

The Week

A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS
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**London
Labour
to sack
Bob Mellish?**

SEAMEN SAY "OPEN THE BOOKS"

54 Park Road, Lenton, Nottingham

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NEWS ANALYSIS FOR NOVEMBER 23-29, 1978

SEAMEN SAY "OPEN THE BOOKS"

SEAMEN SAY "OPEN THE BOOKS" - A major dispute between the International Maritime Union (IMU) and the shipping industry is set to be resolved by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. The ILO is expected to rule in favor of the seamen's demands for a 10% wage increase and a 10% reduction in working hours. The shipping industry has offered a 5% wage increase and no change in working hours. The ILO's decision is expected to be issued in the next few weeks.

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SEAMEN, BOILERMAKERS, TGWU - NOW FOR THE REST OF US

"Where, oh, where in the Labour Party are the democrats who will come forward and stop this gross betrayal of the trade union movement?" This question which Danny McGarvey the Boilermakers' leader, posed in his presidential address to the union, on Tuesday, is echoing round the whole trade union movement. With the seamen's strike, the Government's totally unjust and anti-socialist incomes policy has ceased to be merely an unpleasant blue-print, and has become a real and dangerous fact. Mr. Wilson has shown that he will not draw back from smashing the seamen's organisations in order to exercise control over wages. After his generous offer of beer and sandwiches had failed to suborn the Seamen's leaders ("We are not the NUR" one of the strike leaders was alleged to have said), Mr. Wilson has shown his other face to them: now they are "enemies of the state", which means that the whole weight of the state will be brought in to defeat them.

Harry Nicholas, of the TGWU, has already asked the dockers to stand ready for action. The moment the Royal Navy moves into this situation, it is vital that the dockers should move out. And if the Government does not learn the lesson then, it is crucial that other groups of workers should join to teach them. Our friends at the airports, for instance, who, in the dynamic technicians' unions, are solidly ranged against the incomes policy, must already be discussing what can be done to aid the seamen. Given this vital aid, the seamen can win. And their very solid fight will take the whole issue of the defence of trade unionism on to a new plane. Already the seamen are going on to the offensive, as their demand "Open the books", which we publish on page 2 reveals. This is the proper answer to the incomes policy: if there is a crisis in the British economy, it is the responsibility of the organisers of that economy: and no sacrifices whatever can be expected from the workers until they are accorded their rights as policy makers, over-riding the alleged "prerogatives" of managements which stand exposed as prerogatives of inefficiency, inhumanity and greed. Mr. Wilson's confrontation with the seamen would not be needed if he would follow socialist policies: but since he is not, the whole Labour Movement must help the seamen, and work for the building of an authentically socialist movement which can help undo the damage which this rift is doing the Labour Movement.

SOLIDARITY WITH AMERICAN SOCIALISTS A correspondent reports on page 4 the dreadful murder of an American socialist in Detroit, U.S.A., and rightly points out that this is part of a pattern: the attacks on the Du Bois clubs, the Berkeley Vietnam Day Committee, peace marchers, etc. are increasing. We suggest readers write or telephone the American Embassy (Grosvenor Sq., London W.1.) and tell them that we regard the American Government morally responsible for the attacks.

The following is the text (somewhat abridged) of a leaflet published by HumberSide Voice and is signed by the members of the Strike Committee of the Hull branch of the National Union of Seamen:

"Why we are on strike The press and T.V. have completely ignored the case for the seamen's demand. That is why we feel it is vital to explain the issues to you in the leaflet.

"1. Wages and hours In the past, unfortunately, the Union has failed to obtain a decent living wage for seamen. For example:

The 1961 Agreement gave a basic wage for a 44 hour week of £9! Out of this, after deducting taxes and money kept back for FINES, a man could send home to wife and family a maximum of £7.10. a week. All overtime pay was retained by the employer till the end of the voyage. The seamen's families had to live till then on levels below National Assistance!

In the 1965 Agreement, the NUS accepted a 56 hour week because it meant a man could send an improved allowance of £11 maximum to his wife. But the agreement said that only essential duties should be done at weekends. THE EMPLOYERS COMPLETELY IGNORED THE AGREEMENT - weekends are worked still - regardless of whether they are essential duties or not. Result - the employer gets far more work done at basic rates, less at overtime rates.

"The present demands, 1966

1. A 40 hour week - a thing which nearly all shore workers enjoy now - and an objective of the labour movement for half a century.
2. £14 a week as the AB's basic wage. This would mean that a man could send home £11 maximum to his wife and family.

HARDLY AN UNREASONABLE DEMAND

"2. The shipowners The contribution of British shipping to the solving of our balance of payments problem is consistently falling. This cannot be blamed on labour costs which are below those of our successful international competitors. The growth of the world's super tanker fleet - which, British owners realised too late, are more economic - proves their failure to modernise, despite the largely undisclosed super profits made.

