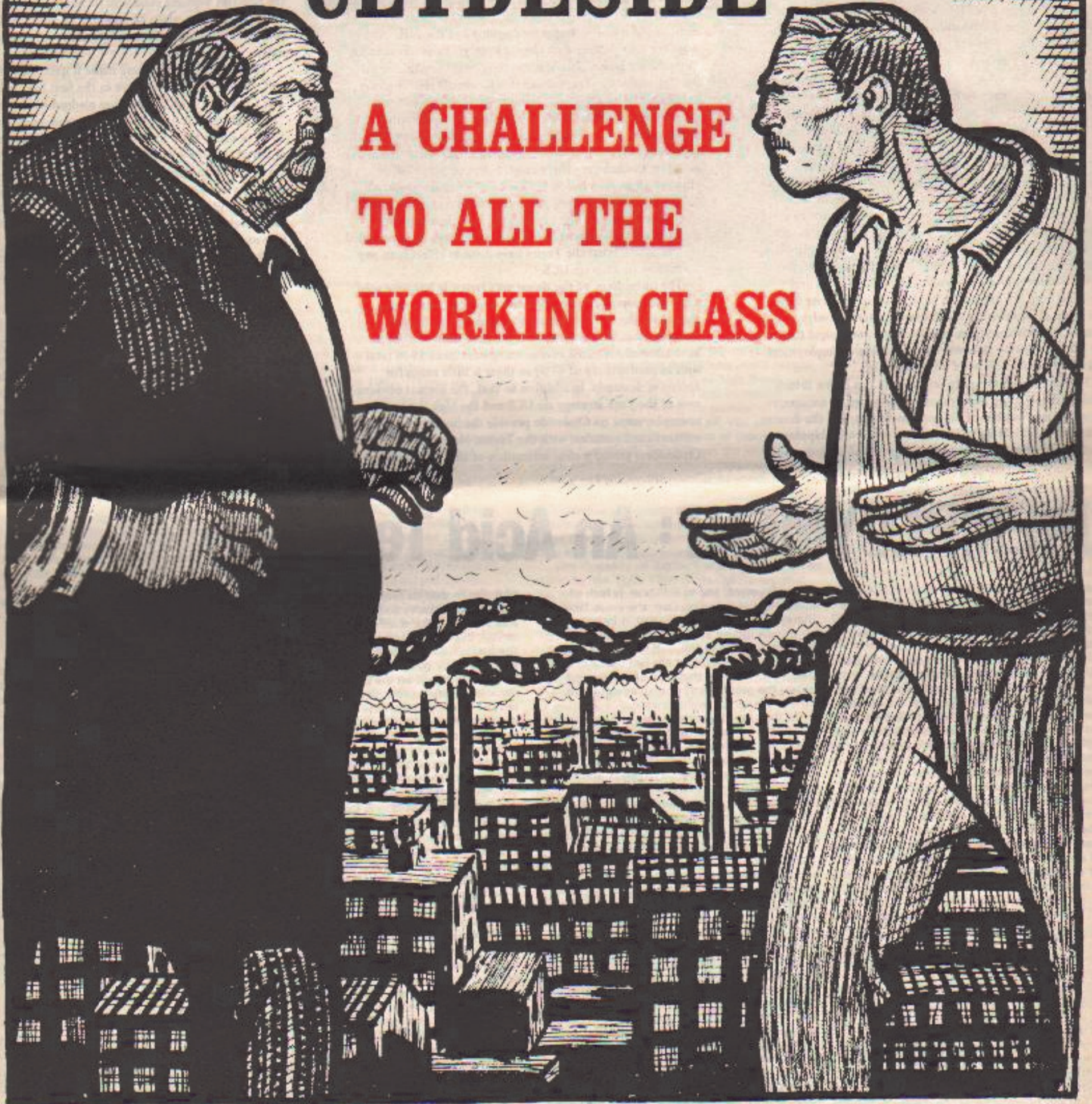


The Red Mole

CLYDESIDe

**A CHALLENGE
TO ALL THE
WORKING CLASS**



HOW TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

LANCASTER : Cleaners win! / Workers' Control / Bolivia

VENEZUELA : The struggle for socialism

UCS: the crisis continues

The collapse of Rolls Royce, the crisis in the steel industry, and now the collapse of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Ltd. prove, in the most dramatic fashion, the diagnosis that British capitalism is not just in a temporary recession but is undergoing a deep structural crisis, the roots of which go back to the relative position of British imperialism vis-a-vis European, American and Japanese imperialism, since the last war. The Geedes Report on Shipping, for instance, reported that Britain's share of world tonnage built between 1950 and the present day declined from 45.6% to 6.5%! As we reported in *The Red Mole* (1st June 1971), Britain's export of steel has remained static for two decades, while overall production of steel between 1954 and 1970 moved from 13 million tons to only 25 million tons while Japanese steel rose from 8 to over 90 million tons, and American steel production now stands at 115 million tons. At the same time, with the present recession in airline markets, it is the British aircraft construction companies which suffer closure. It is plain that British capitalism is going to witness many more crises in the primary sector of industry. It is equally plain that the Tories, as witnessed by their anxiety to get Britain into the Common Market and their deliberate closure of UCS (the Tories had planned this for some months), are prepared to sacrifice whole industries in the primary sector in their efforts to create an investment boom, in increasing cooperation with European capital where necessary, in those sectors of the economy with a high growth rate and a high degree of capital intensiveness. ICI, for instance, are one of the major pressure groups for entry into the Common Market, and Courtaulds has just completed a massive two-year programme of takeovers and capitalisation. Should British capitalism ever recover from this crisis, it is clear that the shape of British industry will be radically different from what it is at present, and that the British working class will suffer massive unemployment and drastic reduction in its living standards.

That the Tories are quite prepared to run down British shipbuilding is quite clearly demonstrated by an announcement by the Chamber of Shipping last week that the demise of British shipbuilding will in no way affect the shipping lines. British shipping in no way depends on an indigenous

building industry, and the Chamber was quite adamant that it did not regard itself as responsible for the financial health of British shipbuilding. Like the steel industry, the shipbuilding industry is enormously undercapitalised, and is shared by a series of comparatively small firms with inadequate working capital and outdated facilities. A survey in 1964 found that over 50% of the machinery in John Brown's yard was over 40 years old. Obviously, in a five year period which has seen oil tankers grow from 90,000 to over 200,000 tons is a norm, British shipyards are quite incapable of competing on world scales.

Under these circumstances, the demands placed on the CBI and the Tories by the TUC for a reflation of the economy and for the creation of an investment boom are not only utopian but incredibly dangerous. The Tories can only create an investment boom by carrying out the anti-working class policies that they are carrying out already. An "investment boom" is not going to recreate the British shipbuilding industry. The Labour Party, when it was in power, proceeded in an optimistic fashion. In 1965 the Labour government gave Fairfields £2½ million to save it from bankruptcy, and in 1967 to facilitate the merger between the several Clyde shipbuilding firms, £5½ million was provided by the Labour government, followed by a further grant of £9 million in 1969. Now the Tories are prepared to pay £5 million to keep the UCS yards turning over while the liquidator winds the business up. It is clear however that the £6 million needed by UCS could have been provided by the banks. What the Tories have done in effect is to pay £5 million to wrap up UCS.

The immediacy of the threat on Clydeside has produced a massive response by the Scottish working class which should set the tone for future struggles by the British working class. The unions, with the exception of DATA, have allowed over 25% cuts in manpower since 1968 (and rises in productivity of 87%) so there is little room for defensive demands. In addition to that, the blatant obviousness of the Tory strategy on UCS and the high level of unemployment on Clydeside provide the background for a militant confrontation with the Tories. Moreover, the Clydesiders gained a clear intimation of the Tory designs

on UCS when the profitable Yarrow yard was broken from the group earlier this year.

The response of the Clydeside working class has been the unequivocal slogan of occupying the yards. It is clear that the Scottish TUC, the Labour Party and even the Provost of Glasgow (representing of course sections of the Scottish bourgeoisie who will suffer very severely by the closures) are trying hard to regain control over the rank and file workers by sending vigorous delegations to London, none of which however have made any headway with the Tories. Wedgwood Benn, making a bid to increase his power base inside the Labour Party, has announced his "plan" to nationalise UCS. He has received a stormy reception from the Scottish working class who demanded to know why he didn't nationalise when he was boss of Mintech and proceeded to dole out millions of pounds to the shipping magnates.

The workers of UCS have made it quite clear that they will occupy the yards as soon as the first man is laid off. The Clydeside working class has pledged its support for this. The T&G tugmen (who fought for seven weeks back in 1962 to break from the National Union of Seamen) have declared that they will block any attempts made by the Government to move ships from the yard before completion. The one danger, to which the UCS workers are alive, is that the plans for UCS will be announced by the liquidator during the coming three-week holiday period in July, thus making a mobilisation in response difficult to organise.

The Red Mole supports the Scottish working class in its fight against the British bourgeoisie and their government. A victory over the Tory government, which they are in an excellent position to win, will be a victory for the English working class movement in its present state of confusion following the sell-out by the TUC. An occupation of the UCS shipyards will resurrect the militancy that was shown in the intention of the GEC workers to occupy their factories in Merseyside in 1969, and which was so tragically absent from the response of the Rolls Royce workers. What is also clear is that the working class of Clydeside is prepared to resist any move by the Tories to bring in the British army from Belfast to break the occupation.

UNEMPLOYMENT: An Acid Test

What happened at UCS is of course important in itself for the thousands of workers involved. But if similar situations to UCS are to be avoided, then it needs to be understood that what happened at UCS is not an isolated example, but in fact that the situation created in UCS only reflects the national situation created by the last Labour government and the policies of many trade unions. It is the question of unemployment above all others that can be seen as touchstone for the shortsightedness and stupidities of various political and union policies. Future generations will look aghast at an economic system which, in a period when poverty was increasing, when housing was deteriorating and when the hospital system was decaying, could permit hundreds of thousands to be forced out of productive work. But the people who realise how absurd this situation was will also be astounded at the shortsightedness and wrong policies carried out in fighting against the crippling problem of unemployment.

THE LABOUR PARTY

Unemployment went up just as fast under Labour as it is doing now. Anthony Wedgwood-Benn, who is now trying to stake his claim to be the Labour Party's next leader by talking in hypocritical terms to the workers of Upper Clyde Shipyards, whose plight he is largely responsible for, sat in a government which in the space of five years saw the rate of unemployment increase by 150%. An extra 350,000 workers thrown on the dole was Labour's contribution to solving the problem of unemployment.

It would however be wrong simply to believe that it was the mere fact that Wilson & Co. were opponents of the working class which caused the Labour government to act in the way it did. This is the belief of Michael Foot, Eric Heffer, Norman Atkinson and the other Labour "lefts". If only *Tribune* and nothing else had been in control of the Labour Party, all would have been well, the Tribunites believe. In fact the policies of the Labour "left" are no more realistic than those of Wilson because they totally ignore the real economic causes of unemployment.

The underlying root of the problem of

unemployment, and of inflation, is lack of investment in industry. Over the years 1964-70 there was no real increase at all in investment by private industry. In the first half of 1971 investment actually fell, and in the key area of machine tools the fall of the last year has been over 40%. The way that lack of investment causes the problems of unemployment and inflation is very straightforward.

In the case of unemployment, if no money is invested in new factories, machinery, etc., then unemployment is increased in two ways. Firstly production in basic industries such as machine tools, steel, etc. is cut back and therefore men are thrown out of work in these industries. Secondly, a situation where there is no increase in investment means that there is no really significant growth in the number of goods produced in the economy. In other words in the economy as a whole the amount of production is not increasing. In a period when machines, new methods of working, time and motion study, etc. are cutting out men's jobs, and all large firms are negotiating productivity deals, this means that the number of jobs available even in those industries which do not produce directly for investment is falling. In the last few years productivity per head of workers has been rising by at least 3%. If expansion of the economy does not take place at 3% a year and the trade unions do not really fight unemployment, then the number of people unemployed will not only not decrease but it will actually increase.

The Labour Party and the TUC are therefore quite correct in seeing the need to expand the economy as the only way of solving the problem of unemployment. They are also right in seeing that the only way this can be done is by greatly increasing investment. Where they are totally unrealistic, however, is when they believe that this will be done by private employers.

Private employers only invest for profit; the case of UCS makes this only too obvious. The Minister of State for Trade and Industry, John Davies, was being honest for once when he said, "The pursuit of profit is the primary stimulus of industry". The reason why industry has refused to increase its investment over the last few years is because it is demanding as the price

of doing so that its profits are increased by government attacks on the working class. This was the reason for the Prices and Incomes policy, the July measures, the savage attack on the seamen, and *In Place of Strife*, introduced by the Labour government, and it is what lies behind the attack on the postal workers, the denationalisation proposals and the anti-union laws of the Tories. It is the employing class who not merely have not increased their investment, but who have been directly responsible for the sackings leading to unemployment. When Arnold Weinstock sacks 15,000 men and then is given a knighthood by a Labour government, then two things are revealed. Firstly, it reveals the way in which Wilson & Co. were totally cynical in their attacks on the working class and, unlike previous Labour leaders, did not even try very hard to disguise their intentions. Secondly, it shows that the Labour Party does not have an ounce of realism left in it. The reason why Wilson & Co. try to butter up men like Weinstock is that they believe they can get them to cooperate with Labour. This idea always was stupid. Weinstock and other employers naturally have no objection to Labour cooperating with GEC and other companies, but they are much too hard-headed to ever want to cooperate with Labour when it goes against the interests of their own companies. But the idea that they will cooperate is reduced to the level of stupidity when the Labour Party and the TUC propose a plan for the expansion of the economy which leaves control of investment in the hands of the employers. What the Labour Party and the TUC now believe is that the problem of unemployment can be solved by cooperation with the same employers whose refusal to invest caused the problem in the first place. The only way that the problem can be solved is to take control of investment out of the hands of the private employers. This means that what the TUC should be preparing now is not an impractical scheme for expanding the economy with the employers taking all the key decisions, but a plan for expanding the economy after the control of industry has been taken out of the hands of the employers by widespread nationalisations. It is unemployment which clearly reveals the totally

unrealistic view of the Labour Party that it is possible to reform capitalism.

