

THE NEWSLETTER

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a service to socialists

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THIS IS WHAT THOSE 11s. 'STRINGS' MEAN

by our Industrial Correspondent

Engineering workers in Salford have not had to wait long to find out the employers' interpretation of the 'strings' attached to the 11s. wage increase.

At Erskine Heaps and Co. the management has put a notice up in the works saying that a warning buzzer will sound at 7.28 a.m., so that all workers will be at their machines or benches when the 7.30 a.m. bell goes.

Shop stewards in Salford are standing by to call a meeting as soon as there are any disputes resulting from employers' attempt to use the 'strings', agreed to by the Confederation Right wing, to attack conditions.

There is likely to be trouble in the Manchester district on the question of dilution. Three years ago, after the sacking of a steward, the Amalgamated Engineering Union district committee banned further dilution at the great Metropolitan-Vickers works.

Last year a complete ban on dilution in the district was decided on as a measure against redundancy sackings.

Now the AEU Executive is said to be considering lifting the ban, in response to employers' requests. Metro-Vickers shop stewards and the district committee alike are opposed to this.

The problem is complicated by the fact that the number of dilutees has grown continuously since the end of the war. Many loyal AEU members, registered as dilutees, have been on skilled work for five years or more.

Apparently the Executive is now making inquiries as to how many could be de-registered—i.e., taken off skilled work and put back on their semi-skilled or unskilled status.

If this is done it would split the workers—whereas in last month's strike there was complete unity, and no differentiation between dilutees and others.

There are many protests at the decision to accept the 'strings'. At Openshaw No. 8 branch of the AEU, when the members were asked to vote on 11s. with strings or 8s. 6d. without, not one hand went up for the first alternative.

Many AEU members have told me that in their opinion, if the leaders had not sold out the 11s. could have been achieved without conditions.

(More industrial news overleaf)

POLAND

THE NINTH PLENUM

by Tony Guthrie

THE Ninth Plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee tried to find solutions to a thousand and one problems thrown up in last October's political hurricane.

Gomulka's report, adopted after some unprincipled sniping and mud-slinging by remnants of the Natolin faction, set the pace for a 'Polish Road to Socialism'.

Gomulka stressed that the importance of the Eighth Plenum last October lay in its rejection of bad and discredited methods of socialist construction. It had paved the way for developing the creative achievements of the Polish workers.

In diplomatic and careful language he made it quite clear that even if there had been no 'personality cult disease' the Russian road to Socialism would still have been far from acceptable to some other countries.

This part of his speech was masterly, for while he gave the Soviet Union no legitimate cause for offence he made it quite clear that owing to lack of experience socialist countries imitated the USSR—and 'this was encouraged by relations of inequality with the Soviet Union when dominated by the Stalin cult'.

Differences with Yugoslavs and French

Gomulka said there were differences of opinion with 'our Yugoslav comrades', but he added: 'Sometimes there arises an urgent need for discussion between parties. We believe that discussion should take place on the principle of mutual loyalty and that charges not substantiated by facts should never be permitted in such discussions. In this matter everything is not in order in Poland and in the international movement'.

Gomulka mentioned, too, that 'our French comrades see certain matters differently from us'—perhaps a reference to the French Communist Party's inflexible and at one time downright hostile attitude to Polish events.

Many of the more woolly ideas about democracy were

(Continued on back page)

SOME EVENTS OF THE WEEK

CYPRUS: There was a 24-hour general strike in protest against the Government's refusal to release all detainees and end the emergency regulations.

HUNGARY: Marshal Zhukov and Mr. Gromyko went to Budapest to sign a treaty laying down the terms on which Russian troops are remaining in Hungary.

GREECE: About 250,000 workers downed tools in Athens and the Piraeus in a 24-hour general strike. The unions are demanding a 30 per cent wage increase, and plan a nation-wide strike on June 18 unless it has been granted by then.

HUNGARY: The 26-year-old poet Istvan Eörsi, a colleague of the imprisoned novelist Tibor Dery, was sentenced to five years' in jail for 'subversion'. Three other defendants received prison sentences ranging from eighteen months to six years.

USA: The Ku-Klux-Klan had set out to destroy every Negro church in Montgomery (Alabama), said the prosecutor in the trial of two men charged with dynamiting.

ALBANIA: At the first Congress of Albanian Writers and Artists the chairman of the Albanian Writers' Union, Mr. Shutriqi, told delegates they must be inspired by the example set by Soviet writers and artists, because Soviet literature and art was the best in the world.

POLAND: The newspaper *Zycie Warszawy* revealed that workers at the Solali paper factory at Zywiec last March ejected the director, the Communist Party secretary and head of the wages department. The three were led out of the gate after a workers' meeting to elect a new director. When a number of workers were charged in court some were acquitted and proceedings against the rest were dropped.

COMMENTARY

EVERY participant in the socialist forum movement will welcome the setting up of a substantially similar movement to ours in the USA, and will deplore the attack the witch-hunters have immediately launched against this venture. If we had supposed that the worst stupidities of McCarthyism died with its founder the events of the past few days have undeceived us. First came the demand of the New York Daily News, in an editorial entitled 'Look into this Mob', that 'American Forum—for Socialist Education' be 'investigated' and placed on the Attorney General's 'subversive' list. Then the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, headed by the segregationist Mississippi senator Eastland, subpoenaed four members of the Forum's National Committee.

