

What the Press Omitted About Britain's CP Parley

By JOHN WILLIAMSON

The 25th (Special) Congress of the British Communist Party, with 547 regular and 173 consultative delegates, met for four days in the Hammer-smith Town Hall, London, with Harry Pollitt in the chair.

Veteran President, William Gallagher had been forced to leave for Scotland a few hours before Congress opened because of the sudden and serious illness of his wife. His speech of welcome was read by Pollitt.

The political spirit and enthusiasm of the delegates grew with each day. By overwhelming majorities the delegates adopted the main political resolution entitled "The Position in Britain and our Tasks;" the revised programme "The British Road to Socialism;" and the majority document on Inner Party Democracy. An Executive Committee of 42 was elected.

The split that the capitalist press and some others had been predicting was not in evidence. The Congress was visibly the most democratic in Britain. With over two thousand Branch amendments to the three political documents and 130 delegates speaking at the Congress (and more than that number appearing before Congress Commissions) the voice of the membership was much in evidence.

This is not the picture one got from the capitalist or non-party press, who looked for sensationalism around individual dissenting speeches of Professor Hyman Levy and Christopher Hill, Briggs Shop Steward John McLauchlin, and a few others.

Typical of the relationship of forces in the Convention were the votes endorsing the Executive Committee statement on Hungary, with no more than 40 in opposition.

Similarly the minority report on Inner Party Democracy supported by Hill, McEwen, Cadogan, Levy etc. received only 23 votes, with 472 against it. By a reverse vote the majority report was adopted.

ON THE ISSUE of Peter Fryer's expulsion for attacking the Party in the capitalist press, the Congress Appeals Committee report approving the expulsion was adopted by 486 to 31 with 11 absentions.

THE CONGRESS heard 3

main reports by John Gollan, George Matthews and John Mahon. These covered the Political situation, the British Road to Socialism, and Inner Party Democracy. Commissions on each of these were set up with only two Executive Committee members on each and a wide District representation. A Congress Arrangements Committee and Election Preparations Committee were also established. All these Committees were in session throughout the Congress.

Greeted with great enthusiasm by the delegates, John Gollan—elected General Secretary after the last Congress a year ago—gave the general political report.

It covered the struggle for peace and national independence for Britain, the economic situation and the lessons of the unprecedented struggles of the workers; and the burning need of unity of all forces in the labor movement to force a speedy election and defeat the Tories.

Gollan declared:

"Events demonstrate the dangers for Britain of a foreign policy of imperialism and a return to the cold war. Suez was an historic lesson . . . An effort was made to patch up the alliance at the Bermuda meeting of Macmillan and Eisenhower . . . The Tories got their guided missiles, but at the cost of Britain's independence."

Concluding this section of his report he declared:

"We need this new independent British policy—one which ends subservience to the United States, insists on the withdrawal of American troops and outlaws nuclear weapons, brings about a European Security System, finishes with the colonial wars, and makes Britain a force for a new international understanding."

DEALING WITH the struggle

to force a speedy election, Gollan declared "We work for the return of a Labour majority, with Communist M.P.'s, and a Labour Government with a new foreign and colonial policy, and a radical home policy that ends the vicious Tory measures against the people, extends nationalisation and develops the social services." However, he emphasized that in some quarters it is argued "that we will not get unity without sacrifice, without giving up our independent role." He rejected this latter point,

saying "The submergence of our Party is not unity; it is capitulation, a weakness of the working class."

Gollan examined at length events in the international Communist movement since the 20th Congress. He said:

"Since the Congress there has been the political fight against dogmatism in the international Communist movement, and for Leninist principles. At the same time the movement has had to combat the wave which arose in almost every country—a distortion of the lessons of the Twentieth Congress."

The main revisionist ideas have been the same everywhere—belittling the leading role of the Party, attacking the principles of Marxism-Leninism, democratic centralism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, questioning whether the Soviet Union is a socialist state, seeing nothing but crimes in the last twelve years. Our Executive has rejected these revisionist ideas and calls upon Congress to do so. We have taken our stand, we believe it to be correct and we believe Congress will endorse it."

Dealing with the British Party, he emphasized the difficulties of the last period and saluted "the way in which the overwhelming majority of our members stood firm for Communist principles."

This, however, could not be an excuse to avoid facing the key problem of the growth of the Party.

He emphasized the need for eliminating all sectarianism and rigidity in the daily work, while calling upon the Congress to "put an end here" to all revisionist ideas.

While stating that those who had left the Party during the last year would be welcomed back, he took issue with "those who said 'many of our best comrades' had left."

"We cannot agree, whatever their qualifications in any particular sphere. They are not our best comrades, otherwise they would not have left."

GOLLAN also took sharp issue with those who claim they "still remain Marxists and at some stage or other will create new Marxist organizations;" to the applause of Congress he declared:

"They never will . . . There is no such thing as Marxism



without the Communist Party . . . to abandon the C.P. is to abandon Marxism . . . and always the first step towards abandoning Marxism is to seek to revise it."

THE DEBATES centered around selected amendments that would bring different viewpoints sharply before Congress with the aim of democratic settlement of all such issues, so that the Party could throw itself fully into mass work, recruiting and increasing the Daily Worker circulation once the Congress was concluded.

In connection with the political resolution, the most important amendments debated besides Hungary, had to do with conscription, the Tory Government White Paper, the leading role of the Soviet Union in the Socialist camp, and that Communist candidates should never be run where there was a chance of the Tory winning.

Congress unanimously adopted the Executive Committee amendment that condemned the Tory Government White Paper. It rejected by 321 to 135 votes the amendment which sought to demand the abolition of conscription in place of the Executive position for an immediate cut in the call-up to 12 months to be served at home. The other amendments each got votes ranging from about 20 to 50.

The most important amendment to the British Road to Socialism that was debated had to do with the attitude of a future Socialist

Britain to the countries of the Commonwealth and the liberated colonies. Emile Burns presented the majority viewpoint of the Executive, and R. Palme Dutt the minority.

There was unanimity on such issues as complete independence, right of self-determination, withdrawal of all troops, handing over sovereignty to the Government freely chosen by the people and other such issues. The differences were expressed in the following two formulations, with the minority receiving 298 votes, the majority 210, and 13 abstentions.

The majority formulation said:

"Propose to all countries of the Commonwealth and former Empire voluntary participation in a close fraternal association, based on national independence, equal rights and non-intervention in each other's internal affairs, to promote their mutual economic, political and cultural interests, and for mutual defence against any imperialist attempts to undermine their independence."

The minority, which got Congress support, declared:

"Promote close voluntary fraternal relations for economic, political and cultural co-operation of mutual benefit, on the basis of national independence, equal rights and non-interference in internal affairs, between Britain and the liberated countries of the existing Common-

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lands all over the globe—a mountain poem of people and houses looking out to sea—"looking America, for you—."

Billy Allan

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Billy volunteered for duty with the U. S. Air Force the day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, serving 42 months in the Pacific.

The fact that Billy is presently facing a four and one-half year jail sentence under a Smith Act conviction and awaiting a court decision as to whether his American citizenship should be taken away, will no doubt keep away from the banquet many of his fellow-newspapermen and people of labor who has taken inspiration from his pen. Yet, many will use the occasion to re-dedicate themselves to the task of ending the cold war. A situation which permits thousands of native, as well as foreign-born Americans to be victimized under such laws as the Smith, McCarran and Walter-McCarran.

Jack London

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their leader, Victor Berger, the first Socialist Congressman. Why shouldn't forward looking people who were not able to see the weak spots in Social Democracy, be proud of the Germans? Even Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had been products of German middle class life and educational institutions.

Why not follow the injunction of another leader of men: "Go thou and do likewise?"

Fraternally yours,
JOHN W. MARSHALL.

British C.P.

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wealth willing to develop such relations."

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ALL OTHER amendments to the programme were overwhelm-

ingly defeated. These included ideas of no compensation of any kind in connection with nationalisation; nationalisation of all land of working farmers; Workers Councils as the basis of a future Socialist Government; and the deletion of a sentence that guaranteed the right of political parties to maintain their organisation and to take part in elections.

Much interest was attached to the debate on Inner Party Democracy. Aside from the overwhelming defeat of the Minority Position already dealt with, all the amendments debated, except one, were defeated with no more than 30 votes in their support. These included proposals for a Federal Executive, the right to mandate delegates to Congress, the right to abstain from carrying out majority decisions, and the legalising of minorities within the Party. The one amendment carried was to delete the proposal that the number of full-time Party workers on the Executive must always be less than 50 percent.

With 192 nominees on the ballot the 42 which the Election Preparations Committee recommended were elected. These included the entire former Political Committee. The highest five votes went to Abe Moffat (493), Annie Powell (484), Frank Haxwell (484), Wm. Gallagher (482) and John Gollan (479). The composition of

the Executive is 19 full time party workers, 14 in factories and pits, 5 teachers or professors, and four full-time trade union officials.

The Congress ended with a rousing "back to work and activity" speech by National Chairman Harry Pollitt. He declared the capitalist press which predicted a split had now changed its tune. Now is the time "to get down to mass work. We have lost many opportunities but there are many new ones ahead," he declared.

Berry

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representatives here, but they will not speak out for their Southern fellow communicants fighting for their souls against the encroachment of the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Councils. Not even the President will say a word in consolation (although southern Negro church leaders have asked him over and over to do so).

Now the pilgrimage will come on May 17. And the real South will have a voice that day in the affairs of the nation. And maybe the President and Congress will listen and learn.

Fight to Learn! Learn to Fight!

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