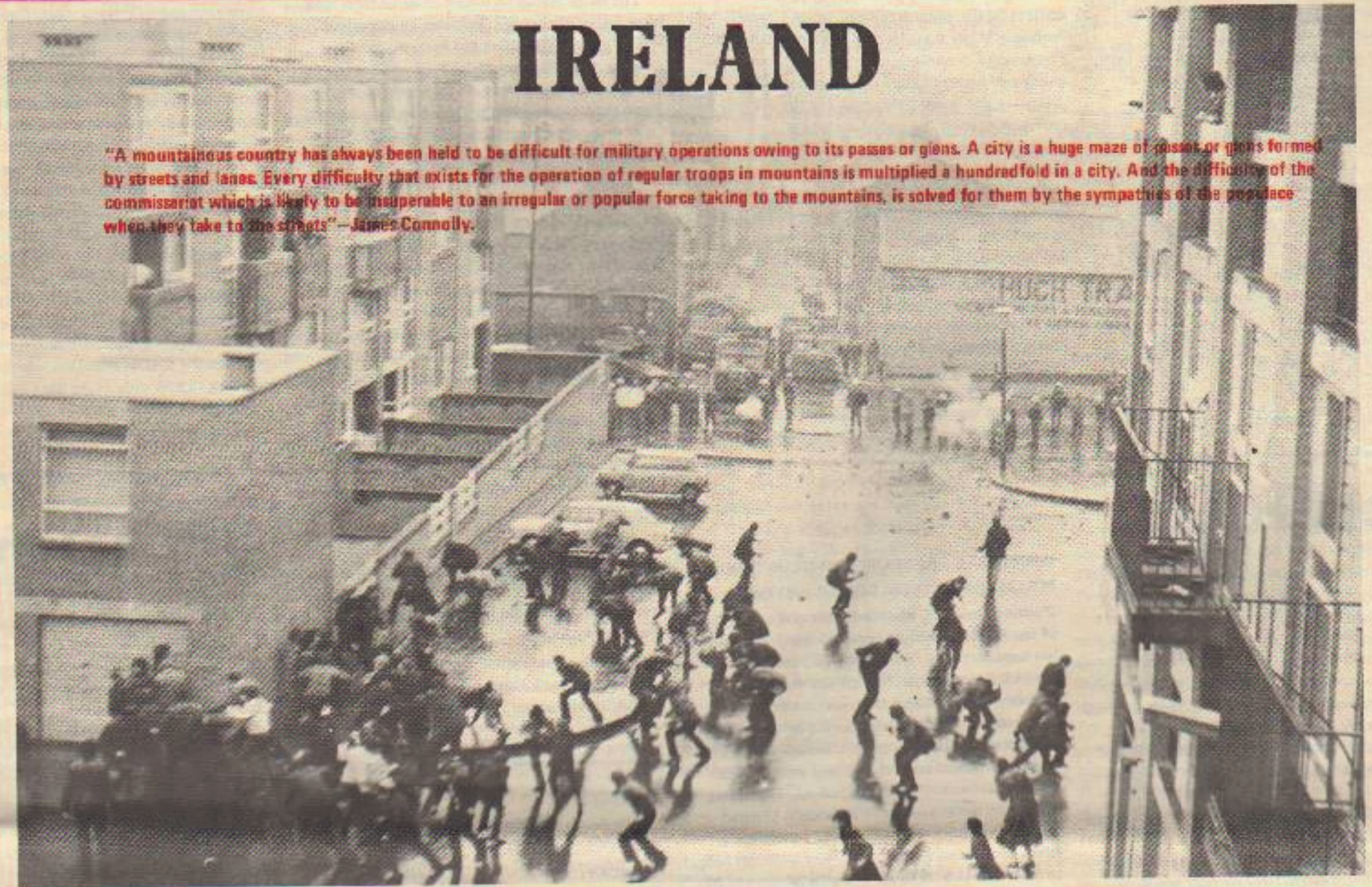


# The Red Mole

## IRELAND

"A mountainous country has always been held to be difficult for military operations owing to its passes or glens. A city is a huge maze of passes or glens formed by streets and lanes. Every difficulty that exists for the operation of regular troops in mountains is multiplied a hundredfold in a city. And the difficulty of the commissariat which is likely to be insuperable to an irregular or popular force taking to the mountains, is solved for them by the sympathies of the populace when they take to the streets"—James Connolly.





# NORTH WESTERN POLYTECHNIC

In the very near future the majority of students in post A-level education will not be found in the universities, and so it is initially surprising that so-called student unrest has been almost totally confined to this sector. Of course, there have been sporadic outbursts elsewhere, most notably in the Art College of Hornsey and Guildford which were, significantly, the most sustained, and, in many ways, the most constructive examples of student (and staff) attempts to win a measure of control over their educational situation. Now we are seeing the rise of a much more potent force than yet experienced: the Polytechnics.

These institutions, the brainchild of the last "reforming" Labour Government, were presented by the then Secretary of Education, Anthony Crosland, as institutions providing a "comprehensive" education which really meant an education tied to vocational training and consequently more intimately linked with industry and the needs of employers—as witnessed by the vast increase in sandwich courses. These "Colleges of the People" are to be the centre-piece of the lower half of the binary system, whose implicit function is to provide as many highly qualified technical personnel as possible for industry at the cheapest possible

price. Within this guiding idea, a whole range of geographically dispersed institutions with differing course set-ups and types of student traditions have been forcibly wed without any thought as to what those who taught and learned there had to say on the matter. Thus, at any rate, is the case at N.W. Poly.

Comprising four separate institutions, matters finally came to a head when a certain Professor Miller was selected as Principal by the Formation Committee—a group of people totally unrepresentative of staff and students alike—providing the immediate cause for the current unrest. Although the initial campaign revolved around the questionable (to say the least) role of Miller as Principal of University College, Rhodessa, this one-sided emphasis was quickly broadened to a questioning and rejection of the mechanics of Miller's appointment as such, leading to the demand that "... the Principal call a general assembly of students, teaching service and technical staff within 28 days to consider the appointment of Professor Miller". Of course, this demand was not met, and Miller's facile views on education in general and Polytechnics in particular expressed at a subsequent meeting with the Union made evident his total incompetence and lack of

empathy with the members of the Poly. This served to bind the majority of the students against his appointment and its methods, and accounted for the large number of students—about 800—who began the occupation of the Kentish Town building of N.W. Poly on 23rd February.

The three weeks of the sit-in since then have been rather chequered. Without an organised left in the college, there has been no obvious rallying point for those who wished to carry the struggle forward, and from those who have come together no clear perspective has emerged. Of course, it was seen from the beginning that it was essential to broaden the struggle both to the other buildings of the Poly and to other colleges and universities; but with the lack of any understanding of the place and function of the Poly in particular, and education in general, in modern capitalism, and of the inability to clearly identify who exactly the enemy is in this struggle, what militancy has emerged has been in ultra-leftist directions with, for instance, the misguided attempt to involve the students at Ladbroke House by locking them out of their own building, thus alienating precisely those students that needed to be won over. And, predictably, the NUS has played a lamentable

role in the whole affair; their "total and unqualified support" amounting to so much verbiage when the vital necessity is to extend the struggle to other colleges.

But whatever the outcome of this present struggle—which looks like being called off without any gains—it is clear that the Polytechnics have emerged as an important force in the student milieu. The binary system, which for so long has had the effect of splitting the student body and localising conflicts, is rebounding on those who would wish to perpetuate it. The fusion of the contradictions implicit in a cheap education policy for which this lower half is being forced to take the brunt, the extreme form of regimentation in relation to the university which is thereby necessitated, and the frustrated aspirations of the students, whose entry qualifications do not mark them off from their much more fortunate brothers in the university, will combine with the crisis in bourgeois ideology to produce, one might predict, a truly explosive situation which could produce the sort of situation which we have come to expect only from the Continent.

J. R. Clynes

## MOLEHILLS

SOME NECK

Pride and joy of the Unionist regime in the North of Ireland is the shiny "New University of Ulster" at Coleraine. Unfortunately it is being spoiled by that curse of the colleges—the students.

The Reverend Paisley's *Protestant Telegraph*, raging at the waste of taxpayers' money involved in the showing of the Tricolour and Starry Plough by the Queens University Belfast Republican Club, goes on to reveal another abomination.

The graduates of Coleraine have chosen as the design for their post-graduate scarf a plain red background, with silhouettes of Leon Trotsky all over it. Three firms have already tendered for the supply of the scarves.

What the good "Doctor" does not reveal is that after the University Senate issued a public statement, in which they said that the meeting which chose the design was "not representative of the graduates", the Union called the best-attended general meeting there has been in the University, and proceeded to give massive backing to the decision.

Stop press: Students at Coleraine have occupied administrative offices.

### IMMEDIATE FREEDOM FOR GLUNTON! POLITICAL ASYLUM FOR GLUNTON!

Glunton Dowdell, black militant and a member of the Revolutionary League of Black Workers, has been living in "humanitarian" asylum from the U.S.A. in Sweden for the last twelve months. He now faces the prospect of being sent back to the U.S., after being brought to trial on charges of which he is innocent. He has been imprisoned and refused any communication outside except with his lawyer. The status of humanitarian asylum in Sweden is granted to deserters from the U.S. armed forces, persecuted Jews from Poland, etc.—but Glunton had to leave the U.S. because of political repression; he can still be sent back there unless he is granted political asylum.

This move is an indication of the way the Swedish government is moving: it has recently been seeking closer contact with the U.S. for advice and aid in solving its economic problems. But it cannot make such approaches successfully unless it concretely shows its willingness to cooperate. The victimisation of Glunton is only one of such manifestations.

The solidarity committee set up in his defence is calling on all revolutionary organisations and labour movement organisations to

support his case. Members should try and pass resolutions of solidarity, supporting the two demands above. These messages should be sent immediately to:

Solidarity Committee for Glunton Dowdell  
c/o David Bararesqatan  
26A Stockholm  
Sweden.

### EVENTS

MONDAY: Birmingham Red Circle, 7.30, The Black Swan, Bromsgrove Street, Digbeth.

TUESDAY: Oxford Red Circle, 34 Minster Road, Contact Mart in Meleyard, 46127.

WEDNESDAY: Stafford Red Circle, 8 p.m., Dog & Partridge, South Walls.

THURSDAY: Glasgow Red Circle, Christian Institute, Bothwell Street, 7.30.

THURSDAY: Norwich Red Circle, Festival House pub opp. St. Andrews Hall, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY: Ealing Red Circle, The Anchor, Usbridge Road (next to Daniels), 7.30.

EVERY TUESDAY: Vietnam Solidarity Committee meets, Queens Arms, Penton St, N.1, 7.30, to work for April 24th Rally & Demo. Everyone interested in helping is welcome.

MARCH 26th: "Fight the racist Immigration Bill"—public meeting, Fishmongers Arms (opp. Wood Green Civic Centre, 2 mins. from Wood Green tube), 7.15. Speakers: Tariq Ali, Gery Lawless, Abasingh Bandara, Bob Gregory. Organised by IMG, North London Branch. Ring 278 2616.

MARCH 28th: Day Seminar on "Social causes and consequences of addiction", organised by Socialist Medical Association, NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, Holborn. Tickets 5/- a session, 10/- all day. Contact T. C. Thomas, 54 Finchley Court, Ballards Lane, London N3 1NH (01-346 5867).

MARCH 28th: "Urban insurgency in Northern Ireland"—film depicting life in Belfast under British military occupation. 8 p.m., The Roebuck, Tottenham Court Road (Warren St/Goodge St tube), 20p. Discussion, Irish Solidarity Campaign.

MARCH 29th: Newly-formed West London Socialist Woman Group meets, Acton Town Hall, Ctise Room 3, Ring Leonora Lloyd, 574 7407.

MARCH 30th: "Peaceful coexistence—the politics of class collaboration", North London Red Circle discussion. 8 p.m., 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1 (Kings X tube).

MARCH 30th: Central London Socialist Woman Group meeting. 8 p.m., George IV pub, Pentonville Road (corner Cuming Street). Kings X tube. Ring Felicity Todd, 837 9987.

APRIL 3rd: VSC Benefit Night, Four Poster Folk Group and others. 8 p.m., The Roebuck, Tottenham Court Road (Warren St/Goodge St tube). See box for other details.

APRIL 8th: Teachers' Red Circle, 8 p.m., George IV pub, Pentonville Road, London N.1 (Kings XI Tube). Topic: "Education in the Soviet Union from the Revolution

## 5th. column

The latest recruit to the Tories' front bench in the House of Lords is the 31-year-old Earl of Gowrie. He will replace Lord Bethel as a Government junior whip. Bethel resigned following allegations about his connection with Victor Louis, the well-known freelance agent for the KGB. It seems that the Tories are so desperate to get some talent into the front bench in the Lords that they are willing to forgive and forget Cowrie's former left-wing views.

I wonder, does the Earl still think that Russia is state capitalist?

Colonel Gerald Kherli of the U.S. Air Force was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by a U.S. court martial in Vietnam last month, and fined \$15,000. Col. K. was not involved in My Lai. He did not take part in that killing of 102 Vietnamese civilians.

His crime, his horrible crime, was that he smoked pot.

Pity the Irish Minister for Defence and his top brass advisers. The recent promotion of Col. Patrick "Baldie" Delaney to be Chief of Staff has left a vacancy at the head of army intelligence. Delaney was Director of Intelligence for one year, having replaced the purged Col. M. J. "Hef" Hefferon. During that year he purged the intelligence section so well that there is no one of any talent left to replace him.

Any suggestions should be sent to Dept. G.2, Red House, Infirmary Road, Park Gate, Dublin.

For all the furore in the press about the posting of the Duke of Kent to Ulster, Fleet Street had very little space to report the departure of his Grace 19 days later. The Duke with his unit, "Charlie" Squadron, Royal Scots Greys, loaded their armoured cars at Larne for Stranraer in Scotland.

