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# Marxism Today

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# The Moscow Conference

(Extracts from a Report made by John Gollan to the Executive Committee of the Communist Party on December 12th, 1960.)

**T**HE Moscow Conference of eighty-one Communist and Workers' Parties was probably the most momentous Conference in the history of the international Communist movement because of the issues discussed. These were the nature of our epoch, war and peace, coexistence, national liberation, the strategy of world advance to socialism, and the varied forms of transition to socialism. These are not academic, but vital issues, deciding the key questions of tactics and strategy of the mass struggle and general political line of our movement on a world scale.

The statement adopted unanimously by the Conference was a most significant and bold development of the Marxist-Leninist position, carrying forward the strategy of the world Communist movement for the next decade.

Why was this possible? This was due to the tremendous successes of the world Communist movement on the basis of the bold new perspectives opened up by the decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. and, subsequently, the 1957 Conference Declaration, the development of world events and the growth in numbers and political maturity and strength of the world Communist movement. As the 1957 Conference Declaration put it, the historic importance of the Twentieth Congress was that it "opened a new stage in the world Communist movement".

The 1957 Conference, the first International Communist Conference since the Comintern, was a decisive step. But then there were still some after-effects of the struggle to defeat revisionism, a struggle which greatly strengthened the Communist movement ideologically. The 1960 Conference was a new stage after three years of this great development of our world political position and tremendous world events. In 1957, sixty-four parties were represented; at the 1960 Conference eighty-one, and total membership had grown by 3 million. Today the world Communist movement is 36 million strong—a great and invincible force in world history. Looking round the hall we saw present leaders of powerful states, representatives of the great forces of communism in Asia, Latin America, the Arab countries, France and Italy. Who could doubt this?

Never has any international Communist gathering produced such important political reactions outside our ranks as this one. This is a fact of enormous significance. Without exaggeration our

decisions gave new hope to world humanity in averting thermo-nuclear war and in advancing democracy and socialism.

## The Nature of our Epoch

The new Statement on the basis of the political experience and victories of the past three years carries the analysis on this vital issue, the starting point for any serious judgment on strategy and tactics, beyond that of the 1957 Declaration.

Certainly the 1957 Declaration said that the main content of our epoch was the transition from capitalism to socialism, that it was a period of developing socialism and declining capitalism. The world socialist system was growing and becoming stronger, it argued, and "is exerting ever greater influence upon the international situation in the interests of peace and progress and the freedom of the peoples".

The new Statement makes a detailed analysis of this period of transition, of struggle between the two opposing systems, of socialist revolutions and national liberation revolutions, a period of breakdown of imperialism, the abolition of the colonial system, transition of more peoples to the socialist path; of the triumph of socialism, communism on a world-wide scale and declares:

*"It is the principal characteristic of our time that the world socialist system is becoming the decisive factor in the development of society."*

It is the world socialist system and the forces fighting against imperialism for socialist transformation of society that now "determine the main content, main trend and main features of the historical development of society".

Lenin's prediction was that the countries of victorious socialism would influence the development of the world revolution, chiefly by their economic construction. This force of example has a tremendous effect on the workers in the capitalist countries, especially as the time is not far off when socialism will beat capitalism in the decisive sphere of human endeavour—material production. And in the capitalist countries the forces fighting for peace, national independence and the triumph of democracy, and the victory of socialism, are gaining in numbers and strength.

But what is the reality of the situation in the capitalist world, despite all the talk of the right-wing leaders about an "affluent" society, a crisis-free capitalism, and the need to "modernise" the

Labour Party by dropping any socialist aims and adopting a policy of managed capitalism at home, and N.A.T.O., the American alliance and the nuclear strategy abroad?

The world capitalist system is going through an intense process of disintegration and decay. There is the growth of monopoly, a sharpening of contradictions internally and externally, increasing instability, and the contrast of the productive forces and productive relations has never been greater. All this is particularly marked in the U.S. The ruling imperialist bourgeoisie in many countries can no longer resist on their own the growing forces of democracy and progress, and form military political alliances under U.S. leadership to fight in common against the socialist camp and the national liberation and working class and socialist movements.

