

THE NEWSLETTER

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STRIKERS TELL SACK-HAPPY BOSSES: 'IT'S NOT 1758'

By Our Industrial Correspondent

HERCULES shop stewards' convener Mr Albert Thompson put in a nutshell the reason why 2,000 employees of Tube Investments Ltd downed tools. 'The management seems to be acting as if it belonged to the eighteenth century,' he said.

And Midlands engineering workers are determined not to let managements get away with sacking *whom* they please, *when* they please, *how* they please. The workers, too, will have a say—and a big say.

The Tube Investments dispute is not the only redundancy struggle. At Alfred Herbert Ltd, Coventry, 3,000 workers recently staged a mass walk-out to discuss threatened redundancy.

At Daimlers the shop stewards are demanding direct negotiations with the BSA managing director to offset further redundancy in the factory.

The militant action of the Smethwick workers, and the splendid solidarity action of the Hercules workers (many of whom are women, including West Indian workers) has given a great fillip to the fight against sackings.

The arrogance of the employers brought an instant reaction. First the Smethwick workers were told they were going on a four-day week; then, one day before this was due to begin the convener was told that 80 workers were to be sacked.

There was no question of negotiation or consultation. The strikers' demands when they downed tools on January 3 were therefore the withdrawal of the dismissal notices and discussion on redundancy.

When the notices expired the demand became one for reinstatement of the sacked men. This is what the workers want, though many of them think there is a danger that the Transport and General Workers' Union officials will try to settle for less: for compensation and a guarantee of full consultation in future.

The expressions of solidarity that have marked this struggle—at the Hercules factory only four men stayed at work—are very heartening indeed, considering that the Midlands workers were sold out in one strike after another in 1956 by the trade union leaders and other 'leaders'.

THE WORKERS WANTED TO FIGHT ON

News of the Tube Investment strikers' return to work came as we went to press. According to *The Times*:

'The 80 workers whose dismissal led to the strike are being dealt with separately. All union attempts to secure their reinstatement have failed and they are to receive one week's wages as compensation . . .

'When the draft agreement was submitted today to the strike committee for approval, officials had some difficulty in persuading shop stewards to accept a return to work without these 80 men, but their objections were eventually overcome.'

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES ARE RISING

Ministry of Labour figures for unemployment and short-time working during November, released on January 10, are as follows:

The number of persons in civil employment fell by 17,000 to 23,080,000 during November.

The number of unfilled vacancies at Labour Exchanges on December 4 was 236,000—16,000 fewer than in November.

The number working short time in manufacturing establishments in the week ending November 30 was 59,000—an increase of 21,000 over the previous month.

On December 9 there were 335,000 registered as unemployed. Between November and December the number of unemployed rose by 19,000, of whom 18,000 were wholly unemployed and 1,000 temporarily stopped.

USA

5 MILLION U.S. JOBLESS NEXT MONTH?

From Our New York Correspondent

SERIOUS unemployment has now hit almost every major population centre and basic industry in the United States.

Industries hardest hit include aircraft, steel, auto, machinery manufacturing, railroads and timber, in addition to such chronically depressed industries as mining and textiles.

'There have been several forecasts that the ranks of the jobless will swell to as much as 5 million by February,' says the *New York Times*.

That will put the number of unemployed registered with government offices at the highest figure since August 1941, before the USA entered the second world war.

The west coast has seen the worst recent rise in unemployment. Until last June, when cutbacks on military aircraft production began, this area had enjoyed the nation's strongest boom.

October figures for registered unemployed in the whole region were 5.1 per cent. of the labour force compared with 3.4 per cent. in 1956.

Since October further sackings have occurred which have not yet been noticed in government reports. Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, for example, is expected to drop its work force below 50,000 this month compared with 67,000 in mid-1957. The Seattle area now has close to 10 per cent. unemployment.

Unemployment insurance claims in San Francisco and the

(Continued on back page)

COMMENTARY

DEFEND OUR JOBS!

THE Smethwick strike has brought to the fore the fight against unemployment. It is essential that the utmost support be given to the workers engaged in this fight, who are in fact fighting on behalf of their whole class. It is essential also that a clearer attitude develop throughout the movement on how jobs can best be defended. The union says the main reason for declaring the Smethwick dispute official was the employers' refusal to consult with the shop stewards on redundancy. It is important to fight for consultation, but the question immediately arises: consultation for what? The men are demanding that the working week be reduced to four days in order to spread the work and accommodate the sacked men. But the union's position is by no means clear on this question of the introduction of a four-day week for all instead of the sack for some.

There are trade union leaders who want consultation merely in order to regularize sackings and see they are carried out in an orderly way. They put forward slogans that sound militant enough but in practice can be used as an excuse for not facing up to the real problems: 'Let's ban all overtime now that the men are sacked'; 'let's fight for the first right of re-employment'; 'let it be last in first out', 'let's fight for full pay until alternative work is found'. None of these forms of struggle is bad in itself. But none gets to the heart of the problem: the fight for the four-day week instead of sackings.