On board cabins were available for the Ponce and the other officers. His "Jacks" including the drivers of the armoured cars had to make do with sleeping on the decks without even sleeping bags.

In its editorial "To end the postal strike", the *Guardian* of February 26th, after appealing for "a more sensible relationship between pay rises and increased productivity", and declaring that "it will be better if the Government 'wins'... in the postal strike" (note, no illusions about whether or not the strike was "political"), went on to make a prophetic forecast which laid bare the class nature of the activities of the TUC: "The probability remains that the TUC will do everything it can to avoid anything that looks like a general strike situation. It is comforting



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WE RECOGNISE OUR OLD FRIEND,  
OUR OLD MOLE, WHO KNOWS SO  
WELL HOW TO WORK UNDERGROUND  
SUDDENLY TO APPEAR:  
THE REVOLUTION



# THE SEAMENS UNION

## a model for Robert Carr?

### INTRODUCTION

*This interview emerged from a conversation with several militants in an East London branch of the National Union of Seamen (NUS). The individuals concerned do not wish to have their names revealed in print because they fear reprisals from both the NUS and the Shipping Federation. This is the first real report published in a socialist newspaper on the situation of militants in the NUS after the famous strike of 1966. It shows very clearly the tensions that exist in the union and the way the union bureaucracy collaborates with the bosses and the capitalist governments. The NUS is the sort of union that Robert Carr and the Tories want for every sector of industry, and this interview should therefore be studied in detail by militants in other industries. In printing it, The Red Mole declares itself in solidarity with the moles on shore and aboard ships who are fighting against heavy odds.*

—Perhaps you can start off by telling us something about the pay and conditions under which you work?

Pay and conditions for British seamen are among the worst in the world. They are little better than those endured by Spanish and Greek seamen, even though there are fascist dictatorships in those countries. We have been fighting the shipowners and the leaders of our own union for years over a number of issues. Low pay, of course, is a major problem: German seamen, for example, can earn over four times as much as we do. But we've been fighting since the war for the most elementary rights—shop stewards on ships, the repeal of the penal and disciplinary clauses in the Merchant Shipping Acts, redundancy compensation, better safety regulations and so on. I think it's true to say that the tremendous militancy the rank and file have developed in the last ten years or so, has been over issues which other trade unionists either don't face—although they're going to be facing them when Carr gets his anti-union Bill through—or over which they've made much more progress because they've not had to face the same degree of obstruction and class collaboration from their union leadership. As trade unionists we face problems which are quite unique for British workers and at the same time we have probably the most degenerate union leadership in the country.

We can take some of these questions in more detail later on, but let me tell you about the wages first of all. Back in 1960, after an unofficial strike by the rank and file, the union executive settled for just over £40 a month for a 56-hour week. That's £10 a week! If you wanted to survive then you had to work a lot of overtime. In all the figures I'm going to give you now, you should keep in mind the fact that being paid monthly means you are paid for 28 days' work—if a particular month happens to have 31 days in it, then that's tough luck because you work those 3 days for nothing. Anyway... when the men heard the terms of this agreement in 1960, they immediately came out on unofficial strike again. Although this achieved only a very small increase, it was a big breakthrough for rank and file militancy, and as a result of this, the demand for a 44-hour week without loss of pay became a slogan. This was conceded in 1961 after we threatened to take action again. By 1965, after small annual rises, we gained a rise to £59 12s 6d a month, but the executive conceded to the employers the 56-hour week again in return! The employers worked everybody flat out.

By 1966 the seamen had really had enough and they came out for a 40-hour week and a round £60 a month... and remember that's still only £15 a week, which left many seamen's families living below National Assistance levels. That was a really bitter strike—the first really political strike in this country for many years because the Labour Party were putting their prices and incomes policy into effect and we were fighting to get a survival wage. After six weeks of strike on a strike pay of £3 a week,

But again, the executive without any reservations endorsed this Inquiry which allowed the owners to cut the navigation watch—saving the shipowners lots of overtime money and killing lots of seamen in the process (shipowners have their insurance so well sewn up that they don't give a fuck if a few of their older vessels go to the bottom). Since then, there have been small rises, but usually under agreements where the executive give away concessions that enable the owners to cut overtime. Feeling has been running so high since 1966 that, combined with the effects of inflation, the executive negotiating committee put in for a "substantial" claim which was quickly converted into a claim for a parity with shore workers by pressure from the rank and file. The ship owners replied with horror that this would amount to 50%—well, they said it, so we put in for 50%. July 1970 gave us 20%, and we put in immediately for another 20%, but it looks as if Carr will try very hard to bring it into line with postmen, power workers, etc.

So you see, even in 1971 we are still earning money which is way below £20 a week. Most seamen have to do a great deal of overtime—when it's available—to support their families. The composition of the labour force reflects this—most seamen are either very young, in which case they do a few years at sea before they marry and settle on shore, or else they are in their fifties, single and acclimatised to the life. This has been erected into a justification for low wages by the shipowners in the past. With continental seamen the opposite principle has been made to apply—seamen are paid at rates above the shore worker average to compensate for the breakup of family life and the enforced leisure on board ship. Such a principle has never been accepted in Britain either by the shipowners or by the union leadership.

—Perhaps you can tell us something about the Merchant Shipping Act? What changes did the Labour Party introduce with their Merchant Shipping Bill in 1970?

Yes. This is a rather unique piece of legislation which British seamen have been living under for over 70 years—1894 to be precise. The Act gives the masters on the ships very wide ranging powers. It enables the master, while at sea or in port, to "log" his men for disciplinary offences. For drunkenness, or—and it states this—what the master considers to be drunkenness, you forfeit a day's pay and are fined another day's pay. For missing work—for any reason which the master chooses not to accept—you could be fined in a similar way. What is more, you are taxed on your forfeits. Now there is no power of appeal against the master. His word is absolute. For other offences—disobeying an order, refusing to do a certain job, and what is more serious, "combining" with somebody else to refuse to do this job—you can be tried by a paramilitary court and imprisoned on board. Every seaman can give you examples of the use of this Act, after which a man has returned home from voyages having worked scores of hours of overtime but with only a few pounds in his pocket to show for it. But that isn't the end of the master. At the end of every voyage, the master gives a report on your "conduct" which is stamped indelibly into your papers. Basically there are two categories—V.G. and D.R. If the master hasn't noticed you during the voyage, you get a "Very Good". But if he considers that you've been guilty of some small "indiscipline", then you get a "Decline to Report". This can be fatal for seamen. It makes it almost impossible to get work from the Shipping Federation that handles all jobs in British Shipping. In addition to this, you can be demoted, as it were, to being an "unestablished seaman"—that is, reduced to the status of a "floater" or a casual labourer. Under this arrangement, you lose all right to the benefit you collect when you are in the Pool or unemployed under the Established Service Scheme. Equally, you can have all previous service neutralised as far as calculating any redundancy

Now, the Merchant Shipping Act stipulated that all seamen are under individual contracts to the Shipping Federation, and these contracts are formalised in the Established Service Scheme as an Established Service Contract. Now, it is quite impossible to strike under this arrangement. If you go on strike, you "terminate your contract". Under the Merchant Shipping Act you can be prosecuted for that. Now, any decision by a man to disobey an order is a breach of contract, and any breach of contract is a strike—there is no difference in the employer's eyes. During the 1960 strike, two strike leaders in Liverpool were served with injunctions under the Act preventing them, and I quote, from "inciting or persuading and from conspiring with one another to break their contracts of employment"—and one man went to prison for disobeying it, and another received a jail sentence though it was later quashed.

Now, you asked me about the new Merchant Shipping Bill which Labour brought in in 1970. They sneaked this through just before they left office after the NUS had pressurised the TUC and the Labour Party for years. Under this new Bill, the penal and disciplinary clauses were retained. Not only were they retained, they were ratified and extended. The new Bill allows bigger fines and loggings for the same offences. Fines, on summary conviction, of up to £100 for drunkenness; disobeying an order with one or more shipmates becomes criminal conspiracy for which you can be prosecuted in a criminal court, and being "absent without leave" makes a seaman liable to the shipowners for damages of up to £100. What the Bill has done has taken the arbitrariness out of the proceedings and laid down guidelines within which the masters can go about their everyday business of putting money back into the pockets of the shipowners and the state. The new Bill admits that seamen have the right to strike, but only if they give 48 hours' notice, otherwise it is a breach of legal contract, and this was won as a right in '66 anyway. It should always be remembered that the 1966 strike was in fact a "termination of agreements" and a termination which the NUS gave the owners plenty of notice of! The new Bill also removes loopholes which could be previously exploited—for instance, it was technically possible to legalise a desertion if the ship could be proved unsafe. The new Bill also waives certain safety regulations. So you see, we seamen don't have many illusions as to who it is that the Labour Party really represent. What's more, our own union's record over this Act is equally appalling.

The executive have blocked strike action against the Act for years. We were tactically in a position to demand its repeal during the '66 strike. But the executive council continued to pressurise the Labour government for its repeal on the one hand and negotiated with the Shipping Federation for shipboard disciplinary committees on the other. Although they are not in practice they are useless anyway; two officers, two ratings, and the captain with the casting vote! Hogarth tells us that this was "a great step forward for democracy" and Spruhan (Assist. Gen. Sec.) said that the Labour Bill gave us 99% of what we wanted!

—If and when the Tory anti-union Bill gets onto the statute book, it's going to make it very much harder to destroy this Act, isn't it?

Yes, of course. The Tory Bill will reinforce the Merchant Shipping Act and generalise some of its features to workers across the country as a whole. This is why it is so fucking important that the NUS apparatus, not to mention the TUC, should conduct an enormous propaganda campaign to illustrate to workers in Britain the state of affairs that the Tories wish to see the unions reduced to. Because, my God, you can see a precise model of what the Tories have in mind if you examine the merchant navy and the state of the NUS. The Tory Bill is designed to smash the power of the shop floor—we, in the NUS, don't even have shop stewards on ships! It's designed to back up employers with

ture and our rule book are what the Tories want to see in practice in all unions—no union democracy, the branches having no power over the executive, and the union bureaucracy reduced to a tool of class collaboration. Let nobody be under any illusions that the employers don't make use of the right to fine and imprison workers who are under legally enforceable con-

tracts—we know, because we've suffered this and continue to suffer it. We can be prosecuted now for conspiracy if we even talk of strike let alone actually walk off. We live under the constant threat of this and the shipowners, use their 'rights' all the time to throw people out of the merchant navy for disobedience, bad character, 'or any other unsuitability', by terminating their contract with the individual seaman, quite openly and legally.

The provision for this is stated in black and white in the Established Service Scheme. Our Executive is a model of what the Tories want—they conclude agreements all the time with the Shipping Federation above the heads of the membership and they are under no obligation to report back to the membership on the course of the negotiation. Our union also takes the opportunity to expel people who criticize the union in print or advocate strike action. Again, the proposal that unions have to give notice of termination of contracts should mystify nobody—in 1966 the NUS gave the shipowners plenty of notice of strike, and they used it. Tankers were diverted in time and this enormously reduced the effectiveness of the strike; other owners transferred cargoes to foreign ships. This brings up another point of course—in the merchant navy we know from experience how important international co-operation is. The Tory Bill would seek to make this illegal by placing requests for international co-operation from other unions under the category of conspiracy. The NUS leadership in 1966 were terrified of the shipowners and actually asked the International Transport Workers Federation not to black British ships in foreign ports. We are aware, perhaps more than others, that internationalization of capital gives the employers greatly increased powers to defeat workers—and the Tory proposals have an eye to the Common Market, make no mistake. We know only too well, the pressures that can be brought to bear on individual militants—the Shipping Federation in co-operation with the NUS find it the easiest thing in the world to freeze militants out of the industry and to intimidate them with all kinds of legal threats in order to demoralize them. Of course, the long term aim of the proposals, which is to destroy shop floor power and make the union leadership an instrument of class collaboration, takes time. But if you want to see what it looks like when it's been achieved then look at the NUS.

What kind of performance have the NUS put up during the campaign against the Tory proposals?

Absolutely hopeless. The NUS executive have done nothing—no strike action, no banners on demonstrations, no propaganda. The rank and file have taken action where they could, including walk-offs on January 12th. But these mean little when ships are in port.

The one and only action that the union executive have taken over the Bill is very significant. As you know, the Bill will outlaw the pre-entry closed shop. Now the shipowners are so fond of the NUS that they recently went to see Carr to ask him if he wouldn't be so kind as to drop this as far as NUS were concerned. At the same time, Hogarth went to see Carr too. You see, the entire rank and file membership of the NUS, which conducts a closed shop with the Shipping Federation, want one thing from the NUS: to get out. We want to destroy the NUS and merge into the T&G. Now Hogarth has said he will fight this to his last breath—and he means it, because he has interests to protect. He has his position (elected for life), his pension, his gratuities and so forth, and he doesn't want to give this up. He is not interested in the membership at all; if he were, then he would say OK let's merge with the T&G. You see, the



# seamens union cont.

rupt—the main cause of this is that the officials took a large rise recently, and for a membership of under 40,000 who have one official to every 300 men, that's a lot of money (most unions have one official for every 3,000 men). The leadership is going to be facing a revolt later on this year when they'll be forced to raise the weekly contribution to about 10/- a week. If they lose the closed shop, they lose the £5 entry fee levied on new members—and in the merchant navy that's a lot of money because new workers are always coming and going in the industry. If they lose the closed shop, then they lose us, and that's the long and the short of it. The result of these negotiations emerged last week—the NUS has been exempted from the clause abolishing the closed shop. We can only speculate what Hogarth has sold in return for this—probably our wage claim.

—Can you give us some other examples of the way in which the leadership of the NUS has acted over the years?

