

THE NEWSLETTER

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HANDS OFF VICTORY FOR SOCIALISM!

FLEET STREET is trying to kill Victory for Socialism and sow confusion among rank-and-file members of the Labour Party. It wants to shore up Gaitskell, preserve the status quo in the Labour Party, and persuade Mikardo, Messer and Swingler to take the bite out of the ginger group's ginger.

That is why it is exaggerating the extent of the Victory for Socialism leaders' concessions to the Right wing. It is all part of the pressure, and Labour Party members should not be deceived.

Nevertheless, there appear to have been *some* concessions. And the many rank-and-file members of the party who welcomed the sign that some at least of their MPs want to get back to fundamental socialist principles and a socialist campaigning spirit, especially on such a life-or-death issue as the H-bomb, want to know whether the VFS executive means business.

Left-wing critics of Victory for Socialism pointed out right at the outset that the success of such a venture depended, in the last analysis, on whether it engaged in serious activity in the factories and trade union branches as well as the constituency Labour Parties.

How correct this was is shown in *The Times* of March 6, which quotes trade union MPs as saying 'they could crush the ginger group tomorrow or whenever they wish'.

Now Marxists are not in favour of adventures in the Labour Party. We are against picking a fight with Transport House on ground that is favourable to Transport House. The reconstitution of Victory for Socialism obviously meant a fight, and the proper preparations must be made. (Continued overleaf)

To All Organizations of the Labour Movement

DEAR COMRADES,

We feel sure you will agree with us that the Daily Herald, in its call for the unilateral suspension of H-bomb tests and manufacture by Britain, spoke for British Labour, for all that is healthy, sane and clear-sighted in our country.

The Herald; the Aldermaston marchers; Victory for Socialism; the H-Bomb Campaign Committee; the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; the London University teachers; the Oxford students who produced the special H-bomb issue of *Isis*; the trade union branches which have called for the 'blacking' of rocket bases: each in its own way expresses the growing determination of millions of our people that the manufacture and testing of nuclear weapons must end, that rocket bases must not be built on British soil.

But are slogans, demonstrations, a great upsurge of public feeling, enough to give us what we all desire—salvation from national suicide?

We do not think so. We feel that the working class must be brought into the centre of the campaign, with its own forms of activity and struggle, to put teeth into this popular movement.

In each locality, and at every level, from the most humble trade union branch and ward Labour Party to the highest committees, the need is for the speediest and utmost mobilization of working-class forces to end the twin menaces of the H-bomb and the rocket bases.

Never have the dangers been so grave. Never have the issues been so simple and straightforward. Never has the response to Labour's voice been so instantaneous, so touching and so inspiring as on this question.

Our people are thirsty for leadership. We have only to call them and they will sweep into activity.

Street-corner meetings, poster parades, deputations, lobbying of MPs and Councillors, demonstrations of all

kinds will help bring our message before the people and complete the task of awakening the public conscience.

And to crown our campaign, industrial action, on however limited a scale, will show the Tory Government that the British workers mean business, that they will not let Britain be turned into a target.

The Aberdeen plumbers and the Liverpool Trades and Labour Council have set a splendid example by their call for the 'blacking' of rocket sites. The whole Labour movement must take up this call and resolutely put it into effect.

We need now to co-ordinate the efforts of every section of the anti-H-bomb movement, so that all the streams of protest and struggle shall be blended into one formidable national campaign mustering behind it the active and enthusiastic support of millions.

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The Editorial Board of The Newsletter therefore puts forward this proposal to all organizations of the Labour movement, and to all other organizations engaged in the common struggle against the H-bomb: that the week preceding May Day 1958, from April 28 to May 4 inclusive, be set aside as a National Anti-H-Bomb Week.

In this week all the most varied forms of protest can be employed to express the will of the British people.

In this week of mass actions and mass struggle the whole power of the organized working class can be brought to bear against the bomb and those who brandish it.

The Newsletter asks all organizations to consider this proposal, and will be ready to publish reports of decisions, resolutions, plans for activity and all other news of the movement, and to help the campaign in any other way possible.

THE EDITORS

VICTORY FOR SOCIALISM (Cont. from front page)

This will involve attention to the factories and trade unions as key sectors in the development of a virile Labour Left.

The first step is the production of a policy statement, manifesto or discussion material (the name does not matter) explaining how trade unionists can meet the Tory offensive, encouraging the building of rank-and-file movements, showing how such movements can reinvigorate the local Labour Parties.

Factory militants should be brought into all discussion groups so that all documents issued on nationalization, for instance, can reflect the needs, problems and sentiments of the man at the bench.

The miners, who are clearly facing a struggle with the Tory Government, should be consulted as to how workers' control could be put into operation in their industry and the regime of 'absentee committees' and office desk leadership swept away.

Active participation by industrial workers in the

VFS discussions, nationally and locally, would bring these discussions down to earth, enrich the political life of the Labour Party, and make the published material a concrete and vital contribution to socialist propaganda.

The argument that the Labour Party cannot participate in industrial struggles has been killed by the Tory Government itself, which for its own political ends aids and abets the employers in their offensive against jobs, wages and workshop organization.