THE TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP

During the last few years of the Labour government, it became increasingly obvious that the only section of the working class movement which was really fighting against the attacks on the living standards of the working class was the trade unions. While the Labour government attacked the Health service, cut the housing programme and increased the number of unemployed, it was the trade unions which really fought back. It was only the large wage increases which they gained which preserved the living standards of a large section of the working class. But there were of course big problems in this. First of all, sections of the working class outside the trade unions—for example the old, many women workers, etc.—did not share fully in these benefits. This is why it is completely correct for a union such as the T&G to campaign on behalf of Old Age Pensioners. Such activity needs to be extended. The living standard of the working class cannot be protected simply by trade union action, but if such action is extended to fields such as education, housing, pensions and so on, then a great deal more than is being done at the moment can be achieved. But the problem of how far this potential is to be realised—which is linked to quite a lot of things which happened under the last Labour government—lies in the type of policies which the trade unions are going to pursue.

Over the last few years wage increases have been high. But in too many instances, as in the case of UCS, the trade union leaders have been content to sign agreements which kept up wages but at the expense of sacrificing conditions or of granting redundancies. This system of productivity bargaining was bad enough at a time of relative economic prosperity, but it becomes absolutely fatal in the present period. Over the last few years trade union leaders both "right" and "left" have accepted the principle of men losing their jobs so that those still in work could maintain their standard of living. By doing this, these leaders have led many men to

believe that this practice is a part of responsible trade unionism. This is bad enough in itself, but it is now creating a situation where the men who lose their jobs have no hope of finding another one. This is only too obviously the case in a city like Glasgow, where there are roughly 24 men out of work for every vacancy which is available, but it is also true in all areas of the country. The existence of this pool of unemployed creates a situation where those who are in work are scared to use their trade union power. Thus once again we can see how unemployment is an acid test. The short-sighted policies of productivity bargaining not only have helped to create the present problem of unemployment, but in doing so, they have now even failed in their original aim of keeping up wages. The greatest single threat to strong trade unions, which are the most basic tools in keeping up the working class's living standards, is now the very unemployment which productivity deals helped to create.

When it comes to dealing with the problem of the already unemployed, the inadequacies of trade union policy are also shown. It is a very important step forward that sections of the trade unions, such as districts of the T&G, are now refusing to sign productivity deals which involved unemployment, but in quite a few cases this is shutting the stable door after the horse has gone. A huge problem for the trade unions is how to organise the presently unemployed. This is a key question and one which at the same time shows all the short-sightedness of the trade union bureaucrat.

There are many reasons why trade union administrators prefer not to have to organise the unemployed. At the crudest possible level, there is the point that the unemployed do not pay as much dues as do members in employment. Also the unemployed do not fit into the nice tidy categories which many fulltime union organisers prefer to deal with. They are not all in one place, they are not easy to deal with, their problems are frequently of a very individual nature, which means he cannot fit them into his slot-like mind. Most important of all, however, the unemployed are an explosive section of the population. Their problems are so acute that in many cases it is obvious that appeals to "reason", "common sense", "moderation", etc. will not be accepted. After all, the belief that basically our present society is all right might seem true if you are doing a £25-a-week job in a factory, but it seems much less reasonable if you are having to live on £8 a week on the dole. Because the problems of the unemployed are so acute, and the only solutions to their problems are so drastic, the trade union bureaucrat, who more than anything wishes to have a quiet life, prefers to avoid the question of organising the unemployed. This means that unions do not set up special sections to deal with the organisation of their unemployed members, they do not allocate money and fulltime organisers to deal with the unemployed, and on organisations such as Trades Councils they normally refuse to allow the unemployed to be represented. This may suit the trade union bureaucrat but unfortunately it is fatal for the working class. Once again, unemployment becomes an acid test. We can judge the extent to which a union's policies are decided by the interests of the working class and how much by the desires of the trade union administrators, by seeing to what extent that union seriously undertakes the task of organising the unemployed.

THE HISTORICAL USE OF THE WEAPON OF UNEMPLOYMENT

In the worst days of the 1930s, over 2½ million men were unemployed. Nearly one man in five was without a job. In some towns over 50% of the labour force was on the dole. These were the darkest days for the working class this century. Not merely those out of work suffered. For those in work things were little better. The trade union organisation of the working class was smashed. Trade union membership had fallen by a half in only twelve years. If you look at a union like the Engineers', you can see that their membership, which had stood at 407,000 in 1920, had fallen to a mere 135,000 in 1933. This decline of working class organisation was shown in a 10% fall in wage rates which occurred between 1924 and 1934. In Europe the situation was still worse. In Germany in particular, the refusal of the German trade unions to organise the unemployed workers resulted in a situation where, instead of the working class uniting against Hitler, he had been allowed, with the backing of the huge German industrialists, to come to power. Once in government, the first people he acted against were not the Jews, but the trade unions. The smashing of the organisations of the German working class had been the reason why industrialists had backed him, and he had to carry out the task they had decided for him. It is the persecution of the Jews we are taught about school, but it was the smashing of the trade unions which was his real aim.



mination grew up in the working class that nothing like it would ever happen again. The power of this determination was recognised even by right-wing Tories. For example, Quintin Hogg, now Lord Hailsham, said in the House of Commons in 1943, "If you do not give the people reform they are going to give you revolution." Since 1945, every single government, whether Tory or Labour, has declared that it will maintain full employment. Yet when the working class organisations formed their determination never to return to the situation of the 1930s, they failed to analyse what were the lessons of that period. The trade unions failed to analyse that it was the refusal of the German trade unions to organise the unemployed which created the conditions for the Fascists to do it themselves. They failed to realise that it was only the refusal of the trade unions to launch a vigorous fight against unemployment which allowed Mosley's brownshirts to spread with some degree of success their racist, anti-semitic and anti-trade union propaganda. Most important of all, they did not analyse that it was capitalism that was responsible for unemployment. By not campaigning on this basis, and by not pointing out this lesson to the working class, they left the field open for alternative explanations of unemployment—the most dangerous of which is of course that it is high wages which create unemployment.

This explanation of unemployment in terms of high wages is one which the government is trying to spread with every means at its disposal. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Barber, said in the House of Commons on April 21st that, "I am in no doubt whatever that the major cause of the increase in unemployment is the absurdly high level of many of the pay settlements which we have experienced since the autumn of 1969." This line of argument is taken up and thundered out millions of times every day in every single major newspaper. In reality, of course, this argument does not have a vestige of truth in it. In fact, if we look at things historically, unemployment normally accompanies low wages. The unemployment of the 1930s followed a whole period of years when wages had been falling. The reason why high unemployment and low wages always go together is, of course, that high unemployment is designed to destroy the power of the trade unions to win big wage increases. This is quite clearly understood by the representatives of the employing class, and in fact the weapon of using unemployment to hold down wage increases is an old one. The businessman's journal *The Economist*, for example, quite openly said that, "We must rely on unemployment to destroy the militancy of the trade unions." To take just one other example, the economist Professor Paish argues in his pamphlet *Rise and Fall of Incomes Policy* that "Incomes must never again be allowed to rise as fast relatively to output as in the last few years; and this, in turn, means that the margin of unused productive resources and the level of unemployment must be higher than it has been since the war."

Barber's and the capitalists' arguments are in fact so stupid that it is easy to refute them even

The number of people in work is of course enormously affected by the number of goods which can be sold. The amount that can be sold is in turn decided by how much money is available to buy them, and one of the most important things in deciding that is how many people are getting paid wages and how high those wages are. By cutting wages and increasing unemployment, so raising the number of people not receiving a pay packet at all, you are actually decreasing the amount of money available to buy goods. This will cut the sale of goods and therefore increase unemployment. In fact, to increase the number of goods that can be sold, and therefore cut unemployment, it is necessary to greatly increase wages. In any sensible economic system that is what would be done to increase employment. Unfortunately ours is not a sensible economic system.

The stupidity of Barber's arguments are understood by the TUC. They quite rightly say that the way to cure unemployment is to expand the economy and not to actually cut the amount that can be sold by holding back wages. The TUC has argued that the way to cure the problem of unemployment is to expand the economy. A rate of growth of the economy of 5% would cut unemployment by 300,000 in a year and would provide an extra £1,000-million-worth of goods, houses, services, schools, etc. Yet despite all this—the stupidity of the government's arguments, the fact that the solution to the economic problem in terms of growth is so obvious; despite the fact that the entire working class movement would fight with all its enormous strength against any return to a 1930s type situation, the TUC remains paralysed. It fails to see that the problem of the 1930s was caused by capitalism, and that to avoid that type of situation capitalism needs to be destroyed and not tinkered with. You cannot skin a live tiger inch by inch. Capitalism may have changed its face, new men may be running it, it may have been forced to make a few concessions in the form of welfare services, but it still remains capitalism, and when the great god of profit demands a sacrifice in the shape of hundreds of thousands of unemployed, then as long as capitalism remains, its demands will be carried out by any government, whether it be Tory or Labour. By failing to campaign on that basis and instead trying to persuade the same men who create the problem of unemployment to solve it, the TUC shows its ideas to be completely unrealistic and utopian. As long as it is prepared to try to solve the problem of unemployment within capitalism, then the government can always point out that in order to expand the economy, employers demand greater profits, and that means holding back wages. Also by trying to solve the problems of unemployment within capitalism, it means that the TUC will not resolutely resist the government's productivity and restructuring schemes which are what helps to create the problem of unemployment in the first place.

Because in the past the Labour Party has been responsible for not fighting unemployment, or has actively created it, and because for their own reasons the trade unions have not wanted to organise the unemployed, the task of building organisations of unemployed workers

fallen on political organisations and on rank and file action. Unfortunately this situation still exists today. The votes of the UCS men to occupy the yards if necessary sets the pace, but throughout the country many similar fights, even if on a smaller scale, need to be fought. Many people are doing a tremendous job in Claimants' Unions and similar organisations, but this work cannot be carried through successfully unless the official sections of the trade union movement can be forced into action. Certain actions in situations like UCS can be taken at once. These include bans on overtime, bans on productivity deals, worksharing. But these can only be short-term measures. In the long run, only measures of nationalisation and workers' control will safeguard the situation for workers on the Upper Clyde and others in similar situations. These can only be gained by massive trade union action, which necessarily means forcing the backing of the official sections of the trade union movement, and through political action. Here little is to be expected from the Labour Party. What is needed is for the trade unions themselves to draw up a scheme for a planned expanding economy. This is turn can only be done once control of investment is taken out of the hands of the capitalists and is placed under workers' control.

As for the work of organising the unemployed, because of the refusal of the official trade unions to do it, organisations like Claimants Unions are doing most of the work. It is vital that this work is continued, but these organisations must not be seen as perfect just because they are somehow "outside" the control of the union officials. On the contrary, work in these organisations is not a substitute for work inside the official movement; it is a way of ensuring that the maximum possible leverage is exerted inside the official movement. Every trade unionist can see the force of arguments for the unemployed to be represented on Trades Councils and for the trade unions to allocate funds and manpower to organising the unemployed. These facts are so obvious that militants will wage big fights against trade union officials to get these things accepted. Unemployment is an issue in which the inadequacy of reformist trade union leaders can be seen not at some high level of abstraction but on a matter of day-to-day struggle which is at the same time a matter of life and death for trade unionism. In the 1930s, the Communist Party undertook the task of building movements of the unemployed. Now it is too enmeshed in parliamentarianism and reformist trade unionism to do so. The small revolutionary groups can now make an impact in a struggle which is central to the needs of the working class. As Trotsky said, living in a revolutionary epoch does not mean that you can ignore the day-to-day struggle of the working class; what it does mean, however, is that even the day-to-day struggle can be carried on within a revolutionary perspective. In the case of unemployment, we can go further; what the whole experience of the period since 1945 shows is that only those with a revolutionary perspective can carry on successfully the day-to-day work of the struggle against unemployment.

The opportunities are there if only revolutionaries can grasp them.

LETTERS ON THE QUESTION OF LUKACS

Alan Jones' article on Lukacs in *The Red Mole* of June 15th, despite a number of generally correct criticisms, does not furnish an adequate assessment of Lukacs' work on a number of key questions. Thus Alan Jones writes of Lukacs:

"His book on Lenin is thought-provoking, and its concept of the 'actuality of the revolution' is a key one, but unfortunately the book is marred by being based on a series of statements which are straightforward lies—such as for example that Lenin was initially alone in opposing from the first the First World War from a revolutionary defeatist position."

Lukacs' *Lenin* deserves better than the book reviewer's feeble accolade that it is "thought provoking". The book is in fact far and away the best account we have of Leninism as a theory. (The Afterword written by Lukacs over four decades later is, of course, a quite different matter). The concept of the "actuality of the revolution", though given intriguing expression in this work, is perhaps its most problematic single thesis since it does not concentrate the attention of revolutionaries on the necessarily conjunctural nature of any revolutionary situation and allows Lukacs to gloss over the debates around the thesis of the permanent revolution. The statement that the book contains "a series of ... straightforward lies" is wildly inaccurate and unsubstantiated. The specific example given of such a lie shows this. Lukacs argues that Lenin's insistence that the imperialist war should be turned into a civil war was an original and outstanding contribution, both theoretically and politically, to the revolutionary movement. He is quite correct to do so. Consider the following account of the Zimmerwald Conference to be found in Isaac Deutscher's *The Prophet Armed*:

"A minority, grouped around Lenin, who for the first time now came forward as the protagonist of an international and not merely of a Russian trend in socialism, urged the conference to adopt a defeatist attitude towards all warring governments, to call upon the peoples to 'turn the imperialist war into a civil war', and to proclaim the need of a new International. This the majority refused to do. On most points Trotsky was in agreement with Lenin, although he would not endorse Lenin's revolutionary defeatism. (It was, he wrote, in the interest of socialism that the war should end 'without victors or vanquished'.) He held, moreover, that these differences should be transcended so as to enable the conference unanimously to condemn the war. In this everybody concurred, and Trotsky was asked to draw up a statement of principles which was soon to become famous as the Zimmerwald Manifesto ... Rousing though it was, the Manifesto was vague in its conclusions. It did not call for civil war to put an end to the imperialist war; and it did not envisage a new International. The Conference adopted the Manifesto unanimously, but Lenin's group placed their reservations on record." (*The Prophet Armed*, p. 226).

