

ment for everyone. It may be so. But it is essential for the Government to have schemes for stimulating employment ready lest this optimistic prophecy is found to be unjustified.

The safeguarding of wage rates at moment when there is a vast movement of labour between the various industries will have to be undertaken by the Government. The wages and conditions obtained during the war must be safeguarded as a minimum. The guaranteed week, in particular, should be made per-

manent in the industries where it now operates.

Every worker should be entitled to the protection of a Trade Union and all employers should be forced to recognise the Unions and their shop organisation.

The British working-class has many great wartime achievements to its credit. But its greatest achievements have still to come. That is why we are justified in asking the Government to remove all obstacles to the victory production drive in the pits and factories of Britain.

Corsica and the Liberation of France

by CLEMENS DUTT

ALGIERS. Saturday,
January 15.

CORSICA is the first department or county of France itself which has been liberated from the Nazi yoke. For this reason alone the lessons of this experience and the course of events following its liberation are of great importance, both for the light thrown upon problems involved in the liberation of France as a whole and on the historical rebirth of democracy in Europe which is the concern of all.

National Front in Corsica.

The Corsicans are a proud, independent people bound by close ties to the democratic French Republic. When in November, 1942, Hitler invaded the unoccupied zone of France and Italians, with German help, occupied Corsica, the already seething anti-Vichy feeling of the people led to the formation of numerous small resistance groups. The main difficulty lay in a lack of organisation and of a sense of discipline, due to the smallness of the working-class.

Of former political parties only the Communist Party survived; and though few in numbers, less than two hundred, the Communist Party continued propaganda for patriotic unity and began to spread understanding of the need for a single unified illegal organisation, and

took the lead in building it. This was the beginning of the National Front, the organisation embracing all patriots with the following as its aims: to expel the invader, liquidate the Vichy regime and re-establish a freely chosen Republican Government.

A mass organisation was gradually built. Each village had its own little group. An illegal paper, *Le Patriote*, with 5,000 copies, pamphlets and leaflets, collection of food and materials for underground fighters and the help of illegal radio and the B.B.C. all played their part in strengthening the National Front.

The National Front rejected equally a passive waiting policy and counsels of premature revolt. It recognised that the development of an organised mass struggle depended on its members gaining experience in immediate action, waged by combat groups. Despite inevitable losses, this correct course brought about a general realisation that such limited mass action is an essential factor in preparing liberation.

A military mission from Algiers quickly reached the conclusion that the National Front organisation was the only one that could effectively assist a landing and so undertook the despatch of arms to it. Nevertheless at the beginning, in

September of last year, the forces of the National Front were still numerically inferior to those of the enemy. It had a few thousands of armed patriots against 80,000 Italians, 11,000 Germans, with 110 tanks. But on Italy's unconditional surrender on September 8 the Italians were thrown into confusion and the Germans began withdrawing to the northern tip of the island. The National Front leaders realised that the time had come to strike without hesitation. At once, on the night of September 8, the call for a general insurrection was issued, and was obeyed throughout the country.

Help had been promised from Algiers, but not until September 11 did the first ninety-seven men of a battalion sent by General Giraud arrive by submarine, followed later by the rest of 500 men. Thus the actual liberation was carried out by thousands of Franc-tireurs and partisans, who carried out many heroic actions, aided by the small force sent by Giraud.

Why were the Corsican patriots successful? Giovoni, one of the National Front leaders and delegate to the Consultative Assembly at Algiers, states that the liberation of Corsica was essentially the work of the Corsicans themselves and that this success was due to (1) training in struggle; (2) unified leadership through the National Front; (3) partial arming from outside; (4) rapid decision for insurrection and discipline in action.

Corsica After Liberation.

Corsican liberation adds a glorious classic page to the history of popular national insurrection. The first legal issue of *Le Patriote*, dated September 10, printed a stirring manifesto—the call to break with Vichy, rally to free France and take up arms against the invader. The first proclamation was also printed of the revolutionary Prefect Pelletier and the Council of five National Front members reflecting decisive initiative of the victorious people. It states (1) Corsica rallies to the French National Liberation Committee; (2) National Front combat

groups are alone recognised as auxiliary police forces; (3) all traitor and Vichy collaborationist organisations are dissolved and their property confiscated; (4) unworthy municipal councillors are dismissed to be replaced by patriots freely elected by men and women; (5) Control established over all newspapers; (6) normal work to continue, food hoarding and speculation to be punished.