Victory for Socialism must refuse to knuckle under to Right-wing trade union leaders who say the Labour Party should not intervene in industry—for these leaders, by their agitation against Victory for Socialism, are themselves intervening in Labour Party politics.

Victory for Socialism must not bow to the pressure of those who fear a positive socialist policy. It must go forward with its plans—and, above all, draw industrial militants into the constructive work of its local discussion groups.

And News of the Anti-H-Bomb Campaign Pours in . . .**FINCHLEY LABOUR FIGHTS H-BOMB AND HQ**

FINCHLEY Constituency Labour Party is trying to get a conference of London Labour called to reconsider the Party's policy on the H-bomb.

Of the 74 London constituency parties, 18 have expressed their support for this proposal, but that is not sufficient for the London Labour Party headquarters to be obliged under standing orders to call a conference. For that one-fifth of all affiliated organizations have to express support.

Now comes the awkward bit. It seems that no list of affiliated organizations is published. (Headquarters use an addressograph plate-index for their own circulars).

When Finchley asked if, provided they supplied the envelopes and the stamps, headquarters would send out a letter from them to all affiliated bodies, they were told that there was no precedent for such action.

It thus appears that no regular means exist whereby a constituency Labour Party can in fact take advantage of its constitutional right to canvass support for a policy conference!

Finchley, undaunted, is understood to be trying to find out the addresses of and write to as many as possible of the affiliated bodies—these are said to number about a hundred.

No doubt members of these organizations who sympathize with the objects of the proposed conference will ensure that support for Finchley in this matter is communicated as soon as possible.

WANTS 'NATIONAL UPRISING' AGAINST BOMB

'A NATIONAL uprising against the nuclear threat' was demanded by the Right Rev. Sir George F. Macleod, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, when he addressed a protest meeting of over 700 organized by the Edinburgh Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons.

The failure of The Times to report the London protest meeting brought forth an attack from the Moderator, as did the statement by Duncan Sandys that the West must use nuclear weapons against conventional weapons, and the utterance in Glasgow by R. A. Butler when he put the alternative of destruction or slavery before the people of Scotland.

A spokesman of the Liberal Party, Mr Richard McPake, called for unilateral action by the British Government in stopping the manufacture and testing of nuclear weapons.

In this he was supported by Dr McIntyre (Scottish Nationalist Party) who also expressed little hope in summit talks, which usually resulted in the 'selling of one people for another.'

These speakers were well received, but heckling interrupted the speech of the Labour Party representative John Mackintosh, prospective Parliamentary candidate for Pentlands, who attacked unilateral disarmament.

A resolution urging the Government to take the initiative in nuclear disarmament was passed with only three votes against.

CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS

'After the war a fleet of half-a-dozen exceedingly fast Mercedes-Benz torpedo-type boats were built, and, manned by sailors from Hitler's navy, were sent out under English captains to provoke and listen to the Russians.

'They would head straight for the Russian Fleet at exercise and circle round a battleship taking photographs.

'When they had succeeded in concentrating all the guns of the fleet and recorded enough messages they fled.

'When in Swedish waters, contrary to all international conventions, they flew the Swedish flag.

'One British captain, who was suitably equipped with

a wooden leg which lent a certain glamour to his Quixotic behaviour, so far exceeded the normal practice, which was merely to enter Russian territorial waters, as to go into Leningrad harbour, and on another occasion to land a small party in Russia.

'It is incredible that this should have been allowed, but the irresponsibility bred and sheltered by the Official Secrets Act is uncontrollable.

'In 1956 the new German navy took over the full control of these boats and are doubtless happily continuing our own policy.'

—(From the special H-bomb issue of Isis, the Oxford University students' magazine, February 26, 1958.)

TWO NEW PAMPHLETS ON THE H-BOMB

Two new pamphlets on the H-bomb will help the growing movement for unilateral renunciation of the bomb by Britain.

Frank Allaun, MP, has written a pamphlet called 'Stop the H-Bomb Race Before It's Too Late. Let Britain Give the Lead' (Union of Democratic Control, 6d.) to which Earl Russell contributes a prefatory message.

'There is one power, and only one power,' writes Allaun, 'which can compel the governments of the world to divert from their present path to disaster; that is the will of the people.'

'Everyone can do something in the struggle, firstly as an individual, secondly as a member of an organization.'

The article by Peter Fryer in last week's issue of The Newsletter has been reprinted as a threepenny pamphlet, 'Black the H-Bomb and the Rocket Bases!' Copies are available from The Newsletter, 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

THE BRASS HATS AND THEIR RAT POISON

FIELD commanders in Britain will be able to use H-bombs two and a half times the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, without contact with their superiors—in fact at their own discretion.

This was revealed by Konni Zilliacus, MP, last Saturday at a day-school organized by the Hydrogen Bomb Campaign Committee, which is closely allied to Victory for Socialism.

Zilliacus said to call the defence White Paper 'Britain's contribution to peace and security' was like peddling rat poison as chocolate.

A member of the National Union of Railwaymen said: 'The Labour Government made a mistake when it agreed to have American bases here. Give us the lead and we will take it. Finish with the rocket bases and give us work—not war!'

