

The Week

SUPPLEMENT

6^D

THE NATURE OF
THE VIETNAM WAR

LABOUR'S FIRST YEAR

(MUST IT BE THE LAST?)

THE WEEK — A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS

Subscription rates: 13 weeks 10/-
26 weeks £1
1 year £2

Students 25% discount

Business Address: 54 Park Road
Lenton
Nottingham

Vol. 4, No. 7. August 26th, 1965

60

THE NATURE OF
THE VIETNAM TOUR

THE WEEK

LABOUR'S

FIRST YEAR

(MUST IT BE THE LAST?)

Business Address: 27 Park Road, London, W.14, England

THE WEEKLY NEWS FOR SOCIALISTS
Subscription rates: 13 weeks 10p
26 weeks 21p
1 year 37p
Postage 2p

Vol. 4 No. 7 August 1961

The preparations for the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool this September are nearing their conclusion. The atmosphere is heavy-laden. After the cheers of last October died away, and after the warm, self-congratulatory mood of the December victory, ^{rally} which replaced the 1964 Conference, Labour's activists went home to their constituencies to meet a cooler mood among their supporters. This has not lifted; rather the gloom has intensified. As Labour's election pledges have been revoked, deferred, transmuted or forgotten, first in single apologetic announcements, then in clusters, curtly explained, and lately in wholesale bulk. So it has come home to the constituencies that their expectations for the future must be frigid, austere and possibly painful. No harvest festival, the Blackpool Conference will mourn lost hopes, console troubled consciences and prepare for dearth and discord.

Mikardo's balance sheet

The record is almost too dismal to bear recital. Few of Labour's major spokesmen have had the intellectual or political courage to assess it clearly. One who has is Ian Mikardo, perhaps the most significant Parliamentary figure who has been left to the left by recent events. Speaking at a conference of Labour students at the end of June, Mr. Mikardo was able to list three achievements on the credit side of the Government's performance. It had properly flouted the opinion of the bankers in order to augment pensions; it had laid out a commendable programme of legislation in the Queen's speech; and the Prime Minister had properly decided to govern as if he had a majority of fifty. But when the Government's pledges were compared with its actions, there were most serious deficiencies.

In at least thirty important sectors election promises had either not been sustained, or had actually been dishonoured. In the field of economic policy the failure to apply physical controls, even such obvious ones as exchange control, import controls, or effective regional development controls, forced the Government to rely upon fiscal manoeuvres, bribery and exhortation as its main 'planning' weapons. Of course these are totally insufficient. No rational overall fuel and energy policy was being elaborated. No transport plan was being counterposed to Beeching's measures. Taxes were not being used selectively... Concerning public ownership, no measures had yet been announced to take over water, and more important, the pledge to start new public enterprises on a competitive basis in growth areas of the economy was not yet being taken up. In the field of exports, the promised long-term contracts with Commonwealth territories, based on state trading, had not materialised. Neither had any significant expansion of East-West trade. As for the question of incomes policy, no attempt whatever had been made to synchronise wage planning with overall planning, which thus made Mr. Brown's policy quite unfeasible.

Concerning social policy, the balance sheet was no less unhappy. The minimum income guarantee was to be deferred until next session. (1). While this could be understood, it provided no reason at all for the deferment of action to rectify outstanding injustices. Many severe hardships existed which could be alleviated by administrative action which was not being taken. Educational expenditure was being curtailed. As for housing, which had been Mr. Wilson's central election issue, the pledge to repeal the Rent

continued over/

Act was being honoured by a measure which threatened to introduce a most dangerous element of decontrol in rents, while building was being thwarted by sky-high interest rates. A two-tier system of finance, or cheap money, was essential to the housing problem. In the field of equal pay, no steps were to be taken to ratify the ILO Convention on that question. The policies which had been expected on immigration had not materialised.

Lastly, in the foreign and defence policy sectors the picture was alarming. The defence estimates had not been subjected to serious overall cuts, whilst the Polaris base and the British nuclear arm were both preserved in flat contradiction to party policy. If anything, Labour's foreign policy showed an even closer dependence on the USA than did that of Sir Alec. This had revealed itself in innumerable areas: apart from Vietnam, in Guiana, in the total abandonment of disengagement in Europe, and in the equivocation about the supply of war materials to South Africa, among many others.

