

REPLY TO DISCUSSION

By HARRY POLLITT

What is the main significance of our Congress? We have found the way to combine our policy to shorten and win the war with a series of urgent domestic issues, blended into a single policy for the achievement of unity and victory.

We have had recorded here the many-sided character of our work. We have had a series of rich experiences exchanged. Many weaknesses have been uncovered, which it is our job to correct as speedily as possible as a result of the strength that Congress gives, so that the work of the Party and Labour Movement can be strengthened.

We have placed as the most immediate decisive task, for which we have now to carry on a really gigantic campaign, that of the immediate organisation of the second front in Europe.

We have stated that this is the only means through which the war can be decisively won. We have warned of the dangers of a prolonged war, not for Russia, but for Britain.

I am afraid, comrades, that in discussing certain aspects of our Trade Union policy and Britain To-day and To-morrow, and also in the discussion on unity and victory, we have not yet ourselves grasped both the terrible urgency of the present situation and the terrible dangers that lie ahead, unless we can now organise the most effective prodding of this Government that our Party has yet attempted to carry out.

We will make a profound mistake if we do not understand that the enemies of the second front are working harder to delay it than we are working in order to get it organised. That is the thing we have to see in this Congress, and that is the thing that

has to dominate our activity immediately we get back into our respective Districts.

Our Congress has made our position clear in regard to the number of urgent demands on the home front, in regard to production, in regard to Trade Union policy, India, and real working-class internationalism, and has placed the post-war problems in their correct perspective. In other words, Congress has now placed new tools in all our hands, and we all have to learn how to use them.

We have elected a new Executive Committee at this Congress that corresponds to the new times and the new tasks that the Party is faced with.

We can place this Executive Committee with pride and honour before the British people and throughout the Labour Movement.

We have endorsed new Party rules, which will widen the basis of the Party while remaining faithful to our Marxist and Leninist teachings. We have formulated rules that will enable our Party to fulfil all its obligations nationally and internationally with more clarity.

We pledge the new Executive Committee to give far more attention to the educational side of our work than perhaps we have been doing in the recent period, although very significant developments have certainly taken place in that respect. And we ask our Districts to do the same. We cannot over-estimate the importance of this aspect of our work.

What other working-class Party in this country is equipped with such a theory and practice as our own? What other Party has such a treasure house and a treasure store of the Marxist classics and literature as we have at our disposal?

Let every one of us understand that we are all only still learning, and we shall know better how to utilise our materials. To take our Party from 60,000 members to 100,000 is no small task. It is a task of really impressive proportions, and it is going to take colossal drive and energy to carry it through.

But, comrades, we have the confidence that our Party can achieve this task—by 1944. Not in order to proclaim on New Year's Day that the Communist Party is 100,000 strong, but so that it can proclaim, as a result of the strengthening of the Party, there has been a strengthening of the Co-operative Movement, the Trade Union Movement, and the Labour Party itself. That is what is at stake.

What is this Communism that we always speak about? What is this theory and practice which has astonished the world by what has taken place in the Soviet Union in the last two years? What is it that has enabled men and women in Russia to do what

they have done? What is it that has revolutionised men and women the whole world over? What is it that impelled a Hamburg docker to ask that his hands could be freed, and to clench his fist and smash it into his hangman's face? What is it that allows men like Gabriel Peri to face his death with a smile on his face and to utter words which will never be forgotten by the working people of this world? What is it that enables men and women in every European country to-day to write the most glorious pages in working-class and democratic history by the capacity of their sacrifices, the ingenuity of their resistance attempts against the Fascist murderers?

What is it that enables British Communists in totally different conditions to prove that we have something which the others do not possess? I have in mind those comrades who in difficult circumstances, in shipyards and mines, engineering factories and depots, are not afraid to point out to the workers that there are other ways of rectifying local grievances than blindly resorting to the stoppage of production in these critical days.

What is this faith that equips men like this? What is this faith that equips women like this?

It is the faith in the working class, it is faith in the common people, it is faith in the cause, it is that faith that nothing can destroy, terrify or intimidate. It is that faith that has no thought of self or power, it is that which nothing can corrupt. We should be proud and honoured that we are members of the Party whose fundamental faith is based on this confidence and belief that the working class shall achieve its historic mission.

We call on you to go into the fight to shorten the war, to reduce the sacrifice, to make a path for real security, to fight for the immediate urgent conditions of the common people, to intensify the work in order that India shall be free and all colonial peoples shall have the same democratic rights, to place the post-war problems in their correct perspective. Then we shall all be stronger to go step by step towards our heart's desire, the achievement of Socialism.

If we remember the words of William Morris—"The cause alone is worthy until the good days bring the best"—we can go from this hall like new men, like new women, invigorated with new strength, new ideas, a new sense of unity. I tell you, in three months we can transform the situation in this country. The victory can be made a certainty in the shortest space of time, and the Fifth Column wiped out. Our Party at the head of the great Labour Movement will march forward to the transformation of capitalism to the Socialist system of society.