Yes. They've a long history of sell-outs to their credit; cowardice during the '66 strike and over the Merchant Shipping Acts, allowing Cunard to create redundancies in 1967, conceding demanning without compensation, giving away paid leave for Sundays spent at sea, and so on.

But let's look at some of the agreements they've concluded on issues over which we've fought for many years. I've already mentioned that they were prepared to accept reductions in the navigational watch. They've constantly pandered to the owners' criminal mentality in the excuses they've given in the past for not taking action against the Act. They accept the safety argument, you see. The argument long ceased to apply that you had to discipline seamen, otherwise they get so drunk that they drown all the passengers and the cargo. The only people who get drowned these days are the seamen—and not through our own fault but through that of the owners. The bulk of ships sailing nowadays are cargo ships. This shift to freight has been accompanied by the most criminal reduction in crews. Most British ships, passenger or cargo, sail with skeleton crews. The NUS says nothing about this. It covers it up by repeating the same old argument about drunkenness. There are dozens of examples I could give of the mentality of the owners and the masters. For example, there was a case recently on a ship in the Atlantic. When an empty crate stowed on deck came loose, six men were sent out to relash it. In the heavy sea these men were washed overboard and killed. The master didn't bother to go back and look for them because "it was a heavy sea". Their families received no compensation even after an "independent" inquiry had looked into the case.

Related to safety is the problem of redundancy. The labour force has been cut enormously since the war. The redundancy compensation scheme negotiated in 1968 after the withdrawal of the Queens requires a little more explanation.

You see, there is constant insecurity of employment in the merchant navy. All seamen are registered with the Shipping Federation under articles or legally binding contracts. This might appear to give us security but it operates to the advantage of the shipowners. The Shipping Federation acts as an employment agency, but selects from a controlled body of skilled men. This Scheme was agreed in 1947 and it has given the Shipping Fed. complete power in return for a few benefits. The Pool (the Shipping Federation, where men have to report every day for work and hang around until a ship turns up) can break their contract with an individual seaman if he is guilty of misconduct "prejudicial to good order or discipline", if you're inefficient or medically unfit. Now, these things are decided by the masters and ships doctors, with no effective redress available to the men. The Merchant Shipping Act maintains discipline on board ship, and the Established Service Scheme, which interlocks with it, enables the shipowners

to cut and shape the labour force as they wish. Individual militants can be, and are, thrown out of the service, and the NUS, which doesn't like militants anyway, isn't keen to take up individual cases on appeal and perhaps risk treading on the owners' toes. It states quite openly in the Scheme that its function is to give the owners a "reliable" labour force and one whose size they can adjust according to the state of the trade (seasonal variations as well as long term contraction). The contract doesn't give you the prescriptive right to employment, but it does give the companies the right to employ you when and where they please, even in a lower grade, on pain of suspension, loss of payments, etc. This whole arrangement facilitates "invisible" redundancy. If a ship takes on two dozen men out of the Pool on one voyage, when the voyage is over, the owners make necessary alterations, containerisation for instance, or automatic navigation, and then take 18 different men back on the next voyage. Technically, no redundancy has taken place. Those six men mightn't be able to find work, so they "voluntarily" leave the service. In addition to this, there are two categories of seamen: established and unestablished. This, as they openly state, enables them to take on casuals at peak period. It also provides a sort of pool into which you are demoted, carrying with it all sorts of loss of benefits, job opportunities, etc. It acts as a kind of dump in which old Established seamen can be dropped just when they're coming up to pension age—any medical excuse can be found.

As for this redundancy payments scheme that's been negotiated, this really isn't worth the paper it's written on. In fact it saves the owners money. Since 1968 only £1,400 has been paid out in redundancy; before 1968 the owners had to pay upwards of £140,000 to the state levy. Now they're exempt. The way it operates is that you get a lump sum calculated on "continuous service". Now, this is something few seamen have—either they have suspensions, they leave the service temporarily for a period of months or years because of bad pay, and so on. Now the terms for qualification are really vicious. All service over 25 years before redundancy doesn't count. Older men lose out straight away, of course. Again, if you have gaps of more than 26 weeks in service, even if due to illness, this disqualifies all previous service in the calculation—and there are many men who have been off sick for more than six months owing to accidents at sea. Any gap of more than 12 weeks, before or after 1968, disqualifies for service. If you fail to report at the Pool every day, your service can be broken. In other industries a terminal payment is made, sometimes of a couple of thousand pounds, but here you're lucky if you get a couple of hundred.

—Apart from the backwardness of trade union bureaucrats in general, what specific historical reasons are there, do you think, for the degeneration of the NUS leadership?

Well, a great deal has been said both by the NUS and by writers outside the industry about the difficulty of effective trade unionism when most of your membership is scattered across the world. But when you look into the history of the union, you can see that the rank and file have conducted a fight for many years to build a union structure which overcame these physical difficulties. Take the issue of ship board representation for instance. This has been fought for since before the war. You see, there have never been shop stewards on ships. This fact, combined with the powers that the master and owners have, means that life on board ship is hell—it is dangerous, the hours are long, and the master can cut your pay by all kinds of penalties. The point is that there is no representation on the ship itself, and therefore by the time the union takes up the case, the master and his ship have sailed, the witnesses are on the other side of the world, and so on. Men know from experience that there is no point in pressing a case and so when they come ashore they just want to get away from the ship and

drawn their sorrows. Of course people go on being killed as a result of NUS impotence. Now, the shipowners have never had to oppose shipboard representation, because the union executive has done it for them. If you flick back over the AGMs, you will see that nearly every year since the war, the branches have put up motions for representation which have been opposed by the executive. The reasons the executive give for opposing it are very interesting. One argument they used was that shop stewards could easily be victimised—but this is just an apology for the cowardice of the executive before the shipowners. The second argument is political. Yates, gen. sec. from 1947 to 1960, used the argument time and time again that ship's committees or delegates were nothing more than attempts by Communists in the union to undermine the work of the union! that these committees would mislead the crew! and that the trouble-makers would be bringing about situations which the executive couldn't control!

In other words, the NUS were saying that effective trade unions would damage the NUS! In fact, the degeneration of the NUS has nothing to do with physical conditions, labour turnover, etc. It is the result of political and economic pressures exercised on the union by the shipowners and by the state who always back this section of employers (whether Labour are in power or Tory). We are strategically vital to British capitalism. The state has always backed them to the hilt. It is obvious when you consider the potential power we have. To walk off in a foreign port, or a withdrawal of labour at sea, can cripple whole sections of industry. Again, the seamen could defeat any anti-union Bill that the Tories wanted to pass simply by striking for a few days. So you see it is very important for the capitalist class as a whole to have the clauses in the Merchant Shipping Act which enable them to fine and jail strikers, and it is vital for them that no shipboard representation comes about. Now all union bureaucracy can be turned against the interests of the workers. This is done all the time by the employers. But in shipping, the state and the employers together exercise more than normal pressure in this direction.

When the NUS was set up by Havelock Wilson before the First World War, it was a militant union. But during the war, Wilson was patted on the back by the government and told that if the boys made great sacrifices at sea, they would all share in a better world afterwards, etc. Of course, after the war the government backed the shipowners, and things became worse, not better. The same thing happened in the Second World War. The leadership of the NUS scabbed on the General Strike of 1926, they backed strike-breaking unions financially, and at one point (1922) were even expelled from the TUC. The British economy more than any other capitalist economy depends on the sea—that's why our pay and conditions are similar to that of the Greek and Spanish seamen. It's no accident that we have the most reactionary rule-book of all British trade unions, nor that we're unable to control the executive council. Only the general secretary and several sea-going members of the executive are elected—the rest are officials appointed by the general secretary. It's not accidental that many of these officials have worked for the Shipping Federation before and after being in the NUS, nor that some have worked for IRIS (Industrial Research and Information Services) whose main job is seeking out communists in industry and building files for the employers. The NUS has finally allowed convenors on board ship, but they are carefully selected by the officials and have no power on board ship anyway, acting as information links only with the bureaucracy on shore. Red-baiting has been rife—Hogarth got his post from Jim Slater in the 1962 elections by creating a huge red scare and using the official union magazine to do it with. Yates reckoned that the 1960 strike was the work of Communists even though decisions were taken unanimously by all the men in the ports at the time. Wilson used it of course during the '66 strike and got sections of the capitalist press to cooperate with him on this.

The union has always sabotaged from the start any hope of progress. The negotiating committee set up to look into the redundancy scheme was selected by the executive and consisted of British Rail men who weren't affected by it. The state has always loaded any Inquiries into shipping. The Rochdale Inquiry, which favoured general purpose manning, is an excellent example of how the state always backs the owners—the men nominated by the Government to represent the trade union side had nothing whatever to do with shipping: Frank Chapple and Les Cannon, two of the most right-wing trade unionists in the business.

—What action do the rank and file intend to take?

The rank and file must find ways by forming organisations in the ports to control the decisions taken by branches in order to pressurise the NUS executive. This alone will not be enough though, because the make-up of the executive allows it to be controlled by Hogarth and his friends, and they rarely heed the decisions of branches anyway. Our only real answer is to pile on the pressure by militant activity to bring about a merger with the T&GWU. This will give us new rules to work under and allow us to channel the militancy that exists on every ship into a cohesive shape to fight the shipowners. Believe me, seamen don't suffer from many political illusions. They understand the role the NUS has played, and hatred of it is universal. They would willingly burn down the branches, many of them, but this of course leads nowhere. We have to channel this aggression into a fighting weapon with a thought-out strategy. At the moment we are building a rank and file organisation around a paper called *The Seaman's Charter*, and I would urge any seaman who reads this interview to read it and support it. We built a similar movement once before known as the National Seamen's Reform Movement. This did valuable work during the period of militancy in the sixties, but its individual leaders became victimised, frozen out of the industry, and so on. Some good militants went into the executive where they still fight, but where they are isolated. We have to organise around this objective of getting into the T&G. Not because we blindly trust the T&G leadership or imagine it can fight all our battles for us, but because it gives us a new framework. This will be a hard fight—against the Shipping Federation, the Tories and the NUS itself. Remember that in 1962 500 Glasgow tugmen had to strike for five weeks before they could get into the T&G. It has done good work for those seamen lucky enough to get into it—7,000 members in deep-sea fishing vessels, for instance, have gained exemption from the Merchant Shipping Act. Another example is the coastal dredgers. A few years ago, the pay and conditions on this job were abominable. Under the T&G, the men have gained one-week on-one-week-off and £60 a week. Getting into the T&G would mean we would have the backing of a large organisation able to coordinate strike support, able to find funds, and able to do necessary research (we have two researchers in NUS, one an ex-IRIS man). The T&G would have to fight the employers to get us out, but this is not beyond its ability—although we have to reach the rank and file in that union too. There is no other real option. Breakaway unions haven't succeeded in the past—the Pilkington example is fresh in everybody's mind where militants left the

The point is that we have the fighting resources. The leading militants have already organised to fight in the branches and take ships on short runs that enable them to be in the right place at the right time. The militancy that has built up in the sixties is still very high. We have learnt a lot from our mistakes. A lot of younger members have entered the industry during the last ten years and have quickly become militants. This makes it easier to fight the constant tendency to demoralisation in our ranks and it also means that men acquire a political perspective more easily in the merchant navy than probably any other industry.

GMWU to form a new Glasworkers Union and were frozen out.



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# IRELAND: REPUBLICANISM

We have seen recently one of the most hysterical campaigns the British press has run for a long time. Headlines scream about "IRA murders" and "Chicago-style" warfare in Belfast. The deaths of three young soldiers have made a deep impression, and British public opinion is being groomed for further repressive measures in the North of Ireland. Already right-wing Unionist M.P.s are calling for immediate internment of known IRA militants, and we can expect an escalation not only of the number of troops, but in the depth of the repression against the nationalist population.

It is necessary to take a long cool look at the situation in the Six Counties, to discern, behind the propaganda barrage, what is really happening, and to prepare for political work geared to combatting the plans of British imperialism.

## RESURGENCE OF REPUBLICANISM

The first factor which must be noted about the current situation is the resurgence of Republicanism. The civil rights phase has been superseded, and the old mark of Irish politics is back—the gun. That the civil rights movement, which seemed to be a new breakthrough in politics in Ireland, should inevitably have led to the situation where the Catholics are looking to physical force Republicanism as a solution to their problems, was not widely foreseen by the British left. Nevertheless, it flows inexorably from the very fact that, for the first time in fifty years, the power of that brutal Orange state was effectively challenged. This opened up all the old contradictions resulting from one-third of the population reflecting the state in which they lived, and being kept in subjugation by force of arms. When the power of that state weakened, inevitably the forces which represented the unquenchable aspiration for national unity, would come to the fore.

## THE BRITISH ARMY V. THE PEOPLE

It was inevitable too that the presence of British troops in the Six County area would lead to clashes with the Catholic people. Although the Catholics had welcomed, or at least tolerated, the troops in August 1969, they did so because they were faced with an imminent pogrom situation, which the troops prevented.

However, two factors have changed this attitude; first, the people in the Catholic ghettos now have the capability to defend themselves against any future attacks; secondly, the role of the troops (that of controlling any independent factors in the situation, while British imperialism tries to find a long-term solution) has meant that they have been trying to prevent the build-up of this defensive capacity, and have thus earned the hostility of the oppressed minority. This combines with their traditional loathing for the uniform of the British Army. Starting with arms searches, reacting to the hostility of the people with wide and more and more indiscriminate arrests, the troops have succeeded in polarising against themselves every section of the Catholic ghettos.

A typical "clash" between British troops and "extremist elements", would take the form of some young people being pushed around, their reacting with stones, the bringing in of more troops, more stones, the troops using CS gas. The gas affects only the people who can't get away from it; so old people, sick people, and very young children are the only serious victims. This means a reply with petrol bombs and often the use of guns, as older men start protecting their area.