Callaghan's measures

Since Mr. Mikardo elaborated this most discouraging catalogue, conditions have deteriorated with malicious speed. Yet further draconian and debilitating economic measures have been brought forward by Mr. Callaghan. Far from getting Britain moving, the Government has moved round to a new and resounding stop phase in its economics. With usual candour, the Financial Times led its account of these savage new restraints with the headline: "The Pound Before Politics". Small wonder that epithets like "Ramsay MacWilson" have begun to appear in the Economist, in columns by Malcolm Muggeridge, and among the maverick political commentators. Just how far before politics Mr. Callaghan has thrust the pound has scarcely begun to filter through to the understanding of Labour's rank and file, but it can clearly be discerned in extraordinary outcries of the liberal business press. The Economist reacted pugnaciously with a leader entitled "Labour Men -- Tory Measures" which speculated whether Mr. Wilson may be heading towards an October election on "what is virtually a National ticket." The weight of these measures falls on precisely the people who returned Labour to office. If anything, a Conservative administration would have moved with greater caution, and would have placed heavier burdens on the business community, because it would not have been labouring under the same drastic imperative to regain the lost confidence of the City. Hardest cut of all are the local Labour councillors, chafing at the reins of more than a decade of central restraint, and now, just as they thought the race was about to open out for them, savagely bridled in. The only truly astonishing thing about this raging mayhem of Labour's election pledges is the solemn quiet which has descended on the backbenches. The only substantial revolt which the Callaghan measures precipitated was the demand for cuts in military expenditure. To an outsider, it looks as if this upheaval was outmanoeuvred without a shot being fired. True, the Parliamentary Party accepted a motion, carefully filleted of any specific dates or figures, which demanded substantial cuts. The fate of this entirely proper decision will probably be found to turn upon the definition of "substance"; and Mr. Wilson is clearly capable of determining this in light of the needs of the pound.

While Mr. Callaghan was immobilising the production drive, Mr. Brown's attempts at acceleration in the control of incomes and prices were not
continued/

abated. The fact that the members of his own union brusquely rejected the incomes policy, while neglecting to invite him to observe the event, was widely remarked. So was Mr. Cousins' flying visit to the conference of the T & GWU, during which he received the ovation of a hero for discreetly congratulating his members on the stand they had taken. But the really ominous accompaniment to these events was the statement that Mr. Wilson made after the Callaghan measures had been revealed, that should the Prices and Incomes Board be found to fail in securing voluntary co-operation, it might quickly be given coercive legal teeth. Although in theory such sanctions might apply to refractory employers, the record of the Government does not encourage the hope that their main effect will tell in that direction. As one surveys the ruins of Labour policy, and the cautious and entirely orthodox pattern of Mr. Callaghan's economic policy, one cannot but conclude that Mr. Wilson's warnings are aimed pre-eminently at the unions. Such a confrontation would be the reductio ad absurdum of the Wilson strategy: if it were to begin, the last figleaf would fall away, revealing that hoary old Adam, Ramsay Mac., naked in all the vigour of his National impotence.

Surrender to Smethwick

As significant as these unhappy portents is the blow which Mr. Bowden has administered, on the eve of the adjournment. From the principled opposition to the immigration controls of 1961 which had been evinced from Mr. Gaitskell, Labour had already slid, before the election, into postures of equivocation, dissembling and vagueness. But Mr. Bowden's White Paper on Immigration, far from remaining ⁱⁿequivocal, unleashed a truly shattering blow. Immigration from all Commonwealth territories was restricted to a maximum of 8,500 a year, including the 1,000 quota which had been guaranteed to Malta. Worse: the White Paper established a fine and sharply screened double mesh through which would-be immigrants must filter. This imposed checks along both national and occupational lines, establishing a sharp class preference for skilled and professionally qualified labour.

