

THE NEWSLETTER

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DOCKERS ARE ANGRY—AND THEY'LL FIGHT

By Our Industrial Correspondent

ONE hundred thousand portworkers are getting ready for battle. Slapped in the face by the employers, they mean to have a show-down over their rejected pay claim. Transport and General Workers' Union member Danny Connolly, who is on the London and St Katharine docks joint liaison committee, told me this week:

'We are incensed at the downright refusal of the employers to grant our wage claim. Why, they didn't even offer us 3 per cent.! Now the union must prepare for a real fight. We do not intend having a repetition of what happened in the bus strike, where the busmen were allowed to remain isolated.

'From the very beginning we want it made clear that other sections of the union will be brought in to defeat the employers.

'Furthermore, if the Government uses troops, as well it might, then the leadership must bring out every Transport and General member in the country.

These were also the sentiments expressed by another member

Julia Rajk

By Peter Fryer

THOSE who murdered Nagy could murder Julia Rajk without compunction. There seems no reason to doubt the reports from Belgrade that she and five other Hungarian communists have been executed. If protesting at the defamation and murder of your husband is revisionism, then Mrs Rajk was a revisionist. If calling for the removal of those who framed and hanged him, and the cleansing of Hungarian political life, is a crime, then she was a criminal. By this token the whole of the Hungarian working class are revisionists and criminals, for they shared her hatred of the régime of lies and blood and terror and they rose to a man to replace it with socialist democracy and workers' councils. This new and monstrous act of revenge is intended as a warning to them that no Marxist alternative to Stalinism will be permitted.

Though these new executions add but one more drop to an ocean of blood, our hearts are heavy beyond words. As many readers know, I attended the trial of Rajk in 1949, and—like every other Communist Party member in the world—helped to kill him by my acquiescence. I know something of what his widow went through. Hardest of all to bear is the knowledge that she died in solitude, without her friends and comrades being given the chance of pleading for clemency. In Cyprus and Hungary alike the murderers seem victorious. But one day the tyrannies will be overthrown and the victims avenged.

of the joint liaison committee, Jim Coughlan, a docker in the West India group.

'This is a deliberate and provocative challenge to the union by the employers,' he said.

'We must meet that challenge with the whole strength of the union.

'We want no fence-sitting by the Trades Union Congress. Its leaders should state publicly that they support our wage

(Continued overleaf)

PAINTERS WIN A STRIKE AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

By Our Industrial Correspondent

PAINTERS on a big Kensington building job have won a strike for the reinstatement of a coloured worker.

At Bowater House 46 members of the National Society of Painters struck for one day against racial discrimination and the employers' failure to honour an agreement.

Abbotts, the sub-contractors, had agreed with the union to take back into employment painters previously sacked by the earlier sub-contractors, Brookers.

The strike took place despite the fact that the firm had screened all employees by checking their 'activities' with previous employers, the screening being designed, of course, to eliminate militant trade unionists.

No letter for him

Abbotts had written to all the men who had been employed by Brookers, saying they could start work on various sites and after three weeks be transferred to Bowater House. But one coloured worker received no such letter.

Arriving at the firm's Harrow office he was told he could not be started. As soon as the painters heard of this they downed tools. Before the day was out the management gave way completely.

The Bowater painters regard this decision as an important victory for militancy and solidarity.

'STOP MAKING H-BOMB' IS CLAPHAM LABOUR'S CONFERENCE APPEAL

By 17 votes to two, Clapham Labour Party's general management committee selected for the Labour Party conference agenda the following resolution, submitted by Larkhall was:

'This conference, convinced that Britain alone can give a lead in halting the arms race and reducing the peril of nuclear war, declares itself in favour of the discontinuance of the testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons by Britain, and is opposed to the use of such weapons by or from this country.'

WE WILL BE BACK AGAIN ON AUGUST 2

Last year The Newsletter came out through the summer without a break. This year we are suspending publication for two weeks. So your next Newsletter will be out on August 2. Owing to pressure on space the second article in Peter Cadogan's series on the Labour Party education policy document has been held over to the next issue.

COMMENTARY

THE DOCKERS CAN WIN

THE outright rejection of the dockers' wage claim does not concern the dockers alone. It is a serious threat to all sections of the working class. Again the employers are using the tactics they used with some success in the bus strike: to isolate one section with the aim of teaching the whole working class a lesson in 'discipline' through that one section's defeat.

Why after making concessions of the order of 3 per cent. to other sections does the employing class now flatly throw out the dockers' claim without offering one halfpenny?

Six points stand out. (1) The recent concessions were only made because of the busmen's fierce struggle. (2) The increase granted to the railwaymen involved speed-up and sackings. (3) There is now beginning a new round of wage demands which the employers want to halt before it swamps them. (4) The bosses hope to smash the Dock Labour Scheme: poor though it is, the Scheme does offer portworkers some security against the dole and the use of cheap labour from outside. (5) In preparing for a general election the Government could appeal to middle-class voters to help it 'deal with' recalcitrant trade unions; therefore it would not be averse to a dock strike. (6) The employers want to weaken the Transport and General Workers' Union (see the report of the Smithfield inquiry), whose leaders take a much healthier attitude to their members' interests than do leaders who say wage increases should be tied to increased production.