But there are serious divisions in the capitalist alliances; they are opposed by great mass movements of the peoples. So the Statement reaches the important conclusion that *a new stage has begun in the general crisis of capitalism*:

"This is shown by the triumph of socialism in a large group of European and Asian countries embracing one-third of mankind; the powerful growth of the forces fighting for socialism throughout the world and the steady weakening of the imperialists' positions in the economic competition with socialism; the tremendous new upsurge of the national liberation struggle and the mounting disintegration of the colonial system; the sharpening contradictions of capitalism resulting from the growth of state monopoly capitalism and militarism; the increasing contradictions between monopolies and the interests of the nation as a whole; the curtailment of bourgeois democracy and the tendency to adopt autocratic and fascist methods of government, and a profound crisis in bourgeois politics and ideology."

The distinguishing feature of this new stage is that it is the result, not of world war, but arises in conditions of competition between the two systems, of the increasing change of the balance of forces in favour of socialism, when the struggle of the peace forces has prevented imperialism undermining world peace, and the struggle is growing for democracy, national liberation and socialism.

The peoples building socialism, the revolutionary movement of the working class in capitalist countries, the national liberation struggle, and the general democratic movement—these great forces of our time are *merging into one powerful current that undermines and destroys the world imperialist system*. The central factors of our day are the international working class and its chief creation, the world socialist system. It is on this

essential background that everything must be assessed.

### The World Socialist System

Here is a section of the Statement that would repay the greatest study. There are no more socialist states in 1960 than there were in 1957. What are the new developments in this period which enabled the Conference to make the statement that now the world socialist system is becoming the decisive factor in our epoch? The points advanced are a rich and far-reaching assessment of the greatest importance.

There are three main points here:

*First, that a new stage in its development has begun.* The Soviet Union is carrying on the full-scale construction of communist society. The other countries of the socialist camp are successfully laying the foundations of socialism; some have already entered the period of construction of a developed socialist society. Together with the U.S.S.R. they form a mighty single socialist camp.

*Second, the tremendous social and economic changes in the People's Democracies.* Socialist relations of production prevail, the exploitation of man by man has been abolished or is being liquidated; there is industrialisation and co-operative farming on socialist lines, and the fraternal alliance of the workers and peasantry; the supreme principle of dictatorship of the proletariat is stronger than ever. This alliance is the political foundation of the socialist system. Historic changes in social structure have taken place, the landlords and capitalists have gone. A new socialist intelligentsia and an alliance of the working peoples of all nationalities has been formed. The moral and political unity of society which, for the first time in history, came into existence, and was firmly established in the U.S.S.R., is now growing in other socialist countries as well.

*Today, the restoration of capitalism has been made socially and economically impossible, not only in the Soviet Union, but in other socialist countries, too. The combined forces of the socialist camp protect it from imperialism. Thus, the rallying of the socialist states in one camp, and their growing unity and strength, ensure victory for socialism in the entire system.*

*Third, the whole progress takes place on the basis of general objective laws.* Mutual assistance and support, the advantages of unity and solidarity of the socialist countries, are the main international condition for the successes.

These laws, planned proportionate development of the economy, a voluntary system of international division of labour, mutual assistance, use of the highest technique, etc., can lead to the gradual

elimination of differences in levels of economic development in the socialist countries and provides a *material basis for a more or less simultaneous transition of the peoples of the Socialist system to communism*. They are necessary, too, for the historic task of surpassing the world capitalist system.

At the same time, however, the socialist camp is a community of free and sovereign peoples with common interests; they are equal and independent—their mutual relations are based on strict adherence to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism. But all this needs conscious political work and the proper combination of the principles of socialist internationalism and socialist patriotism in politics—neither undue emphasis on national peculiarities nor the disregard of national peculiarities. The solidarity of the Communist Parties and the peoples of the Socialist countries, their loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, is the main source of the strength and invincibility of each socialist country and the whole camp.

Because the socialist states have now formed a world system they have become an international force exerting a powerful influence on world development.

As a result of all this, the Statement reaches the great and far-reaching conclusion:

“There are now real opportunities of solving problems of modern times in a new way, in the interests of peace, democracy and socialism.”

### War and Peace

The most burning problem of our time, says the Statement, is that of war and peace. It carries the analysis of the 1957 Declaration to a higher stage.

