

SM Cherry

WORKERS' FIGHT

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GENERAL STRIKE TO SMASH THE ACT



INDO CHINA - see feature on pp 7, 8 & 9

DOCKERS REPLY - SPREAD THE BLACKING!

The dockers are refusing to be either bullied by the NIRC or cajoled by Jack Jones into abandoning their fight to defend their jobs. Heaton Transport is still being blacked in Liverpool, and a national campaign has been launched to extend the blacking of containerised goods packed by non-dockers. Earlier, the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee had met and declared support for Liverpool, and asked each port to select an offending firm which will then be blacked throughout the country. Despite the £55,000 fine, and despite appeals from union leaders to call off the blacking, Liverpool's stewards decided unanimously that it should be continued. Emissaries from Liverpool have now enlisted support in London in the campaign against containers packed by non-dock workers.

The stewards feel and express the tremendous pressure of the rank and file dockers, who act in the sure knowledge that very many of them face unemployment unless they make a stand now against the erosion of dockers' jobs and the dismantling of the National Dock Labour Scheme.

They know that in 10 years, in Liverpool alone, the number of dockers declined from 18,000 to 10,000. They are bitter that it has been left until so late in the day to make a stand. They know they have no choice but to fight.

UNION POLICING

The NIRC campaign to force unions to act as effective policemen against the rank and file militants has run smack up against the immovable strength of the dockers

THE GREATEST POLITICAL-INDUSTRIAL CLASS BATTLE since 1926 now faces the British working class. We are at the moment of decision which will condition the state of the labour movement for years to come. The trade unions will either smash the Tory Industrial Relations Act, or they will submit to its tutelage.

The £55,000 fine on the T&GWU was the Tories' way to tell the 'left' union leaders to either "put up or shut up". They are not to be allowed to skulk in a corner boycotting the NIRC in the hope that it will go away.

Any employer can now invoke the Act and its sanctions against them. Then the Tory Star Chamber will swing into action with a series of fines which quickly escalate into astronomical - and ruinous - figures. Beyond that there is the possibility of imprisonment.

The unions' attempt to ignore the NIRC has collapsed because of the NIRC's refusal to ignore the Unions. The new law has a purpose, it has real power, and it is prepared to use that power. Boycotting it has only led to an upping of the stakes.

Jones, Scanlon and the TUC had to decide quickly - to fight or knuckle under.

The Tories will have no half-measures. As they see it, the duty of a trade union leader is to control the rank and file, and to discipline the workers, occasionally by handing down a few sops when it's all right with the employers.

Sabotage of the struggles of the rank and file by shambling and inefficiency are no longer enough for the employers. Here, too, amateurishness must give way to professionalism. The Unions must either become efficient policemen of their members, or face heavy sanctions. And when they are fined, they must either pay up or risk bigger fines.

They must make the Unions into subsidiary agencies of the state - or else come into sharp conflict with the state.

The TUC decision to participate in the NIRC 'under protest' is the beginning of a complete capitulation. Boycotting it alone - without making preparations for either a stand-up battle in industry, or even a determined campaign to bring down the Government - was never a feasible policy.

They must have expected sanct-

ions, and should have prepared to hit back hard. Instead they grow weak at the knees at the first stiff fine, and will almost certainly pay up.

Even the most militant Union, Scanlon's AUEW, has a policy that must lead them to ultimate scurrying to the NIRC. Saying that "the fabric of the Union must be preserved" is saying that the money of the Union must be preserved. In this situation it means that the fabric of trade unionism will go by the board.

The Unions must indeed be preserved. But as independent, fighting organs of the working class - not as housetrained and terrorised collaborators with this, the most reactionary government in decades. (Not, for that matter, with any capitalist government.)

Only a general strike can now hope to smash the Industrial Relations Act. Between a general strike and surrender to the Tories there is no middle course of action. A generalised industrial offensive now would mean that instead of submitting meekly to the laws which the ruling class makes up as it goes along, the working class uses the strength it undoubtedly possesses to rip up these exploiters' laws.

The long term "strategy" of relying on the eventual return of a Labour Government which may (or may not - remember Castle's anti-union Bill?) repeal the Act, is a cop-out for the Union leaders. It is to shy away from a fight where the working class is strong and could win now. It is to hope for an easy victory in a distant battle, to be fought on the Government's terms, on its ground, and when it chooses.

It is a recipe for defeat and compliance with Tory emasculation of the trade union movement for the immediate period ahead.

A Labour Government firmly pledged to repeal the Act is desirable. But we must not allow trade union leaders, many of whom ply

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From p1

GENERAL STRIKE

us with lies and excuses for shying away from the POSSIBLE, IMMEDIATE fight, to use it as an alibi.

ALIBI

Retreat will not help them — no matter how good the alibis. Avoiding a decisive conflict before the Bill became law, relying on token one-day mobilisations, didn't stop the Tories. They know half-hearted gestures, designed to cover retreat, when they see them. Like the proverbial canine cur, the middle class curs running this government, full of hatred and resentment against the working class movement, and determined to bridle it, followed snapping at their heels.

Each retreat has encouraged the Tories to press home the attack.

Retreat now will meet rigorous use of the law, unless and until the TUC leaders are able, as well as willing, to control the rank and file. Trapped between rank and file pressure and pressure from the law they will fight back or else hang on the ropes while the Tory bruisers bash them out of the ring.

Their offers to work through an independent conciliation system are also useless: the ruling class needs to either beat down, or ensure adequate control of, the working class. And 'conciliation', now, won't give them that. They will only opt for it after a severe defeat by the working class.

After the miners' strike the Government is weak. The war in Ireland continues.

A general strike CAN rout the Tories.

SERIOUS

A General Strike is more serious than a sectional strike. It challenges, directly and openly, the bosses' right to make and enforce the laws. It poses the question Who is Master in the house, or at least the degree of ruling class control.

If they retain power after defeat on the Industrial Relations Act they will quickly counter-attack, as after their rout by the miners. But that will be the round after this one. The job now is to win this round.

Marxists regard the General Strike weapon with great caution. It can lead to catastrophic defeat

for the class, throwing it back for a whole period. But there have been different types of general strike, in varying circumstances, including victorious strikes for limited aims, and without revolutionary leadership.

We believe that, given present conditions, a General Strike could smash the Act.

The call for a general strike must be raised on two levels: that of general propaganda and that of practical preparation. To fear to raise it, crying "we are not ready" is to forego a struggle to make us ready.

Bitter memories of 1926 are an obstacle. But today the relationship of class forces is vastly different.

ELECTION?

Retreat now, to wait for a new Labour Government, is in fact a recipe for defeat in the next general election. The Tories, if they force retreat on the industrial front, will follow up with an electoral offensive — on the issue "Who rules: Government or Unions?"

They need a full victory, to intimidate the Unions and smash rank and file militancy. They need to mobilise and galvanise middle class opinion to give them the support they so conspicuously lacked during the miners' strike.

A Union bashing election, following a Union back-down before the NIRC, would mobilise middle class reactionaries and, if the Tories won, further intimidate the Unions, throw back prospects for changing the law, and quite likely lead to stiffer laws — this time backed by the mobilised reactionaries and probably organised bodies of strikebreakers.

Union retreat now will hearten our enemies and progressively disillusion and demoralise the working class. Capitulation will push sections of the middle class now sympathetic to Labour into the arms of the Tories.

Given the Labour Party's too-recent record in office, an anti-Union election, held after a humiliating surrender, is quite likely to produce a Tory victory.

It follows that an offensive now in industry, where we are immensely strong, is the only serious strategy for the working class.

ACTION

What can we do about it? Militants in a single factory, and small political groups, can't call a General Strike! We can do the following:

1. Argue within the Unions for an offensive against the Act, here and now, where we have strength and resources, and a real chance of victory — in industry.

2. Union branches must call for a special TUC Congress to prepare a counter-attack. They must condemn TUC leaders who collaborate, on any pretext, with the NIRC.

3. Union branches and Trades Councils should call on TUC leaders to adopt the strategy of a General Strike to kill the NIRC.

4. We ourselves — the militants, the socialists — must prepare on a local level, now. A General Strike will be won by the network of workers' committees and organisations, most of which exist already as part of the routine self-defence and self-betterment of the working class: stewards' committees, combine committees, etc. We must transfuse into these bodies the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories.

5. Militants must build rank and file area Councils of Action, to link up the militants of different industries, ultimately aiming at a national rank and file militant movement. The struggle for such an objective, together with propaganda for a General Strike, is the struggle to create an infrastructure here and now to lead such a strike.

NO PANACEA

6. The call for a General Strike cannot be a panacea to evade immediate struggle here and now. Nor to evade sectional struggle. We can take direct and immediate action now. If the Tories take their £55,000 blood money, the dockers should reply by seizing and occupying Liverpool docks, and others too. Every firm that goes to the NIRC should have the threat hanging over its head of immediate sit-in strike. That much, the militants involved can see to themselves.

Even if there is capitulation at the top, there must be no blanket capitulation. Dogged rank and file guerilla action can still make the NIRC unworkable.

Syria

Stalinists split

AS THE RULING SYRIAN BA'ATH Party geared itself for the celebrations to mark its 25th anniversary, the Syrian Communist Party, its chief coalition partner, was reeling under the impact of a new split in its ranks.

The split's grounds are by no means crystal clear. In essence, however, the 'rebel' group accuses hard-line Stalinist First Secretary Khalid Bakdash of "refusing to establish the independence of the Party".

What the "rebel" group led by Riad Turk and at least half of the Central Committee (including Daniel Nimeh) are disputing is the total subservience of the C.P. to the Ba'ath Party within the governing National Progressive Front; the Front's subservience to Nasserite elements in the Federation of Arab Republics; and the subservience of the Communist Party to the dictates of Moscow. But when the "rebels" deny Bakdash's allegation that they are anti-Soviet and anti-Front, they are speaking the truth: their complaint is not against the popular front as such, but only to the totally servile position of their party in that Front.

SUDAN SLAUGHTER

This could most easily be seen during the Numeiri counter-revolution in Sudan, which probably provided the incident that most directly led to the split.

After the failure of the coup last year led by a wing of the army and backed by the Communist Party, Numeiri set about imprisoning and executing any likely opposition. In this he was supported by the Syrian National Progressive Front.

But many communists were of course opposed to this. After all, one of Bakdash's oldest personal friends and comrades Abdel Khaleq Mahjoub, leader of the Sudanese Communist Party, as well as thousands of others, were being murdered by Numeiri. Yet not a murmur from the Bakdash wing.

Obviously what we were witnessing was the typically stalinist subordination of party independence to Moscow's alliance with the Ba'ath.

A more important example of this policy is the position of the Syrian stalinists toward the Palestinian resistance movement.

In the Jordanian civil war of September 1970 sections of the



DID NIXON AND MAO MAKE A DEAL ON

VIETNAM?

The U.S. government is always trying to sell us a bill of goods. In the case of U.S.-Chinese relations, we've gotten two ridiculous stories for the price of one. It used to be that the Red Menace was about to invade Los Angeles. Now, with a snap of the fingers, (and Nixon's trip to China) China and the U.S. are buddy-buddies, doing all they can for peace and goodness in the world.

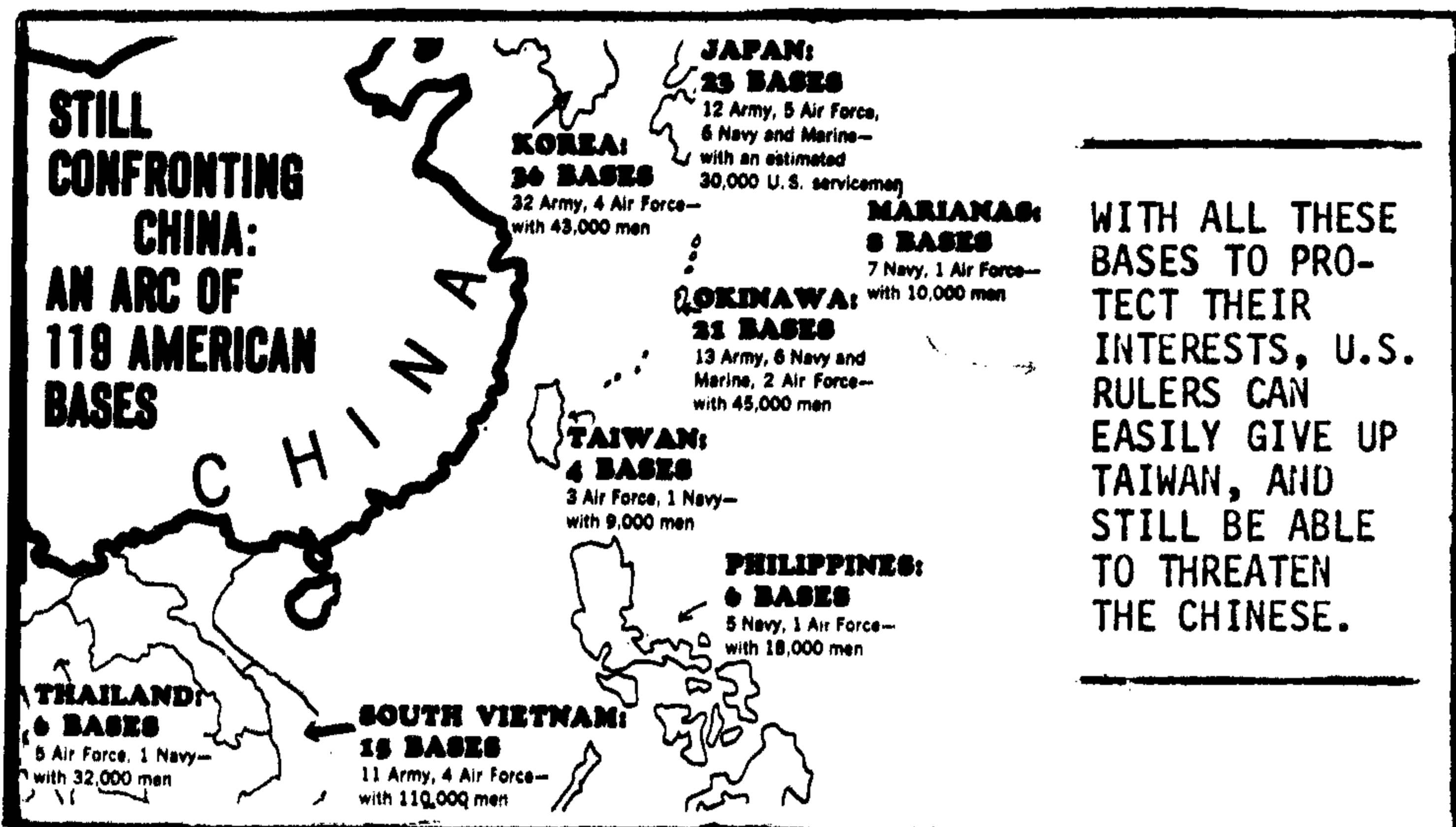
Everyone knows that it's a lot of crap, but the question remains: What's it really all about? There are many pieces to the puzzle, but some things are clear. The "joint communique" issued by President Nixon and Chinese premier Chou En-lai included at least one propaganda victory for the Chinese government. The U.S. agreed to begin withdrawing its forces from Taiwan--but only when "tensions in the area eased."

Ever since the Chinese Revolution in 1949, Taiwan has been controlled by the remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist army. The U.S. has propped up this corrupt dictator as an excuse for ringing China with military bases. But Chiang has now outlived his usefulness to American imperialism. He is being dumped in favor of an alliance with China--an alliance that must offer enough goodies to U.S. imperialism to make the switch worthwhile.

The concrete details of what the U.S. got is a well-kept secret for now. But it's obvious what the one area is where China can really help them out (and where tensions still need to be eased): the war in Southeast Asia.

The war has been a disaster for the U.S., both politically and economically. The tremendous American military machine has been unable to defeat the Vietnamese people. At home, the war has caused enormous political unrest; and war spending has contributed greatly to both the "dollar drain" and inflation.

American capitalism was too close to economic catastrophe for the comfort of the American



WITH ALL THESE BASES TO PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS, U.S. RULERS CAN EASILY GIVE UP TAIWAN, AND STILL BE ABLE TO THREATEN THE CHINESE.

ruling class. So they want a quick end to the Vietnam War. But they want a quick end which allows them to still have some control over the area. A coalition government of all the contending South Vietnamese forces would work out just fine for U.S. imperialism. In the long run, they can retain control over such a coalition--just as they did in Laos.

The Chinese Communist Party could serve as a broker in such a deal. Because the CCP led the Chinese struggle against the imperialist powers, it commands a great deal of authority and respect among peoples of Southeast Asia still striving for their own national freedom.

