

FOR THE Young Socialists and the Socialist Labour League the campaign for the anti-Tory rally at the Alexandra Palace on February 14 is as important as the fight to establish the daily Workers Press. Here SHEILA TORRANCE, assistant secretary of the SLL talks about the meaning of the campaign and its aims to STEPHEN JOHNS.

Sheila joined the Young Socialists in 1961 and was elected a national committee member for London and Middlesex in 1963 only to be expelled in 1964 by the right wing Labour leadership of Wilson together with six other national committee members—all supporters of the socialist youth paper 'Keep Left'.

At the 1965 Morecambe conference the Young Socialists was founded as an independent organization and Sheila became its national secretary.

She relinquished this post in 1970 and was elected the assistant secretary of the Socialist Labour League in June 1970.



Sheila Torrance talking to Workers Press reporter Stephen Johns

Forward to Alexandra Palace!

WHAT is the purpose of the Alexandra Palace rally against the Tory government?

THERE IS a clear difference between the attitudes of the Socialist Labour League and the Young Socialists to the Tory government and all the other tendencies in the labour movement.

We believe that the anti-union laws and the other reactionary measures which the government has taken against the working class can only be defeated if the conditions are created for this defeat.

The Communist Party, the Labour Party and the revisionist groups confine themselves to a policy of mere protest against this government. They accept the fact that it should be allowed to continue in office for another four years.

THE CHARTER OF BASIC RIGHTS

A National mass rally Alexandra Palace London, W22 February 14 11a.m.

The purpose of the Alexandra Palace rally will be to bring together all those who really want to fight the government and make it resign from office, thus opening the door for the return of a Labour government under conditions where it will be forced to restore what has been taken away from the working-class by the Tories and implement a policy on the lines of our Charter of Basic Rights.

This Charter was drawn up after wide discussion and debate among workers at the second annual conference of the All Trades Unions Alliance.

It contains a wide variety of demands to defend all workers' rights that are now threatened; for example where a firm announces redundancies the Charter demands that the firm be nationalized under workers' control.

It opposes all productivity deals and demands that wages and pensions be tied on a sliding scale to prices and, of course, it has a fully socialist approach to the welfare services and housing aimed at restoring the Tory cuts and developing of these services essential to all working-class families.

WHAT WILL be the role of the Socialist Labour League in the campaign for the rally?

THE Socialist Labour League was founded in March 1969 with a

leadership made up of people who had been expelled from the Labour Party.

They were expelled because they had asked the national executive committee of that party permission to form an open Marxist tendency in the Labour Party similar to the position held by the Fabian Society. This request was refused and the expulsions followed.

Since that time we have remained an integral part of the labour and trade union movement. We have continued to work for the return of a Labour government at all times with the stipulation that such a government, to be effective, would have to carry out socialist policies.

We believe that our expulsion was, historically speaking, part of the preparations which the reformists, represented by Gaitskell, then Wilson, were making to betray the labour movement when the party was returned to office.

We don't believe that the rank and file of the labour and trade union movement are tied for all time to the coat-tails of the reformist leadership.

There is a distinct class difference between the Labour bureaucracy which serves the capitalist class, and the working class, which has built its organizations in an attempt to maintain living standards by trade union activity and by the election of a Labour administration.

During the campaign for the Alexandra Palace rally we will be able to explain the role of the Socialist Labour League as one which continually fights for the interests of the working class.

With this policy we hope to build up wider support for our programme within the trade unions and the Labour Party with the aim of forcing the leadership to lift the bans and proscriptions on our movement. We will fight to demonstrate the correctness of the Marxist perspective and against the policies of class collaboration.

WHAT IS the role of the Young Socialists in the campaign for Alexandra Palace?

THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS began inside the Labour Party in the early part of 1960. Their paper 'Keep Left' became the centre for rallying a strong Marxist contingent within the ranks of Labour's youth.

The right wing of the Party made repeated attempts to contain the strength of those forces and in 1962 they banned 'Keep Left' and expelled three people who represented the paper on the Young Socialists national committee.

It was at this time that we took a decision similar to the one

behind the current call for the Alexandra Palace rally.

The 'Keep Left' tendency set out in the winter of 1963 to organize large numbers of unemployed youth into the Young Socialists.

This campaign was very successful and made it possible for

the paper's supporters to gain control of the national committee at the Easter 1963 conference where they won six out of 11 seats.

We were then able to change the policies of the Young Socialists in line with our Marxist perspective and these policies proved very attractive to left-

ward moving youth.