The first section is a systematic exposure of imperialism; its responsibility for two world wars, how it is threatening a new catastrophe; that U.S. imperialism is the main force of aggression and war; imperialism is a grave danger to mankind. There is a detailed analysis of the blocs, the war plans, opposition to disarmament and the wrecking of the Summit—familiar to us all. Then comes the *first main argument*:

“The aggressive nature of imperialism has not changed. But real forces have appeared that are capable of foiling its plans of aggression. War is not fatally inevitable.”

What is the point here? Had the imperialists been able to do what they wanted we would have already have been plunged into the horrors of a new world war. But the time is past when the imperialists can decide at will whether or not there should be war. They have brought the

world to the brink with local wars—but they have been stopped by the peoples.

*The time has come when the attempts of the imperialist aggressors to start world war can be curbed—world war can be prevented by the great and organised forces of our time.*

*What are these forces?* The Soviet Union and the socialist camp; the growing number of peace-loving countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America; the international working class and its organisations, above all the Communist Parties; the national liberation movement; the world peace movement; the neutral countries who want peaceful co-existence.

This policy of peaceful co-existence is also favoured by a definite section of the bourgeoisie of the developed capitalist countries, which takes a sober view of the relation of forces and of the dire consequences of modern war.

Then comes the *second main point*: *The Statement is not concerned just to make generalisations, but, above all, to call for urgent action to carry the struggle for peace to a great new and victorious stage.*

It is a call for the broadest possible united front as there is no task more pressing than to *safeguard humanity from a global thermo-nuclear disaster*. This can't be put off, we must wage the struggle now, not when the H-bombs begin to fall. We must curb aggressors in good time and prevent war. All this requires the greatest vigilance, the exposure of the war-mongers, the rousing of the people, and the organisation of the peace forces and mass action for peace.

We want the broadest peace movement, uniting people of diverse political and religious creeds and classes, *united by the noble urge to prevent war*.

The responsibility to preserve peace rests first and foremost on the international working class. It must close its ranks—no political or religious creed should be an obstacle in countering the forces of war by joint action of all sections and organisations of the world working class. The Communist Parties regard the fight for peace as their main task. This is the key point of popular mass appeal adopted by the Conference.

*This leads to the third main point*: The foreign policy of the socialist countries is based on peaceful co-existence and economic competition of the two systems. In peace the socialist successes will grow, socialism will show its superiority over capitalism. The peace zone will expand. The working class movement in the capitalist countries and the national liberation movement will win new victories, the disintegration of the colonial system will be complete, the superiority

of the forces of peace and socialism will become absolute.

*"In these conditions a real possibility will have arisen to exclude world war from the life of society even before socialism achieves complete victory on earth, with capitalism still existing in a part of the world. The victory of socialism all over the world will completely remove the social and material causes of all wars."*

In a world divided into two social systems the only correct and reasonable principle of international relations is the Leninist principle of peaceful co-existence. It is the basis of the foreign policy of the socialist states.

*Peaceful co-existence or destructive war—there is no other choice.* This is the fourth main point.

Cold war brinkmanship is a policy leading to thermo-nuclear catastrophe. By upholding the principle of peaceful co-existence we fight for an end to the cold war, blocs and bases, with disarmament and negotiation. This meets the basic interests of the people, strengthens socialism, enhances the prestige of the socialist states and the Communist Parties in the capitalist states. Peace is a loyal ally of socialism, for time is working for socialism and against capitalism.

The policy of peaceful co-existence is a policy of mobilising the masses and mass action against the enemies of peace. It is not the renunciation of class struggle. Co-existence of states with different social systems is a form of class struggle between socialism and capitalism. It provides more favourable conditions for the development of the class struggle in the capitalist countries and for national liberation—in turn their successes promote peaceful co-existence.

Nor does it mean conciliation of socialist and bourgeois ideologies. It implies intensification of the struggle for socialist ideas—but we are against settling political and ideological disputes between states by war.

The historic importance of the Soviet proposal for complete and general disarmament, *is the fifth main point* made.

