

THE NEWSLETTER

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a service to socialists

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BLACKPOOL & BRIGHTON CAN GIVE US NEW HEART

By George Cunvin

AS for the Labour Party conference, so for the Trades Union Congress, which opens at Blackpool on September 2. The answer from the ranks of organized labour to the employers' offensive is a call for militant action all along the line.

Trade union branches want no more truck than do divisional Labour Parties with the half-baked ideas contained in *Industry and Society*.

The Constructional Engineering Union calls on Congress to reassert the need for public ownership and exchange.

The draughtsmen call for the taking over of the machine tool industry and the building workers want their industry nationalized.

Workers on the job see none of the difficulties in taking over whole industries which seem to have given Transport House cold feet.

Deakin would turn in his grave

In a strongly worded resolution, which should make the late Arthur Deakin turn in his grave, the Transport and General Workers' Union rejects the policy of wage restraint in any form and reaffirms the determination of the trade union movement, while prices and profits remain uncontrolled, to take such steps, industrially, as will ensure that wages keep pace with rising costs.

The National Union of General and Municipal Workers and the Electrical Trades Union have also put down motions rejecting out of hand any supreme court or similar advisory body which would impose a wages policy on the trades union movement and reaffirming their confidence in collective bargaining as the means of achieving the aims and objects of the organized workers.

The boilermakers want to add punch to Labour's fight against the Tory Rent Act by asking Congress to support the idea of a 24-hour general strike.

This is the sort of language which fills the capitalist press with hysteria—but which puts fresh heart into the ranks of Labour.

Old age pensioners are never forgotten by active trade unionists. Unlike Cabinet Ministers, the worker at the bench lives in day-to-day contact with his old folk. It is not surprising, therefore, that six unions have sent in resolutions calling for increased pensions.

Action against Tory Government

Five unions want H-bomb tests to end. The foundry workers urge support for all unions struggling for a working day of no more than eight hours and a working week of no more than forty hours.

Mineworkers, woodworkers, theatrical employees and plumbers demand action against the Tory Government for failing to improve living standards and to maintain full employment. The attacks on the social services comes in for severe criticism and the medical practitioners want to eliminate prescription charges and special charges to finance the health services.

An interesting resolution from Natsopa seeks Congress support for the setting up of an independent corporation of a similar character to the BBC which would purchase printing machinery and plant for leasing at low rates to national and local groups which would then be free to publish as they wished.

The cine-technicians wants Congress to instruct the General Council to maintain the Daily Herald as the official organ of the movement.

HARD LABOUR FOR GERMAN 'PLOTTERS'

SENTENCES imposed by the Supreme Court of the German Democratic Republic on the four alleged associates of Professor Wolfgang Harich ranged from two and a half years' to five years' hard labour.

Walter Janka, former director of the Aufbau-Verlag publishing house, was sentenced to five years, although, according to the ADN news agency, he 'stubbornly denied' the charge of plotting to overthrow the East German Government.

Gustav Just, deputy editor of Sonntag (the Culture League's weekly) received four years' hard labour, Richard Wolf, a freelance journalist and radio commentator, three years, and Zoeger, editor of Sonntag, two and a half years.

ADN said that Harich, who is serving a sentence of 10 years' hard labour, was six hours in the witness box to give evidence against the accused.

EHRENBURG IN HOT WATER

ILYA EHRENBURG is the object of a suspicious and nagging critique in the June number of the magazine *Zvezda*.

The occasion is given by an article of his about Marina Tsvetayeva, considered by many as the most remarkable poet of modern Russia. She went abroad after the Revolution, returned in 1939 and killed herself in 1941.

The *Zvezda* article complains of Ehrenburg's praise for Tsvetayeva and observes: 'She broke her bonds with her country for a long time, and was subjected to the corrupting influence of bourgeois, cosmopolitan ideas. This was like being poisoned and it did not pass without trace. It ought to be mentioned first and foremost in an article about Tsvetayeva's poetry.'

MILITANCY PAYS ON MERSEYSIDE

Merseyside dredgermen are now drawing some £3 10s. a week more as a result of their recent strike.

In addition to a 10s. weekly wage rise they gained 20s. a week service pay. Although they did not achieve a reduction in their working week from 56 to 48 hours they did succeed in obtaining overtime rates for the extra hours.

