

THE NEWSLETTER

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RIGHT-WING POLICIES BRING DEFEAT

Gaitskell-Bevan responsible

Labour Must Demand Emergency Conference Now!

THE Tories have won the general election with an increased majority. To the thousands of Labour supporters who have trudged the streets night after night over the past few weeks campaigning against Toryism, this will come as a harsh surprise.

The Right-wing chiefs at Transport House assured us that our election machine was better than it had ever been. Thousands of pounds have been spent on its improvement over the past few years. Gaitskell and Bevan told us that Labour's policy, because of its moderate nature, would secure the floating vote. In this connection the party paid the supreme price: nationalization was dropped and Labour candidates were committed to retaining the hydrogen bomb.

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(12)
(13)

O'Leary Covers up

By Our Industrial Correspondent

At last Tim O'Leary has broken his silence on the amendments to the Dock Labour Scheme.

On Wednesday, the national docks' group secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, issued a statement denouncing what he characterizes as 'trouble-makers' and 'unofficial elements'.

In a piece of red-baiting and scaremongering that would have made the late Arthur Deakin envious, O'Leary admitted that he knew all about the amendments to the Scheme. The right of the Dock Labour Board to disqualify a man from benefits for 28 days, O'Leary airily dismisses as a 'minor amendment'. But it was over this very issue that the 'Red Oxide Strike' took place in 1948. A strike which was opposed by the union leaders, but supported by thousands of London and Merseyside dockers.

O'Leary evidently considers the delegation of powers from the Local Boards to sub-committees and National Board Officers to be another 'minor amendment'.

Portworkers have had many legitimate grouses about the treatment they have received from the Boards for alleged breaches of the Scheme. Nevertheless, any docker would prefer to appear before a full meeting of the Board, on which the trade unions are represented, than have to take his chance before a full-time National Board officer.

O'Leary fails to explain why he and the other union officials on the National Joint Industrial Council, have kept hidden from their members the proposals of the employers to introduce unregistered labour on the docks during strikes. He knows that the Minister of Labour is considering the possibility of such amendments.

Dockers will no doubt draw the conclusion that O'Leary's red-bogey, is simply a red-herring, tossed out to evade the real issue of whether or not the employers are to be permitted to smash the Dock Labour Scheme.

The full responsibility for this severe defeat rests on the shoulders of the Right-wing of the Labour Party and Mr Bevan. It is their organization and their policies which have been acted upon.

Contrast the viciousness of Transport House in its recent witch-hunt against members of the Socialist Labour League, whose only crime was disagreement with the type of policies and organization responsible for this defeat, with the kid glove attitude of the Right-wing towards the Tories during the election.

Perhaps Ian Mikardo will reflect this morning on the vote he cast on the NEC for the proscription of the Socialist Labour League. Such retreats in front of the Right-wing, such fraudulent forms of unity lead in the end only to the type of defeat he experienced in Reading.

(14)

What is behind the swing to the Right?

It would be a mistake to try to find an easy answer for the swing to the right. This election was lost in the years that immediately followed the Second World War.

NATIONALIZATION Herbert Morrison, Ernest Bevin and their followers in the Labour government laid the foundations for this defeat as early as 1947 and 1948. Morrison called for a retreat from nationalization in 1948 and by 1959 this retreat had become a rout.

GERMANY When Ernest Bevin, as Foreign Secretary in the 1945 Labour government, permitted the nazi, capitalist gang to regain control in West Germany, he made certain that the Right-wing government of Adenauer was the order of the day for Germany. This was the beginning of the post-war turn to the right in Western Europe.

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(Continued overleaf)

Dockers Must Unite to Meet Employers' New Attack

By Peter Kerrigan

'THE need for all dockers is unity' declares a recent edition of the Merseyside News, organ of the Dock Section of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Certainly there is a great need for dockers to unite in fighting the employers' attack on the Dock Labour Scheme. The Merseyside News, however, has no mention in its four pages of the TGWU leaders' acceptance of amendments to the

Scheme which shamefully worsen dockers' conditions.