Several others said trade unions should 'black' work on rocket bases. The Daily Herald was praised for its change of policy on the H-bomb.

SALFORD LABOUR SAYS 'NO' TO BASES

Salford City Labour Party has added its voice to the growing tumult against the building of rocket bases in this country.

It demanded that the Labour Party national executive join with the Trades Union Congress to inform the Government that they will not take any part in the construction or maintenance of rocket sites here.

The party also instructed the Labour council group that under no circumstances must police dogs be used in an industrial dispute or public demonstration.

RENTS

UNIONS BACK INDUSTRIAL ACTION MOVE

WHAT will Labour do when the Rent Act evictions take place? This was the main question before the 44th annual conference of the London Labour Party last weekend.

After a long debate a resolution calling for the setting up of local campaign committees, consisting of representatives from the constituency Labour Parties, trade unions and Co-operative Parties, to co-operate with Labour groups to prevent evictions, was carried.

An amendment calling for discussion with 'officials of the area and district committees of trade unions affiliated to the London Labour Party [on] the possibility of using industrial action to defeat evictions if the campaign fails to bring about the repeal of the Act' was defeated.

But there was a large amount of sympathy for this amendment from trade union delegates. Among delegations voting in favour of it were the Transport and General Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

TIME AND TIDE'S TESTIMONIAL

THE Right-wing weekly Time and Tide thinks that in recent months The Newsletter 'has been responsible for considerably more militancy and agitation than has the Communist Party'.

This is one conclusion of an article by John Baker White on what he calls 'The New Left'. According to Mr White (a former British military intelligence agent) the 'new political life' of those who have recently left the Communist Party 'makes a fascinating study'.

'Although they disagreed with the "Party Line" and Soviet aggression in Hungary, the vast majority of them remain convinced Marxists and staunch believers in industrial agitation.'

'Being highly trained in forming cells and groups the defectors did not take long to embark upon this practice when they left the party. Indeed some had started even before they turned in their cards.'

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'From these groups and forums of discussion something like the "New Left" in France is emerging.'

After mentioning The New Reasoner Mr White goes on:

'The weekly Newsletter, run by Peter Fryer, former Daily Worker correspondent in Budapest, is the focal point of another and perhaps more formidable group of ex-communists.'

'Many of them, like Brian Behan, who spoke his mind very plainly at the last party congress, are working in industry, and the purpose of The Newsletter is both to criticize the Communist Party and to advocate militant industrial action, especially by building workers, railwaymen, dockers and London busmen.'

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'"To go all out to win every small struggle", "the need to prepare for major battles" and "the development of a conscious, alert and combative rank-and-file movement, able to give back blow for blow, able to strike shrewdly at the employers, where it hurts, the moment they attack" are the current directives put out by Mr Fryer, determined to outdo the Communist Party in industrial militancy.'

'It may be asked what the "New Left" has achieved in the first year of its existence. It is certainly true that in the industrial field in recent months the section of it led by the Peter Fryer group has been responsible for considerably more militancy and agitation than has the Communist Party.'

'It took an active part in the Covent Garden and allied docks strikes, in a stoppage of work on the Cromwell Road extension, in agitation among 'blue union' stevedores on Merseyside and in the Port of London.'

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'It is busy on agitation among London Transport staff over their present wages claim, acting mainly through former Communist Party members.'

'It is almost certain that it inspired the "we are prepared to withdraw our labour in support of any wage claims" resolution passed recently by the Manchester district of the National Union of Railwaymen . . . The Peter Fryer group is also seeking contacts in the Labour Party.'

'In short, there is no reason to think that those who have left the Communist Party, and are leaving it now, have ceased to be Marxist revolutionaries or will abandon their attempts to disrupt the economy.'

FOOTNOTE: Most regrettably, Time and Tide is to cease publication on March 22.

INDUSTRY

LONDON PORTWORKERS BAN OVERTIME

By Our Industrial Correspondent

A MEETING attended by more than 1,500 London dockers and stevedores last Monday decided, with only seven votes against, to ban all overtime because of the employers' discrimination against casual labour in favour of permanent men.

This dispute has been boiling up for some time (see The Newsletter, February 15) and has led to the setting up of a rank-and-file liaison committee representing West India, Millwall, East India and the Royal group of docks.

The National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (the 'blue union') is sympathetic to the struggle, and can be relied on to give full support.

The newly-formed liaison committee is in touch with the men in the provincial ports, and solidarity action is being discussed.

BOSSES TRY TO SMASH SHOP ORGANIZATION

From W. Cauldwell, Chairman of the Shop Stewards' Council at E. Moorhouse (Apex) Ltd, Bury.

THE bedding department of the firm of E. Moorhouse, furniture makers, stopped work last Monday. We workers at this firm had a lesson in the past few weeks on the way employers try to use a slackening of trade to break up shop organization.

Since 1945 our 200 men and women workers have been one hundred per cent. organized in the National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives.

Recently the management declared seven machinists redundant. A machine worked by two of the 'redundant' workers was transferred to other workers already operating one machine.

After a complaint by our district organizer a further eight mattress workers were declared redundant last week. They included the treasurer of our union branch and two members of the shop committee, one of whom is the branch secretary.