Of course, a great deal more could be written about the precise positions adopted by Lenin and other leading revolutionaries on the war but none of it would justify describing Lukacs', or Deutscher's, account as a "straightforward lie".

There are other issues raised by Lukacs' work that Alan Jones treats rather too summarily. Lukacs did indeed furnish theoretical cover to the Stalinist version of "socialist realism" but it also worth pointing out that the only book he ever devoted to a Soviet author was his recent Solzhenitsyn where he argues that the latter was the supreme living exponent of "socialist realism". In itself, of course, this judgement on Solzhenitsyn does not make the significant political reservations it is necessary to make about Solzhenitsyn, but it cannot simply be written off as "intellectual decay and compromise with Stalin" as can much of Lukacs' earlier literary criticism. Alan Jones attacks those who "glorify his (Lukacs') undoubted intellectual achievements while ignoring his political activities". This is quite correct but Alan Jones does not refer to any of Lukacs' political activities before the mid-twenties. Prior to this time Lukacs had been one of the founders of the Hungarian Communist Party, a Commissar in the Hungarian Commune, and later, in exile, one of the most gifted exponents of the ultra-left of the German Communist Party. If our assessment of Lukacs does not cover these episodes then we miss much that is most interesting in Lukacs' political development, not because Lukacs was at all correct in the positions he



adopted during this period, but because he did pose a number of vital questions at this time which were later to be ignored, not least by Lukacs himself: his text "The Role of Morality in Communist Production", for example, speaks of the danger of bureaucratic degeneration of the revolutionary state and envisages the necessity of a political revolution to check this. One should certainly beware of constructing a myth that Lukacs' political activities were blameless until his endorsement of "socialism in one country" since his theses on political questions in this period were often extremely incorrect: e.g. his position on the role of the Communist Party during the Hungarian Commune or his later theses on Parliamentarism. But just as Alan Jones justly indicates that in the field of philosophy Lukacs had an ability to pose correctly questions that he did not answer correctly, so this is also the case with some of his earlier political writings. One reason why it is important to acknowledge this is that it strengthens Alan Jones' own criticism of what later became of Lukacs. His early writings suggest that he could have made a major contribution to the revolutionary movement on the political as well as philosophical level. The fact that Lukacs became a leading luminary in Stalin's peace campaigns and abandoned revolutionary politics then becomes an even greater indictment of his own pact with Stalinism. The diverse deviations espoused by Lukacs in the course of his long life form a complex unity which must be understood as a whole, relating his political to his theoretical work without false short cuts.

The theme of Alan Jones' article was that Marxism should always know how to extract any critical or scientific element in bourgeois thought and restructure it in the context of revolutionary Marxist theory. We must also learn to perform this operation on the works of those writers whose thought was distorted or stunted by Stalinism but still has some genuine Marxist content.

Robin Blackburn

ALAN JONES REPLIES:

Robin Blackburn has rather the advantage in that he can pick out one or two points, whereas I had to attempt to give a rough sketch of Lukacs' work in 1,500 words. This fairly obviously cannot be done to everyone's satisfaction. Also, given the limited space available, I cannot take up, much as I would like to, in order to strengthen my case, the minor points concerning Solzhenitsyn, Lukacs' early political activities and the "actuality of the revolution".

The main point Cde. Blackburn feels is important concerns Lukacs' book *Lenin*. If we examine the book *Lenin* clearly, we will find that it has a whole series of curiosities both in what is emphasised and, more importantly, in what is left out. Of course any writer must choose and select his material, but when selection and omission forms a coherent pattern, then we begin to think that something more than mere compression for the purposes of publication is involved. Furthermore, when the sins of omission and commission are seen to assume exactly the same form as those of the edicts of those who had an interest in creating a false "orthodoxy", then we can begin to do rather more than merely surmise at what is going on. A good example of this is Lenin and Trotsky's position on the First World War.

During the First World War there was not simply, as Stalinist mythology would have us believe, a split between the chauvinists and those who sought a revolutionary end to the war. Actually among the revolutionary internationalists there were

at least two main currents: one consisting primarily of Lenin and Zinoviev and the other of Trotsky and, usually, Bukharin. These came into violent conflict at, for example Zimmerwald, because of Trotsky's totally incorrect view on the revolutionary party. Trotsky's basic view at that time was that under the pressure of events the Mensheviks and others would be forced to act in a revolutionary way and therefore when it came to drafting the Zimmerwald Manifesto, as Deutscher relates, what he tried to do, in line with his basic method of this period, was to try to find a formula to which all could agree in the hope that when it came to the crunch a revolutionary interpretation would be put on it. Trotsky himself admitted this later when he wrote concerning the war that "Lenin could never endure any half statements or unclearness. He was right in dealing double and triple blows when a political thought seemed to him incomplete or equivocal." Given this position of Lenin's, it was of course inevitable that he should clash fiercely and frequently with Trotsky. However as Trotsky also comments, there is a sharp rupture between such polemical blows and the appraisal of the main aspects of a political line. As regards that political line, what Trotsky polemicised against was the position initially adopted by Lenin, although later quietly modified, which although superbly revolutionary, was theoretically incorrect.

When Lenin, in the initial Bolshevik manifesto on the war, raised the slogan of Russia's defeat being the "lesser evil", even his supporters were forced to point out that this position was ambiguous. Trotsky aptly raised the question: "Lesser evil than what?" Did it mean that the defeat of Russia was a lesser evil than the defeat of Germany? Lenin, of course never meant that for one instance, but his formulation was clearly ambiguous, especially when coupled with views such as "Czarism is a hundred times worse than Kaiserism." (Lenin to Shlyapnikov, Oct. 17 1914) Trotsky agreed with the concept of the "lesser evil" only provided it was understood provided that it was made clear that the only correct and scientific concept of it stated that the "lesser evil" was defeated rather than the cessation of revolutionary struggle. This position was spelt out in October 1914 and is what Deutscher refers to when he writes about Trotsky's references that the war should end without "victors or vanquished". This was not a pacifist aspiration, but a rejoinder to Lenin's theoretically incorrect position. Trotsky never budged from this position. As late as 1938 in emphasising the necessity for revolutionary defeatism in World War 2, he wrote that: "Revolutionary defeatism signifies only that in its class struggle the proletarian party does not stop at 'patriotic' considerations, since defeat of its own imperialist government, brought about, or hastened by the revolutionary movement of the masses is an incomparably lesser evil than victory gained at the price of national unity, that is, the political prostration of the proletariat." It is possible that Cde Blackburn will conclude from this that all that has been shown is that Trotsky maintained his incorrect view of what revolutionary defeatism right up to his death. This seems rather implausible considering that the Fourth International was the only Marxist organisation which did not succumb to chauvinism during the Second World War, but it is possible. Let us examine Lenin's views on the subject as we know that he hated all half-clear and unclear statements. Lenin wrote: "From the beginning of the imperialist war, (Trotsky) took a clear-cut internationalist position." (cf. *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 3).

It is necessary to reiterate these facts today, but in 1924, when Lukacs wrote his book, it was all common knowledge despite the fact that Stalin's faction had started its campaign of distortions and systematic falsifications. To believe that Lukacs, an expert on Lenin, a man with a personal knowledge of many of the leading personalities of the Comintern, who lived in a period when the events he was describing were fresh in the mind, and who had easy access to all the material on the subject, was not aware of these disputes is to strain our credulity beyond belief. This becomes clearer when we examine the other aberrations contained in the book. We have space to discuss only one of these.

Lukacs entitles Chapter 2 of his book, "The Proletariat as the Leading Class." Here he correctly emphasises that the basis of Lenin's struggle against opportunism inside the Russian party was his understanding that the proletariat and not the bourgeoisie would lead the coming Russian Revolution. However it is somewhat curious, to put it mildly, no discussion in this Chapter of the fact that until 1917 Lenin believed that the Russian Revolution would be a bourgeois revolution. Thus Lenin had written that the revolution "...will not weaken, but will strengthen the domination of the bourgeoisie" or that because "the proletariat constitutes a minority" therefore "anyone who attempts to achieve socialism by any other route without passing through the stage of political democracy will inevitably arrive at the most absurd and reactionary conclusions both economic and political". The reason why Lukacs cannot deal with this not unimportant position of Lenin's prior to April 1917, is of course because to have done so would have meant dealing with Trotsky who during the entire 12-year polemic between himself and Lenin, had been correct (and Lenin wrong!) regarding the role and objectives of the working class in the Russian Revolution. However by 1924 to have dealt with this debate in a scientific way would have meant breaking with the growing Soviet "orthodoxy". This Lukacs, as we discussed in the first article, was totally unprepared to do. Again this argument about the role of the proletariat was not something which can have "escaped" Lukacs' attention. Just as in the case of the attitude to war, Lukacs was trimming his ideas to fit "orthodoxy", although at this time he was not grovelling before it in the way he was to do later.

What we in fact find in *Lenin*, and there are other examples than those mentioned, is a systematic

omission and distortion. If Cde Blackburn is very concerned with terminology, perhaps "systematic distortion" will offend fewer sensitivities and he can have such a verbal victory if he likes, but I think "straightforward lie" will fit the bill nicely. Lukacs' *Lenin* remains a great work but a fundamentally flawed one.

Perhaps, however, most important in Cde Blackburn's letter is the method he adopts in dealing with intellectuals like Lukacs. It is interesting to contrast it to that of Lenin (as outlined for example in *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p.325, regarding defeatism and the section of *What is to be Done* on intellectuals).

Lenin adopted a completely different attitude to ordinary workers who held false or even reactionary political ideas than he did to intellectuals, no matter how brilliant, who share the same ideas. When the workers and peasants of Russia were for defeatism, this was because of a confused fear of the Kaiser, the overpowering influence of the Russian Orthodox church, the cult of the Czar, etc. Their position of defeatism was totally different to that of an intellectual who had ample opportunity to weigh up the arguments, facts, etc. on all sides and to come to a well-worked-out conclusion. For the worker or peasant Lenin would never have urged anything other than endless persuasion, illustration of events, arguments, etc. For the intellectual however the situation was totally different. Here the only answer was rigorous intellectual war. Lenin's greatest contribution to the theory of revolutionary organisation was his insistence on fierce polemic and struggle against even the slightest of wrong formulations, let alone completely wrong positions. The reason for this was not accidental, but was completely tied up with Lenin's conception of theory as something of vital and immediate practical importance, and not something to be played around with in the manner of an intellectual dilettante.

When it comes to the question of Stalinism, the position is exactly the same as that of the attitudes during the First World War. For a worker, the acceptance of the positions of Stalinism may have been due to instinctive hatred of capitalism, realisation of the necessity for toughness in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, simple confusion or any one of a hundred other things. None of these things makes Stalinism one iota less counter-revolutionary as an ideology, but it does mean that the method we use for dealing with it is that of patient argument and persuasion. For the intellectual the situation is totally different. Just as Lenin could later, at ease, praise Plekhanov's philosophical writings as the finest on the subject but did not hesitate for one moment in attacking him remorselessly for his social-patriotism, so at ease we may select those sections of Lukacs which are valuable, but that in no way alters our central political assessment of Lukacs. By 1924 Lukacs was, and remained, an enemy of the working class. It is as such he must be treated. The fact that he was also one of the most brilliant men ever to be associated with the communist movement must make us more harsh with him, not less.

Dear Comrades,

We are working on a long overdue project—compiling a selection of revolutionary songs for publication. We are anxious to get material from any country depicting workers' struggle or movements for national liberation, together with background information or anecdotes to illustrate the political points.

If anyone wants to help us in this they should send material (words/score/information/recordings, etc.) to the address below. We need to have a wide range of material to be able to make a good selection, and at the moment we are very short of songs from France, Germany, Spain. Translations would also be useful.

Venceremos,
Graham Jones,
19 Lovatt Street,
Stafford.



Lancaster: student-worker solidarity

On Monday 15th June, the cleaners at Lancaster University began a series of token strikes for one hour daily, picketing the administration building and leading demonstrations of students around the university. Previously a very passive, disorganised section of university workers, the cleaners have taken such a militant stand after constant procrastination by the administration in the consideration of their demand for free adequate transport. The university has tried to maintain a reputation of being a liberal institution and a model employer; however, the political work of the Socialist Woman Group has shown the relations between the university and its employees are extremely bad. Not only the day cleaners but also the male night cleaners, the catering staff and the porters have recently expressed discontent over their conditions. This dissatisfaction found expression in the university newsletter *Scan*, in the local press and, particularly in the cases of catering staff and day cleaners, through the Lancaster Socialist Woman Group.

In December 1970, the Socialist Woman Group, compiling information for a pamphlet on working women in Lancaster, began to talk to the cleaners about their working conditions. From these talks it soon became apparent that the cleaners held a common dissatisfaction with the transport arrangements. The university bus service is provided purely for the benefit of the students, and while the university workers are allowed to use it, this means that there is no transport during the vacations. Their complaint is a justifiable one in view of the fact that the university was built three miles from the town itself, on the top of a steep hill. Consequently, the staff are forced to use the Burnley-Lancaster bus service, which is invariably full because of day-trippers to and from Morecambe. Apart from these inconveniences, the staff were left to walk the final half-mile up the hill. However, underlying all these questions was that of the cost. The cleaners have to pay between 10%-20% of their wages in fares, all the year round, with fares being higher during vacations on the Burnley-Lancaster service.

LUNCH HOUR MEETINGS

The Socialist Woman Group arranged meetings of the day cleaners once a week during their lunch hours. Thus the cleaners not only formed a very good relationship with the Group and through them with the student body, but—and more important—their self-confidence began to grow and they started to realise the benefits of uniting together to put forward their complaints. As has already been stated, the cleaners were previously very disorganised. Each cleaner is isolated in a particular college building, her only contact being with the supervisors who can therefore interpret the rules totally arbitrarily. The cleaners were in fact unsure even about the meagre rights afforded to them in the terms of their employment. For example, they were told by their supervisors that they were obliged to work any weekends if required; this was not in the terms of the contract. There was similarly confusion about tea-breaks. Once the cleaners were able to meet and discuss their working conditions, a number of grievances, headed by the transport problem, were listed. In this way the cleaners realised that it was not simply their individual work situation, but the whole system of relationships, which was at fault.