To realise this programme means to eliminate the very possibility of waging war. This is not easy—it encounters stubborn resistance from the imperialists. We have to wage persistent and increasing struggle. The aim is to win tangible, if partial, results, all paving the way for general disarmament. The task is to force the imperialists by the peace struggle into an agreement—to create a mass movement demanding that the money spent on war be used for civil needs. Disarmament has become a **fighting slogan of the masses**, a pressing historical necessity.

And so the conclusion is reached. Communists regard it as their historical mission not only to

abolish exploitation and rule out for all time the possibility of any kind of war in **human society**, but also to **deliver mankind from the nightmare of a new world war already in our time.** The Communist Parties will devote all their strength and energy to this great historical mission.

### National Liberation

When discussing the great issues involved here one felt in the midst of a really great and dramatic moment in history. Present in the hall and speaking were leaders of the national liberation struggle, old and new, of almost legendary fame.

In fifteen years since 1945, forty new states have emerged in Asia and Africa. As the statement puts it, the:

*"breakdown of the system of colonial slavery under the impact of the national liberation movement is a development ranking second in importance only to the formation of the world socialist system".*

New and complicated questions are involved—the attitude to the national bourgeoisie, the completion of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution, its further development in the direction of socialism. Do these new states necessarily take the road of capitalist development? The new forms of colonial exploitation developed by the imperialists. Can these states be won for a peace policy?

And, of course, the urgent questions of solidarity and support of the colonial struggle to end the subjection of the remaining colonies and protect, for example, Cuba, from intervention.

Here the enormous role of the world socialist system on all these issues—its economic and political help—places the national liberation struggle in an entirely new setting.

*What are the main points of the Statement here?* The peoples of the colonies are winning their independence, both by armed struggle and peaceful means. Headed by the U.S., the imperialists are making desperate efforts to preserve colonial exploitation in new forms, undermine the new states, emasculate their national sovereignty and draw them into the imperialist war blocs.

The national rebirth in the countries that have thrown off the colonial yoke can only be effective if accompanied by a determined struggle against imperialism and the remnants of feudalism by all patriotic forces united in a national democratic front. The general task here is to consolidate political independence, agrarian reform, end imperialist domination, restrict or force out the foreign monopolies, build a national industry, develop democratic life and an independent

peaceful foreign policy and relations with socialist states.

The role of the working class, the need for a solution to the peasant problem, and for a worker-peasant alliance as the basis of a broad national front, are all dealt with. So is the dual nature of the national bourgeoisie and our attitude to it.

*Then the important new idea is developed that in the present situation favourable domestic and international conditions arise for the establishment of states of independent national democracy.*

This is defined as a state which consistently upholds its political and economic independence, which fights against imperialism, blocs and war bases, one which fights against new forms of colonialism. A state which rejects dictatorial and despotic forms of government and provides broad democratic rights, enabling the people to work for agrarian reform and other democratic and social changes and to participate in shaping government policy. There is no doubt this important new conception will play a big part in the developments which lie ahead.

### **The Call for Working-Class and Democratic Unity**

In our contribution to the Conference we dealt, among other things, with the situation in the British Labour movement and the idea of winning and consolidating a left progressive majority in the movement. There was the greatest interest in the position. The big next step for us in this conception, of course, is that of building effective unity between the Communist and Labour forces.

After the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. and in the 1957 Declaration the question of working-class unity was sharply put as a supreme issue in the capitalist countries. All at the Conference felt that new opportunities were arising, especially in the major countries of Western Europe. It was a key point in the speeches of Comrades Thorez, Longo, the Scandinavian comrades and others.

The Statement deals with the possibility of a broad democratic front against the monopolists, the grave tendencies to fascist rule arising in many countries. It makes a call for trade union unity, but as the points are clear, we will not elaborate them.

What is of the greatest concern to us is the strong call to heal the split in the working-class movement. This split on an international and national scale, it states, remains the principal obstacle to the achievement of the aims of the working class. The right wing leadership at all

costs wish to maintain it—we work to eliminate it.

When the Statement, in a principled way, exposes the political position of the right wing social democratic leaders, it only does what the majority of the Labour and Trade Union movement did at Scarborough on foreign policy and Clause 4. These very questions are at the root of the great controversy in the British Labour movement. And the statement noted how the battle for a change is mounting in the Labour movement in each country.

