

THE NEWSLETTER

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ULBRICHT'S EAST BERLIN PURGE: THE INSIDE STORY

BERLIN

THE anti-Ulbricht revolt in the central committee of the east German Socialist Unity Party has been temporarily ended by the expulsion from the committee of two leaders of the revolt, the downgrading from the Politburo of a third oppositionist, and by threats of action against other leading party members, as yet unnamed.

News of the move to unseat Stalinist first secretary Walter Ulbricht was first disclosed exclusively in THE NEWSLETTER last December 21, when I wrote: 'Full details of the anti-Ulbricht movement in the highest circles of the Socialist Unity Party cannot yet be revealed.'

Since that date Ulbricht has been fighting desperately to remain in power. During January the Politburo was in almost continuous session, hammering away at the details of deep divergences of opinion on future party policy.

The full session of the central committee, originally scheduled for January 15, had to be twice postponed, since Ulbricht could not get a majority for his 'hard' line even among the Politburo stalwarts.

According to the most reliable information, Ulbricht was able to rally only three of the fourteen members of the Politburo for unconditional support of his policy at one point in the discussion.

Details of the top-secret discussions which have now leaked out make it clear that Ulbricht's hand was weakened throughout December and the first part of January by the fact that

Our correspondent in east Berlin, a former official of the Comintern, forecast in The Newsletter on December 21 in his exclusive article on why Gerhart Ziller committed suicide:

'Gerhart Ziller will not be present at the next plenum of the central committee: but other scapegoats for Ulbricht's failure . . . are sure to be found.'

The expulsion of Comintern veterans Ernst Wollweber, former Minister of State Security, and cadre chief Karl Schirdewan from the central committee of the Socialist Unity Party, bears out our correspondent's forecasts.

His article this week gives further details of the struggle against Stalinism in the top ranks of the east German party.

INDUSTRY

'GO AHEAD WITH SACKINGS—BUT DO BE SUBTLE,' MACLEOD TELLS BOSSES

SACK your workers by all means. But do it in a humane fashion. Butter them up a bit. Soften the blow. Be subtle about it.

This, without the frills and platitudes, is what the Ministry of Labour tells 15,000 employers in a booklet called 'Positive Employment Policies' sent out free to them this week.

The only positive thing in the booklet is the recognition that sackings are 'inevitable from time to time'. The Ministry is concerned to help managements to create unemployment with the minimum 'disturbance'.

Minister of Labour Iain Macleod himself summed up its aims at a Press conference: 'You can boil it down into one word, and that is "confidence".'

Give the workers enough 'confidence' in their security and they'll be signing on at the Labour Exchange before they know what's hit them. And all those unpleasant 'disturbances' like strikes against sackings can be side-stepped.

Or so the Tories hope.

Be 'as considerate as possible', they tell managements. And just to show they are really on the bosses' side, they say in the same sentence that consultation over questions of discharge 'need not detract from management's authority to implement necessary decisions'.

Genuine Contract of Service

The iron hand peeps through the velvet glove again in a passage about one of Macleod's pet ideas: that workers should be parties to 'a genuine Contract of Service involving rights and obligations on both sides'.

That workers' obligations will overshadow their rights in such a scheme is indicated by the talk of an official inquiry—perhaps a Royal Commission—into collective bargaining, with the aim of weakening trade unionism.

Asked why he had chosen this particular time to issue 'Positive Employment Policies' Macleod replied: 'I think industry is now coming into a period when, partly through automation and technical progress, there is a period of change.'

By 'period of change' he means 'period of unemployment'. And this is why he is telling the employers that there are more ways than one of creating unemployment.

There are forty pages of fine words in Macleod's booklet. But fine words, as every trade unionist knows, butter no parsnips.