The most important asset of the working class is the dockers' great courage and capacity to fight a sustained battle. But no section can defeat the employers on its own. Prolonged and sectional disputes bleed the union and the members. Therefore the employers can be beaten only if the whole might of the union is thrown against them in time, and if a powerful rank-and-file solidarity movement is built up. We want no repetition of the actions of the Trades Union Congress leadership during the bus strike. The TUC and Labour Party leaders must be forced to give their full support to the dockers, and those who play the bosses' game by participating in fake courts of inquiry must be repudiated by their members. Let everything be done to arouse the workers' initiative and will to fight; let organized Labour stand shoulder to shoulder with their brothers on the docks. The dockers can win a resounding victory, provided they begin *now* to prepare for the fight. Preparation means that every single portworker understands the issues at stake. It means bringing the dockers' case to the attention of hundreds of thousands of other workers. It means giving careful consideration in good time to all possibilities of solidarity action. The struggle is too important to be left to officials; from the word go it must be directed and inspired by rank-and-file militants, who have been seasoned in previous strike activity and who are directly responsible for their stewardship to their workmates.

DOCKERS (Continued from front page)

claim, and that they will bring other sections out in support if the Government uses troops.

FOOTNOTE. The National Association of Port Employers rejected the demand by the TGWU and three other unions for a substantial pay increase in May.

The unions warned the Ministry of Labour that a dispute was pending, and the views of both sides were placed before its conciliation officers.

On Monday the unions were told that the employers had said they could not make an offer. Commented Mr T. O'Leary, TGWU national docks officer:

'We are very perturbed about the situation. We don't want a strike, but if there is no offer we may have to. We have been very conciliatory, but we don't think arbitration is the right way out.'

HERE IS A MILITANT POLICY FOR BRITAIN'S MINERS

By Price Jones

THAT a new and far from tranquil era has dawned for the miners was shown recently when the National Coal Board turned down the claim of the National Union of Mineworkers for a forty-hour week for surface workers and a sick pay scheme for all workers. The resulting 10s. wage claim was also flatly turned down.

For the first time since 1947 a pay claim has been rejected without any compromise offer.

The union's only answer was to take the claim to the industry's National Reference Tribunal, apparently still cherishing illusions about the impartiality of such bodies.

In rejecting the claim Sir James Bowman, the NCB's £7,500-a-year chairman, says the industry cannot afford it because it would cost £11 million per year.

Miners will answer with the fact that ex-mineowners are still being paid (and will continue to be paid even though the NCB is finding itself in difficulties) compensation to the tune of £16,500,000 per year.

It is estimated that the total interest charge is now well over double the coalowners' average profits before the war on which compensation has been based.

Payments to the parasites

Miners will demand that their standard of living must not be allowed to suffer in order to keep up payments to these parasites.

Miners will insist that their union leaders demand that compensation payments be abolished.

In order to maintain interest payments, and in order to continue to sell cheap coal to private industry, the Coal Board has to cut the costs of production—of which wages is one of the main items.

This means tightening up on the miners. The absentee committees are bound up with this policy. So is the recent announcement that recruitment to the mines is to be stopped despite Bowman's statement not many weeks ago that the total manpower was still 2,800 short of requirements.

Coal output is to be maintained by the further exploitation of the men, and if possible in fewer days.

Despite the talk about persistent absentees' affecting output it is pretty obvious that extra coal at this moment would not really be welcomed.

Five-day week now?

As the Observer puts it: 'The Coal Board have about six million tons in stock, an unusually high figure even by pre-war standards. The one thing that would really cause trouble now would be a sudden burst of output from the British miners.'

(Continued on page 186)

Time and Tide's Tribute Must Spur Us On

By IVY READ

NEVER have I felt so proud of being a supporter of The Newsletter and its policies as when I read the two latest issues of the Right-wing weekly Time and Tide, and the current issue of the People's Guardian, mouthpiece of the People's League for the Defence of Freedom.

For here, from the pen of John Baker White, a former British military intelligence agent and former Tory MP for Canterbury, are two articles paying what every working-class militant and socialist must regard as a glowing tribute to our paper's work during the London bus and dock strikes.

Mr White, of course, is a most unhappy man whenever the workers get on their feet and struggle for their rights. So he looks around for 'agitators', 'Reds' and 'strike makers'.

FAR MORE ACTIVE. Last February, you may remember, he expressed the view that in recent months the section of the 'New Left' 'led by the Peter Fryer group has been responsible for considerably more militancy and agitation than has the Communist Party'.

Mr White is still of this opinion. He writes in the current issue of Time and Tide:

'In exploiting the official bus strike there is no doubt that the Newsletter group was far more active than the Communist Party, and justified the warning I gave of its ramifications several months ago in these columns.'

All The Newsletter did during the bus strike was to provide a platform for garage strike committees to express their views in their own rank-and-file newspaper. We put half our space each week at the disposal of the strikers.

