

THE NEWSLETTER

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TRANSPORT HOUSE LAUNCHES A NEW WITCH-HUNT

By GEORGE CUNVIN

A YEAR after Transport House recommended Constituency Labour Parties not to admit former members of the Communist Party—a recommendation that was largely ignored—the Labour Party leaders have launched a new and more frantic witch-hunt.

A scare article in *The Labour Organiser* says ex-communists may be operating 'an agreed plan to plant a communist cell' in selected local Labour Parties. Regardless of the fact that hundreds of former Communist Party members are proving themselves loyal and devoted members of the Labour Party, this fantastic article says 'caution' must be observed in admitting such 'infiltrators'.

Entitled 'Communists Start New Drive', this unsigned article brings forward not a scrap of evidence to support its charges—except a vague reference to 'a number of declarations recently in the communist international Press which confirm the suspicions of Labour Party members . . . that a new drive to capture Labour organizations is under way.'

The *Labour Organiser* is edited by A. L. Williams, a one-time Left-winger who is now employed as the Labour Party's National Agent.

The article is based on a letter from a constituency agent who wrote to Transport House 'suggesting [emphasis here and elsewhere mine—G.C.] that the communists appear to be pursuing a new concerted plan to infiltrate local parties.

'The plan, he believes, is to use persons who are not known as members of the Communist Party, or who have publicly announced that they have resigned from the party.

'There have been mass resignations since the Russian suppression of the Hungarian revolution and it is possible that amongst those whose resignations were publicly announced are some who have retained their Communist Party associations and whose resignations are for the real purpose of making them look eligible for Labour Party membership.

'Individual applications for Labour Party membership from ex-communists, carefully spaced out over many months, may quite well be part of an agreed plan to plant a communist cell in the selected local party . . .

'There may be many who resigned because of their disagreement over Hungary, but who still regard themselves as communists. In such cases non-membership of the Communist Party is not in itself a qualification for Labour Party membership.

'To be eligible to join the Labour Party, a person must accept its democratic socialist principles, policy and programme, which are diametrically opposed to the principles of authoritarian communism.'

Recalling the national executive committee's advice at the end of last year that Constituency Labour Parties should 'exercise considerable care in dealing with applications from former members of the Communist Party who had recently resigned', and its recommendation 'that they should not at present accept such applications', the article observes:

'This advice was very sound and it is still necessary for caution to be observed.'

What are called 'special cases' should still be submitted to the executive committee of the appropriate regional council for guidance.

EAST GERMANY

FACTS ABOUT GERHART ZILLER'S SUICIDE

'ULBRICHT DROVE HIM TO IT', CHARGES EX-COMINTERN OFFICIAL

BERLIN

ON December 15 *Neues Deutschland*, official organ of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, announced that Gerhart Ziller, one of the six secretaries of the central committee, had committed suicide 'in a fit of depression' at the age of 45.

Gerhart Ziller, former Minister of Light Engineering, was happily married, with two young sons, and was known to be in the best of health. He had survived many years in Hitler's concentration camps without showing any signs of suicidal tendencies.

Quarters in close touch with the east German central committee reported that Ziller's suicide was the direct result of unbearable pressure brought by first secretary Walter Ulbricht upon Ziller to turn 'stool-pigeon' on his associates in the central committee apparatus who had tried to oust Ulbricht from his position in the past few months.

Ziller was presented with two alternatives: either to rat on his associates and denounce them as 'deviationists' and 'centres

A former official of the Comintern, now working in east Berlin, reveals in this exclusive article the reason for the recent suicide of a prominent east German party leader.

For obvious reasons we cannot give the name of our correspondent, but we have complete confidence in him.

of counter-revolutionary groupings', or himself to take the rap for their anti-Ulbricht activities.

Full details of the anti-Ulbricht movement in the highest circles of the Socialist Unity Party cannot yet be revealed, but it is known that in the autumn of 1956 a strong minority in the East German politburo had formed an anti-Ulbricht faction, with support from top sources in the Soviet party.

(Continued on back page)

THE NEWSLETTER'S CHRISTMAS BREAK

There will be no issue of The Newsletter next week. An announcement about plans for the paper's future development will be published in the next issue, on January 4.

COMMENTARY

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

I WILL live', promised Scrooge transformed, 'in the Past, the Present and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me . . . A merry Christmas to everybody.' The English Christmas is still the great annual festival, when for forty-eight hours the hectic rhythm of modern life slows down, the generations are reunited, old friends remembered, and the 'good cheer' of the carol is enjoyed at even the poorest table. It is fashionable to complain that Christmas has become commercialized, spread out venally over so many—too many!—'shopping days', prostituted in a torrent of tawdry greetings cards. There is much to be said for this complaint. A nation of shopkeepers (and postmasters) takes its yearly toll of us, and seems to start taking it sooner, and to take more for less value, each year. The BBC regularly blends royalism, religion and sentimentality in a sickly stew. Yet there are few who for the two days' break do not surrender themselves a little to the renewed magic, with all the childhood associations of decorated fir trees, stockings mysteriously filled while we slept, small bellies swollen with poultry and pudding (the outline whereof had just been wreathed in ignited brandy), the toy cupboard magnificently replenished. It is, we often say, a time for children and if it were not for them we wouldn't bother; and yet most of us recapture an echo or a tincture of our own infant feelings. Back into the past stretches a thread with our Christmases strung on it like coloured beads. We should be Scrooges indeed not to add one more, not to celebrate, however modestly, the advent of a new year of hope and effort.

