

TWELFTH PARTY CONGRESS IN BRITAIN MARKS NEW TURN TO BOLSHEVIK MASS WORK

BY HARRY POLLITT

THE XII Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain was held in London in November. It took place just after the 15th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, when the workers of the world were marking the triumph of the first Five-Year Plan which had been carried through in four years in spite of great difficulties, and pledging anew their determination to defend the Soviet Union. The XII Congress met at a time when the contrast between the growing crisis in the capitalist world and the growth of socialist construction in the Soviet Union is the dominating factor in the whole situation ; when the ruling class are making desperate efforts to save themselves by driving the workers into poverty and starvation and towards a new world war ; but also at a time when the toiling masses throughout the world are rising in revolt against their oppressors.

LEEDS—AND THE TWELFTH PARTY CONGRESS

It is well to recall that the XI Congress was held at Leeds three years ago, just at the commencement of the world economic crisis. For two years prior to the Leeds Congress the Party leadership had accepted in words the analysis of the Communist International and the revolutionary line of *class against class*. But in *deeds* the leadership fought against this line, and still clung to their belief in the further stabilisation of capitalism. The financial crash in Wall Street which heralded the commencement of the world economic crisis, took place just before the Leeds Congress, and gave a rude awakening to these theories. The experience of life was forcing itself forward to demonstrate the correctness of the analysis of the Communist International. At Leeds, the line of *class against class* was adopted amid enthusiasm, the decision was taken to launch the "Daily Worker" (sabotaged by the old leadership) and a new Party leadership elected, pledged to carry out the line of the Communist International.

All that has happened in the past three years has served to emphasise the correctness of the general line laid down at the Leeds Congress. Yet, the isolation of the Party from the masses has not yet been overcome. What is the reason for this situation ? Big efforts have been made to carry out the Leeds Congress decisions to put forward the line of *class against class* and conduct an energetic struggle against Right opportunism as the main danger. But no such big efforts have been made on the other aspect of the line of *class against class*, that of carrying out "revolutionary work in the factories and trade unions," in order to build up the independent leader-

ship and organisation of the economic struggles, and a mass Communist Party. This is the main reason for the continued isolation of the British Party from the masses. In the Open Letter of the Communist International to the Leeds Party Congress, it is stated :

"The Communist Party of Great Britain must definitely understand that it is useless talking about a mass Bolshevik Party, about the leading rôle of the Party in the class struggle, unless it has close and constant contact with the masses, unless it closely studies the mass economic and political struggles, unless it actually organises and leads these struggles, and unless it systematically, day in and day out, exposes the treacherous and social-fascist rôle of the "Labour Government and its henchmen."

It is the failure to carry out this aspect of the Leeds Congress decisions which explains the continued isolation of the Party from the masses. True, there are still opportunist mistakes. No consistent daily drive has yet been given to the carrying out in practice the policy of *class against class*, because correct methods of revolutionary mass work in the factories, trade unions, and localities have not been applied.

The results of the General Election last year revealed still further the dangerous situation for the Party. This situation forced a self-critical analysis of the serious danger confronting the Party. At the January Plenum of the Central Committee this year, a new turn was made to carry out revolutionary mass work. This resolution emphasised that :

"Without a determined buckling down to the daily systematic struggle for the masses against the reformist trade union bureaucracy in all trade union branches and factories the Communist Party can never become a real mass Party."

At the same time, the whole line of the resolution emphasised that the Party could only break through its isolation by a determined struggle to undermine the influence of the Labour Party and the I.L.P. and declared that the Party :

"Cannot be sure of any solid influence among the masses unless it sees to it that throughout all its mass work the demarcation in principle between its line and the reformist line is expressed in the clearest terms."

