

THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

By HARRY POLLITT¹

WHAT is the next perspective that the Congress puts forward ? It puts forward the perspective of the unity of the Labour Movement. You have a right to ask me to define this more precisely, and I will.

The split in the Labour movement was caused in 1914 by the policy of Social Democracy in the imperialist war. We now put consciously to the working class the perspective that the menace of fascism and war should be the driving force that leads to the healing of that split. We fight for a single Trade Union centre in every country and for one Trade Union International. One united revolutionary working-class party in every country and one international of the working class. We make certain proposals and certain stipulations in regard to the achieving of these, but we say here that the prerequisite to any advance towards their final achievement depends on *unity in action now*, that our Party must come out absolutely openly and boldly in this country as the champions for the unification of the Labour movement.

George Lansbury spoke at the T.U.C. on Friday, and he called for a united front on the Abyssinian situation of Jews, Mohammedans, Catholics and Protestants, and he felt sure that if such a united front could be achieved, then the war in Abyssinia will be stopped.

It won't be long before we are able to get these Labour leaders who want to bring such diverse elements as these in a united front to participate in a united front with I.L.P.'ers, Communists, etc.

We must remember this speech of Mr. Lansbury's because the argument is, that so long as there are certain fundamental differences between the Communists and the Labour Party there cannot be unity in any shape or form. Are no fundamental differences between those who embrace the faith of Mahommedanism and those who embrace the faith of Judaism ?

¹ This, the concluding half of a shortened report of a speech delivered by Comrade Pollitt to the London District Conference of the Communist Party held to hear a report on the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. The first half of this was given in the October issue ; it can be obtained for 7d. post free from THE LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John St., London, W.C.1.

We must learn how to utilise such statements as these in order to show the inconsistencies of the line of the British Labour leaders. Why? Because the British Labour leaders are the chief opponents of united action on a national and international scale. They threaten to leave the Second International, but the pressure for united action within the Second International has recently become so strong that it has been forced to agree that Adler and the Committee with him shall study the documents of the 7th Congress and will report at a specially convened Session of the Second International within two months as to the possibility of opening negotiations with the Communist International.

Comrades, if such negotiations can be established, from our side, we are confident that agreement can be reached.

Therefore in England we must now consciously follow the aim which can end in a common movement of those who want to see the realisation of that objective. What is this aim? What do we as communists look upon as our most important task? We defined it at the 7th Congress as follows. The principle task of the C.P. becomes clear. It is to stand out before every working man and woman in Britain as the initiator and leader of the fight to secure the defeat of the National Government, by the organisation of a broad united front movement based on a programme of demands which can and must be carried through by a Labour Government, which will strengthen the workers' immediate fight against capitalism and be a brake upon the advance of Fascism and War, and help the development towards socialism.

That in our opinion, is not only our principle task, it must become the objective of every worker in the Labour movement who is opposed to Mondism, Fascism and War. And we are sure that if the fight is carried on under the slogans "Down with the National Government," "For the preservation of peace, democracy, and the improvement of the conditions of the workers," we can bring about a tremendous change in the situation.

The defeat of the National Government has to be organised. It has increased its political influence to a very great extent since the Jubilee in May. Do not let us be under any illusion. It will increase its political influence as a result of its line at Geneva unless we are able to put the true position before the working men and women in this country.

When the result of the Peace Ballot was declared, I wrote an article in which I stated that every political party in Britain, above all the National Government, will seek to put this desire for peace behind their Party aims and to utilise it as support for itself and help to secure victory at the coming elections.

That is why the Labour Party and T.U.C. line is now so dangerous in regard to the Abyssinian situation. This refusal to expose the National Government, this refusal to expose the imperialist aims of the National

Government, is putting the National Government in a position where it can pose as the champion and defender of peace in Abyssinia and in this way deceive many big sections of the working class and the middle class that it must have a continuance of power to carry out its work for peace.