In the palaces they will celebrate a Christmas Past quite different from the Past remembered in the cottages. An old world is dying, and those whose privileges are dying with it look back with sorrow to the years before the first world war, when they 'never had it so good'. The common people have no vanished or vanishing splendours to mourn: this is not for them the 'terrible twentieth century', but a time when the Future is gradually taking shape. Their efforts, and theirs alone, will shape it; and more and more of them, in years to come, will awaken and join hands as brothers to shape it consciously. There *will* be a Christmas Future when the whole of mankind will hail the end of prehistory; when a race freed from class schism and class greed will address itself to the conquest of disease, the extension and enrichment of human life. That Christmas 'is coming'—how soon it comes depends on what we who are socialists do next year and in the next decade.



TO all our readers and friends; to all who share our vision of a new society of nobility and brotherhood; to all who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, who work by hand and brain; to all who struggle for freedom from colonial rule, colour bar, witch-hunts, censorship, exploitation, bureaucracy, hunger and want; to all these we wish a merry Christmas—and joy in the fight.

'LEADERS STEEPED IN STALINISM'—SO 35 LEEDS COMMUNISTS QUIT

THIRTY-FIVE Leeds communists say their party's leaders are 'steeped in the old ideas and methods of Stalinism'—and that's why they do not intend to re-register in the Communist Party for 1958. Some have already resigned.

In a letter to their comrades they declare that Gollan, Pollitt, Dutt and Bert Ramelson, Yorkshire district secretary, 'control a bureaucratic machine and deny real rights to minorities. It is thus impossible to replace them or, apparently, to reform them.

'They follow the line of the Soviet Communist Party so dogmatically, despite the revelations of last year, that they can only remain isolated from the British workers.

'We therefore can see no alternative but to leave the party and carry forward work for socialism in the traditional organizations of the British working class, as well as in new organizations like the Movement for Colonial Freedom and the Socialist Workers' Forum.'

The letter has seventeen names under it—another eighteen Leeds communists support it, and have written to the district office to say so. But they cannot sign for various reasons, such as the possibility of Press publicity.

Two of the signatories had already been expelled for signing a circular inviting people to a meeting of the Leeds Socialist Workers' Forum to discuss the Labour Party conference; others had been disciplined for arranging a meeting to hear Brian Behan on the Trades Union Congress.

The letter asks: 'Why should the Communist Party discipline comrades who encourage meetings and organizations involving non-communist trade unionists and Labour Party members?' It goes on:

'Why did we call and support these meetings . . . independently of the party?

'Because our experience of the period since Khrushchev's horrifying revelations about Stalin's dictatorship, and through the Polish and Hungarian events, showed that we had a leadership unable or unwilling to face up to the problems before the party.

'We needed a leadership capable of independent judgment . . . We needed the democratization of our party . . .

Leaders have broken rules

'At our Congress, and since the Congress, the viewpoints of minorities in the party have been denied free expression and thorough discussion . . . Our own district committee has broken party rules by deciding to hold no district congress this year. Next year's national congress has been postponed for a year.'

The signatories say they will 'defend the workers' State in the USSR, work for the defence of living standards and trade union organization in face of the coming attacks by the employers, and oppose all witch-hunting, as well as other impediments to the unity of the working class.'

They add: 'We regard the rank and file of the Communist Party as our allies in this fight; we ask you to refuse to accept personal vilification as a political weapon, and to consider the principled differences which have led to our severance from the Communist Party.'

The signatories are Gertie Roche, J. Wolstencroft, C. Slaughter, Beryl Dobbins, Jim Wheatley, Joyce Dean, A. Field, D. Hamilton, A. Slaughter, M. Florey, J. Wheatley, M. Dean, Shirley Wheatley, R. Florey, N. Fairburn, J. P. Roche, S. Wolstencroft.

LEEDS LABOUR WANT H-PLANES GROUNDED

By 214 votes to 6, Leeds City Labour Party on Wednesday night passed the following resolution:

'This party is concerned at the news that American aeroplanes loaded with H-bombs are flying over Britain.

'It calls on the Labour Party to declare that on its return to power it will not permit such flights.

'Meanwhile the party should wage a national campaign in order to stop the flights as soon as possible.'

SALFORD LABOUR'S ANTI-H-BOMB CAMPAIGN

SALFORD City Labour Party is organizing a wide and lively campaign against the testing and manufacture of the hydrogen bomb.

First achievement of a campaign committee set up at a delegate meeting was a meeting and showing of the Japanese film 'The Fishermen'.

A local doctor explained the effects of radiation on this and future generations, and Charles Royle, Labour MP for Salford W., spoke in favour of unilateral action by Britain to end the testing and production of the bomb.

He urged that Labour press for the acceptance of the Russian proposal to suspend tests from January 1, 1958, declaring:

'Maybe it's just a manoeuvre, but I say: try them out.'

The meeting unanimously endorsed a resolution of the National Union of Railwaymen district council calling for the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear bases from Britain and asking the Labour Party's regional council to organize a mass demonstration.

Taking part in the campaign committee's work are the district committees of several unions: those of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, the National Union of Vehicle Builders and the Union of Post Workers have appointed delegates and given money.

At their own expense Salford shop stewards have had 2,000 leaflets printed and distributed them in the factories. Also active in the campaign are members of the Salford Labour youth sections.

Next step will be a poster parade through Salford's main shopping streets this afternoon

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR 'BLUE' UNION

By Our Industrial Correspondent

THE National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers—the 'blue' union—has proved that it has four times as much support on Merseyside as the Transport and General Workers' Union.