Would the Chinese rulers "sell out" the people of Southeast Asia in a deal with the U.S.? Their record up until now shows that they would. They (together with the U.S.) supported the mass-murdering Pakistani ruler Yahya Khan in his repression of the people of Bangladesh. Within the last year they supported and sent arms to reactionary rulers in Ceylon and the Sudan. These arms were used to crush growing political opposition, including Maoist revolutionary movements.

In Indonesia, in 1965 they supported a coalition government which included the pro-Chinese Indonesian Communist Party and sections of the Indonesian ruling class. They tied the Indonesian Communists to this government in a way that disarmed them and prepared for the blood-bath where more than a million people were killed, after a military coup.

BETRAYAL IN VIETNAM

In 1954, when the revolutionary forces in Vietnam controlled most of the countryside, the Chinese government signed the Geneva accords which handed over South Vietnam to imperialist control--on the promise that there would be "free elections" in 1956. These elections never took place, but the armed revolutionary forces in South Vietnam had been disarmed and their control of the countryside broken by 1956.

By these kinds of betrayals, China hopes to protect itself against direct imperialist attack. The policy of the CCP has been to try to make deals with the imperialist countries in order to protect China's national interests. These deals often mean that China uses its influence with revolutionary groups in other countries to hold back their struggles.

The trouble is these kinds of deals don't work for long. Imperialism must invest and must fight to control markets. When this overriding necessity presses on the imperialist countries, no understanding in the world will protect the underdeveloped countries.

The only real fight that can be made against imperialism is a revolutionary working-class struggle in all countries to throw out imperialist domination and the capitalist system. No kind of deals made by the Chinese bureaucracy will protect the Vietnamese people against the onslaught of imperialism. In the long run, those deals will not even protect the Chinese people. ■

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Syrian army under the left wing of the Ba'ath led by Salah Jadid actively supported the guerillas for the first few days. But the Air Force, under the control of right-wing Hafiz Assad, did not intervene. Soon afterwards inter-Ba'ath conflict came to a split.

The Communist Party and the party wing of the Ba'ath supported Jadid, while the Army supported Assad. The C.P. also switched its allegiance to Assad, mainly be-

cause the Soviet Union was against the intervention in Jordan.

Assad then moved consistently to the right in internal and external policy: in particular his policy on the Palestinian resistance is now one of a "peaceful" solution. In other words Assad moved so far to the right as to end up agreeing with Moscow.

His movement to the right was consummated when he forged a unity with Syrian Nasserite group-

ings after the left wing had been eliminated. Thus the Syrian Communists find themselves in a popular front with a right-wing bourgeois party; in a front, moreover, where they have no meaningful political organisational independence.

The Syrian situation -- ignored by almost every paper -- shows the lengths to which Stalinism will go in its prostration before every tendency which affords Moscow even a fleeting advantage economically or

diplomatically.

It also shows the impossibility of the organic regeneration of proletarian politics from the ranks of revisionism.

Despite a movement in the right direction, the group around Riad Turk and Daniel Nimeh are still in favour of a popular front and still generally uncritical of the policies of the Soviet Union.

JACK PRICE

"FAIR RENTS" ①

WHO WANTS IT

CRACKED AND SPLIT woodwork, peeling paintwork, garden gates hanging at a drunken angle on rotting hinges, cracked paths and steps, burst pipes and broken windows caused by twisting frames.

Talk to tenants in groups and at some point they'll laugh bitterly at the atrocious state of the estates they live on.

But I doubt if they laugh as they listen to children coughing in their sleep in a damp bedroom.

I doubt if they smile as they are faced again with the prospect of repapering a wall in an effort to keep out damp.

I doubt if they find it funny as they struggle to mend the burst pipe that the Council said they would do six months ago.

I doubt if anyone would be amused at the sight of a pensioner struggling to get up after a nasty fall on a broken concrete path.

Perhaps they feel, instead, a rising anger at the outrages done to their families.

RENTS TOO LOW!

And now Council tenants are being told their rents are 'too low!' 'Municipal Housing is no longer a Social Service for the deserving poor' says the Conservative Minister for Housing Julian Amery.

Watching them on TV driving in Daimlers down their hundred yard long pebbled drives, workers may well ask themselves: 'do they know what they're bloody talking about?'

Under the Tories' new Act, the 'Fair Rent' for a Council house will be assessed by the Local Authority, which will publish its provisional assessment and then consider representations. And just in case the Council should fix a low Fair Rent it must submit its decision to a Committee drawn from the Rent Assessment Panel.

This Committee will visit sample dwellings and if they consider rent too low they will impose their own assessment. This will then become the Fair Rent for that and similar dwellings. (Cmnd 4728 p9)

NO APPEAL

There is no appeal against a decision of a Rent Assessment Committee!

These vicious Committees are not made up of tenants or workers, as one could easily guess. They are composed of solicitors, lawyers, valuers, civil servants, police chiefs, businessmen, headmasters and an odd worker or trade unionist.

In the London Panel, from which the London Committee are drawn, the workers and tenants are outnumbered 8 to 1. And the poor miner on the Welsh Panel is outnumbered 18 to 1 by lawyers, valuers and the like.

It's beautiful to see democracy at work, isn't it? After all, most Council tenants have a Barrister next door, haven't they? No? Well, at least a Lawyer? No? Not even a teeny weeny Solicitor?

WHO WANTS THE ACT?

Did the tenants of the private houses want the Act?

Did council house tenants want the Act?

Have there been massive demonstrations demanding it? Petitions pleading for it? No? Then who wants it?

The answer is that the Landlords and their Government want it. Eight million tenants don't want it. But a handful of profiteers and their Government do. So they bring out the Act.

Then they have the affrontery to point to the miners and the railway workers and say "you're holding the country to ransom for your sectional interests."

According to Tory thinking, it's all right for a few profit makers to have their sectional interests served by a new Government law, but absolutely scandalous that a few thousand workers, fighting for a living wage, should dare to work to rule to protect their interests. But of course, Tory ideology puts profit before people.

So the Landlords seek to continue to make large profits out of housing. And the Government wishes to place the burden of Council housing upon the backs of the tenants themselves. This will enable them to give the money saved as massive loans and tax free grants to their friends in industry.

MEANS TEST

So rents will go up. But how are we to pay for them? There is to be a rebate scheme. If you think you are entitled to a rebate, you must furnish proof of your earnings by producing your wage slips or by a signed note from your employer (they always take his word, not yours...) and any other information that they think is relevant to calculate the amount of any rebate.

If you then fill in the appropriate forms, queue in the appropriate queues, and wait the appropriate waiting time, you may receive assistance in paying your Rent.

Yes, some may, in the end, be lucky enough to pay only the same amount of rent they already pay now. But before that, they will have to pass the Means Test.

Millions of working men and women will have to go to the Council Offices cap in hand for half their rent.

What sort of dignity does that leave them!

THE WAGE TRAP

So you sit back in your armchair and sigh. You've had a lot of trouble, scratching your head over the forms. The wife's been down to the Council Offices three times. She's queued up for long spells; and you got docked half a day at work because you had to go down yourself.

But now you and your missus have beaten the smarmy buggers. You congratulate yourself on not being one of those actually PAYING the new increases.

True, you'll have to go through the whole procedure again in six months time to qualify again for a rebate, and every six months after that. But for the moment you've won.

But now watch! This is where it gets clever! You know that wage

"FAIR RENTS" ② Trev Cave describes —

THE TORY GOVERNMENT'S Housing Finance Bill is being forced through Parliament to become law by the summer.

It is yet another savage attack on the living standards of working people. The legislation will mean enormous inroads into the incomes of every council tenant, controlled tenant and even those saving to buy a house.

Some councils have already co-operated with the Tories by implementing the first increases from this April — even though it is not yet law!

Fortunately in many areas such increases have been met by stiff resistance from tenants' associations, which have called partial or total rent strikes that have led to councils reversing their decisions.

But what are the proposals of the Tory Bill?

PROFITS WILL SOAR

The Bill shows that their intention is not only to save £200-£300 million in subsidies to council housing, but also to make a profit from it.

Moreover their policies will deliberately encourage soaring profits and racketeering for moneylenders, builders and private landlords.

There are 5½ million council tenants, many of whom faced a rent increase of 50p on April 1st. Those who have not had this increase will have one of £1 in October. It is the Government's intention to see council rents more than doubled by 1976.

Almost 1½ million controlled tenants under private landlords are to be decontrolled over 3 years from January 1973 and will face rent increases amounting to more than 2½ times their present levels.

Moreover, due to these higher rents and the scarcity of housing, house prices will soar — indeed they are already rising rapidly in anticipation. They will become increasingly out of reach for 'low' and even 'average' wage earners.

The Act is designed to force all councils to charge what they arrogantly call a "fair rent" for all

council housing and any council refusing will face stiff penalties.

WHOSE FAIR RENT?

How is this "fair rent" decided? To determine it consideration must be given to "the return that it would be reasonable to expect on it as an investment", i.e. related to "market values" in the private sector. These "fair rents" will be submitted to the Rent Scrutiny Board which can either alter or approve those rents.

They also have the right to enter any council house at 7 days' notice to inspect and if tenants try to prevent this intrusion they they are liable to a fine of up to £50.

Who will sit on this Board? The usual selection of surveyors, lawyers and valuers, probably the odd trade union official (any bets for the GMWU!). Certainly there will be no chance of tenants sneaking onto the Board.

Decisions of the Board will be binding on the Council and tenant and there will be no chance of appeal by the tenant.

Councils are supposed to impose "fair rent" increases by October 1st. In a situation where there has been no increase since July 1971, there is to be a compulsory increase of £1 in October for every dwelling not yet on a "fair rent".

If a rent has been increased since July 1971, then the October increase must be no less than 50p and in every year following, there will be increases of 50p for every dwelling not at "fair rent" level.

HOW RENTS WILL RISE

These figures are from the Department of Environment's estimates of what average council rents will be in 1976:

	NOW	1976		
London	£3.50	£7.45	plus rates	
South East	£3.13	£6.49	"	"
East Anglia	£2.16	£5.72	"	"
W. Midlands	£2.43	£5.72	"	"
South West	£2.43	£5.53	"	"
E. Midlands	£2.02	£5.14	"	"
North West	£2.23	£4.66	"	"
Yorkshire	£2.02	£4.56	"	"
North	£2.08	£4.38	"	"
Wales	£2.39	£4.18	"	"

increase coming off at work? Are you spending some of it already? Holidays? New shoes for the kids? The wife a new coat?

STOP! DON'T! Listen! You'll pay more tax, more Graduated Pension, little Susy loses her free school meals, the family can lose up to 60p in free National Health benefits — and you'll have to pay 17p per week more rent for every £1 wage rise you get.

So your wage rise can and often will turn into a DROP in wages.

You sink once again into your armchair and stare unbelievably at your wage slip. "Never mind Dad" says your eldest lad, "I leave school in a few weeks time, I'll help out." And you haven't the heart to tell him that if he's lucky enough to find a job, the Tory Fair Rent Act will automatically increase the rent you pay by £1.50 per week for every child that starts work.

It's a pretty neat trap. The higher paid worker pays the full amount, and his income is thereby brought down to the level of the poorer worker. The poorer paid worker has to beg for assistance to pay his rent, and is unable to improve his earnings by small wage increases because of the earnings Trap.

And if we get stropky and start fighting for large increases the Government cries 'CRISIS', 'SCANDAL' 'It's not in the National Interest', 'Bring out the Industrial Relations Act — Fine their Unions' — Order a cooling off period.'

FIGHT BACK!

In fighting back, there is only one power that tenants can rely on. That is their own power. The power that comes from organising. Not by fighting legal battles on points of law, with Solicitors and the like using up funds faster than tenants can raise them. Not by leaving it to some well meaning but powerless Councillor, or some cynical vote seeking scoundrel.

But by organising Tenants Associations on all estates, by calling on our brothers in the trade unions for support, and by linking up the Associations into a solid, country-wide working class opposition to the Bill.

- * FOR A RENT STRIKE TO SMASH THE ACT
- * BUILD THE LOCAL COMMITTEES!

Stephen Boyd

OPERATION BIG SQUEEZE

You can see that rates must be added to these figures, and remember that these, too, increase regularly.

Tenants in private controlled dwellings are to be re-designated as occupants of "regulated tenancies" and will be decontrolled from January 1973 over a period of 3 years. The only exceptions to this are those tenancies earmarked as slums.

Their rent increases will be not less than 50p per week each year in three equal instalments. On average these rents are expected to rise to over 2½ times the present figure; many will suffer much higher increases.

The Tories are also very pleased with their proposed system of rebates and allowances. These are to be calculated in the same way whether the tenant be council or private; private tenants will receive their rebates in cash whereas council tenants will have a lowered rate.

The scheme is based on a so-called "needs allowance" of £9.50 for a single person, £13.50 for a married couple and £2.50 for each dependent child. If "gross income" (earnings before tax of husband and wife, including family allowances, less the first £2.50 of the wife's earnings) is the same as the "needs allowance" then the tenant will pay 40% of the "fair rent" fixed for his house. For every £1 of income above the "needs allowance" the rebate will be reduced by 17p., and for every £1 that the income falls short of the "needs allowance" the rebate will be increased by 25p.

However, the maximum rebate possible will be £8 in Greater London, and £6.50 elsewhere.

Moreover, deductions will be made from the rebate if there are other non-dependents in the house. Thus if there is a non-dependent of 18 or over, such as a son, daughter or lodger, not in full time education and not on supplementary benefit then £1.50 is deducted from the rebate for each one.

If the non-dependent is on supplementary benefit then 65p will be deducted. If any pensioners live in, such as elderly parents, then £1 is deducted for one, or £1.50 for a couple.

But that's not all. If any occupant of the house earns more than the tenant then that occupant's income will be used to calculate the rebate. Therefore a lodger or son living at home may be regarded as the tenant and his earnings will determine what rent is paid.

It must be remembered that rebates are a percentage of assessed fair rents and therefore the rent paid by the tenant is not merely related to income but also to the particular fair rent level in the area. Thus the poorer families, contrary to the Tories' claim, need not receive the highest rebates.

BUREAUCRACY

If any tenant wishes to claim a rebate then he or she must complete a form giving particulars of everybody living in the house, any income from lodgers or re-letting, their own incomes, liquid cash resources (bank balances, etc), and gross earnings over the previous

five weeks. Rebates last for six months and must then be reassessed, with a repetition of the whole process. If a tenant's circumstances alter within the six month period he must immediately notify the Council and face a reassessment. Operating this system of perpetually repeated means-tests will require Local Authorities to employ a vast army of official snoopers, and will cost about £10 million a year to run.

By 1976 council house tenants will be paying an extra £500 million in rents, and the profits on housing revenue accounts will be split between councils and the Government. The Government can do what it likes with this income.. it might, for example, be usefully given away as even more tax relief to hard-pressed surtax payers. It has been said that Amery, the Housing Minister, understands few details of his Bill, which was masterminded by others. All he needs to know is that it will take money from a substantial section of the working class and redistribute it among the rich.

SANCTIONS

Councils refusing to implement the Act will face legal sanctions. Subsidies can be withdrawn by the Minister. The Authority may have its housing powers withdrawn. A housing commissioner may be appointed to force through the new schemes. Councillors may be surcharged up to £400.

Some Labour councils have refused to have anything to do with the Act. These include Clay Cross, Halstead, Rugeley, Skelmersdale, Corby and Rhondda. In areas like these the housing commissioners

will be sent in to enforce the Act and tenants will still need to organise and refuse to pay even an extra penny on the rent.

LABOUR COUNCILS

Other Labour Councils have expressed disgust at the proposals and have refused to implement them until they are law. This kind of fake protest is hardly better than the actions of those councils who have imposed the increases from April. The special issue of 'Labour Weekly' on the Rents Bill had a back page headed "How You Can Fight the Bill". What action did they propose to defeat the Tories? "Buy Labour Weekly" and "Get the petition signed".

Obviously such slogans are bankrupt and worthless. They merely spread illusions about the way to fight the Bill. Tenants must demand that all Labour councils come out in total opposition to the rent increases.

This includes deliberately not co-operating with the Government's housing commissioner. Moreover, tenants must organise and let every tenant know the real facts.

NATIONAL RENT STRIKE

The slogans NOT A PENNY ON THE RENTS and NO RENTS MEANS TEST must lead to calls for rent strikes against the Tories.

Non-co-operation and rent strikes on a national scale can force the Government into retreat on this issue, which is only part of their general attack on working class living standards.

TWO LABOUR MEMBERS OF CLAY CROSS COUNCIL EXPLAIN -

How a militant Labour council fights Tory housing policy

THE OLD INDUSTRIAL TOWN OF Clay Cross in Derbyshire doesn't look unusual. But what is different about it is the Council's housing policy, which for the last 12 years has meant that slum clearance has had top priority.