In the Easter of 1964 we again won six of the national committee seats and defeated the supporters of Harold Wilson and the reformist policies that they advocated.

This was just four months before the General Election and

the Labour Party right wing became very alarmed.

As a result they expelled the six leading members of the national committee. The majority of the branches then formed the movement that is today called the Young Socialists. The paper 'Keep Left' goes from strength to strength with a large circula-

tion of 21,000 copies a month. Forty thousand copies have been printed for the Alexandra Palace Rally.

We believe that the Young Socialists have been proven absolutely right in their fight against the Wilson government and the right wing in the Labour Party. We further believe that if they had not been expelled, our policies would have won a wide following in the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

When we were expelled we warned in particular that the Wilson government would open the door for the return of the Tories and this has been proved right.

Now the Young Socialists consider that they are in the vanguard of the fight against the Tory government and as such will play a leading role in organizing the rally at Alexandra Palace.

For the Young Socialists the rally is a continuation of the struggle they have made since 1960 — that is to defeat the Tories everywhere.

ARE THERE other campaigns in the history of the British Trotskyist movement that compare with the one for Alexandra Palace?

YES THE campaign to launch the Workers Press is another example.

In the midst of our expulsion from the Labour Party in 1964 we drew up plans for the publication of a daily paper five years from that date.

We set out and collected large sums of money from our sympathizers in the Labour Party, trade unions and, of course, from young people.

As a result we were able to keep to our time table — the

Workers Press first appeared on September 26, 1969.

The history of our movement in Britain reveals two important characteristics of Trotskyism. The first is a devotion to principles, theory and the history of the working class, the second is a determination to fight to overcome every kind of difficulty we meet in order to achieve what we think is necessary.

No other movement in the world today has founded a daily paper like the Workers Press. But it would not have been possible for us to have done this without the two vital characteristics I have mentioned.

We are sure that Alexandra Palace will be a great success.

WHAT AFFECT do you think the campaign and the rally will have within the trade unions?