SAYINGS OF THE WEEK

'The Europeans have come to realize that their old attitudes are out of date.'—Tom Mboya, 'The Way Forward in Kenya', *The Observer*, July 28.

'The Mau Mau "emergency", as it is called, is now almost over. You still hear of ambushes along the roads, but the Kikuyu tribe, which was the main source of the disturbance, has now been rounded up into newly built villages, and if any man strays outside at night he can legally be shot. (The white settlers, incidentally, miss the Kikuyus very much, for they were the best of domestic servants, the best of workers on the farm.)'—Alan Moorehead, 'In the Wilds of Africa', *The Sunday Times*, July 28.

COMMENTARY

LESSONS OF THE STRIKES

IT WAS their strength and determination which won the busmen their eleven shillings. The employers and the yellow Press, of course, denounced them for 'banditry', 'anarchy' and 'terror'. There were cries of 'intimidation'. There were no such cries against the very real and much more powerful intimidation by the employers. How else, for instance, should we describe the threat of many employers to sack workers who refused to accept the insulting rise of three shillings forced on them before the strike? Or the threat to dismiss thirty-two busmen at Rugeley without notice or holiday pay because they supported the strike? Employers try to intimidate active trade unionists in a thousand and one ways. The whole profit system is based on intimidation. That is why trade unions were formed in the first place. Even the right to 'peaceful picketing'—and everyone who has been on strike knows how narrowly the police can interpret that term—was won only by the strength of the working class.

The busmen and the Covent Garden porters have displayed that capacity for spontaneous organization which is a feature of every major working-class struggle. The same capacity for stubborn struggle, for rank-and-file initiative, is latent throughout the organized working-class, as the solidarity of workers who last week refused to run or use blackleg transport proved. This will to fight was shown in the resistance to sackings in the motor car industry. It was beginning to be shown in the recent engineering and shipbuilding strike. Right-wing leaders have condemned the workers' 'apathy'. But the busmen's strike has underlined once again the conclusion: there is nothing wrong with the ranks, look to the leaders! Far from making the workers 'soft', full employment has made them confident, combative and aware of their strength.

It is this spirit which creates the biggest single problem for Big Business and its government. It is their central problem. They meet it in every attempt they make to drive down living standards. And it is this spirit which guarantees the success of the fight against Toryism—given one other thing: a real socialist leadership.



YET it is just at this time, when the workers would respond to a bold lead, that the Labour Party leadership comes forward with its new policy statement, whose sole object is to avoid a collision with capitalism. If the Labour Party Conference is to act in accordance with the feeling in the ranks it will be obliged to reject this document. Between now and the Conference the Left wing will be directing its efforts in the local Labour Parties and trade unions towards that end. Not the least lesson of the strikes is that the workers are ready to respond to a policy which would prepare a united onslaught, political and industrial, to bring down the Tory Government and replace it with a Labour Government pledged to socialist planning. It would be unwise (and it could be catastrophic) to postpone this onslaught until a General Election of the Tories' own choosing.

The Week at a Glance.

SOUTH AFRICA: About 3,000 African women demonstrated against the Government's attempt to make them carry 'reference books' (identity cards).

USA: A race riot which spread over a two-mile square area of Chicago's South Side began when a group of white youths attacked a Negro picnic party in a park.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Rude Pravo complained that judges, police, public prosecutors and Supreme Court had shown too much leniency in 'certain cases of counter-revolutionary activities'.

FRANCE: Report of the International Commission against the Regime of Concentration Camps found that there had been 'several' cases of parachutists or police subjecting arrested Algerians to 'bad treatment and often to veritable torture'.

GUATEMALA: President Castillo Armas was shot dead by a member of the presidential palace guard, described as a 'communist fanatic'. First act of the provisional president, Luis Lopez, was to decree a state of siege throughout the country.

HUNGARY: Hundreds of 'counter-revolutionaries', including 27 students in Szeged, twenty miners (former workers' council members in Pecs) and 45 former workers' council members in Debrecen, were arrested in a new swoop by secret police.

'WAGES COURT' MEANS 'NO, NO, NO'

By Our Economic Correspondent

At the talks with the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week, the Trades Union Congress delegation turned down the request that it participate in the Government's proposed court on wages, prices and production.