The witch-hunters are trying to portray American Forum as a 'communist front' organization. In fact its National Committee represents practically every socialist viewpoint without discrimination, just as our forums and their committees do here. Its object is to provide a medium for free and unfettered discussion of the problems facing American socialists. The real crime of American Forum is to have at last broken through the sectional barriers, and to have reached agreement on the need for comradely discussion. This, and not the participation of two Communist Party members (out of 40 on the National Committee) is what worries the McCarthyites. It is precisely this which deserves our support and help.

On another page the secretary of the London forums expresses the view that the participants in the movement should engage in political activity within existing political organizations. Surely this attempt to destroy our American friends' liberty of thought and expression calls for an exception to be made? Might it not be a gesture of real socialist internationalism if the local forums sent letters and deputations to the US Embassy to protest against this interference with the right of American citizens to exchange opinions? Perhaps, too, letters could be sent to American Forum expressing our own forums' solidarity? These, of course, are matters for each local forum to decide. But the decision can hardly be in doubt when we reflect how highly we prize our own freedom to debate, and how bitterly we should resist any attempt to rob us of it.

★

THERE are two other current examples of interference with liberty that are of interest to forum participants. One is the witch-hunt in the British universities, about which Lord Chorley has recently made some startling allegations. All who are concerned that students should be able to discuss and engage freely in political activity will certainly express their opposition to M.L.S prying. The other example is the warning by the leaders of the British Communist Party against their members' 'giving assistance' to the forums. Neither the McCarthyites of Mississippi nor the bureaucrats of King Street like forums—because forums mean discussion, and discussion means clarity, and clarity means rejection of McCarthyism and Stalinism alike.

STORMS ARE LIKELY AT ETU CONFERENCE

THE annual policy conference of the 228,000-strong Electrical Trades Union opens at Folkestone on Monday.

Many big battles are expected during the five days of the conference. This year the 'inveterate opponents of the platform' will be joined by Communist Party rank-and-file critics of the union's leadership.

The union's financial difficulties, and criticism of its industrial policy, will overshadow the proceedings.

Though the leaders attribute the serious retrenchment measures they have taken to the effects of the 1954 and 1957 strikes, there are many members who fail to see why strikes of 40,000 members should have caused a financial crisis.

Other controversial issues are likely to be the Executive's attitude to the events of last autumn in Hungary and its policy on the German question.

BARGEMEN LAUNCH THEIR OWN UNION

MERSEYSIDE lightermen and bargemen have announced their intention of leaving the 'white' union—the Transport and General Workers' Union—and forming their own association.

The rebel bargemen have registered as the 'North-western Lightermen's Association' and will seek affiliation with other waterfront unions.

Unlike the London lightermen, these workers are not registered under the Dock Labour Scheme. This means they are still subject to casual labour.

Some men are putting in as much as 84 hours a week, while others are unemployed. Some Merseyside firms regularly lay off five per cent of their workers each week. None recognizes shop stewards.

The bargemen have failed to get the TGWU to take action on their behalf. So they have gone ahead on their own, after a meeting which elected a committee and adopted a four-point programme for registration under the Dock Labour Scheme, equalization of rates, a union controlled by the rank and file and affiliation with other progressive docks unions.

ECONOMICS

THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS IN 1956

by our Economic Correspondent

IN 1956 Britain's commercial balance of payments was £233 million on the credit side.

This was made up of £269 million of invisible exports and £23 million of defence aid, less a £59 million deficit in the visible balance.

But in order to achieve this stocks of raw materials and work in progress were run down from £300 million at December 31, 1955, to £200 million at December 31, 1956.¹

Of this balance £191 million was invested in the overseas sterling area, leaving a net balance on commercial account of £42 million. Had this been a true balance the effect would have been to increase the gold and dollar holdings by £42 million—even though it had been achieved by running down stocks to the tune of £100 million.

This would have been a relatively favourable position. On the credit side there would have been a long-term capital investment of £191 million, plus an increase in gold and dollars of £42 million, less a running down of stocks of £100 million, showing a net increase in assets of £133 million.

However that is not the true position. There were other capital transactions in 1956. These can be summed up in the running down of sterling balances held abroad and in the borrowing from the International Monetary Fund.

The run on sterling is not at all complicated if one merely

¹See Preliminary Estimates of National Income 1951-1956 (HMSO, April 1957), p. 4, Table 1.

looks at the end-of-year holdings in 1955 and 1956.

At the end of December 1955 overseas sterling holdings were £3,576 million; a year later they had fallen to £3,425 million.

These figures do not explain what took place in 1956. But taken together with the holdings in gold and dollars at both dates they measure the overall changes, just as the commercial balance merely measures the trading account of British capitalism as a whole.

The fall of £151 million in those overseas balances is a reduction in the indebtedness of Britain and as such it is a negative asset—an improvement to the extent that debt has been reduced. But it was offset by the borrowing of £201 million from the International Monetary Fund.

The net effect was an increase of Britain's indebtedness by £50 million, less £5 million (the difference between the gold and dollar holdings in the exchange equalization account at the end of 1955—£757 million—and the end of 1956—£762 million).

And so the true balance in 1956 is £133 million less £45 million: a mere £78 million. This meagre result is the net achievement of two years of the credit squeeze, and of a deliberate cutting of production by much more than the net credit actually achieved in the overseas accounts.

Borrowing short and lending long

And this result has been attained by borrowing short—the £201 million borrowed from the International Monetary Fund—and lending long—the £133 million difference between £191 million invested and £78 million earned.