A week after the TGWU—the 'white' union—held a 'closed shop ballot' in Liverpool for two representatives to the local Dock Labour Board, the NASD, which is barred from the Board, ran its own open ballot, putting the seven TGWU candidates on the ballot papers together with two nominees of its own.

Whereas in the TGWU-only ballot 1,478 votes were cast, in the open ballot 4,679 votes were cast. And the two 'blue' union candidates polled 1,854 and 1,729 votes, against the 201 polled by the top candidate in the earlier ballot.

Top NASD candidate J. Benbow in fact obtained more votes than were registered for all seven nominees in the TGWU-only ballot.

The 'open ballot' papers were scrutinized by members of the TGWU.

'No matter how hard they try,' says the NASD Northern Broadsheet, 'the three white union men on the Board cannot justifiably suggest that they are dockers' representatives. They have been rejected at the ballot boxes by their workmates.'

FOUR CRITICS ELECTED TO SCR EXECUTIVE

From a Correspondent

THE annual general meeting of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR drew an attendance of some seventy members last Saturday, more than twenty of whom participated in an unusually lively discussion.

In their opening remarks the president, D. N. Pritt, and the chairman, A. W. Kessel, dwelt upon the Society's difficult financial situation.

The charming Kensington mansion bought at the end of the war had proved increasingly a white elephant, and recently the rates chargeable on it had been doubled. The Society would have to move to cheaper premises.

It was proposed that the Anglo-Soviet Journal should concentrate on literature and the arts, avoiding in particular

the 'touchy' field of the social sciences.

A number of members criticized the annual report for glossing over the basic cause of the Society's difficulties in recent years—its loss of support through appearing to be politically compromised with the British Stalinist organization.

Questions elicited two facts not given in the report: that membership now stood at the comparatively low figure of 1,250 and that there were now no provincial branches functioning except the one at Bradford.

Call for controversial meetings

A well-supported proposal was made that the Society should organize meetings at which two or more different views should be put from the platform—meetings of a controversial character in which Soviet experts visiting this country should wherever possible be invited to participate.

It was announced that Mrs Eleanor Fox, who has served the SCR for ten years, has given up the secretaryship for other work, and has been replaced by Mr Campbell Creighton, formerly on the staff of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

D. N. Pritt was re-elected president. Elections to the 16-strong executive committee resulted in the return, alongside of the Stalinist Old Guard (Andrew Rothstein, the Hon. Ivor Montagu, Judith Todd, Cmdr Edgar Young, R.N. (Retd) and A. W. Kessel) of some new members who may be expected—together with Len Crome, of the old EC, who was re-elected—to ensure that the critical mood of the meeting is carried forward into the discussions in the incoming committee.

These are Joan Robinson, R. W. Davies and Brian Pearce.

FOOTNOTE: It is learnt that the London district committee of the Communist Party, meeting on the following day, considered a proposal to expel Brian Pearce from the party.

SIX PROTEST AGAINST WHIP WITHDRAWAL

Liverpool Corporation Labour group has withdrawn the whip from six Labour councillors who voted against the allocation to the police of premises that could have made a school for backward children.

Among the six are Bill Sefton, prospective Parliamentary candidate for Toxteth, and Fred Walker, full-time official of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Six members of the Liverpool Trades and Labour Council executive walked out of the Labour group meeting, claiming the procedure was unconstitutional.

'KEEP LEFT' OUT ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

A NEW Labour youth paper, *Keep Left*, is being launched on January 1 by the Hendon N. and Wembley N. Labour Party youth sections.

Sponsored by an editorial board of twelve young members of the Labour Party in all parts of the country, *Keep Left* is the printed successor of a duplicated monthly of the same name, which has been appearing for seven years.

Transport House's own youth paper, *Socialist Advance*, went out of existence in the summer of 1956. A quarterly broadsheet is promised some time in the future.

Keep Left will appear monthly, price fourpence.

OLD AND TRUE

'We paint the Soviet Republic as a Utopia, never speaking of the defects and obstacles that have operated against Socialism. If we do not put this right we are leading the workers up the garden.' (Harry Pollitt, 'Building a Bolshevik Party in Britain. The January Plenum of the Central Committee, C.P.G.B.', *Communist Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 133, March 1932)

SAYING OF THE WEEK

'A democratic Power attempting to quell a colonial revolt is always in a dilemma.' (The Times, December 14)

'J. R. Campbell Should Have Been Britain's Djilas — But He Whitewashes the Cominform Corruption I Saw'

THIS article criticizing the Daily Worker editor's review of Djilas's 'The New Class' is contributed by a man who has given a lifetime of service to the communist movement, as agitator, organizer and journalist.

He has asked that we do not publish his name—merely the fact that for several years he represented the British Communist Party at the Bucharest headquarters of the Cominform.

Our contributor accepts the view put forward by Djilas that the bureaucracy that has arisen in the USSR and eastern Europe is a 'new class'. We do not accept this view. But this difference of opinion (about which we hope there will be further discussion in our columns) affects neither his facts nor his sincerity.

FEW things are more disquieting to the political Canutes of King Street than proofs of the existence of that New Class spawned by Stalin and his fuglemen in the Soviet Union and the 'New Democracies'.

Revelations of the sharp class differences existing within the political system operating in these countries—a system to-day erroneously described as communism or socialism—are bitterly resented by these exponents of class equality—in Britain.

And their anger is boundless when revelations are made by such distinguished 'insiders' as Djilas and Nagy.