That this is the heart of the problem is apparent from the employers' attitude. They have insisted time and time again that they have a kind of divine right to sack whom they please. Sometimes they will retreat to a position of being willing to consult about whom they will sack. But sacking they insist on, for there are financial advantages in dismissing some and speeding up the rest. Furthermore dismissals reinforce labour 'discipline'.

Now the four-day week alternative is by no means a complete solution. But Marxists see it as the most realistic method of maintaining unity among the workers. It preserves workshop organization, prevents the demoralization that comes from weeks or months on the dole, and presents real problems for the employers and the Tories. After a period on the four-day week the workers will begin to demand as a right the reintroduction of the full week, and to extend where possible the working time. Moreover they will naturally tend to fight against speed-up, which could reduce the working week still further. And outside the factory the workers will begin to demand political action to restore full-time working.

What then can workers do to support their brothers at Tube Investments Ltd? The Hercules workers, by downing tools in sympathy, have set a fine example. The immediate need now is for messages of solidarity to be sent congratulating the strikers on their stand and for financial aid to be given with all possible speed. But these messages and collections should by no means be confined to the industrial wing of the movement; each Labour Party, too, starting with the constituency and

city parties in Birmingham, should rally round the strikers, give them aid and discuss the meaning and implications of the struggle. Not least, workers should demand that their unions officially endorse the four-day week as the key demand in a real fight against unemployment.



There is a broader question that the Labour movement must face: its enormous responsibilities towards those workers who are already unemployed. The recent increase of over 50,000 in the number out of a job claims the attention of every working-class organization. Many of these are coloured workers, and already in the Labour Exchanges there are signs of ill-feeling between coloured and white. These divisions can be prevented if our movement initiates and leads a serious struggle against unemployment; if the organized workers discharge their responsibilities towards their fellow-workers who are out of a job; if each trade union branch and trades council carefully examines the unemployment situation in its area, sending representatives to the local Labour Exchange to discuss the unemployed men's problems with them and draw them into activity. Unemployment benefit for a man, wife and two children is £4 13s. a week; this is a starvation rate and those who receive it are suffering. This would be reason enough for a sturdy fight on this question, even if the growth of unemployment were not a menace to the standards and conditions of the whole class.

Let there be no division between unemployed and employed workers. Let them organize jointly and fight shoulder to shoulder. Let them jointly demand, for example, the nationalization of industries affected by unemployment. If an industry cannot give its workers a livelihood the time is ripe for it to be taken over by the State; this applies in the first instance to the engineering industry. Let pressure be put on the engineering MPs to raise their industry's difficulties in the Commons without delay.



The struggle against unemployment is the struggle for shorter hours and higher wages. There is a dangerous lull in the battle. Unions should be pressed to launch campaigns to mobilize their members and explain the issues to them, thus paving the way for a co-ordinated campaign led by the Trades Union Congress. The strategy of the Tory Government and the class it represents is to 'discipline' the workers piecemeal. We cannot beat them decisively in sectional battles. The only way for the trade unions to resist is to prepare for large-scale struggles to impose on the capitalists a working-class solution to a crisis whose most recent expression was the Government split. This involves readiness to call out the entire membership of a union in dispute where necessary. The only alternative is a gradual and possibly disastrous weakening of the working class, with section after section doomed to unemployment, wage cuts and the smashing of organizations. Such sectional struggles as the present one are the spearhead of the general movement: the movement must not fail those whom circumstances have placed in the front line.

DEATH OF A NEWSPAPER

THE closing down of the New York *Daily Worker* was treated by that paper's opposite number in London as if it were of no more concern than the closing of the Ladies' Carlton Club. In fact the British 'communist' leaders were glad to see the paper killed. Ever since the Khrushchev speech it was as much a thorn in their flesh

as in that of Foster and Co. Its outspoken criticisms of the Soviet leadership and the way it threw its columns open to free discussion were a standing reproach to King Street. Now what American imperialism could not accomplish, even with the FBI, the Smith Act and McCarthy, the American Stalinists have managed to do. They have murdered a working-class newspaper because it would not toe their line.

An Interview with Mikoyan

IN his recent book 'Russia Revisited' Louis Fischer, the American foreign correspondent who returned to the USSR in 1956 after eighteen years, tells of a conversation he had with Mikoyan:

'Let's drink to the truth,' I toasted. 'Good,' he agreed.

'This morning,' I said, 'I talked with a young communist who proclaimed that he loved Stalin. How is it possible to love a person who submitted his country to such horrors?'

Mikoyan: 'Yes, many still love him; he did much for the country. It will take time to change this attitude.'

'Why don't you publish Khrushchev's speech?'

Mikoyan: 'It's too early. But hundreds of thousands have read it.'

'The speech did not go far enough. Do you really believe that Bukharin was a wrecker and spy?'

Mikoyan: 'No, I don't . . . But you understand, Stalin held us in his hand. Only one escape was left to us—what Ordjonikidze did when he committed suicide.'

'I stood before the same decision. And at the end of Stalin's life I was about to be executed.'

'Now we have changed all this. Yet in the West we are attacked for what we did not do in those years.'

INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIAL ACTION CALL IN LIVERPOOL

RECOGNITION of the need for the Labour movement actively to combat the Tory offensive is growing in union branches in Liverpool.

Liverpool No 3 branch of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, in their resolution to this year's annual conference, call for the nationalization of the building trade.

They urge their executive to press the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party to work for this demand by waging a campaign to bring down the Tory Government, using industrial action if necessary.

Members of Liverpool Instrument Makers' branch of the Electrical Trades Union have sent a resolution for the agenda of their conference asking it to 'meet the threat of mass sackings with industrial action'.

A demand has gone from the Station Engineers' branch of the ETU to the Trades and Labour Council, asking that body to convene a delegate conference to discuss a campaign to bring down the Tories.

Following the lead of the Aberdeen plumbers, members of No 1 Plumbers' lodge in Liverpool have carried a resolution supporting them. The resolution, which is also for the union's biennial conference, calls for the 'blacking of all work on all rocket sites in Britain'.

BUILDING WORKERS ACT TO SAVE JOBS

By Our Industrial Correspondent

BUILDING workers 'must devise new measures to deal with both the Tories and the master builders', says a leaflet issued by the Chiswick fly-over workers in preparation for tomorrow's mass meeting at the Holborn Hall, London.

'An all-out campaign is needed now behind our [eightpence an hour] claim and for full employment.

'The two are connected because the more the purchasing power of our class is driven down the less we can buy and the greater the danger of slump and unemployment.

'Leaflets, site and branch meetings with public demonstrations are needed to back our union's demands.

'We must work to convince the local Labour Parties and trade unions that our claim for the nationalization of our industry is a realistic one.'

Tomorrow's meeting starts at 11 a.m. The former Federation steward on the Chiswick site, Mr Keith Balloch, who was sacked together with 38 other workers, says:

'This is happening all over London. Managements are sacking stewards to crush union organization, and the union is doing nothing about it. The union machinery needs a thorough overhaul.'

BARBARA CASTLE GREET'S 'KEEP LEFT'

BARBARA CASTLE, vice-chairman of the Labour Party, has sent a message of greetings to the Labour youth paper *Keep Left*, which has just made its appearance in printed form.

'Congratulations to Keep Left on its new venture into print!' she writes. 'It is good to see Labour youth sections forging ahead and producing their own socialist youth paper.'

'Young people should show initiative, drive, and independence of thought. That is why I welcome the production of Keep Left and wish it every success.'

In a postscript she adds: 'Since dictating this I have received a copy of your January issue. I do hope you will be able to keep it up.'

Those greeting Keep Left in its January issue include Michael Foot, editor of Tribune, Labour MPs Frank Allaun, Fenner Brockway, Harold Davies, Fred Lee, Ian Mikardo, Maurice Orbach and Konni Zilliacus, Coun. Harry Finch of Birmingham and Bill Jones, leading London busman.

HOW THEY UN-REWRITE HISTORY

In July 1917, when Lenin was on the run from the tsarist police, he sent a note to L. B. Kamenev asking him to see to the publication of a manuscript of his on Marxism and the State—the first draft of 'State and Revolution'—should he be captured.

This incident is mentioned in an article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of November 21, but Kamenev is not named; he is discreetly referred to as 'one of the members of the central committee'.

LABOUR**UP THE HILL FOR LABOUR: A SUNDAY MORNING CANVASS**

By Ursula Verity

CANVASSING time is here again. Unless we have a re-distribution our ward will never be won for Labour, for two-thirds of it is prosperous Tory, and full of dull people, while the rest consists of working people who are much more interesting to canvass.

That is why I stand as candidate year after year and am known as 'Aunt Sally' to the three Tory councillors who knock me down in turn. Nobody wants my ward except me and nobody wants me but my ward—that is, the working-class part of it.

Sunday morning I started my rounds. The response was as usual: 'Course we'll vote for you, lass, but it'll do no good' or 'Voting? Bother them politicians, they all eat out of the same dish'. (The actual words were a little less polite.)

Half-way up the hill lives one of my own collecting-book members. She is young, healthy and has just had her second baby, a much-wanted boy; he died soon after birth.

I had wanted to see her, though there wasn't much I could say to help. As she opened the door, her three-year old daughter was playing on the hearth. Carol is a beautiful child, who should have had brothers and sisters like herself.

'Didn't have a chance'

'There'll be no more,' said Mrs Gill quietly, 'not if I can help it. He was deformed, you know. There was a cyst on his spine, and they had to operate, but he didn't have a chance.'

'It must have been an accident in a million,' I said.

'It doesn't seem so,' she answered, 'not from what they told me.' Her eyes were heavy.

'They said this cyst used to be very rare, but they had had three in a month in that one hospital. Do you know what I wondered? Perhaps those H-bomb tests have something to do with it.'

'They could be causing all sorts of illnesses and deformities that we can't prove are due to H-Bombs. Like leukaemia,

for instance, that's on the increase all over the world, and bone cancer'.

She looked at Carol, then smiled without mirth.

'The clinic gave me a form to fill in, to have her immunized against polio, but I don't fear polio as much as H-bomb diseases.'