This is a policy which has played havoc with the British economy in the past.

Meagre as it is, this result was not even achieved by any success of Macmillan's financial policy. It was a fortuitous product of a world expansion in exports.

In its competition for a share in world markets the British economy achieved no success. Britain's proportion of total world trade in fact fell from 19.8 per cent in 1955 to 19 per cent in 1956.

And her major competitors increased their proportions: the USA from 24.8 per cent to 25.8 per cent, West Germany from 15.5 per cent to 16.4 per cent.

FORUMS

THE FUTURE OF THE FORUMS

by Ian Ramsay, secretary of the London Socialist Forum

THE appearance of the socialist forum movement, the Universities and Left Review and other signs of socialist revival come at a time when the Left in Britain is in pretty bad shape.

The seriousness of the position was sharply revealed at the last General Election, when the Tories were returned to power on a reduced poll because Labour abstentions were greater than those of Tory voters.

The more recent signs of a shift to Labour can give no grounds for complacency, since this is probably due more to dissatisfaction with the Government and the shock of Suez than to positive enthusiasm for socialism.

Since the early post-war years there has been no popularization of socialist ideas. I personally feel sure that a programme for the extension of nationalization over the whole field of heavy industry and finance would not command majority support in the country at the present time.

Like the editors of Universities and Left Review I think that this state of affairs is the result of the polarization of socialist thinking between Welfare State-ism on the one hand and Stalinist orthodoxy on the other.

This situation is now changing, but I feel that the success of the socialist forums in helping the Left revival will depend on their tackling the problems of socialism in Britain realistically and with modesty.

It should not be forgotten that the forums are, in the main, the products of disillusion, questioning and even confusion. They are not new centres of leadership.

To my mind there have been a number of weaknesses in discussions so far at London Socialist Forum and U & LR Club meetings and at the Wortley Hall conference [see The Newsletter, No. 1, pp. 3-6].

On the one hand there have been those who indulge complacently in uncritical general reaffirmations of Marxism, and who suggest that all that Marxism requires for its rehabilitation is a change of environment (to some, preferably, a new party).

On the other hand there have been repeated assertions of the need for re-thinking and re-examining theories and principles, but few fruits of these processes so far have been presented for consideration.

The gap between Welfare State-ism and Stalinism is still waiting to be filled. This will of course take time, but I should like to see the forums as soon as possible sort out the problems and begin to study them systematically.

Among these problems there are first the more fundamental ones of Marxist theory—the questions of democracy, the nature of the State, class struggle and class power—seen in the light of Soviet and East European experience.

Then there are the more practical problems, of which the most important is the state of contemporary British capitalism.

So much Left-wing thinking is based on assumptions of inevitable economic crises and collapse that some kind of analysis and prediction of the course of British capitalism seems to me to be required before a realistic socialist perspective can be worked out.

Other questions are the relationship of bureaucracy and socialism, the role of workers' control and the trade unions under socialism, the stages of socialization, wages policy and economic planning.

In my opinion the chief task facing socialists today is how to convince a majority of the people that socialism and eco-

LOCAL FORUMS IN THE USA

Besides the national 'American Forum—for Socialist Education', whose setting up was reported in The Newsletter last week, the USA already has a number of local socialist forums.

The Detroit Labour Forum attracts audiences of about 130 to its meetings and debates. In Chicago there is a Eugene V. Debs Forum, named after the pioneer of the American socialist movement. And in San Francisco the playwright George Hitchcock has helped to form 'The Independent Socialist Forum of the Bay Area'.

conomic planning will not bring bureaucracy and dictatorship, but greater efficiency and higher living standards.

Finally I should like to say something about sectarianism. Among the reasons why many people have left the Communist Party has been their desire to break out of their sectarian isolation.

It would be tragic if in the forums they merely formed themselves into a new sect. That is why I feel very strongly that the main political activities of forum members should be in existing parties and organizations of the movement, while the forums themselves become centres of socialist discussion on as wide a basis as possible, with Marxist ideas, 'revisionist' ideas and 'reformist' ideas contending freely.

The Communist Party has no policy for unity, despite all the lip-service paid to the idea. Between the last page of the Political Resolution of the recent Congress, which disposed of revisionists, liquidationists, opportunists, etc., and the first page of the revised 'British Road to Socialism', there is a yawning gap.

But the missing pages cannot be written, because a policy for genuine unity cannot be reconciled with the party's separate candidates, its monolithic discipline, and its insistence that in the end it must lead.

That is why I hope that anti-Stalinist communists who still remain in the party in the belief that democratic developments in other Communist Parties will ultimately force it to change, will participate in the forums.

There they can contribute to working out in a responsible way a socialist perspective for Britain, to be realized by future Labour Governments which will not be propped up by foreign tanks if they make a mess of things.

If the forums succeed in uniting the Left to tackle this job they will fully justify their existence.

DOCUMENT

HOW TO BUILD A MASS COMMUNIST PARTY

A political letter circulated this week to members of the Communist Party says once again that the discussion inside the party is over, and warns members in fairly clear terms not to participate in the Socialist Forum movement.

This internal document shows very well the present mood of the party's leaders. Both for what it says and for what it omits it is an interesting example of re-Stalinization. We therefore reproduce it in full.

Political Letter to Members

May 1957

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CONGRESS

DEAR COMRADES,

Following on the Twenty-Fifth Special Congress, the Executive Committee, at its first meeting on May 11, decided to issue this Political Letter to the membership on the significance of the Congress and the next steps for the party in carrying out the policies agreed.