Yet, at the same time, the statement urges that these differences cannot be allowed to block the road to joint action on a national and international scale between Communist and Social Democratic parties on the burning issues of peace, support of the colonial struggle, national independence, protection of living standards and defence of democracy.

As the statement puts it:

*"It is safe to say that on overcoming the split in its ranks, on achieving unity of action of all its contingents, the working class of many capitalist countries could deliver a heavy blow to the policy of the ruling circles in the capitalist countries. It could make them stop preparing a new war, repel the offensive of monopoly capitalism and have its daily vital and democratic demands met."*

This is, and remains, our position. On every issue before the British people this united action is the burning need. The splendid but separate partial united actions which have taken place and are taking place should spur us on to achieve this aim. It will be the duty of our coming Party Congress to consider what fresh steps we can take.

It is of the greatest importance to note, too, that the statement advocated co-operation of the Communist Parties with the Socialist Parties not only for immediate demands, but, I quote, "in the struggle to win power and build socialism." It is suggested the Communists are prepared to discuss all these vital questions with Social Democrats.

This idea, of course, is a central point of the strategy of the advance to socialism in Britain outlined in our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, and we welcome it.

### **The Forces of Transition to Socialism**

In view of the political position of our own party and the central ideas and strategy of our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, the points made in the Statement on the forms of transition to socialism are of the greatest interest.

Our case on all this is known, and we made it in the Conference.

The Marxist-Leninist Parties, the Statement says, head the struggle of the working class for the accomplishment of the socialist revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one form or another. The forms and course of development of the socialist revolution depend on the specific balance of class forces in each country and on the organisation and maturity of the working class and its vanguard, and on the extent of the resistance put up by the ruling class.

Whatever form of dictatorship of the proletariat is established *it will always signify an extension of democracy, a transition from formal bourgeois democracy to genuine democracy, to democracy for the working people.*

The statement again endorsed the 1957 Declaration which said that the working class and the Communist Parties seek to achieve the socialist revolution by peaceful means.

*"Today in a number of capitalist countries the working class, headed by its vanguard, has the opportunity, given a united working class and popular front or other workable forms of agreement and political co-operation between the different parties and public organisations, to unite the majority of the people, win state power without civil war and ensure the transfer of the basic means of production to the hands of the people."*

Relying on the majority of the people, defeating right-wing opportunism, the working class can defeat reaction, secure a firm majority in parliament and transform it into a genuine instrument of the people's will. This requires great mass struggle inside and outside parliament to defeat the resistance of all the reactionary forces—the necessary condition for the peaceful realisation of the socialist revolution.

The ruling class never relinquishes power voluntarily. In the event of ruling-class violence, the Statement goes on, the possibility of the non-peaceful transition to socialism should be borne in mind. "In this case the degree of bitterness and the forms of the class struggle will depend not so much on the proletariat as on the resistance put up by the reactionary circles to the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, on these circles using force at one or other stage of the struggle for socialism." The actual possibility of one or other way of transition in each country depends on the definite historical conditions.

In our view this unanimous declaration is one of the most important of the Conference. It is part and parcel of the conception that we can prevent world war, that socialist revolution is not a by-

product of war. It is a further development of Lenin's idea.

We believe this is a decisive question for the political future of communism, not only in Britain but in France, Italy and other capitalist countries. Any other political line would result in the disastrous sectarian isolation of our movement.

### The World Communist Movement

All Communist parties are sovereign and independent. There is no international Communist organisation with rules and constitution. Proper relations between the Communist parties and international unity, the defence of Communist principles and the proper working of the Communist parties is vital for our common advance.

In many ways, therefore, this section of the statement is of unique importance. The bold opening sentence, "The world Communist movement has become the most influential political force of our time" is not empty rhetoric, but sober fact.

The Leninist standards of party life, democratic centralism, party unity, party democracy, collective leadership, against the cult of the individual, criticism and self-criticism, are laid down as a law.

As in 1957, the statement calls for a struggle on two fronts, against revisionism, which remains the main danger, and against dogmatism and sectarianism. But, it says, the Communist parties have ideologically defeated the revisionists in their ranks. The exposure, above all, is of Yugoslav revisionism and right-wing opportunism, which distorts Marxism-Leninism. Like the 1957 Declaration, dogmatism and sectarianism, it warns, can also become the main danger at some stage of development in some parties—and there is a detailed analysis of what dogmatism and sectarianism can lead to.

