, Emile BURNS and George ALLISON. They are all London members of the Political Committee and are "trusted by other members" of the Peace Committee, MATTHEWS is the Secretary. It is noteworthy that R.P. DUTT's name is not included.

The sub-committee is to discuss those secondary, technical and organisational matters, which formerly took up too much of the Political Committee's time. Some matters will still have to go before the Political Committee for ratification after discussion by the sub-committee, others, will be presented for information only. In some cases the Political Committee will not be consulted at any stage unless it made a specific enquiry.

So far, no information has been received as to how this new sub-committee is performing its functions. It is significant, however, that its powers are sufficiently extensive and its members sufficiently powerful to enable it to wield considerable influence over the Political Committee as a whole, and consequently over the policy of the Party.

## The Peace Campaign

The Party are disappointed that the British Peace Committee has become firmly identified in the minds of the British public with Communism. It is now of very little use to them as a means of fighting the Peace Campaign. It has failed to attract non-Communist members or to obtain the support of non-Communist organisations. They are also disappointed at the lack of leadership shown and with the bad timing of the declaration on German re-armament. The British Peace Committee, on the other hand, consider that it has been deserted by the Communist Party and are annoyed at the lack of support which their affairs in general and the Declaration in particular has received from the Communists. There has even been some talk of winding up the British Peace Committee. Despite their annoyance, the Party has issued a very firm order to districts and branches saying that the British Peace Committee declaration is to be supported.

## The British Peace Committee

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The declaration on German re-armament was launched during the month,

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it was most important that Members of Parliament should receive large numbers and that there was no objection to one person signing many copies of the declaration provided that they were sent to different people. The declaration is therefore being organised on a very different basis to the Peace Petition, which was organised nationally and the list of all the signatories was presented to the House of Commons. A special effort is being organised for the week-end of 3-4 March and by women in conjunction with International Women's Day on 8 March.

After the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons on the American resolution on Chinese aggression against Korea, the British Peace Committee claimed a victory saying "you and I are responsible for this, the ordinary people who have said no war with China".

The British members of the World Peace Council have been increased from 12 to 20 by the addition of more workers and more women.

Ex-Service Movement for Peace

This organisation continues to prosper, and now claims that about 100 groups have been set up all over the country, with a total membership of between 4,000 and 5,000. In some areas "Z" men are being organised, usually by Party members, into groups which, although not affiliated to the Ex-Service Movement for Peace, stand for the same or similar objects. This is being done because the Ex-Service Movement is now identified with Communism to a very great extent. It is hoped that associations of "Z" men will not be so identified. The Ex-Service Movement opened an office in London at the beginning of the month and it is thought that there are one or two full-time workers as well as volunteers. Captain Robert GAITT remains in charge, although he is believed still to be working for the "Daily Worker".

National Women's Conference

The first National Women's Conference of the Communist Party was held on the 3-4 February, not without misgivings from Party Headquarters. At one time it seemed possible that there would be a demand for the formation of a special Women's section inside the Party, but the Political Committee stamped on this idea formally at a meeting held prior to the Conference, in which it laid down "the main responsibility for the development of the work among women is that of the Party as a whole. Every branch and branch committee should give special attention to this work". It then went on to bless the formation of Women's groups and laid down that in every branch, area and borough committee there should be a member responsible for work among women. The word "group" was specially chosen to avoid giving the impression that they intended to organise women separately, which in Communist jargon the word "section" might be taken to mean.

The National Women's Conference was attended by 107 people, including a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, Madame Yvonne DUMONT. Resolutions and pledges were passed in support of the various aspects of the present Communist Party policy.

The Communist Party and the Dock Strikes

It had been realised for some time by the Communist Party that in London, at any rate, it would be difficult to get the dockers to strike, even when the result of the wage claim was announced. The Communist dominated London Port Workers' Committee was therefore anxious to prevent premature strike action by the Merseyside Port Workers' Committee since it was aware that lack of co-ordination between the ports would be fatal for Party prestige. The Party was, in fact, taken by surprise by the strike at Merseyside and was compelled to attempt to fall into line in order to make a show of solidarity. On finding the full extent of the London dockers' unwillingness to strike, the Industrial Department in conjunction with London District of the Communist Party decided to call off the strike in the London Docks.

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In Manchester, where the leader of the newly formed Port Workers' Committee, George NORMAN, is an openly confessed Communist, the London lead was followed, whereas Merseyside continued to strike for the "Dockers' Charter".

The Communist Party is known to have been displeased that Merseyside was striking on an issue which was not of Communist making and which was considered not to be strong enough to keep the men on strike for long. It regarded the Merseyside strike and the efforts of HARRISON, JOHNSON, CROSBIE and CONSTABLE (and possibly also those of TIMOTHY) in London as a "Trotskyist" plot to break the power of the Party and the London Port Workers' Committee in the docks by substituting a new leadership. The arrest of the seven dockers (who include the five already mentioned plus DICKENS and COWLEY, the only two known Communist Party members among them) provided a welcome opportunity for the more orthodox Communist members of the Committee to come forward, and it is they who have been prominent since 9 February. It also meant that the Party could start agitation against Order 1305 instead of against too small a wage increase, which was unprofitable as a Party agitation point, especially in the London docks.

The Party, through the "Daily Worker" and with the help of the Joint Trade Union Defence Committee and the London Port Workers' Committee, continues agitation on the lines of opposition to Order 1305. This agitation also takes the form of token stoppages whenever the case of the seven dockers comes before the courts.

## Communist Party and the Railways

The Communist Party has continued to devote much effort towards provoking trouble in the Railway Industry, but its numerical strength has not been sufficient for it to be able to create of its own accord any issue which could give rise to a national strike. The recent wage crisis in the Railway Industry has however given the Party a ready made platform from which to deliver harangues in the "Daily Worker" and other publications, on the low pay of Railway Workers and against the iniquity of the Labour Government's methods of nationalisation. This propaganda has perhaps had some effect in encouraging the men to press for higher wages, but it is difficult to gauge the extent of its influence.

The extent of the crisis which has occurred since the Court of Inquiry's award was rejected by the Railway Trade Unions, shows that it arose from genuine discontent on the part of the workers and not substantially from any propaganda by the Communist Party. In some localities however, individual Communists holding key positions were able to use their influence against acceptance of offers by the Railway Executive, and even against the exercise of patience in awaiting the result of the negotiations. E.C. COULES, Chairman of the Banbury Branch of the A.S.L.E.F. was no doubt in part responsible for the week-end strike of Locomotive men in the Midlands, which took place from midnight on Friday 23 February to midnight Sunday 25th. This strike was not called off even when the long drawn out negotiations between the Unions and the Railway Executive ended in agreement.

J.B. FIGGINS, the General Secretary of the N.U.R., though not a member of the Communist Party is sympathetic towards it and supports the Party line in international affairs. He did not make any attempt to curb the unofficial strikes and working to rule, until the negotiations were about to result in agreement.

To be seen whether the Party will be able to make

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Errata to the Monthly Notes for January 1951

"South Midlands District".

Page 2, East Midlands District should read:-

William FERRIE, the former Secretary of the North West District, who retired from public life on health grounds has joined the staff of the South Midlands District in Oxford.

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