To Mr White—and the People's Guardian, which greedily reprints one of his articles so as to make its retired brass hat supporters' flesh crawl—strikers who sent in their letters and articles became part of the 'ramifications' of a paper all the more sinister since its Editor is an ex-member of the Communist Party.

URGED POLITICAL STRUGGLE. Mr White reveals with horror that 'Mr E. A. David, a member of the Central Bus Committee, is in touch with the Newsletter group of ex-communists, who are centred round the Editor of this weekly news sheet, Mr Peter Fryer, the former Daily Worker correspondent in Budapest'.

In fact, Bro. David simply wrote an article for the Strike Bulletin. To Mr White and the People's League for the Defence of Tory Freedom there is something quite wrong about this.

The workers should be content to read what their betters write in respectable journals; when they put their own views down on paper that's dangerously near subversion!

Mr White says, quite correctly, that The Newsletter 'since the outbreak of the strike consistently urged its extension and transference into a political struggle'.

He adds: 'During the strike the special Strike Bulletin was delivered to garages and its circulation rose from 9,000 to 17,000 copies per week.'

'KEPT STRIKE GOING.' 'By the end of the strike Mr. Fryer and his assistants were in touch with twenty junior officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union in thirteen garages.'

On the dock strike, Mr White informs his readers that 'the Newsletter Strike Bulletin played its part in keeping the strike going'.

I think we do have cause for pride that our efforts during the recent struggles find this reflection—even in a distorted form—in two reactionary papers.

It helps to show that we did our duty as a small, independent socialist weekly. We did our duty—by serving the working class in struggle.

But there may well be bigger struggles ahead. And we want to be in a position to help the workers still further to meet the employers' attacks on their living standards and workshop organization.

WE NEED MONEY. This means getting ready for the publication of industrial supplements at regular intervals, written by workers themselves, chock-a-block with facts about their conditions and their fight, produced for mass sales on the job.

But we cannot do this without money. And money is in very short supply in our modest office. Energy we have plenty of, as we showed during the strike. But energy by itself cannot build a workers' weekly paper.

One other feature in this week's People's Guardian caught my eye. A long, long list, in very small print, of the people who have sent contributions to the People's League 'Bus Campaign Fund'.

A strike-breaking fund. Designed to take the bread out of the mouths of busmen's wives and children. Glance at the contributors and see how many of them are majors and lieutenant-colonels. 'Top people.' People who hate and fear the workers, especially when they are fighting for their rights.

MADE OUR MARK. There are scores and scores of them. And they are all prepared to dig in their pockets in the interests of smashing and crippling the working-class movement.

Readers, this should spur us all on to build our own paper. Small though it is, it made its mark in the bus strike. Thousands of London busmen speak with affection of the Strike Bulletin that stood by their side during a long fight.

New guarantees to the development fund include a promise of £3 a month from readers in Hendon and £2 a month from Islington readers.

Our warmest thanks to these comrades, and to an Edmonton reader for a donation of £1, and our old and dear friend Rutland Boughton for a donation of 2s.

SAYING OF THE WEEK

'However much truth is twisted into forcing facts into the communist pattern, and to whatever means communists are inevitably led when in power, in Asia they are often men of complete honesty and devotion.'

'Although we have long ceased in Europe to expect any

moral stature among communists, the communist ethic still has a meaning in Asia.

'A Nehru may stand out as a figure of integrity and ability; but take at random a dozen nationalists, compare them with a dozen communists, and the result might be startling'—(The Times, July 8).

MINERS (Continued from page 184)

One way which the Board can cut output is to stop Saturday working. Already miners' leaders have tentatively agreed to this course being adopted.

The president of the Yorkshire NUM states that now is the time to let the miners have their five-day week.

Certainly all miners would like to work only five days—but all workers cannot afford to do so.

When the scheme was first introduced the wage was sufficient for men to live on at a reasonably decent standard, but owing to the increased cost of living, Saturday work, far from being a 'voluntary' shift, is something that day-wage men are forced to want in order to maintain the same standard they enjoyed previously.

Most men are really dismayed at the prospect of having to make do on a basic five-day wage.

Before the NUM rushes into agreement to stop this voluntary shift, some adequate adjustment to the five-day wage must be made in order to compensate for the loss of the sixth shift. Miners will expect and demand this of the NUM.

Not isolated and aloof

These recent developments have brought home to the miners the fact that the coal industry, though nationalized, is not isolated and aloof from the rest of the nation's economy.

It has become obvious that the industry is dominated by the outside economy, which is capitalist in character.

It is becoming clear also that the pits are affected by all the fluctuations of that same capitalist economy, and also that the prime purpose of the pits is to supply coal to industry at cheap rates.

The Samuel Commission gave evidence in 1925 that there were grounds for believing that coal was being supplied to industry at cheap rates. There is no reason to believe that the position is any different now.

To add to this belief is the recent statement that coal imports are to be stopped and, as an incentive to private industry to purchase small coal, of which there is so much in stock, the price will be reduced. But not to coke, gas, electricity or railways (which are of course, nationalized) or domestic users.