The management has refused to negotiate in line with the National Labour Agreement which exists in our trade, and

Leeds Clothing Workers' Pay Fight, by Norman Harding

ONE of the main industries in Leeds is the wholesale manufacture of men's and women's clothing. We have here in Leeds firms like Montague Burton, Price, Alexandra, Jackson and Barran (Barran makes many garments for the well-known Austin Reed).

There must be thousands of workers employed in the clothing trade. We have over 30,000 in the Leeds district of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.

Before the war the clothing workers were high up on the wage scale. It was recognized as a reasonably well paid trade. The workers in the trade cannot now make this claim.

AMONG THE WORST PAID. To-day the clothing worker is one of the worst paid in Britain. Of course there is the exception where one can say: 'Ah, but I know a clothing worker who draws £12 a week.'

But this is due to bonus payments and overtime working. I think what we should be looking at is our basic wage; the wage we take home for a straight 44-hour week.

In September 1956 we received a long awaited wage increase. Our next increase became operative on February 1, 1958, a period of seventeen months without an increase.

And what do we get? The employers consent to give us 2d. an hour—7s. 4d. a week with a clause that agrees to a twelve months' wage freeze. A period of two and a half years could elapse with only this one rise in pay.

LESS FOR WOMEN. Unless there is a substantial increase in the cost of living; then we can submit a wage claim after nine months of the twelve-month period.

And once again the union has accepted less for women than men: 2d. an hour for men, 1½d. an hour for women. Time after time we agree to ask for the same increase for men and women and finish up with this 2d. and 1½d. set up.

At a mass meeting to get the Leeds and district members to accept the wage offer, our union officials had the impudence to call this 7s. 4d. a week increase a victory.

You don't have to be an expert on economics to realize that our 7s. 4d. has already been swallowed up in the seventeen months since the rise in September 1956 and the rise in February 1958.

In accepting this as a just rise our trade union

leaders seem to have forgotten this. The point of the immediate rise in the cost of living has also been overlooked.

Many workers lost their rise immediately to the landlords. Those who lived in houses affected by the Rent Act had their rents put up, and in some cases by more than the 7s. 4d. that we have been 'awarded'.

The other items to go up in price are milk, coal, national insurance, gas, electricity, fares and the threat that rates will go up along with an increase in the rents of corporation houses.

What wage does the clothing worker receive to house, feed, clothe and enjoy himself, and in the case of a married man build a home and bring up a family?

Just before this last wage increase, I remember one week when a married man with one child took home in his pay packet £8 17s. A single man took home £8. This included 25s. bonus.

LEADERS DON'T FIGHT. It is easy to see that if work drops to the extent that there is no bonus, the basic wage will be very low indeed. With the latest rise our minimum (i.e., union rate) is 3s. 8d. an hour, £8 1s. 4d. a week, and the flat rate for the shop is 3s. 11d. an hour, £8 12s. 4d. a week.

Why do not our union leaders fight harder for better conditions and higher wages? Why do they accept 2d. and 1½d. when they were asked to go in for 6d.?

I am sure if it was left to the rank and file of the union we should have a different story to tell. The voice of the rank-and-file member is not heard.

It is not sufficient to expect a mass turn-out at ordinary branch meetings every month, meetings which are usually dull and uninteresting. I agree members should turn out and go to these meetings, but the thing is they don't.

VOICE OF WORKERS. What is needed is more link-up between the factories on the basis of a shop stewards' committee, comprising stewards from all the factories in the area.

Meetings of this nature would be more ready to be the voice of the workers in the factories because of the direct link.

If the union leadership could look over their shoulders and see a rank-and-file organization of this kind, and hear what they have to say, then maybe they would not be too ready in accepting compromises like 2d. and 1½d., but put up a stronger fight against the employers' attack on our standard of living.

which provides for the sharing of work and for negotiation on wrongful dismissals.

It has refused the demand of the union organizer that the dispute be taken to a local disputes panel.

The managing director said recently that the firm was going to declare redundancy, was going to have all jobs retimed, and where a job was in dispute was going to transfer it—all with or without union agreement.

Non-union labour has not been employed in the past. Now one of the directors has informed workers that they can work whether they are in the union or not.

A mass meeting of workers in the bedding department decided to cease work until the management agreed to enter into negotiations with the union in accordance with agreements.

Cunvin's Column

BISHOP SPEAKS OUT

IN their eagerness to join with capitalist politicians in the prosecution of the 'Cold War', some of the Labour leaders forget all about the positive achievements of the Soviet Union in the economic field.

The development of the Soviet Union from a backward peasant economy to the position of the second greatest industrial power in the world, in the short space of forty years, is the strongest argument we can use in favour of the collective ownership of the whole of the national economy and of central planning of that economy.

The Observer, last Sunday, provided striking confirmation of this.

On one page was the remarkable sermon given by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen of New York to an assembly of national leaders in the Statler Hotel, Washington. The Bishop drew a graphic picture of the capitalist world:

'Never before in the history of the world was there so much wealth, never before in the history of the world was there so much poverty . . . One third of the people of the world go to bed hungry every night. One half of the population of the earth lives in Asia, and yet they receive only 11 per cent. of the total income of the world.'

