

# **SPECIAL NUMBER**

**English Edition**

**Unpublished Manuscripts - Please reprint**

# **- INTERNATIONAL - PRESS CORRESPONDENCE**

Vol. 6 No. 92

30th December 1926

**Editorial Offices and Central Despatching Department: Berggasse 31, Vienna IX. — Postal Address, to which all remittances should be sent by registered mail: Postamt 66, Schliesstach 213, Vienna IX. Telegraphic Address: Inprekorr, Vienna.**

## **VII. Meeting of the Enlarged E. C. C. I. Fourteenth to Sixteenth Session.**

**Full Report.**

### **Fourteenth Session.**

### **Discussion of the Report on the Lessons of the English Strike.**

Moscow, December 3, 1926.

**Comrade REMMELE (Chairman):**

The 14th Session of the Enlarged Executive is opened. The first speaker in the discussion on the British Question will be Comrade Lozovsky.

**Comrade LOZOVSKY:**

What took place in England this year at the beginning of the month of May is not only of very great significance to the future destiny of the British labour movement, but is also of great importance for the working class of all countries; it is the task of the Communist International and all its affiliated Sections, to study the lessons of the British events with greatest attention and to look into all details of the clashes that have taken place.

The international significance of these British events is determined, first of all, by the role that British imperialism plays in world politics and world economy. It is readily understandable that everything which weakens this imperialist power is of greatest importance for us, the most consistent foes of imperialism. These events are, furthermore, also of importance because thanks to them a new ratio of class power has arisen in England itself, and also outside of England. The importance of the British events consists in that a weakened British imperialism has emerged from them.

The first question which obviously arises is that of how it could come about that these gigantic convulsions could set in in Great Britain so long a time after the war. England, which in comparison with the other European powers, got off easiest

from the war, and which has been able, as a result of the war, to harness the proletariat and its organisations to the cart of the bourgeoisie, that this same England, eight years after the end of the war, should enter upon a phase of social shocks so serious that British capitalism is facing an absolutely new epoch.

The matter becomes explicable in that, as a result of its own policy and the liquidation of the consequences and burdens of the war in other countries, it becomes further removed from year to year from the position it occupied prior to the war. From world hegemony prior to and also after the imperialist war, England took second place, behind the United States. This fact led to an increasing extent to a sharpening of social conflicts in Great Britain itself, which in the immediate future will unquestionably take on a much more serious character.

Due to the narrowing down of the market and the ebb of its economic influence, the British bourgeoisie is no longer in a position to offer working conditions equal to those enjoyed by the British workers prior to the war. In order to be able to compete on the world market, in order to recapture old positions or even approach them, the British bourgeoisie is forced to eliminate the weightiest obstacle to the reduction of the production costs of its commodities, which will give it greater competitive power. And this obstacle is the standard of living of the British proletariat, which in comparison with the situation of the workers throughout Europa, is a high one.

The struggle which took place in England was in itself a serious political conflict. The determination of the British bourgeoisie in this struggle is to be explained in that it recognised, better than did the leaders of the British trade union movement, that a defeat in this political test of strength would signify a

defeat not only on internal but also on foreign policy, that defeat in this struggle would find expression in the further decline of the British bourgeoisie.

The outcome of the struggle in Great Britain means a **new phase in the development of the class struggle there**. The blow against the vanguard of the British trade union movement, against the miners, is the first clash which is to be followed by other blows against other sections of the labour movement. The defeat of the seven month's coal strike, in consequence of the efforts, not only of the bourgeoisie but also of the leaders of the political and economic movement of Great Britain, confronts the British working class with questions and problems hitherto unknown to it.

The time has passed when the British worker was an aristocrat in comparison with the workers of other countries, that time is over when the British bourgeoisie was able to grant a small portion of the riches stolen from the colonies to the upper strata of the working class, and in this manner corrupt certain strata of the British proletariat. The British proletariat, which had won a certain standard of living, sees all this coming to an end, and realises that the blow against the miners means not only the general reduction of the standard of living, but also the creation of a new juridical and political status of the British proletariat.

The English bourgeoisie has launched not only an economic offensive. Only the narrow-visioned trade unionists like Pugh, Thomas and their friends, the so-called "Left", can look upon the events in England as a purely economic struggle, or present them as such. The British bourgeoisie knows what this "economic" conflict means, and already in the course of the struggle and all its serious episodes, in which the British bourgeoisie manoeuvred with exceptional cleverness, it was able to prepare sufficient forces to wage a political battle.

This combination of the economic offensive with the political, these blows which the British bourgeoisie delivered along the whole line, create a **new situation in British social struggles**. They create a **new regrouping of class forces, a new basis for the actual revolutionisation of the masses**, and for the realisation of those tasks and aims which the Communist International has set itself.

If we ask ourselves what are the grounds for such an unheard of defeat of the miners after their heroic struggle, we must say that they consist primarily in that the British bourgeoisie was much better organised than was the British proletariat, that it had at its disposal far more far-sighted leaders, that it knows what it wants, and that it is able to carry this into effect. One cannot say the same of either the leaders of the British labour movement, nor of the leaders of the economic organisations, nor even of the leaders of such an important proletarian political organisation as the Labour Party. One must admit that the tactics of the British bourgeoisie were supreme. And to the same extent that the tactics of the British bourgeoisie were supreme, the tactics of the leaders of the Labour Party and the tactics of the General Council were not. The united front against the working class — and in this consists the power of the bourgeoisie — penetrated even into the workers organisations. The united front created by the British bourgeoisie was a very extensive one. It included not only a large number of leaders, but also a certain portion of the workers.

The defeat of the working class in England results simultaneously from the **strength of the bourgeoisie** as well as the **political weakness of the working class**. This great lesson cannot remain without effect, and for this very reason we are justified in concluding that the British Labour movement is entering upon a new phase. We have a new situation: a regrouping is taking place within the classes, and it includes also the working class.

At the moment of defeat the shift in the relationship of forces apparently took place in favour of the bourgeoisie. Yet, comrades, the relationship of class forces is measured not only from the standpoint of the immediate present. The relationship of forces in Great Britain has not changed to the advantage of the bourgeoisie, despite the defeat. Why? Because for the first time in the history of England we saw that despite the will of the leaders, class stood arrayed against class. For the first time in history the prize exhibit of British democracy,

the British Constitution was actually exposed; for the first time in the history of British class struggles it was to be noted that the working class, even its most backward sections, was filled with hatred against the bourgeoisie. We see this regrouping not only in the strengthening of the Left tendencies, not only in the strengthening of the Left organisations.

The struggle is now soon at an end, but it has raised a number of new questions before the working class, it has compelled millions of workers to recognise for the first time the boundary lines of their own class. This promises much. Between the bourgeoisie and the working class gaps have opened which formerly did not exist. This crystallisation of the dividing line in the working class is also of tremendous advantage to it. The result, finally, of all these points is that the relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class has changed to the benefit of the working class, notwithstanding its defeat.

The growth of the influence of the Communist Party, the Minority Movement, etc., is only one side of the process, and at that not the most characteristic side, among the toiling masses. There have been dozens of cases in Great Britain in which the workers cast their votes in the elections for representatives of the Labour Party. Of course it might be asked: what is the use for the workers to continue voting for the Right leaders of the Labour Party? Yet, comrades, one must take the British working class as it is. Whereas in the past millions of workers voted for the Conservatives, for the Liberals, now these workers vote for the Right elements of the Labour Party. The swing consists in that a certain portion of the proletariat has come over to the Right Labour Party, and that the elements which formerly followed the Right section of the Labour Party have moved towards the Left. This is the result of a seven month's struggle, it is of greatest importance for the class struggle in Great Britain itself, as well as in other countries.

The British events were not only a test of strength between the proletariat and bourgeoisie there, they were also a test of strength between the II. and III. Internationals, between the Communist Parties and revolutionary trade unions on the one hand, and the Social Democratic Parties and reformist trade unions on the other.