Their complete silence is significant.

Once again the docker is the victim of a package deal in which the trade union leaders get him a sham concession and in return put a bigger stick in the hands of the employers.

After 40 years service the docker will receive 40s. per week
(Continued on page 286, column 2)

RIGHT WING POLICIES (Continued from front page)

The German workers, prostrate and defeated by brutal nazi oppression and Allied chauvinism, needed above all help from a Labour Britain. Instead they were literally kicked in the teeth and handed back to their old masters.

STALINISM It must be said also that a large share of the responsibility for the swing to the right rests on the criminal policy of the Stalinists. By their brutal policies in Hungary and Eastern Europe they provided a tremendous propaganda weapon for the Right to discredit socialism all over Western Europe.

DE GAULLE The Tory victory at the election is the British reflexion of the gradual swing to the right which has been taking shape in Western Europe over the past twelve years. This came to its head with the victory of Charles de Gaulle (with the help of the 'socialists') and it cannot be halted now without drastic changes in policy and personnel in the leadership of the Labour movement of Western Europe.

decline and bankruptcy of
Fabianism leads to defeat

Fabianism is bankrupt. The Fabian concept that parliamentary struggle carried out gradually over a number of years would eventually bring socialism to Britain has been tried and found wanting.

Socialism is not a game of good government and bad government; of the Tories' and Labour's turn. It consists, above all, in the systematic preparation of the working class to take power. This preparation cannot be carried out on the basis of minor reformist concessions, but on the basis of a programme which aims to replace capitalism and institute a socialist society.

It is perfectly true that such preparation would not have brought immediate electoral success in the period after the war. What it would have done would have been to educate and prepare the workers and the middle class for power by consistently demonstrating the contrast between a socialist programme and Toryism.

The swing to the right which has just taken place on the part of a substantial number of backward workers and middle-class voters could only have been avoided by this type of education. Bevan and Gaitskell treat the voter as some sort of special idiot who has only to be promised a few carrots at election time to cast his vote for Labour.

By repudiating the class struggle they continually underestimate the powers of Toryism in this country. This power cannot be broken by a few slogans. What has now been revealed is that Fabianism and Social Democracy will never bring socialism to Britain and in the last instance will repeat the treachery of Guy Mollet, on perhaps a far greater scale.

The rank and file of the Labour Party are not to blame for this defeat. They were never given an opportunity to endorse the policies of Bevan and Gaitskell. Each Conference since 1955 which has adopted policy statements had not the slightest chance of amendment by a constituency or a trade union.

Forward along the socialist road

A new road has now to be taken. The road to socialism by a united struggle of all left-wing members of the Labour Party and trade unions on the basis of a socialist policy. This road will be a hard one at first, but there is one thing we can rely upon the Tories to do now. They will proceed openly under their true colours for legislation against the trade unions, encouraging unemployment, raising rents and reducing the standard of living: in other words back to the thirties.

The campaign for a socialist policy will be slow in the beginning, but the defeat at the election is not a definitive defeat for the working class. It is a partial defeat which can be put right by the prosecution of the class struggle which will now be stepped up on a vast scale.

The whole future of socialists in the Labour Party, therefore, depends upon recognizing this class struggle and really campaigning for socialist policies today. They must break

completely from reformism and class collaboration.

The Tories will not be victorious until they defeat the working class in the factories and workshops. To win at a general election is one thing, to defeat the industrial working class is quite another.

A socialist policy for Labour is already to hand, it has been adopted by tens of thousands of workers throughout the country. This is the policy of the National Assembly of Labour which meets on November 15.

- An end to the manufacture of the H-bomb;
- The strengthening of the fight for the forty-hour week, higher wages, defence of jobs and defence of shop stewards, against rent increases;
- A fight for the extension of nationalization;
- A fight against oppression in the colonies and against racialism in Britain;
- A fight against the bans and proscriptions inside the Labour Party and the trade unions.

The National Assembly of Labour will provide a great discussion forum on the lessons of the general election.