'Will you vote Labour in May?' I asked.

'I'll vote for you,' she answered, 'I don't know about Labour. They ought to be shouting louder about these H-Bombs, but even Bevan wants to keep the things.'

She followed me to the door.

'I'm glad you're well, at any rate,' I said.

'I'm all right,' she said, 'but there won't be any more babies.'

At the top of the hill is a friend of mine. She is energetic and full of optimism and fight. She, too, was worried about H-bombs.

Should make rulers listen

'Something must be done,' she exclaimed. 'The politicians must be made to listen to men like Professor Kennan, and Priestley, and the scientists all over the world.'

'How would you make politicians listen?' I asked her. 'There have been warnings ever since 1950, but our Tory Government, and Eisenhower's lot, and the Russians, all go on making the bombs, and testing them, and talking endlessly.'

'The workers should make their rulers listen,' she said in a surprised voice, as though this was a brand new idea from heaven knew where.

'Of course,' I agreed, 'and in England that can only be done through the workers' organizations—the Labour Party and the trade unions. So we can't separate the H-bomb problem from the struggle for socialism.'

'Priestley and the professors can express what many people want, but only the working class can do the job. It must control the wealth which it creates.'

'Just think what we could do with all that money!' she breathed. 'Anyway, how can we do the job?'

'Well you can start by helping to get more votes for Labour in May,' I suggested. 'Do the job that comes to hand, as part of the main struggle.'

'It would be easier if all the Labour people hated the H-bomb as much as you do,' she retorted. But she took the bundle of canvass cards I gave her.

Cunvin's Column | Profits and Patriotism**MY PROFITS RIGHT OR WRONG**

The Sunday Times City Editor justifies the threat by steel baron A. G. Stewart, chairman of Stewarts and Lloyds, to use all the resources of his organization to combat Labour's plans to renationalize the steel industry.

It should come as no surprise to socialists to learn that capitalism is determined to defend its profits and privileges by all possible means. Of course they try to justify their action by high-sounding phrases.

Thus Mr Stewart pontifically proclaims that: 'Nationalization of the steel industry, in my opinion, would be a disaster for the country as a whole'.

What he means is that it will rob Messrs Stewarts and Lloyds of their huge profits—£6,072,000 for the past year. But people like Mr Stewart genuinely identify the 'country' with themselves.

WHAT OF THE WORKERS?

But if it is all right for the capitalists to defend their economic interests with all the weapons in their arsenal—and most of the national Press seem to be unanimous that it is all right—what about the working class?

The workers' economic security is threatened by rising prices.

Their homes are threatened by increased rents.

The workers possess no vast capital resources which could be used in a gigantic advertising campaign against the rent act, redundancy, H-bombs, etc. Their economic power lies only in their hands and brains.

Yet as soon as any section of the working class threaten to use this power, if they decide on strike action to further some 'political objective', the whole pack of the capitalist Press is in full cry after them.

And, to our shame, many of our Labour leaders join in the hue and cry.

Let us learn from the bosses. Remember 'Mr Cube' fighting against the nationalization of the sugar industry on every packet of sugar you bought?

Remember the vans and lorries bearing posters extolling the virtues of private enterprise road transport?

This was the boss class in action using its vast economic resources to further political ends. Let us not hesitate to further political ends. Let us not hesitate to do likewise.

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE

In the course of his report to the shareholders, Mr Stewart also said, with reference to the renationalization of steel, that 'no responsible body has the right to play such a game of

political spite and tit for tat with the prosperity of the nation'. (There it is again, identifying the nation with Messrs. Stewart and Lloyds.)

Did he give the same advice to his Tory friends when they introduced the legislation to hand back nationalized steel to private enterprise? Not on your life!

All the reasons Mr Stewart gives against renationalization applied with even greater force against denationalization. Within the limits of its capitalist environment, nationalized steel was 'serving the nation well'.

Steel prices were below the world average; productivity increased every year. The industry even showed a profit—which to people of Mr Stewart's mentality is the final criterion of success.

Despite all this the Tories went ahead and handed the industry back to Mr Stewart and his friends. Was there ever a more blatant example of 'political spite and tit for tat'?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Labour Party must take up this challenge of the steel barons and throw it back in their teeth.

Here, in fact is the most cogent reason for nationalization: private ownership of the country's economic resources places vast wealth and power in the hands of individuals who do not scruple to use it to their own advantage and to sabotage all advances toward socialism.

But we cannot champion socialism with muted voices. Mr Stewart says: 'The Labour Party must be well aware that there is little confidence in nationalization in this country. Many of the general public are thoroughly disillusioned with it . . .'

In 1945, the 'general public' sent Labour to power with an overwhelming majority because it was thoroughly disillusioned with 'private enterprise'. They know now that when this system works 'normally' it leads to mass unemployment, lower living standards and war.

But the limited nationalization introduced by the Labour Government was still a long, long way off from that socialism which the electors of 1945 wished to see.

THE SOCIALIST ANSWER

Real economic power remained in the hands of the old ruling class. The boards functioned on very much the same lines as the capitalist joint stock companies they replaced. In many instances the very same persons sat on the boards.