If we consider the events in Great Britain from this point of view, then we shall be able to note a large number of new events that are exceptionally important to the international labour movement.

A characteristic feature must be pointed out — that the Amsterdam International organised an international loan for the British trade unions, in the course of which the English had to conduct rather long drawn out negotiations with the Germans over how high the rate of interest should be. After a long controversy the rate of 4½% was fixed. And against the accusations which the Communists raised on this occasion an official declaration was issued which states literally the following: "In the German banks we can get much more than 4,5%, and if we charge the British workers only 4,5% we are losing on the deal." We must direct attention however, to the fact that our Communist Parties did not sufficiently exploit this attitude for the exposure of the Amsterdammers.

It is worse that the Comintern and the R. I. L. U. were not able to come to the aid of the British miners by means of an international strike. We were not strong enough to meet the strike-breaking of Amsterdam; we were too weak to draw the workers into support, into actual, real solidarity. We were not strong enough even in those countries in which the ratio of strength between our organisations and the reformist is in our favour, for far less power is necessary to break off a strike than to organise one.

Yet, comrades, this recognition of our weakness by no means signifies — as the Amsterdam Social Democrats allege in their press — that the Comintern and the R. I. L. U. on the one hand, and the Amsterdammers and II. International on the other, have alike done equally little during this strike. No, that is not true. We were not strong enough to prevent the strike-breaking of the Amsterdammers, yet in many countries we did succeed in putting through acts of solidarity, and in supporting the strikers to the best of our ability. To be sure, more should have been done, because support in a struggle must be mea-

sured by the outcome of the struggle, yet it is certainly not permissible to compare the Amsterdammers with the revolutionary trade unions and Communist Parties here. But lessons must nevertheless be drawn. We must draw the lesson of how future campaigns are to be launched and carried out, how, in the future, the workers must be organised against the national (viz. their own) strikebreakers, as well as against the international strikebreakers.

I should like to enter upon two questions which I consider exceptionally important for the whole Communist International. First, as to the status in which the British workers at present find themselves, and second, as to our tasks which as Communists we must fulfil in England itself in connection with the new problems and the newly arisen relationship of forces.

We must first observe that the whole trade union movement of Great Britain is in a severe crisis. This is connected with the fact that a shifting is in process there within the working class, within the trade unions, and this not only towards the Left but also towards the Right. The crisis is a consequence of the British trade union movement, in its innermost essence, showing itself not only Conservative, reactionary, but also of an undisguised strike-breaker character. The trade unions were not strong enough to hold the workers back from the action, but they did have a sufficient power to encompass the downfall of the workers once they were in motion. We can observe an ideological and political disintegration of the whole leadership, the whole bureaucracy of the British trade union movement. And this ideological and political crisis will be further sharpened by the bourgeois offensive.

This offensive of the bourgeoisie is expressed not only in a worsening of the juridical status of the workers. It shows itself also in that the bourgeoisie steals one position after another within the working class. What is the meaning of the attempt to found co-operative unions, to create industrial leagues, what is the meaning of the expressions of Pugh, Thomas, MacDonald, etc., in the bourgeois press with regard to industrial peace, the creation of an institute of industrial harmony, etc. What is the meaning of all this? It means an attempt to Americanise the British trade union movement and to establish strongholds within the British trade unions.

The trade union leaders were not strong enough to prevent the struggle. They were forced by mass pressure to enter this struggle, which they did not want, and out of this arose the crisis. The whole British trade union bureaucracy, built up in the course of many decades, is accustomed to a peaceful settlement of conflicts. But we now live in another epoch — a peaceful settlement of conflicts has become impossible even with such complacent peace-loving leaders as Pugh and the rest.

This entirely new phase demands entirely new methods and forms of struggle, and everything that the British trade union movement has historically created, so far as traditions, trade union leadership, Labour Party apparatus, organisational forms of the trade union movement are concerned, has become only a drag upon the development of events.