The National Assembly of Labour will demand an immediate emergency national conference of the Labour Party, so that the old gang of Right-wing Tory fellow-travellers can be removed and preparations laid for a new leadership and a socialist policy.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF LABOUR meets in St Pancras Town Hall on Sunday, November 15.

It is open to all those who are fighting against capitalism: in industrial struggles; against rent increases; against the H-bomb; and in the Labour Party.

Visitors' tickets (price 2s.) may be applied for on the form below.

Name

Address

Organization

Postal orders should be made payable to the Socialist Labour League and sent with this form to its address at 186, Clapham High Street, London S.W.4.

DOCKERS MUST UNITE (Continued from front page)

(if he survives that long). In 40 years 40s. will probably be worth about four bob.

To the older men immediately affected, the pension scheme offers very, very little. A £100 bait is to be given to men over 70. You can draw that on a good Yankee bet or a few weeks' good wages, but in these days have it swallowed up very quickly. They will also get a measly 10s. a week, but that will disqualify the pensioner from drawing the usual supplementary grant given by the National Assistance Board.

What have the port employers got in return for this miserable pension scheme?

Union officials have accepted amendments to the Scheme which mean that a docker can be denied benefit for 28 days. Merseyside dockers know only too well how freely maximum sentences are handed out for the most trivial offences. Militant dockers who have struggled on the job for better conditions have been particularly singled out for this discipline.

Is there any wonder that dockers are angry with trade union leaders who have agreed to men being subjected to this?

Now is the time to fight. We must get off our knees and kick out these vicious amendments before Parliament sets its formal, and what they hope will be final, seal on them.

INDUSTRY

UNOFFICIAL STRIKES

Part III: A Future Programme

By Brian Behan

THE extraordinary thing is that Robert Willis (LTS General Secretary) is also a progressive in the eyes of the Daily Mail. An editorial of September 9 entitled 'New note on strikes' says:

'The Trades Union Congress has heard some responsible people talking sound sense. The speakers we have in mind are Mr Robert Willis, Sir Tom Williamson and Mr Alan Birch. They recognized the problem of senseless and wasteful strikes.

'"The trade union movement might possibly have to find a new method of solving industrial difficulties without resorting to strikes," said Mr Willis.'

It is obvious that Willis and others are preparing for a new period of Mondism: the name given to the practice of class peace in industry proposed by Sir Alfred Mond of ICI as a result of the 1926 strike.

Mond's peace

The peace, of course, was all on the side of the trade unions. Everyone knows that those years were years of hardship and suffering for the working class.

This part of Willis's speech, calling for the abandonment of the strike weapon was not referred to by the Daily Worker.

That other 'left', Mr Cousins, has just written an article for the Financial Times Annual Review of Industry. In this article Cousins talks about co-operation. He says:

'Even as far back as 1927, while there was still some hesitancy about the part unions should play in the comparatively new field of relationships, the Trades Union Congress, speaking for the unions, agreed that the evolution of trade unionism depended on the workers accepting a positive role in promoting an efficient economic and scientific development of the productive system

'This basic thinking, in the formative years, has been invaluable, and many industries have developed good understandings between management and men which have enabled them to resolve productivity problems satisfactorily. The unions, both collectively and individually, have sought to further good relationships by participation with bodies such as the National Production Advisory Council on Industry

Recently, the appropriate Committee of the Trades Union Congress, again pointed out how essential it was for the trade union movement to recognize the need for additional numbers of their officers, and representatives at works level, to undergo training in production and modern management subjects.'

Class collaboration

Such a basic philosophy is little or no different from that expressed by the majority of the Right-wing trade union leaders, whose aim is to secure a relationship with the employing class in which production levels are raised, in other words in which capitalism is made to work efficiently.

It is also important to recognize that a certain part of the Right-wing trade union leadership is for the return of a Tory government. This was revealed at this year's Trades Union Congress when the attitude of the General Council towards a resolution calling for the return of a Labour government was made known. The General Council indicated that they wanted such a resolution to be left to a free vote of Congress, and it was placed last on the agenda.