They are a powerful and ruthless vested interest, with a long history of anti-union activity. In 1955, they broke an unofficial strike by getting the Government to send out National Service call-up papers to strikers between 18 and 26 years old. In 1960, they jailed unofficial strikers who had breached the notorious Merchant Shippin Act (Note: This act is the one remaining example of 19th Century Master-Servants Acts. It is the same form of criminal law as in the armed forces, and enables the shipowners to dictate conditions of employment to which seamen's resistance is mutiny...Every day Masters act as Judge, Jury and Prosecutor, to fine men at sea; for being a few minutes late to work, a man may be fined several days pay, and on subsequent offences, fines are doubled. ...A seaman on leave who fails to report, maybe for serious domestic reasons, can be dragged back to the ship by the police on the orders of the Captain. If absent when the ship sails, he is a deserter, and can be jailed! His wife can also be jailed for "harbouring a deserter"!)

"3. Incomes policy. The NUS accepted the incomes policy in belief that it would benefit low-wage groups like seamen. We now find a 15% increase for doctors.. is permissible, but a 15% increase for seamen will ruin the country! Is it wrong for us to feel that "incomes policy" has become the old familiar WAGE RESTRAINT? Shipowners cry that they can't afford it, the seamen cannot judge this, and neither can Mr. Gunter BECAUSE PROFITS AND COSTS ARE THE BEST KEPT SECRET OF THE INDUSTRYTHE SHIPOWNERS MUST PROVE THEIR CASE BY OPENING THEIR BOOKS. Too long they have they cried "wolf" about profits, now once the...

MORE AND MORE SIGN UP FOR WORKERS' CONTROL MEETING

from Ken Coates

Although there is well over a month to go to the seminar on Industrial Democracy, organised by the Centre for Socialist Education and supported by a number of socialist newspapers including The Week, The Voice and Tribune, registrations are coming in at a most promising rate.

The Edinburgh Trades Council has elected four delegates, and it is expected that there will be a large contingent of participants from Scotland. Since last week delegates have been appointed from Stoke, Nottingham, London, Hull and Cardiff. The Hull dockers who helped to work out the policy outlined in the Anti-Devlin Report (published by The Week and Humberside Voice at 2/6d post free) will be joining with Hull busmen to fill a bus to Nottingham for the week-end. Miners from Notts, Derbyshire and Staffordshire are expected. A large body of shop stewards from the aircraft industry have been invited.

John Hughes, the well known authority on British trade unionism, has agreed to take part, as has Stan Newens MP, a staunch advocate of industrial democracy. Other MPs are keenly interested in the work of the seminar, and several are expected to participate.

One of the major problems of the seminar will be that of housing the delegates who flock into Nottingham. Any Nottingham readers who can offer a bed are asked to kindly notify the conference organiser, Geoff Coggan, 47 Brindley Road, Bilborough, Nottingham; tel 281364. Delegates from outside Nottingham are asked to send in their credential forms early, to allow for speedy assessment of the amount of accommodation required.

LONDON LABOUR PARTY TO DEBATE BOB MELLISH

from a London reader

One of the most hotly debated subjects at this year's London Labour Party annual conference will be the position of Bob Mellish, year's chairman. There are resolutions down expressing concern at his attitude on the immigration question. The controversy was set off by Mr. Mellish's speech at the Blackpool conference when immigration was debated. Many delegates considered his speech had marked racialist undertones and at the conference a petition was circulated among London Labour Party Executive Committee members condemning the speech. In the opinion many people Bob Mellish ought to have resigned from his position due to the fact that he had opinions on a vital issue very far removed from those of the majority of his colleagues. It is important, however, to fight policies and not just call for the removal of individuals and it is good to see that this is way the majority of the left in the London Labour Party view the matter. Once a policy has been fought for and won the composition of the leadership will begin to reflect those policies. It is to be hoped that this is how things work out in London this week end.

AMERICAN SOCIALIST MURDERED BY GUNMAN

from Dave Windsor

According to press reports a gunman forced his way into the headquarters of the Detroit branch of the Socialist Workers Party, last week, lined up the people there against a wall and shot them one by one. One of them was killed and another two were injured. This ghastly crime is typical of recent happenings in the United States: the bomb attacks on the Du Bois club headquarters and Berkeley Vietnam Day Committee, the beating up of peace demonstrators, etc. It is not too difficult to see that the hidden hand of reaction is responsible.