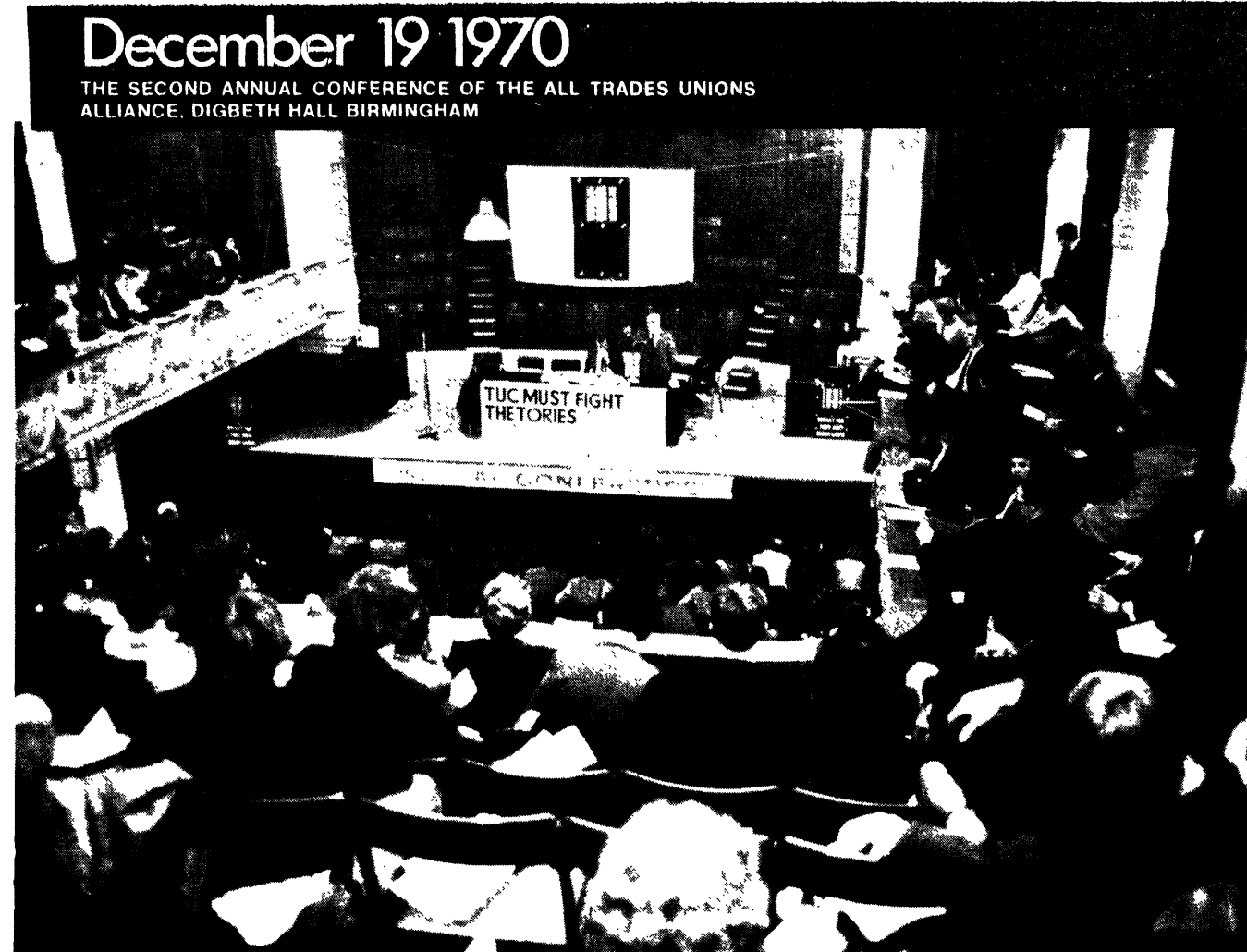
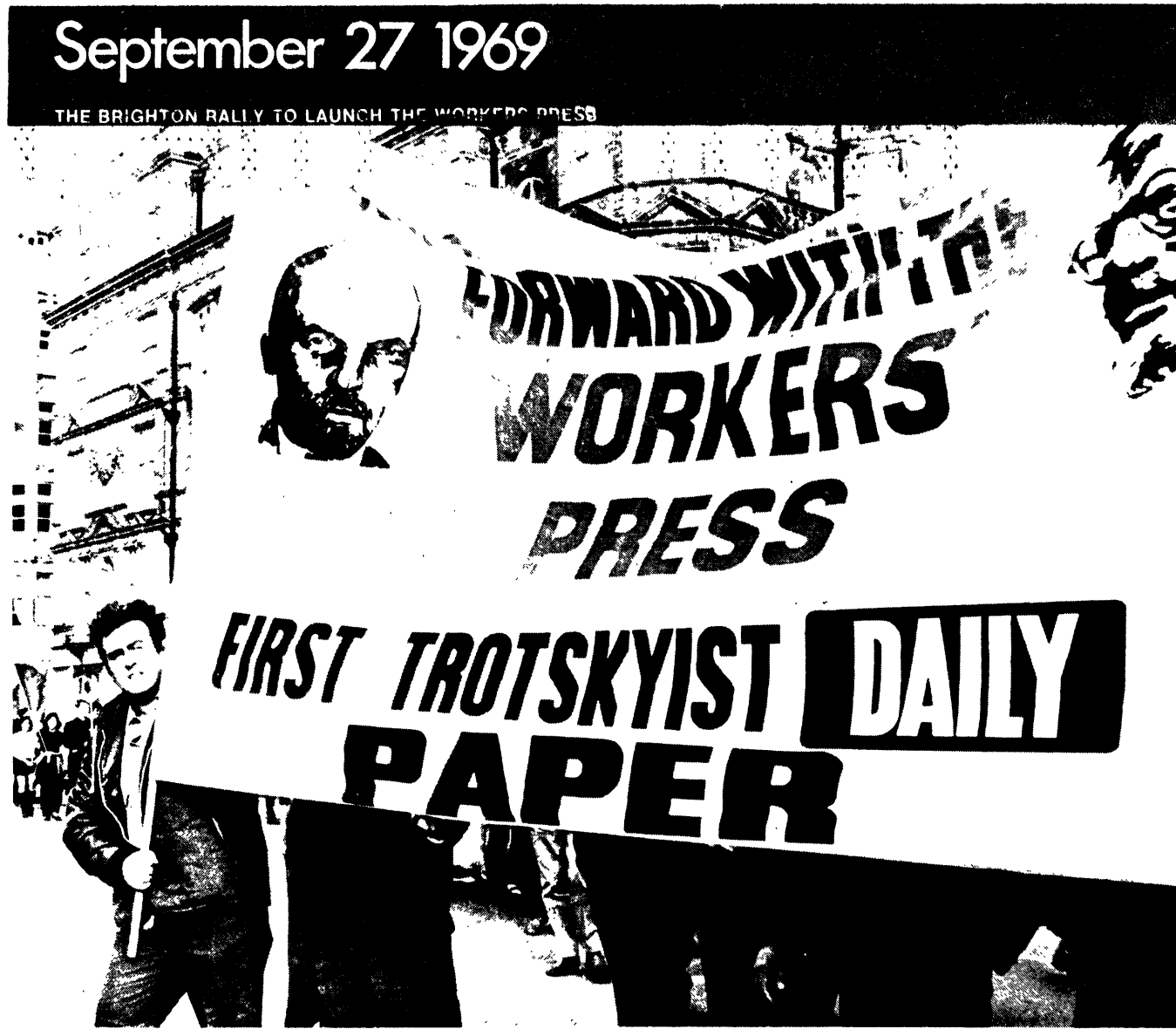
WE ARE convinced that it will have a very big effect. Since October last year we have organized a campaign and discussion around a 'Draft Charter of Basic Rights'.