On the basis of the Congress decisions we must now aim:

- (1) To increase the political activity of the party for the policy of the Congress Political Report and Resolution.
- (2) To develop close relations and united action with all sections of the Labour movement.
- (3) To strengthen the unity of the party and resolve remaining differences.
- (4) To improve the democratic working of the party and its political life, along the lines suggested by the Majority Report on Inner-Party Democracy agreed by Congress.



I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONGRESS

The Twenty-Fifth Special Congress took place at a testing time for the whole international communist movement. It was essential because of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU to review policy and methods of work. Yet this had to be done in the face of a tremendous attack of the class enemy, which hoped to take advantage of the situation to disrupt the international communist movement and to confuse and demoralize the Communist Parties.

The Congress was preceded by the most widespread public discussion ever held in our party. All viewpoints were given the freest scope. Alongside a wealth of useful contributions trying to apply the lessons of the Twentieth Congress or to make new constructive suggestions on policy, there were also contributions which tended to undermine the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, of working class internationalism and democratic centralism, and suggested the liquidation of the party.

The Congress showed that these ideas did not represent the views of the overwhelming majority of the membership. But in the special conditions of this discussion, opportunity was given for these viewpoints to be put forward in order that all such issues could be discussed and settled by the Congress.

Congress is the sovereign body of the party. Its democratic character was unmistakable. The delegates were democratically elected from the local organizations of the party. They employed the power they possessed to determine how the Congress should be run, to decide all questions of policy, and to elect the Executive Committee by individual, secret ballot. There is no other political party which has, or would dare to have, so democratic a procedure.

The delegates to the Congress, as the Credentials Report showed, were representatives of the key sections of the industrial working class, together with all other sections and allies of the working class. They brought to Congress a wealth of mass experience and contact. The average length of party membership of fourteen years was an indication of the party experience of the delegates. This was reflected in the political maturity and seriousness of the Congress and its decisions.

Decisions by votes of full Congress were reached on every controversial issue. In every case these votes revealed an overwhelming majority for the policies put forward by the Executive Committee against the alternative propositions of a revisionist nature. The Minority Report on Inner-Party Democracy was rejected by over twenty to one. This expressed the general outlook of the Congress.



II. THE CONGRESS HAS ARMED THE PARTY

It was essential that decisions should be taken on the outstanding questions raised in the discussion in order that the party can fulfil its function of giving a clear and united lead in the struggle for socialism.

The Reports and Resolutions adopted by the Congress, and the decisions on the issues of controversy, have equipped the party with a firm guiding line and policy on all the main questions of the political situation, as well as on the rôle and functioning of the party.

The Political Report and the Political Resolution are the most important documents of the Congress for guidance on all current political issues. Congress presented a clear positive policy and line of class fight for the Labour movement in the period ahead.

The decisions on the following questions are especially important:

- (1) The united fight against the Tory Government.
- (2) The fight for peace, and the policy on the Defence White Paper.
- (3) Strengthened emphasis on the electoral rôle of the party, and rejection of propositions which would have weakened that rôle.
- (4) Definition of the rôle of the Communist Party, of the relations of the Communist Party with the Labour Party, and of the relations of the Communist Party and the mass movement.
- (5) Clarification of the stages of unity and of the idea of a future united party based on Marxism-Leninism.
- (6) Firm adherence to the principles of working class internationalism, and approval of the policy of the Executive Committee on the rôle of the Soviet Union and on Hungary.
- (7) Revisionism characterized as the main danger at present confronting the party, alongside the danger of sectarianism.

The amended programme, The British Road to Socialism, whose main principles were endorsed by Congress, represents a big step forward. The Report on the principles of this programme, together with the votes on the various amendments, clarified the party's position on many issues of our long-term programme and the application of Marxist-Leninist principles to the problems of Britain's road to socialism. The Congress decisions will enable a final draft to be produced which will go before the party organisations.

The adoption of the principles of the Majority Report on Inner-Party Democracy, together with the votes on the amendments, made clear the firm adherence of the party to the principles of democratic centralism. Congress, while approving the essential proposals of the Report for strengthening the democratic functioning of the party, decisively rejected and condemned all forms of factionalism, campaigning on inner-party questions outside the structure of the party, the counterposing of membership and leadership, and other suggestions which would have weakened the strength and effectiveness of the party.

The whole party now has the job of applying and developing the principles of the Majority Report in the most con-

structive way in order to strengthen the democratic life of the party. We ask all comrades to help in this. At the same time it will be necessary to prepare the new Draft Rules, Standing Orders for Congress procedure and methods of party discussions.

Besides the controversial items debated at Congress there were a great number of constructive suggestions contained in amendments not debated. These will be given the most careful attention by the Executive Committee.

A concerted and comradely effort should be made to win all party members to support and carry out wholeheartedly the Congress decisions, and to consolidate the unity of the party.

The decisions of the Congress now govern the policy and actions of the party in the coming period. They bring to a close the general discussion on the issues decided by Congress. The further discussion that is now necessary will be of a new type.

- (i) Within the party to help all members to understand and work for the Congress decisions.
- (ii) Discussion on the basis of the Congress decisions on new questions of policy arising, and on the many big political and theoretical questions which need to be considered for the further development of our policy in the light of Marxism-Leninism.