(Continued on back page)

TAKE HEED OF ROCHDALE

ROCHDALE'S hard-headed citizens have spelled out messages in the plainest terms to both Tories and Labour. To the Government, reeling from a body-blow worse than any Conservative supporter or Stock Exchange patriot had imagined possible, they say: 'Out with you! With or without bells and bathing costumes and other such stunts, we've had enough of you.' To the leaders of the Labour Party they say: 'If you don't put fire in your bellies and fight, you too may get a shock at the General Election.'

A moment's study of the Rochdale figures shows that Labour has not the slightest grounds for complacency, despite the dramatic reduction in the Tory vote from 26,518 to 9,827. Labour's vote, too, *dropped*, from 24,928 to 22,133. And Labour's share of the votes *dropped*, from 48.5 per cent. to 44.7 per cent. We must do better than this if Labour is to sweep back to power with a thumping majority. This pattern of Tory losses without Labour gains is not a healthy one. At Rochdale, of course, the picture is made more complex by the existence of a strong Liberal tradition, which enables a party that is little more than an anachronism to capture perhaps 7,000 disgruntled Tory votes. We may expect attempts by the Labour Right wing to draw from this Liberal success the conclusion that Labour should seek to attract middle-class voters by soft-peddalling on nationalization and discouraging industrial militancy. Such a course would be disastrous for Labour, which depends first and foremost on the support of the industrial workers. The reconstitution of 'Victory for Socialism' under a new leadership can make an important contribution to the framing of a positive socialist policy, and help turn the Rochdale result into a nation-wide rout for the Tories at the hands of the Labour movement—on condition that it engages in serious activity in the factories and trade union branches as well as in the constituency Labour Parties. Socialist 'shock troops' are even more necessary in industry than in the Labour Party.

MACDONALDS OF 1958

MR ALFRED ROBENS, MP, who is tipped as Minister of Labour in the next Labour Government, brings good cheer to the Tories. Writing in the *News of the World* last Sunday he told them:

No one can complain about the objectives the Government have in mind. They, too, want industrial peace. And they want to ensure that wage increases are matched by increased productivity to fight inflation. But they are going the wrong way about things.

This declaration of basic agreement with the Tories offers still further proof that Robens, Gaitskell, Wilson and Co. have no alternative socialist policy to solve the crisis. They have decided already that if and when Labour returns to office they will continue the policy already instituted by Macmillan. Their main difference with the Tories lies only in this: that they believe they can get agreement with the trade union leaders to reduce living standards without strikes.

Leaders such as this are a menace to the Labour movement. Before the battle they prepare the defeat. These are the Ramsay MacDonalds of 1958, and unless they are removed from office they will behave just as MacDonald did.

NOW IRIS ATTACKS THE NEWSLETTER

By Peter Fryer

THE anti-communist smear sheet *Iris Newsletter* has joined the attack on THE NEWSLETTER launched by the Economic League.

On December 14, in an article 'Defend the ETU against Fleet St and King St!', I referred to the attempts being made by the Iris outfit and other reactionary elements to exploit the situation in the Electrical Trades Union.

This reference to Industrial Research and Information Services Ltd has drawn a shriek of hate from the residential flat at Maritime House where the persons who run this organization turn their duplicator handles.

It took Iris no less than seven weeks to react to my reference to them, which is scarcely a tribute to the thoroughness of their 'industrial research'.

They start by accusing me of helping 'to sow disruption in the Labour Party'.

'The Newsletter, in common with Keep Left and other doubtful publications, is printed by the Plough Press in hole-and-corner premises in a dirty alley at the back of 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.'

'Bloodthirsty lies and distortions'

Fryer 'writes as if he alone is a true communist as distinct from the CP "Stalinists".' Then comes a quotation from the article, and the comment:

'The many thousands of trade unionists who really know Iris and the invaluable service it performs will split their sides with laughter at this bloodthirsty language of lies and distortions.'

'The "renegades" who run Iris have done far more for the "working-class movement" than Mr Peter Fryer can ever hope to do.'

'But this is just the sort of defamatory diatribe to be expected from a dark corner in a dirty alley "at the rear of 180 Clapham High Street".'