The Council has had to fight against entrenched middle class opposition to their housing policy. They are now defending it against the Tory Government's Rents Bill, and have put an ad in the local paper telling the people of Clay Cross that they intend not to implement the new law.

SLUMS

Clay Cross, like many other places, was filled between 1850 and 1860 with slums that the employers who provided them chose to call homes for the workers.

Almost 700 of these were still standing in the early 1960s, owned by the Clay Cross Company and the National Coal Board. Local legend still remembers Long Row - 60 houses with 2 rooms downstairs and 2 up, no hot water and lavatories across an unpaved yard.

In 1960 Labour won control of the Council from the Independents. At that time Tory Government regulations only allowed Local Authorities to build a few houses a year for

renting. During this period a group of leftwingers gained control of the Labour Party in Clay Cross. As soon as the Labour Government lifted building restrictions in 1964, slum clearance became the Council's first priority.

Up to 100 Council owned houses were built every year - 2½ times the national average for Council building rates per population.

The Clay Cross area has been one of low wages and poor working conditions. The area as a whole has a male unemployment rate of 11.6%. Rents have traditionally been low, housing conditions dreadful. Council rents for the new housing, which has all but replaced the slums, have been deliberately kept down to a level normal for the area.

LOW RENTS

The idea of "economic rents" has been rejected in Clay Cross. Instead the whole community has helped to bear the cost of slum clearance, because 18% or £26,000 of the general rate obtained by the Council has been used to help pay for new and better Council housing.

The average rent for Council and privately owned houses in Clay Cross is £1.50 a week, rising to £2 for the newest properties.

For the last 8 years the local elections have been won on a slum

clearance platform, but as might be expected this policy has not been approved by all. The Residents' Association, local house buyers, has fought the Council's housing policy. When they talk of "subsidising" council houses, they conveniently forget that house buyers get considerable "subsidies" from the Government which gives tax relief on mortgage interests. Of course, the bigger and more expensive the house, the more tax relief is given.

When the Clay Cross Residents Association protested at the amount being spent from the rates on Council housing, the District Auditor ordered the Council to appear at a hearing and explain their policies. Aided by Tom Swain, the local Labour MP, the Council persuaded the Auditor after a 12 hour hearing that their policy was justified.

Had he not decided in their favour, the Councillors might have been held personally liable for the money spent on housing.

Again this year the Residents' Association objected to the Council's spending; but this time the District Auditor rejected their objections, following his decision at the previous year's hearing.

A precedent has now been set, establishing the obligation of the whole community to bear the cost of slum clearance.

Why don't more Labour Councils make use of this precedent?

NO "FAIR RENTS"

The Clay Cross council has of course refused to adopt the Government's so-called Fair Rent legislation. This would mean that rents in Clay Cross would go up to £5-£6 a week.

Total opposition to the Tory Government's housing policy is vital. It not only concerns Council tenants: private landlords and tenants will also be affected. The "Fair Rents" legislation will end the old system of rent control which provides some protection against rent increases.

The Bill will mean that private rents will go up because rent officers are obliged to consider the "average rent in the area" when deciding on the level of private rents. Higher Council rents will therefore help to produce higher private rents.

Other Labour Councils must be pressed into following the lead given by Clay Cross. Only total refusal by local councils and tenants to co-operate in putting into practice this new legislation can stop the Government savagely cutting the standards of working class living.

Arthur Wellon

David Nuttall

- Do you know about the effects of his row?
- Eh, what?
- Turn that bloody noise off.
- Sorry, I can't hear...
- Turn that machine off!
- What?

Despite what the campaigners for noise prevention claim, the noise that affects people the most doesn't come from radios or unsilenced motor bikes. It comes from machines in factories, as anyone who works in a textile mill or foundry well knows.

What isn't so well known is the effects of working in an environment with a high background level of noise, although people have been studying this problem since way back in the eighteenth century.

In 1713 an Italian, describing the working of copper, said that workers engaged in the hammering of copper "have their ears so injured by that perpetual din that workers of this class become hard of hearing and, if they grow old at this work, completely deaf."

Since then modern industrial machinery has greatly accentuated the problem, until the stage has been reached where you can hardly hear yourself speak on some shop floors.

The effect of working in these conditions is to gradually restrict the range of hearing of the worker, reducing his ability to hear high

pitched sounds, an ability necessary for the correct perception of speech. And, with prolonged exposure, to produce almost total deafness.

Furthermore there are other side-effects of exposure to noise. In 1940 Vernon, a leading British

the sound of machines

NOISE

psychologist, showed that excessive noise of the type found in factories produced "nervous irritability and strain."

More recent work by Satalov and other Russian psychologists has shown that noise produces an abnormally high level of activity in the nerves controlling the heart and other internal organs. This tends to produce such things as increased heart rate and a liability to ulcers.

Noise, then, damages the worker by interfering with his hearing and also upsetting his nervous system.

EAR DAMAGE

Studies from all over the world show the enormous damage done to the hearing of workers by occupational noise.

ITALY — a survey of 743 steelworkers showed all had hearing damage. Another survey of shipyard workers showed that every riveter and caulker was affected.

AUSTRALIA — a study of over 5,000 workers of all trades showed that a third had occupational hearing losses.

U.S.A. — a recent government report estimated that 16 million

American workers are threatened by hearing loss.

FRANCE — nearly half of forge workers had hearing losses.

In the face of these findings, the bosses' response has been one of complete indifference. Little research by machine manufacturers is done into incorporating sound-reducing devices into machinery, and no protective or compensating measures are introduced onto the shop floor.

Attempts to produce legislation to control noise levels is at the moment being frustrated by disagreement among researchers, employers and health officers over the level of safe maximum sound intensity.

However, a Russian survey in 1962 showed that high-pitched sound of around 85 decibels (about the level of an operating lathe) produced deterioration of muscular performance and disturbances of nervous function.

This suggests that levels should be reduced to about 70-75 decibels. But, in a World Health Organisation report on noise by Bell, it is claimed that this limit is "industrially impracticable."

There should be, however, a

definite safe limit for noise, and the employers should be forced to produce quieter machines, and replace noisy machines by quieter ones. This is certainly far preferable to the use of ear-muffs, which are uncomfortable and isolate workers from one another by preventing conversation during work.

COMPENSATION

A fight for noise control legislation should also include a fight for compensation for hearing damage. At present there is compensation in the USA; and in Norway hearing damage is classified as an industrial accident, entitling the worker to Insurance benefit. In Japan, compensation is established on retirement.

But in Britain, and in most other countries, there is no compensation for occupational hearing damage. This must be fought for!

There is no technical reason why nearly all workers shouldn't enjoy much quieter working conditions which don't damage their hearing or affect their nerves.

The only reason for the perpetuation of the racket in factories is the bosses' habit of looking no further than their profits. A lack of trade union pressure, over this and other environmental conditions, has allowed them to get away with it.

However the realisation is now growing among workers that there is no necessity for them to be subjected to all the worst side-effects of technology. This has been reflected in the setting up of union units to look at working conditions and in strikes over working conditions.

Let's make sure we have quieter factories. Don't let the bosses put their profits before your hearing and health!

Neal Smith

Dave Brodie

FROM UNDER THE STONES AND OUT OF THE WOODWORK

How well do you know Manchester? It probably depends which side of the city you live, or which parts you have visited.

Do you know Red Bank? Have you driven through and wondered what goes on amongst all that dirt and squalor?

Do you remember the dwellings on Collyhurst Road? Those tenements were demolished only three years ago.

The River Irk, fetid, poisonous River Irk, slurped its slimy way within feet of the decaying brickwork.

Rats were the constant companions of the children playing by this flowing excrement.

How about Bradford or Beswick? Row after row of grubby little boxes, street after street of crumbling bricks and mortar. Intense overcrowding, bad sanitation (you could get even money on battles between the bugs and the cats.)

Why didn't the people move out?

Well, if you lived in Beswick or Bradford, or perhaps Ancoats or Collyhurst, it would be more than likely that you would travel each day to Red Bank to work at Carey's Springs Works or Wallworks Ironfounders.

Here you would sweat, you would burn, choke down dirt and fumes and at the end of the week collect a pittance barely adequate to keep your family fed till the following pay day.

Now the houses have been demolished. The wages and conditions remain.

If a worker headed in the opposite direction he perhaps would be employed by B & S Massey or the British Steel Corporation. Here you would be blasted by burning saw-

dust and blistered by boiling oil from the crashing hammers.

Deafened, stinking in your own sweat, you would earn perhaps a little more than at Carey's.

There was always Smithfield Market, where a man could work as a porter, usually without insurance cards. If you were sharper of eye and fleet of foot, or best of all able to fight better than your workmates, you could supplement your pitifully small income by stealing produce and selling it to other stall owners and shopkeepers.

There are other firms in the area. Clayton Aniline, Hardman & Holdens, Anchor Chemical Co., etc, places filled to the brim with industrial diseases such as papilloma (cancer of the bladder) but very little cash.

The slums have been rebuilt. Nothing else has changed.

If you pass Hardman & Holden in Miles Platting you will be greeted by some strange sights. You will see blue men, green men, yellow men and others of a royal purple.

Perhaps you wonder why workers will remain in employment in such conditions. My own opinion is that I would not lie in bed chopping firewood for the money to be earned in these factories. But that is simply my opinion.

The fact is that there is a mass of unemployment in the Manchester area. And as we all know, most working class families have bad habits like eating, and buying shoes for their kids.

Having completed our short tour of part of the industrial slag heap of our fair city, let us pause to reflect.

P.C. PLOD

Believe it or not, out of this squalor and corruption where the

contradictions of our society are more blatant than anywhere else, come, not only the guardians of the law, the fuzz, the pigs or what you will, but the sycophantic worms who lay the whip on the backs of the rest of us at the bidding of their masters.

We shall study P.C. Plod first of all. How can a young man born and bred in the industrial slums of a large city, living in a damp overcrowded house, seeing his parents, his brothers and sisters deprived of decent living standards — how can this creature become the oppressor of those same people?

How can this creep, after seeing his father exploited in one factory or another, being made redundant and going cap in hand for Public Assistance to feed them, then become a scourge of the class from whence he came?

Knowing that when his father and his workmates have struck for better wages and conditions, the fuzz have always been there in the role of strike-breakers — he nevertheless adopts the role himself.

And he will not even demand a decent wage for his treachery.

Though there is of course the free entertainment. Beating up drunks must have a certain attraction. Being the Nemesis of seven-stone callow youths must make the chest swell beneath the blue serge.

Then of course there is safety in numbers and in the fact that the Establishment will condone the actions of thugs providing they wear a uniform, whether it be blue or khaki.

Apart from this, what kind of obsequious reptile can be made to sit up and beg, jump through the hoops and say "yes sir" and "no sir" to order, usually to a bureaucratic snake with the rank of Inspector.

GODS IN OVERALLS

What of the traitors in overalls?

I will give an instance. A construction worker at Shell Carrington related an incident to me concerning the sacking of three shop stewards. The foreman concerned with the dismissals is a lethargic animal with all the natural charm of an Orang Utang.

He is reported to have made the boast, "I think that's my best yet, three stewards in one day."

Fortunately a group of stronger-willed individuals were able to reverse the decision of the management.

Does the foreman concerned hail from Solihull or St. Annes? From Hampstead or Kensington? From the poor end of Park Lane?

No. He grew up in the Gallowgate area of Glasgow.

Will it ever be possible to remove such powerful individuals as Duncan Sandys, Julian Amery or Arnold Weinstock if we cannot even keep a watery little foreman under control.

I have seen Agents and Engineers crawl out of the woodwork and begin to play God. Sometimes they have been opposed. Sometimes not.

But we must not forget that the William Mathers, Basil de Ferrantis and Robert Careys can only impose their will upon their slaves with the assistance of slaves prepared to betray the others.

In Northern Ireland, those who take the side of the British troops are quite rightly punished. So it should be with those who side with the "master" instead of with their workmates.

One thing is certain. When the old slums were cleared not only blackjacks came from under the stones. Not only lice crept out of the woodwork.



SAIGON PUPPETS ON THE RUN

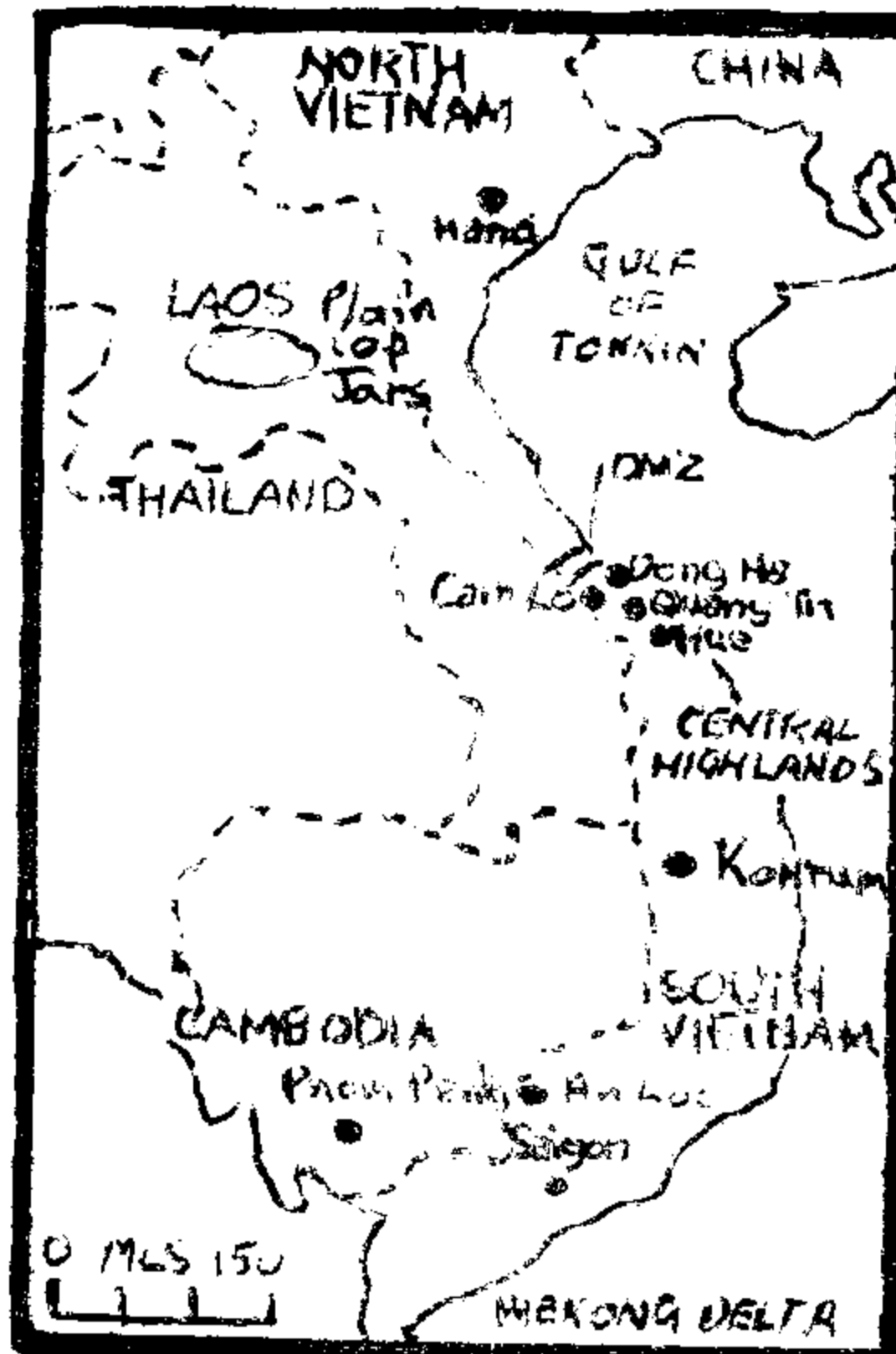
MANY FRONTS

By contrast the liberation forces have shown that for all the bombing they are able to move where they want. They have used new techniques of modern warfare together with guerilla warfare. They have been able to attack on many fronts, and the activities behind the main fronts, such as mortar attacks on Saigon's Tan Son Nhut air base, have demonstrated that the N.L.F. is far from finished as a fighting force, despite the 1968 losses.

So, even to date, the whole fabric and substance of 'Vietnamisation' has been exploded. However, there are possibilities far beyond these.

The remaining ARVN troops are over-stretched. When An Loc was attacked, it had been stripped of 3 regiments of ARVN Rangers who'd been sent north. In order to try to hold An Loc, Saigon threw in most of its own defensive strength, including even the Presidential Guard. And while An Loc itself presents little danger to Saigon, it has now been possible for the liberation forces to cut round behind the ARVN on Highway 13, as well as approaching Saigon from the Delta, from the north west, and then direct from the 'parrots beak' section of the Cambodian border, which is nearest Saigon.