III. STUDY AND POPULARIZE THE CONGRESS DECISIONS

Much needs to be done to ensure that every party member becomes fully acquainted with the Congress reports and decisions, and understands them and knows the reasons why they were arrived at.

Not every member had the opportunity to attend the Congress, listen to the debates and to see what great efforts were made to examine the issues and to secure united decisions. It is understandable that for many comrades it is difficult only from Press reports to get a complete picture of the Congress. That is why all possible steps should be taken to get in all sections of the party an understanding of the results of the Congress.

The Congress Booklet (containing the three Reports and the Political Resolution) together with the Summary for Reporting (which alone gives the important votes on amendments) should be read by all members, and be made the basis of study and discussion.

In every branch there should be the most comradely discussion with members who may have queries or criticisms concerning particular decisions of the Congress, and these should be collectively considered so that unity is reached on the basis of the decisions of the Congress.

The unity of the Communist Party is not a mechanical unity based on discipline. The decisions of the Congress are binding on all members, but our aim must be that party unity is always based on political conviction, with careful attention to all questions raised by members. There should be no impatient or hostile attitude towards those who may still have points of disagreement, but comradely discussion to clear up such questions. At the same time, those who held critical views on various questions before the Congress, should now consider these questions in the light of the Congress discussions and decisions and give the most careful thought to the reasons why the overwhelming majority of the party has reached these decisions.



IV. GUARD THE UNITY OF THE PARTY AGAINST ATTEMPTS AT DISRUPTION

The firm decisions, clarity of line and unity of the Twenty-Fifth Congress have strengthened the unity and stability of the party.

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the attempts to disrupt the party will therefore be abandoned.

The capitalist Press has tried in every way to distort the Congress, completely ignoring the main speeches and policy decisions. We must not underestimate the confusion that this misrepresentation has been able to cause among the workers and general public.

Capitalist Press editorial comment has had to recognize that the vast majority of the party remains firm, and that the hopes of disruption have been defeated.

But the effort to disrupt the party is now taking on new forms. An organized effort is being made by people hostile to the party, open Trotskyists and some ex-members, to draw party members into their circle by persuading them to participate in 'independent' journals, or 'discussion forums' run under their auspices for the purpose of attacking Marxism-Leninism, the international communist movement and the Communist Party.

Frank discussion and united action on agreed issues among all sections of Labour, socialist and communist opinion are not only desirable but essential and the need for them forms a key part of our party's policy. We welcome, moreover, the increase in political interest brought about by events of the last year and recognize the positive aspects of this. At the same time it should be understood that:

- (1) Communists in all gatherings with non-party people must always fight for the principles of Marxism-Leninism and the policy of the party and reserve inner-party discussion and controversy for consideration within the party.
- (2) It is harmful to give assistance to Trotskyist and anti-party people who try to cover up their aims by the participation of one or two communists as sympathetic contributors in journals or conferences whose main political content is anti-communist and anti-party.

We are convinced that the political understanding of all party members will enable them to judge at their true value all attempts to disrupt the party or organise factionalism within the party from without, and that it will be sufficient for these attempts to be publicly exposed and brought to the knowledge of the members for them to be defeated.



V. THE NEXT STEPS

The most urgent need following the Congress is to bring to bear the full strength of the party in public activity. This should centre on the immediate issues (as part of the general line of the Political Resolution):

- (1) The fight against the H-bomb and for the ending of tests, with support to the Petition Campaign of the British Peace Committee; and to insist that the Government responds to the Bulganin offer of talks.
- (2) The fight on the wages front.
- (3) The development of a broad united fight against the Tory Government on all issues (rents, pensions, etc.).
- (4) The strengthening of the whole electoral work of the party.
- (5) A big effort to win new readers for the Daily Worker as our main weapon.
- (6) More attention to the improvement and strengthening existing Factory Branches, and the rapid development of new Factory Branches.
- (7) Development of the Young Communist League, and the allocation of party members to assist this development as decided by Congress.
- (8) Urgent attention to regular Marxist education in all branches, and the encouragement of personal study.

The Executive Committee is confident that our party can go forward, win back many members who have been temporarily confused during the recent period, and win many new recruits from all sections of the workers and professional people so as to measure up to the great responsibilities and opportunities of the present situation.

Yours fraternally,

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Dawn Breaks in Poland, by Stanislaw Kowalski

(This is the first in a series of articles by our Warsaw correspondent, Stanislaw Kowalski is the pen-name of a young Polish journalist, a friend of Adam Wazyk and Wictor Woroszycki.)

In February 1956, while I was studying the reports of the Twentieth Congress, a friend called on me and told me he had a document purporting to be a report of a secret speech made by Khrushchev to a closed session of the Congress.

I refused to accept this report as authentic and assured my friend that 'this is the post-Beria period: the era of secret speeches is past'.

Soon afterwards I had a telephone call from my borough party secretary. I went to see him, and received from him a copy of the Khrushchev speech. Its details, he said, might be revealed to party comrades.

I took it home and began to read. After twenty pages I telephoned some party friends. I read the speech aloud to them. For a while no one spoke.

I re-read the paragraphs dealing with the imprisonment of communists and the course of the Second World War.

We were too astonished to speak. Something which had

In 1944 I was one of a team manning an observation post in the July uprising. How often had I gazed through my binoculars at the Russian troops massing beyond the Vistula? And how often in later years had I indignantly dismissed the suggestion that these troops had been deliberately halted? But who could now say what the truth was?