Isn't this an answer to the Stracheys of this world who try to prove that Marx was wrong when he wrote about the rich growing richer and the poor poorer?

RUSSIA'S FORWARD SPURT

And in contrast, in the same issue of The Observer, Edward Crankshaw compared the slump conditions in the capitalist world today with the terrific economic upsurge in the Soviet Union.

In America unemployment has reached 4,494,000 and in Britain it is growing; capitalist governments impose restrictions on capital expenditure in a vain attempt to stabilize the economy.

But in the Soviet Union the watchword is expansion. New bridges, new canals, new stretches of railway, new irrigation works, new power stations, new machines of every kind—that is the picture of Soviet economy today.

The record forward spurt of the Soviet economy has been achieved despite the restrictive hand of officialdom.

As the Russian working class wins for itself greater freedom of action and control over its State and economy, there will be no limit to what it can achieve.

SARAH'S THREE POINTS

AT the annual general meeting of Heston and Isleworth Constituency Labour Party, Miss Sarah Barker, the party's assistant national agent, listed three requirements as essential for victory in the next General Election:

1) Leadership of the highest quality for practical purposes, inspired by imagination and vision that would embrace the needs of tomorrow;

2) Unity of purpose—a democratic party could not avoid clashes of opinion, but it was a sign of maturity in a party as well as in the individual to know how to agree to disagree;

3) Effective organization. This was the key to power, although it was not sufficient in itself, as witness the ineffectiveness of the Tory machine at the moment. The machine had to be manned by willing workers.

Few would disagree with these conclusions, but it would be a good thing if Miss Barker drew the attention of the national leadership to point two.

A section of that leadership appears to be very frightened of anything like a genuine clash of opinion and is only too ready to squash any manifestation of Left-wing opinion.

The willing workers to man the machine will be found within the Labour Party, but only if the party develops a policy which can break through the current mood of apathy and frustration.

AIN'T WE GOT FUN?

THE most notable difference between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition was that the Prime Minister had returned from his Commonwealth tour convinced that the well-known Russian letter-writer pronounced his name Bulgehinn.

Mr Gaitskell plumped for the more conservative Bulgarnin.

"You say Bulgehinn and I say Bulgarnin, Ain't we got fun?"

In the atmosphere of Wednesday's debate it seemed almost as if that was the only obstacle to a National Government.'

—(Punch, February 26, 1958)

UNION JOHNNIE

NEAR the front, almost hidden by an immense Union Jack carried by the man behind him, marched Mr John Gollan, secretary of the British Communist Party.'

(Sunday Times, March 2, 1958)

GEORGE CUNVIN

NIGERIA

E. NIGERIA'S WOMEN FIGHT FOR LITERACY

By Kiomkengha

IMPRISONMENT, banishment, deportation, tear-gas, fines and shooting have not stopped the people of Nigeria from demanding their rights.

Since February 2, with the help of an imperialist police force, Dr Azikiwe (described by the Daily Worker as the 'spearhead of the national movement') has been using these methods against Nigerian men and women protesting against the reintroduction of school fees.

On February 13 two men were killed when the police fired on demonstrators at Okaki. Women demonstrators were arrested and heavily fined. Other demonstrators later stormed the prison and the police barracks.

Seeing how determined the women were and how strong was their solidarity, Mr B. C. Okwu, Eastern Nigeria's Minister of Information and acting Minister of Education, gave them a written assurance that the matter would be debated in the House of Assembly.

These written assurances have not stopped the reintroduction of school fees, and for that reason the demonstrations and protests are being kept up.

Shooting Nigerians has always been the method of imperialism, ever since the struggle for national independence started.

In 1949 the imperialist government shot unarmed miners who were on strike at Enugu, killing forty-nine of them. This act was justified by the Labour Government as 'a primary duty of upholding law and order'.

Mr John Dugdale, former Minister for Colonial Affairs, said at Ashridge College (Herts) on July 3, 1951, that 'Africans are still liable to be shot down for demanding higher wages'.

In 1953, when the people of Badagry refused to pay a capitation tax introduced by Chief Owolowo of the Western Region to solve his financial crisis, armed police were sent in. Several people were shot. No records were kept, so that the public does not know the exact number of casualties.

In 1954, when a Federal election was approaching, Chief Owolowo promised the voters free elementary education if his party, the Action Group, came to power.

Dr. Zik made similar promises on behalf of his party, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons.

Both parties came into power in their respective regions. So in 1955 Chief Owolowo, Premier of the Western Region, introduced free schools. And in 1956 Dr Zik reluctantly followed suit in the Eastern Region.

Since 1956 the government of the Eastern Region has run into a financial crisis due to the very high administrative costs involved in running the House of Chiefs (recommended by the Jones commission of 1957) and in paying car and other allowances and massive compensation to retiring imperialist administrators.

The appointment of an Eastern Region Commissioner to the United Kingdom, with a large staff, has also proved costly.

Joined hands with imperialists

Like the Tory Government in Britain, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons has decided to place the burden of its financial crisis on the working class, fishermen and farmers.