To hide their class collaboration, the Stalinists prate about 'the necessity to work within the machine' conveniently forgetting that the drivers of the machine are employers' men

and have made certain alterations to the engine.

How is it possible to work within disputes machinery that is geared to allow the employers victory every time? In fact it is now clear that unless the rank and file have a machine of their own in the form of newspapers, committees and so on, then they have no hope of winning back control of the unions or of defeating the employers.

It is necessary that the Marxists in the trade union movement fight much harder for a programme of defence of the right of the workers to strike, and that a strike should be judged not by its label, whether it is official or unofficial, but by the strength of the issues involved.

We need to accelerate the building of a powerful revolutionary movement a hundredfold to lead the fight against the reformism of both the Right-wing and the Stalinists.

Revolutionary alternative

There are a number of factors that will greatly assist in the development of a revolutionary alternative. In the first place the Right-wing trade union leaders have used the argument 'Let's wait for the return of a Labour government' to hold back demands on wages and hours.

Gaitskell at Blackpool had made it quite clear that a Right-wing Labour government will concentrate on 'expansion' with the working class making the necessary sacrifices to expand a capitalist system.

At the same time big monopolies will press forward with demands for wage reductions.

In such a situation under either Tory or Labour the working class will swing back to industrial action as a means of solving their problems.

A sharpening economic situation can transform such struggles from being purely defensive and economic to ones in which the problem of power will be posed. The Tories are terrified that they may have to meet an economic crisis on the scale of 1929 without first having smashed the working class as they did in 1926.

Neither the Right-wing nor the Communist Party will be able to offer any real leadership in this situation. It is here that the great attractive power of the Socialist Labour League can be seen.

This programme of uniting workers in struggle for higher wages, the 40-hour week, for the extension of nationalization and against the H-bomb, is the only one that can solve the problems of the working class in a socialist sense.

The National Assembly of Labour will take place at a critical moment in the development of the struggle. It can usher in a new 'Minority Movement' based on the trade unions and Labour Party that will lay the basis for the defeat of the Right and the emergence of a working-class based on Marxism.

OXYGEN STRIKE ENDS

By Bob Pennington

BETRAYED by their union officials, denounced by the hierarchy of the Trades Union Congress, witch-hunted by the national Press, the workers at British Oxygen returned to work on Monday.

For a full week Fleet Street poured out a veritable torrent of abuse and vilification on the strikers.

Ignoring the fact that the men's claim had been lodged 12 months ago, the Daily Herald discovered 'A very odd fact' about the strike. 'They were also on strike in May 1955'—the date of the last General Election—screamed Labour's daily.

That pillar of Toryism, the Daily Telegraph, whimpered and complained about the tactics of the strikers' unofficial committee in 'misleading union officers and snubbing them.'

The Star thundered against the 'menace of unofficial strikes'. Discarding its liberal phrases and forgetting its chatty little homilies about individual freedom, the Star demanded that

'those who disobey, defy and denigrate the union rules, be 'kicked out'.

The right of workers to use their strength to speed up a wage claim constituted 'anarchy' and 'wrecking' for the Star. The absolute industrial monopoly enjoyed by British Oxygen is apparently in full accordance with liberal principles.

From the beginning of the dispute, Fleet Street set out to intimidate the strike leaders and to discredit their case. Roy Nash of the News Chronicle, always in business for a 'red plot', did his best in the edition of October 2 to tie up the strike with the Socialist Labour League.

'Keep politics out of industry' said the employers and the Labour leaders, whilst the employers' Press busily engaged in a political smear campaign.

What undoubtedly disturbed the employers was the emergence of a national rank-and-file committee. Here for the first time workers from the various depots came together to discuss their fight. The appearance of such a committee shows that a growing awareness is developing amongst industrial workers of the need to co-ordinate and join their struggles on a national basis.

This committee should not be allowed to lapse. The employers are due to give their reply to the wage demand on October 20 and the men must prepare now for a new struggle if the employers' answer is unsatisfactory.