There are two classic examples of this. The first was the arms search and curfew in the Lower Falls, Belfast, in July 1970. Having ordered the inhabitants of the area into their houses, and soaked the area well with CS gas, the troops proceeded to tear the house apart in a search for arms, arresting people wholesale, gunning down three men, and running over another with an armoured car. People in the area can testify to their house being broken up, religious ornaments being smashed, and money being stolen. This led to a 16-hour gun-battle between the British Army and the Official IRA. Afterwards it was admitted that the curfew had been entirely illegal, and that only a tiny quantity of arms was found. It was this which broke the uneasy truce between the British Army and the inhabitants of the Catholic ghettos; all further escalation can be traced back to this action by the British Army.

The second happened only a short time ago.



A "B" Special is issued firearms by a Royal Ulster Constabulary sergeant.

strike, but television and radio did not report the real facts, and there was no reference to it in the newspapers later.

The *Irish Times* report concerns an incident at the Unity Flats on Saturday February 27th, following the weekly parade of supporters of the Protestant Linfield Football Club, who do their best to show their contempt for the Catholic inhabitants of the flats, before going home to Shankill. This is always an explosive time, and the troops surround the flats, preventing entrance or exit during the time the Linfield supporters are passing. The report<sup>1</sup> says:

"After about ten minutes the Linfield fans were gone, past the flats and up home towards the Shankill road. . . . At the flats the police were beginning to move away also. . . . Troops began to push slightly against the crowd of Catholics which had knitted into a solid 200 . . . but still there seemed no need for concern.

"Quite unexpectedly two water cannons began to move towards the entrance of the flats' forecourt. A soldier was heard to say something ending with the words 'water cannon'. Whether he gave an order to fire them or not one of the water cannons was fired. A jet of water showered the crowd who backed further into the courtyard. Another jet followed, some missiles were thrown and at least three soldiers fired about a dozen rubber bullets.

"Whatever hopes there had been for a peaceful evening were gone. Now shower after shower of missiles descended on the troops who replied with volley after volley of rubber bullets, while streams from the water cannons swept the flats. . . .

"At one stage a grey van leaving the area had its windscreen smashed by a stone. A soldier shouted: 'Watch that van' and two soldiers rushed towards it. They pushed their rubber bullet guns in through the broken windscreen and fired several rounds of bullets at point blank range. They did the same through the side windows.

"The van driver was arrested and taken away.

Citizen's Defence Committee was filming the happenings. He left his camera in a shop, and was chased back into the shop by some soldiers. The shop owner, Mr. Austin, tried to stop them entering his shop:

"The man with the baton came forward slightly and, although Mr. Austin was standing in front of him, tried to get past.

"A scuffle followed. The soldier hit Mr. Austin several times across the head and arms with his baton. Mr. Austin grabbed the soldier round the neck and pushed him back towards the stairs. When this happened a soldier who was now at the top of the steps moved back slightly and leaned against the back banisters. He made two metallic sounds with his rifle, pointed it at Mr. Austin's forehead and screamed: 'If you don't move I'll f—ing shoot you.'

When one realises that the troops have been carrying out similar actions in all of the Catholic areas of Belfast for months now, and that there have been no such actions against Protestant areas, despite the known fact that there are large quantities of arms there; and that the brave hopes of progress towards civil rights which the British government promised have not materialised; that unemployment in the North of Ireland is rising rapidly, and that the inhabitants of these ghettos have no hope left of a decent life: it is hardly surprising that there should have developed deep bonds between them, and their armed vanguard—the Irish Republican Army.

## WHAT IS THE IRA?

The IRA is best known for its two campaigns against Northern Ireland, in 1939, and 1956. It was formed from that part of the Irish guerrilla army which after the struggle against Britain between 1918 and 1922 refused to accept the Treaty and the partition of Ireland. In the civil war against the forces of the "Free State", it failed to reverse this betrayal, and has existed ever since as an irregular army, dedicated to combatting British imperialism's hold on Ire-

land. Following the failure of the 1956-62 campaign, the leaders of the IRA spent a long time discussing the reasons for their failure.<sup>2</sup> What was important to them was not their military defeat but that they had failed to get the support of the Irish people. With such support their guerrilla war would have been invincible without it, despite the widespread sympathy they received, they were powerless against the armed might of British imperialism.

This long discussion had profound consequences. A large section of the movement began to realise the need for a clear idea of the kind of Ireland worth fighting for, and that the only perspective was to fight for a Workers Republic. This coincided with a move away from such practices as refusing to recognise courts, or to answer police questions, which had led militants needlessly going into prison, thus weakening the movement further; to a move to the dropping of the "abstentionist" policy of refusing to take seats if elected to Westminster or the Dail.

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## "OFFICIALS" AND "PROVISIONALS"

It was the latter point which was the ostensible reason for the split last year between the "Officials" and the "Provisionals". Following the decision of the Army Council in favour of ending the abstentionist policy, the 1970 Ard Fheis (Conference) of the Republican Movement's political wing, Sinn Fein, supported the abandonment by a small majority (which was not enough to make the necessary change in constitution).<sup>3</sup> A large number of the delegates walked out, setting up the "Provisional Army Council", and the "Caretaker Executive of S. Fein."

The differences were of course more profound than on the question of abstention: the Provisionals also rejected the socialist perspective of the Officials, and accuse the Officials not only of having sold out by recognising the "Treatyite" parliaments, but of being under communist influence.

## AUGUST 1969

But there was another issue, which has been the cause of the real deep bitterness between the two organisations, and that is the role of the Army Council during the August 1969 event in the North. The fact that, when the people Bogside and Falls were facing a pogrom by the "B" Specials and RUC, the Army Council did not send the arms which were available. Cath Goulding, the Chief of Staff, has explained the reasons for this<sup>4</sup>; they carry a great deal of conviction. However, the fact of the failure of the arms to appear, at a decisive moment, combined with the turn of the Officials away from pure physical force tactics, has enabled the Provisionals to label them as "pacifist" and accuse them of running down the armed section of the movement. In addition the Provisional has undoubtedly gone out of their way to prove their own militancy against the British troops. This has tended to obscure the fact of the longest engagement between British troops and Republican forces since the Black and Tans Wars was the 16-hour gun battle carried on by the Official IRA in the Lower Falls last July.

## OFFICIALS V. PROVISIONALS?

It is impossible at this stage to comment knowledgeably on the recent conflicts between Officials and Provisionals; however, it is important to note the role of the British Army and the British press.

For the last three months or more, there have been continual headlines about warfare between the two movements; there are two aspects of this reportage. Firstly, it has been (to say the least) inaccurate. For example, in January the newspapers were full of the incidents in which men were found tarred and feathered in the Lower Falls. They screamed about this being an internal feud in the IRA, and later reported (in very small type) that police thought that the men were in fact per criminals who had been punished by the IRA for burglary in the area. Republicans in the Lower Falls confirmed this to me when I visited Belfast at the end of January. They explained that these men had been breaking into houses, small shops and pubs under the mist



# vs. BRITISH IMPERIALISM

sentence with a fairly good grace, having had it emphasised to them that any further depredations against the people would lead to sterner punishment. (According to the British press, this was proof of the brutality and lawlessness of—the IRA!). Other incidents have been played up in a similar manner.

Important, also, is the language used in reporting the conflicts. They talk of "internal feuds", of the "militant breakaway Provisionals", and of the "regular IRA". In fact, the Officials and the Provisionals are two quite separate organisations, which operate generally in different areas. It seems fairly certain that the Provisionals can turn out larger numbers in conflicts with the Army, than the Officials, and that they have hegemony in more areas, certainly of Belfast. So that talk of them being a "breakaway" can only be calculated to sting them into proving their military capacity, and talk of the Provisionals being more "militant" must be designed to prod the Officials into proving their own "virility" (to use a favourite term of the same press).

## ARBITRATION MACHINERY

The British papers quite ignored the fact that in January the two organisations set up arbitration machinery to regulate any conflicts between them. It unfortunately seems evident that this machinery has broken down; however, the press has also largely ignored the fact that, at the time of writing, they are operating another truce. The pattern is clear: the press wishes to play up, and exacerbate, the conflicts, in the hope that the Officials and Provisionals will turn their guns on each other, rather than on their real enemy.

## THE BRITISH ARMY'S GAME

The British Army has been playing a similar game. When I commented to Republicans in the Falls on the dramatic absence of a British military presence there, compared to last July, they explained that after the first reported shooting between themselves and the Provisionals, the troops were immediately withdrawn! They could only construe this as a move dictated by the hope that there would be an extension of the conflict. So much for the British Army keeping the peace!

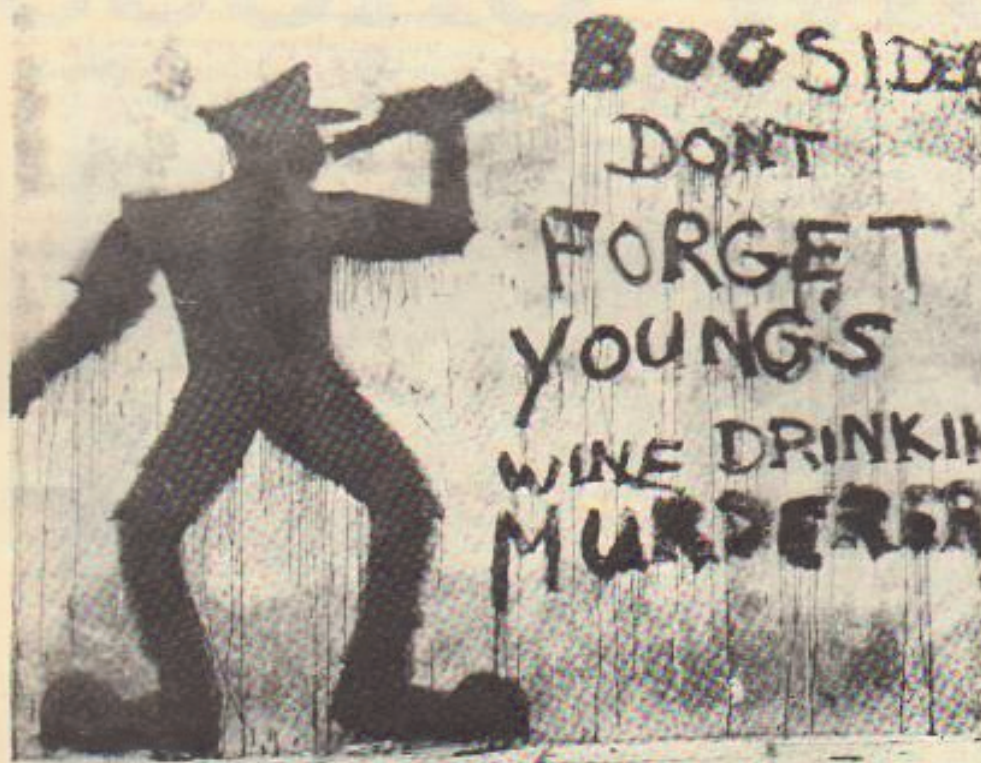
With the British press and Army so keen on Republican fighting Republican, it would be an obvious tragedy were the conflict to continue, and it is to be hoped that the present negotiations succeed. There is not enough evidence available, nor would it be helpful, in the present context to discuss the conflicts in detail; *The Red Mole* will try to get some material on this in future issues. However, it is necessary to state our attitude to both Republican organisations.

## UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT

We support both against British imperialism, and defend their right to take action against the British occupation forces. We have political differences with both, but we support their struggle unconditionally, as is the duty of every British revolutionary. We recognise both as the vanguard of the oppressed minority. We support them, and we support that minority, when they attack British troops. We support them when they throw stones, when they throw petrol bombs, and when they shoot at British troops. Unconditionally.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE OFFICIALS

Nevertheless, regular readers of *The Red Mole* will no doubt be aware that we have paid a great deal of attention to the evolution of the Official Republican Movement; it is clear from what we have written that we consider them to be the most important socialist organisation in Ireland today. We think that in the long term they will play a much greater role in liberating Ireland than will the Provisionals. This is not solely because of the fact that the Officials have embraced a socialist perspective; much more important is their capability of giving a political lead to the Irish people. In a situation where the British Army is smashing up Ardoyne or Ballymurphy, the Provisionals can gain widespread support for their military effectiveness. But were British imperialism suddenly to change its tactics, and not offer the minority this provocation, even if only for a period, the Provisionals would have no role to play within these communities. Whereas the Officials have been working patiently to raise the political conscious-



which was behind barricades in August '69, the Lower Falls, is the area where the officials are strongest; the experience of that struggle must have raised the general level of political consciousness.

## THE SHOOTING OF THE THREE SOLDIERS

Now the question of the shooting of the three soldiers in Belfast. To survey the British press is to feel a strong physical revulsion. Seldom have they been more hypocritical, or blatantly prejudiced. It is a tenet of bourgeois law that a man is innocent until proved guilty. Without any hesitation the British press has screamed the responsibility of an entire movement. In the atmosphere of hysteria they have whipped up, it will be impossible for any member of the IRA to get a fair trial on any charge, let alone the charge of killing these soldiers.