50,000 draft copies of the Charter were circulated to many thousands of workers who suggested improvement and amendments for the final draft.

This was drawn up and agreed at the ATUA's second annual conference in Birmingham on December 19. The Charter is now being submitted as a policy statement to the Alexandra Palace rally.

We hope to circulate 100,000 copies of the Charter in the trade unions in preparation for Alexandra Palace.

This government is attacking all the basic rights of the working class and we believe that the Charter will give a lead to the working class to defend its rights.



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EAST & WEST

European REVIEW

The might of the Lord

PEACELOVERS and Protestants everywhere were relieved to hear that the Vatican had recently become party to the international treaty on nuclear non-proliferation.

The move follows slashing cuts in Mother Church's conventional forces — consisting now mainly of the multi-coloured Swiss pikemen who guard the entrances to the Vatican city — and gives practical effect to the oft-repeated Papal declarations in favour of peace and goodwill among men, irrespective of race or creed.

Yet the Church has not always been so moderate in its use of military power to support its primary, spiritual, aims. Almost a thousand years ago it adopted the strategy of indiscriminate slaughter of the civilian population, now described by nuclear 'theorists' as 'deterrence'.

Early in the 13th century the official Church was seriously embarrassed by the growth of a popular anti-clerical 'heresy' in the Languedoc—the SW region of France.

The most important were thousands of 'Albigenses' (so-called from the town of Albi) who held,

among other things, that corrupt priests were the appointees of Satan, that bishoprics should not be bought and sold, and that men should live modestly and share their goods with one another.

These beliefs, attacking both the doctrines and the property of the Church, clearly had to be extirpated.

So in the spring of 1209 the reigning Pope launched a crusade against the Albigenses. (The previous four had been

directed, with no permanent success, against the Moslems in the Middle East.)

The feudal barons of N France were promised remission of all sins (past, present and future) if they would provide the forces. And lest this spiritual incentive should not be enough, they were also promised all the land they could conquer.

Their campaign culminated in the siege of Béziers, where the Albigenses had assembled for a determined stand. When the

crusaders had breached the walls, and supposing they should distinguish between heretic and orthodox, they asked the Papal legate, Arnold Amalric, how they were to know whom to kill.

'Kill them all!' replied the prelate, 'God will recognize his own!' And so they massacred at least 15,000 and many others in the following months.

The Pontiff of the day—still celebrated as a staunch defender of the faith—enjoyed the name of Pope Innocent II.

Cinema Stalinism

BELGRADE'S film festival, which closes today, was subjected to some last-minute changes by the Soviet authorities.

The aim of the festival is to present to film-makers, press and public an international selection of successful films on various 'themes'.

One of these was 'confrontation', dealing with political and social questions.

But the Soviet delegation insisted that their film 'Czechoslovakia: Year of Trials', giving a version of the events in Czechoslovakia during 1968, should be withdrawn.

Apparently it was to have been shown in the same programme as the American 'Czechoslovakia' and the Canadian 'Seven days in Prague', both dealing with the same subject.

Withdrawn

Also withdrawn was the historical film 'Andrie Rublev', by the Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky.

The official explanation was that it 'did not have the necessary qualities to represent the Soviet cinema in an international festival'.

But the Soviet director Mark

Donskoi, interviewed by journalists at the festival, said:

'All I know is that our historians consider that the historical events treated in "Andrei Rublev", which in my view is a good film, have not been respected.'