The refusal of the TUC should not be misconstrued. There are strong union objections to participation in any tribunal which may appear to intervene in, or obstruct, free collective bargaining.

The objection, however, is not a refusal to collaborate with the Government in measures to control inflation: it does not even mean that no trade union leader will serve on the 'wages court'. It means only that the TUC will not be officially represented.

Thornycroft waved a big stick in the Commons on July 25. If 'saying no' to wage claims, he said, 'leads to some measure of disagreement, so be it. It would be better to disagree than to drift'.

'Clearly, the Government's super-court is to stiffen the 'no'. The idea is that when next a major wage demand is brewing this 'impartial body' of experts, including in all probability some trade union figure, will be brought in to condemn it.

MERSEY 'BLUES' WANT SAY ON BOARD

MERSEYSIDE members of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers—the 'blue union'—are campaigning for representation on the local Dock Labour Board.

Dockworkers are allowed five members on the Board. The 'blue union' holds that the present method of election violates the Dock Labour Scheme.

Three of the workers' representatives on the Merseyside Board are lay members of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The other two are full-time officials of that union.

Present procedure is for nominations to be made in TGWU branches. The nominations then go to a ballot, conducted again through these branches.

In the last ballot the lay nominees did not get more than 200 votes between them. Liverpool had then a working strength of 17,000 dockers.

The Birkenhead nominee rolled up five votes. The labour force on Birkenhead docks is over 2,000.

The NASD has organized a ballot among its members to take place at the pay-houses on August 3. They will vote there for the two of their members they consider most suitable to serve on the Board.

A 'Lost' Tribe in Australia

A REPORT from the Darwin correspondent of The Times of the discovery of a 'lost' tribe of aborigines in Central Australia inevitably provokes a romantic curiosity here in Britain.

In the last year or two we have read of newly-discovered tribes in New Guinea, which was of course once part of the same continuous land-mass as the Australia of today.

Despite our similar reaction to two such finds, despite their proximity in space and their co-existence at this same point in history, the types of culture involved, and the significance of the discoveries, differ widely.



A WIDE GULF. The modern natives of New Guinea and the hunting peoples of Australia, of whom a bare hundred or two remain, are in fact separated by a wide gulf in social evolution.

Before taking up this difference in culture and social life, we ought to remember that a hundred years ago such discoveries were commonplace, but only a few enlightened thinkers and writers thought it worthwhile fully to investigate and describe the social phenomena involved.

The study of man and society as objective sciences (anthropology and sociology) has developed much later than the natural sciences.

Not until capitalism as a social system was entering its final critical phase did there break through any serious questioning of the social and economic order—just at the very time when the ruling class most feared such a questioning!

Of course, **within** capitalism these sciences will never truly flourish, since no exploiting and oppressing system can afford to entertain a science which treats none of its myths and assumptions as sacred, demanding the truth about history, both past and present.



THE DOMINANT MYTHS. As in every other class-divided social system, the dominant illusions of capitalism are connected with the idea that the behaviour patterns and institutions necessitated by capital (competition, aggression, individualism, monogamy, private property, etc.) correspond to something 'natural', or laid down for all time, either by divine decree or simply as part of an unchanging 'human nature'.

Thus it was very difficult for the scientific study of **non-capitalist** peoples, more and more of which were discovered in the course of the nineteenth century, to establish itself.

In fact there grew up new myths, like that of inborn racial inferiority, to justify oppression and even the wiping out of colonial peoples.

For this article however the main point is that, as in other fields of science and all human effort, the great treasure house of anthropological science presented by newly-discovered peoples in Australia, Africa, the South Seas, and the Americas, was destroyed by the exploiting interests of merchants, slave-traders, settlers, and finally the exporters of capital and planners of world war.

Estimates of the population of Australia at the time of European discovery vary: a modest and widely accepted figure is 300,000.



THEIR TERRIBLE FATE. A separate article would be required to describe the terrible historical fate and the present plight of their few thousand descendants.

Here there is no question of romantic longing to see the 'noble savage', untouched by civilization, living his unspoiled life close to nature; it is a question of the destruction of a society.

In some cases this meant the sheer murder of men and women, often shot for an afternoon's sport as though they

were wild animals. (Television viewers will recall van der Post's account of his own grandfather's participation in such exploits against the South African Bushmen.)