Yet in the years immediately after the war the Polish part had undoubtedly been right. It had shown the way out of the grinding misery, poverty and oppression of the pre-war years.

I recalled the occasion in the winter of 1947 when I was one of a group of party agitators sent to a village near Ostrozka. There were seventeen of us, travelling in a lorry through deeply-wooded countryside.

We were about to turn a bend in the road when we heard the sound of rifle fire. The driver braked quickly. We grabbed our rifles and leapt down.

Unfortunately we had misjudged the direction of the fire, and we were pounced on from behind. We were taken prisoner by a unit of the NSZ, an armed fascist organization which had collaborated with the Germans during the war.

Of the men guarding us some were Ukrainians, one was German, and the officer in command was a Pole.

We were lined up beneath the trees.

'Who is the leader?' the officer called out. No one answered.

'All right. You can wait.' He drove off in our lorry and left us under guard for two hours. When he came back he searched us. The papers on the first comrade searched showed him to be the chairman of the youth organization in Ostrozka. He was immediately shot through the back of the head. Next the NSZ officer approached me.

'Are you a communist?'

'Yes.' He looked at my papers.

'You are too young to bother with.' Next but two to me stood the representative of the Central Committee, who was the oldest among us and was in fact the leader of the party.

As soon as the NSZ officer saw his papers he ordered us to form a circle around him and the CC comrade, whom he proposed to interrogate. He asked a few questions, but soon began to beat him.

Soon our comrade lay groaning in the snow, now red with his blood. Another young comrade who could no longer stand the sight of the beating reached forward to help the old man, only to be dragged aside and shot.

The old man was left to die where he had collapsed. Suddenly the air was filled with the sound of machine gun and rifle fire; we had been saved by soldiers of the internal security force (KBW).

Never was I more proud of being a member of the Polish Communist Party nor more sure that in the party lay the best hope for the people of Poland.

These were the years of silence

Recalling that incident as I lay pondering on the Khrushchev speech led me to recall another occasion when I went into the depths of the Polish countryside.

This was one Sunday in 1952 when I went as a party agitator to a village near Gretynin, about 150 miles from Warsaw. My task was twofold: to discuss international questions with the peasants, and to persuade them to deliver corn to the State and if possible form themselves into a collective farm.

There were about 120 farms in the area, each of six or seven hectares. But the solitary kulak in the neighbourhood owned a farm of some 25 hectares.

Immediately after the church service about twenty peasants gathered in one of the cottages. My first thought on seeing our meeting-room, with its earth floor and wooden boxes for seats, was how important it was that the Six-Year Plan should succeed.

I was questioned about the Korean war and the European army. I told them that the Anglo-American imperialists were

YOUNG COMMUNISTS RESIGN

Seven members of the South Liverpool branch of the Young Communist League have resigned in the past few days in protest at the decisions of the 25th Congress of the Communist Party.

They include the branch secretary, Elizabeth Rand, the treasurer and literature secretary, and a member of the League's Lancashire and Cheshire district committee.

In a statement to The Newsletter, Elizabeth Rand says the seven reject the Congress decisions, 'believing that neither the events in Hungary nor the disclosures of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU have been treated in a serious Marxist manner by the Stalinist leadership of the Soviet and British parties'.

All the seven have applied for membership of the local Labour Party.

been dear to us had gone out of our lives; yet we had to face the truth.

We saw at once that this was not a Marxist analysis.

'It is a piece of sensational crime reporting,' said one. 'But it probably means a new era in world socialism,' said another.

We sat and discussed the nature of the Soviet system in which such crimes had been possible; and we resolved that we would never again accept or condone the methods of Stalinism.

Within a fortnight it was possible to buy the text of the Khrushchev speech on the black market for 200 zlotys. Since its contents were the subject of general rumour I called a meeting of both party and non-party people in my firm and read the speech to them.

One colleague commented: 'Now we know why Stalin dissolved our own illegal Communist Party in 1938. He wanted to make an agreement with Hitler.'

Another said: 'I see now why the present party leadership doesn't want to change life in Poland. They are all Stalinists. The one hope is Gomulka's return to power.'

But I am going ahead too quickly. I want to write first of all about my own questioning and re-thinking and attempt at readjustment, the night I lay awake till dawn pondering the implications of what I had just read.

My father had been a member of the illegal pre-war party and had been detained for a long period at the concentration camp at Bereza, established in 1933 by Poland's fascist government.

He was killed in 1943 while fighting the Germans as a member of the communist Resistance.

The third article in the series by J. B. Salsberg has been held over to next week.

preparing an attack on the socialist camp through Asia and through Europe.

They listened in silence. These were Poland's years of silence. Some people spoke and the masses listened. No one discussed.

It was impossible to tell what they thought.

Then we turned to domestic affairs. The questions came thicker and faster.

'Why haven't we got new ploughs?'

'Why is there a shortage of nails?'

'Why can't we buy artificial fertilizer?'

I said: 'There isn't enough iron. All that there is is needed for the new plants.'

'Yes, yes' they interrupted. 'We know all about the new plants. Some young people from our village have gone into the towns and are working in the new plants.'

'Well,' I said, 'it is merely a question of time. The same applies to the artificial fertilizer.'

Then, seizing the initiative: 'The best way to get iron and steel is for you to fulfil your obligations and to deliver the corn expected of you.'

They said: 'It isn't so easy. We have had a bad harvest this year.'

'Yes, and there is no fertilizer.'

'What's more, there are not enough people to work the land—the young people have gone to the cities.'