Abroad, everything but the cost of Mr. Wilson's commitment East of Suez has been crumbling around him. His farcical and demagogic peace mission to Vietnam was exploded before he had finished the blueprints. Mr. Davies, who bravely put in jeopardy all his friendships in Hanoi in a loyal effort to voyage to the rescue, returned, chastened, home to the muzzle. Trouble in the Rann of Kutch has been transferred to Kashmir. Cruellest indignity of all, Malaysia, that most streamlined essay in neo-colonialist intrigue, carefully assembled to the credit of the pound and as a fearful deterrent to Indonesian "bolshivism", suddenly and without warning blew up. Britain's autonomous imperial zone revealed its true crisis level of instability. Meanwhile, President Johnson intoned sympathetic dirges about the agonies of sterling, as he fortified the dollar by the slaughter of Vietnamese children.

In unrelieved gloom, this record may be left where it stands, incomplete and undocumented, because, partial though it is, it establishes beyond reasonable doubt the most important thing about the Government: its tendency - the line of march, the main drift, which implies that unless there is a sharp re-orientation, amounting to a complete reversal of policy, the Fourth Labour Government will be the most catastrophic ever. Later, socialists will have to itemise this balance sheet with miserly precision

continued/

and analyse its every grey nuance. Now, the key question is not ^{the} charting of each isolated, broken pledge and shattered hope, but the appreciation of the wood rather than the leaves of the tree.

The bankers' way

Some socialist journals have already begun the labour of analysis and explanation which is urgently required. New Left Review, in the introduction to the July-August number, quite rightly indicating that "Few regimes have so immediately lost all credit or respect", went on to insist:

"The first task is... to try to understand the logic of the political experience we have witnessed since October, 1964. Why has Labour administration performed so badly, even in its own terms? Why has it abandoned so much of its programme, so soon?...The Labour Party's abysmal record since October reveals much about its own character; but it has revealed, more clearly than ever before, the real secret of the impasse of British society today - the at once indispensable and insupportable heritage of imperialism."

In elaborating and refining this insight, the article by Tom Nairn, "Labour Imperialism", makes some extremely telling points. Tracing the structural integration of industrial capital into the nexus of finance capital's interests, as all the major industrial giants like ICI, BIC, Unilever expand their networks of direct foreign investment and association, Nairn shows that this "annulment of old frontiers" leaves an insoluble dilemma: whereas Wilson had aligned himself with the dynamic soul of the industrial enterprise against the restrictive spirit of conservative rentiers and bankers, the two ghosts in fact inhabit one machine, and there in torment savage one another. This must lead direct to the question, succinctly posed by Nairn: is it possible for any government to

"master the British dilemma in quite the way which seemed entailed by Wilson's original approach? May it not be too late for even a 'radical' solution of that kind, given the effective unity between financial and industrial capital? May it not be too late, in other words, for any solution to the problem which remains within the terms of the national capitalist system itself, in any of its form?"

Trade union independence

This is clearly a central question. Part of the answer, though, was offered years ago by Lenin, when he remarked that there were no "final crises" from which capitalism could not escape, its replacement was not at hand. And there are other contradictory features of British capitalism which need an examination as careful as that which Tom Nairn has begun to devote to the relationship between industrial and financial capital, if all the potentialities for capitalist survival are to be thoroughly evaluated. Principal among these is the prolonged and apparently inexhaustible intractability of the British trade unions, which are proving markedly defiant about the degree of integration into neo-capitalism which Mr. Brown is attempting to secure with the Prices and Incomes Board. In most European countries the trade unions have been far more effectively assimilated into the structure of neo-capitalism than their British equivalents. It is true that with the exception of the Germans, European workers are cursed with sectarian and political fragmentation in their unions. It is equally true that there are repeated resurgences of militancy in the labour