## WHAT THEY HAVE NOT CONDEMNED

They have not condemned the brutality of British imperialism which compelled the Irish people to develop an armed movement to fight for their freedom in the first place. They have not condemned the unemployment which forced young Scotsmen to join the Army. They did not wax hysterical over any of the 17-18 civilians who have been killed in the North in the last few months. They did not mourn when Charles O'Neill was run down by an armoured car in July '70 when trying to signal it to stop; they were not shocked when the troops told one of his neighbours, "Move on, you Irish bastard—there are not enough of you dead." They did not devote headlines to the death of Patrick

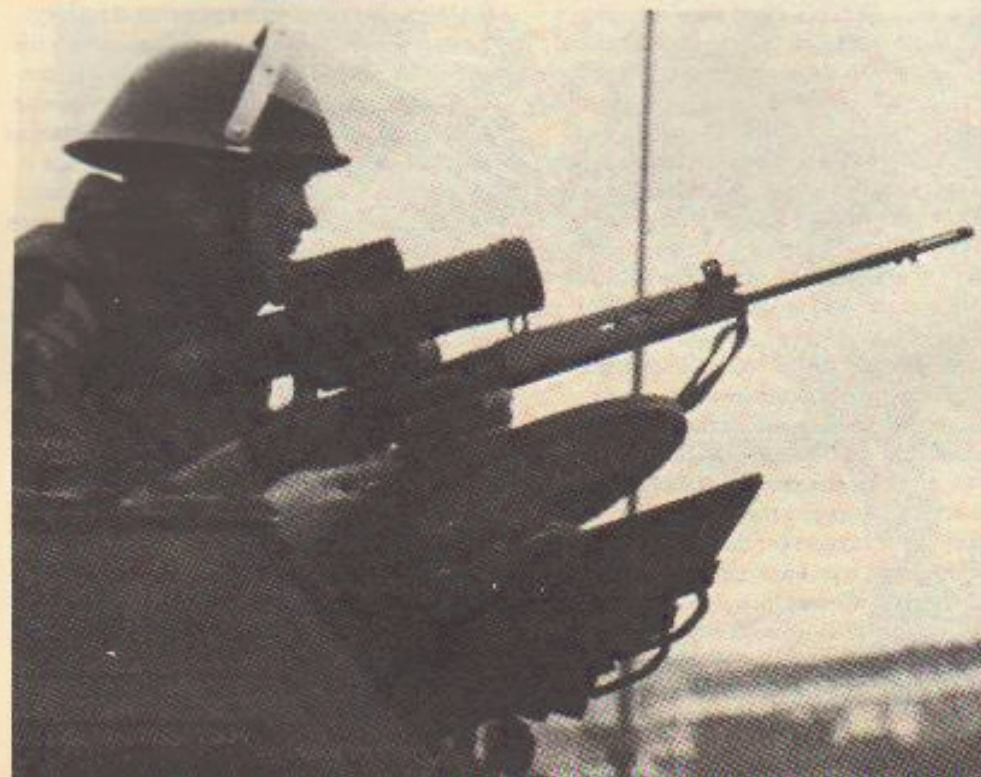
Elliman, shot down when taking a breath of fresh air during General Freeland's illegal curfew; nor did they scream when British soldiers subsequently broke down the door of his house, and having helped themselves to a cup of his tea, dozed down in the upstairs room while their victim was gasping out his life in hospital (it took him a week to die).<sup>5</sup>

## WHAT IS THE PROOF?

What is the proof that the IRA shot these soldiers? There is none. Some papers have mentioned, in passing, that both IRA's have issued denials. They have not mentioned the fact that it has been a rigid practice of the IRA, before and after the split, to announce its responsibility for actions which it has taken, and that there is no known case where they have denied responsibility for something, and it has later been proved that they were culpable.

## OTHER THEORIES

There are other theories that are at least as plausible on the basis of the evidence. For example, that the UVF were the culprits (the immediate demonstrations for internment of IRA leaders would be the kind of response they would hope to gain). The British press has not reported that the soldiers were last seen in the company of other soldiers; they have not commented on the strangeness of these soldiers being tempted away to a lonely place by people they could not have known, in a city where they would expect to have many enemies.<sup>6</sup>



## THE PURPOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN

The purpose of the press campaign is prompted neither by a desire for truth nor by sympathy with the victims. It is a ruthless attempt to set the scene for more repressive measures in the North. If the Stormont government does not introduce internment over this issue, the hysteria evoked will help them if they use some other incident as an excuse. The atmosphere the press have tried to create will help in tougher measures, and will be used to cover up for any outrages of the troops against the minority. For example, the *Sun*, reporting reactions from the dead men's platoon, quotes a lance-corporal as saying that if they had not been withdrawn from duty, "There could have been some Irish blood about the place."<sup>7</sup>

## THE EXECUTION OF SOLDIERS

Of course it is possible that they were killed for some specific reason by Republicans. And it could be that as the struggle sharpens in the coming period, soldiers will be executed as a punishment for acts of brutality, as reprisals, or as a means of demoralising the British Army. Such methods are forced on guerrilla armies fighting an enemy with vastly superior firepower. They have been used on British soldiers before and were particularly effective in forcing them out of South Yemen. But Ireland being Britain's backdoor, they will have a much more profound effect on "public opinion" if used there.

Revolutionaries should not bend to the pressure which will brew up. We must say clearly that we defend the forces fighting British imperialism in Ireland, and we will not seek to tell them how to wage their struggle. We must point the finger at the real culprits of the violence—those who are trying to maintain political and economic domination over Ireland. If the British government is really worried about the fate of British soldiers, its course of action is simple—withdraw them. They never had any right to be in Ireland in the first place.

But let us reiterate, there is no evidence that the IRA, Official or Provisional, has taken up a policy of terror against the troops, or that they will, and we do not accept that there is any evidence to support the accusations that they killed these particular soldiers.

## THE IRISH PROBLEM AND THE BRITISH LEFT

The latest crisis is evidence of the continuing insolubility of the Irish problem for British imperialism. The permanent crisis is no nearer solution. Unfortunately, it has cast a woeful light on the British left. As the struggles have escalated, our solidarity action has de-escalated.

Part of the reason for this has been the tremendous upsurge in the workers' movement in Britain; this has obscured the importance of other issues. (It means, for instance, that we are quite unprepared for a fight over the Immigration Bill). We must be clear; we bear a historical responsibility to support the Irish people's struggle.

It is not enough to talk about the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill aiding the Irish by engaging the enemy on another front. We need to mount a special campaign to explain the real facts to the British workers, otherwise they will be stampeded into supporting the future repression.

It is vital that the Irish Solidarity Campaign be seen as the focus of our efforts, and that sections of the left who have dropped out turn once more to building a serious united front. A start can be made by helping to build the Easter actions which ISC plans. On Easter Sunday they will be supporting the Easter demonstration in Birmingham of Clann na h-Eireann (the Official Republican Movement in Britain). And on Easter Monday they will be holding a public meeting and filmshow in London.

Withdraw British Troops Now!

Support the Armed Action of the Irish People!  
Self-Determination for Ireland!

Bob Purdie

## NOTES

1. *Irish Times*, Monday March 1st, 1971.
2. See interview with Cathal Goulding in *New Left Review* No. 64.
3. The Official Republican Movement has now dropped the abstentionist policy; see the report on the 1971 Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis in *Red Mole*, 1st-15th Feb. 1971.



# ARMED STRUGGLE IN ARGENTINA

In Argentina in 1969 there was an unprecedented eruption of the working class onto the political scene. The workers vigorously demonstrated both in the workplace and on the streets their opposition to the anti-working class and anti-popular policies of the military dictatorship, which expresses the interests of the imperialist monopolies. In Cordoba, then especially in Rosario, the mass mobilisations very quickly developed into confrontation with the forces of repression.

This experience faced the Argentinian workers, on a really massive scale, with the question of armed struggle.

During 1970 the intervention of the vanguard at all levels, and in particular on the level of armed actions, grew considerably. The vanguard organisations sought to find through such actions the beginning of a solution to the problems posed by the intensification of the class struggle. These armed actions had on several occasions international reverberations; organisations such as the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), the Argentinian Revolutionary Movement (MRA), the Montoneros, etc. became known internationally. Appropriations of money and arms were combined with acts of armed propaganda which went as far as the occupation for a few hours of certain towns in the interior of the country.

One of the most active organisations in the last few months has without doubt been the Revolutionary People's Army (ERP, Ejército revolucionario del pueblo), a mass organisation set up by the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT, Partido revolucionario de los trabajadores).

The actions with ERP's name attached to them date from the last months of 1970: "the ERP was created as the result of a political

decision taken by the most recent congress of the PRT, which was held in June of this same year... the congress decided to organise the ERP, an army which must be proletarian in its social composition, revolutionary in its practice, with the objective of assuming the functions of a mass organisation, since it is destined to act in the framework of a popular civil war." In addition, the comrades of the PRT reaffirmed in this Fifth Congress the thesis which it regards as central: "the consolidation of a revolutionary party, of a class party of socialist ideology which takes an active part in the proletarian internationalism of the Fourth International led by Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank and Alain Krivine."

Since the month of September, there has been at least one ERP action a day. Their commando groups are active especially in Rosario, Cordoba, Tucuman and Buenos Aires. The ERP combines its political work with actions designed either to accumulate resources or to make armed propaganda. Thus, in addition to several big expropriations, the ERP has made interventions in student assemblies, and has distributed food in working class areas and slums. This arises from the conception of the ERP according to which "we are at the beginning of the revolutionary civil war, at the stage of armed propaganda, of the accumulation of forces, of the undermining of the enemy. Obviously we think that the war will be long, but we are convinced that it has already begun, even if it is for the moment sections of the vanguard which are waging it."

In order to get an idea of the response which actions of armed propaganda can arouse, of the progress which is being made by the idea of organised revolutionary violence and civil war, it is enough to give a report of the agitation carried on at the FIAT factory at Ferreyra near

Cordoba during the last week of December.

The factory is in an important industrial area: the 3,000 workers of the FIAT factory played a primary role in the struggles in this area recently. Several workers' delegates were under trial for trade union activities and for resistance to police brutalities, and the management of the company wanted to sack them on various pretexts.

On December 22nd, a commando of the ERP disarms the guard of the factory, goes into the factory and calls the workers together for a meeting. The local press gives a detailed account: "a worker said to the PRT speaker: 'Put down your machine gun, mate, we're all in agreement here. The speaker smiled and put down his machine gun...'" The comrade explained the position of the Party in relation to the general situation in the country and the repressive intentions of the management. "He had such a success that long after he had left, protected by the workers, rounds of applause could still be heard." A few days later, after the sacking of the delegates, the FIAT workers retaliated with a strike and an organised occupation. They also

held in the factory, as hostages, more than 200 supervisors, foremen, engineers, etc. . . Everything was prepared for resistance against police attack: barrels of petrol at strategic points, stocks of Molotov cocktails, etc. . . On the second day of the occupation the President of the Republic, General Levingstone, issued a decree ordering the ending of the occupation, together with a two-hour ultimatum to obey the decree or the forces of order would be sent in. The FIAT workers rejected the decree, the ultimatum and the threats, and the governor of Cordoba province, faced with the prospect of a murderous confrontation, threatened the President of the Republic that he would resign if the decree was not withdrawn. On the

expiry of the time limit, about one o'clock in the morning, the situation remained unchanged; at midday the factory was still occupied and all the factories in the area had stopped work in solidarity. At three o'clock in the afternoon, on the order of President Levingstone, the Minister of Labour expressly asked the management to reemploy the sacked workers' delegates, which it finally agreed to do. The hostages were released, the factory was evacuated in the evening, without the authorities having dared to display a single policeman.

This victory of the workers illustrates the new forms of struggle which are necessary for even elementary demands by the workers to be satisfied. In a country where the bourgeoisie hasn't much to give away, only the threat of a partial show of force, with a dynamic which is uncontrollable by the bourgeoisie, can drag from it the respect of the workers' rights and the satisfaction of new demands. This is the direction in which the comrades of the PRT and the ERP are working. They are accumulating the necessary resources for spreading the revolutionary war: they are training in action the embryos of the revolutionary army; and they are stimulating through propaganda and action the maturing of the mass movement of Argentinian workers.

Armed actions have already become an important factor in the undermining of the dominant classes and of their military dictatorship. These actions are also polarising the radicalisation of different sectors of people.

A new and decisive stage of the revolutionary process will be reached if the organisations of the extreme left show themselves capable of integrating significant sectors of the masses in the armed struggle in Argentina.

S. Lopez-A. Toussaint

# THE SPARTACUS LEAGUE & VIETNAM

The war in Indo-China has not slackened off. On the contrary, the Americans are escalating the war (*Red Mole*, Vol. 2, no. 5). Involvement on the ground of American troops is not so significant as the ever-increasing tonnage of bombs dropped from American planes. This policy has the advantage of allowing the American politicians to lull the people (fewer casualties, fewer large land clashes involving American infantry) and to blunt the anti-war campaign with promises of de-escalation, Vietnamisation, etc. We have seen that this "de-escalation" has meant extension of the war first to Cambodia, now to Laos, and very possibly to North Vietnam tomorrow, which is already being bombed again. With every escalation, however, the Americans sink deeper into the mire. The Cambodian incursion has led to a situation where the Lon Nol regime is tottering and the popular forces hammer on the gates of Phnom Penh. The Laotian invasion, this time attempted with Vietnamese troops, has met a more crushing retort still. The policy of Vietnamisation lies in ruins, just as the policy of "search and destroy" lay in ruins after the Tet offensive in 1968. The Pathet Lao and popular Vietnamese troops have attacked and smashed the vaunted "elite" corps of the puppet South Vietnamese army, which now confusedly makes its way back to the Vietnamese frontier. The Americans will have to search for another way out of their dilemma: they have not ruled out the use of tactical nuclear weapons against the

North, nor of American air support for an invasion of the North.

The international resistance to the war is a very real factor in the ability of the American imperialists to manoeuvre. We do not mobilise in solidarity with the revolution in Indo-China, however, solely on the ground that the activities of the Americans are morally outrageous. We mobilise because we know that the struggle against capitalism is a world-wide struggle, because the revolution in Indo-China is still today the key to world revolution. The process of permanent revolution has begun in Indo-China. In the liberated areas the transition to socialist property relations is taking place. What was a struggle in Vietnam yesterday, today embraces Cambodia and Laos. A victory for the Indo-Chinese revolution profoundly transforms the balance of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class on the world scale. It would have profound effects not just within S. E. Asia or the "Third World" but on the metropolitan countries themselves, not to mention the further tensions that it would create within the Stalinist bloc. Solidarity action with that struggle in Britain has a two-fold effect: at one and the same time it expresses our support for the Indo-Chinese revolution and is an important means of introducing a revolutionary internationalist current into British politics, of demonstrating the meaning and importance of revolutionary internationalism, of educating large groups of

people on the nature of the struggle in Indo-China. That is why it is important to do more than just make propaganda within our immediate milieu: whether it be factory, university, school, or wherever. We must take independent political action on the Indo-China question now.