Further meetings, on occasions with militant trade unionists such as May Hobbs and Audrey Wise, led the cleaners to draw the further conclusion that it is necessary in any struggle against the management to gain the support of the trade union movement. Consequently Mrs. Lancaster was elected shop steward and 22 out of about 30 cleaners joined the T&G, which had already organised the night cleaners.

"THE LIBERAL UNIVERSITY"

For five years the university has refused to recognise the union's right to act in negotiations. The university admin. have, however, set up their own particular system of negotiation in order to bypass the union. This the Joint Consultative Committee, which is officially said "to promote the free flow of ideas between management and employees ..." In fact it quite blatantly intimidates its employees, as can be seen in the interview below, and has only advisory status. At this meeting the Joint C.C. apparently arrived at a "decision"—although no vote was taken—against the provision of free transport for the cleaners. This was in March, and by mid-June, with the approach of the vacation and transport no nearer to being provided, the cleaners, backed by an emergency meeting of their T&G branch, decided on a series of token strikes and pickets. Even this small action had immediate results: the university verbally recognised the union as the sole negotiating body for university workers.

Lancaster Socialist Woman Group has supported the

the exploitative nature of the university, which, although it epitomises the bourgeois ideal of a "liberal" institution in its relationship with the students, has no scruples in exploiting the problems caused by the extremely high unemployment in this area. Thus the university workers are in a very vulnerable position, and support from the student body was absolutely essential to prevent victimisation of these 22 isolated cleaners. On Wednesday 17th June, after a great deal of propagandising, the Socialist Woman Group proposed in a Federation (Students Union) meeting that there should be an occupation of the university administration building until the cleaners' demands had been satisfactorily met. The university was effectively brought to a standstill and although the administration had previously refused to meet the cleaners until they stopped industrial action, by the end of the first day of occupation they were willing to do so—provided of course that the students withdrew their solidarity action. Obviously both of these expedients—withdrawing student support or industrial action—would weaken the workers' bargaining position. Therefore the mass meeting of the occupation, after hearing an address by May Hobbs of the London night cleaners, who called for their continued support, voted to remain in occupation, in spite of the threats of injunctions and victimisation of individual students, until the cleaners were satisfied in their demand. The militancy of the cleaners and the unqualified solidarity action by the students combined to create a force which could not be broken by the repressive and underhand actions of the university authorities—such as the naming of individual students in a court injunction and the calling of a "union" meeting by the management to which non-union cleaners and supervisors were specifically invited. Indeed, within a few days we were able to expose that the liberal veneer was simply a cover over the university's repressive core. We were also able to expose the role of the "Left" bureaucrats of the NUS who hastened to send up a representative to give "unqualified support"—the hollowness of which was revealed when an appeal for legal aid, the following night, was in practice rejected and the students were told that they were "on their own".

However, the cleaners' morale was further boosted by the message of solidarity brought up to Lancaster by May Hobbs. The following interview with Mrs. Lancaster, shop steward of the day cleaners, and May Hobbs was conducted on Thursday, the fourth day of the token strikes and the second day of the solidarity student action:

C. Young: The administration have repeatedly said that your demands are not clear; is there any confusion about them?

A. Lancaster: No, it's quite simple; we want a bus to run between Garstang and the university and another between Morecambe and the university.

—And would this be just for the 22 cleaners who had fought for it?

A.L.: Well, it's us who's fighting for it, but if they want to carry on working and then to come in with us after—well, that's up to them. We're not going to pressurise them.

—Do you think your claim is justified and how confident are you that you will win the fight?

A.L.: I know it's justifiable. I have to pay 32% every day, that's 20% of my wages. The Burnley-Lancaster bus that we have to use in the vacation is very unreliable—a few times we've had to wait from 3.30 until 5 o'clock for a bus that isn't full. Sometimes the girls who live in Galgate (about three miles away) have to walk. We're all quite confident that we'll get somewhere—you have to be. I think we're so confident because it's been made into a big issue now, it's not just us and the management. We need the publicity. The students are getting most of the publicity but they're doing it on behalf of us.

—What do you think of the students' support?

A.L.: I just can't say enough for them; we wouldn't have got this far without them. Some people say that students don't really care about workers and that they're only messing about, but they've really been good for us. We would have tried to stick it out without them, but we would have been forced to back down in the end.

May Hobbs: It was the same in London, with the students and the Socialist Woman groups. They put such a lot of work into it.

A.L.: Yes, they've been running about here for us, arranging meetings, writing leaflets and letters to the paper—we appreciate it very much.

—What do you think about the way you've been treated by the management?

didn't want any trouble but their pig-headedness forced us into it. Take the mini-bus, at the beginning of this fight we would have been satisfied with a mini-bus that ran up and down the university hill during the vacations—we were willing even to pay some of the cost. But they said it couldn't be done—it's funny but the first day of our token strike a free mini-bus was running up and down that hill. Now we've got more confidence in ourselves and we can stick together, we're determined to demand the best. Before we started having meetings we used to be scared, just as some of the other university workers are now. When we complained to the Joint Consultative Committee about the conditions, one of them asked why we worked here. One of us, although we know now it was stupid, said it was because there were no other jobs. So the management officials said that if we didn't like the conditions we could leave. I said, "What, all of us?" and he said, "Yes, all of you." We're more confident now and we realise that it's better not to make complaints on your own. Like, a couple of weeks ago, a girl who had to clean out a college all on her own went to see the administration, and she was again told if she didn't like it she could leave. Now if only she had come to me we could have done it through the union ...

—Have the union officials been helpful in this campaign? The administration claim that they have in fact confused your demands.

A.L.: Well, at first they were a dead loss, we were getting nowhere, but lately they have been getting better.

M.H.: If you push them, like you've done they have to, don't they?

A.L.: Yes—well, we've been pushing Mr. Taylorson all the time. At the beginning they messed things up because two officials, him and Mr. Page, put in two different demands—although we were quite clear what we wanted. Of course the management wouldn't listen to us—they said that a letter had to come from an official. Mr. Page eventually withdrew completely leaving only Mr. Taylorson who kept stalling for a while, constantly asking us what we exactly wanted, although we'd made it quite clear we wanted the two free buses. I think he was hoping that if he asked long enough we'd back down. Anyway in future we're going into meetings with him. We're all going in tomorrow. We used to sit quiet in meetings but we've been pushed about so long that we're not frightened.

M.H.: Yes, you've really got to make the unions for you. It's no good waiting for the officials to move while you just sit there paying in your dues.

A.L.: Well, none of us have been involved in this sort of thing before—I just used to send in my money each week and didn't know what I was paying for.

The following day after this interview, with the strike and occupation still solid despite the intimidation by the authorities of the students and an attempt to manipulate a union meeting, the administration was forced to concede. Although the cleaners did not get their exact demand, i.e. the two free buses, they agreed to what they considered to be an equivalent: i.e. a travel allowance of 120p a week. Under a written guarantee that this would form the basis of further negotiations between the cleaners and a management committee, and a written guarantee against victimisation, both the token strikes and the occupation were ended.

Although the university authorities have, in fact, managed to avoid agreeing to the principle that they should provide transport for their staff (an admission which would have led to their being flooded by demands for transport from other sections of university workers), one can still consider this campaign a victory for the cleaners and students. Not only have the cleaners gained self-confidence in the face of the administration but they have also learnt that by rank-and-file organisation they can make the union and union officials work for them. This has encouraged other sections of university workers who have shown solidarity and are learning of the benefits of rank-and-file organisation.

The students, by forcing the Vice-Chancellor's hand, making him react violently in a totally unconstitutional manner (over-riding the decisions of various committees and officials) have exposed the true nature of the university structure, alarming even the most conservative academics on the staff. Finally, by their solidarity, students and workers have managed to score a victory and have been seen to score that victory in a dramatic way against one of the institutions of bourgeois society.



Venezuela and the Socialist Revolution

BY TERESA HAYTER

"They say that Venezuela is a rich country, they fill our mouths with the mythology of riches and progress. In reality we are a country of the poor, the wretched and the sick. Exploitation and plunder have gone to inconceivable lengths. Venezuela is in the hands of the big foreign monopolies and of a few families who act as stooges for these monopolies. Our entire economy ensures the grave disability of dependence and every day our people suffer more from economic and social extortion and violence.

"Every day the poor get poorer. Every day the monopolies get richer. Where does the sweat of your forehead go? Who are you working for? Why are you so poor in such a rich country? Why do you poor out your blood and your life, and those of your children and grandchildren? Why is there no education and culture for you? Why are there no more hospitals, no sanatoriums, no convalescent homes? Why will your old age be a time of insecurity and waiting for death? Why is your youth a time of bitterness and frustration? Why do you not have the right to be a Man, free, self-respecting, full of opportunity?

"Because we are a country in the grip of the big monopolies and of a small group of multi-millionaires. Because we are a country which is dependent, humiliated, insulted and plundered."

Editorial Letter to the Reader, *Vea Y Lea*, April 20, 1971.

By Latin American standards, and to the exclusive benefit of the exploiting classes, Venezuela is a rich country. Like most other Latin American countries, it is heavily dependent on one product, and oil accounts for 93% of its exports. But world oil prices, unlike the prices of other commodities, have been steadily rising in recent years. As a result the economic crisis in Venezuela has been less acute than that in other Latin American countries. Nevertheless the growth rate has slowed down and the rate of capital formation is almost stagnant. Between 1968 and 1969 the level of exports actually declined by 0.2% and capital outflows have been higher than from most other Latin American countries put together.

The oil industry employs less than 1% of the active population. But oil revenues have produced a relatively large parasitic middle class and bureaucracy and swollen service industries. Today in Caracas all the visible signs of the American way of life are present but the superficial characteristics of prosperity hid a tremendous poverty. 300,000 people live miserable existences in packing cases and tin boxes on the hills that surround the capital. Many of these so-called "marginal" people are immigrants from

majority of the population lives in the cities. The origins of this immigration are not to be found in urban industrialisation but in the failure to conduct agrarian reform and to invest in farming. Indeed, many of the people attracted to the cities still maintain a semi-peasant existence whilst increasing the great numbers of unemployed. Change has brought about a social disintegration such that as many as 51% of children born in Venezuela today have no knowledge of their father.

The present struggle against the Christian Democratic regime of Caldera is a continuation of the movement that overthrew the dictator Perez Jimenez in 1958. This popular revolt resulted in the reign of Betancourt and his *Accion Democratica* party. It was during Betancourt's rule that the guerrilla struggle began as the reactionary nature of his government became clearer. Under the influence of the Cuban Revolution pressure for change grew and demonstrations were met with savage repression. *Accion Democratica* split and the MIR (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*) was formed and set up guerrilla fronts in the East of Venezuela. The Communist Party had supported Betancourt but eventually it too developed a position—albeit temporarily—of support for the armed struggle. By 1962 guerrilla warfare was under way. Remnants of the Patriotic Junta that had overthrown Jimenez, Douglas Bravo and Luben Petkoff of the Communist Party, and elements of the MIR engaged in a struggle which was soon to lead to the formation of the FALN (*Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion*) and the FLN (*Frente de Liberacion Nacional*). At this stage the Communist Party was in favour of the armed struggle, although its support can be explained partly by its fear of being outstripped by the MIR in this respect. Later it was to adopt a position of complete hostility. At the OLAS conference in 1967 it was publicly condemned by Castro for its treachery.

In 1965 Douglas Bravo broke with the Party. In 1966 Fabricio Ojeda, largely responsible for the Patriotic Junta that had overthrown Jimenez and chief of the FLN, was assassinated whilst on a visit to Caracas to discuss for a last time with the Communist Party. Douglas Bravo took over the leadership of both organisations. By 1967 the Communist Party's degeneration was completed, symbolised by the telegram of condolences they sent to the family of Dr. Julio Ibarren Borges, who was kidnapped and executed in reprisal for revolutionary leaders murdered by the government. The guerrilla fronts have continued their activities in the face of active opposition from the PCV, who traded the release of their members from prison and freedom to participate in elections as the price of their defection. They claimed that in 1962 a revolutionary situation had existed; but in the ensuing years it is difficult to see what has changed beyond increased repression and the PCV defection.

Inevitably, the process of decay has continued. Venezuela has not known a Maoist party or indeed a Maoist faction of any dimension. The form of the latest split which took place at the end of 1970 has been the formation of the MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*) with Teodoro Petkoff as one of its leaders. Petkoff originally supported the armed struggle (along with his brother Luben) but then condemned it whilst in the PCV. Now the MAS has taken a position, not of armed struggle, but as a more liberal variant of the PCV. The MAS has positive aspects. It opposes the invasion of Czechoslovakia; it claims to oppose the "theory" of stages. Above all it is a reaction against the party machine, the lack of internal democracy, the dominance of Moscow

of some support for the electoral road and does not identify with the FLN/FALN. It is in danger of being all things to all people and encompasses a broad membership from right and left of the old PCV. It claims a place as a Marxist party and has organised its own trade union, the CGT, but its commitment to revolutionary struggle is not dissimilar from the PCV. It is new and has yet to evolve. At the moment it is a "better" PCV. But one Venezuelan comment was: when a piece of shit is divided in half, you get two pieces of shit.

The Caldera Christian Democrat regime, which defeated *Accion Democratica* in the 1969 elections, is the most "progressive" variant yet produced by imperialism. Nevertheless, it is in continual crisis and far from being able to abandon the weapon of repression. On taking office it introduced a programme of so-called Pacification, designed to incorporate revolutionaries into Venezuela's democratic way of life. It was a kind of semi-amnesty: if revolutionaries came down from the mountains they might not be gaoled, especially if they provided useful information to the repressive apparatus. In fact, it was a manoeuvre to weaken the left and eat into its foras. It was also designed so that revolutionaries came out into the open to be counted in preparation for the definitive clamping down of the repression. And, parallel to the Pacification, the shootings and arrests continue. More than 15 students and demonstrators have been killed in the two years of Christian Democrat Pacification and many more people have been indiscriminately arrested, sometimes merely for "investigation", often a euphemism for torture. There are some 200 political prisoners. The repression affects not only student demonstrations, but workers and above all, peasants. As *Vea y Lea*, the magazine, explains, "the differences [between *Accion Democratica* and the Christian Democrats] are superficial, since in the background the hidden threads of the same oligarchic and pro-imperialist interests continue to operate. The difference is one of "style". While Copei (Christian Democrats) and AD (*Accion Democratica*) polemicise on the respective merits of Pacification and Repression, in fact the two parties are reinforcing their collaboration to suppress the masses and the repression itself is in full and vigorous expansion. The difference in style produces apparent anomalies. It means that a magazine such as *Vea y Lea*, which reports interviews with Douglas Bravo and has a big Trotskyist influence can exist and is on sale at most street kiosks; and meetings can be held at which calls for the armed struggle can be made. But those who participate in such activities live in a state of permanent insecurity, liable to arbitrary arrest at any moment and with the threat of death and imprisonment constantly with them, such that some of them feel that they would be personally more secure if they were up in the mountains with the guerrillas.