This wasn't socialism but a mockery of it! This '20 per cent. revolution' left itself wide open for just the sort of criticism which Mr Stewart and his kind make.

BILL JONES BACK ON TGWU EXECUTIVE

Bill Jones, the well-known London busmen's leader, who resigned from the Communist Party a year ago, has been re-elected to the national executive of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

He will hold office for two years from March as one of the Greater London members' two territorial representatives.

Bill Jones was removed from the executive in 1950 under a ban on communists' holding office.

WILL RUSSIAN DIVORCE LAW BE RELAXED?

Literaturnaya Gazeta of November 30 publishes yet another story of tragic delay and red tape in the granting of a divorce, and calls once again for reform of the law on this matter.

'Sometimes people justify this extraordinarily complicated and cumbersome divorce procedure by the need to combat frivolous and unfounded divorces.

'Life has shown that a complex and cumbersome divorce procedure in no way helps to strengthen the Soviet family. On the contrary, this sometimes leads to people, in despair of getting a legal divorce, breaking the law.'

The answer is not less nationalization but more. All the decisive sections of the national economy should be brought under public control in the shortest possible time.

And within industry the entire set-up must change so that the old 'worker-boss' relationship gives place to a genuine system of workers' participation in management and control at all levels.

Then it will be possible to plan the national economy effectively; all the world will see that under socialism productivity will flourish as never before and the benefits will result in an improved standard of living for all.

VICTIMS OF APARTHEID

In Johannesburg the trial of 93 men and women—Africans, Indians, Whites and Coloureds—on a charge of 'treason' was reopened.

These people have now been on trial for a year. (Originally there were 150 of them, but 63 have been released because of 'insufficient evidence'.)

Many of them have had to give up their jobs. At least one of the prisoners has been divorced by his wife; all have been subjected to big economic and psychological stresses.

The Labour Party has helped to raise over £5,000 for the cost of the defence and to help maintain the accused and their families. This is a fine gesture of solidarity but we must not leave it at that.

Through resolutions we must make it clear to the South African Government that British Labour stands solid with the accused and will do all in its power to help them in their task of building a truly democratic and socialist South Africa.

GOOD-BYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE

So Sir Hartley Shawcross will resign his seat as Labour MP for St Helens before the end of the present Parliament. He finds it impossible to couple political life with his heavy business responsibilities.

I have been wondering for a long time how he was able to square his responsibilities to big business with his duty to the working class which, presumably, he represented as a Labour MP.

'Mr Gaitskell,' it seems, 'will be sorry to see the departure of someone of such appeal to the "moderate" voter.'

This regret is certainly not shared by the rank and file of the Labour Party. We are glad to see him go. Our only regret is that he didn't go sooner.

GEORGE CUNVIN

THE INVISIBLE MEMBERS

'There are nevertheless one or two organizational problems. We do make allowance for one or two who don't want any communications and want to pay an annual membership because we think that some people need special consideration.

'But I am not sure about members who for a very long time have never been seen, only a couple of people on our register as a matter of fact.

'Their stamps are put in their door in an envelope and the money sent to the dues collector by post. He tells me he has done this for years and never seen the comrades. I feel this is a sure way of cards falling to misuse.'

Bulletin of London district committee, Communist Party, December 1957.

GOING, GOING—

'The revelations of shameful actions during the last days of Stalin . . .' (Ivor Montagu in *Marxism Today*, January 1958)

First it was 'the last years'. Now it's 'the last days' . . .

The Algerian Revolution: Social and Economic Background

By MICHAEL BANDA

THE Algerian revolution has entered its fourth and—let us hope—last year. For three bloody years this small and impoverished nation, whose cultural and ethnic unity has been suppressed for over a century, has resisted the massive superiority of the French army and the squalid reforms of the Lacoste administration.

Despite tremendous losses—more than 100,000 killed and a greater number rendered homeless—and despite the terror of the French police and army, the Algerian workers and peasants have stubbornly refused to yield to the French.

What are the sources of this remarkable resistance? What sustains it? What are its prospects of success? I shall try to answer the first two questions in this article, the third next week.

128 years of oppression

Since the conquest of 1830 the French have systematically tried to obliterate every vestige of national identity in Algeria by incorporating the maritime areas (Oran, Constantine and Algiers) as departments of Metropolitan France.

Unlike Morocco and Tunisia, which were annexed much later and whose social and political order was not greatly changed, the process of colonization and exploitation in Algeria went much deeper.

The French took seventeen years to pacify Algeria. In the insurrection of 1871 alone more than 60,000 tribesmen were massacred and another 6,000 hanged.

Not satisfied with killing whole tribes, sacking entire towns and burning down villages, the French discouraged the use of Arabic and the practice of the Mohammedan faith.

Arabic is considered a foreign language in the French and State secondary schools. As a result the Arabic language has degenerated into a clumsy dialect written in French script.

Incredible as it seems, one of the first things an Algerian Moslem learns in school is that his ancestors were Gauls and that Algeria is a geographical extension of Metropolitan France! Not so long ago an Algerian teacher was given four years' imprisonment for teaching Algerian history.