Let me commend this attack to the notice of the many honest rank-and-file members of the Communist Party who felt that the 'Defend the ETU!' article concentrated too much on criticism of the ETU leadership, and not enough on exposing the character of the capitalist attack against that union.

'Defend the ETU!' was intended as a principled statement. That it stung in the quarters it was meant to sting in is shown by the immoderate tone and smearing style of the Iris comment.

Tanner and his team

How 'doubtful' a publication is Keep Left? Ask the many Labour MPs, including Barbara Castle, deputy chairman of the Labour Party, who have greeted this Labour youth paper and wished it well.

Equally threadbare is the 'dirty alley', 'dark corner' kind of writing.

A team of four men runs Iris: Jack Tanner, former president of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (who got that job, incidentally, with the support of the Communist Party); William McLaine, former assistant general secretary of the AEU; Charles R. Sonnex, former clerk at the AEU head office; and James L. Nash, formerly employed at the AEU head office as Tanner's personal secretary.

These men have turned their backs on everything the British Labour movement was formed to fight for.

The only 'invaluable service' they render is service to the boss and the Right-wing union leaders—by demanding higher 'productivity' and by fostering witch-hunts.

An editorial board of ten runs The Newsletter. All of them are active in the Labour movement, and among them are men who have earned the respect of their fellow-workers as militants on the job.

A year or so ago, some of us who now bring out The News-

letter had the chance of moving far, far away from the 'dirty alley'—which is how working-class militancy and the modest way of life that is associated with it always appear in the consciousness of the capitalist class and the Right wing.

There were plenty of suspiciously friendly people about who jumped to the conclusion that our break with the Communist Party meant that we had abandoned socialist principles. They were ready with their offers.

But we were leaving for reasons which the Iris boys, and those of similar mentality, could never even begin to understand.

Get this straight, Messrs Tanner, McLaine, Sonnex and Nash. We don't care much for the smell in the regions where you now move. We'll settle for the 'alley'—and the respect of militant workers.

WHO CALLED OUT THOSE POLICE DOGS?

By John Connor

'I THOUGHT they only guided old ladies across busy roads,' quipped an indignant Wimpey striker. He was referring to last week's strike meeting at the big Petrochemicals site at Flixton (Cheshire).

Astonished workers attending the meeting were treated to the sight of four anti-riot police cars, a galaxy of uniformed police and two police dogs.

Site convener Eddie Marsden and other stewards protested to the management—but they denied any knowledge of the affair. The police blandly stated that they received a telephone call warning of possible trouble and acted accordingly.

The workers do not intend to let the matter rest. Convener Marsden has urged the men to protest in their trade union branches and trades councils.

The meeting resolved by 50 votes to 30 to return to work. As reported last week, the men had stopped in protest at the suspension of twenty-six of their workmates.

The firm agreed to lift the suspensions and to reopen negotiations on the question of special payment for certain pipework.

A report-back meeting of the stewards on Saturday recommended to the men the acceptance of the firm's new offer. This awards threepence per hour on some jobs, twopence on others.

The original claim was for threepence on all but one section of the pipework; nevertheless the award is considered a victory.

'PERMS' FROM OUTSIDE RILE DOCKLAND

By Our Industrial Correspondent

TROUBLE is brewing on the docks over the way 'permanent' men are being used. These are dockers who are employed as weekly workers by dock employers and are not hired for particular jobs, as are the majority of dockers.

In Liverpool, London and elsewhere there is feeling on the issue. On many jobs weekly workers work for different rates from those of the 'casual' men.

A fortnight ago the Port of London Authority brought 'permanent' gangs into Millwall dock from outside while 'casual' dockers in the section were without jobs.

The result was a short stoppage affecting six ships. The strikers said this practice of the PLA was a contravention of the Dock Labour Scheme.

Unofficial representatives from Millwall, West India, Royal group and other London docks met on February 7 to discuss the position.