Twenty years ago Trotsky in 'The Revolution Betrayed' uttered his pregnant warning against the rise of this New Class and bureaucracy in the Soviet Union; a warning too many of us coldly ignored. But within a year the prescient J. R. Campbell was publishing his book 'Soviet Policy and its Critics' to try to still the rising doubts which troubled the percipient few.

And now Milovan Djilas, in 'The New Class', projects his warning and exposure from the prison in which some members of the New Class entomb him, and J.R.C.—who privately knows much better—is entrusted by the Daily Worker with the futile task of attempting to brush aside with witticisms a truth whose demand to be heard defies terror and torture.

'Diatribes without Data' is J.R.C.'s description of Djilas's searing indictment. 'Lacking in statistics' he writes of the work of this man who, unhesitatingly, pledged his life to utter truths no one in King Street has yet dared sanction, although still protected from the revengeful claws of Khrushchev by those democratic rights they privately despise.

Dishonest intellectual persiflage

What proof is there of a new class? asks J.R.C. Differential incomes? Inheritance of wealth and control of industry? he inquires with a pretended naivety strangely at variance with his ability to recognize existing realities of power and privilege enjoyed by the New Class in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe.

As though anticipating such dishonest intellectual persiflage, Djilas bluntly states in his book:

'The New Class obtains its power, privileges, ideology and its customs from one specific form of ownership—collective ownership—which the class administers and distributes in the name of the nation and society.'

Again: 'In contrast to earlier revolutions, the communist revolution, conducted in the name of doing away with classes, has resulted in the most complete authority of any single new class. Everything else is sham and an illusion . . .'

'The new Class may be said to be made up of those who have special privileges and economic preference because of the administrative monopoly they hold' . . . The once live, compact party, full of initiative, is disappearing, becoming transformed into the traditional oligarchy of the New Class, irresistibly drawing into its ranks those who aspire to join the New Class and repressing those who have any ideals . . . The class grows stronger while the party grows weaker: this is the inescapable fate of every Communist Party in power.'

Membership of the British Communist Party, as J.R.C. once knew it, meant personal sacrifice. To be a professional revolutionary was one of the highest honours.

Their habits and mentality

But now the Communist Party has consolidated its power in the Soviet Union and the New Democracies, party membership for the leaders in those countries, as Djilas so pungently reminds us, 'means that one belongs to a privileged class. And at the core of the party are the all-powerful exploiters and masters.'

Since J.R.C. refused to accept Peter Fryer's dispatches from Hungary, I can hardly expect him to accept Djilas's analyses of the New Class in Yugoslavia, of which Djilas writes with undisputed authority.

But J.R.C.'s cursory dismissal of Djilas prompts some timely personal recollections of the habits and mentality of these members of the 'privileged class' and 'all-powerful exploiters and masters' which I noted while working at the Cominform and in eastern Europe during the closing years of Stalin's blood-stained reign.

This experience fully confirms for me the truth of Djilas's prognosis that the New Class which, as he points out, possesses 'monopolistic ownership and totalitarian authority', is 'voracious and insatiable, just as the bourgeoisie was. But it does not have the virtues of frugality and economy that the bourgeoisie had. The New Class is as exclusive as the aristocracy but without aristocracy's refinement and proud chivalry.'

'Party members feel that authority, that control over property, brings with it the privileges of this world. Consequently, unscrupulous ambition, duplicity, toadyism and jealousy inevitably must increase. Careerism and an ever-expanding bureaucracy are the incurable diseases . . .'

Although a communist for eighteen years, I must confess I was naively unprepared for the Cominform realities which awaited me in the 'liberated' city of Bucharest. Doubt, that grave heretical sin, first raised its head in the incurable unease born of two undeniable facts.

Rigid and inhuman hierarchy

The first has been satirically immortalized in literature by the porcine governing caste in Orwell's 'Animal Farm': that in a society of equals some are more equal than others. This was reflected in the dominance exercised by Soviet leaders in all spheres of Bucharest's 'Kremlin'—political, economic and administrative.

Within this framework life was dominated by a hierarchical rigidity based on race, size of national party and individual Cominform status. Thus, within this strangely inhuman hierarchy, the Rumanians, mainly employed as hewers of wood and drawers of water, occupied the lowest rung, with the unfortunate 'stateless' Spaniards one degree higher and the British precariously perched on the third rung.

Certainly it was not fidelity that determined the status of a party on the slide rule brandished by Moscow's minions. There were occasions when, placed well behind our Soviet, east European and west European counterparts, I would look at them and murmur to my outraged British colleague:

They are the precious chosen Few
And all the rest are damned;
There's only room for one or two—
They can't have Heaven—cramped!

Students of the British Civil Service may perhaps cavil at the absurd divisions which isolate one grade from another: small mat for a clerk, large carpet for the boss.

Such critics would find a study of the Cominform's divisive arrangements most rewarding: corridor boxrooms for the typists, flats, mats and moquette suites for the second in command; carpets, brocade, three piece, silk curtains, servants and cars for the boss—and none of that pristine revolutionary nonsense about equality.

Segregation at the table

Separate restaurants ensured that no matter how repeatedly Karl Marx may have abjured the workers of the world to unite the Cominform authorities determined this would not take place around the canteen table.

Vastly disproportionate salaries, country homes, the best apartments, exclusive rest homes, special privileged shops, from which even their Rumanian guards and servants were excluded: such was the order of the day in the capital of this thriving 'New Democracy'.

In the same city Rumanian workers suffered great poverty, queued for meagre supplies of oil for their cooking stoves while millions of gallons of oil, gushing from wells thirty miles away in Ploesti (pardon, Stalintown), were exported in gratitude for 'fraternal assistance' rendered by the New Class in the Soviet Union for the establishment of a second-class model in Rumania.