The committee could strengthen its base if it offered a united front to the motor car workers. During the dispute 'black' oxygen was flown in from the Continent to Vauxhalls at Luton.

A pledge from the oxygen workers that, in the event of disputes between car firms and the motor workers, they will give full support to the motor workers would end any plans the employers may have for breaking a future strike of the oxygen workers.

The British Oxygen strike showed again the importance and necessity of rank-and-file committees. It also emphasized the need for these committees to have a political leadership which can break through the restrictive sectional divisions of the unions and co-ordinate the struggles of all workers against the employers.

The employers and their Press fully recognize the dangers for them of the emergence of such a leadership, hence their hysterical tirade against the strikers and their efforts to isolate every dispute.

HOSIERY WORKERS FACE PAY CUTS

By Alan Stanley

PAY cuts continue to hit workers in the hosiery and knitwear industry. At one Leicester knitwear factory women cutters have seen their wages reduced by an average of £3 in as many months.

Bonus was formerly paid on some work at the rate of 2s. 6d. a bale (24 garments). This has now been reduced to 2s. 3d. In other cases 2s. 3d. bonus has been reduced to 2s. 1d. In addition to this, a penny a bale bonus for cutting out a piece for the armholes bordering has now been withdrawn.

Despite the fact that modern fashions result in more difficult cutting, more favourable prices have not been given.

'There is no shortage of work,' one of the affected cutters told me. 'In fact we have been asked to work overtime. The firm claims it is in a financial crisis but nevertheless it is spending quite extensively on new machinery.'

This machinery is reducing the demand for labour. 'A bordering machine has been installed which is replacing hand work. On neck linking where one girl formerly operated one machine, two girls now operate three machines. When girls leave they are not being replaced.'

'The union is doing nothing,' I was told. 'Some time ago the organizer came down, had a cup of tea with the management and addressed us—over the loudspeaker system—presumably so that we couldn't ask questions. The girls were so disgusted they refused to switch off their machines in order to listen.'

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY WORKERS DEMAND IMPROVED WAGES AND CONDITIONS

By Harry Finch

SHOP stewards representing 120,000 workers in the electricity supply industry meeting in Birmingham, have demanded a vigorous fight for the 40-hour week, a substantial increase in wages and a fight for three weeks' holiday with pay.

In a statement to The Newsletter the chairman of this 150-strong stewards' conference, Bro. Len Pickersgill, told me:

'The feeling of the men in our industry is that we are grossly underpaid as compared with workers in many other industries. Our lowest paid workers receive only 4s. 0½d. per hour and the highest 4s. 10½d. per hour. Yet our jobs are highly skilled and we are responsible for supplying electricity to the whole country.'

'We discussed wages, hours and conditions in the industry. All resolutions were passed unanimously. We decided that action would be taken to force through our just claims.'

'We are calling for a national 24-hour token stoppage to fight for the 40-hour week. We are demanding that the lowest paid workers shall receive 5s. per hour, with corresponding differentials maintained.'

'The conference set up a national committee representing the shop stewards in the industry from the five unions involved; ETU, MGWU, TGWU, AEU and the Engineering Union of Firemen and Electrical Trades. This national committee will meet in London on November 7, and there we will take a decision as to when the one-day token strike will take place in support of our claims.'

Bro. Pickersgill, who is also the chairman of all electricity supply shop stewards in the Birmingham area, informed me that he has never seen such a determined spirit among the men in the industry. He said: 'Fifty-one power stations were represented, with delegates coming from Plymouth, Manchester, London, Yorkshire and Liverpool, as well as the Midlands. This is virtually representative of every major power station in the country.'

The men feel that they can be the spearhead in the fight for the 40-hour week and they certainly mean to take action against the scandalous wages being paid to them.

MERSEYSIDE DOCKERS UNITE FOR MASS CAMPAIGN

By Bill Hunter

MILITANT trade unionists working on or around the river Mersey met in Liverpool last Sunday to discuss how to build a unity of all harbour workers to defend and advance their conditions.

They set up a temporary committee of dockers, dockgate men, dredgers, tugboatmen and riggers.