They decided to give out leaflets at the dock gates and demanded that the PLA stop the indiscriminate transfer of 'permanent' labour from dock to dock.

Dockers in Liverpool and London with whom I have discussed the problem say that either every docker should be made permanent or all should go into the labour pool. Divi-

sions among the workers, which are exploited by the employers, would thus be prevented.

Compulsory overtime is the cause of another current dispute on London docks.

Dockers on Regent's Canal, Sector 6, have been operating an overtime ban for four months. The ban was started when a gang of men were suspended for refusing to work overtime.

MINERS SPURN ABSENTEE COMMITTEES

By Price Jones

THE first opposition to the absentee committees set up in Lancashire recently by the National Coal Board and National Union of Mineworkers has now appeared.

I understand that the Plank Lane (Leigh) Branch of the NUM will withdraw its support from the now unpopular committee.

The miners there have told the branch committee, in no uncertain terms, that they will not recognize the newly-formed committees, and if any of their workmates receive notice to appear before this 'tribunal' they will come out on strike en bloc.

Faced with this opposition the branch has, I gather, decided not to take part in the anti-miner set-up.

No doubt other miners will come to the same decision as they realize that these committees are against their own interests.

LEEDS CHIPPIES CALL FOR JOBS CAMPAIGN

AT the Leeds district management committee of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers the following resolutions were passed unanimously:

THAT all overtime permits should be terminated;

THAT Leeds City Labour Party be asked to support the extension of the Corporation's direct works department, including the building of new houses by direct labour;

THAT a mass meeting be organized for all building workers in the Leeds district to discuss the consequences of unemployment in the trade.

All three resolutions were endorsed by the Leeds committee of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives.

Other resolutions recently passed in Leeds include the following:

Leeds no. 11 branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union 'is disturbed at the lack of activity by the Labour Party regarding the carrying of H-bombs by American aircraft' and calls for 'public meetings . . . to build up resistance to the production of nuclear weapons'.

East Leeds Constituency Labour Party says it is highly necessary that a public campaign be launched in the near future, both by local Labour Parties and by the party nationally, against nuclear weapons.

LABOUR

GIVE US SOCIALIST POLICIES, CAMPAIGNS, NOT MAYOR'S PARLOUR INTRIGUES

By Ursula Verity

A DISCUSSION took place at the annual general meeting of our ward, on the functions of executive committees. Like many local Labour Parties, we carry on a desultory war with our city EC, and a recent skirmish had resulted in our receiving a plaintive note, appealing for 'loyalty to your elected EC'.

'Loyalty for what?' demanded our most truculent member. 'We elect them to carry out our decisions, and we allow them to make recommendations which we can overthrow by a majority vote.'

'Only we never get a majority vote for big issues, because

they rig the meetings with phoney delegates.'

This outspoken summing-up received so much support that we decided not to elect a ward EC this year, but to manage with an officers' meeting if an emergency arose.

It seems a pity that the Labour Party nationally cannot manage without an EC, or at least curtail its powers, for, according to my correspondents, it spends too much time interfering in the affairs of local Labour Parties and not enough in formulating policies with which we can fight the Tories.

At Brighton we witnessed the attempt (arising from the Wilson Report on party organization) to shape all the borough Labour Parties into the same mould.

The NEC alleged that too many borough Labour Parties allowed their delegates to waste time at management committee meetings, so that the work of the constituency parties suffered.

They recommended that more emphasis should be placed on divisional work, so that more MPs could be returned.

This would be a good reform where constituency party organization is bad, but the NEC insists that it be carried out even where organization is extremely efficient and the borough party a real help in Parliamentary elections.

One suspects that the real grumble is at the tendency of the livelier borough parties to pass resolutions demanding socialist policies and criticizing the Parliamentary Labour Party. Instead of silencing criticism by doing the job it is called upon

to do, the NEC abolishes the organizations which criticize.