Although far from satisfied with the bureaucratic set-up of the NCB the miners have remained loyal to nationalization because they have felt that it could and would continue to guarantee their living standards.

Nationalization is not socialization

They find that now this cannot be. They now see that nationalization as we have it is not socialization, but State capitalism. There will be a growing dissatisfaction with things as they are and a demand for something much better.

There is also growing discontent at the obvious link-up between the Coal Board and the NUM.

It is becoming more and more difficult to find any lines of demarcation at many points. The union's collaboration has meant that it has come to be regarded as merely the Board's production agent, and union contributions as a not-to-be-dodged stoppage like income tax.

Apparently there has been a feeling in the NUM leadership that the present set-up was 'perfection' itself, that we had achieved 'socialism' and that there was no need to go any further.

What miners will demand

This feeling resulted two or three years ago in the NUM's voting against further nationalization.

But miners will begin to see that to socialize the mines with some sort of effective workers' control and a standard of living that can be guaranteed can be brought about only when the whole of the economy of the country is nationalized.

In other words, it is not possible to have a single socialist

industry existing in a general capitalist economy.

To achieve all these desired ends the miners will see that action along the following lines will be needed, and will demand such a policy with increasing pressure:

Definite action is expected

They will expect that the NUM leaders, instead of their present collaborationist policy, will play a part more consistent with their terms of office. Instead of occasionally mouthing militant phrases, they will be expected to take definite action to maintain the miners' standard of living.

At the same time they must campaign inside the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party for the adoption by the latter of the policy that the next Labour Government will nationalize all basic industries.

With that as the aim the NUM must campaign along with other industries by all possible means for the removal of the present Tory Government as the first requisite for what will be to the lasting benefit of all workers—a socialist Britain.

SCIENCE**NUCLEAR POWER: GOVERNMENT IS IGNORING THE PERILS**

By Our Scientific Correspondent, J. H. Bradley

THE recent accident to a turbine at the Calder Hall extensions caused no radio-active danger, since radio-active materials do not pass near the turbine.

It seems that the device which keeps the speed of the turbine constant must have failed, and it speeded up so much that it flew apart.

This could not have happened if it had been supplying power to the National Grid, for it would have had to speed up all the other power stations in the country. Obviously one turbine cannot give enough energy to do this.

Yet the incident shows that our power stations must be safe even in face of extensive damage. In those now being built the reactor is cooled by high-pressure carbon dioxide, a slightly poisonous gas which becomes only very minutely radio-active in the process.

The heat from the carbon dioxide is given up to steam in devices called heat-exchangers, and the steam then drives turbines as in a normal steam power station.

If one of the heat exchangers were so badly damaged that most of the carbon dioxide escaped in a few minutes, something like the Windscale catastrophe could result, only on a smaller scale.

Fuel rods might burst, or become overheated and melt, and if air got in a serious fire could result.

Serious fire could result

These things are very unlikely, but it is no use pretending they could not happen. It is almost impossible to say how great is the risk—or, in scientific terms, how often it will happen—and a great deal can be done to cut down the risks.

But if it happens once in a century the price will be well worth while, for it means no less than the survival of Britain as an industrial nation whose coal reserves are running out very fast.

The decision to make plutonium for bombs in the new power stations is far more dangerous, not to mention the cost. In order to make the plutonium-239 needed for bombs, fuel rods have to be replaced much more often than if the plutonium is to be used for future power stations.

The longer the rods stay in, the more of the useless uranium-238 is converted to plutonium-239, but also the more plutonium-239 is converted to the useless plutonium-240.

A little plutonium-240 can be tolerated in a power station; but it makes the bombs of lower power.

Now, apart from the dangers of a sudden pressure loss when changing fuel elements (just as if a heat exchanger were suddenly burst open), moving fuel elements with the reactor running is a ticklish affair.

Without power for hours

If it should cause any of the reactor safety devices to turn off the power station, an intolerable strain would suddenly be thrown on other power stations in the area, and a large part of the country could be without power for several hours.

Such things have been known before, when a failure in one station or a transmission line overloaded all the other stations. Back in the days of power cuts it used to happen quite often.

Then it can happen that a fuel rod gets jammed, breaks, or catches fire.

This recently happened at the Canadian reactor NRX at Chalk River, and the whole building had to be cleaned far more carefully than any operating theatre. The reactor will not be working for several months.

A little bit of radio-activity even got outside the building, though not enough to be dangerous more than a hundred yards away.

More fuel rods means more factories for their processing, and more people exposed to the risks of these factories. More transport of rods means greater risks on the road and railways.

All over the town

A new, unused fuel rod is slightly poisonous but not radioactive. Some of them can catch fire in a very hot flame.

Just imagine, though, if a lorryload of used fuel rods met a

petrol tanker, and the resulting fire blew radio-activity all over one of our big towns.

And just try finding a route from Somerset or Essex to north-east Cumberland without going through a town.

Everybody has seen what a rail smash does to coaches. If a few fuel elements were mixed up in that twisted mess there would be an intolerable risk to rescuers and injured alike.