continued/

movements of practically every common market nation. But if we are to search out the basic distinction between labour in Britain and Europe, it is not to be found in the hallmark of sturdy independence which is branded on every British buttock. Careful examination of the appropriate limbs of Sir William Carron or Mr. Jack Cooper would be likely to reveal a quite cosmopolitan clarity of skin complexion on their part. The basic reason why British capitalism has shown a marked inability to restrain and contain the appetites of its labour force is that it has had no long-term counterweight to full employment. Wage drift has thus constantly pushed to take up the diminishing slack that an ailing economy had to offer. In Italy, large-scale unemployment with a declining rural population have produced effective disciplinary force during much of that nation's postwar history. Before Herr Ulbricht's wall intervened, the Federal German Republic had abundant labour quarries in the East. Since, it has threshed about for substitutes as far afield as Greece and Spain, but without effectively replacing the East as goad and stimulant to a loaded labour market. De Gaulle, too, in his agrarian rationalisations, and later with the pied noirs (the returned colons from Algeria) has found easement for labour shortage. In the United States, the depressed Negro population has provided its reserves of labour. But in Britain, only limited immigration has taken place, and that counterbalanced by a constant outflow. As Labour has been forced to abort its housing programme, the pressure of a strident minority of xenophobic electors has brought it in a shamefully misguided way to staunch even that limited trickle to the large discomfort of George Brown and the business press, whose liberal sympathies may not be large, but whose appreciations of the labour shortage in Britain are certainly realistic. Each stop that has been imposed on British economic growth has produced its momentary growth of unemployment, but the check to that growth has not been administered simply by renewed expansionist opportunities: rather it has flowed from the inevitable and sharp recoil than an independent and undefeated labour movement can administer in the political field. (2)

The work of Rationalisation could not proceed uninterruptedly in such a context. Capital found itself confronted by persons who not only claimed rights, but were able to punish their violation. It was surely for this reason that successive governments were forced to tread into the most dangerous terrain of a search for a political solution to the problem of labour costs and wage-control. And Mr. Wilson's usefulness to capital can scarcely be appreciated outside this field. What is most noteworthy in the record of this administration is the valiant way in which its opponents have striven to keep it alive. Tory chairmen who cast their votes in chivalry; Tory MPs who with touching gentility lose themselves between the bars and the lobbies when the fatigue of Government supporters proves greater than the will to rule; these remarkable phenomena scarcely signal a return to the sporting traditions of British parliamentarism. They do appear to make sense in a context in which the opposition does not wish to prevail, until the Government has performed the role which has been allotted to it. As more and more of the unions' teeth are drawn, as the Prices and Incomes Board recruits first whips, then scorpions to its armoury, and as usual, all the while, the unions are disarmed by Mr. Wilson's rhetoric, so the opposition can begin to flex its muscles and prepare for the resumption of control. Is this not a natural way for Mr. Heath to think? Meantime, the Government continues to develop all the rationalisations of Dr. Beeching on the railways, and to drive through the explosive re-orientation of the mining industry, as if its one object in life were
continued/

to establish the truth of this pessimistic view of its role. (It is even rumoured that, in order to secure the complicity of the railway trade unions' leadership in the creeping denationalisation involved in the liner train scheme, Mr. Wilson has promised extensive new nationalisations after the election. Alas: Mr. Heath need have no sleepless nights on this matter).

Incomes policy, cuts, rationalisations: all these amount to the classic solution which capital, itself sick, prescribes for labour as well. I am too ill; here, you take my pill...all that is new in this situation is the ministering physician. And what is astonishing is the way in which Mr. Wilson plays the role. Malicious gossips even claim that he enjoys it....

Where is the left?

Yet is is not all that is strange. Perhaps the most truly amazing thing about the post-October situation is to be found in the becalmed tranquility of Labour's back benches. After the storms of the unilateralist campaign perhaps the largest left intake into any Parliament since 1945 has appeared, only to discover that discretion is rather the more responsible part of valour. This strange event has staggered the Economist, which returns week after week to discuss the reason why, half in malice, half in pique. The leaders of the traditional left, Anthony Greenwood, for instance, were wisely co-opted by Mr. Wilson into peripheral complicity in his arrangement. Their behaviour has been scandalous. Whether Mr. Greenwood has gained a final victory over the schoolchildren he gassed in Bahrein, as they threatened to undermine the East of Suez design, it is too early to say. What does, however, appear quite clear is that he has finally routed and liquidated his own conscience. Perhaps this is the most significant political victory Mr. Wilson has scored: he has benumbed, confused, and outwitted the left in a manner that outbids the most bizarre predictions of the most hostile opponents of that grouping. Perhaps the fact that the Government had its own left cover has given other members of Parliament pause. With very few honourable exceptions, the Parliamentary left has bought every dud Peace Mission, every hoax and placebo that has been offered. The flight of Steel Nationalisation through the lobbies is a significant case in point. If Mr. Gaitskell had attempted such manoeuvres as those which Mr. Brown (and presumably Mr. Wilson) have accomplished, he would have been denounced from every platform in the land. Instead of raising hell, the left has melted into the landscape.