How can a country such as Nigeria (pop. 34 million) maintain three Houses of Chiefs, five Houses of Assembly, four High Commissioners and their departments, and a huge administration of imperialist governors and their subordinates?

Instead of cutting down on these expenses, which are ruining the country, the National Council has joined hands with the imperialists against its own people.

Recent events in Nigeria have shown that the struggle against imperialism has become a class struggle. The national leaders are coming out in their true colours.

Chief Owolowo and Dr Zik did not introduce free schooling because they wanted every Nigerian to be literate, but because elections were approaching for the first time.

NEW 'BRITISH ROAD' EVADES KEY QUESTIONS

By BRIAN BEHAN

THE revised version of *The British Road to Socialism* avoids what after all is the key question facing British Marxists: should they constitute a separate working-class party, or try to work within the Labour Party to build a powerful Left that will reject class collaboration and use the great power of the working class to establish socialism?

British working-class history has shown that one of the main weaknesses of Marxists has been their failure to drive deep roots within the mass organizations.

History has also shown that despite clear and undisputed betrayals by MacDonald, Snowden and the like the mass of the working people have not turned to Left alternatives, either those of the Communist Party or of other Left groupings.

One of the main reasons for the stability of the British Labour Party, as distinct from social-democratic parties on the Continent, would appear to be its trade union basis.

For a Marxist the problem is not simply to be clear or principled. Both are important. The problem is to apply clarity and principles in building a conscious movement.

In British conditions this raises first and foremost the problem of how to win the masses of Labour, at their present level

Where will the unemployed workers, the people who have been driven from their land, the poor fishermen, and the many others whose income is less than £12 a year get the money to pay for their children's school fees?

The reintroduction of school fees means only one thing to them. They have to fight or their children will be illiterate.

—That is why the women of Eastern Nigeria are fighting back.

ALGERIA

HOW FRENCH OFFICERS TORTURED ALLEG

SEIZURE of last week's *France-Observateur* was only the latest of many violations of Press freedom in France since the beginning of the Algerian war.

It was provoked by the publication of extracts from a book by Henri Alleg, editor of the Algerian Communist Party newspaper until its suppression in 1955, in which he described how he was tortured by French paratroops.

He was given the full Gestapo treatment. One torture followed another. Part of the time he was unconscious. Electric shocks were administered to all parts of his body. While he was tied down to a plank, water was run into his mouth until he was nearly asphyxiated. Burning paper was then applied to his genitals and other parts of his body.

This was no isolated occurrence. Others, Europeans and Algerians, were being tortured in the same building. And it was clear that French officers participated, or knew what was going on, up to the highest levels.

Alleg was threatened that if he did not give information his wife would also be taken and tortured. Finally the aide-de-camp to a general suggested that the best thing for him to do, if he would not talk, was to commit suicide.

The *France-Observateur* editorial raises the question 'Is the Government afraid of the army?' and sees in the Algerian events the possible seed-bed for a form of military fascism in France. It is obvious that the French Government is afraid of Press freedom.

There is no doubt that a series of strong resolutions of protest from Labour Party branches to the French Embassy would strengthen the hands of those in France seeking to preserve human rights and liberties.

and within their present forms of organization, for a socialist programme.

The Labour Party as it is now places certain restrictions on the activities of Marxists. These divisions and proscriptions are explained away by the Communist Party as simply arising from the Right-wing domination.

The Communist Party gives neither a clear nor principled explanation of the divisions. 'The British Road' does not admit that the first approach for affiliation was couched in terms which gave the Right wing every opportunity to reject it.

Stands outside the mainstream

No mention is made in 'The British Road' of the characterization of the Labour Party and trade unions as 'social-fascist' at the Leeds Congress of the Communist Party in 1929.

No mention is made of international policies which must have played a big part in further strengthening the Right wing and increasing the Marxists' isolation.

Against this background the programme simply becomes an analysis of what capitalism is, plus an outline of what might happen if socialism were to be established.

Any Marxist road to socialism must more seriously envisage the winning of the key positions in the Labour movement. The

Communist Party stands now where it has stood for the past thirty years—outside the mainstream of the British Labour movement.

On the one hand, after the Brighton conference of the Labour Party, it proclaims the end of the Left in the Labour Party; on the other, in 'The British Road to Socialism', it resurrects the

The Communist Party's programme 'The British Road to Socialism' was first published in January 1951 without the rank and file being given the opportunity to discuss it.

Members of the party's political committee were afterwards to reveal why. The original draft was taken to Moscow by Harry Pollitt, then general secretary, and Stalin himself made additions and alterations 'and refused to let them be changed'.

From Stalin's pen came passages asserting (despite 'For a Soviet Britain!' (1935)) that it was a lie to tax British communists with wanting to introduce soviets, or do away with the British Empire.

'The British Road to Socialism' was later revised; a further revision, in an attractive green cover, is published today, price sixpence. It is reviewed here by BRIAN BEHAN, building trade militant and former member of the Communist Party's executive committee.

Labour Left—with whom it is going to unite at some distant future.

But the Right wing of the British Labour movement can be exposed in a serious fashion only by a Left working within this movement and fighting for a socialist programme.