Disease was the main killer, and natives died in hundreds of thousands all over the world with the introduction by the whites of measles, tuberculosis, syphilis and other gifts of Christian civilization.

In Tasmania the brothers of the Australians were wiped out to the very last individual. Where populations were not physically destroyed, the people was severed from the land on which it depended and its traditional way of life decayed.

The Australian aborigines of today are such a people, decimated and reduced to underprivileged status in an alien civilization which has imposed its system upon them. As indicated above, the newly-found groups in Central Australia are highly exceptional in having maintained their isolation.



NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES. In referring to such peoples as 'primitive', it is customs and way of life that are under discussion. At one time it was thought, even by progressive thinkers like Morgan and Engels, that with higher levels of material culture went greater brain-power.

In point of fact, however, there are no significant differences of ability between the racial groups in the world.

The culture of these hunting and food-gathering people is called primitive because it is based on productive equipment and methods of a very elementary type.

Their only implements are digging sticks, for taking wild roots from the soil, and hunting tools such as spear-throwers and boomerangs.

The returnable boomerang represents the peak of ingenuity in the limitations of a hunting and food-gathering culture.

In different conditions in other parts of the world, and perhaps because of the need to hunt different types of game, there was invented the bow and arrow which, by using stored-up energy of a non-human kind in the bowstring, meant a great advance in techniques.

The Australian hunters represent, not a 'backward' people, incapable of the advance to civilization, but the last carriers of a stage in social and cultural evolution left behind by peoples in more favourable conditions.



STRANDED IN A LAND-MASS. Like every other people, their ancestors of prehistory wandered over vast distances.

Historical chance caused the Australians to be stranded in a land-mass with highly unfavourable geographical conditions which not only made excessively difficult the advance from food-gathering to agriculture, but which were to isolate Australian society completely from all the more advanced centres of civilization.

In New Guinea, climatic conditions and type of vegetation made possible the advance to cultivation of the land and settlement in permanent villages.

Much more space would be required to give an account of the way of life of Australian or New Guinea natives, or of their sufferings at the hands of colonialism.

When the newspapers, quoting the leader of the Australian government expedition, speak of the groups recently discovered as 'incredibly primitive', and eating 'rats, mice, lizards, etc.', they are describing a way of life not at all incredible but typical of peoples living in difficult, semi-desert conditions, geographically isolated, and relying on wood and stone as the only materials for production.

In this sense their culture is akin to that of the early predecessors of all men.

James Todd

'PUNISH THE FAMILY' CLAUSE TO GO?

An article in *Izvestia* of July 27 calls for revision of the Soviet penal code, and notably for the abolition of the second paragraph of Article 58 (i) (c).

This clause, which is dated July 1934, reads as follows:

'In the event of the flight abroad of a member of the armed forces, those adult members of his family who in any way assisted in preparing or carrying out this act of treason, or who, although they knew about it, did not inform the authorities, shall be deprived of liberty for a period of five to ten years, with confiscation of all their property.'

'The remaining adult members of the traitor's family who were living with him or were dependent on him at the time when the crime was committed are subject to disfranchisement and to exile to remote districts of Siberia for a term of five years.'

This Draconic paragraph has long been a source of embarrassment to the professional cover-men of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Only two years ago a Communist Party member was summoned to King Street to be quizzed by Reuben Falber as to why, in his capacity as an official of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, he had supplied an inquirer with a translation of the paragraph in question.

This translation had been used to confound a party spokesman who had declared that no such law existed or could exist in the USSR. The spokesman had indignantly demanded of King Street whether the SCR existed for the purpose of 'spreading anti-Soviet propaganda'!

DOCUMENT**'WHY I RESIGNED'—BY ANTONIO GIOLITTI**

The following is the full text of the letter of resignation sent by MP Antonio Giolitti to the Cuneo Federal Committee of the Italian Communist Party, and published in *Unita* on July 24.

Giolitti, who is 42, joined the party in 1940 and took part in the Resistance. His resignation was accepted by the Federal Committee, and he was not expelled.

DEAR COMRADES,

I feel I still have the right to address you by this title because the ideas and resolves which impel me to present to you, with this letter, my resignation from the Italian Communist Party are in no way a denial of my past as a militant communist and of my socialist ideals.