This committee is to plan a campaign among Merseyside harbour workers, culminating in a mass meeting at the end of the month when a permanent rank-and-file committee will be elected.

The meeting carried a resolution on the Harbour Workers' Voice—a monthly paper started three months ago by a group of dredgers. This asked that the Voice should be expanded to serve all harbour workers in Liverpool.

Dockers at the meeting discussed the employers' attacks on the Dock Labour Scheme. They decided to begin an immediate campaign of dock gate meetings with the purpose of building a dockers' rank-and-file committee.

The first of these was held at the Gladstone dock last Monday dinnertime. Six hundred dockers heard Peter Kerrigan call for a fight against the proposed amendments to the Scheme.

Four dockers—two members of the Transport and General Workers' Union and two members of the 'blue'—were nominated to carry forward the campaign at the Gladstone dock.

EDUCATION

WHAT IS MARXIST THEORY FOR?

I. Theory and Activity

By Alasdair McIntyre

A Marxist movement is apt to be attacked from two sides. Intellectuals see the militant participation in strikes and lock-outs and cannot connect this with anything in their own experience. So we get the charge of 'mindless militancy'! Militant workers are equally puzzled by our stress on discussion, on argument, on theory. 'What good is theory to us?' they ask. 'We want action.'

At the centre of Marxism is the belief that theory which does not issue in action is mere talk; and that action which is not guided by theory is in the end always condemned to failure. But how does Marxist theory guide Marxist action? This is the question which I want to ask in these articles.

We can begin from the feeling of helplessness which many workers have. They feel that their lives are shaped and dominated by powers and forces far beyond their control. The operations of society appear as a set of impersonal happenings which impinge on men and dictate to them, whereas in fact what happens in society is always the outcome of human intentions, decisions and actions.

The young Karl Marx learnt from the philosopher Hegel that it is human activity, the power of setting oneself purposes and carrying them out rationally, which makes men different from all other beings in the universe. But of course, what men set out to achieve and what they want, are often very different from what they actually achieve and what they get.

So they come to see society and human institutions, such as the state, not as the products of human agency, but as powers with an independent existence. Man appears to himself the plaything of non-human forces, part of a system whose laws operate independently of what he thinks and wills. This is what Hegel called 'alienation'. But Hegel thought that all this came about because of the inadequacies of human thinking.

Men are enslaved by these alien powers because they have not progressed far enough intellectually. Marx argued that this alienation is created by the working of the economic and social system. 'Alienation' is not a word which described men's mistakes about their relation to society; it is a word which describes their real situation in capitalist society.

Under capitalism the vast majority of men, the industrial working class, do not and cannot have lives that are genuinely their own. They have to sell their labour power to an employer in order to live. The employer expends their lives in making such goods as he hopes will satisfy the demand. The lives of working people are turned into somebody else's property and become something 'alien' to them, first in the form of their working day which is given to another, and then in the form of the goods which they make, which belong to the employer and are sold as he wills and as he can, and finally in the form of the social system which exists only by virtue of their work, but whose chief effect so far as the working class themselves are concerned is the loss of their own lives.

It is worth remarking that this essential loss of control over one's own life occurs under capitalism (and under earlier systems of exploitation) even when capitalism appears temporarily to be alleviating its ordinary ills of poverty, unemployment and war. Even under boom conditions the workers' life is dictated to him by others.

Capitalism then is a system in which men's lives are dominated by a power which takes shape as the power of money, the power of ownership of the means of production. Men appear to themselves as helpless, because they are in the grip of a system which makes their labour power into a commodity, which needs their labour to produce as the system demands and their consumer power to buy as the system demands.

The satisfaction of real human need disappears as a purpose. In one sense all men are equally victims of the system. What happens to the capitalist depends upon its workings as much as what happens to the worker. But the important difference is in what happens.

'The possessing class and the class of the proletariat represent the same human self-estrangement' wrote the young Marx. 'But the former is comfortable in this self-estrangement and finds therein its own confirmation, knows that this self-estrangement is its own power, and possesses in it the semblance of a human existence. The latter feels itself annihilated in this self-estrangement, sees in it its impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence.'