The result of this 'educational' policy is easily guessed. Ninety per cent. of the people are illiterate. In 1948 the number of children attending school represented 0.7 per cent. of the population.

This policy of 'assimilation' was designed primarily to detach Algeria from the rest of the Arab Maghreb and break up the long-established pattern of Arab unity.

Democracy a meaningless word

Democracy is a meaningless word in Algeria. Until 1947 a Moslem had to reject his faith in order to acquire the franchise. Under the 1947 statute an Algerian Assembly was created on a two-college basis.

The French—outnumbered nine to one—had 60 representatives and the Moslems also 60. Even this mockery of democracy has been disbanded: only a few communes, on which sit a few 'Beni Ouis' (yes-men), exist. These, too, are dominated by the SAS—the Special Administrative Service of the French army.

Representation of Algerians in the French Parliament too was organized on a two-college basis with each college sending 15 representatives.

When the nationalists demand a Constituent Assembly the French respond by dangling the bait of administrative reforms. When the nationalists demand independence the French respond by brandishing the 'big stick' of military power.

The attitude of the French is summed up by Marcel-Edmond Naegelen (French socialist deputy) in *Western World*:

'What must be given to Algeria is not independence, but the right to administer its own affairs. What has been sought . . . is a broad form of autonomy, one which will leave the country within the orbit of the Western world and protect the country against the risks of civil war between the Europeans and Moslems loyal to France on the one hand, and those Moslems who have gone over to pan-Arabism or to communism on the other.'

The economy is distorted

Agriculture dominates Algerian economy. And Algerian economy is distorted to serve the interests of French industry and finance. Three-quarters of the population are directly dependent on agriculture.

Minerals—iron ore, phosphate rock, coal and non-ferrous metals—constitute 4 per cent. of the total economic output. There is little industry and production costs are extremely high because of scarce and expensive fuels.

The importance of the land question is shown in the fact that six-sevenths of Algeria is desert and that only one-sixteenth of the total area of 850,000 square miles is cultivable.

This area, called the 'tell', is approximately 16 million acres. One-third of this area belongs to 25,000 French landlords and the rest belongs to 2 million Algerian Moslems.

Needless to say that Algerian Moslems own the worst land, which in most cases cannot be irrigated. More than 70 per cent of the Moslem holdings cannot be considered normally viable.

Most of the Moslem farmers are subsistence farmers. Most cash crops are grown on the big French estates, many of them

This is the first of two articles by Michael Banda on the struggle of the Algerian people for national independence.

owned by firms in France, for instance the *Compagnie Algérienne*, which owned in 1930 about 174,000 acres. Out of 2,400,000 acres belonging to the French 1,700,000 were obtained by bloody expropriation.

Thus the land question is the fundamental and decisive problem of the Algerian revolution. It is the source of the terrible poverty, misery and oppression that prevails in this martyred land.

A workable solution of the agrarian problem demands first of all the nationalization of the big landed estates and the banks, and secondly a programme of intensive industrialization which would absorb the rural unemployed and help to increase agricultural productivity.

The land problem is aggravated by the colonial nature of Algeria's economy. The biggest anomaly is the wine industry. Of the total annual production only 6 per cent. is consumed in Algeria. The rest goes to France, where it is distilled into commercial alcohol.

The Sahara's black gold

Yet half a million acres of Algeria's best land is devoted to wine production! This also helps to explain the fact why Algeria has to import three-quarters of her food requirements.

The French—after eleven years of prospecting—have discovered a new reason for hanging on to Algeria: the existence of huge reserves of oil in the Sahara desert, which would make France independent of Middle East oil (and, incidentally, of

Nasser's canal) for at least fifty years.

At Haasi Messaoud and Edjele in the Sahara oil has been struck and pipelines have been laid. The total reserves of this area amount to more than 7,150 million barrels of oil.

Since Algeria is the gateway to the Sahara the question of holding Algeria has become a life or death question for French imperialism.

The creation of the Sahara Territorial Organization and the incorporation of the Sahara territories within the French Union indicate that France is determined to continue her repression for a long time to come.

The French administration boasts about its enlightened policy of social reform, but reality belies its propaganda. Fifty per cent. of Arab children die before the age of five, thanks

to poverty and malnutrition.

For every 100,000 Arabs there are only six doctors. As for malnutrition, the daily diet of the Arab is 1,500 calories; of the Frenchman, 3,000.

The major source of profit for the French is the cheap labour of the Algerian labourer. The income per head of the rural worker until quite recently was £20 a year. The town worker received about three times as much.

The fragmentation of Moslem land, the low level of productivity and the absence of big industry have driven thousands of Algerians to seek employment in France.

The figures speak more eloquently than all the rhetoric of the French government. They speak for Algerian freedom.

POLAND

BALANCE-SHEET OF POLAND'S ECONOMY

By Tom Kemp

It is something of a feat to discuss the Polish economy since 1950 without a mention of Stalin or Gomulka, but it is done in an article in the latest issue of *Economic Bulletin for Europe*.¹

Here is a highly competent technical survey, without a single propaganda phrase about 'building socialism' or 'communist tyranny', which underlines the current dilemmas of Polish economic policy.