British workers, whose sacrifices for their political beliefs make every honest leader feel humble, have no conception of the tyranny and injustice imposed in the name of communism on the Soviet people and on the peoples of its colonial empire by the members of this New Class.

For make no mistake—whether in the Soviet Union or the 'New Democracies', race or mere citizenship counts for little, party membership and rank for correspondingly much. This was the second unpalatable fact which contributed to my ever-increasing 'heresy'.

The liberty to speak and organize against real oppression is unknown. Sincere rank-and-file militants in the Amalgamated Engineering Union or the Electrical Trades Union would have short shrift in these countries and history records no Altrincham critics of the new 'Royalty' being tolerated, much less encouraged, in a communist Press.

Each fears the spy's report

Even more deplorable is the moral degeneration of those who wield and become the victims of such power. Accustomed to spying on everyone themselves they trust no one.

Free expression of political opinion, such as we know it even under the limitations of capitalism, in public or private, is unknown in these inner circles, each of whose members fears the spy's report of an indiscreet word or act.

'Meetings of party forums, conferences of government and assemblies', says Djilas with great truth, 'serve no purpose but to make declarations and put in an appearance. They are only convened to confirm what has previously been cooked up in intimate kitchens.'

There is no place for Bolsheviks in these truly remarkable Dumas. Willie Gallacher, on form, would be silenced after a session.

Cominform personnel, whose political and economic security depended on the whim of the party bosses, expressed in action the slogan: 'Make hay while the sun shines.'

They quickly discovered the sartorial riches of the 'privilege' shop which displayed in constant abundance the choicest materials, wines and foods skimmed from the cream of products from the more advanced 'people's democracies'.

Indeed, one senior Soviet official, with a weather-eye ever keenly alert for a possible rainy day, soon boasted of 27 suits.

Another typical case was the wife of a Czech representative. She once saw me buy a piece of Wedgwood in the State pawnshop. With more greed than taste she ordered the

assistant to keep for her in future all examples of 'that stuff the Englishman bought'.

Before I left Bucharest she had amassed twelve packing cases full of porcelain and objets d'art, explaining, with sagacity, 'They can be sold. I never know how long my husband will remain at the top'.

The NKVD philosopher's question

In such an atmosphere it was less surprising, when protesting about anything, to be asked by the Cominform head, Professor Mitin (an NKVD man who, I found out later, helped decimate the Moscow Institute of Philosophy in the middle thirties):

'But first, tell me comrade, are you satisfied with your material circumstances?' One quickly learned that Machiavelli's sordid trade was practised elsewhere than among the Medicis in Florence.

Let no reader believe these things have no relevance to Communist Party 'leaders' in Britain. Happily they do not yet possess the power to silence, to imprison, to starve, or to hang the more clamant of their critics within and without the party.

But their frequent excursions abroad where the New Class is temporarily in power, have taught the more venal of these leaders some of the tricks of this seamy side of politics.

The new bathroom freely installed by honest young neophytes in the home of 'Dear Harry', the suits donated by Jewish admirers to leaders who remained silent during the worst Soviet purges of the Jews; the acceptance of 'comradely help' to finance the university education of the sons of these proletarians: these are but the gentle Zephyrs of to-day which could herald storms of corruption tomorrow were these types to gain power, then to demand as an exclusive right that which they now fawningly accept as a favour.

It would, of course, be grossly inaccurate to suggest that all Communist Party leaders in Britain, or abroad, are tainted by this political disease; but inhibited contact and acquiescence exposes them to contagion, first on the political and then on the moral and personal plane.

Trading on his reputation

Personally, I find it a strange twist of irony that J.R.C.—who could and should have been Britain's Djilas—should become the defender of this New Class whose political iniquities and private luxuries must inwardly disgust and repel him.

In his attack upon Djilas, J.R.C. trades upon his own former reputation as an honest and heroic working-class leader. It ill becomes him to denigrate another who retains his honour and his status among revolutionaries.

Apparently it is idle nowadays to expect J.R.C. to agree with Djilas that 'each man's experiences are unique, worthy of communication to his fellow men'.

But will he not concede to Djilas what he himself wrote in another context, when he ended his own book 'Soviet Policy and its Critics' with these words:

'If this book has contributed to explaining that evolution, to keeping the young on the historic path of revolutionary Marxism, it will have accomplished its purpose.'

Newsletter Pamphlets

- **Into Battle!**
BRIAN BEHAN, BOB POTTER, TOM KEMP 3d.
- **Defend the ETU against Fleet Street and King Street!**
PETER FRYER 2d.

Obtainable from The Newsletter, 180, Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

A Christmas Story by Alan R. Bennett

THE WIND OUTSIDE SHRIEKED AND moaned as it beat frantically against the wooden outhouses and stout timbers of the old inn, but inside the sole drinking room a huge log fire, casting weird shadows as it illuminated the strange structure and the network of beams, warmed and cheered the customers.

Ranged around the room were pictures of local scenes, hunting horns, old-fashioned guns and delicately carved and fashioned models showing the exquisite craftsmanship of years long past and seeming scornful of an age full of machinery, smoke and noise.

Though it was only a few days before Christmas there was little gaiety in the inn. The weather, the poor returns at the markets and the general scarcity of money in the pockets of the villagers; all these factors contributed to the general atmosphere of restraint as Ted drew a pint of ale for a small, slim, brown fellow, whose bubbling enthusiasm seemed out of place in the surroundings.