While the ARVN is stretched out to capacity, with tactical air support made difficult by up to date anti aircraft weapons available to the liberation forces, and with the US navy under attack at sea, the liberation forces still have fresh forces in reserve, both in Cambodia and in the Central Highlands. A well-seasoned Divisions is also approaching Da Nang along the Ashau Valley.



The offensive in the Central Highlands, the Saigon Government's most vulnerable area, has scarcely yet begun. Binh Dinh province in the highlands has the worst 'security rating', with large areas already liberated by the NLF and with Saigon's former allies, the Montagnards, now hostile. Running across it is Highway 19, a crucial supply road linking the coast with ARVN military centre at Pleiku. There are now 30,000 liberation troops in the vicinity of Kontum and Dak To, waiting to pick their own best moment to attack.

The demoralised ARVN has nothing but borrowed armoury to match the dedicated determination of the liberators of Vietnam. Before the offensive is over the Thieu regime, already visibly shaking and exposed as a hollow creature of US imperialism, may be smashed, and with it the pretense of the USA that there is a viable native opposition to the NLF and the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

The new Vietnam offensive of the Liberation forces of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front has already shattered the myth that the war was slowly grinding to a peace of exhaustion, as American troops pulled out and the American Presidential hopefuls vied with each other, like so many crazy bankrupts let loose at an auction, in their promises to end the war.

The war is not over and never will be over until the Vietnamese people have driven out the last in a long line of invaders, and settled with the puppets planted in power to

serve the interests of imperialist control of Vietnam.

In the months before the new offensive, the American press had been constantly forecasting it — in the hope of minimising its capacity to shock an unsuspecting public. Nevertheless, when it did come, its scope and speed were quite unexpected, to public, politicians and military alike.

It was not difficult to surmise that something was afoot. But US Intelligence had no idea just what, or when, or where. Would it come in the north, the South, or the Central Highlands? Would it come when Nixon went to Peking — to 'embarrass him' — or at Tet as before, or perhaps for Nixon's visit to Moscow — yes, to embarrass him there, too. Would there be an attempt to cut the country in two? Move the border southwards? Or perhaps take a provincial capital and declare a government?

On April 1st. North Vietnamese troops, with tanks, artillery and anti-aircraft guns, advanced swiftly across the DMZ, overran the ARVN (Saigon army) forward positions, and rapidly took control of most of Quang Tri province. Since then 3 new fronts have opened up, and guerilla actions have sprung up all over the country.

If not as dramatic as the Tet offensive of 1968 it is certainly the biggest push forward since, and might well have further reaching results. Even if it gets no further, it will have achieved a great deal already.

First, it has exposed the extent

of the US's continuing involvement, and the propaganda lie about "winding down the war." The savage revenge bombing of the North has only shown up the impotence of the remaining ground forces at the disposal of the US ruling class. And it has shown also the desperate need to disarm the murdering maniacs who will stop at nothing to hold Vietnam

DISARRAY

Within days of the offensive, as the ARVN forces scattered in disarray, Thieu announced that he had appealed to Washington for "maximum aid."

Indeed, he had little reason for confidence in his own troops. In December, the Saigon correspondent of the Financial Times thought that if an attack came in the north the ARVN "will be able to put up a still resistance ... some of their best units are near the DMZ."

But when the attack came, the only resistance these troops put up was to fighting. The 3rd. Division abandoned 13 firebases in 4 days, and were in such a hurry that they left behind quantities of artillery and ammunition as well as

small arms. Many changed out of their uniforms and mingled with the civilians fleeing from the fighting. In one base, a fight broke out between the officers, who wanted to fight on, and the men, who refused to.

The desperate attempt to cover the situation has produced a remarkable range of special pleading. "The performance of the 3rd. Division" (those self-same "best units") wrote one hopeful journalist "was hardly a proper test."

A Saigon spokesman referred to the rout as "a new tactic called mobilisation". And US sources "emphasised that the South Vietnamese had been forced out of only two or three of the bases and had left the rest voluntarily."

The number deserting was so great that on April 4th "The national radio in Saigon appealed to all those soldiers who had ... left their units to go back to their posts." (Le Monde).

Among the remaining US ground troops, a "moral demobilisation" has set in, with at least one case of troops refusing to go into combat "because it is too dangerous."

"One of the most awesome and least publicised weapons to have been spawned by the war" is 11 foot long, weighs 15,000 lbs. and contains a dense blasting agent which "provides a concussive blast surpassed only by that of a nuclear bomb."

Disarmingly named 'the Daisy Cutter' by US troops, these bombs can wipe out a forest, and everything in it, in one fell swoop.

The lethal zone of Daisy Cutters blast covers about 780 acres. The larger area of death, destruction and injury ranges over about 1,750 acres for every bomb.

At least 100 have so far been dropped. "They have such a devastating effect that we hate to give them much publicity" was a USAF officer's comment.

Neither have they been very keen, during their so-called "withdrawal" from Indo-China, to publicise the two computers stashed away in Thailand and designed to control a variety of anti-personnel devices. They will receive data from signals picked up from sensors, which can be dropped by pilotless planes, telling them of the approach of people, which they can detect at considerable distances.

The computers then send inform-

ation to field commanders, who call on anti-personnel weapons delivered by aircraft. The computers can also communicate direct to mines on the battlefield.

The backroom boys who thought up these mines certainly weren't lacking in imagination, albeit of a gruesomely inhuman twist.

The spider mine, for instance, about the size of a ping-pong ball, shoots out eight nylon threads. Any one who touches a thread explodes the mine.

Silent button bomblets are filled with white phosphorus, which can kill by poisoning and burning. Mines cunningly disguised as leaves or pieces of cloth can blow a foot off.

Then there are the pineapple bombs which explode to release a whole cluster of smaller ones. Or another variation on the same theme — Shrike missiles explode near the ground releasing 10,000 4mm. steel cubes which penetrate deep into a person's flesh.

Cannon shells explode to release shrapnell balls, each of which bounces and then explodes, letting out 600 small fragments at the height to hit the chest or head of the average Vietnamese.

Yes, they can talk again about "indiscriminate civilian bombing" in Northern Ireland...

The United States ruling class, despite its vast armoury of hellish weapons, is cornered in Vietnam. But, like a cornered rat, it is still dangerous. In impotent rage Washington has ordered a rain of death and destruction in a final, vain attempt to impose its will on the people of Indo-China.

In 1968 the Tet offensive brought home to a shocked America that there was no "light at the end of the tunnel". The ability of the liberation forces, primarily the National Liberation Front, to penetrate 36 cities and hold them until bombed out, showed the reality of the war.

Mounting American casualties and a rapidly spreading anti-war movement forced a realisation that the US could not win in Vietnam. Lyndon Johnson learned the lesson — too late — that no politician aiming to win the war could gain popular support.

The troops had to be brought home, and an alternative way had to be found of making Vietnam safe for the landlords, the speculators, the money lenders, and, above all, for US imperialism.

'VIETNAMISATION'

There followed the "Nixon Doctrine", generally advertised as 'disengagement' or "winding down the war", or "Vietnamisation". For a time there were no dramatic battles, casualty figures slumped and it began to look to many Americans as if the war had just 'gone away'. And with Saigon still in the hands of President Thieu and his men, Nixon could expect a smooth run-in to easy re-election. "Vietnam" he said in December "will not be an issue in the (election) campaign, because we will have brought the American involvement to an end".

But behind the facade, there was no intention of giving Vietnam back to its people.

The latest phase of US policy in Vietnam was summed up officially in these words: "The US rules out intervention in Asia; but it will honour its commitments."

The advertised solution to this contradiction was the build-up and equipping of ARVN (the Saigon regime's conscript army), to be backed by a "residual force" of American 'advisers'. But the reality was somewhat different, and is best described as "a shift from a labour intensive to a capital-intensive war." All the time the GIs were piling off the boats back home, a string of air bases in neighbouring Thailand was being strengthened and built up, protected by 38,000 ground support troops with no tickets home. No plans have been made to close down Danang air base in Vietnam. And a vast array of aircraft carriers and and naval artillery stood ready.

Politically, Nixon needed to shorten the casualty lists, and his solution was to step up the bombing. This was to be the balance between popular demands for the US to pull out altogether, and the supposed needs of continuing the war.

In December, before the present

escalation, it was reported that a million tons of bombs were still being dropped every year. The target area has widened to include regular bombing of Laos and Cambodia, where the bombing has actually escalated — while Nixon was "winding down the war".

The results can only be given in statistics. It is impossible to imagine the magnitude of suffering and terror. One quarter of all the Laotian population are refugees. The once green and beautiful Plain of Jars is a blackened mass of craters and bomb litter, totally uninhabited and dotted with the wrecks of towns and villages. Now infested with booby traps and unexploded ordnance, it may never be possible to reclaim it.

In Vietnam itself the terror continues, and the wanton destruction. After 8 years of chemical warfare, pressure forced a halt. But it has now been replaced by bulldozers and the giant 'stun-bomb', which in 2 years have done more damage than all the chemicals. South Vietnam now has 10 million bomb craters, many filled with rain and breeding mosquitos and disease.

Despite all the advanced technology, the "sensors", night bombers and computer-plotting, the bombing is terribly crude. A high level evaluation of an electronic targeting device, which cost millions of dollars to develop, came to the conclusion that the mechanism "equalled but did not surpass in effectiveness sightings by the naked eye."

The most ironic effects have generally become known — the bombing of US-supporting troops, or the bombing of the CIA headquarters in Laos, or last week the bombing of US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin.

But these merely stand out from the criminal and random civilian bombing, using specially designed anti-personnel ordnance which has killed ¼ million or more civilians in South East Asia. And while the people of North Vietnam have



THE STATE OF THE ARMY: it took two hours of debate to persuade these American soldiers to move to the front...

INDO CHINA

WHY THE GOES



the defences, the morale and the organisation to cope, the people of the South, of Laos and Cambodia, are quite helpless. Their own governments have called for or sanctioned the bombing and they are without defence.

GROUND FORCES

But the crucial factor in the "Vietnamisation" equation is that of the available ground troops: there has to be something for the air support to be supporting. So the ARVN was expanded, as a conscript army.

The Tet offensive of 1968, which precipitated the new policies, also made the localisation of the ground forces possible — for a time. The NLF suffered a heavy toll in casualties, and is only now beginning to recoup its strength.

So, for a time, ARVN made out, even making some gains, and more of the countryside was secured for the Saigon government — by the

usual method of clearing and bulldozing villages and herding the inhabitants into camps. It was cited as a victory for "Vietnamisation" that the major engagements were now taking place outside Vietnam, with ARVN pushing into Laos and Cambodia: while the propagandists carefully played down the heavy losses it actually suffered there.

SAIGON

Overall, what did it all achieve for the US, whose aims were to bolster up in safety its puppet-ally in Saigon?

Last October, President Thieu was returned to power unopposed. The Elections, the 'democratic' dressing of this Free World bastion, were considered by even the corrupt opposition to be so rigged that they withdrew, not wishing to give them credibility. (In recent trials in Saigon, people have been charged with the serious crime of "sabotaging national security — for destroying Thieu's election posters!")

So Thieu continues to preside over a regime which has no popular support whatever. Corruption is still the rule at all levels. Only last month a major scandal hit Saigon, when it was found that certain army widows had received nothing from a military assistance fund, made up from compulsory contributions of rank and file soldiers and worth about £10 million! The investigations have so far led to the suspension of 5 men administering the fund, and the Defence Minister had to offer his resignation.

The entire economic, military and political structure of the Saigon regime has come to be completely dependent on the US military machine.

For instance, Thieu has only recently moved to broaden the base of his one man show to the extent of forming a political party, to include members of his present power apparatus — civil servants, senior police and army personnel and Province chiefs. Assuredly the very best collection of members for a party named "Democracy"...

The withdrawal of 400,000 US ground troops in 3 years has place

WAR ON



intolerable burdens on an economy geared to providing for their various needs. The military boom towns are now swollen with unemployment, surrounded by miserable refugee shanties. In this once prosperous rice-exporting country, the price of rice has just risen by 50% and shows no signs of coming down.

In a drive to boost exports (last year worth \$12m. as against \$720m imports) and gain foreign currency for the war machine, the Government in November devalued the piastre. "Sacrifices will have to be made", they said, and since then the cost of living has gone up by another 10-15%.

ARVN

The Saigon army, though no longer quite the shambles it was, has a built-in dependence on the the American presence. It is built in the image of the US Army, which is vast and rambling and based on close and extensive air support and a technology which is way beyond that available to Saigon; whereas an indigenous army built for "counter insurgency" work would be based on small, mobile units.

At the same time ARVN reflects within it all the weakness of the society around it. Its officers are driven by vested interest and corruption. Local factors are predominant and there is a minimum of real co-ordination. Some units, regarding themselves as "elite", are apt to act independently and ignore an overall command.

Above all, its members are conscripted by an unpopular regime. Desertion is still high at all times, let alone under attack. The units around Saigon and the Delta cannot be safely moved north for fear of desertion by locally recruited troops. And it is of course infiltrated throughout by NLF forces.

In the countryside "pacification" has continued in the old manner, and with the usual blundering ineptitude which has characterised the war, has even been directed at the regime's few allies. The Montagnards of the Central Highlands, by tradition fighters on the government side, have been "relocated"

from their forest homes into camps, while their land has been sold to rich families and speculators.

It is little wonder that the NLF has been regaining its strength and influence. At the high point of 'Vietnamisation' back in January they were openly collecting taxes on the road into Tay Ninh, only 50 miles from Saigon.

LAOS AND CAMBODIA

And what of the bombing in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia? The weak pretense that this has been necessary to protect the withdrawing US troops could have convinced no-one. But what in fact was the point?

Except as tactical air support for ground forces in an engagement, generalised bombing has been shown and admitted to be useless and futile for the US forces.

Originally started by Lyndon Johnson as an attempt to intimidate North Vietnam from aiding the NLF, this was years ago exposed as having had no military effect. Later it was felt that saturation bombing of supply routes would stop men and equipment being moved south. But as early as August 1967, Johnson told the Armed Services Committee that this had failed, and 6 months later the Tet offensive was to prove him right.

Yet with the US troops being withdrawn, and the ARVN incurably weak and unreliable, bombing is all that is left to Nixon. Despite it, liberation forces have a free run in the Laos and Cambodian countryside. The regimes there are constantly beaten back to the cities.

In Cambodia the regime made a great determined push, using all its forces, to regain a vital highway. It failed. Meanwhile, Phnom Penh airport was under constant mortar attack in daylight. The regime lost control of the major rice-growing areas, and last year imports went up from 50,000 tons to 500,000 tons.

Despite a conscript army expanded in the last 2 years from 30,000 to 160,000, the last reports from Cambodia at the end of March told of the capital Phnom Penh under a close 2 mile siege. Its biggest bridge was blown, supply boats

under attack, and liberation commandoes had penetrated the city and knocked out its radio station. The High Command became positively Churchillian, offering "blood, sweat and tears" in return for loyalty.

In Laos, Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces retook the Plain of Jars and have pushed far beyond it since, taking most of northern Laos. The CIA base at Long Cheng has been under siege since the nearest army base, 7 miles away at Sam Thong, was over-run in early March.

PARIS TALKS

Yet Nixon continued to believe that the war was being won. The US showed no signs of understanding its position. The negotiators in Paris, and Administration spokesmen, publicly stuck to the idea that in not bombing North Vietnam they were "winding down" the war — and that the Liberation forces should reciprocate and "wind down" their activities. But when there was evidence that this blackmail had not worked, North Vietnam was once more bombed, just after Christmas.

In Paris, the US negotiators were exasperated to find that the other side did not regard the war as over, or themselves as losers. The request that US prisoners be freed in return for the withdrawal of troops (who were going anyway, because of pressures back home) was met with the reasonable demand that ALL the U.S. personnel leave the territories they had occupied, and that the air bases be dismantled.

Ten years ago the US Government was prepared to start a nuclear war rather than permit missile bases in Cuba, 90 miles from their territory. Now they walked out in outrage because the Vietnamese refused to allow such weapons in and around their country. North Vietnam, which has been blackmailed for years with the destruction, and the threat of further devastation, of her industry and civilian population, was actually accused by the US delegate in Paris of using the murdering American bomber pilot prisoners as "a particularly abhorrent form of blackmail". But then, American lives are different.

With pressure, trickery and blackmail having no effect on the Vietnamese, the US politicians turned to Vietnam's allies, on whom she is dependent for aid and arms.

Back in November, on the occasion of a visit by Pham Van Dong from Hanoi, Chou en Lai publicly stated that the US could never negotiate peace in Vietnam with China. But only 3 months later Nixon was to be welcomed in Peking, as the bombs rained down on North Vietnam. Both sides denied vehemently that any deals had been made about the war. But in Vietnam it must have looked as though they did "protest too much."