After the three year reconstruction plan (1947-50) Poland was dragged along the path of forced-march industrialization by Stalinist methods. A tremendously high rate of investment was achieved in heavy industry, while consumption—by the ordinary people—fell, leaving 'productive capacity greatly increased, though in a seriously unbalanced pattern'.

By 1954 the strain had become so great that investment had to be restricted.

This phase was essentially the imposition on Poland of a pattern derived from Soviet experience, amounting to an attempt to build 'socialism' in one country with little co-ordination even with the other 'people's democracies'.²

¹This is published by the Economic Commission for Europe, a United Nations agency and one of the few bodies in which East-West collaboration between experts has been uninterrupted. This article is anonymous, is based not only on published official statistics but also upon information obtained directly from the Polish government. It is about as impartial as can be expected. All quotations are from it. The same issue contains an equally valuable and objective study of economic development in Soviet central Asia.

²Recognition of this is now general in eastern Europe. Thus Vladimir K্লাigl, Director of the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of Czechoslovakia, in a special article for the French Communist Party journal *Etudes Economiques*, no 100-101, has much to say about the international division of labour which might have come from, say, Trotsky. He writes:

'Before 1955, the division of labour between socialist countries was influenced mainly indirectly by long-term trade agreements and it was for this reason very inadequate.

'It often happened that different peoples' democracies constructed simultaneously powerful productive enterprises of the same type, production programmes duplicated each other, very large sums were spent to very little effect.

'All this led to insufficient utilization of funds available for production, to a lag in the technical level and a slowing down in the growth in the productivity of social labour.'

According to K্লাigl this situation caused problems for Czechoslovakia in 1953-55, since when it has been put right by the co-ordination of the economic plans of the different countries of the 'socialist camp'.

While there was excessive investment in some sectors there was insufficient investment in others. Farm buildings and some of the transport system suffered some disinvestment through lack of materials for repair work.

Some sectors lagged behind and held up the rest of the plan, the most serious shortcomings being in electric power and building materials. Investment in the armaments industry exceeded that in all light industries producing consumers' goods.

As an example of disproportionate growth, 'many engineering plants have been running at a mere 30-50 per cent. of capacity—and there are numerous large plants with an even worse record', owing to lack of high quality steels.

Amid the 'achievements', entailing heavy overhead costs in falling morale and wasted effort, went the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus with its privileges and luxury, and the oppression revealed at the famous Seventh Plenum in 1956.

In agriculture there was conspicuous failure. Output failed to expand as expected. Drives against the kulaks, some forced collectivizations and compulsory deliveries by the peasants to the State—on the best Stalin model—impaired output and antagonized the peasantry.

Postponed to Greek Calends

Consequently 'at the end of 1956 four-fifths of all collective farms were spontaneously dissolved'. Indeed, collectivization has been so discredited that although it remains 'the main goal' it has been postponed to the Greek Calends.

The tendency at present seems to be to strengthen private property and private accumulation in the village. The slavish following of Stalinist policies in the agrarian sector has thus resulted in a great retreat.

Thousands of artisans, who could have provided the basis for an improved production of consumer goods, were driven out of business—and into black market and other doubtful activities. Throughout the economy absenteeism, pilfering and lack of interest were besetting problems.

This article speaks, for example, of an important means of increasing output being 'the bringing into the normal production process [of] the effort that at present goes into private work carried on during absenteeism from the worker's usual job (sometimes using illegally acquired materials) . . .'

But there is no understanding of why such an attitude arose. It is, of course, a sad commentary on bureaucratic methods and the failure to enlist the full participation and enthusiasm of the working class—even under Gomulka.

The present economic situation of Poland, as a result of past mistakes and the lack of this last, vital factor, is by no means rosy. The article is written from a standpoint which cannot give offence to the existing political leadership.

Emphasis is laid on the fact that the concession of large increases in money wages brings an inflationary danger and that further increases cannot be safely conceded.

Although food prices have not risen much owing to good harvests and better deliveries from the peasantry other prices have been going up. However, living standards remain low for vast numbers below the 6 per cent. or so of the privileged.

It is stated that 'to maintain a family adequately more

than one wage is usually necessary, and if this is unobtainable by legal means a family is left with the choice between misery and seeking an illegal income'.

The working class seems to merge indistinguishably into the underworld. The background to Poznan and Lodz emerges clearly.

A serious aspect of the situation is that the Polish economy is being helped along by foreign credits—150 million dollars from the USSR (with a further 75 million dollars for 1958-60), 95 million dollars for food from the USA, and Czechoslovak and east German assistance for re-equipping the coal mines.

Further investment is necessary and the revised plan for 1956-60 aims at a return to the level prevailing in 1955. Weak sectors of industry have to be built up so that labour and capacity can be more fully employed and further advance be more uniform.

The article cautiously recognizes the importance of the political factor in its last sentence which is worth quoting in full:

'Pressing as the claims of a higher rate of investment undoubtedly are, there is a real danger that any attempt once more to hold the average real income of industrial workers practically constant would be self-defeating through the adverse effects on workers' morale and productivity.'