The crowning absurdity comes from Leeds, where, I hear, the NEC are actually objecting to their method of electing the Lord Mayor!

They say that as Leeds is the only borough in the country where election of the Labour Lord Mayor is not in the hands of the Council group, but has always been the prerogative of the delegate management committee, Leeds must 'come into line'.

Leeds say that their way of electing the Lord Mayor is democratic, and will not settle for a spot of annual back-scratching in the council chamber.

Surely it is time that the NEC stopped poking its nose into local affairs, and, with the Parliamentary Labour Party, got down to the job of getting out a socialist policy on foreign affairs, the H-bomb, housing, nationalization and the cost of living.

In spite of the superficial unity behind the emasculated resolutions at Brighton, the delegates made their desires plain. They wanted a fighting campaign to get the Tories out.

There are fights to be won, campaigns to be organized, and we of the rank and file are looking for leadership, not for intrigues in the Lord Mayor's parlour.

Comrade Morgan Phillips must stop living in Mrs Dale's Diary and realize that history waits to be written.

Cunvin's Column | Well Spoken, Sir!

AT last the Labour Party has replied in unequivocal terms to the steel barons. The next Labour Government WILL renationalize the steel industry.

Speaking to a Labour Party conference in Glasgow last Sunday, Mr Alfred Robens, MP for Blyth and a front bench spokesman, said: 'This is a pledge.'

Mr Stewart and his fellow steel bosses have been assuring us that they have the unanimous support of their shareholders in their fight against nationalization. This is not surprising.

No property-owning class has ever tamely submitted to expropriation. But have the boards of the various steel firms consulted their working men? We think not, for the answer is likely to be a fruity one.

The Labour Party should issue a statement that the next Labour Government will introduce legislation which will, retrospectively, make the money spent by the steel and sugar barons on the proposed anti-nationalization campaign liable to tax.

They should not be allowed to get away with this openly pro-Tory anti-Labour propaganda as legitimate business expenditure.

Whatever is spent will be added to the cost of steel and so help to swell the already swollen cost of living still more.

DALTON'S BANK OF ENGLAND

WHEN Hugh Dalton was Labour's Chancellor of the Exchequer, he lost his post because he talked too much. Nowadays he writes too much—too much nonsense.

In last Sunday's Express, he defends the Act of Parliament introduced by the Labour Government nationalizing the Bank of England. Characteristically, he refers to it as 'My Bank of England Act'. Very well, history will know where to lay the blame.

To make the Act work, however, according to Dr Dalton, it requires a strong Chancellor of the Exchequer (Hugh Dalton, for instance?).

He sees nothing wrong in appointing part-time directors from the world of private capitalism but thinks their function should be 'advisory'. 'They should give information to the governor rather than receive it.'

He also thinks that the wrong people are being appointed to the Court of the Bank of England—too many merchant

bankers, not enough industrialists or joint stock bankers.

The Bank of England was nationalized by the Labour Government, along with coal, power, iron and steel, and transport, presumably as a step toward a socialist order of society.

How on earth does the good Doctor think industrialists and joint stock bankers with their stakes deep in capitalism are going to contribute toward this end?

Or perhaps the genial Hugh never thought much about socialism at all?

HOME, SWEET HOME

IF there is one thing which Charles Curran hates—he vents his spleen every Friday in the London Evening News—it is the spending of 'public money' to alleviate the condition of the poor and the needy. Spend hundreds of millions on armaments, atom bombs and what not. That is all right!

But when he thinks of old age pensioners augmenting their meagre pittance from Public Assistance, or unemployed workers drawing money from national insurance, his Tory blood boils over with rage.

Latest victim of his vitriolic pen is the mother who goes out to work and is compelled to leave her child in a day nursery.

What sort of world does Mr Curran move about in? Certainly not the world of working mothers.

If he did he would know that the great majority of mothers would prefer to stay at home to look after their children.

But Mr Curran's capitalist friends do not pay the husbands of these mothers enough to enable them to keep a decent home together.