The isolation of the Communist Party is reflected in the way 'The British Road to Socialism' envisages a bureaucratic transition to socialism.

Certain changes have been made in this new version. The right to strike has been put in. The programme now speaks of 'socialist democracy', not 'people's democracy'. But the question of the stages of the socialist revolution in Britain is still

blurred:

'The removal of the bans and proscriptions directed against the Communist Party is the first step in restoring unity to the movement. This could lead to further steps towards unity, including the possibilities of affiliation, and eventually of a single working-class party based on Marxism when the majority of the movement has been won for the Marxist outlook' (p. 29).

Is this how it will happen? Can we envisage the Labour Party, with its affiliated membership, ever being based on Marxism?

The real King Street argument is not to be found here. Their real argument is that the Right wing of the Labour Party is going to be exposed, and masses of the Labour workers will come to the Communist Party, which will emerge as a dominant partner with a few Left-wingers dotted about here and there.

The leaders of the Communist Party do not seriously believe in transforming the Labour Party. At the end of their 'road' is a party based on bureaucratic centralism, which sees as the chief enemy any principled Marxist opposition.

How much more practical, more constructive, more in tune with British conditions and working-class traditions to get the Labour Party moving in a Leftward direction, with Marxists playing a part within it.

This is not to underestimate the strength of the Right, or to preclude any division in the Labour Party in the future, but more to recognize that Marxists can only build from reality.

There is space only to mention some of the other defects in this programme. It speaks about a mass movement, but the form it will take is left vague.

No mention of workers' councils, or councils of action, which were surely 'our traditional institutions' (p. 10) in 1926! Nor of workers' control—the workers will merely 'help in running their industry' (p. 19).

Lastly, an important question unanswered is this: is there a basis here in Britain, with all the experience of the British Labour movement, for a socialist Britain to become a centre of world socialism, free from the bureaucratic handicaps and distortions that the Russian workers have had to suffer?

Constant Reader | Introducing a new column by Brian Pearce

Sloan on the purges

PAT SLOAN, secretary of the British-Soviet Friendship Society, writes in his *British-Soviet Newsletter* dated February 22, under the heading 'The "Purges" of 1937-8':

'Together with the actual revision of a number of past sentences, now found to have been unjust, certain rumours have been circulated in the Press and sundry newsletters to the effect that the big treason trials of the 1930s are now recognized to have been unfounded.

'One of the latest reports on this subject "quotes" an article by I. Serov in Pravda of December 21, 1957.

'A perusal, however, of the relevant passages in the article makes it clear that it is not the big treason trials that Serov criticizes—but the purge that followed during 1937 and 1938 in the wake of these trials.'

Kept from his readers

Certain nobody could draw from Serov's article the conclusion that 'the big treason trials of the 1930s are now recognized to have been unfounded'—for he expressly justifies three of them, namely the 'Industrial Party' trial of 1930, the 'Menshevik' trial of 1931 and the 'Metro-Vickers' trial of 1933.

It is just that, however, which makes so significant his omission to mention the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial (1936) or to except the Pyatakov-Radek trial or the Generals' trial (1937) or the Bukharin-Krestinsky trial (1938) from his blanket repudiation of the 'repressions' of 1937-38.

Sloan has been careful to keep from readers of his newsletter the numerous references to victims of these trials that have appeared in the Soviet Press over the last few years—references of a kind that are fully understood to imply rehabilitation of the persons concerned.

Thus, for example, in an article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of February 28, 1957, on Latvian literature, the writer mentions Robert Eidemann ('a talented Soviet Latvian writer who was also an outstanding commander in the Civil War, head of the Frunze Military Academy, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council and chief of Osoaviakhim').

Eidemann is listed along with a number of other Latvian writers, with the comment: 'In relation to many of these writers violations of socialist legality were committed.'

'Unmentioned' in recent years

Now Eidemann was one of the Generals executed with Tukhachevsky. It is also significant that in an editorial on party history in the journal *Problems of History* (no. 3 of 1956) Gamarnik was mentioned alongside Antonov-Ovseyenko ('rehabilitated' by Mikoyan in his Twentieth Congress speech) as one of these whose names had been 'unmentioned' in the writings of 'recent years'.

Gamarnik, then head of the Red Army's political administration, was included in the indictment of the Generals, but was said to have killed himself to avoid arrest.

(The implicit rehabilitation of Gamarnik is particularly interesting in that Krestinsky, one of the principal accused in the 1938 treason trial, was alleged to have been go-between

for a group of civilian conspirators and Gamarnik's military group.)

Again, Tukhachevsky himself is named, as commander of the First Army, in articles on the Eastern Front in 1918-19 in *Problems of History* nos. 6 and 10 of 1956.

Sloan knows very well that the mere mention of his name was interpreted by Soviet citizens as an admission that the former Red Army chief had not been guilty of the crimes for which he was executed.

And now comes Marshal Bagramyan's article on the Soviet army anniversary, with its mention of the officers murdered by Yezhov . . .

'Shoot 'em all down'

Sloan's anxiety about the 'anti-Trotsky' trials is understandable, for he was one of those who worked hard at the time to convince the working-class movement here of the justice of the verdicts.