While we must organise independent activity on this question, such activity must not be a substitute for other forms of political activity. Indeed, revolutionary solidarity action with the Vietnamese only really makes sense if it is combined with a total revolutionary life-style: with militant involvement in the struggle in Britain of revolutionary youth and workers against the capitalist system, and that means involvement in a revolutionary organisation able to intervene over the whole spectrum of political issues. That does not mean that we must not involve people in this campaign against the war who were not involved before in politics. That is precisely what we must do: by demonstrating the nature of the war in Vietnam, it is a short step to demonstrating the nature of capitalism. The tragedy of the previous Vietnam demonstrations in '67/'68 was that many thousands were involved and that their involvement was not led onto a higher stage, to a stage where their resistance to the bourgeoisie could be generalised and integrated with their daily life. Some militants began to feel a certain weariness at repeated demo's on Vietnam, but to the question of how long to continue the demon-

strations, we must answer "As long as the war continues".

T That is why it is important that the revolutionary left in Britain mobilise for the international day of solidarity with the Vietnamese people on Saturday April 24th. A demonstration will take place in London on that day.

We should mobilise for that demonstration, explaining that the Americans have suffered a defeat, and that the demonstration will be a celebration of that defeat and an earnest of our intention to take up again the question of solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. Comrades in socialist societies, trade unions, schools, should begin now to mobilise for that demonstration and to ensure that their organisation will support it. Our comrades in the Spartacus League are making a national mobilisation and have approached other organisations with a view to United Front activity on the Vietnam issue. We are holding a series of meetings on Vietnam throughout the country. Individual comrades or groups who would like details of these meetings, or more important who would like to collaborate with us in this campaign, should contact Spartacus League, 162 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

VICTORY TO THE INDOCHINESE REVOLUTION.

COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. FORCES NOW.

AN END TO BRITISH COMPLICITY



# Pakistan: the second wave

The massive and spectacular explosion in East Pakistan was not completely unexpected. It was obvious that any elected representatives of East Bengal would try to modify the economic and political subjugation of the country by West Pakistani capital and its protectors. It was precisely this oppression which gave the national question in East Bengal a phenomenal importance. For Pakistan has since its creation in 1947 been a state, but never a nation and the naive belief that the Muslim religion would transcend all other barriers and bridge the political, cultural and geographical gap which divides both parts of the country, has been shown to be completely absurd. The constitutional struggles are only a symptom of the general unrest which underlies East Bengal: it merely emphasises to the Bengali masses the fact that the vested interests in the West (and this includes Bhutto) will never give up their power in the East willingly.

## THE SIX-POINTS AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Despite the fact that the Awami League cynically called the masses out on to the streets without arming them and thus allowed them to be slaughtered by the armed forces of the bourgeois state (the deaths so far are well over 3000; the Pakistan Government only admits 200, but then its figures of people killed during the great cyclone disaster were not quite accurate either. To these bastards a few more Bengalis dead or alive doesn't really matter all that much!), the masses have shown as always an amazing degree of militancy. Over a million people in Dacca have attended the meetings of the Awami League leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, and have demanded in no uncertain terms the independence of their country - a Bengali nation, free from the parasites of the West. Thus do all the contradictions of the Awami League emerge publicly for the entire nation to behold. The limitations of Mujibur Rehman and his petty bourgeois leadership are plain and obvious. The truth of the matter is that Rehman would like nothing better than a compromise solution based on acceptance of his Six-Points, which are the charter of the Bengali upper petty bourgeoisie and demand:

- 1) A federal system of government, parliamentary in nature and based on adult franchise.
- 2) Federal Government shall deal only with Defence and Foreign Affairs. All other subjects shall be dealt with by the federating state.
- 3) (a) Two separate but freely convertible currencies for the two parts of the country; or (b) one currency for the whole country. In this case effective constitutional measures to be taken to prevent flight of capital from East to West Pakistan.
- 4) Power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the federating units and not at the centre.
- 5) Separate accounts for foreign exchange earnings of the two parts of the country under control of respective governments.
- 6) The setting up of a militia or para-military force for East Pakistan.

## BOURGEOIS DUAL POWER?

The astounding election results which gave Mujibur Rehman's party, the Awami League, an overall majority throughout the country were quite correctly interpreted by him as a mandate to implement the Six-Points and establish a Federation in Pakistan. This created a furor in the West Pakistani ruling class and the latter used Zulfikar Bhutto as its spokesman: it was his threat to boycott the assembly (because he was in a minority) that was used as a pretext by the army to postpone the meeting of the National Assembly and spark off the recent uprising. The Six-Points are essentially expressing the feel-



A massive demonstration of workers in Lahore.

ings of the deprived Bengali bourgeoisie which wants a share of the capitalist cake. It is obvious that a federation of the sort demanded by Mujibur Rehman would seriously curtail the economic and political power of big business in West Pakistan and the Army. The Army Generals miscalculated if they thought that a show of force could ease the situation. It has done precisely the opposite and in East Bengal today the question of military rule or people's power is posed very clearly. A continuous successful General Strike has forced the Awami League to accept part of its logic and an extremely weird dual power situation exists today in East Pakistan: it is a situation of bourgeois dual power! The Awami League has been forced to set up committees to take over the administration of key areas in cities and only the Army cantonments are at the moment independent of its control. But the League's committees are merely preserving the existing order in their own way and they clearly have the support of the Bengali elements in the local bureaucracy. The tough Punjabi General from West Pakistan, Tikka Khan, sent to restore order as Governor of East Pakistan was confronted with

a Bengali Chief Justice of the High Court who refused under directions from the Awami League to swear him in as Governor! However for the Awami League the situation is fraught with dangers. The masses will not take too kindly to any betrayal and the Awami League seems to be well aware of this fact, but on the other hand, total independence is not what the leadership of the Awami League seeks at the present moment for reasons which are very obvious.

A declaration of independence would in all probability lead to a period of limited armed struggle against the occupying army and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is too old a bourgeois politician to have any illusion regarding his own survival once that process starts. In addition the Bengali state apparatus is virtually non-existent: a crumbling police force, a half-baked Army which will disintegrate in no time given a serious struggle, a weak bureaucracy and most important of all no established indigenous bourgeoisie to wage a desperate struggle to preserve its property. An independent East Bengal would therefore be posed very quickly and much sooner than was



A demonstrator is attacked by a Dacca policeman.

Cuba with the logic of the Permanent Revolution and despite the fact that there is no strong revolutionary organisation, what is clear is that power of the Awami League would be eroded very soon. Mujibur Rehman therefore confronts an awkward choice: the bullets of the Pakistan Army or the wrath of the people.

## THE TRAGEDY OF THE LEFT

Of course the real tragedy lies in the total inability of the East Bengali left to understand the importance of the national question till it was too late. After all the economic exploitation East Pakistan began immediately after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 and by 1956 economists had worked out that 300 million rupees (£1 = 12 rupees) were being extracted annually from the East by West Pakistani investments. Both politically and economically, East Bengal was treated like a colony; its raw material (jute) which brought in badly-needed foreign exchange was used to develop Karachi and the Punjab, West Pakistan. Development plans were openly biased against East Pakistan and actively retarded its development. Thus the uneven economic development led to an uneven development consciousness. The Bengali masses were politically much more advanced than their counterparts in the West and their discontent overflowed into the streets fairly regularly. A United Front victory in an election in 1954 had been taken away from the people by the imposition of a rule from the centre by the colonising power. The dictatorship of Ayub had further repressed the Bengali people. The latest attempt by President Yahya was bound to have caused an upheaval. One of the reasons for the failure of the Left was due to their refusal to develop their practice based on a theoretical survey of the politico-economic conditions of East Bengal. Instead a parrot-like repetition of Mao's thought and a fetishisation of the Red Book was substituted for real political work and today the left learns this lesson the hard way. Whether or not a compromise is reached and the National Assembly meets on March 25th as the Army is now proposing, what is plain is that the question is far from solved. It is therefore vital that the left prepares to organise immediately. The Awami League has proved that it is not capable of giving any meaningful direction to the masses. Instead of leading the people to face army bullets, it should have called for an occupation of the countryside, a seizure of the police stations, the expropriation of all the police-station arsenals, and the arming of a people's militia. This would have drawn the Army into the countryside where they would have enjoyed no advantages at all as compared to the streets of the cities and could have been effectively isolated armed guerilla actions. That will be the next step forwards...

The uprising in East Bengal and a successful declaration of independence could have extremely positive results on the situation in West Bengal. A united national consciousness and a united struggle could make Bengal the first liberated area of the Indian sub-continent and could usher in the dawn of the Indian Revolution, which is going to be the spectre haunting American imperialism in the Seventies.

Self-determination for East Bengal!

For a United Socialist Bengali Republic!

For a Red Sub-Continent, a Red Asia!

Javed Hussein



# LESSONS OF THE POSTAL WORKERS STRIKE

*We produce here an interview with two militants in the UPW. Such a defeat as has been suffered could isolate the militants and they therefore remain anonymous. However, conditions are also favourable for doing long term work within the UPW, and the basis is there for a rank and file movement against the leadership. Anybody interested in more details should write to The Red Mole.*

—What would the men have accepted and how prepared were they to carry on?

**Peter:** We can only speak for the London rank and file at present, and mainly the overseas exchanges who we represent. The strike leadership in the exchanges felt there would be a sell-out, and two weeks before this meeting between Jackson and Carr we decided to push down our members' throats that there would be a sell-out and that they should vote not to go back.

Our branch did vote to stay out, but unfortunately we were defeated by the majority. If the rest of the branch leaderships in the country had prepared their members for this, there would have been a massive vote not to return to work. But they didn't keep their members informed of the possibility of a betrayal, and just talked all the time of 15% and three quid.

—We've heard that branch meetings were rigged by the bureaucracy, and that they created deliberate confusions so people couldn't get there and vote. Could you tell us more about this?

**Dave:** In some London branches, the lay officers said the meeting was on Sunday, when the militants found it was in fact the day before. They had been held on the Saturday with no discussion as to the executive's about-turn, and the militants turn up the next day to find it's all over. Take Mount Pleasant, for instance, where they voted not to go back a day before that Thursday meeting, but when the ballot was taken on the Saturday at a rump meeting, they voted overwhelmingly to go back to work. How was this organised?

**Peter:** And there's another important factor. After the Thursday Hyde Park meeting when Jackson advised going back to work after a ballot, the first step taken to sway the ballot was to cut off the hardship fund at once, and this affected the most the sort of men and women who'd stayed at home and not been really involved in the strike.

—On the Thursday morning, the reaction to Jackson's announcement was fantastic confusion. There were definite sections who knew what it was all about and fought against it. Could you explain the reaction to the UPW executive's deal with Carr?

**Peter:** Yes, it was unfortunately an unorganised reaction. By this time there were four London branches forming a rank and file movement. But we failed in one thing on this strike—we did not organise from the beginning. I felt that if we could have got together people involved, particularly in London, Liverpool and Manchester, we could have put the case to the rank and file from the start, instead of three weeks later. The Hyde Park marches could have been up to 70,000, and people would have been informed—of course, you got militant feelings, people saying they aren't going back to work, but they didn't realise what this sell-out meant.

—Was the leadership policy to limit the strike purely to the economic sphere deliberate, or merely due to their political limitations?

**Dave:** Well, at Wren House we certainly thought it essential to extend the strike. What must be realised is that Lord Hall was sacked because he was prepared to concede this wage claim, and this was a political decision by the government which the UPW executive refused to recognise when they insisted the strike was only between them and the P.O. Their actions were certainly

For any T.U. leadership to continue in an isolated fashion in an economic struggle is absolute nonsense—they should have mapped out a strategy generally for the entire movement. A concrete strategy is now needed even to win a wage claim.

**Peter:** On the Monday prior to sell-out, Jackson met Feather. The TUC had decided that the UPW should go back, and Feather told Jackson that no more money would be forthcoming.

The only revolt on the E.C. was from the right who wanted to return to work immediately.

—What effect will the strike have on the rank and file?

**Peter:** Well, already the strike has educated large numbers of people—particularly noticeable was the way people were rapidly demystified as to the role the press plays in strikes. Men who've thought of themselves as civil servants for years realise what they're up against for the first time. In the telecommunications side of the industry, where there was a scab problem, people were polarised into very firm positions. We used to have branch meetings of 50 people if we were lucky; the other night 300 people turned up to the branch. What is more, it is now possible to put a political line in meetings. Now we can explain to the members the economics of what the department earns in their exchanges and put in for our own wage claim.

—What were the key turning points in the strike?

**Dave:** The key turning point of the strike was the Feb. 21st demonstration when Jackson marched to Trafalgar Square with the UPW. He said previously that he would have to change the quality of the strike. Earlier he had been convinced that the strike was against the P.O. only, but now he knew it was against the government. Jackson and the E.C. were now hurled into a whirlpool with the campaign against the Industrial Relations Bill, with the engineers and transport workers on the streets. Feather and the TUC didn't want this. The problem for them now was how to sell us out. The government was not prepared to give anything more than 8%, and Jackson couldn't accept less than 15%. This is why they came up with a court of inquiry. The rank and file, on the other hand, knew from this point on that they had to get the engineers out—if you notice, it was only after this that the engineers came out on a one-day solidarity strike, due to pressure from the rank and file. It was obvious to every member that the P.O. and the government were digging in and that it was necessary to extend it to the engineers and railmen whose pay claim was coming up. But Jackson decided to confine the strike to his own sphere.