Then in March, US Secretary of State William Rogers bluntly stated that both Peking and Moscow had been asked to cut their aid to Vietnam. He said they had refused, but the US would "try again".

Vietnam has little reason to trust either of her allies, whose aid is grudging and given with the main objective of not being outdone by the other. In Cambodia Moscow retains diplomatic relations with the dictator Lon Nol, and has set up a 'third force', the Khmer Rouge, to try to undermine the efforts of the liberation forces and mediate with the tottering regime.

Moscow, on whom Vietnam is particularly dependent now for up-to-date anti-aircraft equipment, has been wooed for the past year by a heavy spate of US trade and technological missions. "US businessmen, starting with grain dealers and ending with manufacturers of computers which are still on the embargo list, have been encouraged to go to Moscow with offers that would tempt a saint — though there was always a hint that the saint would have to surrender his virtue first. In the past year more US businessmen have visited Moscow than during the whole of the preceding 20 years. ... As seen at the highest levels in both Washington and Moscow, the proposed trade deal would not be a simple commercial bargain, but the basis of a whole new relationship between the two Super Powers. ... As seen in Washington, a Vietnam peace settlement would have to precede any such arrangement." (Victor Zorza, Guardian 19th. April 1972.)

At the same time back in the US, even with an election campaign coming up, Nixon had won himself some room to manoeuvre. With casualty figures down and 400,000 troops home, it began to seem that the 'Nixon Doctrine' was really working. With barely any protest, Nixon had been able to resume the bombing of North Vietnam, and invade Laos. The Pentagon Papers, which showed how Congress had been tricked into sanctioning the war, had been published without incident. Now the American people were being tricked into continuing a war which they thought was being ended.

If the destructive monster was ever to be dislodged from Vietnam, a major offensive was necessary. It was necessary to weaken the Thieu regime and its army; to show up the sham of Vietnamisation and expose both the inability of the Saigon ground troops to cope, and the fact that the Pentagon had done nothing to loosen its grip and disengage; and to show demonstratively to Moscow and Peking that Vietnam was still at war.

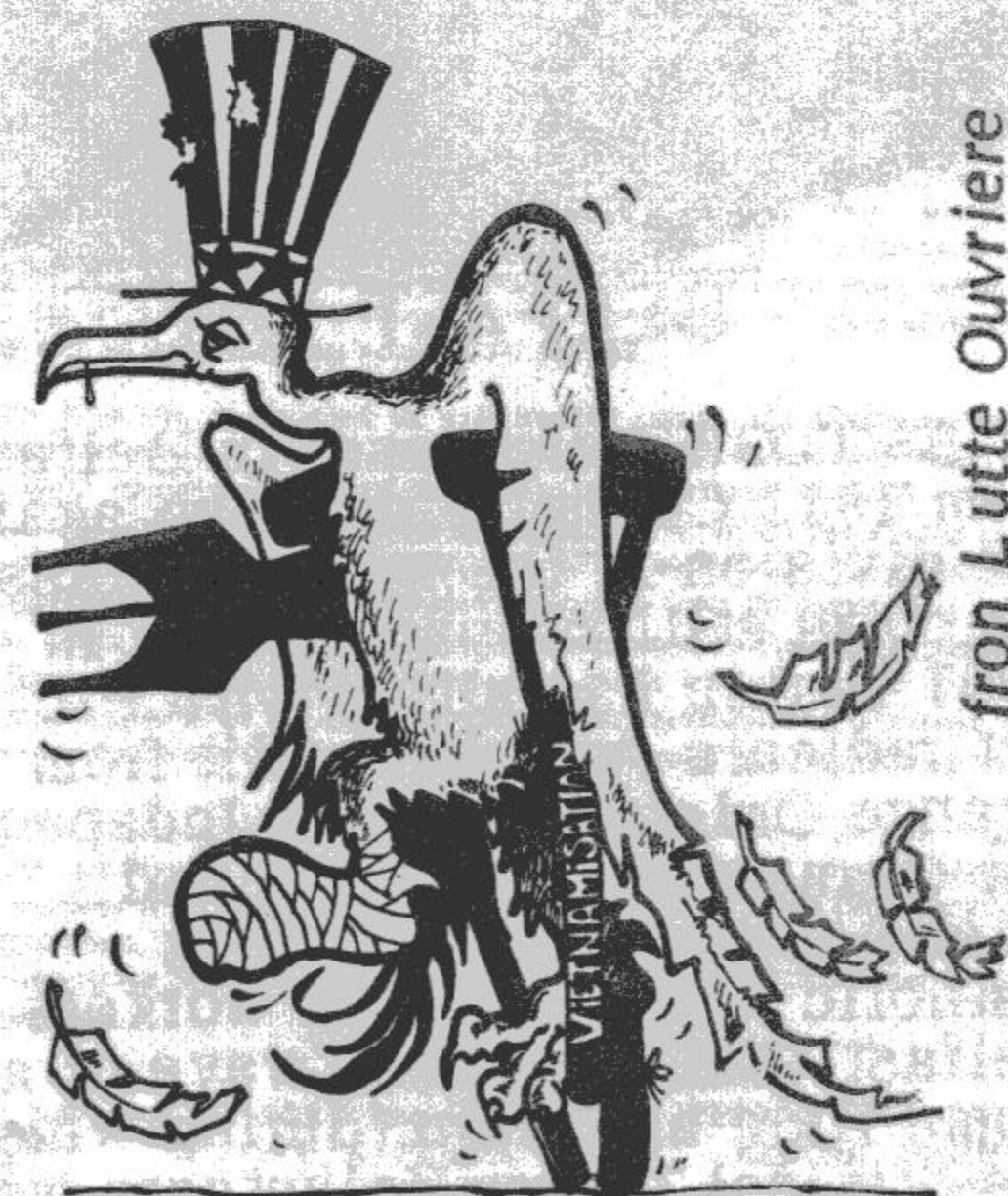
SOLIDARITY VITAL

For all the unquenchable heroism and tenacity of the Vietnamese it is difficult to imagine that they can win the war militarily. The US has enough secure bases outside of Vietnam to continue to harass and destroy. Traditional war strategies like taking a city meet with the ruthless US response of flattening the city "in order to save it".

But military actions can affect political decisions. Nixon has only been able to continue the war under the cover of 'Vietnamisation', the show of backing up something in Saigon. If this can be smashed, then the whole content of the 'Nixon Doctrine' is removed.

And in turn, politics affects military options. There are clearly

continued on page 13



from Luttie Ouvriere

"The only true prophets are those who carve out the future they announce"

JAMES CONNOLLY



James Connolly

The road to the Easter Rising PART 2

IN 1910 CONNOLLY returned from the USA to a changing Ireland. Jim Larkin had been at work for three years organising the dockers, carters and other trades misnamed 'the unskilled

The 'new', general unions which grew in Britain after the matchgirls' and dockers' strikes of 1889 had been feeble in Ireland. Now labour was stirring itself again in Britain and in Ireland as well.

In Britain, where the general unions were already in the grip of self-serving officials, the labour upsurge created a rank and file 'unofficial' movement. In Ireland a 'newmodel' union was being built: the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

Connolly became an organiser for the ITGWU. A chastened Connolly, reflecting perhaps his experience in the American SLP, he had written before leaving the USA: 'Perhaps some day there will arise a socialist writer who in his writings will live up to the spirit of the Communist Manifesto, that the socialists are not apart from the labour movement, are not a sect, but are simply that part of the working class which pushes on all others, which most clearly understands the line of march.'

Yet he remained a 'De Leonite' in his basic conceptions; the workers must build industry-wide unions which would act together against the capitalist class. As the organisational strength and class consciousness of the workers grew it would be reflected in the ballot boxes, until finally a sort of dual power in society existed with the militant workers organising and mobilising, to confront and finally appropriate the capitalists. Should the capitalist state attempt to use repression its limbs would be paralysed by the industrial power of the workers — and bloodshed would be minimal.

Whether the workers, once a majority wanted socialism, were to be helpless before the bosses' state, or the bosses helpless before the workers, would be determined by the industrial strength and cohesiveness of labour.

Both Connolly and Larkin saw their trade union work — and the ITGWU itself — in this revolutionary light. Connolly became a member of the Socialist Party of Ireland, the successor of the ISRP, as the other plane of the labour army they were mobilising.

promising beginning of class unity. Connolly got to the heart of the problem when he wrote, in 1913.

Let the truth be told, however ugly. Here the Orange working class are slaves in spirit because they have been reared up among a people whose conditions of servitude were more slavish than their own. In Catholic Ireland the working class are rebels in spirit and democratic in feeling because for hundreds of years they have found no class as lowly paid or badly treated as themselves. At one time in the industrial world of Great Britain and Ireland the skilled labourer looked down with contempt upon the unskilled and bitterly resented his attempt to get his children taught any of the skilled trades; the feeling of the Orangemen of Ireland toward the Catholics is but a glorified representation on a big stage of the same unworthy motives.'

Connolly looked to a future unity of all Irish workers in struggle against capitalism for the Workers' Republic — a unity which was to be postponed more than 50 years by the grip the British Empire kept on Ireland with partition as its weapon and the Irish capitalist class, North and South, as its garrison.

'In their movement the North and South will again clasp hands, again it will be demonstrated as in '98 (1798) that the pressure of a common exploitation can make enthusiastic rebels out of a Protestant working class, earnest champions of civil and religious liberty out of Catholics and out of both a united socialist democracy.'

DUBLIN LOCKOUT

In contrast with the North, the workers in the South, led by Larkin were making big advances. The standard of living of the newly organised rose substantially, so did their self-confidence. They had found a new weapon — class solidarity. No trade, no workplace

Larkin and Connolly (recalled from Belfast to help) had been arrested and the Citizen Army, the strikers' militia that grew to be the first Red Army in Europe, had been organised to fight back against the cops.

After eight months the labour war ended. The workers were not defeated — the union remained intact. But it was not a victory either: after that the union was more cautious and less able to bring full pressure to bear on the bosses. Connolly blamed the semi-defeat on the isolation of Dublin — on the fact that the British trade unions had merely given financial help while withholding the decisive aid of direct industrial action which they had it in their power to give. This failure of solidarity was a big blow to Connolly.

However, as late as November 1913 he had written: 'We are told that the English people contributed their help to our enslavement. It is true. It is also true that the Irish people contributed soldiers to crush every democratic movement of the English people... Slaves themselves, the English helped to enslave others: slaves themselves, the Irish helped to enslave others. There is no room for recrimination.'

But after the strike Connolly had less confidence in the immediate revolutionary potential of the English workers, seeing them, correctly, as tied too tightly to their imperialist ruling class. The support of the British labour movement for the 1914 war reinforced him in this bitter conclusion.

PARTITION

With the end of the strike in 1914 Larkin went to the USA (where he remained until 1923) and Connolly took charge of the union and the task of rebuilding its strength and confidence. And the Citizen Army was maintained and strengthened as labour's independent armed force. This was made possible by the fact that the northern Unionists and the Green Tories also had their 'private' militias: the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers.

When the English Liberals and the Irish Home Rule Tories, in face of a virtual rebellion by the Unionists and their Ulster Volunteers, agreed to the partition of Ireland, Connolly wrote the most tragically prophetic words he ever penned:

'The proposal to leave a Home Rule minority at the mercy of an ignorant majority with the evil record of the Orange Party is a proposal that should never have been made, and... the establishment of such a scheme should be resisted with armed force if necessary... Filled with the belief that they were after defeat the imperialist government and the Nationalists combined, the Orangemen would have scant regards for the rights of the minority left at its mercy.'

'Such a scheme would destroy the labour movement by disrupting it. It would perpetuate in a form aggravated in evil the discords now prevalent and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make division more intense and confusion of ideas and parties more confounded.'

'... the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of

reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured. ... All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old political battle cries will be shattered, and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will be still used to cover the iniquities of the Capitalist and Landlord class. I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised labour movement in Ireland when I say we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out ...'

PERMANENT REVOLUTION ?

With the outbreak of war the issue was shelved 'for the duration' and the Home Rulers became recruiting agents for Britain. Their Irish Volunteers split, with a minority adopting a revolutionary nationalist stand.

Connolly now recalled — publicly — the Irish truism that Ireland could only hope for a successful rebellion against Britain while Britain was at war. And he vowed not to miss the chance to strike at the Empire. In August 1914, to avert the expected threat of a wartime famine, of high prices in the towns, he advocated guerrilla resistance, strikes and sabotage to keep enough food in Ireland to feed the people.

The article (Our Duty in this Crisis) ended on a note which showed that he did not see it as merely an Irish struggle: '... starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord.'

He began to plan an insurrection. After initial conflict, an alliance was entered into with the nationalist volunteers of Pádraig Pearse.

The Communist International was later, in 1920, to encourage communists in countries where genuinely revolutionary nationalists existed to join with them — 'to strike together, while marching separately'. Connolly's well known remark to some Citizen Army men before the Rising — 'The odds are a thousand to one against us but in the event of victory hold onto your rifles as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached — shows he had a similar conception to the International.

As early as 1910 Connolly had come close to an understanding of the process of permanent revolution. In his foreword to his book Labour in Irish History he wrote: 'In the evolution of civilisation the progress of the fight for national liberty of any subject nation must, perforce, keep pace with the struggle for liberty of the most subject class in that nation and



BELFAST 1911

As ITGWU organiser in Belfast from 1911 Connolly came up against the division in the working class which is still rampant today. In 1907 Larkin had allied with Protestant radicals (who had split from the Orange Order to form the Independent Orange Institute) and had briefly succeeded in uniting Catholic and Protestant workers in Belfast. But the rising wave of anti-Home Rule agitation (during which the original Ulster Volunteers were organised) swamped what was a

was isolated in its struggle. The policy of sympathetic strike action was applied by the union with tremendous success.

And of course the employers hit back. Led by William Martin Murphy 400 Dublin employers organised to break the union. The famous Dublin Labour War of 1913 followed. Those workers who refused to sign a document repudiating the union were locked out. But all the union's members stood firm.

For eight months the bitter war dragged on. Before it ended strikers had been batoned to death by police,

that the shifting of economic and political forces which accompanies the development of the system of capitalist society leads inevitably to the increasing conservatism of the non-working class elements and to the revolutionary vigour and power of the working class.' The Irish bourgeoisie '... have a thousand economic strings in the shape of investments binding them to English capitalism... only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland.'

If Irish labour between 1916 and 1923 had adopted this perspective, maintained its political independence and fought for its own class goals, then history could have taken a very different turn. To examine why it didn't is to explore the great weakness of Connolly: the inadequacy of his understanding of the organisation needed to fight for socialism.

He had understood that labour's real strength is industrial. But he had lost sight of, or perhaps never fully grasped, the fact that the potential social strength of labour, however militant on economic issues, would only be real to the degree that it was ideologically prepared: and in turn that this must be expressed in a political organisation, which knew its own mind, a party like Lenin's party.

Connolly's SPI was (until its old leaders were expelled and it was reorganised as the Communist Party of Ireland in 1921) an old fashioned and ramshackle affair, over-recoiling from De Leonite 'purism'. The compromisers, the Lib/Labs, the 'mensheviks', were not outside it, looking in — some of them were its leaders, as they were

number of areas. But at the eleventh hour the titular head of the Volunteers called off the Easter Sunday manoeuvres, which were planned as a cover for the rising.

Faced with this catastrophe, expecting to be rounded up, believing that European peace was imminent and that, through their failure to act, Ireland would miss the chance of an independent voice at the coming peace conference, the leaders in Dublin had to make their choice.

In 1914, Connolly had indicated what his choice would be in such a situation. He had written: 'Even an unsuccessful attempt at socialist revolution by force of arms, following the paralysis of the economic life of militarism, would be less disastrous to the socialist cause than the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers.'

On Easter Sunday 1916 their choice lay between one kind of defeat or another. Either a defeat in battle, that might help rouse the forces for a new struggle. Or defeat without a fight, which would bring discouragement and demoralisation in its wake as so often before in Irish history.

Connolly and Pearse decided to fight. They went out to try to start that fire Connolly had written of at the outbreak of the war. For a week they defended in arms the 32 County Irish Republic, one and indivisible, which they had proclaimed on Easter Monday 1916. Before they surrendered, Dublin was in ruins.

They died before British Army firing squads, together with the other leaders of the Rising, after summary Court Martial. Connolly, grievously wounded, was court martialled in bed, and shot propped up in a chair.

They did indeed light the fire of revolt which Connolly had spoken of, but it was not to be controlled by men of their persuasion nor to lead to their goal. The middle class leaders of the Irish national revolution first misled it and then betrayed it to British imperialism.