Do not let us forget the other thing. There is not all the keenness of the Labour Party to-day for a Labour Government that there was a few short months ago. Anyone who has noted the *Daily Herald* and contrasted the *Herald* in the campaign for socialism that the Labour Party previously carried on, the contrast strikes very forcibly.

The Labour leaders do not want power at the next General Election in the present international situation, because they know perfectly well that the masses to-day will never be deceived again as they were in two previous situations. The masses will demand some improvement in their material conditions. They know to-day the masses will demand an end to our foreign policy of support to Hitler. The masses will demand closer and closer relations with the Soviet Union. In this situation the principle leaders of the Labour Party are not desirous of getting power at the next General Election, but the working men and women of this country dare not contemplate the National Government getting a new lease of power at the next General Election. Because a Government such as we have now which is not a fascist government, but which is a government whose legislation has fascist tendencies and takes us on the road to fascism, this Government, given a new lease of power, by its attacks on the working class on the one hand and its foreign policy on the other, will place us in the most desperate situation.

We need now to raise this slogan : "Down with the National Government," and what can we put in its place ? I read an article in the *New Leader* some weeks ago headed "Baldwin, Maxton, Lloyd George," and the editor of the *New Leader* permitted himself to leave out any reference to the Labour Party because they did not count. The overwhelming majority of the masses of this country who are organised in the Co-operatives, the Labour Party and the Trade Unions are still under the influence of the Labour Party. It is not Maxton they see, it is not Baldwin they see, it is not Pollitt they see, it is the Labour Party they see, and the possibilities of a Labour Government, and the sooner we recognise that the better.

We have to learn how to organise all of the intense hate of the masses for the National Government, and harness it in a movement that will drive the National Government from power. A Labour Government elected in these circumstances faces a new political situation. Germany, Austria—has not been lost on the British workers. Spain has not been lost on the British workers. Reformist leaders are still strong, but class consciousness is still deeper in Britain than ever before. And are we now to believe that all this will disappear in a general election ?

If we can force the return of a Labour Government it is bound to try to do something in the interests of the proletariat. If it fails to do these things because of the attack on the vested interests of capitalism there are hundreds of thousands of British working men and women whose eyes will be opened to the real character of the capitalist State who will take extra parliamentary action. If we have as a result of the next General Election such a Government repealing the Trades Union Disputes Act, only to mention one little thing, to mention it because the miners are preparing for battle, because the miners are preparing for a national strike. The history of the industrial movement shows that when we have a miners' strike we have a political crisis in this country, and the Trades Disputes Act's repeal will be a valuable factor to help the Labour movement as a whole to come behind the miners' struggles. If we get the identification of a Labour Government in this country to a similar pact with the Soviet Union as exists with France, do you think Hitler would not have to take note of that, and Mussolini would not take note of that?

Such a Government can be a brake upon the advance of Fascism and War, as a result of the work the I.L.P. and the C.P. will do to increase the political class consciousness, therefore it is one of the most important things we have to understand at the present time.

How will the C.P. approach the question? We are proposing to the Labour Party quite definitely that in order to prevent one working class vote, being split in this country we are prepared to withdraw a considerable number of our candidates, if the Labour Party will withdraw their candidates against our comrades. We would like to be able to convince the I.L.P. of such a policy of jointly approaching the Labour Party for such a demand.

We make a lot of mistakes, but when we say our Party will go into action, it works. We are also prepared to go further. As a conscious stepping stone first towards bringing about the maximum of unity of action to defeat the National Government, and secondly, towards the realisation of the perspective of one working class Party in Britain, we are prepared to become an affiliated body of the Labour Party. Does this mean that we are prepared to be an affiliated organisation from the point of view that we argued this in the years 1920 to 1923? The situation is entirely different. In those years we did not have the perspective of a united working class party in this country.