Since last April, when the Tory Rent Act sent up the rent in thousands of working-class homes, many hundreds of mothers who never went out to work were compelled to seek employment to find this extra rent.

Next April, when the rents go up again, they will be joined by hundreds, perhaps thousands more.

In October, hundreds of families face eviction—they will no longer have a home in which to look after their children.

Mr Curran was one of the most vociferous and consistent champions of the Rent Act. He and the class he speaks for have much to answer for when it comes to the question 'Who is breaking up family life?'

GEORGE CUNVIN

More about Explorer - & a Warning on Strontium

By Our Scientific Correspondent, J. H. Bradley

MANY facts about the American satellite programme are now available. First, the matter must be put in perspective by saying that the irreproachable conduct of nearly all American scientists has been obscured by a flood of misleading propaganda.

In fact no observation has been made by Explorer which was not perfectly well known from Sputnik I.

No apparatus weighing 30lb. can give information about high-energy cosmic rays, since massive lead screens are needed to cut out low-energy rays.

NO INFORMATION STORE. Sputnik II had about 1,200lb. of instruments and 670lb. of rocket motor and casing. Thus Explorer may have about 20lb. of instruments.

Explorer has no store for information gathered in regions far from receiving stations. Even when the USA puts up its 300lb. television satellite, pictures will not be stored in the satellite.

Modern television needs about four million impulses a second, and the only feasible systems are recording on film or on very fine iron wire. There will be extreme difficulty in keeping a camera always directed towards the ground.

Vanguard at launching has a thrust less than one and a half times its own weight. I have no doubt that this is a top military secret, but it is easily calculated from official statements, if one has the slightest knowledge of mechanics.

If I knew the weight of a Sergeant rocket I could calculate the thrust of a Jupiter C within 10 per cent., and no doubt the Russians have done so.

MUCH MORE POWERFUL. Jupiter C is much more powerful than Vanguard, which is why it is less dependent on the wind and time of day for launching.

A simple calculation shows that the energies of Explorer and Sputnik II are equivalent to 5.282 and 5.178 miles per second respectively at the surface of the earth.

Allowing for the speed of the earth, the latitude of the launching sites, and the angle of the orbits, these become 5.008 for Explorer as against 5.070 for Sputnik II.

The merit of the achievement is therefore very nearly in the ratio of the weights of the satellites—about 50 or 60 to one for the Russians.

A speed of 7.81 miles per second is needed to reach the planets, and a little less for the moon.

COULD REACH PLANETS. It seems that the Soviet Union could send a very small and scientifically valueless rocket to the planets, but not the USA.

Conflicting reports of the size and shape of Explorer's orbit are due to its passage over such large areas of sea and less developed nations, where there are no radar tracking stations.

The orbit stretching far out into space has advantages in the measurement of air pressures at those distances, but, like the latest Vanguard failure, is probably due to the poor control systems used.

RECENT reports of children with unusually large amounts of radio-strontium in their bones should cause no surprise.

Even with the strictest shielding of food from dust, and the best supplies of calcium, results are bound to be patchy.

One would expect to find that people in areas with very hard water had less radio-strontium than people drinking soft water. This is only one factor which has not been investigated.

It is possible that the northern temperate belt (North America, Europe and Siberia) receives more fall-out than other areas.

This poetic justice, if true, will be one of the most important observations of the International Geophysical Year, both for health and for meteorology.

It was never clear why the Medical Research Council chose 10 strontium units as the level for urgent review.

GOVERNMENT WON'T TELL. Any reconsideration ought to be when new evidence becomes available about the effects of fall-out. The level of 10 units is not a scientific choice, based on evidence, but a reflection of our almost total ignorance.

The Dutch fence in a girl with part of a radium needle in her nose. The villagers of the Forest of Dean prevent the most harmless dumping in disused mines.

They have no source of genuine, impartial information on which they know they can rely. The Government will not tell the public about radiation dangers because of the political troubles it would create for itself.