Thus in Controversy of March 1938 he wrote of the victims: 'It is a good thing they have been shot. Further, if there were more of them, then more of them should have been shot.'

Sloan's controversial methods have not changed, either. In the same article he denounced as 'an unscrupulous misquotation by Trotsky' Stalin's statement of November 6, 1918 about Trotsky having been the chief organizer of the October Revolution—though this appeared in the collection of Stalin's articles called 'The October Revolution' which had been published by Lawrence and Wishart in their 'Marxist-Leninist Library' such a short time before as 1936!

Sloan evidently believes in the tactic of bold denial. Alas for such methods, though—1958 is not 1938.

Seize this opportunity

THE third issue of *Universities and Left Review* (Winter 1958, 4s.) contains the full text of the pamphlet *The Insiders*, that most useful factual exposure of the 'managerial revolution' theory behind *Industry and Society*.

People who missed getting 'The Insiders' when it first appeared should seize this opportunity of securing a first-class piece of propaganda material.

Other contributions include 'Hungary and Socialism', by François Fejtö, who wrote what many think the best book to date about the background to the Hungarian Revolution; a survey of 'Labour Movement Historiography' by John Saville, himself a notable worker in this field; and 'Russia Alive', by Michael Kullman, an impression of the Moscow Youth Festival which supplements the account given by Maurice Pelter in his Newsletter pamphlet 'Russian Youth Awakes'.

Announced in this issue is the opening of a Left Book Centre at 7 Carlisle Street, W.1, on March 14. This should meet a long-felt need for a place where the literature of all socialist trends, without discrimination, can be obtained.

No confirmation

Latest volume of Documents on German Foreign Policy published by the Foreign Office confirms the rumours we used to hear about King Edward VIII's Hitlerite sympathies already when he was Prince of Wales.

What no documents so far published have confirmed is the charges regarding talks between Trotsky and Hess which were brought up in the notorious Moscow trials.

Nor was anything mentioned about them at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal. Trotsky's widow was refused permission to interrogate the Nazi leaders on that occasion.

Soviet Studies

The quarterly Soviet Studies, published for Glasgow University by Basil Blackwell, Oxford, often carries well-informed articles of general interest and value.

For example, the October 1957 number has an article 'Labour and the Social Structure', by Margaret Dewar, which offers a penetrating analysis of relations between the bureaucracy and the working class in the Soviet Union today.

In the January 1958 number Jacob Miller reviews at length

the symposium of stories, poems and essays called 'Literary Moscow, II', which caused so much controversy last year and was mentioned once or twice in The Newsletter.

Soviet Studies costs 10s. 6d., but it is, or ought to be, in every large public library.

AFFIDAVITS CAN HELP SAVE DAVID HYUN

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD struggle to save David Hyun's life reached a climax when the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service revoked a stay of deportation to South Korea.

The deportation order had previously been revoked on grounds of probable physical persecution.

Hyun, a South Korean architect living in the USA, was arrested in 1950 as a 'dangerous alien' and charged with being a member of the U.S. Communist Party. Denied bail, he was held on Terminal Island for six and a half months, released, rearrested in July 1953, held in custody for five months and freed on \$2,000 bail.

Return to Korea will mean life imprisonment or possible death for Hyun, who is a communist, a vocal critic of Syngman Rhee and the son of Rhee's principal opponent.

His only hope is to prove that physical persecution of political opponents still continues under Syngman Rhee.

Any information on this should be sent in the form of personal affidavits, or articles from periodicals and newspapers with proper identification and photographs, to: Mary Hyun, P.O. Box 26026, Los Angeles 26, California, USA.

LETTERS

BACK UP LADS WHO BLACK ROCKET BASES

AS a building worker, I firmly believe that work on rocket sites should be 'blacked', that the Trades Union Congress should give a lead on this, and that the unions concerned should make it clear that their members are not going to touch this kind of work.

We can achieve this—if the lads on the jobs and in the branches start developing this demand now, with the aim of co-ordinated action by the unions, the TUC and the Labour Party.

Workers who refuse to build rocket bases will need every bit of help they can get. The TUC has an international solidarity fund—why not a solidarity fund to back up the 'blacking' of the rocket sites?

Such a fund would get a tremendous response, and would show the workers directly involved that the whole working class is behind them.

London, S.W.2

Mick Gammon

WATCH THE MENACE ON THE FAR RIGHT

SOME attention should be given to the growth and development of neo-fascist and pro-fascist tendencies on the extreme Right of British politics.

The Union Movement is undoubtedly finding in the frustration of sections of the middle class a fertile soil for its demagoguery.

The Liberal vote at Rochdale was by no means an entirely 'liberal' vote. It was a vote of exasperation, a vote of protest. A vote which in a serious, deepening crisis could take on fascist overtones.

But perhaps more important than the old-line Mosleyites are the organizations like the League of Empire Loyalists and the People's League for the Defence of Freedom (which is now holding a referendum on its next steps).

The Labour movement cannot afford to relax its vigilance towards these organizations. The ruling class will have no hesitation in using them in a national crisis.

London, N.W.6

E. Bergman

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