On May Day your correspondents participated in a counter-demonstration to the traditional government-patronised festivities. Afterwards a march of 200 set off, led by a banner bearing a portrait of Che, with no clear purpose, but merely, it seems, to avoid straggling off to their houses. After about a mile they passed a house in which there was an Inspector of the Metropolitan Police. He came out shooting. He killed a 22-year-old worker, Benjamin de Jesus Teran Ruis, with a bullet in the head. And he wounded several other people. This Inspector was reported to have been taken for questioning and then returned to duty. The next day, after attempts by the authorities to have the burial immediately in order to prevent demonstrations, 60 people were arrested at the funeral and in the cemetery. All this made little impact on the Caracas newspapers.

Trade unions in Venezuela are held in the grip of the bourgeois and reformist parties. The largest union, the CUTV, is controlled by AD, Copei and MEP, a leftist split from AD. Workers regard it as in no sense a class organisation. Its leaders negotiate directly with the government, without regard to the membership's wishes. The official May Day rally is addressed by Caldera from the balcony of the presidential palace. The CUTV is the PCV's union and is barely more militant; it is also weaker. Most Venezuelan unions are organised along political lines with only a few independent industrial or factory unions. As an article by Dulio Bracho in *Vea y Lea* says: "Most struggles are begun from below, obliging the leadership to put themselves at the head of them and subsequently creating a contradiction between the masses, who press for concrete objectives, and the leaders, who at the same time as they pervert the basic issues of the struggle apply a policy of class-collaboration. There are symptoms which demonstrate non-participation in the unions. 90% of the union leaderships are elected with the participation of less than 40% of the trade union members. The discussion of contracts takes place with a minimum of participation on the part of the workers. In the more advanced sectors workers are beginning to look for their own organisational forms, doing without the traditional union leadership".

It is generally recognised that the revolutionary left in Venezuela is weak and divided. The big revolutionary upsurge which led to the overthrow of Perez Jimenez and was carried on into resistance against the betrayals and police terror of Betancourt and the AD party petered out as the

vacillated and degenerated. The armed revolutionary organisations broke with their degenerated parties; first the FLN/FALN broke with the CP; later the MIR guerrilla fronts broke with the MIR and set themselves up independently as *Bandera Roja* (Red Flag) and the *Organización de los Revolucionarios* (OR—Organisation of the Revolutionaries). But they suffered badly from their isolation. The FLN/FALN lost most of its urban organisation and support through desertion and betrayal, and all of the groups lost many of their guerrilla fighters from the mountains and countryside. Many of the best leaders and fighters were killed, and many are in prison. They still suffer from this isolation. Because of the severity of the repression and their absolute need to protect their cadres through strict clandestinity, their activities are very little known even to active revolutionary militants in the universities and towns. Even their literature is very hard to obtain inside Venezuela; its existence is indeed unknown to some militants. Their influence, in spite of the fact that, in the abstract, they are greatly admired by revolutionaries, is therefore quite small in direct political terms inside Venezuela. Their great and important achievement is that they have maintained the tradition and the continuity of the armed struggle in Venezuela. Above all, they have not abandoned the struggle. As Douglas Bravo says, in a message to the *Cabimas* Congress (see below): "The war has begun, the revolution is on the march, and the obstacles which it has encountered cannot lead us to defeatist positions. We cannot confuse the failure of the rightist leaderships of the parties which were once called revolutionary, who capitulated, with the failure of the revolution as a whole. The war is prolonged, and is part of the process we are living through..."

These organisations may also provide a pole around which new forms of armed struggle will be organised. In recognition of their isolation, the three main armed organisations (the FLN/FALN, *Bandera Roja* and the OR) are markedly changing their political line. All of them clearly accept the need for mass work in addition to the organisation and extension of the armed struggle. To a greater or lesser extent, they also accept the need for the creation of a revolutionary party. *Bandera Roja*, for example, are attempting to link the armed struggle more closely with the activities and immediate demands of the people; they reject the concept of merely terrorist activity, and have used their armed strength to support the struggles of workers in their factories against the employers' increasing use of the repressive force of the State. The OR, which was badly affected by betrayals, is reorganising itself and developing its political line, notably in favour of the building of a mass revolutionary party.

Much the most developed theoretically of the three organisations is Douglas Bravo's FLN/FALN. The FLN/FALN have been accused of *foquismo*. But they maintain that they never in fact held this position. If for a time their activities have been largely restricted to the rural guerrilla front, this has been from necessity. Their ability to maintain their forces in the mountains for 10 years, cut off from the support of the CP, even physically betrayed by this party, is an extraordinary achievement. It is an achievement that was only possible because they had the support of the peasants. They have now, they say, reached a stage where they can begin to extend their activities towards the centre; first into more populated areas, then into what they describe as "suburban" areas and minor industrial areas, and finally into the towns. Like *Bandera Roja*, they see the need to link the armed struggle not only to the abstract goal of socialism, but also to the felt needs of the masses. Thus, for example, in their rural sphere of activities, they have ambushed lorries with the help of local peasants, and distributed the contents of the lorries among the peasants. Above all, the FLN/FALN have reached the clear position that they cannot extend the struggle beyond their rural guerrilla front unless they succeed in creating a mass revolutionary party.

On more general theoretical questions, their position is equally clear. They reject the Stalinist concept of the national bourgeois revolution and state clearly that their aim is to achieve the proletarian revolution and the overthrow of imperialism and capitalism; they reject also any concept of building socialism in one country, and hold a strongly internationalist position, especially as regards the rest of Latin America and Cuba in particular. (Douglas Bravo's supposed "denunciation" of Cuban "betrayal" was, incidentally, an invention of the bourgeois imperialist press; the FLN/FALN are critical of aspects of the Cuban revolution, notably of its support for the Peruvian military regime, but hold that any criticisms should be made in a fraternal and comradely spirit and in the context of general support for the achievements and heroism of the Cuban people.)

Douglas Bravo states that in Venezuela the party exists and that it is the *Partido de la Revolución* (Party of the Revolution), most of whose members and leaders are also members of the FLN/FALN, but which has its own internal organisation and leading bodies. This party is being developed. But the leaders of the FLN/FALN and of the *Partido de la Revolución* are clearly aware of the need to draw on new forces and to work for unity among the scattered



ceeded in reaching agreement to set up a *Comité de integración revolucionaria* (Committee for revolutionary integration) with the leadership of *Bandera Roja*, at a meeting held in the latter's sphere of operations in the East of Venezuela. At the end of 1970, on the 4th-6th December, a mass meeting of revolutionaries took place at the so-called Cultural Congress of *Cabimas*. The idea of the Congress originated with a group of revolutionary intellectuals at *Merida* university. It grew into a major meeting of revolutionaries whose fundamental purpose was to organise a united front of revolutionaries. The Congress rejected the theory of the traditional parties of the reformist left on the need for the bourgeois-democratic revolution, affirmed the need to struggle for the socialist revolution, supported clearly the fundamental necessity of the armed struggle to overthrow imperialism and its Venezuelan representatives, and called for the creation of a revolutionary workers' party. The armed organisations supported and participated in the Congress, together with revolutionary intellectuals, workers' and students' organisations, left Christian organisations, and Trotskyists; at times there was an attendance of 4,000 people. The Congress led to the setting up of a united front Committee against Dependence and Neo-colonialism, which is functioning in several parts of the country, and is beginning to fill the great vacuum left in Venezuela by the absence of revolutionary mass organisations, particularly in the cities. In Venezuela there exist numerous small revolutionary groups, many of them of a spontaneous nature. Their joint activity, if it can be organised through achievements such as the *Cabimas* Congress and the committee set up by it, can have a big effect on the growth and strengthening of the Venezuelan left. There is a feeling, widespread among revolutionaries, that unity in working for the revolution and the creation of a revolutionary vanguard will not come about by a confederation of small groups and bureaucratic agreements between their leaders, but through practical activity and joint struggle at the base.

One of the groups which participated in the *Cabimas* Congress was a group of Trotskyists who are supporters of the Fourth International. They issued a declaration of Trotskyists who are supporters of the Fourth International. They issued a declaration of Trotskyist principles, and spoke openly in support of the Fourth International at *Cabimas*. This was the first time that such an initiative had been taken in Venezuela, where there is virtually no Trotskyist tradition. The group itself consists of a number of individuals with experience in the Trotskyist movement who began working together as a group only two years ago. They have an influence disproportionate to their numbers. This is, first, because of the objective situation. With the betrayals and degeneration of the Stalinist parties and also, to some extent, with the discrediting of *foquista* theories of guerrilla warfare, there is a great receptivity towards Trotskyist ideas among Latin American revolutionaries. The credibility of Stalinist attacks on Trotskyists as "agents of imperialism" diminishes as the credibility of the Stalinists themselves diminishes. The political line of the Fourth International on the permanent revolution, on the armed struggle, on the need for mass work and the creation of a revolutionary party, is coming to be accepted by the main revolutionary forces in Venezuela, in particular the FLN/FALN. Most of them have reached these positions independently, but they are aware of their similarity with the positions of the Fourth International, and some have certainly been influenced by discussions with Trotskyists in Venezuela. The members of the Trotskyist group themselves feel that the opportunities for Trotskyism in Latin America are very great, and their objective is to build a section of the Fourth International in Venezuela.

The second main reason for the increasing interest in Trotskyism in Venezuela is the existence of the magazine *Vea y Lea*. The editor of the magazine, Pedro Miranda, is a Trotskyist, and several of the contributors and members of the editorial board are Trotskyists or Trotskyist sympathisers. The magazine is a weekly, and is on sale at kiosks all over Venezuela; it has a circulation of 40,000; it is presented as a popular glossy magazine, with glamour pictures and film stars, although decreasingly so. It is the only open and

revolutionary movements that are at all full or adequate, let alone objective, and that attacks and agitates against the repressive violence of the Caldera regime. It has been in existence for about 18 months and has become progressively more political and more radical. As this process has taken place, *Vea y Lea* has lost its advertising income, but not its circulation, and the people who work for it have become increasingly subject to police harassment. It is therefore not clear how long it will be able to survive as an openly revolutionary magazine. But for the moment it is important and influential, and is used by revolutionary organisations, not only of course by Trotskyists, to propagate their ideas and to denounce the repressive activities of the government.

In general, there are signs in Venezuela that revolutionary activity is on the upturn, after a low period of disunity and demoralisation. The moves towards unity and the creation of a new revolutionary vanguard are a sign of this. Workers are increasingly coming into conflict with the bureaucratized political leaderships of their unions and hence with the AD/Copei control of the state; in this process, the reformist nature of the CP leadership is also being exposed. Strikes are declared illegal by the government and are subject to military and police intervention. The peasants' struggles for land and for better conditions are confronted with the repression of the *Guardia Nacional*. The Indian population is trying to re-occupy the land stolen from it by the *latifundistas* and is meeting with persecution and attempted extermination by the *Cazadores*, the special elite anti-insurgency forces trained in brutality in Panama. The *barrios*, the city slums, are invaded by the repressive forces. The students have been in more or less permanent revolt since the government attempted to introduce a Law ending the autonomy of the universities and their immunity from police or military intervention, in earlier student struggles. The national university in Caracas has been closed for six months because the government is unable to control the students and administer the university with teachers and administration able or willing to operate its Law. The rebellion has spread to the secondary schools, which the government is similarly unable to dare to keep open, with the result that formal education in Venezuela is virtually non-functioning. The open and violent revolt of the students is even more important in Latin America than in Europe or the United States, since the students tend to retain their links with the people, and since the universities, in conditions of dictatorship, have frequently been the only places in which revolutionary traditions can be openly upheld. As Douglas Bravo explained in his message to the *Cabimas* Congress, "There is thus no demand put forward by the masses, however small, which does not find itself confronted with the repressive brutality of the Copei government... The oppressed classes in their struggle against exploitation continually clash with the military forces and the police; in face of this reactionary violence there is no other alternative than revolutionary violence."

Revolutionaries in Venezuela are nevertheless aware that the struggle will be long and bitter. There appear to be few illusions about a quick victory of the *foquista* type, or a repetition of the Cuban experience. The imperialist forces are now very much more organised than they were. In addition, Venezuela, because of its oil, is of exceptional strategic importance to imperialism. Venezuelans say that the Venezuelan army is probably the best trained and equipped, and the most experienced in anti-guerrilla activity, of all Latin American armies. The grip of reformism on the masses is said to be exceptionally strong, with a union bureaucracy integrated into the state and a rich propaganda machine. Less still are there any illusions, except no doubt among opportunists of the CP variety, on the possibility of any repetition of the Chilean phenomenon in Venezuela. The MEP is talking in terms of a popular unity-type electoral front with the CP, MAS, etc. But its leaders are aware that its chances of electoral success are less than in Chile because of the solidity of the AD/Copei pro-imperialist collaboration, and above all that its chances of being permitted to govern are minimal, because of the strength and political traditions of the Venezuelan army; their objectives, it seems, are largely education, and they are also attempting to create popular committees. Their effect, nevertheless, is likely to be the traditional effect of reformist parties: creating a certain confusion among the people.