As he sipped the ale his blue eyes sparkled and contrasted with his tanned features. In spite of his alertness he was obviously fifty, perhaps more.

But his warm, rich brogue seemed of the very essence of his work and his class—full of gentleness and patience; and he appeared to grasp the very fundamentals of existence as do so many whose lives are spent close to the rich soil and amid the animals of the fields.

'I wish this wind would ease, Ted. Working in the open in this weather gives me an appetite that I can't really afford to satisfy.'

Ted chuckled, though his good-natured face was not free from concern.

'I only hope things improve, Mart. I'm scarcely keeping my head above water, I'll admit. It makes no difference either whether my customers are employees or self-employed. This isn't the era of the small man no more than it is of the ordinary labourer.'

As they leant on the bar counter, they both felt the cold draught of air which entered with the new arrival.

Ted's face relaxed a little. When Mart turned to greet the newcomer he looked rather sceptical. It was George, backbone of the village cricket and soccer sides—and the village policeman.

'Hello Mart. I was hoping to be able to have a word with you. I noticed your battered old wreck outside, and it's about that I wanted a chat.'

'Very well, George. But be a pal and make it snappy.'

GEORGE SMILED AMIABLY. 'A SMALL brown please, Ted. Thanks. Well, it's simple enough really, Mart. I might as well tell the story from the start. Because otherwise I'd never have come by this way. It's like this.

'I was cycling past the poultry houses of old Smith-Snobson, when who should I see but the old devil himself, haring towards me as if his very life depended on it. And all the time shouting his head off at me to stop.

'To cut a long story short, it seems that he'd just found out from "one of the men", as he put it, that about twenty of his fattest cockerels and ten of his turkeys had been removed from their houses last night or early this morning. And was he mad!

'I never heard anything like it for abuse, except as when I remember Bert Higgins was fouled in that game at Lowhampton—still, that's by the way.

'He was carrying on about the "scoundrels and vagabonds" roaming the countryside these days. He said it was the fault of those who told others not to respect honest people's property.

'And he said that if he could lay his hands on those responsible he would get the greatest pleasure from giving them a good whipping. And he would make sure that an example was made of them before the whole village.'

'You bet he would,' grinned Mart. 'He'd love to go

back to the old days and treat people as his ancestors did. He owns nearly every stick and stone for miles around. And he owns the very people as well. But even that's not enough for him. He talks of "honest people's property" and the hardest day's work he's ever done was at Ascot!'

'Well, to come to the crux of the matter, Mart—your car! You see, I only came along this road because I was wanting to use the nearest telephone to report the loss. And I knew that Ted had one.

'So when I was wheeling my bike into the yard I naturally noticed the fact that your car door was partly open and I also saw something else of great interest when I went to slam the door tight.

'You know, Mart, I've a good mind to make you fork up a few pounds for the magistrates' tobacco fund.'

Mart looked at that moment as though he almost hated George.

'Why?'

George beamed benevolently.

'You know, I do believe you are worried.'

'Look, George. You know that you said yourself in this very room not two weeks ago that you would help in any way possible to make this Christmas a happy one for those in this village who haven't got enough cash even to live normal contented lives every day of the week—the old folk.

'Those who have given a life of service to the community, a life of toil on the land and in the fields to give their children a better world to live in than they were born into.

'And you know that what with one thing and another the usual Christmas that we give them here was impossible unless we found some cash quickly.

'We all would give as much as our hearts and our pockets would allow, but that wouldn't be enough.

AND WHO COULD SPARE THE MONEY TO give our old folk the Christmas they deserve—with the feast in the village hall and the celebrations and the presents? And who refused because he said the workers he employed were so greedy that all his profits were taken paying them wages which not one earned by an "honest day's toil"?

'And who drives around in a Bentley, and whose wife spends God knows how much on taking her bloody pet poodles to beauty parlours? Who, George? Who, I ask you, George?'

'You are really steamed up, Mart. But don't worry. I was only going to remind you once again that your tax on your car should have been paid up nearly six weeks ago! But remember, this is my last warning, Mart!'

Mart looked incredulously at George. He didn't speak for several seconds, and when he did it was very quietly.

'Give George another small brown, Ted, please. His glass is empty.'

Mart moved off towards the door.

'Well, I must be going, friends. Goodnight.'

And with a long look at George he opened the door and went out into the blustery wind.

As he got into his car, he picked up and examined a handful of white feathers in the driving seat. Then he lit his pipe and let the feathers drift out through the open car window.

His hand slipped into his coat pocket and drew out a small slip of paper. As he studied the writing on the receipt for £25, his eyes shone with excitement.

That Christmas was a wonderful one for the old folk of the village. And as they ate their pudding and laughed and sang, Mart, seated a little away from the table, smiled happily, and wondered when such scenes would be the rule and not the exception.

And as he wondered, others too, all over the globe, smiled and dreamt of a world that would be created one day—a world where Mart's Christmas for the old folk would be Christmas day for all for ever.

CHRISTMAS AND THE POLITICS OF TRUTH

By The Rev. Stanley Evans

THERE are clergymen who object to the fact that Christmas is so widely observed outside their churches as a season of frolic and fellowship that even Woolworths have taken it up in a big way.

This is as misguided as the attitude of certain Left-wing types who send cards at Christmas giving greetings for the New Year, and suffer considerable embarrassment if they wish to order in a restaurant that blackish sort of pudding with a lot of fruit in it which is habitually served and eaten around the date of December 25.

In whatever pigeon-holes these separate gentlemen care to file themselves, the great mass of people in this country have a whale of a time at Christmas.