There is no sign that the necessary radiation monitors, or facilities for treatment, or protective clothing is available. I know of no evidence that the problem has even been thought of in Whitehall.

All these risks will come in any civilian power plan, but the making of military plutonium will make them three or four times as common.

Insurance companies are demurring

Happily there seems to be one place where sanity may yet prevail. The insurance underwriters do not seem inclined to let nuclear powered ships go sailing about just anyhow.

The bill for putting Southampton Docks, the Port of London, or the North Sea fishing grounds out of action for twenty or thirty years may seem nothing to the squanderers of the H-bomb, but the insurance companies do not seem to want to have to pay it.

Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect the question to cross the mind of a government which thinks it more important to be able to drop bombs on Moscow when most of our nation is dead than to store up wheat, canned food, blood plasma, medical supplies and essential raw materials for those who might have some chance of survival.

FRANCE

There has been a debate in our columns about the real meaning of de Gaulle's coming to power. We think it important that the debate should continue. Here is a reply by our Paris correspondent, Seymour Papert, to the letter from David Finch (see *The Newsletter*, June 21, p. 166) criticizing his views, and the first of four articles by John Archer putting forward another

point of view. Readers are invited to join in the debate.

FINCH HAS SPECIFIED THREE TRENDS—BUT THERE ARE CONTRADICTIONARY TRENDS TOO

By Seymour Papert

DAVID FINCH'S criticisms of my articles raise some of the most important questions about what is happening in France. These are:

(1) Is it true, as Finch puts it, that big business has 'pushed aside parliamentary forms of government', 'is looking away from its usual props—the "socialist" and "communist" lieutenants of capitalism—and is very seriously considering constructing a mass fascist movement'?

(2) Is the essential feature of de Gaulle's Algerian policy capitulation to the demands of the settlers?

(3) Is the motive force of the Algerian war big capital's interest in the recently discovered Saharan oil rather than the interests of the settlers and the more backward elements of France's capitalist class?

Finch answers categorically 'yes' to all three questions and accuses me of being naïve and complacent for not seeing these plain facts, or of being schematic in trying to talk them away.

I agree that Finch's position has a large element of truth in that each of these three features is a trend in the situation. But there are contradictory trends which, in my opinion, are very likely to dominate. I shall try briefly to review some of these.

Want to retain lieutenants

It is hard to know what big business is 'seriously considering', but it is a fact that in France there are no visible signs of the construction of a movement which even faintly resembles those associated with Hitler, Mussolini etc.

Far from pushing aside the 'socialist' and 'communist' props, de Gaulle has put Mollet in his cabinet. Perhaps he will be pushed by events to smash the 'Left' parties and the trade unions.

But the signs are that he and big business are doing their best to retain their lieutenants. It is hard to see why they should do otherwise.

It is significant that in the whole history of the Algerian war the Left in Parliament has always been 100 per cent. co-operative—it voted everything it was asked to vote: increased taxes, increased military service, special powers etc.

It is the Right wing which has been obstreperous and 'troublesome' every time the 'rational' conduct of the war demanded measures unpopular among the middle class on whose vote it depends.

Thus when Parliament was 'sent on holiday' the saner elements of big business had more reason to be relieved at no longer having the nuisance of the Right-wing MPs than at being rid of the 'communists'!

Parliament not pushed aside

One of the first actions of de Gaulle was to sign an agreement with Tunisia concerning the withdrawal of French troops. This agreement is essentially the same as the proposal made by Gaillard a few months ago which led to his being called a 'defeatist traitor' by the settlers and to his Government being turned out by the Right!

I do not say, of course, that this is the reason for the dissolution of Parliament. In fact Parliament was not pushed aside as Finch says; it simply collapsed in a situation in which it could no longer govern.

Moreover it is pretty certain that the new constitution to be proposed in October will be parliamentary.

I believe that big business is aiming at a set-up which will

permit something more akin to Tory rule in Britain than Nazi rule in Germany.

Reactionary, anti-working-class, yes. Fascist, no. To the degree that it does not succeed it will turn to fascist solutions. But this is a different prospect from Finch's, which regards its immediate aim as a non-parliamentary régime based on a mass fascist movement.

Is de Gaulle appeasing the settlers? Yes and no. He is a canny politician who is feeling out the ground. Finch cites the fact that he used the magic words 'French Algeria', so dear to the settlers.

But he also signed the agreement with Tunisia, which did not please them at all and which is more than words!

Fire and brimstone predictions

The question of oil interests is too complicated to discuss briefly. I believe that the more rational business interests know that sooner or later they will have to find a basis for a partnership with an Algerian élite for the joint exploitation of the oil and the Algerian people.

Finally, about Finch's remark that I sin in minimizing the threat to the working class.

I should like to emphasize that it is not necessary to make fire and brimstone predictions in order to fight de Gaulle in particular or capitalism in general. Both are horrible enough as they are.

ECONOMIC PRESSURES LIE BEHIND FRENCH CAPITALISTS' ATTACK

By John Archer

THE French capitalist class has never been among the strongest in the Western world. It belatedly developed industries which, even despite spectacular exceptions, remain technically backward.