The real prospect is of a progressive extension and broadening of the current dispersed forms of armed struggle and confrontation with the repressive forces, into a popular war against imperialism and its local representatives and for the proletarian revolution. The Political Declaration of the *Cabimas* Congress stated: "The socialist revolution, as the only valid alternative for Latin American and national liberation, means the reaffirmation of popular revolutionary violence as the only certain way to liberate ourselves and to succeed in building the future socialist society. The armed struggle not only has the strategic characteristic of the unavoidable path and denouement of the socialist revolution; it also has existed and exists today as a genuine process, in which its tactical, practical and concrete character is continuously confirmed, in opposition to the behaviour of



Workers' Control

INTRODUCTION

Recently in an atmosphere of increasing militancy, the issue of workers' control has been raised again by the Labour movement. The attendances at the Workers Control Institute Conferences shows that shop-stewards and militant workers are more interested in the issue than at any time since the 1920s. The object of this article is to examine, in the light of the massive Tory attacks being mounted on the working-class, the years of highest militancy in order to draw out the most important aspects of the experiences for our use today.

Webb, one of the first reformist socialists to discuss the subject, divided "workers' control" into three parts; firstly control over decisions about what, when and where to produce; secondly control over decisions about what methods to use and how to produce, and thirdly control over decisions about under what conditions to produce. These three divisions are useful because by showing which division a particular organisation or group is interested in, we can more easily explain its relation to other groups and to revolutionary politics in general. The trade union movement has traditionally been interested in gaining some control over decisions about wages, working conditions and working hours. By demanding increases in wages, etc., trade unions are demanding a right to decide what a worker should be paid—which erodes the power of the bosses or owner within the factory. The trade unions achieve this small area of control only through struggle, and these actions relate to the third division of Webb's scheme. The first area of control outlined by Webb would obviously have to include the national economy in its scope. To ensure this sort of control seizure and maintenance of class power must be achieved—such a political object would be the aim of a revolutionary party. In the early part of the period 1914-23, however, the most common type of "control" desired by the various workers' movements was of the second sort, control over production levels, etc. Often this control was seen within a framework of capitalism (as for example the miners' plans for joint control of their industry submitted to the Sankey Commission on the mines in the early '20s). But a theme of the period is the growth of the idea, and working-class organisations, that saw the second and third types of control as ultimately impossible to deal with, without first taking the question of the overall political power of the state.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

After 1900 a decline in real wages set in. The official figures show that retail prices had risen by 16.5% from 1900-13, while wage rates had only increased by 6.5%. The decline in real wages was only slightly offset by marginally greater job-security than in the 1890s. So there was a real feeling of a drop in living standards, particularly disturbing because it occurred in a period of good trade, and when unions were rapidly increasing their memberships and improving their organisations. The period of World War I saw an increase demand for armaments and made state intervention a feature of British capitalism. This went hand in hand with attempts to "dilute" the skilled industries with cheaper, less skilled labour. The "dilution" issue was particularly important in the engineering industry, which was the stronghold of the shop stewards movement during and after the war. This better form of local organisation was a response to the threat of the new unorganised semi-skilled influx of workers. After the war, a short boom providing full employment meant that 1918-21 were peak years of working-class militancy—however with the slump in 1921, defending workers' jobs and conditions became issues and workers' control was dropped from the position it had held as prime concern of the

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The "new unionism" movement of the 1880s and '90s reflected the increasing tendency for "crafts" to give way more and more to mass production techniques. The pressure created by the New Unions was initially for political representation for the working class in Parliament. It was to that end that the Labour Party was formed. The failure of the Labour Party to do anything but tail-end the Liberals, up to 1913, directed attention away from "the political" to "the industrial" as the apparent place to make gains for the working class. The grip of syndicalism was very strong, and militants were faced with the need to create a new leadership giving expression to their militancy within the factories and trade unions. The rank-and-file committees and shop-stewards' movement arising between 1914 and 1921, especially in engineering (the craft under most pressure from dilution) became the backbone of the movement for workers' control—as it assumed more and more importance in the factory relations with the employer.

POLITICAL THEORIES & WORKERS' CONTROL

Guild socialism was centred around the National Guilds League—whose influence reached a peak between the years 1914-19—and was the most important and widely held theory of workers' control. It had members in the mining, railway and engineering unions, as well as in the building and Post Office unions. Their impact can be seen in the detailed plans both mining and railway unions drew up for committees of "joint control" in their industries. But the Guild socialists were strongest in the growing shop-stewards' movement in the engineering industry; first in the "Amalgamation Committees" and then in the shop stewards and Workers Committee Movement.

Guild socialists were as critical of the leadership of the unions as their brothers, particularly in the ASE. Their ideas were to transform British society peacefully, by creating national Guilds or Industrial Unions (including white-collar workers and the unemployed). Industrial self-government would then be achieved if a policy of "encroaching control" were followed, and only when "the community" had control over the means of production. "The Community" would then hand over industrial affairs to the Guilds which would pay a rent for them! Encroaching control was the gradual transformation of trade unions into industrial unions, which would press for greater and greater shares of decision-making in industry. These ideas deal in a completely unsatisfactory way with the problem of national control and local control. This can be seen in practice in two ways; firstly Guild socialists participated in the Government's "joint control" experiments, in the Whitley Councils, in the Councils to spread dilution, and in the case of the miners nationally, completely excluding the local pit-committees except in name. Secondly, when the shop stewards in engineering began to move away from Guild socialism under the influence of the Russian Revolution*, the failure of the miners' proposals in the Sankey Commission, and the strengthening of the employers by the creation of railway cartels, left only the building and Post Office workers' unions as strong bases of Guild socialism. Hobson's Guild experiment in the building industry (a cooperative based in Birmingham) completely collapsed in 1923. One qualification is needed, however. Despite Guild socialism's reformism and Utopianism, it could with certain uses and in certain situations assume almost revolutionary implications—as indicated by the Clyde Workers Committee in 1916. Eventually, the government had to deport leading militants from the Committee to prevent anymore Clyde-wide strikes.

"Industrial unionism" and its ideas about workers' control, represent a British version of the theories developed by thinkers like De Leon in the United States. The International Workers of the World had its much smaller British counterpart in the Socialist Labour Party (a split from Hyndman's SDF in 1903), and its industrial wing in the Industrial Workers of Great Britain—intended as a recruiting union. On the decisive day, workers would vote political power to the SLP and would, in their industrial unions, lock out the employers and take over all industries. The Socialist Parliamentary majority would then adjourn itself, and control would pass to the unions. They viewed other unions as a bulwark of the capitalist class. Workers' control was a slogan that they used, but which remained undiscussed in their propaganda. Their contribution to the workers' control movement in general was most obvious in their support for the SS and WCM—greatest on the Clyde and in other Scottish areas—particularly between the years 1915-17. The immediate failure of Industrial unionism to build a base in Britain, especially in the workers' control movement, was because they did not appreciate that for British trade unionists the question of control, because of the government's wartime measures, was an immediate one. The precise reason why the complicated plans of the Guild socialists met with immediate success was because advanced workers wanted control immediately, and therefore saw the need for operational plans. Again Industrial unionists did not deal with the question of overall political power, which reduced their influence when the stewards' committee realised the importance of the state, and the model of the Soviet Revolution in Russia became available to them.

Syndicalism by 1914 had "shot its bolt", although Tom Mann became president of the ASE as late as 1920. It too regarded political action as a waste of time. Its enormous successes of the pre-war period were not repeated in the new wave of militancy during and after the war. We can say, however, that its success was due to the immense practicality with which it approached industrial politics. In this it was distinguished from the small and sectarian Marxist parties and from the SLP. The syndicalists' policy for control, based on national industrial unions and the Trades Councils of different districts, was however not so useful in a situation in which increasing militancy had mobilised the state in attacks on the working class—although some syndicalist base was maintained in the Amalgamation Committees in the engineering unions between 1913-19.

PROBLEMS

What were the problems of these competing theories of workers' control in practice? The political failure of the Labour Party for the working class (it only passed Clause 4 in 1918) together with the attacks made upon the working class by the government (in dilution, the Munitions Acts, deportation, etc.) were underlined by the economic stresses of the imperialist war. In a sense these pressures (especially the lever used by the government that strikes "harmed the war-effort") held back the outburst of militancy until 1918. When it did occur in full flood in the years 1918-23, the number of stoppages jumped from 730 in 1918 to 1,165 in 1919; 1,352 in 1920 and 1,607 in 1921—surpassing the record 1913 total of 1,459. The number of working days lost in strikes reflect the increasing fight back of the capitalist class after the enormous 1922 total of nearly 86,000,000. This peak is not only the most working days lost before 1926, but was also the watershed of the labour movement's offensive struggle. From 1922 onward (despite the Minority Movement) the demand for workers' control was dropped in favour of a

underlined by unemployment, wage reductions and cutbacks on the dole. The essential failure of the movement for workers' control up to 1922 was that it had not yet fully developed into a form which could challenge state power, at least potentially. An impasse had been reached in 1921 in which only a consolidation or obstruction of capitalism could occur. More of the organisations associated with the three strands of theory discussed could make the leap to the essential workers' control, the political seizure of the state. Only by the 1920s did the shop stewards and workers' committee movement even grope towards a national committee even then it had little power.

COMMUNISM

The final stage in the workers' control movement of this period was the gradual realisation by vanguard workers' groups, in the light of the Bolshevik revolution, of the need for a revolutionary party. The effects of the rethink that the SS and WCM undertook in 1919 occurring even two years previously are impossible to calculate. Even so the schemes advanced by *The Worker*, a Glasgow paper of the movement, centred around the notion of workers' control through district based workers' social committees. Although Gallacher (President of the Clyde Workers Committee) and Campbell finally rejected gradualism and reformism in the name of their movement, they still made no mention (as yet) of any agency of national control. Power would flow to the working class "because of their power of numbers in industry". The social committees did at least recognise a non-industrial dimension of workers' struggle, despite the fact that their construction was a failure. The class relationship of forces not fitted to a dual-power situation, the soviet flavour of these committees was then an empty one. By the 1920 conference "joint-control" schemes were called class collaboration. In 1921 the conference called for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that the industrial movement was only part of, and should serve the wider political struggle. It had fallen under the influence of the Communist Party formed in 1920. It was Lenin who finally convinced the British shop stewards' movement, at the Comintern, to form a British C.P. Unfortunately the establishment of a fully revolutionary movement was started in increasingly hostile conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, it was the practicality of workers' participation and later control as a next step which attracted militant workers. But a purely workers' movement could not generate the fully fledged theory of Leninism, it could not even make the essential link-up of the political nature of industrial struggles and work from that. The result was ultimately that "workers' control" submerged until these important political questions had been faced and met. "Workers' control" is again being raised by the militants. In some way the revolutionary tendencies must converge with this vanguard if "workers' control" is ever to become anything more than a slogan.

Brian Heron

MOVEMENT FOR THE DEFENCE OF QUEBEC POLITICAL PRISONERS

Help defend the Quebec citizens recently arrested under the War Measures Act solely for their political views. 43 of those arrested last October still await trial. The MDQPP is the major fund in English Canada and Quebec formed to pay the legal expenses of these political prisoners. Send money order or cheque to MDQPP, Dr. Serge Mongeau (Secretary), 5285 Rue Anjou, St. Hubert, Quebec.

BENGAL

An open letter to the Arab peoples on the situation in Bangla Desh

Dear Friends,

As you undoubtedly know a terrible war is at the moment raging in what was once East Pakistan, now Bangla Desh. The war was unleashed on March 25, 1971, by the military dictatorship headed by General Yahya Khan and the Pakistan Army has carried out a reign of terror, resorted to mass killings of hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians in the cities and villages of our war-torn land.

It is only too easy these days to use the word "genocide", but we can inform you that the massacres in Eastern Bengal more than justify its use. Unarmed men, women and children have been mowed down in cold blood by those who talk in terms of "Muslim brotherhood". Their only crime was that they were Bengalis. In Dacca, the capital city, the Army killed 10,000 students, teachers and workers in an attempt to destroy the political heart of the Bengali national movement, during its first attack. Thousands more have died since then, while millions have been driven out of Bangla Desh and are dying today of cholera and starvation in refugee camps in West Bengal. We do not need to tell you, friends, of what life in a refugee camp is like. The experiences of the Palestinian Arab masses after their expulsion by Zionism bear eloquent testimony to the reality. At first the Army tried to conceal its brutalities from the eyes of the world by imposing a stringent censorship and expelling all the foreign correspondents, but as terror-stricken people began to flee the country, the news of the widespread massacre was revealed. Today in the eyes of all those who hate oppression, the perpetrators of this unparalleled tragedy, the Yahya Khan military dictatorship is guilty of crimes against humanity.

Friends, allow us to briefly explain to you the background to the present crisis. A glance at the geography of Pakistan will show you that the people of this country are living in two different parts separated from each other by 1,000 miles of foreign territory. Of the entire population of Pakistan, over 56%—a total of 75 million people, predominantly Muslims—lived in Eastern Pakistan. They had agreed to a separate Muslim homeland only on the basis that it would be a loose federation of two autonomous states, but from the very beginning the Bengali nation was discriminated against, both politically and economically. The entire political history of Pakistan has been dominated by a conspiracy hatched by the feudal landlords, big business interests and the Army in West Pakistan, to prevent the Bengali people from exercising their rights. Time and time again the 89-year-old peasant leader, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, who has a fantastic record of struggle against British imperialism, warned the West Pakistani leaders that unless they mended their ways the East Pakistani masses would explode. These warnings were disregarded. The Muslim peasants who were promised that Pakistan would be a "poor man's paradise" discovered that a small coterie of landlords, newly-emerging industrialists and bureaucrats dominated their entire existence.

In 23 years of its existence the vast wealth of the country came to be concentrated in the hands of 22 West Pakistani families. Today they control 85% of banking, 90% of insurance business. Trade and commerce are largely controlled from the Western wing. The merchant navy has its headquarters at Karachi and the resources of East Bengal were used to finance industrial development in West Pakistan. Till 1968-69 more than half of Pakistan's exports were dependent on East Bengal and yet of the total foreign aid received by Pakistan, 80% was used up in West Pakistan.

As the economic disparity grew between the two parts of the country, the attitude of the Bengali people in the East began to harden. They realised that they were no longer a free people and they understood that to free themselves from the colonial regime they would have to struggle. Yahya Khan's army junta has resorted to bullets, bombs and napalm to suppress the voice of the 75 million people wanting their liberation. We can assure you that we will not be intimidated and will fight to the last till the invaders are expelled. The liberation struggle in East Bengal is now part of the great revolutionary war that is being waged in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Friends, we know that the Yahya regime has resorted to malicious and false propaganda, particularly in its messages to Arab governments, in an attempt to divert the attention of the people of the world from their oppressive military operations in East Bengal. We are confident that you will not be deceived by these lies. The Pakistan Army is part of the imperialist-backed SEATO and CENTO pacts, which are directed against the revolutionary movements in the Middle East; the same Army has participated in the massacre of Palestinian commandos in Jordan and today helps the reactionary rulers in the Arab Gulf to oppress the peasant masses in that region. So in essence we are facing a common enemy and are part of the same struggle.