Even although the Leeds Congress marked a definite break with the policy of Right opportunism and an important stage in the history of the Party, it was the big experiences of mass struggle in carrying out the January resolution which formed the main basis of

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

discussion at the XII Congress. In view of the growing economic crisis and seriousness of the war situation, the Congress was vital for the Party and the working-class in general. Taking place within two months after the XII Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the Congress was able to learn a great deal from the analysis of the new situation made by the XII Plenum and clear guidance in its efforts to win the majority of the working-class. The analysis of the decisions of the XII Plenum, together with due consideration of the mass work experiences of the C.P.G.B. during the past year, determined the character of the work of the XII Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

THE REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The report of the Central Committee to the XII Party Congress was the most exhaustive and self-critical ever presented to any previous Congress in Britain. What was the character of the report? Commencing with a review of the XII Plenum resolutions and their significance to the British Party, the report then made a living contrast between Britain—the oldest capitalist country in the world, and the Soviet Union—the young and growing country of Socialism. The thesis of the XII Plenum, that the growing world economic crisis is leading to a “transition to new wars and revolutions” is revealed in the desperate efforts of the British ruling class to find a way out of the crisis by further wholesale attacks on the workers, the most brutal suppression of colonial peoples in India and Ireland, and the extension of its tariff policy at Ottawa which is aimed at the U.S.A., which in its turn is closely linked with the struggle over the payment of war debts. At the same time the Ottawa decisions are directed against the U.S.S.R., as shown by the denunciation of the trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. The outstanding feature in the present situation is the shameful lying campaign of the bourgeoisie against the Soviet Union (following upon the denunciation of the trade agreement with the Soviet Union) which is increasing precisely because of the difficulties of the crisis and the growing tension between the imperialist Powers. This expresses the capitalist robbers’ common hatred and fear of the U.S.S.R.

The extent of the crisis is shown even more clearly in the determined efforts of the ruling class to make the workers bear the burden of the crisis. The big “economy” attack launched by the National Government last year, was only the beginning of a much wider attack to deprive the British workers of a widespread system of social services which had been forced from capitalism in its relatively prosperous days before the war. £88,100,000 have already been robbed from the workers in the past year by 10 per cent. cut in unemployed benefit, the brutal operation of the Means Test for all workers unemployed for

more than six months, reductions in benefit for sick workers, and cuts in education and social services, and in the wages of State employees. Now the National Government is launching a further attack on unemployed benefits (particularly young workers), proposing compulsory forced labour as a condition for receiving unemployed benefit, and is considering the extension of “physical training” for the youth along the lines of military preparation similar to that enforced in Germany. Together with this, the report of the Royal Commission on Local Government recommends a further “economy” of £40 million by drastic attacks on poor law relief and educational services.

The “economy” measures of the ruling class are not confined to the unemployed and social services. During the past year big attacks have been launched upon the wages and conditions of the miners, textile workers, dockers and other workers. In all industries wages have been reduced by £203,000 per week since January this year. Further attacks are now being launched on the railway workers and textile workers, and preparations for attacks on the miners within six months. Together with these all-round attacks on wages and conditions, it is impossible to estimate the terrible effects of increased rationalisation in every industry and the widespread effect of increasing unemployment. *All this is taking place at a time when the tariff policy of the National Government is increasing the cost of living.*

The report of the Central Committee to the Congress dealt not only with wages and unemployment, but made a startling revelation of the increasing death rate of children, and working women giving birth to children, under-nourished children, and overcrowding of working-class families, etc. One can say that the C.C.’s report is a modern picture of Engel’s book on “The Conditions of the Working-Class in England in 1844,” of the “mass pauperisation,” the appalling starvation and misery, to which the ruling class are driving the workers in their efforts to solve the crisis.

But at the same time grows the fighting resistance of the workers to the capitalist offensive. This is shown not only in the number and extent of the strike struggles, unemployed demonstrations and street fights, but in the *character* of these struggles and the fact that they are conducted in defiance of the reformist leaders. The strike of the Lancashire cotton workers was carried on after three years in which the employers attacked mill after mill, and the reformist leaders tried to disorganise and demoralise the ranks of the workers. But being unable to prevent strike action against wage-cuts, the reformist trade union leaders called the strike in order to be better able to defeat it at the earliest possible moment. Never before in the history of the Lancashire cotton workers was there displayed such revolutionary determination as was shown in the big mass demon-