**Peter:** There were other significant occasions. At the White City, the day before the strike, Jackson had said he was willing to settle for a "reasonable offer". On the 10th day of the strike, he said 13% would be a "reasonable offer". Again, COPOU (Council of Post Office Unions) never met once during the strike. No approach was made to the Managerial Staffs Association to undertake no more than their normal duties. Jackson sent the editor of the *Post* (official journal of the UPW) to France to discuss international cooperation with the representatives of telecommunication unions in France. We have been told nothing of the outcome of the meeting. Scanlon and Jones offered monetary aid. There was no financial reason why Jackson should have refused large interest-free sums. We could have paid them back very quickly with a levy of 10/- a week per member after a successful strike. But Scanlon and Jones didn't instruct their members to take action—food and oil deliveries to exchanges, for example, or blocking of parcels on the railway.

On returning to work, we find that management have used this period to bring in new in-

plant with the men out, the management are taking the opportunity of laying new assembly line tracks that the unions have fought against for years. In the overseas telephone exchanges, the management have extended subscriber dialling services to the States without any reference to the union, who would have fought for more overtime staff to cope with this extra work. At Mount Pleasant Sorting Office, they've cut the labour force by one-third. There were about 400 resignations from Mount Pleasant during the strike, and these men aren't being taken back on. The P.O. have got redundancies without a fight.

—Don't you think that this was one of the aims of the P.O.—that if a strike in one sector of capitalism is to be beaten decisively in order to inflict a political defeat on the working class as a whole, that that sector must be given something in return?

**Peter:** Yes. In the first week of the strike people were saying that Ryland called the strike, not Jackson, since the P.O. were going to have to fight the UPW on redundancies. The P.O. have been very quick to use the strike to solve their labour problems and streamline their service.

—In the future, how do you think it will be possible to maintain the militancy build-up? How will it show itself?

**Dave:** The next turning point will come at the next AGM when 26 members of the executive come up for re-election. If the rank and file still feels the same way then as it does now, the union will be turned over. Then there are the five permanent posts for life—the General Secretary, three assistant secretaries and the Editor. Each year our branch puts forward resolutions at conference that they should be elected for three years only. Up till now Jackson has swung conference by talking about the need for a permanent place to work from, etc. But if the postmen, who are the largest section, vote for this resolution, then Jackson will have to seek re-election after another three years.

**Peter:** The rank and file has learnt a lot about the leadership during this strike. When management, on the return to work, took away three days' holiday pay, there were strikes and sit-ins in Liverpool, Preston, Croydon, and parts of London.

—What was the reaction to scabs?

**Peter:** There hasn't been a scabbing problem in the postal section, but rather on the telecommunications side. No question of victimisation of scabs, it's the strikers who are victimised. In our exchange, there was a walkout by canteen staff after a supervisor took it out on a striker. They aren't scared of coming out for a day or an hour now after six weeks out. Strikers, as you know, were threatened with three days' loss of holiday pay, whereas scabs weren't affected. Also on overtime, which works on a points system here, some scabs will not have overtime points awarded against them when they've been working night and day keeping the lines open, and this has caused animosity. There's a tense atmosphere with people being sent to Coventry and non-cooperation with some supervisors.

—Is there a basis for a rank and file movement v. the executive?

**Peter:** There are some moves to ensure the right delegates go to conference—usually it's careerists who go to conference and vote for the E.C. on everything. Each branch in London is putting forward amendments for conference, especially for the procedures on elections. Communication is key. We must get into contact with our colleagues up and down the country. The feeling is that in the main industrial centres, we have the basis for a rank and file movement. This strike showed one thing—all grades were involved, we all went into the streets together and we'll be voting at conference together. In London we are having meetings between telecommunications workers and our postal colleagues, which are against union rules. But we haven't heard a word from the E.C. that these meetings will be banned. So while they are playing it cool, we have the opportunity to speak to these people, and given time and organisation, we could have a rank and file movement at conference.

—Why don't you want your names published?

first be referred to the E.C. We have got people banned from the union on similar things, such as Ron Black who was got rid of for putting in the branch bulletin a letter sent to him from the E.C. The union is so bureaucratic that if they knew we had given this interview, we would be out immediately.

—In fact the Court of Inquiry will look into the relationship between the union and its members. Is it possible that they will turn this on its head like they've done with the Race Relations Bill when the only people arrested are black?

**Dave:** Of course, this strike was about a wage claim. The relation between the union and its members must be seen to by the members, not by an independent enquiry.

—How do the militants see the Commission of Inquiry? Crumbs to soften the blow?

**Dave:** It's just a different name for arbitration. It will probably concede 9.5%-10%, but it was set up to get a return to work—we have no illusions about that.

**Peter:** The terms of reference of this inquiry are not only over wages and incremental scales. We feel that whatever increases we get, there will be even more concessions to management on redundancies and part-time labour, etc. The findings will be binding, and whatever else came out of it, they will split up the overseas exchanges and spread them around the country, and they'll look into the hours we work and the night-duty we do. This inquiry is one of the worst things that could have happened. I don't think we've got 200,000 members at the moment. After the inquiry and increased redundancies, we'll be lucky to have 100,000. This inquiry and strike has definitely defeated a union—halved its membership. For what? a 10% wage increase?

This is the danger of a court of inquiry or arbitration or whatever they call it. We'd have done better settling for 9% rather than going to this inquiry. I don't see why we should even get 9%.

**Dave:** I'll say why I think 9%. The Civil Service Union has just got this amount, and at least the government and the P.O. still need a corrupt union like the UPW and will not go all out to disgrace it completely. When Jackson can

mobilise thousands in Hyde Park and have them singing "Jackson for King" just a week before the sell-out, they're not going to throw away a man like that. Of course, now the process has begun when his hypnotic effect on the membership is being whittled away.

**Peter:** One point is sure. This inquiry will go along with and push for the selling of the telecommunications section to private industry. It was on the cards before the strike, and the failure of the strike has strengthened the arm of the government to sell this part of industry off.

And that leaves Jackson with . . . what? 100,000 postal workers (if that) and you haven't got a credible union then.

*Interviewed by our Industrial staff.*

## Public meeting to discuss Emergency Rule in Ceylon.

Venue: University of London  
Union Buildings.

Speakers: Abasingh Bandara  
and R. Mendis.

Chairman: Tariq Ali.

Time: 7.15 p.m.

FRIDAY 2nd APRIL

Organised by the Revolutionary  
Action Committee for the Release  
of Political Prisoners in Ceylon.

We apologise for the lateness of this  
issue which is due to technical reasons.



# revolutionary art: TATLIN TOWER

The Hayward Gallery is currently running an exhibition of Russian Revolutionary Art. As readers of the *Mole* are probably aware, the revolutionary impulse of this work is still so strong that Russian bureaucrats have felt it necessary to censor the exhibition, removing all the work of Malevich and many other items from Lissitzky, Tatlin and other brilliant Soviet artists who, one way or another, were victims of Stalinism. The Arts Council tamely colluded at this bureaucratic repression. However, there are still many fascinating exhibits to see in the exhibition—partly because the Soviet Government did not have control over all the works in the exhibition, partly because the Soviet Embassy officials who censored the exhibition were clearly so stupid that they didn't understand the art they were looking at.

One of the most interesting and controversial works of the period is Tatlin's "Monument to the Third International", a model of which has been rebuilt by the organisers of the exhibition. This gigantic steel construction was meant to be the operative centre of the Third International and not just a monument as its title implies. Tatlin executed the design in 1919 when there was clearly no hope of employing the Soviet Republic's extremely scarce supplies of steel for such a project instead of for badly needed armaments. The following two excerpts give some idea of the project and the controversy it aroused. The first is taken from David Mitchell's recently published book "1919: Red Mirage". Mitchell's account of the Soviet revolutionary art is a bit like the book as a whole, exuberant but unreliable. One is grateful to have a book written with such gusto about so many fascinating events but disconcerted by the blithe disregard for original sources. The book contains passages of great interest on many of the events of that amazing year, including the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the Munich Soviet, the battles of the Wobblies, the General Strike in Belfast, Liverpool and Glasgow. But the book is marred by inaccuracies (we are told that Trotsky did not join the Bolsheviks until October 1917) and vulgarities (such as the account of the Latvian revolution drawn from absurdly unreliable sources). The passage we publish on Tatlin gives some idea of what the artist was driving at; though it does not point out that the reason the different levels were designed to revolve at different speeds was to symbolise the different pace of history in the base and in the superstructure. The other extract is from Trotsky who well understood the artist's intention but refused to believe that it was either aesthetically or practically appropriate for the headquarters building of the Third International. However, although Trotsky had his own very strong views on most artistic questions, he never sought to impose them on the artist by administrative dictat as was soon to become the rule under Stalin. The lesson for us today is clear. All attempts to interfere with or suppress the freedom of the artist should be unhesitatingly condemned. But equally revolutionaries should give the artist's work its due by taking it seriously and not simply praising it because of the repression to which it is subject. Clearly it is the duty of Marxists to encourage all that is

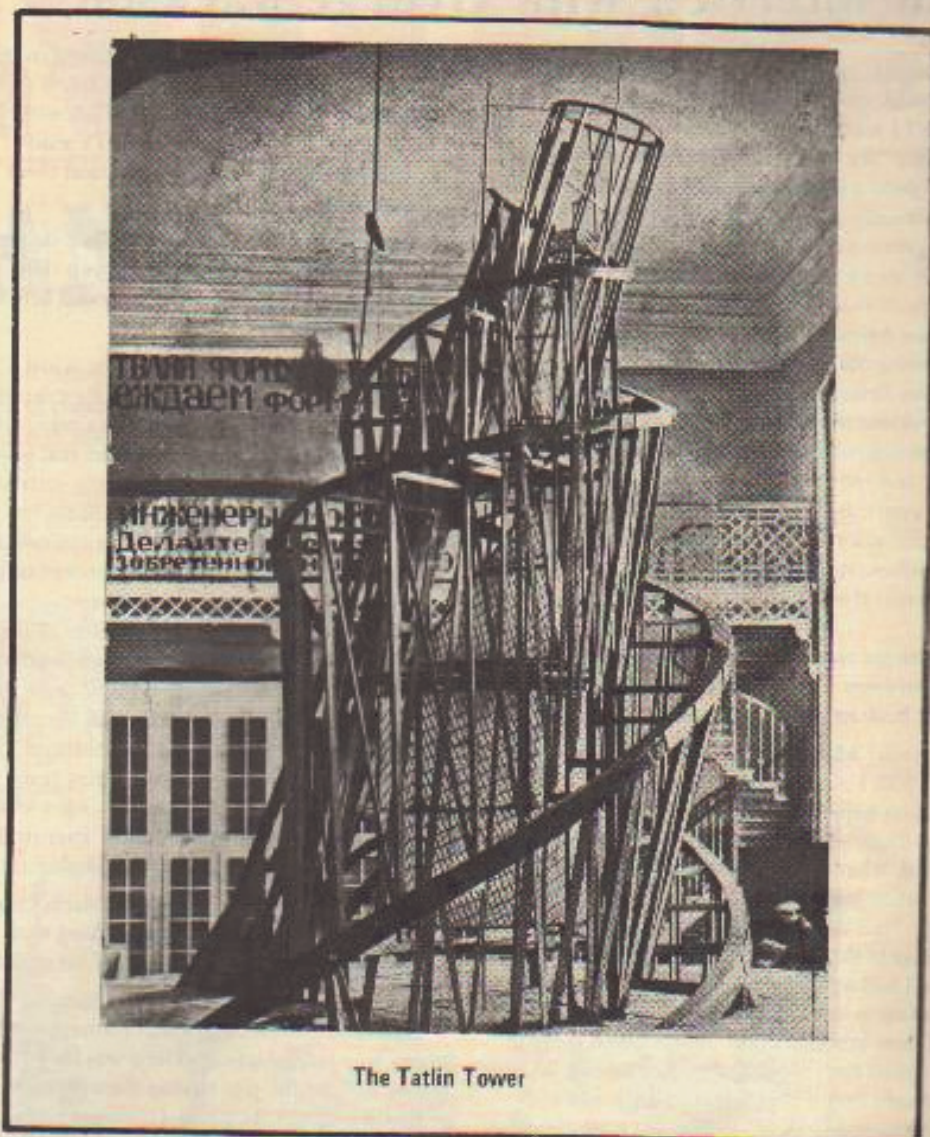
really revolutionary in art because only such art can assist and enrich the revolution. Trotsky was later to expound his ideas on this subject very eloquently in the *Surrealist Manifesto* which he wrote with Andre Breton and Diego Rivera.

**Tatlin's Monument to the Third International**  
"Tatlin . . . was commissioned to design a monument to the Third International. Straying far beyond his brief, he obliged superbly. His was to be a working monument, housing and inspiring as well as commemorating. It was to be a world beating constructivist triumph—a leaning tower twice the height of the Empire State building in New York, with a special iron framework based on asymmetrical axes and cradling a glass cylinder, a glass cone and a glass cube. The various components would move continually at varying *tempi*. The cylinder intended for lectures, conferences and congresses would make one revolution a year; the cone filled with executive offices would complete one revolution a month; the cube surmounting the whole structure was to execute one full revolution a day (enough to satisfy even Zinoviev) and to contain an information centre to end all information centres. This would constantly transmit news bulletins, proclamations and manifestoes by telegraph, telephone, radio and loudspeaker. A vast exterior screen, floodlit at night, would rivet the attention of the people. A special projector would flash words upon the sky in cloudy weather . . . In Tatlin's Leaning Tower ingenious machinery would dethrone the tiresome body, glorify and liberate the mind . . . 'Least of all must you stand or sit in this building. You must be mechanically propelled up and down, carried along willy nilly. Before you will flash the firm, laconic phrases of the announcer-agitator. Further on the latest news, decree, decision, the latest invention, will be announced. Creation, only creation.'" (David Mitchell: *1919: Red Mirage*, pp. 158-9).