It is evident that the Polish working class has not yet said its last word. Meanwhile a study of the Polish experience has a great many lessons for socialists everywhere.

FORUMS

ISLINGTON FORUM TO DISCUSS 'INSIDERS'

An interesting programme of lectures and discussions has been arranged by Islington Socialist Forum. Next Monday Stuart Hall, co-author of 'The Insiders', is speaking on this pamphlet, which examines the ownership and control of British industry.

On February 3 Tony Cliff and Arthur Urbansky will lead a discussion on the German revolutionary movement between the wars.

Other discussions include 'Lessons of the General Strike' (Feb. 17), 'The French Revolutionary Movement', led by Martin Grainger (Mar. 3), 'Today's industrial struggle and the Labour Party' (Mar. 17).

The Forum meets at 20 Canonbury Park North, N.1, at 8 p.m.

LETTERS

THE RETURN OF SHEIKH ABDULLAH

THE return of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, veteran leader of the Kashmiri people, from four years' imprisonment again spotlights the seemingly insoluble crisis which both Nehru and the Pakistan Government are anxious to perpetuate for their own class interests.

Both Pakistan and India wish to annex Kashmir for military and economic reasons. Neither side is genuinely concerned with the problems and desires of the Kashmiri people.

Mr Nehru's spurious democracy, badly exposed by his treatment of the Nagas, has been revealed for what it is—a façade for his Greater-Hindu communal complex.

The Sheikh's charges of bribery, corruption and communal discrimination may be ignored, but they cannot be denied.

Mr Nehru had an excellent opportunity to justify his government's policies by putting the Sheikh on trial. For reasons best known to himself he did not.

'If they can prove I am a traitor why not hang me?' challenges the Sheikh. Mr Nehru remains inscrutably silent.

If Kashmir is to avoid a recrudescence of communal strife then the only solution is a plebiscite giving the possibility for a decision for an independent Kashmir. This may not be a panacea—but it is just and democratic.

The Sheikh however, by excluding independence on the grounds of non-viability, and calling for accession to Pakistan, is helping to fan the very flames which he tried unsuccessfully to extinguish under the Indian régime.

London, N.W.3

K. Singh

ADVANCED INDUSTRY, BACKWARDNESS TOO

V. FRANK has a point, but it is not so decisive as he supposes. Russia today has a powerful, advanced industry, with one of the highest levels of productivity in the world.

But we should never forget that this is set amid a sea of peasant backwardness which has changed very much less since the nineteen twenties than Russia's urban life.

Socialism, as Lenin pointed out in 'The Deception of the People' and elsewhere, means a state of social development in which such conditions no longer exist.

The Stalinists have succeeded too well in debasing the significance of the word 'socialism' in the minds of many people!

It was in 1924, in a famous speech entitled 'Through What Stage Are We Passing?' that Trotsky observed that if, ten years from then, Britain were to have a workers' revolution, another ten years onward it might well, given its starting-point, possess a developed socialist economy.

Whereas Russia twenty years from the time he was speaking, though it would doubtless have made great advances, would still include a great deal of peasant backwardness—and not only in Yakutai, either, but much nearer Moscow'.

And, with all due respect to the remarkable industrial and technological progress achieved, this remains true in 1957

Wareham (Dorset)

J. Williams

THE BEAM IN THE PRESIDENT'S EYE

In his State of the Union speech President Eisenhower made an appeal for Soviet and American people to get to know each other better.

'Recent negotiations in Washington,' he said, 'have provided a basis in principle for greater freedom of communication and exchange of people.'

Then he urged the Soviet Government to co-operate with 'prompt and tangible actions'.

His advice was rather misplaced. Of the 42 delegates to the Moscow Youth Festival who returned to the USA ten had their passports seized.

And of the 24 who remained abroad ALL had their passports cancelled by the State Department.

U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT (Continued from front page)

Los Angeles area are now at or above the 1949 level.

In the South textiles, the principal Southern industry, has maintained below-average employment since April 1956 and dropped in October to the lowest point since 1949.

The nation's most concentrated manufacturing area, the Middle-Atlantic, was also hard hit. Mid-December showed 163,627 on New York City's unemployment compensation rolls. The New York state figure is 44 per cent. higher than December 1956.

In Chicago, factory jobs declined throughout 1957. The city's registered unemployed stood at 55,000 in mid-December or 68 per cent. over the previous Christmas.

Officials of the United Steel Workers estimate that 60,000 workers in basic steel, mostly in the Pittsburgh-Youngstown area, are now unemployed and an additional 100,000 more are on short work weeks. The operating rate for the steel industry is now around 60 per cent. of capacity.

The average unemployment figure for 1957 in Detroit was 199,000, the worst since 1949. Holiday season sackings—a pre-war tradition—hit 90,000 Detroit area motor-car workers this year.

Figures published in the New York Times National Review show that in 1957 the average wage-earner got about 80 dollars less in real wages (in terms of 1947-49) than in 1956 in spite of wage raises, overtime, etc.