Because of this the working class is the only class that has the will and the need to abolish capitalism. The only solution to its problems is the abolition of the system, in order to create a society in which human activity is not deformed into a commodity, and in which men begin to shape their own lives. This is the starting point of Marxism, but it is a starting point which already rules out any attempt to solve working-class problems by finding some way out within the system.

The question that is raised is how human activity can become an effective means of ending the system altogether.

BOOKS

'The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929' (Oxford University Press, 38s.)

'The Prophet Unarmed' is the second volume of Isaac Deutscher's biography of the man he calls 'the representative figure of pre-Stalinist Communism and the precursor of post-Stalinist Communism'. It carries the story from the end of the civil war and commencement of the New Economic Policy to Trotsky's deportation from Russia as the first Five-Year Plan was beginning.

The book runs to over 470 pages and is full of meat. Much new material has been used, especially papers in the Trotsky archives now at Harvard University. It is hard to select what to comment on in particular in a book which is so obviously a 'must' for every student of Soviet affairs, of the international labour movement or of Marxism.

Deutscher shoots down the legend of Trotsky the romantic and shows us how it was Trotsky who faced most hard-headedly the objective necessities facing the Soviet economy in the early 1920s. He was the pioneer of planned industrial expansion, which he saw as the only solution both to the problem of strengthening the worker-peasant alliance and to that of making Soviet Russia a firm basis for the world revolution.

His fight for workers' democracy was closely connected with his fight for planning. He saw that democracy was no luxury, but an essential, and this awareness saved him from the terrible mistake made by some of his followers in 1928-1929, when they imagined that Stalin's turn to industrialization meant that all was now as they had striven for it to be. Trotsky understood that, in his own phrase, in politics it is not only what is done but who does it, and how, that matters.

In contrast, however, to the Workers' Opposition leaders,

Trotsky in tackling the economic problems of Soviet Society, 'wrestled with a real dilemma', whereas they 'seized only one of its horns and clung to it'. He was never a believer in telling the workers what they might like to hear regardless of whether it was true or not. 'Say what is' was a principle he tried to follow steadily, whatever the temporary disadvantages.

Demagogic reform

Thus, in 1927, Stalin suddenly introduced the seven-hour day, though no basis existed for it and all current planning assumed a longer working day. The Trotskyists pointed out the demagogic character of this 'reform'—and this frankness of theirs was used to discredit them among the unthinking sections of the working class.

But Trotsky did not always adhere to his principle. During the period 1924-1926, after the defeat and disbandment of the original Left Opposition, he 'lived to fight another day' in the party, and that meant making such concessions as repudiating Eastman's book 'Since Lenin Died', with its pioneer exposure of Stalinism for Western readers.

Deutscher's pages on the reasons for Trotsky's passivity in these years are of exceptional value. He shows that Trotsky was fully aware, after his experiences of 1922-1923, that the apathy into which the Soviet working class had sunk was not something that would soon wear off, and that the power of 'the machine' to kill incipient opposition movements was immense; and he refused to share the heady optimism with which Zinoviev and Kamenev, new-baked oppositionists, embarked in 1926 on their short-lived struggle in alliance with him.

Additional factors in his passivity were his recurrent ill-health and his alarm at the 'support' any sally by him against the leadership received from anti-Bolshevik elements. And when the break of Zinoviev and Kamenev with Stalin did at last enable him to escape from isolation, the needs of this alliance compelled him to keep silence for a whole year on the

key questions of the Chinese revolution.

Another important section of the book discusses Trotsky's reconsideration of the 'Soviet Thermidor' idea, a process not completed until after the end of the period with which this volume deals. All through the 1920s he and his adherents had fought the bureaucracy for its tendency to yield to the rich peasants and the new bourgeoisie, and had indeed seen the bureaucrats as objective agents of those social forces, who might lead Russia back to capitalism. Stalin's 'left turn', with the liquidation of the rich peasants and final crushing out of the private sector by the State sector, cut clean across this conception as a continually valid one.