They enjoy their food, they enjoy their drink and they enjoy each other. More power to their stomachs, their elbows, their lips!

The truth is that Christmas is the supreme non-sectarian feast of history. It is not one of the earliest of Christian feasts: the earliest known observance of the birth of Christ

ON THE NATIVITY OF A NEGRO BABY

Beauty of beauties, lovelier as more strange
Than golden babies are, how shall I sing
Your warm deep sweetness and the love you bring
In a cold country fearing mortal change?

For you are promise. In your passionate eyes
I see a world reflected, and believe
That we can make that world. Not to deceive
Your hopes of us—parents, all-kind, all-wise—
We fight to win your freedom. Darling, grow
Ready and strong to take it. All the wrongs
Told in your ancestors' heartbroken songs
Shall be avenged, your enemies brought low.

Let the defiant rhythm of your race
Beat in your veins. Oh, never fear to face
The daffodil-haired angels in the park.
Their dazzling fairness fades in your more dazzling
dark.

ALISON MACLEOD

was in the second century in the East and was the Feast of Epiphany on January 6.

The separation of the celebration of the birth from this Feast and its observance on December 25 took place in the West in the fourth century, although it may have begun at the end of the third century.

The observance grew at an important point in history and in the history of the Christian Church in particular.

It grew at the period after the great struggle between Church and Empire had passed its climax and when the chief work of the Church, particularly in the West, was becoming a struggle to win the people of the tribes that were breaking up the Empire.

It was a part of the struggle between a paganism whose practices were often barbarous while its emphasis was limited and tribal: against it Christianity was universal and eminently civilized.

So civilized was it and so sensible that instead of trying to suppress the popular celebration of the winter solstice on December 25, an aspect of a veneration of the sun, that it deliberately took it over and gave it a new significance as a day on which to celebrate the birth of 'the Son of Righteousness'.

This same attitude was shown later in medieval England in York. By that time there had grown up a horror of mistletoe in Christian circles as the supreme symbol of paganism, which had treated it as an emblem of reconciliation and forgiveness (which is why we still kiss under the mistletoe).

York would have non of the stuffed shirt (or should I say stuffed alba?) attitude.

It blessed mistletoe in the Minster and carried it to the gates of the city and proclaimed there universal liberty and pardon and peace to north and south and east and west. Then it opened the city prisons so that nobody should be inside over Christmas.

There is a wideness and universality in these attitudes which we would do well to follow, for who can lead the people who is not with the people? The Cockney, I think, is right to suspect somebody who is prepared to lecture him but has no heart for a 'Knees-up Mother Brown'.

It is said that there is a growing demand for Christmas cards that reflect the meaning of Christmas. And that is good because Christmas has a meaning and it is that fellowship must become universal.

It is the feast of the Prince of Peace, the Son of Righteousness, the feast that speaks of the hope of humanity throughout the ages that discord should go and man grown to his full stature should live in a world of harmony.

That is why Christmas is not only a challenge to politicians—it is the supreme recall to politics, politics as clear and fine and simple as the outhouse of that historic pub in Bethlehem: the politics of peace and understanding and brotherhood and sharing: the politics of truth.

Christmas is also the time to help those who are in need. So may I finish with a reminder?

There are still about the victims of earlier struggles, now almost forgotten, who are still paying the price—Spanish refugees in the south of France and elsewhere, Greek resistance fighters still in jail who need food and clothes and blankets.

Let them not be forgotten.

LETTERS**IS THIS WHAT UPSET COMRADE KENDALL?**

ONE thing that many folk forget is that a lot of people attending a lot of Forums need not add up to a Forum 'movement'.

I doubt very much whether the majority of people attending local Forums want them to become 'an alternative pole of attraction to Labour Review', as H. Kendall suggests—or indeed to any other publication.

What I suspect has really upset Comrade Kendall is that he didn't know that readers of Labour Review were going to turn up in force (if in fact they did), otherwise Vanguard Pamphlets and Workers' International Review and Socialist Review could have organized a bit of opposition.

Next time, in fairness, everyone might be informed, including Socialist Revolt, Socialist Leader, Workers' News Bulletin, Socialist Standard and the Bulletin of the London Group of the Communist Party. Then we could all play at being 'with Lenin in 1917' in deadly earnest.

London, N.

..Paul Simon

'NEW CENTRISTS' AND CLASS STRUGGLE

KEN JONES is justified in praising the solid and constructive work that has been done by some of the comrades associated with *The New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review*.

Nevertheless I hope I may not be considered a fuddy-duddy for quoting what Earl Browder used to call 'the old books' if I say that the writings of the 'New Centrist' trend (as I would prefer to call it, rather than 'New Left') sometimes remind me of a remark made by Engels about the early Fabians.

'With great industry they have produced, amid all sorts of rubbish, some good propagandist writings as well, in fact the best of the kind which the English have produced.

'But as soon as they come to their specific tactics of hush-

LETTERS (Continued from previous page)

ing up the class struggle it all turns putrid. Hence, too, their fanatical hatred of Marx and all of us—because of the class struggle.' (Letter to Sorge, January 18, 1893)

Whitney (Oxon.)

D. Desmond

ZILLER'S SUICIDE (Continued from front page)

Early in October 1956 it was regarded as a foregone conclusion that Ulbricht would soon be down-graded.

Events in Poland and Hungary, and the subsequent swing towards re-Stalinization, strengthened Ulbricht's hand once again, but for some months his hold on the reins of power was so tenuous that he did not dare attempt a purge of his opponents in politburo and central committee.