The significance of this must not be under-estimated. Had the left spoken out, the constituencies would by now be in a turmoil. The unions are already full of bewildered, often bitterly disappointed men. At the local level, the party preserves its peace, because loyalty is the first rationality of one who knows rightly that unity is strength. Monolithic in its piety, the traditional left leadership defers to that peace, as if it were the ultimate in political wisdom. In fact it is the reverse. If there were any hope for Mr. Wilson, it would lie in an outcry from the Labour movement. Only the strongest pressures from his supporters could prevail over the ruthlessly implacable logic of the barkers, which grows more persuasive each day as the vacuum left by its application yawns wider through the party. If anyone had spoken earlier, perhaps the first fatal steps might have been turned aside. But if is no answer: the problem of the left was not shortage of force, lack of numbers, or even lack of faith or goodwill. What the left lacked was any sense of programme,

continued/

any notion of the direction of events, any first faint beginning of a strategy. It fenced in the foggy lobbies of the politics of previous decades, bound by the imagined supremacy of institutions which were in fact at their last gasp, (4) while the real rulers enmeshed its protectors and champions in their own completely alien objects. Recriminations are the very last thoughts that this sad history should inspire; there but for the grace of the polls goes every last fundamentalist red sectarian also. What does emerge is the paramount need for a strategy of socialist advance which rests on solid theoretical foundations, and which lives in the present world.

A new programme

The work of elaborating a programme is not one which can be passed across to three part time research workers. It involves a whole protracted labour of discussion and education within a very wide area of the Labour Movement. Precisely what has gone wrong with the fourth Labour Government has been this old, elitist conception of programme. Policy is left to the wise, to the ones who know. Everyone else knocks doors. In the event, the knowledge of the wise was insufficient: what they needed was no longer an insight into the wickedness of the world, but the social understanding and the political ^{staff} with which to assault that wickedness. This can only be created in painstaking political discussion and organisation, starting from the fundamental premise that the richest source of socialist potential is the self confidence and self activity of the workers themselves.

The natural tendency which will emerge from the accumulating disillusionment of Labour's activists will be to seek immediate, partial solutions to what are global problems. There is diminishing scope for effective, purely local, trade union militancy though. Labour needs a socialist perspective, designed for practical application. To those who see the impossibility of piece meal solutions, there may arise the alternative of self immolation in a purely abstract and doctrinal socialism. The failure of labour to meet its immediate, bread and butter commitments may impel many on the left to reject all bread and butter demands as a deluding distraction, and to seek in their place to elevate a purified and spiritualised vision of commonweal as the motivating goal of socialist activity.

While it is acutely important to discuss the idea of socialism, and to widen constantly the circle of people for whom its problems are already a living reality, this can never be a sufficient answer to the difficulties in which we find ourselves today. It will not help the railwaymen to be told that "socialism is the only answer to Doctor Beeching", true though that aphorism may be. Unless we can offer some practical immediate steps to socialism, our railwayman is likely to choose either to belt hell out of someone in the union, or, more probably, to look for another job. Even slogans which in themselves could contribute to the growth of an explicitly socialist awareness, like the demand for an integrated transport policy, need to be linked inseparably with a whole series of complimentary conceptions, which taken together can form the mental bridge over which the workers may pass from capitalist to socialist forms of reasoning and action. Simple reiteration of demands for nationalisation alone do not form such a bridge.

continued/

The programme which we need to elaborate, neither maximalist and entirely abstract, nor minimalist and blind, needs to lead from the particular ills of capitalism, as it is, to the general solution we have to offer, and from the partial, schizoid outlooks which are fostered by capital to a fully socialist world view. Such a programme must attack, not only the organisational failures, but the feel of capitalism, of subordination : it must expose its alienating effects plainly, so that they are devoid of mystery and terror. Clearly, in the fight against alienation which the workers suffer as producers, the major answering socialist response is the demand for worker's control. This becomes increasingly urgent as neo-capitalist rationalisations gather force. Workers' control of job organisation, the speed of work, re-tooling, is no mere panacea. It can very well be understood by shop stewards and local union officers as fitting present needs. But neo-capitalist reorganisation extends from new practices in the shops up to the attempt to elaborate a comprehensive policy for incomes : and so too can the fight for workers' control, as it takes up the demand for complete and democratic accountability, the opening of the books, and the abolition of business secrets. All the work of elaborating a detailed campaign on such lines can only be done in the creation of a movement for industrial democracy : no amount of blueprints will replace its living agents in the factories. At the same time, the struggle for self management in the nationalised sector can feed and inspire such a movement. This already began to shape up in the steel industry in the discussions around the new Bill : and its embryos can be clearly seen in the mines, the railways, and, among the white collar staffs in particular, in the other nationalised industries.