Recently the militants engaged in the struggle formed a National Liberation Front, headed by Maulana Bhashani, to unite the progressive forces waging the war of liberation. In the name of this Front we appeal to you to extend the solidarity of all oppressed peoples and support the struggling masses of Bangla Desh.

LONG LIVE THE SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE BENGALI AND ARAB MASSES!

LONG LIVE THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT!

**FOR AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC
BANGLA DESH!**

(Issued by the Bangladesh National Liberation Front in Europe, Paris)



Some weeks ago the Workers Press in its now inimitable fashion published a carefully chosen excerpt from a New York Times editorial to try and accelerate their campaign of slander and vilification against our comrade Tariq Ali. For the benefit of readers we are reprinting the complete editorial so that comrades can appreciate why the Workers Press gets so infuriated.

The New York Times

Published every day by The New York Times Company

'Bengal Is the Spark'

Tariq Ali, a Pakistani radical who has been active in British left-wing student circles, turned up recently in Calcutta, where he was reported encouraging secessionist tendencies in both West Bengal and East Pakistan with the aim of promoting a united socialist Bengal.

"The revolutionary movement has a big opportunity in Bengal," Mr. Ali told a British reporter. "This is a heaven-sent opportunity which we should not miss. What I see in the future is the distinct possibility of India and Pakistan disintegrating—and Bengal is the spark."

Mr. Ali's radical vision of chaos on the Indian subcontinent cannot be taken lightly. The Pakistan military government's brutal crackdown on a popular democratic movement that sought a large measure of autonomy for East Pakistan has set the stage for an increasingly violent and radical reaction in the long-neglected and much-abused eastern state.

A prolonged guerrilla conflict in East Pakistan would have profound repercussions in the neighboring violence-prone Indian state of West Bengal, already shaken by the influx of more than three million refugees from the Pakistani Army's campaign of terror. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is under mounting pressure to intervene to try to check this threat to India's own internal peace and integrity.

It is obviously in nobody's interest to allow the Bengal "spark" to explode into a major international conflict, one which might speedily involve the major powers. Nor is it wise to permit the situation in East Pakistan to continue to fester, inviting the gradual political disintegration of the entire subcontinent.

To deprive Tariq Ali and his like of their "big opportunity" it is essential that Pakistan's President Yahya Khan come to terms speedily with the more moderate Sheik Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League, which won an overwhelming popular mandate in last December's national and state elections. Such an accommodation with East Pakistan's elected representatives should be a prerequisite for the resumption of United States aid, except for relief assistance, to Pakistan.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1971

solidarity

The West Pakistanis in Solidarity with Bengal (WPSB) group based in London (address: c/o 182 Pentonville Road, N.1) has started the regular publication of a broadsheet in Urdu, designed to explain to West Pakistani workers in Britain and at home the real issues involved in the

struggle in East Bengal. The first issue of the paper, called *Jad-o-Jehad* (Struggle), was distributed free and copies were smuggled into West Pakistan where they have been well-received. The second issue is under preparation and will be priced at 5p. All those interested in helping distribute the paper should write to the WPSB address. Subscriptions can be obtained for £2 a year.

MESSAGE TO THE NLF (E. BENGAL)

The International Marxist Group (British Section of the Fourth International) is pleased to learn that a National Liberation Front has been set up in Eastern Bengal to lead the struggle for national and social liberation. We extend to all your comrades our total support in the armed struggle to liberate East Bengal from the invading armies of West Pakistani capital.

We look forward to the establishment of NLF offices and centres in Western Europe in the near future and assure you that we will afford all possible help.

**VICTORY TO THE NLF
FOR A LIBERATED EAST BENGAL
FOR A UNITED SOCIALIST BENGAL**

USA

The Struggle of the Black workers

INTRODUCTION

While some organisations of Black Americans were making the headlines of the international press in recent years, not much was known about the political work which was carried on among the black working class of Detroit—capital of the world of the automobile—by the League of Black Revolutionary Workers. This organisation's principal target which was the conditions of black workers in the big enterprises such as Dodge, Ford, etc., also had to deal with the yellow labour union United Automobile Workers (UAW), which—with a black membership of 45%—didn't show interest for the specific problems of the black working class. Already in May 1968 a group of leftist activists from the black community of Detroit started the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). After having organised some black workers at that factory, this organisation was able to initiate a labour strike lasting three days and which received the support and participation of 90% of the Blacks employed at Dodge. Later on DRUM contributed to the organisation of similar groups at different places of work: Ford Revolutionary Union Movement (FRUM) and Eldon Avenue Gear and Axel Revolutionary Union Movement (ELRUM), which led to the creation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which now plays a significant role in the black community of Detroit and at various places of work in the area.

During the visit in Scandinavia of one of its organisers, Madison Foster, we had the opportunity of discussing the situation of the black struggle in general as well as the difference of approach and strategy which exist between them and the Black Panther Party. Mr. Madison Foster came specially to Scandinavia in order to mobilise public opinion against the possibility that the Swedish government might cede to American pressures and refuse political asylum to one of its leading members, Mr. Glanton Dowdell, who has been accused of fraud in connection with savings bonds. Faced with this frame-up which the authorities organised in order to remove him from his political activities in Detroit, Mr. Glanton Dowdell chose exile in order to continue struggling for the liberation of his people across the Atlantic.

—Could you define the main difference between the unspecified slogan "Black Power" that was raised a few years ago and "Black Workers' Power" that you use?

The slogan "Black Power" that was articulated by Stokely Carmichael and other persons generally spoke to a feeling of black nationalism that has ebbed and flowed among black people ever since the Civil War. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers talks about "Black Workers' Power" in the sense that Blacks are

exploited as Blacks and that the whole feeling of nationalism is a base for revolutionary endeavours.

—Does that affect your differences with the Black Panthers?

No, not really. The difference between the League and the Panthers is basically one of practice although the fundamental analysis of the Black Community put forward by the Panthers is not the same as that of the League. For instance the Panthers state that the most popular base on which to raise a revolutionary movement is the so-called "lumpen-proletariat". We disagree with them. We say that empirically the black community is virtually a working-class community and that the most revolutionary segment of the the black community is the black workers.

—Why?

First of all, black workers are the most disciplined element in the black community. Black workers have most of the economic power in the way that black workers are specifically related to the means of production. If one takes into consideration where black workers are located, it becomes clear that black workers are placed at the most

In the automobile industry, for example, which is a pivotal industry, black workers are doing the most dangerous and dehumanising work. At the same time black workers' importance is such that if they would refuse to work, then the process of production would cease. We also understand that Blacks are service workers, that Blacks drive buses, trucks and make the mail run. Blacks work at hotels and in hospitals. What we say is that this is a fantastical potential amount of power which, if organised, will assuredly be the most forceful means the Blacks have at their disposal for bringing about a radical change in America. The Black Panther Party talks about Blacks as if they were unemployables, as if Blacks are sitting or hanging around on street corners. Besides, they contend that the whole question of cypernation means that Blacks will be pushed out of the labour force. We do not agree with this approach. First of all, even though cypernation could push all Blacks out of the labour force, it would not occur for another decade. It would be mathematically impossible to push out all Blacks of the labour force within a decade even if cypernation functioned in this way. Fortunately cypernation does not. I don't think that the Black Panther Party understands the economics of black labour, that is to say that Blacks are essential to the production process in America.

—Following these lines your organisation claims to be Marxist-Leninist and per definition this means to have an internationalist position. Now, considering the percentage of industries connected with armament in the United States, how do you relate to taking care of black workers' interests without sacrificing your international responsibilities?

This explains our attempts at the League to gather enough resources so that we can sustain a black workers' strike. Therefore we have presently decided to refrain from striking if at all possible until such a time. The problem is that unless one is able to provide for the worker and his family one cannot sustain a strike over any longer period of time. On the other hand if you look at the factories in Detroit, for instance at "The Automatic Tank Command" you will find that approximately 90% of the workers there are Blacks which means that if Blacks stopped work they could paralyse the functioning of the factory. —Yes, we do have an international view of the world. We contend that unless one stops American imperialism with its aggressive expansionism and militarism one won't be able to talk of freedom anywhere in the world. We most assuredly support the liberation struggles throughout the world and we think that the struggle black workers wage, say, in the "belly of the beast" is a key factor in bringing about the downfall of imperialism.

—But cannot freedom be reached through wars of national liberation even though American imperialism still exists and even though the conflicts within the country itself have not reached the proportion that could stop it?

Of course, I am not saying that it is an either/or situation—either you do deal with America from the outside or from the inside. Obviously the struggles going on in various parts of the world are related and connected to the struggle going on in America and vice versa. My point being that unless we are able to dismantle the capitalist, imperialist system that one finds inside America, there will continue to be various Vietnams, various struggles like the ones in Mozambique and Palestine. Therefore we contend that the struggles like the one being waged by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in the heart of America are essential in stopping the racist, imperialist wars that America is waging throughout the world.

—On the question of nationalism—does it stem from your condition as an oppressed minority in the USA or does it stem from the cultural heritage and the feeling of affiliation with the African Continent?



I think both factors are operating. First of all it is essential to recall the fact that Blacks had a feeling of nationalism since they reached the shores of America. Prior to and after the Civil War we have known high and low points of nationalism. The period from 1915 to 1920 which was the highest point of black nationalism with emphasis on being a different people was best articulated by men as Marcus Garvey. Once again following the death of the Civil Rights Movement one finds that Blacks reached a high point of nationalism. But this time we are contending in the League of Black Revolutionary Workers that nationalism is a base for change. Nationalism is not necessarily a political position per se. Therefore our understanding of nationalism is radically different from that of many other black organisations. The nationalism of the Black Muslims for instance is not the kind of nationalism we have in mind. The same can be said of the nationalism of "The Republic of New Africa" when it speaks of a kind of Zionism, that is a return to Africa or the creation of an independent black state in the south of the USA. We oppose these forms of nationalism as we feel that these organisations fail to tackle the real problem. We, on the other hand, see in black nationalism an "esprit de corps" and a cohesive base on which to build a revolutionary movement in order to dismantle American capitalism.

—Your organisation is now thinking about working politically on a national level. Now, how are the authorities dealing with your organisation?

Well, the League in a sense has already moved on a national level. One might say that we were pulled into the national arena. Black workers from places like Atlanta, New Jersey, etc. come to Detroit asking for help and requesting that we send teams of workers to the various cities to assist them in their organisational efforts. Consequently the League had to respond to these demands and in this way moved on the national arena. In terms of oppression I might note that the League has been engaged in several legal battles. We are presently fighting against a Senate investigation. I suspect and I know that as we move on and increase our organisational efforts we will have to deal with other forms of oppression.

SAOR EIRE MESSAGE TO IMG NATIONAL CONFERENCE, 1971

Dear Comrades,

The Irish revolutionary struggle has developed during the last year not only in the occupied Six Counties but also in the Twenty-Six County Free State. If Imperialism is to be defeated and a Workers' and Small Farmers' Republic created, it is imperative that the Irish revolution receives the support and solidarity of the British and international working class.

We welcome the active help and involvement of English revolutionaries in mobilising Irish workers in support of this struggle and in making the British working class politically aware of the nature of the fight against Imperialism and its agents throughout Ireland.

We extend our fraternal greetings in the belief that the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International, can play a constructive and progressive role in breaking the chains of British Imperialism that fetter the Irish working class.

—M. Price, D/C Saor Eire



—Does that have any connection with your trip to Scandinavia to try to gain international support for your political activity?

Yes, I am here in Scandinavia for several reasons. We realise in fact that international visibility makes it somewhat more difficult for the U.S. Government to squash our movement. We are concerned to get some political support but also to raise some concrete and financial support for our movement. There are persons, progressive Danes, Swedes and people in Holland who have indicated an interest in our struggle as black people in general and in the Revolutionary Black Workers in particular.

Interviewers: Ellen Brun, Jacques Hersh

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molehills

A TROTSKYIST IN THE KREMLIN?

An attentive reader of Soviet journals will have been lucky enough to acquaint himself with an author whom the French and English-language "Communist" press have chosen to ignore. We are speaking of our friend Nathan Weinstock.

One might search in vain, in fact, for even the smallest reference to his book *Zionism against Israel* in *l'Humanité* and *La Nouvelle Critique* in France, or *Morning Star*, *Comment* and *Marxism Today* this side of the Channel.

But if censorship of Trotskyist publications still holds sway in the West, the USSR itself is apparently breaking with the decreed silence. In the very official *International Life*—a Moscow journal published in Russian, French and English—a certain L. Medvedko published, in January 1971, an article entitled "Zionism and Israel", which contains in the space of six pages no less than 27 quotations from our comrade's book (pp. 66 to 70 and p. 76).

It is to be wondered why this book which has "aroused a great deal of interest both abroad and in Israel"—we are quoting Medvedko (p.66)—has been completely passed over by our own Communists. Ought not wide publicity to be given to a publication against which "the ideologies of international Zionism have not been long in starting a well-sustained fire (...) making use to this end of all the weapons of their propaganda arsenal" and "sparing nothing" (p. 66)?

The Soviet reader would certainly be most dismayed at this. For he knows Weinstock very well! The friends of his friends are his friends. And "the idea that N. Weinstock wanted to emphasise (...) is also the conclusion suggested to the Israeli workers by the theses of the (Israeli) Communist Party ..." (p. 76)!

So why not give a rundown on this fellow-traveller?

The answer is so obvious that Professor Ziv, who was delegated to Belgium at the time of the Conference on Soviet Jewry to put the Russian viewpoint, was well and truly flabbergasted, in a debate at Brussels University, to discover in Weinstock an abominated Trotskyist. Well, well! As a regular reader of *International Life*, he had been under the impression that our comrade was a supporter of "peace and co-existence in the Middle East" (p. 76). But he found on the platform, much to his amazement, a supporter of the Arab revolution, a mortal enemy of the Soviet bureaucracy, and a supporter of the rights of Russian Jews! Who on earth could have predicted that the Kremlin would be doing publicity for the Fourth International?