France lacks coal and iron, and even today nearly half of her people live by agriculture, in conditions which exclude them as both producers and consumers from many of the benefits of twentieth century civilization.

Protectionism and price-rings have for a century held the prices and costs of French manufactures well above competitive world prices.

Cannot maintain independent place

French capitalism cannot maintain an independent place, even a modest one, in the world market without the aid of cheap colonial raw materials, without interest on foreign loans and without cheap labour in the factory and on the peasant's plot.

After Versailles they were too weak to make good their claim to lead Europe. By the 1930s their decline had become pathetically obvious.

The Resistance and the Liberation raised the hopes of the workers and peasants, hopes which the capitalists cannot possibly satisfy, for the old investments are lost, the colonial revolution is advancing and more efficient powers dominate the export markets.

Yet since 1946 a substantial industrial boom has remarkably boosted national production—by nearly 10 per cent. a year. French consumption of industrial and consumer goods has risen considerably, and far outstripped what the French capitalists can hope to pay for.

Loans, inflation, arms expenditure

Three things have made the boom possible, and each of these has, at the same time, prepared for crisis.

First, very heavy American loans and aid have paid for the new factory building, which has maintained full employment.

Secondly, inflation, while it systematically undid the people's efforts to raise their living standards, enriched the industrialists and fed investment.

Thirdly, the transiently high world prices of French colonial

products helped to provide export markets, even though defending the colonies (Indo-China, Madagascar, Algeria) meant rising expenditure on armed forces.

For each of these things the price must now be paid. The boom has strained the rotten foundations, for the situation is now more difficult for the French capitalist class than it was even before 1939.

Full employment has raised the workers' fighting potential. Protectionism and export subsidies have whetted the appetites of the peasants.

Balance of payments deficits

World prices of colonial products are now falling, and the Algerian question cannot be settled despite all the men and arms. If Algeria goes, West Africa goes too, and that will be the end.

The boom has been financed by recurrent deficits in the balance of payments. France has consistently imported far more than was being paid for, and U.S. loans covered the rest.

The OEEC reported in 1957:

'With the exhaustion of the foreign exchange reserves and the absence of loans from abroad, France will be faced in 1958 with the vital necessity of balancing her accounts.'

'It is obvious that if a readjustment of this order, amounting to about 35 per cent. of her exports or over 25 per cent. of her imports, is to be carried out in an orderly manner, rigorous action will be necessary.'

In 1957 private investment continued to soar, while State spending and mass consumption were checked. But no government which depended on votes in the National Assembly could apply the surgery drastically enough.

'Credit squeeze' was ignored

The capitalist class would not pay, and the workers and peasants would not give up their demands, however refracted through the parliamentary prism.

The Treasury tried to check the rise in imports and in inflation by a 'credit squeeze'. This the banks and industrialists simply ignored.

What could be cut: the Algerian war budget or the consumption of the people? For the capitalists would not agree to cut either their own consumption or their investment.

And already the rising cost of living had in 1957 left earnings behind. The authorities expected considerable wage demands this year.

The French capitalists, therefore, have no alternative to attacking the trade unions and working class. Why does their attack open with political manoeuvres rather than with industrial struggle, as in Britain?

(To be continued)

Constant Reader

Choosing the moment

THE growth of unemployment in the engineering trades, and the prospect of renewed clashes with the employers in industry generally, are turning the minds of many of the older generation among engineers back to the great lock-out of 1922 and the lessons to be drawn from it.

The leadership of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, having missed several opportunities to challenge the bosses in favourable circumstances, was eventually forced to give battle when unemployment had grown into a grave menace and union funds were heavily depleted.

Defeat was followed by systematic victimization of militants. My father was at one time a member of the old Steam Engine Makers' Society, which was absorbed into the AEU, and I

remember friends of his still in the trade, who after the lock-out had to travel all over the country looking for jobs, everywhere coming up against the employers' 'black list'.

March 1922 was a classic example of the need to avoid letting the capitalists choose the time and circumstances for a show-down.

If the union had reacted in April, 1921, when the first threats began, the outcome of the fight might have been very different; the depression was then in its early stage, and the engineers' lock-out would then have coincided with the miners' strike.

Rank-and-file committees

In such a situation, 'Black Friday' might never have occurred. As it was, during the lock-out the National Council of Labour, with 'Black Friday' behind it, devoted itself not to developing support for the engineers but to attempts at mediation.

There is a good account of the lock-out in the official 'Story of the Engineers' by James Jefferys (1945).

He says nothing, however, about the beginnings of 'Minority Movement' activity by militant workers in engineering during this dispute, though he does indicate the important role played by rank-and-file committees and the aid given by the organized unemployed in preventing blacklegging.

Reproduced in the book is the famous cartoon showing a starving family in the background with in the foreground an engineer asking: 'Must I work overtime while my mate and his family starve for want of work?'

Control of overtime was one of the issues in dispute. One of the demands in a programme drawn up in 1938 by Marxists was for reduction of working hours (without reduction of wages) in proportion as unemployment increases. This is likely to become a live issue again in the near future.