Corsicans throughout the island rallied to the National Front. A meeting of 1,000 National Front delegates on September 28 heard a report by Giovoni back from Algiers, congratulated the committee of the department which issued the original call to arms and declared its support for programme of a rapid purge, help for victims of the struggle, a rise of wages and measures against the Black Market. It declared against the return to superseded legal forms of 1875 and affirmed "legal is that which the people demands and imposes."

Very quickly after the liberation, however, attempts developed to contest the authority of the National Front in regulating the problems of liberated Corsica. After only a few days Prefect Luizon, nominated by the Algiers National Committee, took over the direction of a department in insurrection and was added to the department National Front Committee on investigation from Algiers. Under the influence of Giacobbi an attempt was made to organise a counterpoise to the National Front in the form of an organisation called *The Fourth Republic* and then France Combattante. But these were rejected in Corsica.

The Vichy members of village councils and town councils were thrown out, but it seems that control from Algiers has in many cases denied the validity of the new elections of departmental delegates from patriotic municipalities. The Corsicans wanted a new *Conseil-General of Department* freely elected by the people; but, apparently on a decision from Algiers, it has been constituted of twelve members nominated by the central

Government. The view was apparently held in some quarters that the National Front was good enough for fighting invaders but that its members were not sufficiently experienced for administrative.

On the other hand, with the affairs of the Department returning to central control from Algiers, the economic and administrative situation has evoked much dissatisfaction. After four months the Black Market continues, food difficulties are acute, transport and road repairs remain disorganised and elimination of sabotaging elements especially in powerful positions has hardly gone forward. Pourtalet, a farmer, Communist Party Deputy and Vice-President of the National Defence Commission of the Consultative Assembly, after returning from an official visit to Corsica at the end of December, said that the situation there really shows no advance on that of the time of liberation. In addition, it was decided a month ago that Corsicans should surrender their arms on the ground that these were needed to help France. This has encountered stubborn opposition, an opposition natural enough—for the people are accustomed to carry arms—and there are still Fascist elements undisarmed, while Corsica is near enough to the theatre of war for possible parachute raids or other forms of attack. Corsica, moreover, is the advanced bastion of Free France, and needs its Home Guard as much as Britain.

Despite all difficulties, the National Front continues to grow and has now over 30,000 members. It has a women's organisation with over 5,000 members. Trade Unions in Corsica have resumed active functioning. The Communist Party has about 6,000 members.

Liberation of France.

From what has been said it may seem that Corsican experience provides both encouragement and warning. The conditions for the liberation of the rest of France differ in many respects from those of Corsica; but two main conclusions can

be drawn which are all the more important because of the differences.

The first is the reinforcement of the general truth that liberation must essentially be the work of people themselves, that it depends above all on popular initiative. Freedom cannot be established passively from outside. In Corsica there was fortunately a unified mass movement from the start. In France for various reasons this has been delayed, although there have been many splendid exploits of French patriots. Despite De Gaulle's statement that passivity is the worst crime, an attitude of passive expectation characterises some circles outside France more than inside and hampers the growth of real spirit of war and encouragement of popular guerilla warfare.

The growth of the French resistance movement testifies to the readiness of the French people to take the path of mass struggle for liberation. Largely under the influence of resistance delegates from France more attention is now being paid by France's provisional Government to the needs of the French struggle. But more recognition is required, both from it and from the Allies, of the mass popular character which this struggle is bound to assume. Hesitation in supplying arms and material for French patriots is in itself partly a political reflection of the distrust of mass action.

Failure to understand that war against Fascism must be a war of the people and not only of the army has been responsible for many setbacks. When General Tassigny raised the standard of revolt against the Germans in 1942 he failed primarily because he relied solely on a few skeleton army divisions instead of heading a popular rising. André Marty, French Communist leader, in an article (which for some curious reason came under the Algiers censorship ban) has pointed out that if Tassigny had sought the co-operation of the Montpellier National Front Committee he could have obtained the support of thousands of workers and peasants in

action which would have made possible the maintenance of a bridgehead until allied help arrived.

In the liberation of North Africa from the Vichy regime a similar lack of reliance on the people was responsible for great obstruction and delay in the establishment of a democratic regime, the effects of which are not yet overcome. The five hundred patriots who staked their lives to assure the Allied landing had not built any mass organisation. They did not even effect the release of imprisoned deputies.

Hence the basic principle is that well expressed in the recent illegal issue of *Humanité* (Number 237); "The initiative of the people is always at critical hours of history an essential element of victory. It is because we have confidence in the people of France and their creative genius that our Party, which is proud of having done its utmost for the formation of a powerful movement for the independence of France, proposed that committees of fighting France should be formed everywhere. The adoption of this proposal by all resistance groups can and must greatly facilitate the accomplishment of the tasks involved in national insurrection."