Warning that the unity of the world Communist movement is vital in the face of imperialism, the Statement declares:

*"The interests of the Communist movement require solidarity by every Communist Party in the observance of the estimates and conclusions on the common tasks, in the struggle against imperialism, for peace, democracy and socialism, jointly reached by the fraternal parties at their meetings."*

A resolute defence of the unity of the world Communist movement and the prevention of any actions that would undermine that unity are a necessary condition for victory.

The unanimous statement is made that the C.P.S.U. has been and remains the universally recognised vanguard of the world Communist

movement and, finally, as in 1957—the statement again declares:

“The historic decisions of the Twentieth Congress are not only of great importance for the C.P.S.U. and Communist construction in the U.S.S.R., but have initiated a new stage in the world Communist movement and have promoted its development on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.”

### Conclusion

You can imagine, therefore, our legitimate feeling of great and positive achievement when we assembled for the final plenary session. Here after much discussion, on what after all are vital issues for the future of humanity, was a unanimous Marxist-Leninist document of truly historical importance.

That this was an historic meeting has been recognised by friend and foe alike. The view that war is not inevitable is a great message of hope to humanity. Above all it is a call to action to save the world from thermo-nuclear war. War has ceased to be inevitable because of the strength of the world socialist system and the growth of the peace forces. The meeting has unanimously endorsed the socialist policy of peaceful co-existence, that in peaceful competition, socialism will rout capitalism. It has charted the course of victory in the great movement for national liberation and socialism for years ahead.

The nature of our epoch is the transition of the world from capitalism to socialism. The struggle for social change is the responsibility of the working-class movement in each country. The great change in the balance of world forces has created still more favourable conditions for advance to socialism, including possibilities in a number of countries of winning this change without civil war.

British Communists in particular support and welcome the statement, for these views are precisely the main ideas of our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. It will have a special appeal in Britain, in view of the great peace movement, the tremendous struggle in the Labour movement, expressed in the Scarborough decisions—and now in the ever-growing protest against the Polaris bases—in all of which the Communists have played a vital part.

From this Executive Committee we call for a great renewed effort to win peace—Communists must become even more the standard-bearers for peace. Above all, to prevent the Polaris and the German troops training in Britain as the immedi-

ate aims of the struggle. We publicly declare to all peace movements that we will work for the common ends, and call for unity of all peace forces.

The Statement comes at a time of the most important situation in the Labour movement for years, when the battle for the fulfilment of the Scarborough decisions is raging. Its political reception by the left in the movement, expressed in *Tribune* and the motion initiated by Jennie Lee in Parliament, is an indication of its powerful appeal. Can we now get still greater efforts for working-class unity? We ask all left progressive forces—can't we unite our efforts for peace and socialism? We want the Scarborough decisions. Why? So that Labour could place itself at the head of the peace forces of the nation, as is happening in Scotland today over the Polaris base.

Our meeting spelled the doom of all the vain hopes of the imperialists for a split in our ranks. Soviet-Chinese unity is essential for peace and progress. That unity was triumphantly confirmed at Moscow. Comrades Khrushchov and Liu Shao-chi, in their stirring speeches at our final session, stressed the unbreakable unity of their two great Communist parties and their two great Socialist states. As the *Economist* gloomily noted after the Conference:

“But the Western governments can already bury the illusion and start getting accustomed to a new historical phase. The illusion is the hard-dying hope that the two Communist Parties will break apart. . . . It is idle to pin any hopes on a conflict between European Russia and Asiatic China.”

A defeat for them is a victory for the people. Not only for peace. The Statement shows the way of advance of the peoples for democracy, national liberation and socialism—as the *New Statesman* said, the new Communist Manifesto is “a landmark in Communist history”.

It is a vindication of our general political line. It will be a great ideological stimulation and preparation for our National Congress. We have already started our preparations. Let us boldly work out our resolutions and proposals so that our Congress marks a new stage in our mass position.

Study and popularise the Statement in the party and every section of the Labour and peace movement. Go forward with added strength in our great membership drive up to our Congress.

It was an honour and privilege to be present at this historic meeting. Now let us work to fulfil its aims.