

Interview with International's Chairman

We publish an interview with the Chairman of the Socialist International, Bruno Pittermann, who is Vice-Chancellor of Austria, Minister for Nationalised Industries and Chairman of the Austrian Socialist Party.

QUESTION: Are there differences between the present Socialist International and the former Internationals.

PITTERMANN: In some aspects, there certainly are. The Socialist International as reconstituted in Frankfurt in 1951 differs from its predecessors in the parties which comprise it, especially in the fact that many of its European member parties either lead the governments of their countries or are coalition partners. Clearly, therefore, the form of activity of the International must necessarily differ from that in the inter-war period and even more so from that when the International was founded over a century ago.

How many parties belong to the International now?

Including the Social Democratic parties exiled from East Europe, the International has fifty member parties. These parties command the support of about 13 million members and almost 70 million voters. A large number of parties, especially outside Europe, are associated with the International as Observers. And there is close cooperation between the International and the trade union and cooperative movements in many countries.

The International has certainly increased in size. But has its work and effectiveness not lost some of its impact?

By no means: collaboration between individual Social Democratic parties at many levels is today much closer than ever, and this cooperation constitutes the most important part of the work of the International. Spectacular actions are not decisive. Steady collaboration on practical policies is much more significant.

Are there examples of this?

A whole string. Think of the frequent meetings of Socialist party leaders. The work of the International is being intensified by the creation of numerous expert committees. The most important of them are dealing with political education, economic problems, the relations between Socialism and religion, and cooperation with the developing countries. Think, too, of the organisations affiliated to the International, like the Women's and Youth International.

You and other Heads of Social Democratic parties have more than once talked of the necessity of reorganising

the International. What are you aiming at specifically?

In my opinion we shall succeed in building up the International into an even more effective instrument for peaceful mediation in disputes between peoples, and for the achievement of human and civil rights wherever people are still oppressed. Of course the principles of the International have remained the same. Nevertheless, in the second century of its existence, the methods of work of the International must be adapted to the organisational forms of the supranational bodies of our time.

Obviously a special working group will be needed for the reorganisation of the

International as a result of which the contacts between the Socialist parties would be strengthened. Are there any results to show yet?

The initiative on reorganisation came from the Austrian Socialist Party which two years ago put forward a specific proposal. At the same time the Party suggested that a regional structure of the International be considered. In the European sphere a new officer within the Secretariat of the International will strengthen the ties between the Socialist Groups in the European Parliament and in the Council of Europe. The contact committee on European integration, which comprises representatives of the E.E.C. and EFTA countries, also has a special importance. It will have to take on the role of a working group on world economic and trade questions. And I consider the forthcoming establishment of a commission of the International on disarmament questions as especially significant. From: *Vorwaerts*, Bonn, April 7.

Meeting of the International's Bureau

A regular meeting of the Bureau of the Socialist International was held in Congress House, London, on April 23. The meeting was presided over by the Chairman of the Socialist International, Bruno Pittermann. The meeting was attended by: Karl Czernetz (Austria); Victor Larock (Belgium); T. C. Douglas, George Cadbury (Canada); Pauli Burman (Nordic Countries); Robert Pontillon (France); Herbert Wehner, Hans-Eberhard Dingels, (Germany); Walter Padley, A. L. Williams, George Cunningham (Great Britain); S. Levenberg (Israel); Antonio Cariglia (Italy); Max van der Stoep (Netherlands); Anders Thornborg (Sweden); and Albert Carthy (Socialist International).

The Bureau made final arrangements for the conference of Socialist party leaders held at Chequers on April 24.

The Bureau discussed the political situation in the Far East. It decided that the Secretary of the Socialist International should visit India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Japan before the next Bureau meeting.

The Bureau made preliminary arrangements for the next Council and Congress of the Socialist International which are to be held in Stockholm on May 1-8, 1966. In this connexion the Bureau decided: (1) to publish as a contribution to discussion of Socialist economic policy on developing countries, the documents which resulted from the recent conference of Socialist economic

experts, before the Stockholm meeting; (2) to make every effort to increase the representation of African Socialist delegates at these meetings, and to discuss there the question of the relevance of Socialism to problems of the new states in Africa; (3) to hold a preliminary meeting of the International's commission on disarmament questions on October 5, 1965, at which the Foreign Minister of Austria, Bruno Kreisky, would be invited to introduce a discussion on the problems of the spread of nuclear weapons.

The Bureau expressed its concern at reports that the leader of the Opposition to the Portuguese dictatorship, General Humberto Delgado, had been murdered by the Portuguese secret police. The Bureau authorised the Secretary of the International to make further enquiries about these reports. [See page 108].

The Bureau accepted an invitation by the Italian Social Democratic Party to convene a high-level conference on economic problems, to be held in Rome on November 2-4, 1965. Parties would be invited to try to arrange for the attendance of Ministers or "shadow" Ministers concerned and experts.

On October 29-31, 1965, an experts' conference on opinion research will be held in Vienna, on the invitation of the Austrian Party.

The Bureau decided that its next meeting would be held on October 4-5, 1965, in London.