And today, the bonds and debentures, the capitalists and their war lords, still exist. In Ireland they rule — for themselves and also for British capitalism. The Southern Irish capitalists, wrapped in the Green trappings of 'traditional' Nationalism and perpetually 'honouring — in hollow, gruesome mockery — the "men of 1916"', still oppress the workers of Ireland with exploitation, poverty, unemployment and forced emigration. They are engaged now, as for decades past, in the most criminal collusion with British imperialism, sabotaging and undermining the revolt of the Northern Ireland victims of partition, which Connolly first denounced nearly 60 years ago.

'Connolly' has been made part of their canon. His name is that of a national hero, while his ideas are either suppressed or heavily toned down. As if foreseeing it, he himself once said of the great Irish Jacobin Wolfe Tone: "Apostles of freedom are ever idolised when dead but crucified when living."

But Connolly, the greatest revolutionary socialist either Britain or Ireland has yet produced, cannot be cut down to the dimensions of a cardboard ancestral ikon in the pantheon of the pygmy Irish bourgeoisie. The ideas for which he lived and died — national and social emancipation for the workers of Ireland as part of the world soc-



Above: a British army barricade during Easter Week
Below: the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic
Far left: the battle flag of the Republic Army in 1916



P. H. PEARSE
Executed May 3rd, 1916.

also of the ITGWU.

In the post 1916 period they set themselves up as a bureaucracy within the ITGWU, and betrayed socialism by timidly trailing after the bourgeois leaders who has seized control of the national struggle.

This was the flaw in Connolly's design. Not seeing it, he felt no inhibitions. Relentlessly he pressed for an armed rising, outdaring even the nationalist idealists around Pearse.

THE RISING

In 1910, in Labour in Irish History, Connolly had told the endless story of the lost chances and the botched risings, that succeeded each other like monotonous days of mourning and depression in Irish history. Bitterly he wrote — and the bitterness attested to his determination to do better himself if the chance came.

Nor did he believe there was such a thing as a ripe revolutionary situation. Revolutionary action would make it ripe: 'An epoch to be truly revolutionary must have a dominating number of men with the revolutionary spirit — ready to dare all and take all risks for the sake of their ideas... Revolutionaries who shrink from giving blow for blow until the great day has arrived and they have every shoe-string in its place and every man has got his gun and the enemy has kindly consented to postpone action in order not to needlessly hurry the revolutionaries nor disarray their plans — such revolutionaries only exist in two places: on the comic opera stage and on the stage of Irish national politics' (November 1915).

The plan finally agreed on was for simultaneous risings in a

ialist revolution — are again being clothed in the flesh and blood of working class revolutionaries now moving into action in Ireland, north and south of the border, against imperialism and also increasingly against Irish capitalism.

For us, living in Britain where the labour movement has only begun to emerge from stagnation and where the worst pedants pass for the best revolutionaries, Connolly can be a bridge between ourselves and the only real tradition of revolutionary action in the British Isles. It is as vital for British revolutionaries to link up, however critically, with this tradition as it is with the combatants of the 'Third World' epitomised by the heroic figure of Che Guevara and by the unconquerable people of Vietnam.

Sean Matgamna

POBLAcht NA H EIREANN.
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN — In the name of God and of the dead generation from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences, carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children, to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government,
THOMAS J. CLARKE.
SEAN Mac DIARMADA, THOMAS MacDONAGH,
P. H. PEARSE, EAMONN Ceannt,
JAMES CONNOLLY, JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

MANY WORKERS BECOMING INTERESTED in revolutionary socialist politics are dismayed by the multitude of competing groups on the left. But recoiling in horror will solve nothing. Serious people will study the questions involved and single out the group standing on the firmest political basis.

The history of the international labour movement is full of tragic examples of parties which at first sight seemed to be based on revolutionary socialist politics but which failed to stand up to the decisive test of a revolutionary situation.

Of the groups to the left of the Communist Party, the biggest and most impressive is the INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS (I.S.) The IS Annual Conference on April 1/2/3 provides a good opportunity for taking stock of IS, from which WORKERS' FIGHT was expelled last December. (See W.F. no.1)

HEATED DEBATE

The discussion on Socialist Workers' (IS's weekly paper) reaction to the bombing of Aldershot produced the most heated debate of the conference. Many IS members were disturbed by their leaders' effective support for the anti-IRA witchhunt of the bosses' press: Socialist Worker had carried an editorial thundering against "individual terrorism". Significantly, it had reserved its outcry against "terrorism" for the first IRA action on British soil, an action in no sense either individualistic or terroristic, but rather a simple act of war. In addition IS has failed to raise any explicit slogan of support for the IRA.

The acid test for the IS conference as for the British left was the war in Ireland. WORKERS FIGHT has argued that British socialists must stand for the defeat by the IRA of the British Army, the agent of the British bosses' government. Logically this means supporting the right of the IRA to use all necessary military tactics in their fight to drive out British imperialism, including the right to strike at military targets in Britain itself.

This support could not be withdrawn because of the tragic accidental death of civilians at Aldershot.

However, the IS leadership eventually won the vote on its attitude to Aldershot, but only by a narrow margin (205 to 148).

How is it that more than 40% of the delegates found themselves in sharp opposition to the leading national figures of IS? How was it, in the first place, that IS came to take such an unprincipled line?

To understand that, we shall have to look more deeply at the history and ideology of IS. Leaving aside, for reasons of space, a discussion of the major IS shibboleth, the belief that the deformed and degenerated workers' states (Russia, China, Cuba etc) are 'state capitalist' * we will deal with the current issues of IS politics.

I.S.'S POLITICAL METHOD

IS's approach rests on extracting one particular concept, or principle, from the body of Marxist theory, and using it as an ideal norm to judge reality by. A scientific approach excludes such short cuts. It requires a concrete analysis of reality, a rounded assessment of the laws of development of the thing under consideration - whether it be the class nature of Russia, or the bombing of Aldershot.

When political analysis becomes a matter of pulling out this or that feature of the situation and comparing it with this or that suitably chosen scrap of Marxist theory, confusion inevitably results, in any 'difficult' situation.

This is the significance of Aldershot. IS's general position, which you can find by reading carefully in the small print of Socialist Worker, is "unconditional but critical support for the IRA." Good! But as always with IS,

* For a full examination of the issues read the collection of articles and excerpts on Russia by Leon Trotsky, available from 98 Gifford Street, N.1, price 10p.

Roads in the marsh

IS in conference

general positions are taken in the abstract, the argument is constructed as an argument: but as soon as certain conclusions, uncomfortable in the circumstances, flow from applying these positions logically and rigorously in the real world, equally good reasons are found to construct contrary arguments so as to avoid the difficulty.

Such politics - revolutionary in 'theory', less than revolutionary when it comes to the crunch - are called CENTRISM.

WORKERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES

In addition Centrism, as Trotsky put it, "plays with all the colours of the rainbow." Every centrist political grouping has its own crotchets. IS's trade mark (after the theory of 'state capitalism') is the inflation of the question of the "self-activity" of the working class from its proper place as an important element within Marxist theory into a universal 'cure-all'.

But the activity of the working class under capitalism is fragmented, spasmodic, half-smothered by the influence of capitalist ideology. Marxists who tail along behind the spontaneous activity of the working class are failing to fight these burdens which capitalism imposes on the working class. They are failing to appreciate the tremendous importance for the class struggle of a scientific understanding of the workings of capitalism.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the years of the long capitalist boom, IS's waiting upon the activity of the working class was a recipe for passivity. The vital task for revolutionaries in such a period was to train and educate a nucleus of militants, to build theoretical clarity, to take the limited opportunities that did exist for intervention. IS tackled none of these tasks.

It operated as a loose and sloppy "talking shop" propaganda group. In Tony Cliff's articles on Rosa Luxemburg (1959) and on 'Substitutionism' (1960) they went so far as to reject the need for a revolutionary party on the model of Lenin's Bolshevik party, that could give a lead in struggles instead of just writing about them.

WHY I.S. GREW

In the 1960s, new currents of militancy began to stir. People moving to revolutionary politics naturally don't, on the whole, first occupy themselves with a detailed study of the history and theories of the various left groups. They go to the group that seems to be most active, most flexible, most alive.

IS's emphasis on 'non-sectarianism'

and 'non-substitutionism' now showed a positive side. The other major revolutionary groups had succumbed to the pressures of isolation by becoming closed, hermetic sects, largely incapable of responding to new radicalisations. IS had at least preserved some openness and flexibility.

As the new militancy filled the flapping sails of IS it produced a definite political improvement in the organisation. IS declared for the victory of the NLF in Vietnam - a welcome change from the position of neutrality it had taken on the Korean war. It declared for building a democratic centralist party. It declared a "turn to the class", taking its orientation to the working class from the realm of rhetoric to the realm of practice.

There was no real break, however, with the politics of centrism. IS's politics are still the politics of a weather-vane.

COMMON MARKET

Many members of IS have become disturbed by their leaders' growing obsession with 'gate receipts' (membership forms signed and papers sold) above all else. This discontent came to a head over the Common Market issue last year.

In June 1971 the National Committee suddenly reversed the principled position held by IS for the previous nine years (and reaffirmed only two months previously by Conference) that the task of socialists was to stress that the real question was not the Treaty of Rome, but the defence of working class interests in or out of the EEC.

Startled IS members were informed that "The issue is for or against the Treaty of Rome. And... the line of IS is against the Treaty of Rome." The IS leadership was clearly sacrificing political principles and consistency in order to jump on the bandwagon of anti-EEC public opinion.

This episode resulted in 21 IS branches supporting a call for a special conference to bring the National Committee to order.

Alarmed, the leadership replied with a hysterical condemnation of 'inward-looking', 'negative', 'carping' opposition. A special conference, they said, would be disruptive. And they branded the Trotskyist Tendency, which had led the opposition to the leadership's opportunist policies on the EEC and on other issues, as "sectarian".

In December 1971 they themselves called a special conference, at which they proscribed the Trotskyists.

The December 1971 special conference produced a peculiar line-up: no

less than 38 out of 40 members of the elected National Committee supported the expulsion, but some 37% of the rank-and-file delegates voted against. This gap between leadership and rank and file members was repeated at the 1972 conference.

Because of the low level of political education in IS, the leadership uses demagogic brow-beating and machine manipulation to keep the organisation together and beat down opposition. But just because criticisms of the leadership are answered, not by rational political argument, but by bureaucratic tub-thumping, discontent and mistrust are permanently re-created among the rank and file.

IS will continue to grow, for the time being. Its impressive size and activity make it a magnet for people newly moving to revolutionary politics. But IS will continue to be plagued by political instability and internal crises. And in the quite likely event of the growth of a mass movement around elements of the left wing of the labour bureaucracy, IS may find much of its impressive but unstable growth melting away quite rapidly.

THE 'OPPOSITION'

For the last few months a current has existed inside IS which sees itself as an 'opposition' to the leadership. It has substantial influence in some of the most industrially important IS branches - Bristol, Coventry, Manchester, Merseyside. But virtually the only unifying factor politically is a dissatisfaction with the leadership's "gate receipts" politics.

Many oppositionists were pleased by two 'victories' they won at the conference: the organisation's "Draft Programme" was rejected and a resolution from the leadership proposing IS factory branches was defeated.

But negative victories, stopping the leadership doing something are, at best, of very limited value. The rejection of the Draft Programme illustrates graphically the continued political instability of IS (after 22 years of existence!!). But the majority for rejection was an odd combination of two schools of thought - on the one hand, those who believed the Draft to be a programme of the traditional Leninist-Trotskyist "transitional" type, and who were against a transitional type of programme; and on the other, those who thought the Draft wasn't a transitional programme, but should be!

To be flatly against the setting up of factory branches is a nonsense. Any Marxist party must organise itself where the working class is organised, where it can intervene promptly and consistently in the everyday struggle of the class.

But the way the leadership posed the question of factory branches - so oppositionists said, and we can believe them - was that IS worker members should concentrate on the "real" industrial struggle, without being diverted by non-industrial issues.

A healthy opposition would have challenged this way of posing the question, while accepting in principle the need for factory branches. They would have emphasised the need for more political education, more thorough internal discussion, more stress on principled propaganda among the working class on non-economic issues such as Ireland.

REFORMISM

Despite the general incoherence of the opposition, it has thrown up a document, "The Problem of Reformism" by Ted Jones, which is of some interest.

Marxists, following Lenin, analyse the politics of reformism (the Labour Party and similar parties) as finding their main social base in an upper stratum of the working class, the 'labour aristocracy', whose extreme expression is the bureaucracy of the labour movement. Obviously support for the Labour Party and reformism extends widely throughout the working class. Many workers accept in whole or in part the concept of the State being neutral between classes, and see socialism as a fight for a better deal for the working class by bargaining within the capitalist system.

Parliamentary elections, the fact that everyone is formally equal before the law, and the reforms that the system

occasionally does give, all serve as evidence to justify reformist ideology.

But superficial evidence for reformism only explains the abstract possibility of workers having reformist ideas.

It says nothing about the role of mass reformist organisations in the class struggle, or about the concrete balance of social forces involved in reformism. To understand these questions we must study the role of the labour bureaucracy.

The labour bureaucracy is a special social grouping raised on the backs of the working class to a position where it mediates between the workers and the employers. It is tied to the working class through the mass workers' organisations, and tied to the employing class through its conditions of life and its interest in preserving stability.

Reformist politics of bargaining within the system correspond to the bureaucracy's position in the class struggle. Every battle in the class struggle belies the myth of class harmony. The labour bureaucracy is the agent which maintains the influence of reformism in the working class. In the labour movement it sets up a vicious circle consisting of bureaucracy and elitism at the top and apathy and servility at the bottom.

LAVA?

Back in 1957, IS rejected the Marxist analysis of reformism. "An inevitable conclusion following upon Lenin's analysis of Reformism" they argued, "is that a thin crust of conservatism hides the revolutionary urges of the mass of the workers. Any break through the crust would reveal a surging revolutionary lava." They concluded that "In the final analysis, the base of Reformism is in capitalist prosperity" — that is, in the ability of capitalism to give reforms.

The objection to Lenin's analysis is not substantial. Unless revolutionary consciousness is generated spontaneously there is no reason why "a surging revolutionary lava" should lie beneath the "thin crust".

IS's conclusion actually coincided with a well-known theory of bourgeois sociology, the theory of "relative deprivation", which says that militancy is caused by people getting less than they have been led to expect. As long as reformism can deliver the goods, the reforms which it leads people to expect, then it will keep its influence. When it can't, its influence begins to crumble.

This essentially bourgeois theory reduces the working class to the status of laboratory rats. The activity of the working class, whether gratified by reformism or frustrated by it, is not seen as having any determinate direction and consciousness. (So we see where IS's emphasis on the "self-activity" of the working class, neglecting the active role of ideology in creating that activity, led them!)

Actually, economic crisis can lead to a strengthening of reformism, as workers cling desperately to the "lesser evil" of Labour against the Tories.

IS saw reformism simply as the expectation of reforms, not as a deep-seated view of the world with definite social roots. This led to premature obituaries. From the decline of the Labour Party and trade union branches, IS concluded (in the words of a 1969 IS pamphlet) that "The Trade Unions and the Labour Party are either dead or dying." This assessment has naturally now been reversed, in IS's usual "now you see it, now you don't" style. The Labour Party is not yet dead, they say, but it's very ill...

CRITIQUE

Now IS argues that the economic crisis will prevent the Labour Party making reforms. The Labour Party is therefore no longer a "classical reformist" party. It can be "exposed" by demanding of the Labour leaders reforms which workers will see as reasonable but which Labour can't deliver.

Comrade Jones' pamphlet criticises these conceptions. IS's approach, he points out, is "more in tune with the response of outraged reformists... than the needs of a revolutionary programme."

Firstly, no-one can fight reformist ideology "by arguing that revolutionar-

THE WAR GOES ON

(From page 9)

ies can fight better for reforms than reformists."

Secondly, whether Labour (and capitalism) will give reforms depends not only on the economic situation, but also on the balance of class forces. The possibility of reformist concessions to buy off working class militancy in a big upsurge cannot be ruled out.

Thirdly, Labour is still a reformist party. True, Labour's policy is basically to rationalise capitalism for the benefit of the bosses, perhaps giving a few reforms on the side — but what else have Marxists ever expected reformists to do?

Therefore, Jones argues, we must expect a Labour Party revival. We must drag the Labour leaders "into the centre of the arena of every struggle in which the working class engages" and demand of them not reformist, but transitional measures, which are a real solution to the problems of the working class, and therefore actually challenge capitalism.

INADEQUATE

Jones' argument is largely correct, as far as it goes. But he fails entirely to connect his criticisms of IS's confusion on reformism with any general criticism of IS's politics. He does not even contest IS's 1957 rejection of Lenin's analysis of reformism.