## Trotsky on Tatlin

"As soon as a surplus will come after the most urgent and acute needs of life are covered, the Soviet state will take up the problem of gigantic constructions that will suitably express the monumental spirit of our epoch. Tatlin is undoubtedly right in discarding from his project national styles, allegorical sculpture, modelled monograms, flourishes and tails, and attempting to subordinate the entire design to a correct constructive use of material. This has been the way that machines, bridges and covered markets have been built, for a long time. But Tatlin has still to prove that he is right in what seems to be his own personal invention, a rotating cube, a pyramid and a cylinder all of glass. For good or bad, circumstances are going to give him plenty of time to find arguments for his side.

De Maupassant hated the Eiffel Tower, in which no one is forced to imitate him. But it is undoubtedly true that the Eiffel Tower makes a dual impression; one is attracted by the technical simplicity of its form, and, at the same time, repelled by its aimlessness. It is an extremely rational utilisation of material for the purpose of making a high structure. But what is it for? It is not a building, but an exercise. At present, as everyone knows, the Eiffel Tower serves as a radio station. This gives



The Tatlin Tower

it a meaning, and makes it aesthetically more unified. But if the tower had been built from the very beginning as a radio station, it probably would have attained a higher rationality of form, and so therefore a higher perfection of art.

From this point of view Tatlin's project for a monument appears much less satisfactory. The purpose of the main building is to make glass headquarters for the meetings of the World Council of People's Commissars, for the Communist International, etc. But the props and piles which are to support the glass cylinder and the pyramid—and they are there for no other purpose—are so cumbersome and heavy that they look like unremoved scaffolding. One cannot think what they are for. They say: they are there to support the rotating cylinder in which the meetings will take place. But one answers: Meetings are not necessarily held in a cylinder and the cylinder does not necessarily have to rotate. I remember seeing once when a child, a wooden temple built in a beer bottle. This fired my imagination, but I did not ask myself at that time what it was for. Tatlin proceeds by a reverse method; he wants to construct a beer bottle for the World Council of People's Commissars which would sit in a spiral concrete temple. But for the moment, I cannot refrain from the question: What is it for? To be more exact: we would probably accept the cylinder and its rotating, if it were combined with a

simplicity and lightness of construction, that is, if the arrangements for its rotating did not depress the aim."

...  
"There is no doubt that, in the future—and the farther we go, the more true it will be—such monumental tasks as the planning of city gardens, of model houses, of railroads, and of ports, will interest vitally not only engineering architects, participators in competitions, but the large popular masses as well. The imperceptible, ant-like piling up of quarters and streets, brick by brick, from generation to generation, will give way to titanic constructions of city-villages, with map and compass in hand. Around this compass will be formed true peoples' parties, the parties of the future for special technology and construction, which will agitate passionately, hold meetings and vote. In this struggle, architecture will again be filled with the spirit of mass feelings and moods, only on a much higher plane, and mankind will educate itself plastically, it will become accustomed to look at the world as submissive clay for sculpting the most perfect forms of life. The wall between art and industry will come down. The great style of the future will be formative, not ornamental. Here the Futurists are right. But it would be wrong to look at this as a liquidating of art, as a voluntary giving way to technique." (Leon Trotsky: *Literature and Revolution*, Ann Arbor edition, pp. 246-8, 249).

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# SOLEDAD BROTHER

## an interview with George Jackson

*George Jackson will soon celebrate his 30th birthday—as he has every birthday for the past 11 years—inside a California prison. The “crime” for which he was jailed was stealing \$75 from a petrol station. His sentence has been continually extended for alleged failure to cooperate with prison authorities. Last year, after the shooting of three prisoners by guards at the Soledad jail, a guard was thrown from a prison balcony and died. Jackson is presently awaiting trial, along with John Chuchette and Fleeta Drumgo, on the dubious charge of murdering the Soledad guard. George consented to an interview held inside San Quentin late last year with Wildcat, a West Coast revolutionary paper. In the hour-long interview, George discussed a range of topics, from legal matters to prison organising. The following text includes excerpts from the interview.*

—You are about to publish some of your political writings [Penguin, March]. When did you first become politically aware?

*Jackson:* When I first arrived in the joint, early in 1960. I was in Soledad when the Cuban Revolution happened. Castro had just taken over and declared himself. I was upset, angry, confused. What I noticed was that the Cuban situation upset the authoritarian types—the little Nazi cliques—and the bulls. I read the things in the media about proletarian socialism, but I had no real sense of the thing. I started reading in that area because of the attitudes of these guards and the authoritarian types in the joint toward the Cuban Revolution. I thought that if they felt it was harmful and detrimental to them, then it just might possibly be good for me.

—What were you doing before your arrest and sentencing (“one year to life” for second degree robbery) in 1960?

To be truthful, if I hadn't been busted, I'd probably be a small-time gambler or a dope-fiend. I learned something about butchering, meat cutting and knives when I was doing time as a Y.A. [prior to his robbery arrest at the age of 18, George did time in a Youth Authority institution] at Tracy. When I got out I did try to work, but just before I got arrested I had been laid off on two jobs. I just didn't like that type of work—it just didn't fit my disposition. I had been trained in boning and meat cutting, but on the first job they put me to work

unloading those huge carcasses from an overhead pick onto an assembly line table. Well, I quit that job and went to another job with Union Packing. There I worked on a semi-skilled job—all day long I would stand there dicing meat. I quit.

—You received your high school diploma here in San Quentin in 1967. What do you think of the rehabilitation concept as practised here in California state prisons?

Rehabilitation? The whole concept is just a word and has a lot to do with public relations. Actually, it really means breaking a man, making a man accustomed to restraint. The real purpose behind making a man accustomed to restraint is preparing him for the life he is expected to lead when he hits the streets. Now you can call that rehabilitation, but I think their concept involves restraining a man rather than reorienting him. The educational facilities here and in all the other joints usually will accommodate no more than one-eighth of the prison population. In any case, the purely academic stuff is right on a par with the mission schools in Southern Rhodesia and Angola. The stuff they teach is outright nationalistic propaganda. I got kicked out of two or three of the classes. Eventually I ended up buying my high school diploma.

—Your brother Jonathan led the Marin County Courthouse kidnap attempt. Looking back, how do you analyse the significance of his action?

Jonathan's whole operation was aimed at the destruction of prestige. I don't interpret it as in any way individualistic. There was really but one way for the pigs to stop the operation, and that was to kill the judge. Of course, Jonathan went in there with the impression that the police would have some respect for the judge's life—he was a chairman of the Republican Central Committee. I think, knowing Jonathan and James [McClain, one of the prisoners involved], that they both at one point thought of the guard as starting to shoot and then all the other guards would chime in with their conditioned reflexes. But that was the element of chance—beyond that there was no chance. With the hostage game it depends on keeping the hostage alive. As long as you can keep the hostage alive it can be assumed that the pigs are going to have some regard for life and you should be able to walk him right down to Chile along the Intercontinental highway.

—What was the effect of the action inside prison walls?

It was electric. Everybody related to it.

—Subsequent to the Marin action and a demonstration outside the prison walls protesting trials held in the prison, there was a prison rebellion in the latter part of August. Could you go into some detail about it?

The rebellion was an effort on the part of the convicts to gain more control over their lives. There were between 2,200 and 2,500 Black, white, and Mexican-American prisoners involved. Two hours after the thing ended, they transported Warren Wells [Black Panther Party member convicted last year of attempted murder in connection with the 1967 shootout in which Oakland police murdered 17-year-old Bobby Hurton] and one white and one Mexican-American out of the prison. These were the fastest transfers I've ever seen: I've never seen anything happen like that. During the thing Warren made some speeches along with a couple of other guys. The pigs sallied out with tear gas and the convicts threw it back at them. Some shots were fired—that's not unusual. They fire at us all the time. I've had shots hit the wall behind me only a couple of inches from my face, but I've been really lucky.

—It appears that for the first time, Black, Brown, and white prisoners are getting together to fight the prison authorities. How do you explain that?

Before the whites were threatened and we were threatened and we were just at each other's throats. It was a question of circumstances beyond our control. I think we all understood what was happening all along—that it was really a case of the prison administration using convicts to strengthen and maintain their own position. Racism is the control mechanism. To start off with, it's almost impossible for a small knot of guards to hold down five or six thousand inmates without some kind of divisive tactics. It's part of their standard operating procedure. They use the race issue like they use homosexuals to divide the prison population.

But what could I do? It was all I could do to stay alive. For example, the prison authorities would make the “mistake” every now and then of opening the doors of white convicts at the same time that we were on their tier. They would attack us. That's the stupid, silly, infantile way the authorities would use to get us.

Prior to January 13 in Soledad, there were two specific instances of Blacks being beaten to death by the police in a back room and the doctor certified that he died of a heart attack. That was in San Quentin.

—How do you account for the increasing inter-racial unity among prisoners?

The reason for the recent success is due to outside support and the attention that revolutionary circles are giving men in prison. It's had a profound effect on the efforts to unite the prison population. The Blacks have recently veered away from the Muslim ideology. In the early '60s, when I first came to the joint, the Blacks were to some extent responsible for the racism, because we levelled both barrels at the white convicts. Of course, we didn't initiate it. We merely responded. Responded in a way that precluded any unity. But recently, since Huey Newton and Bobby Seale and the Black leftists have come in here from the community and the streets, it has been reflected right here in the joint. It's gone from just “brother” to “comrade” and from Black to just people. The white convicts have stopped feeling threatened and they're able to respond to the new approach. Add that to the fact that all convicts are intelligent enough to see the advantages of working together.

—Any final comments?

To get back to Jonathan Jackson and the August 7th action, everybody in prison identified with it. I think that this incident did more to solidify the unity effort than anything that's ever happened in the past nine or ten years. I'm not concerned with the opinion or the opposition of people who are tied into the establishment. I'm concerned with the people who say they identify with the revolution. And we do have people of the liberal-left who condemn these types of military activity. I'd like to emphasise here that if it's violence they condemn, there's productive violence and there's counter-productive violence. Jonathan felt, and I feel, that carefully planned, staged, and ordered political attacks are at least the minimum we have to support if we are going to support the revolution.

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## THE COMMUNE

In November 1970 in response to the call of the European sections of the Fourth International, 3,500 delegates representing nineteen Western European revolutionary organisations met in Brussels to draw the balance sheet of three years of struggle and to discuss perspectives for coming interventions. The Brussels Conference ended with a call for an international demonstration in Paris in May 1971 for the 100th anniversary of the Commune.

Following on from this decision, an international demonstration of revolutionary youth will take place in the first fortnight of May.

From now on the perspective of a mass mobilisation in Paris is being spread throughout most of Western Europe.

At its session on 13th February, the Central Committee of the Communist League (French section of the Fourth International) decided to organise a mass mobilisation of revolutionary militants in Paris from the French provinces at the same time. Some thousands, or rather tens of thousands of revolutionary young people and workers from France and abroad will be gathered in Paris, probably on May 15th and 16th for a massive demonstration.

The centenary of the Commune must not become an excuse for a sentimental commemoration, but an occasion for a combative and militant mobilisation. For us, it will not be an

adventuristic) fighters of a nineteenth century revolt, or of paying homage to those “who made the assault on heaven”, of praising their courage while preaching the Parliamentary road to socialism.

To commemorate the Commune is on the one hand to reaffirm the reality of the revolutionary aspirations of the Communards, as they are expressed today through the struggles of the working class and youth. On the other hand it is to stand by the political lessons of the Commune (by refusing to mummify them).

That's why the organisations which signed the Brussels call have decided to call the international demonstration on the following two themes:

Firstly, it must concretise the slogan—the Commune is not dead, it lives through the struggles of youth and the international working class. The demonstration must not be simply a commemorative procession, remembering the great deeds of the Communards. Its slogans must take up the principal aims of the struggle since May '68.

In the second place, as much during the preparation period as during the demonstration itself, the political theme must be sharply pressed: the Commune, symbol of workers' democracy, first organised expression of the workers' state, concrete embodiment of prole-

fore, to bring home the differences between the dictatorial bureaucratic regimes of the Eastern bloc where a privileged bureaucracy substitutes itself for workers' power, depriving them of their rights to organise and of political expression, and the Paris Commune (forerunner of Soviet power) which was the realisation of an authentic workers' democracy.

We must use the commemoration of the Commune centenary to popularise our ideas of socialism (to popularise the slogan of the Republic of Workers' Councils) and to pledge the solidarity of revolutionary youth and workers with the Polish (Kuron and Modzelewski), Czech (Plocek and his comrades), Russian revolutionary militants, etc. We must popularise their struggle against bureaucratic power and for the introduction of genuine workers' democracy as it took form for the first time in history in the Paris Commune.

In the present political situation (Polish, Czech events, re-Stalinisation in the USSR), this aspect of the mobilisation is very important.

Whoever, group or individual, is in agreement with this political conception of the commemoration and in general sympathy with the Fourth International is invited to participate. Contact the Spartacus League at 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1 (01-278 2616) for further information.

### V.S.C. BENEFIT NIGHT

*THE FOUR POSTER FOLK GROUP  
and other groups and artists*

**SATURDAY APRIL 3rd at 8.00 p.m.**  
The Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road (Warren St. tube)

*Tickets 20p in advance or 25p at the door. Buy from Red Books or VSC, 182 Pentonville Road, N.1.*

### HELP THE CLEANERS CAMPAIGN

The Cleaners Action Group has taken up the case of a cleaner sacked by Acme cleaning contractors without redundancy money or holiday pay, after 16 years' work. Money is desperately needed for the Fighting Fund to pay legal costs. Please send as much as you can spare to May Hobbs, Cleaners Action Group, 13 Middle Lane, London N.8, and draw the attention of your union or other organisation to this campaign.