

SOCIALIST AFFAIRS

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CONTENTS

<i>Bureau Meeting of the International</i>	222
<i>Socialists and European Unity: A British Labour View</i>	
ERIC HEFFER	224
<i>A European View</i>	
WALTER BEHRENDT	226
<i>A Finnish View</i>	
PAAVO LIPPONEN	227
<i>Socialists and Disarmament</i>	
JULES MOCH	228
<i>Towards a Socialist Society</i>	
ROBERTO GUIDUCCI	230
<i>International Socialist Solidarity:</i>	
JAN LUYTEN (Belgium)	232
IAN PIPER (Britain)	233
<i>From the Socialist Press:</i>	
BRUNO KREISKY, KLAUS VOIGDT, LUCIANO DE PASCALIS, FRANK JUDD, CLAUDE FUZIER, JOHN IVAR NALSUND	234
<i>Larock on E-W Relations</i> ...	238
<i>Obituary: Willi Eichler</i>	
MARY SARAN	239
<i>REPORTS: Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland</i>	242
<i>Socialist International Diary</i> ..	246
<i>Profile of the New IUSY</i> ...	248

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THE INTERNATIONAL

Important Decisions for Future Structure

Two Socialist International Bureau Meetings were held in London on 14 and 15 November, the first being an extraordinary session, the second a regular meeting. Important decisions for the future structure and work of the International were taken.

The Bureau Meeting on 14 November was an extraordinary session, the main task of which was to discuss a draft for a revised statute of the Socialist International.

The outcome was, in the first place, a decision that the annual 'council conference' of the International should be abolished and that the Congress, previously triennial, should from 1972 onwards meet every two years. In the second place, it was decided that the Bureau should be strengthened by extending membership of it to all full member parties of the International. In the third place, the category of consultative member of the International would be discontinued. After the next Congress of the International (which will be held in Vienna, beginning 26 June 1972), membership categories for parties would be reduced to two: full member and observer member.

The significance of this decision is that it would end the individual membership of the exiled social democratic parties of Eastern Europe, which make up all but three of the twelve parties in this category. However, these parties would remain linked to the Socialist International through their umbrella organisation, the Socialist Union of Central-Eastern Europe, which would remain an associated body of the International.

The decisions outlined above will go forward for ratification by the 1972 Congress of the International in Vienna.

These were the decisions taken by the extraordinary session of the Bureau on 14 November. On 15 November the Bureau occupied itself principally with European, monetary and African questions. Representatives of member parties of the International in Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy (both the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party) and the Netherlands attended. Representatives of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Chilean Radical Party attended as guests.



Harold
Lever

Walter Behrendt (President of the European Parliament—the first socialist to occupy this post) addressed the gathering on the theme 'A Socialist Programme for Europe' (see pages 226-7). After a discussion on the prospects for implementing such a programme, the Bureau decided that a special meeting should be convened in 1972 to consider this matter further. This special meeting of the International would have special reference to the enlargement of the EEC and the socialist response to it; it would also consider the proper response of democratic socialism to the current campaign of the communists for co-operation with social democrats in the international arena. This latter matter was considered carefully by the Bureau and the decision to take it further in a special meeting reflected the general view that the communist initiatives should be taken seriously and not dismissed as a propaganda manoeuvre.

On the international monetary crisis, the Bureau received an extensive report from Harold Lever, British Labour Spokesman on Europe. The report derived from the deliberations of the recent meeting in Brussels of socialist monetary experts organised by the International, at which Harold Lever represented the British Labour Party. The purpose of this expert group is to produce comprehensive policy recommendations for socialist parties and governments on how the current crisis could be remedied. Its next meeting was scheduled to take place in Vienna on 4 December on the invitation of the Austrian Finance Minister, Hannes Androsch.



The Chairman of the British Labour Party, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, addresses the Bureau of the Socialist International on 15 November. Also in the picture are (left to right) Anna Rudling (Chairman of the ICSDW), Bruno Pittermann (Chairman of the International) and Hans Janitschek (General Secretary).

Unconnected with the present international monetary malaise was Harold Lever's acceptance of the Bureau's invitation that he take on the job of Honorary Treasurer of the Socialist International, with the task of raising funds for special projects.

The Bureau's important decision on Africa concerned the raising of financial support for the liberation movements in the southern part of that continent. A proposal was presented to the Bureau by Relus ter Beek, International Secretary of the Dutch Party of Labour, that the Socialist International should, on each May Day beginning in 1972, coordinate fund-raising campaigns by member parties, the proceeds to be donated to the liberation movements of southern Africa. This proposal was accepted by the Bureau.

Other items on the Bureau agenda included nuclear testing and China. The General Secretary of the International, Hans Janitschek, was authorised to protest in the strongest possible terms against the recent nuclear testing by the US and French Governments in the Pacific. It was also decided that an Extraordinary Bureau Meeting would be held in Luxembourg on 17 January 1972, devoted exclusively to Communist China. Leading democratic socialists who have visited the People's Republic in recent months (including Anthony Wedgwood Benn of Britain, Pietro Nenni of Italy, and Gough Whitlam of Australia) will be invited to present reports.

A final important decision taken by the Bureau was to sanction the establishment of the Socialist International Research Council, the aim of which will be to coordinate on an international level the internal research work of the member parties of the

International. The inaugural meeting of the SIRC is scheduled to take place in London in January 1972, when the two main themes will be industrial democracy and multinational companies.

Anthony Wedgwood Benn

At lunchtime on 15 November the Bureau heard a special address from the Chairman of the British Labour Party, Anthony Wedgwood Benn. He spoke on the theme 'From Foreign Policy to World Policy'. He said that technology, far from liberating man, was in danger of enslaving him. It had brought about, for example, the growth of multinational corporations with greater economic power than many national governments but completely free from any sort of democratic control.

Such entities and the world problems they created did not fit neatly into the traditional category of foreign policy, he said. There were general world problems, such as race conflict, pollution and arms expenditure, to solve which 'an enormous institutional and imaginative vacuum' still had to be filled. In the regional blocks that were developing, particularly the EEC, we were in danger of repeating on a continental level the old errors of nationalism. And traditional bilateral relations between countries had completely outdated institutions through which they were conducted.

In such a situation, said Mr. Wedgwood Benn, the biggest shortage in the world was not of food or computers but of 'imagination to embrace the magnitude of changes that have occurred'. Therefore, he concluded, 'if there is a role for socialists and the Socialist International it may be more as teachers or as educationalists enlarging the experience and imagination

of man rather than simply as representatives of nation states trying to plan a new policy in a world suffering from the defect that it is anchored to concepts and ideas which history has left behind'.

Study Groups

On 13 November two study groups of the Socialist International also met in London. These were the Middle East Study Group and one on Socialist Strategy for the Third World. The former met for the second time and continued its discussion of the programme and method of work which it will endeavour to undertake. The latter, meeting for the first time, had detailed reports and discussions on Latin America, Africa and Asia, from the point of view of the possibilities of the International extending its relations with new parties in these regions. The intention is that the Study Group will eventually make positive recommendations to the Bureau. Dr. Peter Jankowitsch (Austria) was elected Chairman of the Group, and Ian Piper (Britain) and Pierre Schori (Sweden) Rapporteurs for Africa and Latin America respectively.

A notable guest at the Third World Study Group meeting was the General Secretary of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), José Francisco Peña Gomez, who reported on the deterioration in the political situation in the Dominican Republic and the persecution of PRD militants. (An article on the PRD based on his report will be published in the next issue of SOCIALIST AFFAIRS).

Latin America

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