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29th May, 1942.

WAR CABINET.

The position of the "Daily Worker".

Memorandum by the Home Secretary.

1. When Parliament reassembles further questions will be asked and further representations made about the Government's future policy with regard to the "Daily Worker". Support for the view that the ban on this newspaper should be lifted is not confined to M.P.'s who are on the political Left. There are others who think that the change in the attitude of the Communist Party towards the war makes prohibition no longer necessary and that the continuance in present circumstances of the order for suppression of this paper involves an undesirable interference with the freedom of the Press.
2. The view that the prohibition should be revoked has been expressed in a number of journals including the "News Chronicle", the "Daily Express", the "Evening Standard", the "Daily Mirror", "Reynolds News", the "New Statesman", and the "Spectator". Other papers while not definitely advocating the revocation of the order under Regulation 2D have maintained that any action ought to be taken by means of a warning and prosecution under Regulation 2C. This view has been advocated in the "Manchester Guardian", the "Yorkshire Observer", the "Scotsman" and the "Glasgow Herald".
3. The Communist Party has in its public propaganda followed the policy laid down in Mr. Harry Pollitt's circular letter of the 8th July, 1941, namely that the Party should give full support to the war effort "without harping on the disagreements of the past or raising the fundamental differences between the Communist Party and other political parties". This does not mean that the Communist Party has in any way abandoned its revolutionary aims, but the Party recognises that it can best strengthen its position in the country at the present time by championing the united front with Russia for the defeat of Fascism and saying little or nothing about its ultimate political policy. That policy continues to be the seizure of power by force whenever a suitable opportunity may arise.
4. The view urged by those who are in favour of lifting the ban on the "Daily Worker" is that while they disapprove of the political views of the Communist Party, the Party should not be deprived of its right to express its views through the medium of a daily paper, and that even if prohibition were a regrettable necessity in December, 1940, it is no longer justifiable in the changed circumstances of today.

5. My own view is that there can be no question of revoking the prohibition immediately, but I have always had it in mind that revocation ought to be considered at some appropriate date, if possible before the end of the war. If prohibition is continued till the end of the war and the paper, after a long period of suppression then bursts forth freed from such restraining influence as the present Communist war policy imposes and from the special restrictions imposed by Defence Regulations the dangers of its use for subversive purposes in the difficult times of post-war reconstruction will be aggravated.

Whatever may be the objections to allowing the Communist Party to carry on propaganda by means of a daily paper, these objections are far less than they were in December, 1940. Not only has there been a change in the Communist attitude to the war but there has been so prolonged a demonstration of a consolidated national determination to allow nothing to interfere with the war effort that any apprehensions as to the risk of injury to public morale by factious propaganda have been greatly allayed.

If there are advantages in lifting the ban before the end of the war, it can be contended with considerable force that this step should not be unduly delayed. The question will no doubt be raised - do the Government intend to continue the ban throughout the whole period of the war and if not what is the objection to lifting the ban now that the Communist Party are, and have been for some time, on their best behaviour and the national morale is such that dangers from querulous propaganda are small?

6. At an appropriate date, therefore, I think the question of a revocation order should be considered by the War Cabinet and the proper timing of any such order will be a matter of importance. But whatever may be the arguments for such a future step, any immediate requests for the lifting of the ban should, in my view, be resisted; and for my guidance in framing answers to questions which I expect to be addressed to me in Parliament next week I think it right to ascertain whether this view is approved by the War Cabinet.

H.M.

HOME OFFICE,

29th May, 1942.