'In any case the land here is bad land.'

I asked: 'Well, then, why don't you organize yourselves into a collective farm? It would solve many of your problems.'

'We have heard of this idea. There is one in a district near here, and it is quite good. But here it is a... complicated question.'

'Yes, complicated. I have daughters. I will need my land for their dowries.'

I said: 'Well, if you start to organize the State will help. You will be granted credits and agricultural machinery.'

'All right, we'll think about it. But remember, after all, we are only poor peasants.'

My unquestioning ardour

As I recalled this meeting I thought that a touch of the scepticism of the 'reactionary' Polish peasantry might have been of more value to me as a Marxist than my unquestioning ardour.

It was ironical to reflect that the very dogma which was alleged to have led to the worst crimes of the Stalin era—the view that the class struggle sharpens as socialism advances—was the one I had used to still the faintest doubts which might sometimes have disturbed me.

Then I remembered that day in July 1953 when I was serving as a political officer in the Polish Army. The news came through that Beria had been arrested as a foreign agent.

The following day I would have to give a lecture to the soldiers on current political events. But how could I explain that the man who had been for so many years the head of the security police in the USSR was a foreign agent!

All that day I discussed the problem with party friends. Finally we decided that this was another example of Stalin's thesis that the class struggle is sharpened with the advance of socialism.

Was it a coincidence that Radkiewicz had told a recent Plenum, when he announced the arrest of Komar: 'The enemies of the people are entering the party's ranks. Vigilance is more necessary than ever before. Komar will be tried and all will be proved.'

Bierut, too, had taken the opportunity of the Plenum to urge this very dogma of Stalin's as the vital lesson to be learned from his late master.

Next day I addressed the company on three main themes. First I dealt with recent events in Korea and insisted that the cease-fire proved that the USA could not win a small war without allies.

Finally I reached the Beria case. I said it was unpleasant to have to face the fact that an apparently trustworthy leading member of the Communist Party and Government should be revealed as a traitor.

But we must never forget that the imperialist enemy was very clever and would be prepared to utilize any weakness in the Communist Party.

The soldiers listened and said nothing. If I had said that the sun revolves round the earth the silence would have remained undisturbed.

The night ended. The dawn broke over Warsaw. And I was faced with the problems of the new day.

USSR

ANNA PANKRATOVA: A TRIBUTE

As editor of the Moscow journal *Voprosy Istorii* (Problems of History) Anna Pankratova, whose death was reported this week, waged all through 1956 a battle for truth which brought upon her head the anger of the CPSU pundits.

Not content with publishing articles which debunked Ivan the Terrible, or revealed what Marx and Engels thought about tsarism's colonial wars, she also opened her columns to studies in the history of the party and of the Civil War which gave a very different picture of the facts from that which readers had been accustomed to since 1929.

These studies reduced Stalin to his proper stature and revealed the true role of at any rate some (such as Zinoviev) of those whom Stalin had destroyed and slandered as 'enemies of the people'.

Party Life No. 6 (March) of 1957 wrote: 'Even now there are still some people of whom it is hard to tell what they believe in... Some articles published in certain journals, *Voprosy Istorii* among others, have begun to smell strongly of bourgeois liberalism.'

They shyly hush up the fact that the Trotskyists, Right-wingers and nationalists were enemies of the party, who in their struggle with it transcended the bounds of Soviet legality...

I have pleasure in this connection in recommending a Society for Cultural Relations publication—the SCR History Bulletin of May 1956, which carried the full text of Pankratova's speech at the Twentieth Congress.

Pankratova dealt with the suppression of some of Lenin's writings, the doctoring of the memoirs of old Bolsheviks and other abuses, denounced the 'adjustment' of historical truth to current political convenience, and, reminding her listeners of the approaching fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, warned:

'Incorrect portrayal of historical reality can prevent both our own cadres and also our friends abroad from making correct use of the precious experience of our party's struggle.'

L.H.

LETTERS

TO LABEL IDEAS DOES NOT HELP

WHILE agreeing with Edward Thompson [The Newsletter, No. 3, pp. 21-2] that gratuitous bitterness only does harm in discussions among socialists, I must disagree with him regarding the need for sharp and cold analysis where questions of political principle are concerned.

It was once said that the British Communist Party was a 'society of great friends', in which 'good relations with persons' took precedence over 'good relations with principles'. Perhaps there was something in the charge, and it may be at the root of some of our current troubles.

Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re is an excellent motto, provided one pays attention to the second part as well as to the first. In this connection, it seems to me that the epithet 'sectarianism' is being used as loosely and harmfully by some as 'revisionism' by others.

Though by no means of the opinion that Lenin was always

right. I feel sympathy with his point of view in the story he tells in 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back'.

"I cannot help recalling... a conversation I happened to have at the Congress with one of the "Centre" delegates. "How oppressive the atmosphere is at our Congress!" he complained. "This bitter fighting, this agitation one against the other, this biting controversy, this uncomradely behaviour!"

"What a splendid thing our Congress is," I replied. "A free and open struggle. Opinions have been stated. The shades have been made clear. The groups have taken shape. Hands have been raised. A decision has been taken. A stage has been passed. Forward! That's the stuff for me! That's life!"

"That's something different from the endless, tedious word-chopping of your intellectuals which does not terminate because the question has been settled, but because they are too tired to talk any more"...

The comrade of the "Centre" stared at me in perplexity and shrugged his shoulders. We were talking in different languages.