strations and mass pickets against the "blacklegs." The unemployed hunger march to London had a wide mass response throughout the country and struck fear into the hearts of the ruling class. The capitalist Press was furious. It carried out a lying campaign against the leaders of the hunger march and screamed for drastic measures to prevent the marchers reaching London. But the marchers fought their way through to London, where this movement met with a tremendous response. The London workers presented a solid front in support of the hunger marchers and fought against the police in street battles which rivalled even the heroic struggles of Belfast and Birkenhead. *The growth of the revolutionary fighting spirit of the British workers confirms the fact of the revolutionary upsurge of the workers and peasants throughout the capitalist countries and the Colonies*, as pointed out in the theses of the XII Plenum of the E.C.C.I.

It is in this situation that the reformist leaders are carrying out new manoeuvres in a desperate attempt to disorganise the mass struggle of the working-class. Having agreed in principle with the Means Test, prepared hereby the way for the attacks of the National Government, and helped to carry them out, the Labour Party leaders make brave speeches against the National Government. They endeavour to hide their daily traitorous practice by distortion of socialist phrases, putting forward schemes of capitalist reorganisation (public control, transport boards, etc.) in the guise of "drastic socialist plans." The revolt of the rank and file of the I.L.P. against the leadership forced Maxton and Co. to manoeuvre and put forward the policy of disaffiliation from the Labour Party. The I.L.P. leaders now talk of a "new Marxist policy" and the need for bold "socialist planning," but *deny the need for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the setting up of the dictatorship of the working-class*.

But these manoeuvres indicate that down below there is a tremendous ferment among the rank and file members of the I.L.P. and a genuine desire to struggle against the capitalist offensive. On this question the report of the C.C. put forward an important question. Should the Party try to win over decisive sections of the I.L.P.? Then went on to declare emphatically *Yes*. This would be a serious blow against reformism and strengthen the Communist Party and the revolutionary fight of the workers. How is this to be done? By a definite turn to united front activity from below, drawing militant I.L.P. members into strike activity, trade union work, mass struggle against unemployment, and the fight against war and intervention in the Soviet Union. By overcoming sectarian tendencies to lump together I.L.P. members with the leaders, and expose the policy of the leaders in a more convincing way, on the basis of the experiences of

I.L.P. members in struggle, not shrinking from comradely polemics with rank and file I.L.P. members in the fundamental questions of parliamentary democracy and proletarian dictatorship, of revolution and violence, and initiating discussions on "Moscow's reply to the I.L.P.," etc. And all this must be done in a manner to make these discussions get inside the ranks of the I.L.P. In this way, it will be possible to win over, not only members and branches, but decisive sections of the I.L.P., and destroy the influences of the I.L.P. leaders who are the most dangerous enemies of the workers. This policy of course implies ruthless resistance to moods and tendencies that try to reduce the united front with I.L.P. members to a policy of bloc with the leaders of this Party.

The report of the C.C. dealt exhaustively with the lessons of economic struggles and the methods of building up the revolutionary trade union opposition. The Minority Movement still remains a small sectarian organisation, with little or no contact with the militant movements springing up in the factories and trade unions. *The biggest defect of all the work of the Party is the failure to carry out mass work in the reformist trade unions*. In the preparatory discussion before the Congress, the trade union question received most attention and important differences on this question were revealed. The report of the C.C. declared that there must be an intense drive to carry out mass work in the reformist unions, and all obstacles and doubt on this question must be removed. This does not mean confining mass work within the framework of the trade unions. But it means *winning the support of the trade union members, and the lower organs of the trade unions, as an essential part of the mass work in the factories, and building leadership in the factories to lead economic struggles*. In the pre-Congress discussion on this question, certain misconceptions have arisen due to certain unclear formulations which I had made, that might be used to distort the line of the workers' independent fight and leadership. But these were of secondary importance to the main line of my drive. In this connection, the Congress resolution on economic struggles makes it quite clear that:

"The Party must fight irreconcilably against all Right opportunist deviations and tendencies, as the main dangers, which are expressing themselves in a denial of the possibility of winning the workers away from the influence of the reformists, and of organising the independent leadership of the struggle (trade union legalism, policy of 'make the leaders fight,' etc.), but such a fight can only be successful when the Party at the same time leads the irreconcilable fight against the 'left' and sectarian deviations, which are expressing themselves specially in the hesitating and vacillating on

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

the necessity of revolutionary mass work in the trade unions."

All the lessons of recent economic struggles, particularly that of the London busmen, show what an important force are the trade union branches in building independent leadership in the factories. These experiences show clearly that the revolutionary trade union opposition can only be built through mass work in the factories and trade unions, developing the movements now arising among the London busmen, Welsh tinplate workers, metal workers, dockers, and textile workers. The first step is to strengthen these movements from the bottom without intrusion from the top, working towards district conferences, setting up Communist fraction in this movement to consolidate them under one leadership, and leading to a gigantic national conference to build the basis for the revolutionary opposition throughout the country.

In face of the tremendous attack of the capitalists on unemployed workers, the report of the C.C. gave considerable attention to the methods of mass struggle against unemployment and the Means Test. Although big unemployed demonstrations and street battles have taken place, and the hunger march to London roused the whole country, the mass fight against unemployment is all too weak and has only reached the first stages. At the same time, the big weakness about the unemployed demonstrations is the *failure to build an organised mass movement of the unemployed and break down the sectarianism of the N.U.W.M.* This means a determined drive to lead the daily struggles of the unemployed in the streets and around the Labour Exchanges, winning support for local programmes of demands and organising the fight to achieve these demands, fighting for the feeding of school children, etc. This is the basis for organising the unemployed out of mass struggle and building broad unemployed councils.

Finally, the imperative need of struggling for a mass Communist Party was emphasised as something which must run like a red line through every phase of mass activity and personal work in the factories and trade unions. Whilst the Party membership is bigger now than at any time since 1926, not the whole Party has already realised the whole significance of struggle for Party influence among the masses, and for a mass Party. The weakness of the C.P.G.B. is shown in the fact that during this year alone the fluctuation of membership is at least 40 per cent. Most recruits enter the Party through general agitation, and very few through the leadership of daily struggles in the factories and trade unions. This is brought out clearly in the low proportion of members in the trade unions and the factories. Every Party member must now devote constant attention, not only to recruiting new members, but to keeping

them in the Party, developing the interests of new members and bringing them into activity.

THE SITUATION CONFRONTING THE PARTY

How far has the Party made progress in this important situation? This was the outstanding question dealt with in the Congress discussion and in the report. Since January, a real turn to mass work has been made in the factories and trade unions, and among the unemployed. The four main districts in the country (Scotland, London, Lancashire, South Wales) were selected for concentration, and within these districts particular factories and trade union branches were chosen where the main activities and forces of the districts would be centred. In all more than fifty important factories and trade union branches were selected, covering the important industries of mining, textiles, railways, metal and docks. This method was also applied in the remaining five districts, but on a much smaller scale.

The turn to mass work in line with these methods of concentration has changed the whole outlook. Particularly in the four main districts, the experiences of mass work showed that the Party was in closer contact with the workers than ever before. The report to the Congress was able to deal with concrete experiences in the pits, railway depots, and textile mills, and the lessons in the carrying out of mass work in the trade union branches. Amongst the unemployed there was greater attention to the daily issues in everyday life, related to the bigger questions affecting the unemployed as a whole. Through the direct participation of the Party leadership in the mass work in the four main districts, new problems of mass work had to be considered, which never before existed as problems precisely because of the isolation of the Party from the masses.

The report and the discussion showed that the first steps had been made in the turn to mass work. The Party had played a bigger part in the mass struggles of the workers. The Party membership had been doubled in the past year. There were eighty-two factory cells and a beginning made in transforming the Party into a Bolshevik organisation.

But these small improvements indicate, on the one hand, what could have been achieved if the whole membership were actually carrying out the January resolution, and on the other hand, emphasise the dangerous "lagging behind" of the Party in so favourable a situation. The Party failed to play a decisive rôle in the important economic struggles, has not succeeded in any great degree in destroying the poisonous influence of the reformists, has not made any real effort to develop a broad organised movement of the unemployed, and failed to recruit workers (or to keep new members) to the Party in accordance with the big favourable possibilities.

The serious situation which therefore confronts the Party is its inability to take advantage of the favourable situation, lagging behind events, and together with it, weakness of mass work, inability to develop the revolutionary understanding of the workers in the course of its existing mass activity.

CHARACTER OF THE CONGRESS DISCUSSION.

But the Congress discussion gave the guarantee that the Party would be able to overcome its isolation from the masses. The speeches of the delegates were an expression of the new fighting spirit of the masses. Nearly one-half of the delegates were new members who had entered the Party since the Leeds Congress three years ago: a big number had joined during the past year. Not only did the delegates give experiences of activities in the factories and trade unions, and the mass struggles of the workers, but almost every speech was *full of confidence and revolutionary enthusiasm*. At the same time, the dominant note in the discussion was *not self-satisfaction at the meagre results of mass work, but a healthy self-criticism and alarm in view of the continued isolation of the Party in such a favourable situation*.

Several delegates pointed out from their own experiences how the Party had made big strides in breaking down its isolation in the factories and trade unions. An indication of this is given in the following extract from the speech of a delegate from a factory cell in an important railway repair shop in Glasgow:

"In connection with the recent Lancashire cotton strike, we raised this question in a trade union branch and we were able, by virtue of the fact that we had a decision taken to take the matter from the trade union branch into a reformist Mondist works committee, and despite the opposition in that body, we were able to carry out weekly collections which amounted, over a period of weeks, to £60. This was collected, in one factory alone and sent direct to the W.I.R. strike relief committee in Lancashire. At the same time, comrades, the question of the national hunger march was raised and at this same factory £3 12s. was collected and sent on to the national headquarters of the hunger marchers. All this by virtue of the fact that we raised these questions not only in the reformist trade union branch covering this factory, but also took it from there into the Mondist works committee and made considerable use of these bodies, and won mass support in the strike and in a practical fashion for the hunger marchers.

"Now there is a question of there having existed in the past a tendency to shout abstract slogans, to chalk up around the factories, pits and docks, the abstract slogans and general slogans of our Party

and the failure to understand that unless we can concretise these slogans in the sense that the workers actually feel that they apply to them, we cannot make headway. For instance, in the factory of which I have experience, one actually felt that there has been a barrier erected as a result of the application of wrong tactics. The workers in the factory feel that the comrades of the Communist Party in the past have shown a certain amount of irresponsibility in making general appeals—calls for strike action on any and every occasion and the workers simply marching past—not treating them seriously. To give one instance of this concretising of immediate demands. In this factory we never had on any occasion a demonstration. We had been able, it is true, to draw a very small percentage of the workers from this factory on to demonstrations in the evening, but as a result of the correct application of the Party line in the light of the January Revolution, we were able to get a whole department—something like 250 men, engineers, craftsmen, and so on, to demonstrate during working hours, to stop work, to parade just as the unemployed comrades parade in the streets. They lined up in their fours, disciplined, understanding what they wanted, and not only did they march to the offices, but they took a route which had a certain strategical importance in that it raised the spirit in every department in the works. They marched through every other department in the works, raising immediately in front of the total 2,500 odd workers, how it was possible to fight for very small demands. On this occasion the demand was a very simple one—it was for the recognition of a committee, and it only needed five minutes in front of the offices and the management to convince them that they had to grant this demand immediately to get the men back to work because they felt that this spirit and these tactics, if allowed to be carried on and developed, would mean an end to the influence of the reformist works committee, and we also found the whole of the reformist works committee immediately attempted to come in at the head of the demonstration, and we were able to expose them in a fine fashion, not the abstract manner of merely telling the workers that they were reformists, and proving concretely the anti-working-class character of their rôle by virtue of the fact that their tactics and policy are anti-working-class."

That this is not an isolated example, is shown by the speech of a delegate from a factory cell in London who told us that owing to special attention to the work of individual Party members, in this case, to the work of one member employed in the railway depot, it was possible—by rousing him to activity and initiative—to raise Communist authority and set up a strong cell in this depot. This is what he said:

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

"We decided after we worked up our cell and on the basis of our trade union activity and on the depot to test our comrades in the struggle in the forthcoming L.D.C. elections which stand for a lot for the workers in the railway industry. So we saw that at this juncture to run our candidates for the L.D.C. in opposition to the trade union branch candidates with whom we did not establish sufficient contact in the branch to get the branch to back our comrades. He polled for the first time, polling 322 votes against the highest official branch candidate's 325. On this basis of his year's work on the L.D.C., taking up every single grievance that came before him, daily discussions with the workers, daily fights with the foremen, he was able to establish quite a good connection with the workers there, and also bring the other comrades in the cell into good prominence in order to run them for the next L.D.C. election. He waged three fights with the foreman, who ordered our comrade outside the office. Remarks were heard from the workers

"This is the first time in the history of any L.D.C. representative that we have had our member ordered outside the foreman's office, and never have we heard such good reports of what happens behind closed doors, and how the other reactionaries act."

"Our comrade, by being on the L.D.C., was able to expose and will be able to concretely expose at some future date, the whole function of this body.

"On the next occasion he put up he polled the magnificent number of 406 votes, the highest ever recorded, a certain victory against the trade union bureaucracy, with which none of the workers had much sympathy.

"On top of this we were able to put forward our other two comrades at the next L.D.C. elections and they polled 298 and 292 votes, only just falling short of getting on the committee itself."

There were sixty-six delegates who took part in the discussion throughout the Congress and most of them able to speak of good experiences similar to those of these two delegates. Those who have attended all the previous Party Congresses of the British Party declared that never before had there been a discussion which reflected so close a contact with the masses, and which gave confidence in the ability of the Party to strengthen its work and lead the mass struggles of the workers.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE TWELFTH CONGRESS.

However, it is necessary to point out that the Congress discussion revealed serious weaknesses—weaknesses which are a reflection of the unsatisfactory situation throughout the Party as a whole. These political and organisational weaknesses can be dealt with under four main heads :

First, the improvement in mass work represents only the first steps. The Party as a whole has not yet made the turn to mass work. As also in the given phases, the extension and strengthening of the economic struggles of the proletariat is of paramount importance in the development of the revolutionary struggle of the working-class, the Party must present this extension and strengthening in the light of struggles for a revolutionary way out of the crisis, of preparation of decisive struggles for power, for proletarian dictatorship. Branches of industry, such as the mining and textile industries are for many years, in the throes of a serious crisis. Governments have appointed many Royal Commissions to make proposals for capitalist reorganisation ; and the Labour Party and trade union leaders have supported these proposals. Still, the crisis continues and time after time the employers systematically attack the wages and conditions of the working-class ; and the reformist leaders continue to ask the workers to make sacrifices in order to "save the industry."

In this situation the Party has made insufficient efforts to put forward the revolutionary solution for the crisis, in the light of the experiences of the workers themselves. The Congress discussion revealed that the imperative need for this revolutionary propaganda is not understood throughout the Party. Another aspect of this weakness is the falling off of agitation and activity against war and armed intervention, after the Amsterdam Conference, and the failure to give sufficient attention to the important struggle of the colonial workers and peasants in India and Ireland, and particularly the weak campaign for the release of the Meerut prisoners.

Secondly, the Party has allowed the reformist leaders to carry out successful manoeuvres to harness the rising discontent of the workers against the National Government, and has not throughout all its mass work expressed in the clearest terms 'the demarcation in principle between its line and the reformist line.' The experience in the municipal elections and the hunger march, show that there are still strong right opportunist tendencies towards being deceived by these manoeuvres and making agreements with reformist leaders, which have the effect of disorganising the mass struggle of the workers. On the other hand, there are sectarian tendencies which express themselves in general denunciation and abuse of reformist leaders, lumping together the leaders and members of reformist organisations and resistance in practice to the united front from below.