Outside the sphere of production, the New Left has frequently documented the manipulation of men as consumers. Here too, the socialist movement has a traditional answering response : the transition to welfare forms of distribution. Free public transport : free housing : these are no more utopian in modern Britain than the National Health Service or free compulsory schools. To a nation embarking on the structural change from capitalist to socialist organisation, they would not be frills, but essential means of obtaining a human focus on the inherited economic difficulties. If the Bow Group can put forward the notion that the roads be metered as a counter to the fact that rail computes its costs comprehensively while roads do not, cannot we respond by demanding the opposite kind of parity? Here surely is a real answer to Beeching, which would enable some true picture of the travelling needs of Britain to be compiled.

In a context of public welfare, norms of consumption, the pressure for extended public control of industry becomes enormous. Arising out of the pioneer movement of a fight for more welfare and a fight for workers' control at every level, the arguments about the need for more nationalisation cease to be ritual incantation, and take on a more and more immediate necessity. Around the central core of such a programme as this, there are many issues to be resolved. But if someone speaks out, to say that socialist options are possible and practical, then there will be an answering call from very many people in the unions and the workshops. Only if the left is silent is there danger : for then each worker feels alone, his doubts his own, his conscience an isolate, and therefore, his will paralyzed. Voices must be found to enunciate the new socialism. The left must organise.

NOTES.

1. Soon after Mr. Mikardo had spoken, it was of course, deferred still further by Mr. Callaghan's measures. Mr. Callaghan had, it must be said, warned us in advance. He told a Fabian gathering at the 1963 T.U.C. that, "A Labour Government must not rush its fences... its first job is to get industry moving again. Then we can start paying ourselves a dividend." The Guardian reported that Mr. Callaghan felt this interval might be eighteen months. In this most dire case, which deals with Labour's pledge to the least fortunate, most penurious of its supporters, the time limit has now more than doubled and is stillextending.
2. These points have been elaborated in detail in a paper which has been written by Pat Jordan, to which I am much indebted.
3. On August 6th, Michael Foot wrote in Tribune about this question. He spoke of the potentially dangerous gulf between leaders and led, and called for sustained left pressure. "Sustain the left pressure and sustain the Government." This in itself is not an objectionable call : nobody would suggest that "the Government should be torn to pieces by the actions of the left inside the party," as Mr. Foot puts it. What the left should do is move towards an integrated focus both in terms of policy and organisation. What the sundering of the left into sectarian fragments, which is a present fact, not, as Mr. Foot seems to think, a future possibility, involves is the continued fostering of the illusion that there is no alternative to Wilson's policies. The left must look to its own problems : it must continually hammer out its own suggestions, and then promote them. This is the only realistic way of "putting pressure" on the Government, and until it happens, the incidental outbursts of resentment at this or that intolerably reactionary measure will all be met and deflected by Mr. Wilson, without occasioning him the need for any significant change of policy.
4. Parliamentary cretinism is a polite term compared to that which is necessary to characterise most of today's left. Not the slightest attempt has been made by the overwhelming majority of M.P.'s to do anything at all to mobilise external pressure on the Government. For years more and more of Parliament's perogatives have passed away from it : to the hands of banks and oligarchies, to the executive, to the international organisations, and of course through them to Washington. Parliament no longer knits the bourgeoisie into a coherent grouping : the concentration of economic power does this outside its confines. In a world in which their leaders were hemmed in and surrounded by such hostile forces, one would have thought that M.P.'s would have sensed the need to mobilise some effective countervailing power at the grass-roots. Not so. The only significant demonstration of socialist activists, that on Vietnam, was carefully handed over to Mr. Wilson by its parliamentary spokesmen almost as a thanksoffering for his piddling peace mission.
5. They haven't known anyhow. the complete mental laziness of empirical British socialism was sharply revealed by Emmanuel Shinwell in his autobiography, when he wrote that in 1945 he arrived

There are certain fundamental points which must be understood if any discussion about the war in Vietnam is to have value. The population of Vietnam has fought against foreign invasion and domination for twenty-five years without respite. Two generations have grown up in Vietnam knowing only conditions of violence and occupation by oppressive troops. In every village in Vietnam the characteristic landmark was the guillotine and tens of thousands of citizens were mutilated and executed for the sole reason that their loyalty was held in doubt by the occupier of the moment.

Secondly, the basic characteristic of the American war in Vietnam has been experimental. In the name of "Special Warfare" great masses of the civilian population have been used for experiments in mass slaughter. Chemicals involving arsenic compounds have been used indiscriminately throughout Vietnam by the United States. Toxic gases have been standard equipment of the puppet army. 59% of the rural population were placed in concentration camps under conditions of forced labour, perhaps the largest proportion of any national group to be subjected to such conditions. Within these camps, 300,000 secret police and army conducted dismemberment and disembowelment. In village after village pregnant women had their stomachs ripped before the gathered populace. When the French were defeated and the Americans, through their agents, began these practices for which the documentation is both available and overwhelming, there was no armed resistance for a period of five years. There are hundreds of villages in Vietnam in which mass burials of live people were carried out by the forces of Ngo Dinh Diem, financed and directed by the CIA. Students, Buddhists and children were buried up to their necks and decapitated. After suffering such atrocities which, both in character and scale, compare closely with the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe, a guerilla struggle of resistance broke out in 1959. The struggle was primitive in that it depended on bows and arrows, bamboo spears and animal snares. Arms were only available through their capture from the enemy. Bear in mind the experimental character of this war and then realise that in one year alone, namely 1962, more than 50,000 air attacks on villages with napalm were carried out.

Napalm, a chemical, is a jelly gasoline which behaves literally as a ball of fire burning all in its path. Napalm cannot be extinguished. Victims of napalm are unable to put out the fire, but become molten masses of fire until nothing remains. These weapons have been used by the U.S. against villages, schools and hospitals as a matter of policy, over and over again and throughout the country. A further chemical, phosphorous, acts as an acid, and has been used throughout the country. Phosphorous burns as does napalm, but phosphorous is a white cloud which envelops all with which it comes in contact. Experimental fragmentation bullets and shells have been employed. A bomb which is a container holding tenthousand steel darts has been used widely. Each steel dart is self-propelled and kills at a range of three hundred yards. Each dart is sharpened as a razor and slices all in its path. Each container holds tenthousand such darts. Hundreds of bombings missions have occurred in which these containers have been dropped indiscriminately over areas such as the Mekong Delta.

Why does the United States experiment in Vietnam? Because they consider this struggle to be the prototype of similar resistance throughout the poverty stricken sections of the world. If they lose in Vietnam it is
continued/

possible for starving peasants to drive out industrial powers anywhere. The other essential of the war in Vietnam is the fact that the United States has viewed the Vietnam war primarily as a staging ground for war with China. We have had all the evidence to which we are entitled, which is to say there is no remote justification for further ignorance or further misunderstanding of American intentions. The Director of the State Department Policy Planning Board formulated Plan Six which called for the creation of an incident off the ports of North Vietnam to provide a pretext for bombing further North. After a period, further bombings were to be held. Any pause for the response was planned to create additional pretext for bombings. The object is to provoke China into resistance in order to be allowed to destroy her industrial centres and to remove her from the Twentieth Century. American imperialism is aware that the emergence of China as a major industrial power will be a death blow to the control by American capitalism of the underdeveloped world and its resources.

To repeat: the two basic facts about this war are that it is experimental in the manner of Spain and preparatory for an assault on China.

The United States has purposely and steadily increased the scale of this war. President Johnson's electoral victory was overwhelming and there was no obstacle to a settlement of the war if it was wanted by the United States. The North was bombed because the United States wanted to bomb the North and troops have been sent because the United States wants them sent. This is the record. What does it teach us? It should teach us that American words cannot be trusted because American actions betray them. The Peace Movement has been deceived by words in a manner reminiscent of the 1930's. "We seek no wider war; we wish not territory for ourselves" - President Johnson, 1965; Adolf Hitler, 1939. The use of the language of peace to camouflage acts of war is Hitlerian.

We must be clear, therefore, about why suddenly in April of this year Johnson was prepared for negotiations which had always been refused. The negotiations were advanced when 300,000 troops were blueprinted for Vietnam. Wilson's Peace Mission was conceived in Washington, together with bombings within thirty miles of the borders of China. In short, the negotiations proposed and the peace missions advanced are camouflage in a Nazi sense for a policy of military adventure long prepared and long underway and now fulfilled. When we ask the Vietnamese to negotiate, what, in fact, are we asking them to do? When we acquiesce in peace missions, what do we expect the Vietnamese to discuss - a sovereign state is being bombed and a foreign army is invading the South. If 59% of the Americans had been placed in concentration camps, if Americans had been subjected in their millions to napalm, phosphorous, gas, dismemberment, disembowelment, would we have the arrogance to ask them to negotiate or talk peace while the perpetrators of these crimes were increasing the scale of ^{be} them and pronouncing their determination to remain in occupation. Let us ^{be} clear - negotiations as advanced from Washington and peace missions as advanced by its cat's paws are fraudulent because they do not require the cessation of the aggression. On the contrary, this would permit the disintegrating puppet army to regroup and thus in practice keep American troops in Vietnam indefinitely. Do we not have the example of Laos next door? Have the Chinese not been negotiating for fifteen years in Warsaw? These peace missions have been advanced for one reason: to enable the United States to say, "You see, we have tried everything but the Vietnamese and Chinese do
continued/

not want peace. Therefore we must "continue to bomb their hospitals and schools with napalm until death and desolation" (to use Johnson's words) "break their will to resist."

What is our responsibility? We have only one responsibility - to stand together with the Vietnamese just as we stood with the French resistance to Hitler. There is only one solution to the war in Vietnam which is honourable and serious - that is the removal of American troops. This is the first condition for the acceptance of the international agreements already negotiated at Geneva in 1954. The responsibility of the left in this country is to show our solidarity with the just struggle of these people. We shall be told that it is impractical to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops and so we must support peace missions. This is dangerous talk. These peace missions are devices both to silence us and to legitimise aggression - that is the nub of the matter.

We do not want to discover a formula permitting the retention of U.S. troops under whatever guise, therefore why flirt with schemes which have this as their object? Our responsibility is to tell the truth about Vietnam, mobilise opposition to what is going on in more than a symbolic or romantic sense. We are all corrupted through being beneficiaries of exploitation. Our standards of living derive from the brutality in Vietnam and the under-developed world. It is only after these liberation struggles have been successful that it will cease to be possible to buy us off with the spoils of exploitation. Only when we begin to experience that exploitation, which we avoid experiencing because there are Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans to be exploited, will conditions of struggle exist in Britain. All those who wish the defeat of the Nazis should wish the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam - that is the issue.

Postscript

As we went to press we received the following press statement from Bertrand Russell; we feel that it is a logical sequel to the article above (itself, written by one of Bertrand Russell's secretaries):

"The bombing of dams in North Vietnam is a horrible and vindictive attack on a civilian population. We know that serious consideration has already been given in the U.S. to the bombing of the Red River dykes for which the destruction of the dam is apparent preparation. If this happens, between 2 and 3 million people will drown, the rice crop will be destroyed, causing mass starvation. Is there no ounce of humanity left in this Government that it should fail to condemn and publicly reject this barbarism?"

A delegation to Prime Minister Wilson is being assembled quickly to demand that Britain should forcibly inform President Johnson of its detestation of this wickedness. Among those who have already agreed to participate in such a delegation are: Iris Murdoch, Professor Wedderburn, Ruth Glass, David Glass, Ralph Miliband and Lord Silkin. Further names will be announced later.

notes continued from page 9

at his desk in the Ministry of Fuel and Power, with a mandate to nationalise coal, electricity and gas, expecting to find detailed plans all ready. They were not. He had to start from scratch. Under this Government, despite all the noise about an integrated transport system, the new ministers have carried on in the grooves established by their predecessors, witness: rails and mines.