Behind the serious and bitter decision to leave the CPI (after over fifteen years of political struggle as a communist against fascism) is an experience which I have undergone and thought about deeply.

The answers given under the party imprimatur to my booklet, and the report of the last meeting of the Central Committee, deprive me of any remaining hope of opening up in the party an internal debate on the political and ideological problems which I have found myself repeatedly compelled to face for more than a year.

The ideas which I have expressed are now brought forward as a typical example, unique in the CPI, of 'unprincipled revisionism' and are branded as a conscious concession to anti-communism.

I have sought in vain to correct the deformations in my work which have been listed in support of these charges; moreover, in his report to the CC Togliatti, after having denied that in the booklet there could be found anything 'coherent or serious', claims to reduce it to two propositions which are not to be found in it.

He condemns them as heretical, as 'social-democratic banality' and as expressions of 'bourgeois ideology'.

But what matters is not so much the polemic against my presumed 'revisionist' positions, as the interpretation of Marxism, of the Twentieth Congress [of the CPSU] and the Eighth Congress [of the Italian CP] which emerges from this polemic, and which opposes every revivifying idea and every honest attempt to investigate the very serious problems opened up by the Twentieth Congress and by the facts of Poland and Hungary.

For this political reason, and in no wise from intellectual punctilio, I can no longer accept a formal discipline which

signifies my surrender of my fight for the ideas and objectives which today I hold essential for the victory of socialism.

The future will tell if the road I choose now is right, and should be followed by the socialist revolutionary forces in Italy and in the world.

But as to the present it is obvious that if the road to new ideas is barred for the workers all prospect of the conquest of power is precluded—to the point that in Togliatti's report to the last CC we find the bewildering admission that 'we cannot today concretely define how there can be realized' the objective of 'a democratic government of the working classes' laid down by the Eighth Congress.

And how could it be otherwise when we remain tied firmly to dogmatic and sectarian positions which impede the political and trade union unity of the workers, which is the only force capable of achieving the transformation of Italian society from capitalism to socialism?

To this cause I will continue to dedicate my energies. From this I will draw consolation for the grief of apparently separating myself from you, comrades of the Federal Committee of Cuneo, comrade partisans, workers, peasants, intellectuals, comrades in struggle for so many years, to whom I feel closer than ever now.

Our roads must join one day—and that day is not far off if we know how to work to bring it about. And the separation of today will prepare the more solid and effective unity of tomorrow.

For these reasons and in this spirit I request you to accept my resignation, without going through the procedure laid down by article 6(f) of the Statutes of the CPI.

Postscript. I am sending a copy of this letter to the secretary of the CPI, with a request that it be published in the *Unita* of Wednesday, July 24.

In view of my public duties this request cannot be considered illegitimate and trifling; my resignation as a deputy, which I will announce quickly after the publication, should be preceded by an accurate explanation of my act.

LETTER**POLICY STATEMENT ASKS FOR TROUBLE**

TO PRODUCE a pamphlet like *Industry and Society* in times like these is asking for trouble.

Bus workers have just fought a bitter struggle against the private companies; the market men are still doing battle against the bosses' charter; the workers at Standards, BMC, Nortons and Briggs have not forgotten their struggles against unemployment.

Yet the Right wing try to tell us capitalism can continue to run things with just a little help from the Government.

But there are protests all round. Reynolds News printed a letter signed by 32 MPs who call for the rejection of the policy statement. Constituency parties are putting forward specific proposals for nationalization.

The engineering unions are already parties to the Confederation's plan for engineering, which cuts across this document, and the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives has a nationalization policy too.

There must be a fight against the document, and those Bevanite MPs who believe that the policy is acceptable because it can be interpreted in many different ways must rethink their position.

The rank and file want a policy of nationalization—and we don't want the type we've got now, with Lord Stick-in-the-mud running it.

As a member of the Labour Party, I believe that Aneurin Bevan and the constituency representatives on the NEC should lead the fight against this policy statement.

They must not allow themselves to be put in a position of defending it at Brighton in October—rather, they should resign from the NEC and lead the fight from the Conference floor.

London, S.W.16.

..... **Dot Moulder**

While the Editor is on holiday The Newsletter will be smaller than usual. Normal size will be resumed on August 17.