Whispering campaigns

I MENTIONED recently, during the bus strike, hearing somebody who should have known better (and possibly did) shooting a line about sympathetic and general strikes being illegal.

Since then I have heard the same thing from other quarters,

and friends tell me they have had similar experiences.

No doubt this is a 'line' being put out from some Right-wing centre in the Labour Party or trade union movement—just as the Stalinist leaders seem to have been spreading the story that 'The Newsletter and Labour Review are financed by the U.S. Embassy'!

The Labour Government of 1945-51 left undone a lot of things it ought to have done, we can all agree: but let's not let anyone forget that it did repeal the 1927 Trades Disputes Act.

According to Gollan

It is always interesting to read what the British communist leaders write for Soviet newspaper readers—a captive audience where information about Britain is concerned. John Gollan reviews the current political scene for them in Pravda of June 22.

He begins by praising the Declaration of the 64 Parties, goes on to report that the communist leadership in Britain unanimously condemn the Yugoslavs for their 'revisionism' (in particular for suggesting that the Soviet Union should be guilty of aggression), and at last gets around to the movement against the H-bomb.

Though the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is mentioned in passing, nothing is said about the Aldermaston march; on the other hand, a paragraph is devoted to the Communist-organized marches to American bases.

The big issue, it appears, is summit talks, and around this the party is developing mass unity.

Somewhat patronizing mention of 'Victory for Socialism' is qualified by the statement that only in unity with the Communist Party can Left-wing movements in the Labour Party achieve success.

As always, the party programme, 'The British Road to Socialism' is translated into Russian as 'Britain's Road to Socialism'. This helps to prevent awkward questions arising such as: if a British road, why not a Polish road, or a Yugoslav road?

BRIAN PEARCE

TWO EDITORS: TWO EPITAPHS

By ANNE DOOLEY

IN this troubled century, when manipulation of truth and distortion of history have become internationally flourishing industries, it is timely to recall the wise words of a twentieth-century Irish Don Quixote—Captain Henry Harrison—who deemed his life well spent in clearing Parnell's brave memory of the calumnies which over the years had tarnished its lustre.

In his book 'Parnell Vindicated' Captain Harrison wrote:

'It's hard to evade the idea that, for the common purpose of mankind, historical truth is needed, and that it behoves all people of goodwill to tender such little fragments of it as come their way, each his own small offering, to those whose task it is to compose the larger records.

'For if the smaller rills refuse to flow, there is small blame on the major stream for failing to carry a bank-high flood of truth.'

The Irish Democrat flourished

My husband, Pat Dooley, was proud to call Captain Harrison a friend, for although their 'solutions' diverged, both men valued truth, courage and social justice above all else, and during Pat's war-time editorship of the Irish Democrat they happily co-operated on several occasions.

During those years (1942-1945), despite editorship on a shoe-string, the fortunes of the Irish Democrat flourished.

Undoubtedly one of the primary reasons for the paper's re-

markable increase in circulation and prestige was Pat's un-failing delight in encouraging maximum controversy.

He believed whole-heartedly, not only that readers are entitled to know all sides of a question, but also that the truth, boldly faced, can only serve to strengthen the cause of socialist humanism.

Indeed, as is well known to readers of The Newsletter, to the end of his days Pat never flinched from facing facts, however unpalatable.

Thus, when he found chauvinism and corruption masquerading as communism, first at the Cominform, and later in Prague, he soon became ostracized by the more timid among his colleagues who feared his outspoken on-the-spot criticisms, and disapproved of his journeys to tell British communist leaders facts they had no wish to hear, much less to act upon.

Controversy and truth outmoded

But, alas, changing times, changing editors. The Irish Democrat today is edited by a Mr Desmond Greaves who, it would appear, tends to regard both controversy and an unflinching respect for truth as outmoded.

The March and May issues of the Democrat reveal a sad-denning example of how distortion of history begins, not merely in the columns of the millionaire Press and Pravda, but even in those of a paper purporting to serve the cause of Irish socialism.

Following my husband's death in February, Mr Greaves saw

fit to:

- (1) Reject a commissioned tribute to Pat's memory from Flann Campbell, presumably because he had mildly mentioned Pat's 'heretical' views.
- (2) Pen a strange editorial which, while professing to laud Pat's 'enduring contribution to the socialist and above all the Irish cause', implied that this 'man of the emotions' not only experienced intellectual difficulty in 'understanding' the corruption he had witnessed, but to the end had tacitly acquiesced in Stalinist crimes.

Not based on terror

Mr Campbell and myself promptly protested vigorously. In the words of Mr Campbell:

'To the end of his life Pat remained convinced of the necessity for world peace and socialism—but it was a socialism which would be based, not on lies, distortions or police terror, but on basic political truths and unshakable belief in the dignity and brotherhood of man.

'All these facts were well known to his friends, and since his death have been widely publicized. For the Irish Democrat to ignore them is an insult to the memory of a brave and noble man.'