The emergence of the ex-worker bureaucrats as a social force in their own right (so far as internal Russian factors were concerned) necessitated a new look at the Marxist analysis of what had gone wrong with the revolution and how it must be put right. This Trotsky was to complete in 1936 with his classic study 'The Revolution Betrayed'.

'Not by politics alone'

Several reviewers have already drawn attention to the chapter called 'Not by politics alone . . .' (after an essay of Trotsky's) in which Deutscher reviews his subject's ideas and activities in the cultural field. Trotsky's amazing many-sidedness and the respect in which he was consequently held by writers and scientists was a potent cause of envy and resentment among those of his colleagues who 'prided themselves on their narrowness as on their virtue'.

His defence of artistic freedom and exposure of the half-baked idea of 'proletarian culture' made him deadly enemies amongst the parvenu officials for whom the revolution meant first and foremost power to dictate their will on all matters to all and sundry and to set up their pet notions as idols to be worshipped with a straight face even (and especially) by those who knew better.

Brian Pearce

Constant Reader George Padmore

As a negro Communist, the late George Padmore was active in the work of the League Against Imperialism which the Stalinists set up in 1927. There was much to criticize in that organization, but nevertheless the deliberate fading-out of it in the middle 1930s marked a deeper stage in the degeneration of the Stalinized Communist movement—and Padmore reacted sharply against this.

In the days of the Left Book Club, Padmore was one of the few who tried to develop a Marxist approach to world politics, resisting the 'People's Front' confusion spread by that disastrous concern. His book 'Africa and World Peace' (1937) was an important contribution to understanding the realities of imperialist politics, to which all too little attention was given in those days by sincere but muddled left-wingers.

On the ability of General Franco to use Moorish troops against the Spanish Republic, for instance, Padmore wrote: 'The People's Front programme in Spain did not once mention the question of colonies . . . Had the People's Front Government made a gesture to the Moors by pointing out to them that the new régime was the defender of their economic, political and social interests, then we feel certain that Franco would never have been able to have deceived these African tribesmen into supporting his cause.'

'This failure on the part of the People's Front Government is the political reflexion of its class composition. While we recognize that such a régime represents an advance over a feudal-clerical administration, it is nevertheless an imperialist government. And exactly because the People's Front Government has not broken with the policy of imperialism it is unable to carry out an anti-imperialist policy in the colonies, which alone can convince the colonial masses that People's Front Governments are fundamentally different from other bourgeois régimes.'

MARXISM AND HISTORY

RECENTLY attention has been given in the Press to the centenary of William Wilberforce, the campaigner for the abolition of the slave-trade, which falls this year. This is my excuse for bringing to readers' notice two books which throw Marxist light upon that episode, one of the most mystified and sentimentalized in our history.

These are 'The Black Jacobins' by C. L. R. James (1938) and 'Capitalism and Slavery', by Eric E. Williams (1945), the latter being an American publication.

James's book is primarily a history of the great Negro revolt in the West Indies led by Toussaint l'Ouverture. In his introductory matter he briefly sets out a conception of the struggle around the abolition of the slave-trade which Williams develops more fully and in a wider setting.

It would be useful if readers would send me the titles of books, pamphlets and articles which they have found valuable in convincing others of the materialist conception of history and which may not be as widely known as they should be. A many-sided propaganda for Marxism is among the principal tasks of the Socialist Labour League, and for this we need to 'mobilize' all the material available.

BRIAN PEARCE

MEETINGS

BIRMINGHAM The Arden Hotel, New Street,
7.30 p.m., Sunday October 11,

GLASGOW St Andrews Hall,
7.30 p.m., Sunday October 11,

COVENTRY The Centre Ballroom, Holyhead Road,
3 p.m., Sunday, October 11

ST MARY CRAY St Mary's Village Hall, High Street
7.30 p.m., Monday, October 12

BATTERSEA Latchmere Baths, Latchmere Road,
8 p.m., Wednesday, October 14