BOYCOTT AS ANSWER TO SAKIET CRIME?

By Michael Banda

DESPITE the vote of confidence accorded M. Gaillard by the National Assembly, public opinion in France and elsewhere has been severely disturbed by the bombing of Sakiyet Sidi Youssef.

The motion tabled by three Labour MPs, Mr Wedgwood Benn, Mrs. Barbara Castle and Mr Fenner Brockway, asking for an immediate meeting of the Security Council to consider the 'threat to peace' that has developed out of the French bombing, is considered far too mild by many Labour Party members.

The view is developing that the party and the National Council of Labour should demand a boycott of all military goods destined for the French authorities in North Africa, and should organize the mass picketing of the French embassy in London.

Observers not content with British Foreign Office handouts consider that the concern expressed in Whitehall and by Dulles at the murder of seventy-five Arabs is not in fact dictated by humanitarian considerations.

Eisenhower's asking whether the planes which bombed Sakiyet were delivered for NATO purposes or were bought

by French funds is regarded as disingenuous, since the USA could stop the war in Algeria tomorrow if it chose to react as it did to the Suez adventure.

LETTERS

THERE MAY BE TOO MUCH TO UNRAVEL

A. POWELL'S demand for clarification of a 'socialist foreign policy' is indeed timely and necessary.

While the editorial 'When Robbers Meet' [The Newsletter, January 25, p. 22] was essentially correct in recognizing that only a socialist Europe could bring lasting peace, it nevertheless inclined towards an optimistic rather than a realistic approach.

When will the socialist movements be strong enough? Perhaps a decade, or two decades? It is impossible to predict.

In the meantime a summit meeting may give the world a breathing space. If the imperialists succeed in giving west Germany what Adenauer is demanding—nuclear weapons; if American bases complete with rockets are established throughout Europe; if nuclear weapons continue to be tested—there may be too much for the working class movement to unravel.

ELSEWHERE IN EASTERN EUROPE

IN POLAND, communist leaders are resentful at a recent anti-Polish campaign in the Czechoslovak Press, alleging 'revisionism' and artistic deviations.

IN BULGARIA, some 3,000 young people have been arrested in the past few weeks in the campaign against 'hooliganism'.

IN HUNGARY the return of ex-dictator Matyas Rakosi has been announced to local party meetings. He is to take up a post as an 'economic adviser'.

IN RUSSIA Khrushchev has been talking about the 'withering away of the State' (see letter from 'Historicus' below).

LETTERS (Continued from previous page)

Even the most limited agreement will mean more time for the forces of socialism to gather strength.

At this stage neither Zilliacus in Tribune (who plumps entirely for diplomacy) nor The Newsletter (which places perhaps too much faith in European revolution) seem to have fully developed a realistic socialist foreign policy for Britain within the framework of a still capitalist Europe.

An immediate appraisal is vital!

Upton (Dorset)

Alan Bennett

'WITHERING OF STATE'—OR RESHUFFLING?

It is a long time since Soviet spokesmen dwelt on the topic of the 'withering away of the State'.

Under Stalin the role of the State was exalted, and he even said that the State would still exist under 'communism in one country'!

Once the Twentieth Congress had raised the slogan 'Back to Lenin!' it was inevitable, however, that the idea of the withering away of the State should find its way back into Soviet thought.

Nevertheless it comes as a bit of a shock when Khrushchev himself brings it up in a talk with a correspondent of The Times, reported on February 1.

The decentralization measures taken recently and the broadening of the basis of supreme power in the USSR, from the presidium to the central committee, are signs of a trend, Khrushchev claimed, which will culminate in the dying-off of all the organ of State power, including the Army and the judiciary, with only economic planning bodies left in the end, divested of political power.

Two questions arise as one reads Khrushchev's latest.