It should be emphasized that the anti-Ulbricht movement in the Socialist Unity Party had little in common with the Nagy and Gomulka 'liberalization' trends.

The top ranks of the Socialist Unity Party are almost entirely composed of veteran Stalinists, and any reorganization would probably have resembled more the replacement of Rakosi by Gerö in Hungary.

In the old Comintern days it was commonly stated that a certain faction in a national party was 'attempting to become the Comintern faction', that is to say it was attempting to gain the confidence of Moscow.

If the Comintern was contemplating a change of line in the near future, one or more such factions in each national party were granted Comintern protection in their factional activity, and in case of need they were then substituted for the previous national leadership.

This appears to have been the case with the anti-Ulbricht faction in the Socialist Unity Party.

By autumn of 1957, however, Moscow had withdrawn its protection from the anti-Ulbricht faction, and Walter Ulbricht was given a free hand to bring his opponents to heel or get rid of them.

The beginnings of the purge came out into the open in October 1957 at the 33rd plenary session of the central committee of the Socialist Unity Party.

The published documents of the 33rd plenum showed only that Ulbricht was aiming at a new 'hard line' in most fields of public policy:

In industry new norms were foreshadowed which would mean a cut-back in earnings, particularly in light industry;

In agriculture production co-operatives were to be pushed ahead with, even if this involved some sort of forced collectivization;

In culture there was to be an all-out campaign for 'socialist realism' and against 'cosmopolitanism' (this word, with its slightly anti-Semitic connotations, appeared in party documents for the first time after a long pause in December 1957);

And harassment of the church was to begin again.

The full significance of the 33rd plenum only became apparent towards the end of November, however, when the full text of the discussions was printed in a top secret edition, with a print estimated at 500 copies.

These were distributed under extraordinary security precautions to district party secretaries, party secretaries of key industrial undertakings, and a few other high-ranking party members.

Your correspondent has been privileged to see one of these top secret copies.

The discussion is notable for three things:

FIRST for the fact that only a very small part of the discussion was devoted to the extremely urgent economic problems now facing east Germany, and that the overwhelming majority of the speakers devoted themselves almost exclusively to either heaping ashes on their own heads or lambasting others for ideological weaknesses;

SECONDLY for the low political level of the various speeches; and

THIRDLY for the fact that Ulbricht himself behaved throughout like an insulted prima donna, interrupting almost every speaker either with crude insults or with words of encouragement when the speaker happened to be one of his

supporters.

The substance of the attacks made by Ulbricht and his friends was that the events of the past year, and particularly of October 1956, had shown that there were 'soft spots' in the party, and in particular in the top party apparatus, i.e., the central committee bureaucracy.

This apparatus is apparently headed by some or all of the six 'secretaries of the central committee', who are in fact the permanent Civil Servants who run the day-to-day operations of the party, and thus indirectly of the State.

The tone of the speeches attacking these 'soft spots' varied, but the most violent speeches hinted mysteriously at 'counter-revolutionary groupings' in the apparatus of the central committee; and anyone with an experience of Comintern language knows the seriousness of such charges.

If the top secret transcript of the central committee plenum in fact contains the full text of the proceedings, only two of the six secretaries appear to have been criticized by name.

They were Paul Wandel, old Comintern war-horse who used to have a reputation for undeviating Stalinist conformity when he instructed at the Lenin school in Moscow under the name of Richter, and Gerhart Ziller, who has just committed suicide.

But anyone able to read between the lines could see from the transcript that the real attack was centred on another person or persons, and the probability is that the main target was another of the secretaries, whom it would be invidious to name at this stage.

The specific charges made against the two secretaries named, and against several other high party officials, were not particularly hair-raising in any normal atmosphere.

Paul Wandel, who had been in charge of cultural affairs, was accused in general of not acting firmly enough on the question of socialist realism, and specifically three counts were raised against him:

1) He had suppressed a letter from a leading actor stating that he had 'doubts' (this theological phrase was actually used in the discussion).

2) He had prevented the central party organ from launching a full-scale Vyshinskyite attack on Alfred Kantorowicz, leading east German writer who recently went to West Germany.

3) He had attempted to suppress an introduction written by Walter Ulbricht to a book on popular science, and to replace it by another introduction.

'We shall resume this discussion'

But these rather minor charges were sufficient to have Paul Wandel removed from his post as secretary.

The accusation made against Gerhart Ziller was even weaker. Early in the plenum Ziller had made a general factual report on the situation in industry.

He was thereupon attacked by Paul Verner (former top cadre who was down-graded by Ulbricht four years ago and who is now trying to make a come-back) 'for not emphasizing the role of the party in the industrial tasks confronting us'.

The fact that the 33rd plenum was only the opening shot in the purge of the party apparatus was made clear by Walter Ulbricht when closing the plenum. Ulbricht said:

'These are not my closing words: this is only an interim statement. We are still waiting for the comrades who have been criticized here to make a clean breast of their deviations.

'We shall resume this discussion and bring it to a conclusion at the next plenum of the central committee to be held in January 1958.'

Gerhart Ziller will not be present at the next plenum of the central committee; but other scapegoats for Ulbricht's failure to make the German Democratic Republic into a model socialist State in central Europe are sure to be found.

Public interest has been aroused here by the fact that Ziller's suicide was frankly described as such in the official announcement in the party Press instead of being described as 'food poisoning' or 'a tragic accident' as has generally been done in the past in such cases.

It was generally assumed in leading party circles that this had been deliberately done to discredit him, and to open the way to later accusations that he had 'deserted the party under fire'.