We are prepared to go into the Labour Party as an affiliated organisation retaining our identity as a party, and we will loyally carry out every decision that is reached, as a result of our participation, that corresponds to the interests of the working class. In the Trade Union movement when we are defeated by majority votes in the unions we will accept such decisions, but we will continue with our propaganda and education to try and win the workers on to our side. We have to have a line of Trade

Union unity in this country. The argument is all too common that the Trade Union movement is already united. Ours is the most split Trade Union movement in the world. A year ago at the Weymouth Trades Union Congress it was said that the time had come for us to unite in order to fight the wage reductions, but nothing has been done.

In Lancashire there are 36 different Weavers' unions. In the Engineering and Shipbuilding trade there are 51 different unions. The Miners have their District Unions. Therefore the struggle for unity of the Labour movement is a struggle also for unity inside the Trade Union movement. The telegram received at the Trades Union Congress from the Russian Unions, from 19,600,000 trade unionists, said they were confident that the British Trade Unions would play a rôle in unification against Fascism and War. This is a very important thing, and if we can get the Russian and British Trade Unions together by whatever steps, it can lead perhaps to the coming together of the two Trade Union movements, which can bring about on an international field the embracing of the two Trade Union movements, and for one International that embraces every trade unionist in the world.

We have to organise the unorganised in the trade union movement. In Sheffield yesterday I was asked whether we were in favour of having a strike to force men into the unions. Every time and any time. By all means do everything you can in order to win the unorganised man and make him a trade unionist. A certain type of worker wants to come in at first ; concentrate our best forces on him so that he can become the best advocate of what a trade union stands for. We say this because we are accused of being the splitters and disrupters. The majority of members who win T.U.C. recruiting medals are party members.

All this talk about disruption, all this talk about splitters—we are against disruption, we are against Mondism, we have been opposed to it since 1928. We are for the unity of every man in the trade unions—one trade union centre to embrace not $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions, but 10 million unionists in this country, and it can be done. We must get out to the masses. Therefore the 7th Congress decisions on these questions of unity must be widely made known to help bring about unity in action as the stepping stone to complete unification.

Changes have been made in the composition of the E.C.C.I. The leadership of the C.I. is going to be stronger than ever before, because men are now coming into it who had a leading rôle in the building up of Socialism, but who could not be spared before as the first job in Russia was to build Socialism. Comrade Dimitrov, the general secretary—at the head of the C.I.—stands as the incomparable fighter and leader against Fascism and War.

Just as the C.I. has changed and strengthened its leadership, so every country in the world will have to do the same. We must have comrades who are not afraid to plunge into the stream, who when they take a dive do not want to be surrounded by all the lifeboats so that they should not sink.

Finally, comrades, we can speak with pride of the fact that at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International there was not one commission that had to be appointed to consider any internal quarrels or dissension in the Communist Party. There were comrades from Germany, facing gaol and death, comrades from Japan, giving us living examples of what the struggle against fascism means, comrades from all the British Dominions, all taking part, giving their experiences, and out of these experiences was born the line as laid down at the Congress that was received amidst scenes of enormous enthusiasm. Why was the line received with such enthusiasm? Because everyone knew it was the correct reply to the demands of the situation, and the demands of the masses themselves, and we therefore hope that the comrades here will support the line the Congress laid down. To those of you, comrades from the Labour Party and the I.L.P., we will undertake to supply your organisations with any of our comrades who will help you in intimate forms of discussion. This is possible and necessary in order that the masses everywhere shall know what the Seventh World Congress stands for. We were never more confident that the comrades will carry out this line and in three months from now, particularly in Germany, Poland, Japan and Italy, this line of the Seventh World Congress is going to lead to enormous changes in the class struggle.

Why have we made this change? because we want to stem the advance of Fascism and War, and because, as Comrade Dimitrov said in his concluding remarks, "We want all this because only in this way will the working class at the head of all the toilers, welded into a million strong revolutionary army led by the Communist International and possessed of so great and wise a pilot as our leader Comrade Stalin, be able to fulfil its historical mission with certainty, to sweep Fascism off the face of the earth, and together with it, Capitalism."

We here in Great Britain, assisted by the leadership of the Communist Party and C.I., pledge ourselves to make our great objective the achievement of our aims within the shortest possible space of time.