Evidently, Medvedko had been somewhat selective in his quotations. He had unfortunately omitted to point out that, from the very first page of *Zionism against Israel*, reference was made to "the stifling of independent Marxist thinking by Stalinism", that the same chapter contained about ten pages on the repercussions of the Stalinist (and post-Stalinist) degeneration of the Russian Revolution on the condition of Soviet Jewry, and that the entire work revolved around the theory of permanent revolution.

However, Medvedko had inserted a subtle hint in his review, which ought not to have escaped the well-informed Soviet reader. Quoting from Weinstock a text of Lenin's on the Jewish question, he introduced the passage with the following comment: "Interpreting in his own way the Marxist conception of the Jewish problem ..." (p. 68, our emphasis). It was enough to give food for thought: to interpret the Jewish question after the manner of Lenin is evidently to study it in the Trotskyist perspective! You won't however be able to convince the Kremlin's publicists that their conceptions are Leninist!

"RANK AND FILE": TV AND CLASS STRUGGLE

The screening of Jim Allen's play "Rank and File" on Thursday 20th May turned into a major political event. The play itself was closely modelled on the Pilkington strike and presented a searing indictment of Trade Union bureaucracy and Labourism. The realist aesthetic used so successfully in Jim Allen's previous TV plays, "The Lump" and "The Big Flame", again drove home the political points in a powerfully authentic fashion. The pivotal character was played by a former industrial militant and the other parts were filled by drawing on the actors who usually play in working men's clubs and are quite unlike the usual phoney caricatures seen on TV or cinema screens when shop-stewards are depicted. The play showed what a waste of time it was to lobby "left" Labour MPs such as Eric Heffer instead of getting to the root of the real industrial and political problems posed by the strike. The odious role of the TUC in persuading the men to go back to work and in dishonouring their pledge to ensure there would be no victimisation of militants, was exposed with unanswerable force. However the real political lessons of the play emerged with even greater clarity in the following evenings discussion of the play on "late Night Line-up" where Jim Allen confronted Hugh Scanlon, George Woodcock and a representative of the CBI. While none of these gentlemen could deny the accuracy and authenticity of the play they all denounced it as one-sided and unfair to union leadership and management. In true red-baiting fashion Scanlon chose to ignore the serious charges made against his own role in the affair by saying that Allen was just a wrecker motivated by "Trotskyist philosophy" who wanted to destroy Social Democracy and not improve the conditions of the men. When Allen calmly and firmly insisted that Scanlon explain why he had not acted on a letter he sent to the militants promising them that they would be protected against victimisation, Scanlon replied

that he had written no such letter. Thereupon Allen produced the letter from his pocket and read it out, revealing Scanlon to be a liar as well as the betrayer of the strike. The play and discussion were in fact a very advanced example of the use of the mass media in the class struggle. The only criticism one could have of the play is that the subject chosen—the struggle of an inexperienced and unprepared group of workers—suggested too much fatalism and defeatism. There was scarcely even an embryonic political organisation in the factory so the discussions among the militants on the conduct of the strike did not include making real political initiatives or indicating concrete alternatives. For this reason "Rank and File" was not like *The Big Flame* which developed a more ambitious theme—dockers take over and temporarily run the docks where they work until the army and the police suppress them. However by limiting himself to one specific strike Allen achieves a different, and equally important, effect—a greater understanding of how strikes get sabotaged by reformist union leadership. The only point on which Allen was not completely persuasive in the discussion of the lessons of his play concerns the advisability of the Rank and File Committee breaking from their union. If such a move would have attracted the support of the workers involved then it is hard to see why it would have been politically incorrect. What was in question was not setting up a break-away "Red Union" but switching from one highly corrupt and bureaucratized union (GMWU) to a somewhat less corrupt and bureaucratized union (TGWU). Such a switch, if it commanded the support of the men (which it is admittedly difficult to be sure about) would not have "split the working class" but been a real blow against one viciously reactionary TU bureaucracy and a warning to all such bureaucracies. However at least this question was raised very powerfully even if Allen's own reasoning was not entirely clear.

R.B.

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Published by Redcovert for The Red Mole, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 6954, 01-278 2616.
 Printed by The Printshop Press Ltd. (T.U.), 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 9987

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The Current Situation in Bolivia

[Hugo González Moscoso, leader of the POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario—Revolutionary Workers party, the Bolivian section of the Fourth International), gave the following interview in late April to Jean-Pierre Beauvais of the French Trotskyist weekly *Rouge*. We have translated the interview from the May 17 issue of *Rouge*.]

Question: How would you characterize the present situation in Bolivia?

Answer: Since Torres came to power, the situation has been marked by great instability. Ovando's exit was a clear manifestation of the disintegration of the Bolivian regime and of the only organization still capable of defending the interests of the local bourgeoisie and imperialism—the army, or rather the army-party, inasmuch as this is the role it really plays.

Totally discredited by his daily clashes with workers and students, Ovando had to be replaced. However, despite the advice of the American embassy, the military chiefs could not agree on a substitute. The support Torres enjoyed from the workers and students enabled him to win out. The armed forces then apparently regrouped around Torres under the slogan "no victors and no vanquished."

This development, in fact, accelerated the crisis in the armed forces, which are now split into two, if not several, factions. The right wing is entirely manipulated by the State Department and the CIA and by their Brazilian military hirelings. On the other hand, a nationalist wing, which, as an added attraction, claims to be revolutionary, is trying to follow a policy of bourgeois reform that involves making secondary concessions to the mass movement, with the evident aim of co-opting it.

One thing must be clearly understood, however. *Despite the divisions that have weakened it, in the last analysis the army, the military party of the bourgeoisie, still holds power.* Emphasis in the original. — *IP*. Thus, the attempted coup January 10 and the recent events in Santa Cruz province must be viewed in the context of the split in the armed forces.

As regards the attempted coup January 10, of course, the facts are quite clear. The officers implicated in this affair are notorious CIA stooges.

The aborted coup in Santa Cruz is interesting, inasmuch as it revealed some very precise plans worked out by the imperialists. The province of Santa Cruz covers more than a third of the country's territory. Unlike the other regions, it is a zone of plains and forests extending uninterruptedly into Brazil.

The principal economic activity is carried on by the big tropical plantations, but the mineral and petroleum resources, unexploited in the main, are enormous. With the direct participation of officers and agents of the neighboring Brazilian regime, the imperialists tried to lay the groundwork for a separatist movement in this province, a movement that would base itself on the big landowners.

The imperialists were not aiming for an immediate success. They will carry out their plans if the revolutionary forces take power in La Paz. The March operation, in which some military leaders laid siege to the provincial capital, organizing demonstrations of planters and agricultural workers—who in this type of large landholding system are bound to their employers like slaves to masters—was intended to put Torres on notice and blackmail him with a threat of seces-

sion by the province . . . Everything was directly stage-managed by Washington and Brasilia.

Q. What is Torres's position toward the sectors of the army hostile to him?

A. Torres is not a "comrade," that is, an ally of the popular forces, as some reformists and, above all, the Bolivian Communist party would have us believe. Basically he represents and defends his caste—the army—as part of his job of defending the class to which he belongs, the bourgeoisie. In this sense, he has had one clear objective since he came to power—to reunite the armed forces and, of course, reunite them around himself. All his efforts, all his steps pursue this aim. Of course, in the face of a mass mobilization of the workers, students, and certain sectors of the peasantry, he is forced to compromise . . . but that is only a technical step necessitated by the weakness of this regime. And he hopes, once the unity of the armed forces is restored, to bring the mass movement to heel.

For our part, we do not think that Torres will achieve his objective. The fissures in the army are too wide. The right-wing officers and the American services are too mistrustful of Torres, who, they think, is a captive of the worker and student mobilization. The most probable outlook is for a right-wing coup d'état sweeping him away rather rapidly and for a severe repression to follow.

Q. What is the attitude of the working class toward Torres and perspectives like that?

A. One thing is clear. While they support Torres against threats of an extreme right coup d'état, the most combative and advanced sectors of the working class do this only half-heartedly. In reality, they are struggling to impose their own solution to the Bolivian crisis, that is, a workers' and peasants' government that would be definitely and concretely anti-imperialist and socialist.

The history of these last months in Bolivia indicates this fact clearly. Thus, at the time of the January 10 coup, about 4,000 miners came to La Paz from the mining regions. They came in trucks with large stocks of dynamite expropriated in the mines. Officially, they came to defend the Torres government. When they arrived in La Paz, they went, still armed, to the presidential palace and demonstrated there. They offered a very strange type of support.

For several hours the miners demonstrated, shouting "Down With Imperialism," "Long Live Che," "Socialism Yes, Betrayal No," "Long Live the Guerrillas" . . . Torres did not dare come out, as they called on him to do. Finally he made a speech heavily larded with demagoguery. Unsatisfied, the miners continued to demonstrate. At last, after twenty-four hours, they agreed, under the pressure of some of their union leaders and thanks to some "economic" concessions by Torres, to return to the mines. This is one example among many indicating the mood of the Bolivian working class today.

But we must also take account of the attitude of the reformist union leaders and the Communist party. They are supporting Torres. And all their activity is taken up in maneuvering to channelize the energy of the masses and the mass movement into supporting the regime.

This attitude is reflected very concretely in the matter of arming the workers. This problem is on the agenda, and the consciousness of the work-

ers themselves has reached the point where they raise it every day. The forms taken by the demonstration I have just described are a clear indication of this.

The reformist or CP leaders continually evade this question and try to divert this tendency, this demand, which would be a powerful asset for the workers when the time comes for them to impose their own solution and stop playing the role of arbiter between two factions of the army, an extremely dangerous role and one which they will not long be allowed to play, as we have seen. In attempting to carry out their policy, the reformist leaders have the advantage of not inconsiderable influence and even a certain prestige. Let us not forget that they were the victims of severe repression in the previous period.

Q. Much has been said about the People's Assembly, which, notably, was formed after the January 10 coup d'état. What is the POR's position with regard to it?

A. This assembly was formed in the confusion at the time of the unsuccessful right-wing coup d'état of January 10. It tended to try to become a workers' parliament, taking charge of organizing the response to the actions of the extreme right. As early as last October, we advanced the idea of forming such an organization in our propaganda work. This idea was, in fact, taken up by many other sectors of the Bolivian left.

Confronted with the development of the People's Assembly, and once the danger of the rightist coup was passed, Torres took an extremely defensive attitude. Eventually, he chose to try to co-opt it. He took up a series of demands raised by the People's Assembly and granted it official recognition.

In the People's Assembly, which includes all the leftist parties and unions, the COB [Central Obrera Boliviana—Bolivian Labor Federation] plays the decisive role.

The left wing, to which the POR belongs, has developed the idea that the People's Assembly should be a body that would discuss national problems and solutions for them but would leave the power in the hands of the mass organizations (unions and popular militia or people's army).

The situation is quite different today, in fact. The People's Assembly is hardly more than a kind of national parliament where the most important sectors of society are represented. The working class has a certain percentage of the seats, along with the peasants and the middle classes. Furthermore, every organization that participated in the "People's Command" set up at the time of the [October 1970] coup d'état has two representatives. It must also be noted that the People's Assembly does not meet regularly enough to be able to organize the popular forces.

In the present situation, thus, its

perspectives are extremely limited. An acute political crisis might revive it, but that is not certain. The POR comrades in the People's Assembly, whether they represent the party directly or some union, hold no illusions. They are using the People's Assembly as a forum, as a platform. That is all.

Q. In the present situation what activities is the POR carrying on and what perspectives is it following?

A. In the present context, the party's work follows two main lines. On the one hand, we are striving to link ourselves with the masses and, over and above this, increase our forces. On the other, we are preparing internally for future confrontations, as a revolutionary party must do in a situation such as we have analyzed and in line with the developments that we expect to occur.

To pursue these two tasks at the same time, to combine them, is an extremely difficult thing. Under the Ovando government the party operated in completely clandestine conditions and was totally absorbed in armed work. Since last November, after Torres came to power, we have been able to redevelop our legal work aimed at the unions but also the peasants and the universities, where we had done very little before.

On the basis of our political analyses and program, we have registered a number of gains and increased our strength markedly. But this was also a result of the prestige we gained in our previous armed work shoulder to shoulder with the ELN [Ejército de Liberación Nacional—National Liberation Army, the guerrilla force led in 1967 by Che Guevara].

Through our program we won the leadership of several small unions of urban workers. Last December our line was adopted in full by the La Paz Department [Province] congress of trade unions.

This growth in our mass influence is reflected in the progress of our publications. Our paper *Combate* comes out regularly each month. We are also publishing a monthly student paper and in the coming months we will put out a theoretical magazine.

But obviously this work cannot be capitalized on, or have any meaning in the long run, except in the context of preparing our organization for armed struggle. In the present unstable situation we look on everything as temporary. The repression that is to come will signal the start of a new stage of armed struggle on a scale previously unknown here.

This armed struggle will be a highly diversified one and will encompass the various sectors of the Bolivian population, from the miners to the peasants and including the students . . . Fundamentally it is this stage we are preparing for by trying to take full advantage of the opportunities offered us by the present situation. □

MESSAGE TO THE PRT/ERP, ARGENTINA

The 1971 Annual Conference of the International Marxist Group (British Section of the Fourth International) extends its warmest fraternal greetings to the comrades of the PRT (Argentinian Section of the Fourth International) and the ERP, the revolutionary Army they are in the process of building. Your recent militant actions which have been welcomed by the Rosario workers and have upset the trade union bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie have shown in a very concrete way some of the possibilities which are opening up for the Fourth International. The fact that the capitalist official you arrested and released after your demands had been met was also a British official is no accident. It shows the very real links which exist between British and Argentinian capitalism and that is why we are more enthusiastic than we would normally have been at your action. Comrades, we solidarise with your struggle, with your militants who have fallen in battle, and with all the victims of bourgeois repression. We are confident that you will deepen and extend the armed class struggle till the Argentinian partners and agents of U.S. imperialism have been completely smashed.

VICTORY TO THE ERP/PRT
VICTORY TO THE LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTION
LONG LIVE THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL