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THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

APRIL 1952

1. The 22nd National Congress of the British Communist Party.

A. The 21st National Congress took place in Liverpool in November 1949. Since then it has been decided that future Congresses would be held at Easter to take advantage of the holidays. Accordingly, the 22nd National Congress was held from the 11th to the 14th April 1952. 520 British and 13 foreign delegates assembled in the Battersea Town Hall.

The most important items on the agenda were:

- (i) To receive a report by the Executive Committee on the work of the Party between November 1949 and December 1951. This had been published before the Congress.
- (ii) To hear a political report from Harry POLLITT, the General Secretary, on the situation and the tasks of the Party.
- (iii) To consider and approve the revised version of the "British Road to Socialism", a document setting out the policy of the Party.
- (iv) To consider and approve the amended Party Rules.
- (v) To elect the National Executive Committee, which is to run the Party until the next Congress.

B. The first business at the Congress was to elect members of Committees which were to sit for the duration of the meeting. These were:

- (i) The Standing Orders Committee: responsible for the general running of the Congress, for dealing with resolutions sent in by branches and with the amendments to the "British Road to Socialism".
- (ii) The Panels Committee: responsible for sorting out nominations for the Executive Committee and presenting a selected list to the Congress.
- (iii) The Rules Committee: responsible for examining on behalf of the Congress proposed amendments to the Party rules.
- (iv) The Appeals Committee: to deal with two appeals before the Congress against expulsion from the Party.
- (v) A Credentials Committee: responsible for examining the credentials of delegates to the Congress.

C. Before the formal proceedings opened, J.R. CAMPBELL, the Editor of the Daily Worker, who was in the Chair, outlined the time table and arrangements made for the conduct of the meeting. After this the Congress was formally opened by R. Palme DUTT, Vice-Chairman of the Party, in the absence of William GALLACHER, who was in Australia.

DUTT declared that the political crisis in Britain was of a three-fold character. First, the crisis of war or peace; second, the crisis of Britain's economic position; third, the crisis of the policy of the Labour Movement. The Congress gave a prolonged ovation to Stalin when DUTT referred to him as "that genius of theory and practice who is carrying forward in our day the immortal teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin."

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After officially opening the Congress, DUTT submitted to the delegates the printed "Report of the Executive Committee covering the period November 1949 to December 1951", and this was unanimously approved.

D. Harry POLLITT, the General Secretary of the Party, then presented his political report to the Congress in a speech lasting for 3½ hours. This report has been published as a booklet with the title "Britain Arise", price 1/-. In general it lays down the tasks facing the Party and states the methods by which these tasks are to be fulfilled. In other words, POLLITT dealt with the attainment of the programme of the Party as expressed in "The British Road to Socialism".

He began by stating that the supreme task facing the 22nd National Congress was "to find the means through which, on the basis of a policy of immediate demands, a mighty united front of all workers by hand and brain can be created". The first object of the united front would be to put the Conservatives out of power, this being regarded as a pre-requisite for the pursuance of their chief political aims. POLLITT then discussed the present economic position as interpreted by the Communists.

The ultimate solution of all economic problems was still to be: "the end of the ownership of Britain's resources by a tiny minority of capitalists, the complete re-organisation of Britain's industry, the nationalisation of all key industrial organisations and the complete breaking of the power of the monopoly capitalists in industry and finance".

The speech then advanced the Communist views on peace, stating that the Communist Party puts the defence of peace as its most urgent and noble task. The Communist peace campaign was to continue and to be waged with increasing activity in industry and in the factories, with the Appeal for a Five Power Pact for Peace in the forefront.

Next POLLITT referred to the Colonies. He supported the movement for independence and said that it was the political duty of the Party to unite with the colonial cause and to assist the colonial peoples in every way "to carry forward their heroic struggle".

POLLITT then returned to the discussion of how the Conservative Party was to be defeated. He presented the policy advocated by the Communists, which he thought would command the support of the Labour Movement as a whole and result in "a crushing defeat of the Tories". This policy was:

- Not understanding
how point 1
also might refer
to the program
in the CP.*
- "(1) The withdrawal of all cuts in the social services, restoration of cuts in food subsidies; wage increases to meet the rise in the cost of living, and increased benefits for the unemployed, old-aged, and war disabled.
 - (2) The development of East-West trade.
 - (3) The reduction of armaments.
 - (4) The signing of a Five Power Peace Pact.
 - (5) Withdrawal of British troops from Korea, Malaya and Egypt.
 - (6) Throwing off America's domination of Britain."

(Note: This policy is to be advanced by Communist candidates in the coming local elections).

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He elaborated on the theme of unity of the working classes, indicating how approaches could be made to Labour Party members, trade unionists, members of Co-operative Societies, women and young people, and made the following interesting observation; "the leading role of the Communist Party does not come of itself. It has to be won in action. This is why we need to remember that the best way of establishing unity in action consists, not in posing the demands which we think the masses want, but in leading the fight for the demands that the masses themselves are expressing a desire to secure".

The next section of the speech was devoted to "the fight for Communist ideas" and dealt with the necessity of improving Marxist education in the Party and for spreading the understanding of Marxism outside the Party. The remainder of the address contained references to the Young Communist League, the Daily Worker and the Party programme - "The British Road to Socialism". During his speech POLLITT asked for an increase in the membership of the Party to 50,000 in 1952.

E. On Sunday, the 13th April, John GOLLAN, Assistant Editor of the Daily Worker, presented the Party programme - "The British Road to Socialism". This remains virtually unchanged from the form in which it was published in January 1951, but the introduction has been rewritten, revision having become necessary because of the change of government. GOLLAN's speech has been published by the Party under the title "Peoples Democracy for Britain", price 6d.

The Congress was closed by J.R. CAMPBELL, the Editor of the Daily Worker.

F. During the course of the Congress many individual members made speeches after the address and reports of the chief speakers, who then replied to some of the points raised. Two points made by POLLITT in these circumstances are worth reporting:

- (1) He made it clear that the Party would not collaborate with Aneurin Bevan and his supporters in any special way.
- (2) He stated that the Party was not opposed to conscription (although it was opposed to the length of service), since it was necessary that there should be people in the country who understood how to defend themselves and what they could do when certain circumstances arose.

G. Certain other points arising out of the Congress are worth a mention in this summary:

- (i) The new Executive Committee has 40 members - 4 more than the last. It is intended to be more broadly representative of all interests in the Party, and this is probably the main reason why 6 members of the previous Committee did not stand again. 11 new members were elected (one replacing George ALLISON, deceased). One of those leaving the Committee was Arthur HORNER (of the National Union of Mineworkers) and one of those going on was James KLUGMANN, the National Education Organiser.

*Send down
the new
internal rules
and see
what is
interesting*

- (ii) The new Party rules had been drafted for the Executive Committee by a Rules Commission and embodied selected amendments submitted by Districts and Branches. The main changes in the rules are intended to improve the discipline and security of the Party and to define and give an important status to the Factory Branch. They also include an addition to the aims of the Party, which is that it shall "work for the removal of all discrimination based on race, colour or religion". The weekly membership dues were raised from 4d. to 6d.

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- (iii) Several resolutions were put to the Congress and passed. Two were emergency resolutions, one protesting against the use of germ warfare in Korea and one calling for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Malaya. Other resolutions dealt with measures for ending the crisis in the textile industry, called for increases in the sales of the Daily Worker and for improving the propaganda drive of the Party.
- (iv) Mick BENNETT, the National Organiser, made an appeal for increased collection of signatures for the Five Power Peace Pact, stating that if all districts achieved the same results as Scotland and Yorkshire there would now have been more than 4,000,000 signatures instead of just over 1,000,000.

H. M. The thirteen fraternal delegates included representatives of three members of the Cominform Bureau, the Hungarian Workers' Party and the Communist Parties of France and Italy. MOLNAR is Hungarian Minister of Justice, MICHAUT is a reserve member of the Politburo of the French Party and GIOLITTI is secretary of the Italian Shop Stewards' Movement. RYERSON (Canada) recently spent some months in Eastern Europe, including the U.S.S.R.

2. Germ Warfare Campaign.

The Communist Party continues to develop its campaign of protesting against the alleged use of germ warfare in Korea. During the month Jack GASTER, a member of the Communist Party and a Solicitor, returned from Korea where he had been a member of a commission of lawyers from Western countries organised by the Communist controlled International Association of Democratic Lawyers. GASTER's statements were given full publicity in the Daily Worker. During the next two or three months he is expected to devote most of his time to spreading propaganda and to making public speeches whenever he can. The nature of resolutions to be put forward will vary according to the character of the organisations asked to support them. For example, in some cases positive statements that germ warfare is actually being used will be omitted. A penny pamphlet written by GASTER is now on sale at Central Books and the Party is urging its members to get as many copies as possible sold.

3. County Council Elections.

None of the Communist candidates in the London County Council elections was successful.

4. National Council of Tenants and Residents Associations.

The fourth annual conference of this organisation was held in London on the 30th March and was attended by 56 persons. 27 Tenants Associations were said to be represented. Affiliated organisations now number 122 (147 in 1950) having a total membership of 27000. The conference adopted a "Call to Action" manifesto urging tenants to support a national campaign against new increases and the Government's housing policy. 6 of the 14 members of the newly elected Executive Committee are known to be Communists or Communist sympathisers.

5. The National Council for Civil Liberties.

This organisation held its Annual General Meeting in London on the 19th April. It was attended by 221 delegates representing about 100 affiliated organisations. A new Executive Committee was declared elected without a vote, as there were only enough nominations to make up the required number. It is, as were the previous ones, Communist dominated.

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6. International Conference for the Defence of Children.

At least twenty-seven British delegates attended this Conference in Vienna on the 12th to the 16th April. Of these many, but not all, were Communists or Communist sympathisers. The sponsoring committee which organised the British delegation contained forty-five people, of whom twenty-eight are known Communists or Communist sympathisers. It is to be expected that propaganda arising out of this meeting will be spread throughout the country by the Communist Party and women's "front" organisations, such as the National Committee for the Celebration of International Women's Day and the National Assembly of Women.

7. International Economic Conference.

After many trials and tribulations in the British arrangements for sending a delegation to this Conference, 36 British representatives are known to have attended. Of these 10 are known to be Communists or Communist sympathisers. Some others were fellow-travellers, well-known for their advocacy of the cause of East-West friendship, and the remainder probably went for innocent motives, such as curiosity about Russia or genuine interest in doing business. As in the case of all other international Communist-sponsored conferences, full play has been given in Party and "front" circles in the United Kingdom to propaganda arising out of the conference. For example, at the 22nd National Congress of the Communist Party the immediate development of East-West trade was called for.

8.5.52.