Now is a time for examining both past and present problems of the socialist movement with fresh eyes. It is hard, though, to examine objectively ideas for which we have made sacrifices and which have come to symbolize our own youth.

There is a temptation to get angry with people who insist that such an examination must be made—but this temptation ought to be resisted.

To label certain conceptions as 'Trotskyist' does not help in the least. Some of the ideas that Comrade Thompson has recently been expressing are easily recognizable to the student of communist Oppositions as 'Lovestoneist' (or 'Brandlerist')—but how does that help us either in understanding or refuting them?

Brian Pearce,
London, N.12.

IN DEFENCE OF THE ASJ.

from the assistant editor of the Anglo-Soviet Journal

SO FAR from consisting 'mainly' of translations, the last fourteen issues of the Anglo-Soviet Journal (Summer 1953 to Spring 1957) have been less than fifty per cent translations, none of them official Government statements.

Of translated matter, about a quarter has been 'heavyweight specialist'. Non-translated matter has been half specialists' surveys (one from Mr. Donald Veall himself), the rest eyewitness accounts and reviews.

So far from presenting a 'rigid unity of viewpoint', the translated articles alone are about twenty-five per cent controversial and argumentative.

The subjects covered—archaeology, architecture, astronomy, automation, co-education, constitutional and criminal law, electron diffraction, literary criticism, orientalism, phonetics, theory of ballet technique, unified electric power systems, etc.—hardly lend themselves to 'rigidity'.

There is not one translation of any official Soviet Government statement. Those by members of the Government are on subjects still at the discussion-and-controversy stage.

Much of the translated matter is amusing. We are, for instance, proud of having offered the first translation of Chekhov's comic masterpiece, 'Sergeant Prishibeyev'.

The allegation of 'distorted' book-reviewing might well offend some very distinguished contributors. The above fourteen issues reviewed 97 books (counting the 13-volume Stalin's Works as one) in 81 reviews by 48 reviewers, half of whom are university specialists and many without political affiliations.

The subjects covered were mainly translations from Russian, Russian-language texts, and the arts; about a quarter were on history, geography and international affairs, and about a fifth on specialist subjects.

The Anglo-Soviet Journal is a non-political, middle-to-highbrow, semi-learned quarterly. To blame it for not being a popular news-sheet is like complaining that caviar is not blackcurrant jam.

S.J.
London, W.8.

[Mr. Donald Veall has promised to comment on the above letter next week. Meanwhile, perusal of the book-review columns of the Anglo-Soviet Journal for 1955-57 has failed to reveal a review or even a short notice of Notes for a Journal.

Published in 1955, this remarkable document was attributed to the pen of Maxim Litvinov himself. Professor E. H. Carr, no mean authority on Soviet affairs, saw fit to write an introduction to the book.

Now, will S.J. tell us: did the publisher, André Deutsch, send a review copy of Notes for a Journal to the Anglo-Soviet Journal? And if so why has no review ever appeared? —Editor.]

NINTH PLENUM (continued from front page)

picked to pieces. Other more constructive ideas on democracy within the dictatorship of the proletariat have become an integral part of the programme.

So much for a few of the constructive points discussed at the Plenum. But there was another side. It is disquieting that Gomulka stuck the 'revisionist' label on many of his earlier fervent supporters.

That there are some unbalanced ideas emanating from the 'critics' is to be expected, and the fact that some irresponsible ideas should come to the surface should not surprise us.

Nevertheless Gomulka is using a grimy label. In 1949 when Rokossovsky returned to Poland as Minister of Defence, Trybuna Ludu, organ of the party, said it was a 'warning to revisionists'. A week later Gomulka, Spychalski and Kliszko were sacked from the Central Committee and deprived of the right to participate in any party authorities.

Gomulka's attitude towards such labels in future will prove whether he is not only a brilliant statesman but a true champion of the people. In Poland especially an indiscriminate use of labels covering many other people or party members will cause profound distrust.

There is another test for the Central Committee. The Eighth Plenum declared that one future line of development for socialist construction was through the workers' councils.

At the Ninth Plenum these were still described by Gomulka in friendly terms and he mapped out a rôle for them: that they should act mainly in an advisory capacity, as 'a form of workers' democracy'. The Ninth Plenum, however, made it clear that they would have no real power.

The important thing is that whatever the Polish party feels and says about the workers' councils having no say in Government administration, the workers have turned to them and in many districts ignore the trade unions, which have become discredited as a result of years of acting as a government rubber stamp.

Positive and encouraging changes

When assessing the Ninth Plenum it is important to tot up the score of the new administration since last October.

There is freedom to talk and criticize. The hated security forces have been cleaned up, and their numbers drastically cut.

The Polish Parliament, without providing a 'bourgeois' opposition platform, has after twelve years of socialism at last become more representative of public opinion, and has ceased to be a formal purveyor of party decisions.

—Artists can write and paint and think aloud without crippling restrictions. Spychalski has ended the privileges for high ranking army officers and their families.

Outbreaks of anti-semitism, particularly vicious after October, have been dealt with much more firmly as a result of the overwhelming victory of the National Front at the elections earlier this year.

These changes are positive and encouraging, and are only some of the results of the defeat of Stalinism, or, as is said in Poland, of 'conservative elements'.

Lastly, it should be said that in the amount of criticism and controversy it permitted the Ninth Plenum set a great example to other parties—for unity in a healthy party does not mean that constructive criticism must be stifled or critics driven out of the party.