The Congress discussion also failed to give adequate attention to the need for destroying the influence of the reformists. This was particularly shown in the absence of any comment or concrete discussion in regard to the I.L.P.

Thirdly, inadequate attention was given in the Congress discussion to the preparation for immediate economic struggles and the methods of building the revolutionary trade union opposition. The Congress emphatically and decisively rejected tendencies to neglect work in the reformist trade unions, to build barriers against carrying out this work by superficial arguments about the impossibility of "capturing the apparatus," and to regard independent leadership of economic struggles as something entirely separate from the trade unions. The Congress emphatically declared that the winning over of the lower organs of the trade unions was an essential part of the task of building the revolutionary trade union opposition, and was strengthened in this view by the valuable experiences of recent economic struggles, and particularly the successful movement among the London busmen.

But despite this, there was little response in the discussion (apart from the expressions of general agreement) to the proposals in the report to build the revolutionary trade union opposition from the bottom out of the struggles of the workers in the factories and trade unions, commencing from the basis of the "unofficial" movements now springing up. At the present moment there is the movement of the London busmen embracing bus-garages and trade union branches, the unofficial movement of the tinplate workers within the union embracing sixty-four union branches, the Members' Rights Movement in the A.E.U. embracing hundreds of union branches, and the beginnings of the Solidarity Movement of the Lancashire cotton workers. Together with the existing groups of the Minority Movement and the two revolutionary unions (Scottish Miners and United Clothing Workers' Union), these movements represent a mass basis for building the revolutionary opposition, instead of formal recruiting to the M.M. and imposing the M.M. from above. But this perspective of building the revolutionary opposition to lead economic struggles was not thoroughly understood and did not receive adequate attention in the Congress discussion.

Finally, the weakest phase of the discussion was the failure to deal with the extreme poverty of new leading forces and the building of the Party in the factories. Numerous examples were given of methods of work which prevented the development of new forces.

The organisational report to the Congress revealed that the Party membership was 5,600, that there were eighty-two factory cells with 550 members and 100 street cells with 1,500 members. This means that over 3,000 members are not organised in basic units (factory cells and street cells), but are working loosely in area groups and aggregate meetings similar to the Social-Democratic organisations. Whilst the report and the discussion emphasised greater

attention to consistent recruiting from the factories and trade unions, the organisation of the membership into basic units, and the bringing forward of new cadres to strengthen the lower Party organs, the outstanding importance of building the Party along these lines did not emerge from the discussion.

PERSPECTIVES AND NEXT TASKS.

What are the positive results of the XII Congress? It put forward a clear analysis of the situation confronting the working-class due to the increasing intensity of the world economic crisis and war situation, and its special features in Britain and throughout the British Empire. The character and extent of the capitalist offensive against the workers was thoroughly discussed, together with the new manoeuvres of the reformist leaders. The necessity of strengthening revolutionary mass work in the factories and trade unions, and among the unemployed, impressed every delegate at the Congress. *This is a big advance.* Particularly, because the failure to carry out mass work has been the biggest weakness since the Leeds Congress. Discussions throughout the Party in the past three years have shown that the Leeds Congress decisions were interpreted to mean that independent mass activity was "independent" of the reformist trade unions! The discussion prior to and during the Congress, and the line of the Congress resolutions, had made it quite clear that *no barrier must be placed to prevent a tremendous drive for mass work in the reformist trade unions, and to win the lower organs of the trade unions as an essential part of the revolutionary opposition to lead economic struggles.*

Despite the weaknesses of the Congress discussion, the experience of mass struggle, the confident note throughout the Congress, was the determination to strengthen revolutionary mass work and overcome these weaknesses. What are the perspectives before the Party? In the few weeks following the Congress, there is already ample evidence of the growing tension between Britain and the U.S.A., accompanied by intense hostility and war propaganda against the Soviet Union. The U.S.A. is retaliating against the decisions of the Ottawa Conference and the active support of Britain to Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, by taking a determined stand against cancelling British war debts. There is a division in the ruling class breathing war against the U.S.A. There is no such division in the *hostility to the Soviet Union.* The whole of the ruling class and the capitalist Press is carrying out the most shameful and lying campaign against the Soviet Union. The difficulties between the imperialist Powers, and particularly of British imperialism, are creating bigger efforts than ever before to destroy the Soviet Union. The struggle over war debts with the U.S.A. will strengthen the opposition of the Irish