First, while decentralization is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, as also is the increasing role played by the central committee in comparison with the presidium (if this is indeed so), what signs are there that this is not, at present, merely a reshuffling of power among the bureaucrats?

Secondly, how does all this tie up with the talk of 'peaceful coexistence'? Can the USSR disarm in a still predominantly capitalist world without risking destruction?

Let us hope that we shall learn more from Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders on these questions—and that the Communist Parties will be encouraged to discuss them.

London, W.3

'Historicus'

KEEPING THE PARTY CLEAN

Gordon St-Clère Smithe, former member of the Communist Party's Kent district committee and Beckenham borough treasurer, has been suspended from the party for allegedly supporting the 'London Group' and providing information to The Newsletter.

Another charge against him was that he let a flat to Peter Fryer, which, said one of his accusers, 'he must have known was a political act'. He has appealed to the district committee against suspension.

ULBRICHT'S PURGE (Continued from front page)

named as one of the leaders of the anti-Ulbricht opposition.

During December Wollweber received information that Ulbricht intended to arrest him, and thereupon he sought asylum at the headquarters of the Soviet troops in east Berlin. He was granted asylum, and flown in a Soviet military plane to Moscow, where he is reported to have put the opposition's case to Soviet party leaders.

Early in January he returned to Berlin, and moved about freely once again, apparently having received a Soviet assurance that he would be protected.

In the second half of January, however, a decision was obviously reached in Moscow that overall political considerations made a downgrading of Ulbricht inadvisable at this time; and this was possibly reflected in various Pravda articles attacking 'revisionism' once again.

The dispute was finally resolved at a meeting of the east German Politburo in the first days of February, at which Ulbricht, supported by the protective hand of the Kremlin, managed to rout his opponents.

Moving force in opposition

At this meeting Ulbricht launched a full-scale attack on Karl Schirdewan, another Politburo member, and key man in the party apparatus: he was the cadre chief.

Schirdewan, who had been regarded in the public eye as an Ulbricht protégé, had been in fact the moving force in the opposition for over fifteen months.

He stuck to his guns in the decisive Politburo meeting, and flatly refused to make a 'self-critical statement' on his errors.

He had counted on the support of several other Politburo members, but at the decisive moment they deserted to the winning side, and he was left isolated.

The result was clear: at the plenary meeting of the central committee from February 4 to 6, Schirdewan and Wollweber were expelled from the central committee, and Fred Oelssner, leading Marxist theoretician, independently in opposition, was downgraded from the Politburo.

The published charges against Schirdewan and Wollweber make interesting reading. They are charged with having 'formed a faction and attempted to change the political line of the party'.

It is repeatedly hinted that Schirdewan had had some links with the 'counter-revolutionary centre Janka-Harich', or at least that he had not acted strongly enough against this group. (Wolfgang Harich was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on a frame-up charge in March 1957).

Twentieth Congress lessons 'misunderstood'

There is no serious evidence of any such link. Schirdewan is also attacked in very strong language for his 'slandereous methods', his 'attacks against Comrade Ulbricht', and his 'pathological ambition, superiority and sense of infallibility'—all of them charges which could better be aimed against Ulbricht himself.

It is also very significant that Schirdewan is charged with 'misunderstanding the lessons of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU'.

The charges against Wollweber are more moderate: the main accusation is that he did not do his work as Minister of State Security efficiently, and that he conspired with Schirdewan.

With the purging of Schirdewan and Wollweber, together with a number of their collaborators in the top party apparatus who are expected to come under fire shortly, Ulbricht has taken another step in winking out old communist veterans who have spent their whole life in the service of the party.

Wollweber has a particularly long party history. As a young sailor he was one of the leaders of the Kiel revolt in the German Navy in 1918 which toppled the Kaiser.

He has been a member of the German party since its foundation, and during the second world war he was a brilliantly successful saboteur, sinking Nazi ships which called at Swedish harbours.

Schirdewan, pre-war leading member of the Young Communist International, spent the entire Hitler period in jail and concentration camp.