Moreover, to pose the question simply in terms of exposing Labour leaders is incorrect. The real problem is to supercede them. Does Jones think that IS could supercede them, even if it adopted some of the political "corrections" offered by the various strands of the opposition? And if he doesn't think so, what is he doing about it? Here is the real weakness of an opposition which sees IS as merely the best available sounding board for ideas.

Many workers are well aware of the limitations of the Labour Party. The problem is that they see no alternative.

The alternative can only arise through mass struggles and through the intervention of Marxists in those struggles, to develop the consciousness of the working class to the point where large sections of workers break from the bureaucracy and act independently. Necessarily these struggles take place while the mass of the working class is still "led" by reformists.

That is why issues have to be posed in the form of demands on established leaders — not just to expose them, though that is part of it — but because the working class can only fight with the organisations it actually has, which are still under the control of the established leaders.

TODAY

The tactic of "dragging the Labour leaders into the centre of the arena" must not, therefore, be elevated into a principle. This point is seen as especially important when we examine the actual state of reformism today (something Jones completely fails to do). Working class participation in the Labour Party, and the expectations workers have of the Labour leaders, are at a low level. The hold of reformism is more commonly expressed through expectations in the left trade union leaders and through what IS has, usefully, called "do-it-yourself reformism."

But the Labour Party is not dead. Its ideological hold has not been broken. As problems requiring political and not merely economic action come to the fore, so the class will tend to turn to the Labour Party. However, we must know how to seize hold of the positive elements in the present widespread partial disillusionment with Labour.

In face of the Industrial Relations Act, the trade union bureaucrats are extremely keen to place demands on the Labour Party. The trade unions, organised at the point of production, can, given the will, move effectively against

two main reasons why the use of American troops is not open to Washington.

There is the fear of popular anger at rising casualties in a war nobody any longer wants. But there is also the fact that the movement in the US in solidarity with the liberation forces has so undermined the power of American chauvinistic ideology within the army that the US troops are scarcely reliable for offensive combat.

More than ever, the need is for a mass solidarity movement, to match the courage and boldness of the Vietnamese fighters with a clear and uncompromising political offensive in the heartlands of imperialism, as a preparation for disarming and smashing the genocidal system.

When imperialism is driven headlong from Vietnam, that will be the first stage of its downfall. The masters of war in the Pentagon and in Whitehall — and in Whitehall, too — now it. So must we.

One of the major victories of the US war criminals in the last 3 years was the re-growth of apathy about Vietnam in the cities of Europe which saw giant solidarity demonstrations in the wake of the Tet offensive. It is in our power to deprive them of that.

The Vietnam solidarity movement must be rebuilt — this time on a more secure basis, and on an outlook derived from the Vietnamese themselves: that there can be no let-up until imperialism and all its works has been smashed in Indo-China.

Ireland and the bosses press

The so-called "liberal" paper The Guardian may give sympathetic reports of the struggles of Southern African blacks against white oppression. There is after all a respectable, middle class campaign against Vorster and Ian Smith here in Britain.

But when things come a little nearer home, and "our" oppression is involved, The Guardian shows its true face as just another ruling class newspaper.

The paper was recently shocked because IRA Provisionals in Free Derry have ordered certain reporters

to leave. These reporters insisted on labelling the popular militias of the IRA as murderers, terrorists, gunmen and thugs, rather than as a military arm of the republican movement fighting British imperialism.

Some of these journalists also implied that the Provisionals were criminals lacking in political motivation.

Is it so surprising that they have been expelled from an area where they work at the invitation of the IRA, not of the British Government?

The Provisionals control Free Derry, which is like a separate little state in its own right. Vicious slanders against the IRA and the people of Derry are not exactly welcomed. Hospitality can only go so far.

Full of outrage at warnings to right-wing reporters, The Guardian, which supports internment and backs those calling for a "military solution", ie more repression, whined about the IRA's "ability to intimidate the press and manipulate the news coming out of the city."

The "Free Press" is in danger! Maintain the right to slander and vilify the Republicans! — That is The Guardian's attitude.

They also claim that the IRA are listening in to journalists' phone calls, although a Derry Republican said that he picked up reporters' calls while monitoring British Army radio messages. Now how did these phone calls happen to find themselves on British Army short-wave radio? That is not a question for The Guardian to ask — is it?

In any case, Republicans involved in fighting a war against an army of foreign invaders and oppressors have a right to know what news is leaving liberated areas, so that even if IRA sympathisers are tapping reporters' phones, there is nothing immoral about that. As the fight continues, differing methods of struggle and various means of obtaining information must be used.

The Special Branch and British Army use phone-tapping, raids, interrogation, spies, agents provocateurs and the seizure of letters and diaries as well as military force, in order to smash the Republican movement — or at least, try to smash it. THEY have no scruples about "democracy", "freedom" and "rights." A.T.

Martin Thomas

Black workers and the Act

A BARRAGE OF TORY LAWS HAS BEEN
DESIGNED TO OPPRESS BLACK WORKERS
AND DIVIDE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The Industrial Relations Act is a blow against all workers. But every capitalist viciousness inflicted on ordinary workers hits with double force at that section of the working class which is black. And the Industrial Relations Act is no exception.

White workers who defy the NIRC face fines on their unions, imposed cooling off periods, and possibly prison. For black workers who came to this country after July 1971, defiance of the NIRC — either by striking, working to rule, blacking or whatever — can mean immediate deportation, together with their families, without even the right of appeal.

Under the 1971 Immigration Act, all "Commonwealth Citizens" entering Britain after July 1971 have the status of 'aliens'. (All black people, that is; those who are of British ancestry, ie have white skins, have special treatment.) They need work permits for specific jobs, to be renewable yearly, and must carry identity cards.

What if such an 'alien' joins a trade union and is prominent in labour struggles, or becomes outraged by sweatshop conditions and organises to fight back? He can, at the discretion of his employer, have his work permit discontinued the next time it comes up for renewal.

Where a white militant would have to be dismissed to be got out of the way, with consequent risks of a confrontation with the other workers, a post-1971 immigrant can be deported at the whim of the Home Secretary, on the prompting of the employer.

The Industrial Relations Act means that, faced with militant immigrants who come under the 1971 Act, the law can step onto the factory floor at will — the bosses' will. Someone who is only a face in the crowd of strikers won't necessarily face deportation. But distinctive militancy or any leadership in a struggle by such a worker probably would lead to refusal to renew the work permit, or to deportation.

Like the provisions in the Industrial Relations Act itself, this too would be entirely up to the bosses and the state.

There are industries with a high proportion of immigrant labour — many ironfoundries, cotton mills, public transport, hospitals etc. And such a vicious marriage of two vicious Acts of Parliament is by no means fanciful.

Because renewal of work permits can depend on the goodwill of the employer, his power is tremendously increased. Any immigrant workers finding themselves in sweatshop conditions can be blackmailed into acquiescence on threat of deportation (a real objective possibility and therefore a powerful threat).

He becomes virtually a contract labourer, dependent on the "good will" of his employer.

And of course, the system can not only victimise the militants but can also intimidate others from joining in the everyday struggles of

British workers, thus dividing the working class and increasing the already virulent quantity of racist poison in its system.

TENSIONS

Thus the combined malevolence of the two Tory Acts can extend way beyond the as yet limited number of immigrants open to deportation and magnify hostilities and inter-race tensions within the working class. It can even divide the black community against itself by separating the community into grades (pre- and post-1971) thus militating against united black action.

The legally necessary identity card affects not alone the post-July 1971 arrivals. It means that in practice the police can stop anyone in the street who *might* be covered by the new Act, and demand identification.

But it is *blacks* that it singles out. This Act is a licence for every bored policeman on the beat, and for every one of the disproportionately large number of hard-core racists who wear the blue serge uniform, to harrass and intimidate the whole black community.

No British worker would tolerate such treatment for himself for even an hour. To our shame, we tolerate it — when we don't actually join in inflicting it — for our black class brothers and sisters. When they fight back they fight alone, often encountering the hostility of white workers.

VICTIMS

Blacks in Britain are discriminated against and condemned, by and large, to the worst paying and most unpleasant jobs. To add insult to injury, they get blamed for the social evils of bad housing and unemployment — by people who forget that there were terrible slums and mass unemployment when there were few blacks in this country.

They are bullied, assaulted and

framed up by policemen who translate the real feelings and attitudes of the lawmakers into the more honestly brutal reality of bare-knuckle backstreet racialism.

They are an easily identifiable target for the sexually and psychologically disturbed, who are themselves wounded victims of a system which fills them with sick hatred as with puss.

And all the time there is the insidious bruising of a white culture with values, aesthetics and view of history which depicts blacks as synonymous with "forces of darkness" and ugliness, and as representing a heavy 'burden of backwardness' which the "enlightened" half of humanity has had the selfless and unrewarding task of dragging into the periphery of civilisation.

Racialism was, in fact, first generated to provide the justification and sanctification for the gruesome pillage of Africa, which is now presented as a glorious chapter in the march of civilisation.

No mention is made of the advanced African civilisations that were destroyed in the process.

LABOUR ACTS

If every worker is a victim of the system, the black worker is the super-victim — in a sense, capitalism's original victim.

Yet it was the Labour Party — 'the party of the worker and the underdog'! — which in 1965 and 1968 took the first giant steps towards the new wave of increasingly shameless racist legislation.

It is now time that rank and file members of the labour movement took steps to rectify what their "representatives" have perpetrated.

And in the present situation, either the militants will take the fight against racialism into the factories — or, increasingly, the bosses and their Government will use their divisive anti-working class racist poison, together

with the Industrial Relations Act, to smash working class unity and rule over a divided working class.

FIGHT INTIMIDATION

WITH SOLIDARITY

Trade union branches and shop stewards committees must take it upon themselves to see to it that no employer actually uses his power to deprive black workers of a work permit: within the factory all workers must be equal. Any hint at intimidation must be met by immediate collective action.

The labour movement must insulate immigrants from the pressures of racist laws by demonstrating in practice that labour solidarity — across national and race lines — can actually count for something.

Many blacks are either wary of the racialism of white workers, or have bitterly experienced it. Recognising why they feel like this, militants must support the right of blacks to organise separately — politically, culturally and socially, if they themselves think it necessary, at the same time as attempting to forge unity in action in the trade unions against racialism, wherever it may be found.

We must aim to build trade union anti-racist committees to defend the black community and also to eradicate racialism in the white labour movement.

Above all militants must face the implications of widespread racialism in the working class, and even in sections of the labour movement. Proposals for unity and anti-racist campaigns are mere good intentions unless they are ideas, slogans, proposals in the hands of an organisation which sees the fight against racialism as part of a general class struggle and can act as an agency for organising that struggle on all its levels.

Jackie Cleary



Supporters greet the Mangrove Trial defendants outside the Court

Islington tenants angered by Labour Council

A meeting of 250 tenants was held in Islington on Monday 18th. April. It was called by left wing Labour Councillors in conjunction with local tenants associations, to protest against the decision (carried by 28 votes to 18) of the Labour group, which controls the council, to implement the Tory "Fair Rents" Bill.

Speakers from both the platform and floor pointed out that this Bill will mean up to £1 increases in rents for Islington tenants. Also, as each tenant's rent will be assessed individually, this will tend to break up the ability of tenants to organise collectively to fight rent increases.

A spokesman for the Labour group majority, Cllr. Southgate, attempting to justify their action, said that "we believe that by the use of our brains we can keep the increases down." Just like the faithful servants of the Tories that they are, the right wingers always try to justify their attacks by appeals "to respect the law". However they have come unstuck trying to con the working people of Islington, who are sick to the teeth of Southgate and his ilk. One right wing councillor was forced to sit down by the barrage of abuse, when he remarked that one old-age pensioner who said that the increased rent would leave her with less than £2 a week for food was "alright".

WON'T FIGHT? LEAVE!

After a two-minute adjournment for "all those who don't want to fight" to leave the meeting plans were laid for campaign in all the housing estates, for a mass demonstration outside the Council chamber on May 9th., and for a rent strike throughout the borough, unless the Council refuses to implement the Bill.

Rank and file trade unionists speaking from the floor pointed to the need to refuse the Tories the right to increase workers' rents at

will and refusing them the right to say that we cannot withdraw our labour. Refusal to implement the Rents Bill was likened to refusal to recognise the Industrial Relations Court.

So far 11 London boroughs have announced that they will not implement the Bill. However, tenants must note and learn from the action of the Union leaders who talked "left" over the Industrial Relations Act but are playing around with the bosses' court now that the crunch has come.

Tenants must organise and be on their guard for a retreat by these Labour Councils. Already there are signs of this. Lambeth and Wandsworth Councils have left themselves a way out by saying that they will fight the Bill only if the other Labour councils do.

The Labour Party at its London conference decided to oppose the Bill, in spite of a plea from its executive that it was an "illegal" action. Also all three local Labour parties in Islington have taken a firm stand in denouncing the Labour group majority.

REJECT THE BILL!

Labour militants must demand that their leaders put militant phrases about "repealing the Bill" into practice NOW by instructing Labour councils not to implement it when it becomes law.

Also, tenants cannot fight this Tory law on their own. The trade unions, faced with having to defeat another pernicious Tory law, should take responsibility for linking up the strength of the isolated tenants associations.

In this way a national rent strike can be linked with a general strike to defeat the bosses' and landlords' anti working class laws.

Militants in the trade unions must demand of their leaders that they start to organise for a decisive fight now.

KEN STRATFORD

GEC Death by a thousand cuts

KIDSGROVE

"THEY'RE DOING IT IN DRIBS and drabs. They think no-one will notice." That was how one Staffordshire GEC worker described the Weinstock Empire's massive job-slashing programme.

But that was before January.

Then, 453 redundancies were announced at GEC Power Engineering at Stafford. A little later another 234 at the very same plant.

And that has now been followed by the announcement of 555 redundancies at GEC-owned Elliott Automation at Kidsgrove and 115 at GEC Measurements.

But whereas GEC had hoped to carry out a massacre on tiptoe, local workers knew how serious the threat was. As Len West, Branch Secretary of the Clerical & Admin. Workers Union put it: "This is a very serious threat to the workers at Kidsgrove. It could mean the beginning of the end for all of us."

Last year GEC got rid of 5,000 jobs, while over the past three years 4,000 jobs have been got rid of in the Stafford area alone.

Certainly if GEC manage to carry out their scheduled chop of the whole of the Process Automatic Division many more hundreds of workers will be out of a job.

GEC's policy is obvious: they try to 'soften the blow' — not out of any concern for the workers, of course, but simply so as not to provoke opposition. That means they try to 'soften the blow' — for themselves!

One way of doing this they hope is through the old 'Divide and Rule' tactic, announcing some redundancies first, so that those who aren't yet affected are less likely to take action along with those who are.

Their other trick is a familiar one. They say they are not sacking anyone. All they are doing, they claim, is "aiding" voluntary redeployment.

To this we have to reply not just by saying "No Redundancies" but also insisting on "No reduction in the number of jobs". So-called natural wastage means that the dole queue still gets longer. And the

workers who are left work harder — they've got to cover the job of the man who wasn't replaced.

But there has to be action to back up militant demands. The lead of the ASTMS should be followed by other unions. This union called a joint meeting of representatives from GEC Kidsgrove, GEC Leicester and GEC Rugby (the product division) to arrive at a co-ordinated policy. But we need to go further. Not only inter-plant discussion but inter-union discussion too. And what the product division has done should be done by the other divisions.

But even these discussions are meaningless unless they prepare to launch a full scale attack against Weinstock's policy of "death by a thousand cuts". It's not enough just to operate overtime bans, in those sections where there are full order books.

The only tactic that makes any sense is a sit-in. That should be the reply to the GEC management.

The local Council, which has expressed concern at the redundancies, should be asked to give serious help. They could take punitive action against GEC (like raising their rates or threatening to cut off services) if GEC do not accept the men's demands of 'NO LOSS OF JOBS'.

And, like those councils that waived miners' rents when they were on strike, it could give similar help to any action by the GEC workers.

M.T.

COVENTRY

ON APRIL 20TH A MASS MEETING of 2,000 workers from GEC Copsewood (Coventry), the headquarters of the GEC Telecommunications division, decided on an all out strike against "the management's blatant attack on trade union principles."

On the following day the 8,000 copsewood workers were joined in a one day solidarity stoppage by the 1,500 workers of GEC Helen Street.

Not satisfied with the miserable wages at GEC, 120 electricians' mates and pipe-fitters had put in a claim for £9 a week increase. In this way they spearheaded the struggle against the notoriously low wages at the plant.

Management replied with a derisory offer of £2. And when these workers backed up their claim by striking, management brought in staff to cover their work.

This scabbing naturally led to other workers not handling anything operated by the blacklegs. And in response to management threats the workers escalated their actions and, following a call from the model room, an all out strike was decided on.