(The historical background is that of 15th Century Russia.)

In place of 'Andrei Rublev' was substituted the mammoth Soviet-Italian epic 'Waterloo' which recently had a Royal World Premier in London.

Bulldozers

Its director was Sergei Bondarchuk, to whose creative talents were added tens of thousands of Red Army soldiers and enough bulldozers to transform a size-

able area of the Soviet Union into a precise replica of the original battlefield.

Bondarchuk, the darling of Soviet bureaucrats and British royalty alike, was recently interviewed in 'Le Monde'.

Truthful?

When he was asked if 'Waterloo' was in his view historically truthful, he replied that it was, explaining that in preparing for it he had read through more than half a ton of documents!

He went on to say that he would like to make a film on Stalin and have the script written by Mikhail Sholokov (veteran Stalinist novelist, who lent his talents in the 1930s to the justification of forced collectivization).



Rod Steiger plays Napoleon in Sergei Bondarchuk's 'Waterloo'.

SOVIET INVASION Czech CP blames the Jews

THE Czech Communist Party Central Committee has officially blamed Jews for the crisis that led up to the Soviet invasion of August 1968.

A report on Alexander Dubcek's period as CP secretary singles out seven Jews for special mention and claims:

'Forces which committed themselves from the positions of Zionism were of considerable influence in the struggle against socialism in Czechoslovakia.'

The seven Jews accused of Zionism are Frantisek Kriegel, a veteran of the Spanish civil war, victim of Stalinist justice in the Novotny era and

in 1968 chairman of the Czech National Front; Jiri Pelikan, former head of Czech television, Eduard Goldstucker, former President of the Writers' Union, Arnost Lustig, a writer, A. G. Liehm, an editor, and the political journalists Evzen Loeb and Kamil Winter.

Escaped

Loeb was also a defendant at the infamous Prague 'trial' of December 1952, in which 11 out of the 14 accused were Jews.

He was one of three who escaped execution, and after his release in 1963, he set down the details of the

Stalinist frame-up system in his book 'Sentenced and Tried'.

The anti-Semitic flavour of the 1952 trial is summed up in this 'confession' by former CP secretary, Rudolf Slansky (a Jew):

'I deliberately shielded them [the 'Zionist' plotters] by abusing the campaign against so-called anti-Semitism [note—so-called].'

'By proposing that a big campaign be waged against anti-Semitism, by magnifying the danger of anti-Semitism and by proposing various measures against anti-Semitism, such as the writing of articles, the publication of pamphlets, the holding of lec-

tures, etc, I criminally [NB] prevented the waging of a campaign against Zionism...'

This 'confession' (written for him by Stalin's advisers in Prague) is all the more ironic in that it was with the Kremlin's full approval and active support that the Zionist state of Israel was created in 1948.

Terror gangs

On Stalin's instructions, Czech arms were sent to the Zionist terror gangs driving the Palestinians from their homeland.

This evidence was understandably not brought forward at Slansky's trial.

The 'findings' of the Central Committee commission on the 1968 crisis have about as much validity as the verdict in the Slansky trial.

But their publication raises important questions that must be answered by the present leaders of the British Communist Party.

They fully endorsed Stalin's judicial massacre of the Czech Communist Party leadership, and even went so far as to defend the Kremlin against charges of anti-Semitism, charges that were later found to be true by a British CP delegation which visited the Soviet Union in 1956 to investigate the condition of Jews.

We should also recall that only two weeks ago, the 'Morning Star' specifically denied that anti-Semitism was involved in the hi-jack 'trial' of the Leningrad 11, all but two of whom were Jews.

Now we have the same anti-Semitic refrain being churned out again this time from Prague.

Kriegel

Former Industrial Organizer of the British CP Peter Kriegel should certainly speak out against the slandering of Kriegel.

At the British Communist Party's November 1969 Congress, Kriegel defended Kriegel against attacks made

on the Dubcek leadership of the Czech party by the Palme Dutt-Sid French group, which supports the Soviet invasion and occupation.

Kriegel insisted most forcefully that he knew Kriegel from the Spanish Civil War (where they were both active in the International Brigades) and he was no agent of imperialism.

Kriegel, the only one of the seven Jews named who is still in Czechoslovakia, is obviously in great danger.

Not only Kriegel, but every member of the British Communist Party has a duty to denounce this latest and sickening example of Stalinist anti-Semitism and slander.

Important reading

REVOLUTION BETRAYED TROTSKY

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