The second conclusion which follows from the Corsican experience is the necessity of ensuring full scope for popular initiative in the establishment of free institutions after liberation. The liberation of France, even more than that of Corsica, will also require military intervention from outside. But it would be disastrous if considerations of military expediency or even distrust in the people themselves were to lead to a denial of

popular initiative in the revolutionary task of reconstruction that is required.

A continuation of the sorry *AMGOT* story, or even such a compromise as poisoned the atmosphere in North Africa, is almost unthinkable. But a successful national insurrection in France will bring new popular representatives to the fore and this is bound to provoke opposition from groups which desire a return to the policy of sectional interests which events have rendered out-of-date. Algiers, with its remoteness from the theatre of war, and with a certain absence of war atmosphere that even resembles the "phony war" period, is not characteristic of the French war spirit. This deadening atmosphere has apparently also retarded the solution of the problems of liberated Corsica.

But the Liberation Committee now exiled in Algiers feels itself sufficiently representative of France in its struggle to act as provisional Government until a new constitution be adopted. It has every ground for exercising such authority. But paper schemes for a democratic constitution of a new French Republic are not enough. National Liberation is not a mere matter of voting. Millions of people will be swept into active movement. More confidence in the people and in the mass National Front organisation needs shown than was seen in the case of Corsica. In Britain also our duty is to see that obstacles are not placed in the way of democratic victory and of solidarity with the French people. Only the unity of the popular struggle can provide a sure basis for the world family of democratic nations after the end of the war.

The Editor of LABOUR MONTHLY will be very glad to receive contributions in the form of finished articles or of suggestions and data for articles. The customary proviso must be made that no responsibility is undertaken for manuscripts sent to him nor can he promise to enter into correspondence regarding contributions not accepted.

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American Trade Union Unity

(The following article under the title "Two Trade Union Congresses," was published in the Trade Union magazine War and the Working Class. —Ed. L.M.)

DURING the time the second world war has been in progress the degree of activity and organisation of the working-class in the United States has increased considerably. The working-class is undoubtedly playing a big part in the war effort of the United States. That part, however, could be considerably greater if the labour movement were not split up and divided as it is today.

The Trade Unions of the United States still suffer from lack of unity. There are two big and influential trade union bodies: The American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organisation.

According to the Report presented by the A.F. of L. to the National Convention in Boston last October, the membership of the Federation at that time numbered 6,000,000. Among the larger Unions affiliated to the A.F. of L. are the Local Transport Workers, the Carpenters and Joiners of America the Ladies' Garment Workers of America, the Electrical Workers of America, the Hod Carriers, Building and Common Labourers of America and the International Association of Machine-Builders. There has been a considerable increase in the past three years in the membership of the Munition Workers' Union, the Aircraft, Shipbuilding and Engineering Workers' Union and also of the Builders and Electrical Workers' Unions.

Still more striking is the increase in the size of the Congress of Industrial Organisation, which has in a relatively short time developed into an important trade union body and at present also numbers about 6,000,000 members. A point of particular note is that the C.I.O. has tackled energetically the job of organising the unorganised workers. It has won a firm footing in such major American industries as automobiles, aircraft and electrical and radio equipment production,

steel, shipbuilding, rubber, and so on. Among the Unions affiliated to the C.I.O. are the United Automobile and Aircraft Workers of America, with a membership of 1,175,000; the Mine, Mills and Smelting Workers with over 600,000 workers; the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America with 500,000; the Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America with 375,000; the Textile Workers' Union of America with 360,000 members.

There are several dozen million workers and office employees in America today, but out of this total only a little over 12,000,000 are organised. And it will readily be understood that unity in the American trade union movement could be a big factor in drawing in millions of new members, and could greatly increase the role and weight of the Trade Unions in the country's political and economic life. The recent National Conventions of the A.F. of L. in Boston and of the C.I.O. in Philadelphia gave some idea of the degree of organisation and strength of the American Trade Unions, and also of the political ideas of their leaders, and the latter's stand in the matter of national and international trade union unity.

The A.F. of L. Convention showed that the tone of the A.F. of L. is still set by the more reactionary sections of its leadership, that is, by Matthew Woll, the Vice-president of the Federation; Hutcheson, the President of the Carpenters and Joiners of America; Ryan, the President of the Longshoremen's Association; and Dubinsky, President of the Ladies' Garment Workers Union; and that these are vigorously resisting national trade union unity, while claiming that it is the C.I.O. which interferes with it.

Both before and after the Convention the more reactionary leaders of the A.F. of L. campaigned against agreement with the C.I.O. At the same time Woll,