GEC Copsewood is a mirror of hundreds of factories up and down the country. After years of being told "You may not get good wages like the car workers but at least your job's secure" they found they had neither good wages nor job security. Only recently 1,000 redundancies were announced at Copsewood.

Now the struggle for both better wages and against redundancy is underway.

D.S.

BRISTOL A.I.L. DEMO



On Saturday 15th. April a national ANTI INTERNMENT LEAGUE demonstration took place in Bristol, to protest against the 'Glorious Glosters' march through the town 2 days earlier, and to counter the barrage of chauvinist propaganda that had accompanied it.

The local press on that occasion presented a model of capitalist Free Press reporting. First, while dwelling at length on the hardships the troops had undergone on their Tour of Oppression in Belfast, they 'forgot' to mention that on their last night there the Gloucesters had run riot. Watched by one of their officers, they ran through the Falls insulting and assaulting the people there, letting off guns and banging on doors, and painting up Union Jacks.

More curious was the Bristol Evening Post reporting of the "returning heroes" march through Bristol with bayonets fixed, which according to the papers had been greeted by an enthusiastic drowd of 100,000. In fact, the paper carrying this 'report' was published ¾ hour before the march even started, and the real number turned out to be less than 10,000, mostly middle class housewives out shopping.

The A.I.L. demonstration, organised in the face of local reaction by a new branch at short notice, had 500 people, including contingents from London, Oxford, Southampton and Exeter. Its success has given a big boost to the AIL locally.

WORKERS FIGHT

From P.1 DOCKS

and created the most explosive situation in British industry.

Jack Jones has tried (we believe tried sincerely, though many dockers will believe it was just a show for the NIRC) to fall into line with the NIRC and pressure the stewards into ending the blacking. But he has failed totally to control the dockers. He is reduced to talking about the good work he is doing in preventing a National dock strike.

A circular from the EC of the T&GWU told officials of the policy of the union about the law. The policy states that workers taking unofficial action must have regard to the law of the land. A law which should have been killed stone dead is now being respected by the T&GWU leaders.

Normally the union has dragged its feet on the docks, entered into sell-out agreements which have culminated in the present plight of dock workers, and sabotaged militancy — ineffectively, but blatantly enough to make its influence during any sharp conflict negligible. (The Government-sponsored Devlin Report, let us not forget, set up to inquire into dockers' militancy, criticised the T&G for being not militant enough even to keep contact with its own members!)

Now the NIRC is demanding that the Union suddenly become an efficient policeman, able to control the dockers and subordinate them to their laws.

Some hope! The trade union bureaucrats are moving in one direction... but the dockers are going the other way.

Jimmy Simes, chairman of the Joint Dockers and Transport Workers' Committee in Liverpool which launched the present campaign to have containers packed by dockers at dockers' wages, was expressing the general opinion when he told WORKERS FIGHT reporter Paul Barker that: "The Union never supported the blacking right from the start. But we're not going to let jobs go down the drain. We will ignore the injunction; the blacking will continue. The Unions should not pay the fine. If we are going to fight the law we shall fight it now. Industrial action could have stopped the Industrial Relations Act before it started."

Caught between the dockers and the NIRC, the Union leaders are wriggling on the end of the hook. The NIRC has only brought the docks conflict to a head, though in a particularly explosive form.

Jones and Co. will either fight or run. And the indications are that they are running.

Jones is now talking of the responsibility of the whole trade union movement to help pay the T&G fine. And he has started moves for a radical solution to docks problems, which will only speed up the depletion of jobs.

He has proposed a general discussion on docks employers' problems to Maurice Macmillan: "One proposal which Mr. Jones will put forward will be that a levy should be imposed on containers passing in and out of British ports, similar to arrangements in some North American ports. The money raised would be spent on redundancy payments to dockers, together with other advances such as warehousing within dock areas." (Financial Times, April 28th.)

BIG FLAME

This is a recipe for selling out the dockers. The present high national unemployment rate means that it is merely another route to the dole queue for dockers. Severance pay, after all, doesn't last all that long...

Dockers must be on guard against such deals which solve the containerisation problem at their expense. They must oppose weak-kneed surrender and the payment of the fines, because that is only the thin end of the wedge. The Union leaders have for decades been policemen for the bosses on the docks. Their masters are now cracking the whip.

Serious consideration must be given by the stewards in Liverpool and other ports to the recent experience of sit-ins and how effective they've been.

The Government can seize the Union's money over the Liverpool

blacking: we can seize the port of Liverpool. The Big Flame may yet catch light on the Mersey.

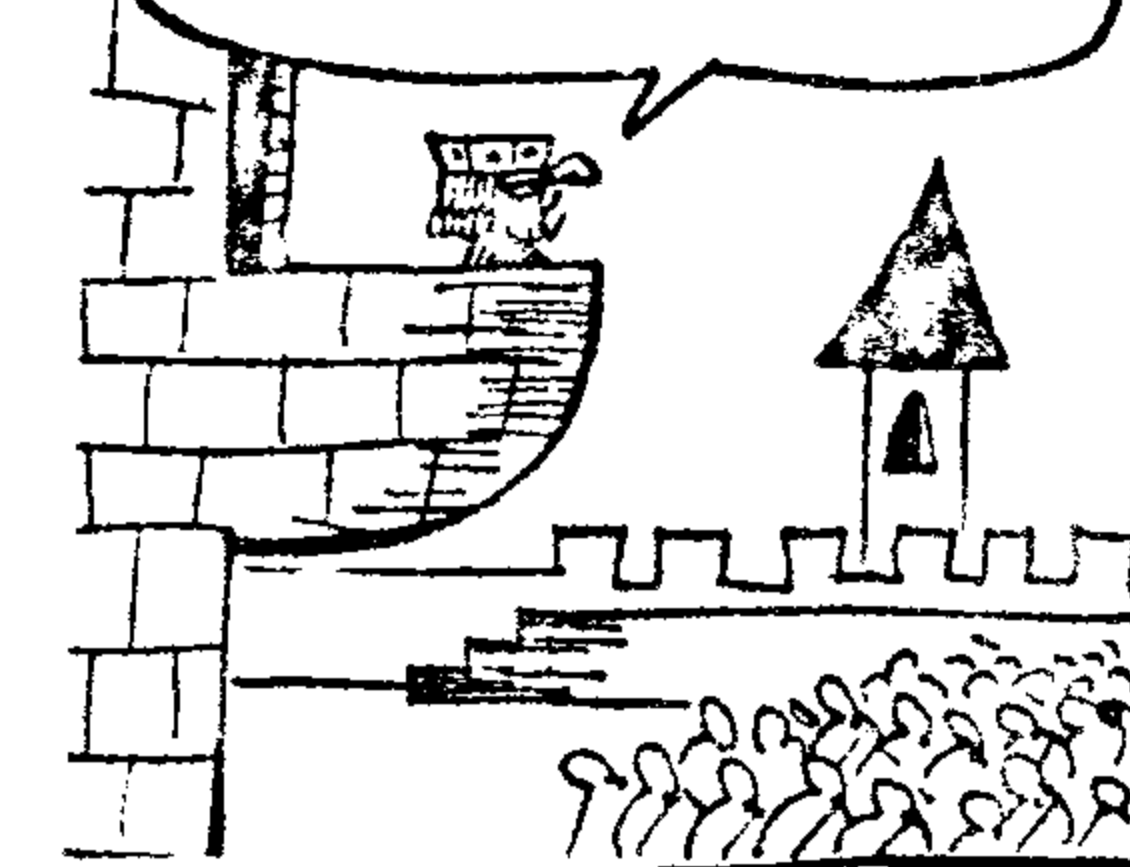
Meanwhile the 9 point Charter is a far better basis for defending the dockers than is any possible deal that Jack Jones can make:

1. No redundancies.
2. Retention of the National Dock Labour Scheme.
3. All loading and unloading of containers to be controlled by the NDLB.
4. All workers in a port to get the average wage in the port, and for the 'pool' to be in fact temporary, and not the never-ending limbo at £20 a week that it is now.
5. Earlier retiring age.
6. Strict adherence to the Bristow Committee's definition of dockers' work.
7. A minimum national manning scale.
8. A 30-hour week.
9. Nationalisation under workers' control.

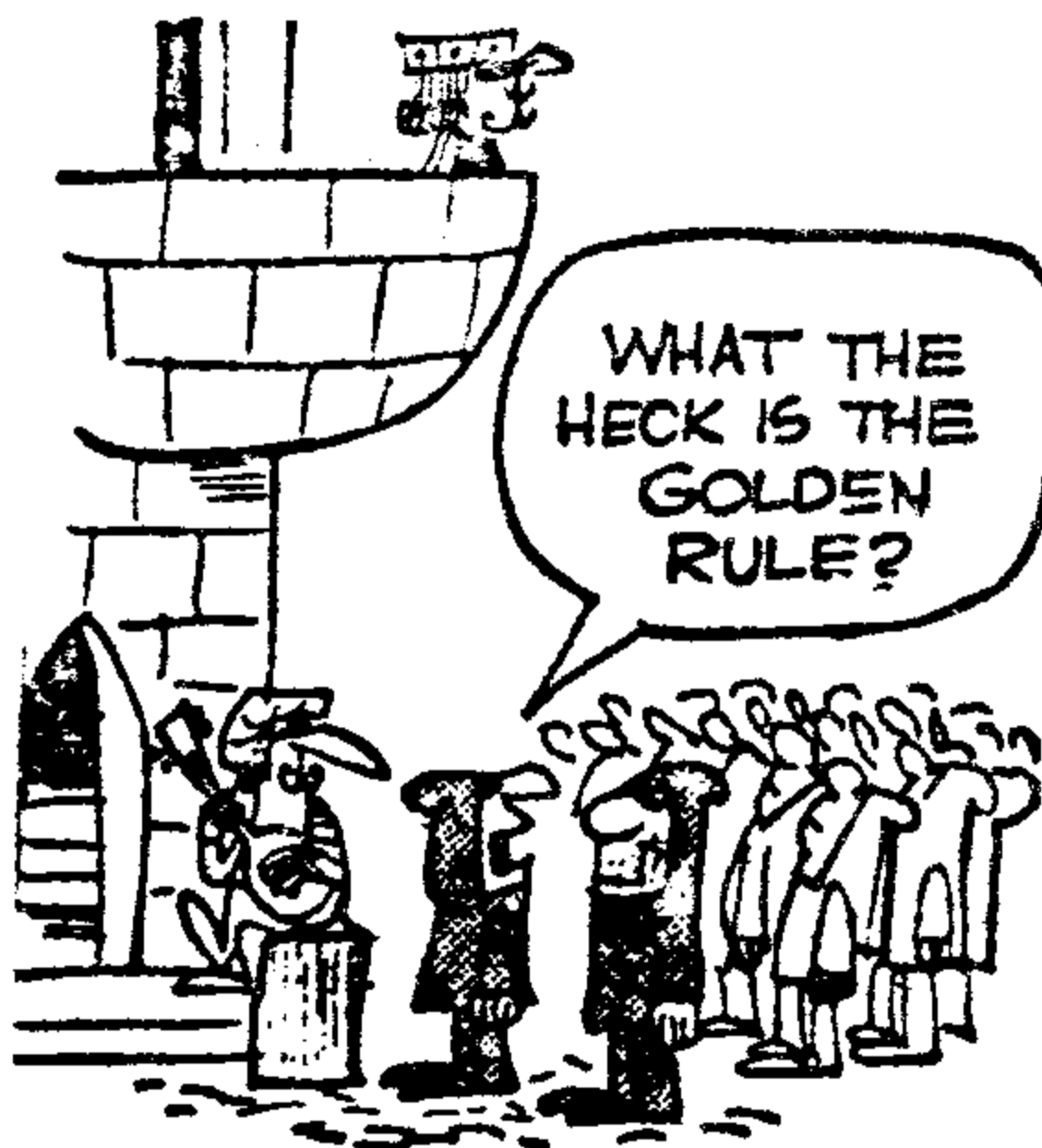
HAROLD YOUNG
Manchester Portworkers
Committee

THE LAW OF THE LAND

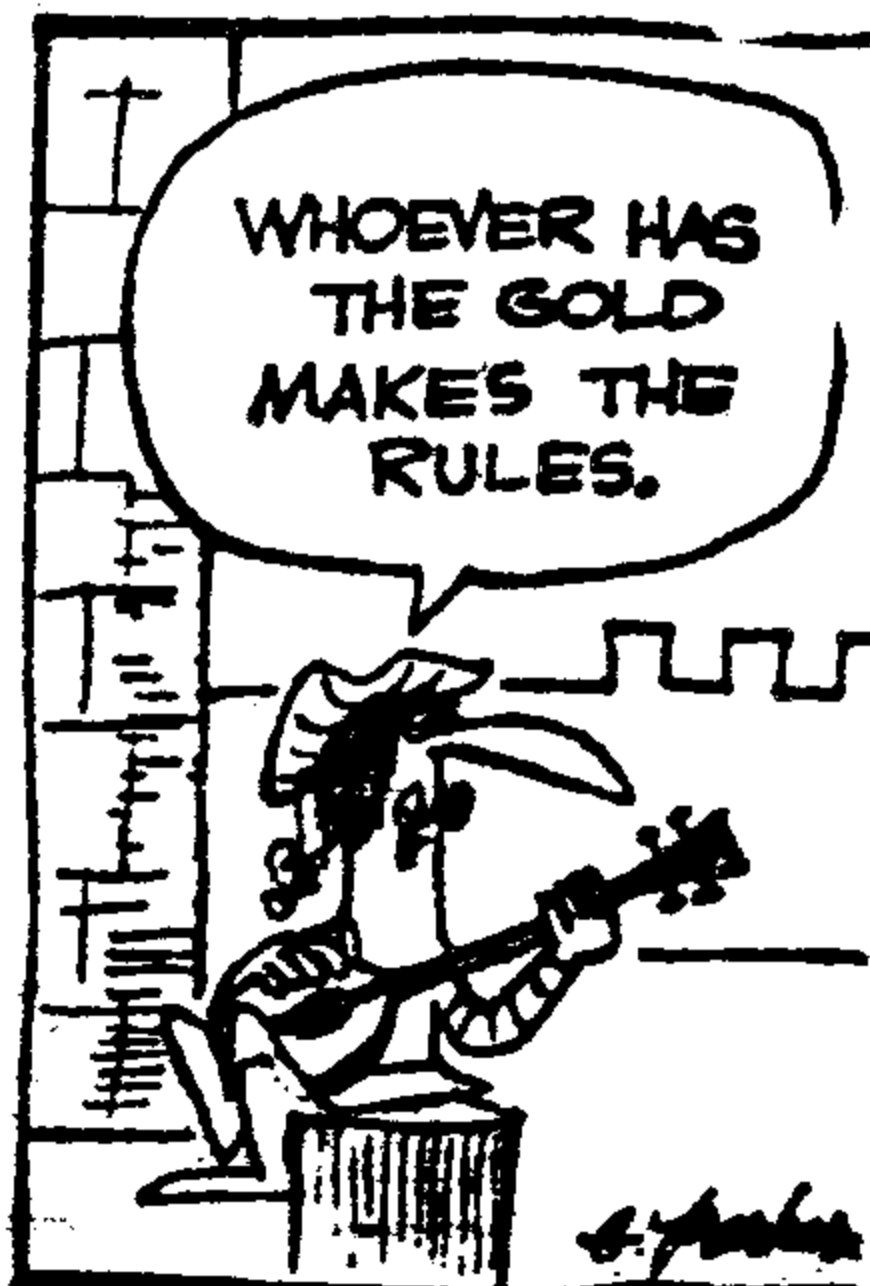
REMEMBER THE GOLDEN RULE... WE MUST ALL LIVE BY THE GOLDEN RULE.



WHAT THE HECK IS THE GOLDEN RULE?



WHOEVER HAS THE GOLD MAKES THE RULES.



"...the unusual experiences of some British pressmen in Northern Ireland... haven't been deemed worthy of any column inches. Like the Daily Mirror photographer in Derry who sent some exclusive riot pictures by taxi to Coleraine for immediate wiring. The pictures arrived in the Mirror's Manchester office 2 days later."

"I.T.N. have got their troubles too. The news editor noticed that every reporter sent to Northern Ireland began to turn into a raving Republican after only a couple of weeks' fact-finding there. Now reporters are sent for maximum periods of ten days at a time..."

"Susceptibility to the 'Irish disease' ITN are so wary of may not be unconnected with experiences like a recent lesson in rubber bullet technique. A group of soldiers showed a visiting TV crew (off the record, chaps) how they pour the powder from two charges into one so that a rubber bullet strikes the victim with twice the regulation velocity. But the best trick, as revealed, is to put a U2 battery in the gun instead of a rubber bullet. It's got the same calibre and it hits a hell of a lot harder. We all do it. They call us the 'Ever Ready'..."

(Irish Post, 18.3.72.)

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Editor,
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