This crisis in the British Labour movement has resulted in a part of the leading heads shifting towards the Right, and a widening of the chasm between the leaders and the masses. These leaders are ready for anything in order to avoid the necessity of heading the growing movement and of settling the mounting conflicts. But the objective situation forces the masses to fight, and after one, two or three, or I know not how many defeats, we shall certainly achieve victory. From out of these contradictions there springs the present crisis in the British Labour movement.

On this very basis of the regroupings within the class, upon the basis of the shift within the British trade union movement, a Leftward trend is taking place, and upon this basis the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Minority Movement, can grow and develop.

The Communist Party of Great Britain entered the struggle with 6,000 members, and returned with double that number. Of course this is but little. But in what consists the strength of the British Communist Party? It consists in that it is the only organisation which, during the whole course of this struggle occupied a correct position. Despite a number of

mistakes, the British Communist Party had a correct policy during the struggle, and the British proletarian masses must admit, and do admit, that the British Communists and the members of the **Minority Movement** were actually to be found in the front of the fight. In this manner the Communist Party has honourably withstood its first historical test.

Yet this recognition does not spare us the necessity, yes, it even makes it our duty to point out the tremendous dangers which confront the British Communist Party. The English bourgeoisie is concentrating its fire against the Left sector of the British labour movement, and it will not only strike with all its might against the Communists, but with the aid of its agents, it will also proceed against the whole labour movement. The **General Council**, the trade union bureaucracy, the **Labour Party** — all of them will carry out the advice of the British bourgeoisie, to exclude the Communists from the toiling masses, to separate the most active section of workers from the **Minority Movement**. The first blow that falls after the miners' strike will be directed against the Communist Party and against the **Minority Movement**.

We must of course ask ourselves whether the British Communist Party is strong enough in order, in the visible future, to be able to offer resistance to the blows directed against it. I answer this question in the affirmative. It is **strong enough**. While the British Communist Party numbers only 11,000 members, its influence extends over a million workers.

The tremendous political influence of the British Communist Party, notwithstanding its small organisational structure, on the one hand, is the Party's greatest credit; and on the other hand, constitutes its greatest menace in the immediate future. Unless in the immediate future we make the greatest effort to build up the Party in an **organisational** sense, in order to take in new tens of thousands of new workers, then there is a danger that the repressions of the bourgeoisie, the suppressive methods of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy, will be able to tear loose a part of the elements that now are to be found in the **Minority Movement** and in the following of the Communist Party.

Another important task is the **organisational consolidation of the Minority Movement**. The very weakness of the **Minority Movement** consists in that the **political** influence is not sufficiently consolidated **organisationally**. There, were there are undefended borders, there where there is but soft-spoken sympathy which has not been welded together, there vacillation, deviation and separation is possible. I therefore repeat that one of the most important tasks of the Communist Party of Great Britain is the organisational consolidation of the **Minority Movement**.

Already at the opening of my report I pointed out that the British events must be studied with extraordinary care by all Communist Parties. The united front between Social Democrats and Amsterdam Leaders, on the one hand, and the capitalists on the other, is constantly being entrenched. Their amalgamation is becoming more and more complete and for this reason the Communist Parties, the vanguard of the working class, in the visible future will be confronted with more and more difficult tasks. And only if we give a careful and detailed study to the strong sides of our work in England, if we see how the fight went there, what strategy was applied by the bourgeoisie, what "strategy" was resorted to by the General Council, what strike-breaker role one or the other organisation played during the struggle, either in England itself or outside of the country, only then will we be in the position to draw actual lessons from it.

The lessons of the struggle that we waged in 1905 were studied by us in the course of 12 years, up to the February revolution, and Lenin taught us: "Especially from defeats you must learn, you must study especially the mass movement, you must turn your attention particularly to what took place during this movement". And only if you, I am speaking about the Comintern, and the Communist Parties, — will devote years of study to the British events, only then will we be able to draw a valuable and useful lesson from it, not only for the British, but for the **International** labour movement.