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

republicans to British imperialism and draw them closer to the U.S.A. British imperialism is increasing its brutal oppression in India and is striving to recoup itself from the payment of war debts by forcing greater tribute from the poverty and misery of the Indian masses. This places a tremendous responsibility on the British Party to organise the struggle of the British workers in unity with the colonial peoples (particularly in India and Ireland) in the common fight against British imperialism, and for the release of the Meerut prisoners.

Everything points to the increasing preparations for a new world war, and more brutal suppression of the colonial peoples. In Britain, the speech of MacDonald declaring that two million of the unemployed were just "scrap" and the declared intention to enforce compulsory labour in payment for relief and the militarisation of young unemployed workers, indicates that the further attack on unemployed benefits and social services is only the first stage in the new offensive. The agreement between the textile employers and reformist union leaders to enforce the more loom system, the demand for 10 per cent. wage-cut for railway workers—all indicate that *gigantic class battles are looming ahead in Britain*.

The reformist leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions sense the rising discontent of the workers. Lansbury quite shamelessly makes brave speeches against the Means Test, the reformist leaders of the railway trade unions (Cramp, Dobbie, Bromley) talk of drastic action against wage-cuts. The General Council of the T.U.C. propose workers' delegations from the provinces to converge on London early in the New Year, to join in a huge demonstration of London workers in Hyde Park, which will send a deputation to present the "case" for the unemployed before the Bar of the House of Commons. The I.L.P. talks of "drastic revolutionary measures" to achieve Socialism, whilst at the same time disorganising the mass struggles of the workers. The reformists are making desperate efforts to take control of the increasing spirit of revolt to divert it into safe channels and prevent the rising mass struggle. *Herein lies the big danger for the Party unless in its revolutionary mass work it clearly exposes the dangerous rôle of reformism.*

This situation places tremendous responsibilities upon the British Party. The resolutions of the XII Congress are simple and clear, and deal concisely with the tasks confronting the Party in order to win the majority of the workers for mass struggle for partial demands, and its development into political struggle

—into conscious revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism :

- (1) Against the capitalist offensive led by the National Government and actively supported by the policy of the reformist trade union leaders on the wages of the workers, and unemployment and health insurance benefits, provision of work schemes for the unemployed, the Means Test, rationalisation, against any restriction on existing social services, high prices through tariffs and inflation, for freedom of strike, and against all anti-Labour legislation now being used to try and smash the increasing militant resistance of the workers.
- (2) Against the National Government's war preparations, and its active co-operation with other imperialist Powers, for armed intervention against the Soviet Union, and particularly its policy of supporting and encouraging the anti-Soviet aims of the Japanese and French imperialists; mass mobilisations against the breaking of the trade agreement with the Soviet Union, which puts tens of thousands of workers out of employment, and signals the alarm to the further concrete steps being organised for armed intervention against the Soviet Union. To systematically expose, especially in the factories and trade unions, the active support of the war policy of the National Government by the reformist leaders under the cover of pacifist phrases, and even verbal defence of the Soviet Union.
- (3) For the withdrawal of all armed forces from the colonial countries, for the full independence of the colonies, with the right of separation from the British Empire.

The important question now is to end at once and for all the old practice of accepting good resolutions on paper, but not carrying them out in practice. Already steps are being taken to ensure that the resolutions of the XII Congress enter into the life and work of every Party member, and are concretised in the districts, locals and factory cells, to meet the actual situation in each industry, town and village, factory and trade unions branch. In this way, the Party will enter into close contact with the masses, will lead the daily struggles of the workers and in the course of its mass work destroy the influence of the reformist leaders and win over the workers in the reformist organisations to build a mass Party rooted in the factories to lead the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and establish a free Socialist Britain.