In a similar protest from myself, dated April 13, which Mr Greaves has refused to print, I begged the 'painful privilege' of joining issue over certain statements to avoid 'injustice to a fearless man's memory'.

I also pointed out: 'Tyranny, capitalist or communist, begins with a contempt for facts, develops with a contempt for freedoms, and ends with the contemptuous suppression of lives.'

Not only has Mr Greaves reiterated that he 'won't print' my justified protest. In the May issue of the Democrat he has committed the editorial enormity of using publication of Flann Campbell's protest as a pretext to 'justify' a second mendacious article which, blandly defying the facts in his possession, basely impugns Pat's honour.

Treated like a leper

Greaves, one among the many who in the pre-Khrushchev years treated Pat like a leper, now hypocritically declares that it would be 'surprising' to learn Pat 'was horrified by what he saw of trials etc.', since Pat, after leaving Rumania, took another job in eastern Europe.

If Mr Greaves had been sufficiently courageous and honest at any time in the past six years to embark upon frank discussion with Pat, he would quickly have learned that Pat did so for one reason.

As a lifelong socialist he could not in those early post-war years believe the corruption he had witnessed among Soviet leaders would be matched by corresponding corruption among communist leaders in satellite countries.

Again, pretending 'surprise' that Pat did not suggest entering into controversy in the Democrat over events in eastern Europe, Mr Greaves conveniently omits to mention that far from inviting my husband to contribute controversial views, he carefully refrained even from inviting the then untouchable heretic to the paper's twenty-fifth anniversary dinner, though no man had selflessly done more to build both the Democrat and the Connolly Association.

Like the witch-hunting Pope Urban VIII who persecuted Galileo, Mr Greaves regards heresy as an unmentionable word. This blinkered fear of embarrassing truths leads him in turn to betray his dead colleague and his editorial trust.

Like all would-be dictators and petty politicians he seems to suffer from the delusion that adroit distortion can be relied upon to dazzle one's followers.

'We must start again'

Lack of scruple can never substitute for principle. Such apparently simple words as truth, justice and freedom retain a fathomless power, for they are the words that ordinary men and women still aspire to live by, no matter how many times they fail, or are betrayed by those who lead.

Mr Greaves has written his own epitaph as an editor, in his

seemingly insurmountable distaste for editorial integrity in this matter.

Perhaps Pat wrote his in the following words of advice to anguished rank-and-file socialists:

'Nothing, of course, will destroy socialism—or indeed communism. But I venture to suggest that we must start again—on new and more humane foundations, with a livelier critical faculty and with new leaders and perhaps new models.'

LETTER

WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD SOCIALISTS TAKE TO SUMMIT CONFERENCES?

THE attitude of Marxists to summit conferences should be determined by two basic criteria:

- 1) Do such conferences bring world peace any nearer?
- 2) Do such conferences reflect the real feelings of the majority of the world's peoples on such a vital subject?

I think that much of the confusion on this subject—which I feel is reflected in Cliff Slaughter's article (June 12, pp. 163-5)—can be cleared up if we examine what this demand means in practice.

The first post-war summit conference was held in Geneva in 1954. At that time French imperialism was facing its Nemesis in Indo-China. The armies of Viet-Minh were preparing to liberate the whole of Annam and Cochin-China after smashing the French forces at Dien Bien Phu.

At the same time the resistance to German rearmament was growing in volume and intensity throughout Europe.

At this critical moment the Soviet leaders and their Chinese partners stepped in and called for the summit.

Through Molotov the Soviet bureaucracy utilized the Indo-Chinese victory in order to conclude a diplomatic horse-deal with Mendès-France which bartered Indo-Chinese independence for a vague and unfulfilled promise to reject German rearmament.

What was the price?

As a result a temporary 'peace'—armed truce would be a more appropriate description—was secured. But what was the price paid?

American imperialism was able to establish itself more securely in Vietnam; the French were able to withdraw their remaining troops to North Africa; the London Treaty was ratified by the French Parliament; the elections in Indo-China were postponed indefinitely and the division of a living nation was formally concluded.

Thanks to the summit Indo-Chinese freedom was sacrificed on the altar of Geneva.

The second summit conference (1955) was more platitudinous—but no less dangerous. 'There ain't gonna be no war' was Sir Anthony Eden's message to the British public.

The bluff was called in 1956. Dulles threatened atomic retaliation if Formosa was attacked. Khrushchev sent 4,000 tanks to smash the Hungarian Revolution. Eden attacked Egypt.

These experiences lead directly to the conclusion that summit conferences are an inseparable part of big-power diplomacy.

The participation of the Soviet and Chinese Governments does not change the character of these conferences. It only lends them a more sinister flavour.

Socialists must be against secret diplomacy. We must warn the working class to put NO faith in big power summit conferences even though they may be held for a limited and specific purpose.

One final point. The struggle for peace is a struggle for working-class power, which alone can eliminate the causes of war.

Support for summit conferences diverts the energies of the workers from a real struggle for revolutionary ends to a false struggle for pacifist and essentially illusory ends.

London, S.W.12

Michael Banda