At a time when efficiency is increasingly being equated with socialism, it is especially useful to read the Ministry of Labour's latest contribution to socialist theory*. Labour's new ideology differs in some respects from the old. "A contented worker is not necessarily an efficient worker. A man with a skill in some traditional craft may derive satisfaction from a job which is not economically justifiable or may prefer to work far more painstakingly and carefully than is necessary or, from the point of view of speed, desirable." No stone is left unturned by the authors in their search for the formula of efficiency. Joint consultation is considered and then rejected. "It may help greatly to improve efficiency in the right conditions but it cannot change the fact that the interests of managements and workers do not wholly coincide." Quite so. However, satisfactionism, consultation about and control of work is incidental to a higher purpose- "Pay... is the most important thing for the great majority of workers. It is after all what most people work for."

The discussion of method of payments spreads over several pages. Fowley is the inspiration and 'incomes policy' the watch-word. Piece rate encourages wages drift and therefore should be changed for a variety of incentive schemes. Fringe benefits are welcomed as they raise the worker's status and make him feel integrated. The report comes out strongly for fostering the shop-steward movements. Stewards are "often not sufficiently appreciated". Management should help their workers' representatives by providing facilities for proper elections and enhancing their prestige by taking them on trips to look at new machinery installed in different parts of the country, etc. The stewards should be given opportunities to report back to their constituents. This paternalistic approach should not be too blatant. Management should "avoid putting on workers' representatives the responsibility for explaining and justifying management policy; it is not their job, they are unlikely to do it well and they may well lose the confidence of their constituents in the process".

The final recommendations of the report are few. Profit-sharing is rejected as is codetermination. The Ministry of Labour should increase the promotion of sensible labour management, examine the possibility of producing statistics giving a guide to labour management relations, etc. The authors have prowled around for 35 pages firmly within the cage of capitalist assumptions and have got nowhere. Their chronic myopia is seen in the discussion of workers' control (all six lines of it). Yugoslavia is discussed: "This system is very much the product of particular historical circumstances".

*"Attitudes to Efficiency". H.M.S.O. 1/6d.

TRADE UNION AND LABOUR PARTY DELEGATES TO ATTEND VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

So far delegates and observers have been agreed upon from the following groups and organisations to attend the June 4/5 Vietnam Solidarity Conference: Newbury C.L.P., Arab Revolution, M.C.F., Sheffield Soc. Soc., Brighton YCND, Catholic Libertarians, Horley BCPV, ESMP, St. Marylebone Y.S., Hampstead Y.S., Oxford Vietnam Peace Movement, Mid-Beds C.L.P., L.U.M.S.S., Hornchurch C.L.P., West Ealing N.U.R. (No. 2), Waltham B.C.P.V., Torch, Hillington trades council, Putney C.L.P., Basildon YCND, Hampstead CND, Hampstead BCPV, Romford CLP, Borehamwood Trades council, St. Marys (Twickenham) Soc. and others. This list is by no means exhaustive; each post brings fresh names. Material is going out and intending delegates should write to V.S.C. 8, Roland Gardens, S.W. 7

Hull CSE held a very successful inaugural public forum on the Incomes Policy on April 24th in the Co-operative Social Hall. The organising-secretary of the local CSE, Colin Stoneman, had done an impressive job in obtaining so much literature on the incomes policy. The audience was drawn from trade union branches, various left wing groups in the city, the Labour Party and the University; and on every seat there was a copy of "A Declaration of Dissent" from the five Technicians' Unions (ACTT, AScW, DATA, STCS), and DATA's evidence before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, as well as leaflets on local meetings.

Particularly useful was the way in which this meeting enabled ideas and plans for future strategy and policy to develop. The first session was spent in destroying the case for an incomes policy. Don Major, of DATA, emphasised the importance of shop stewards and their role in challenging management on the shop floor, and went on to question the whole concept of productivity as a solution to our economic problems when we continue with a vast defence burden and an East of Suez policy. John Saville then effectively cut the ground from under the incomes policy by showing, from the work of Titmus and others, that there had been no increase in equality of incomes since the 1940s, rather there had been a shift towards greater inequality.

The second session was opened by Jack Ashwell (T&GWU), author of the Humber-side Voice pamphlet on workers' control of the buses. He outlined the development of the T&G's opposition to any kind of wage restraint since 1947. Norman Lewis, a lawyer at Hull University, posed questions as to whether we want an incomes policy at all, and emphasised his conviction that it was a criminal act to bring criminal law into labour relations as envisaged by the penalty clauses of the aerly warning bill.

In the discussion which developed there began to emerge a well defined programme of practical and immediate activity which should form part of the Left's strategy. The Left's opposition to capitalism must include structural reforms, but these themselves should form the beginnings of an alternative policy for the Left in this country. Immediate action was suggested on the following lines :-

- 1) Help to stiffen trade union opposition to the incomes policy.
- 2) Support for the use of strike action where workers have taken this step; i.e. the dockers' recent action in Hull. Here the Left can help with leaflets, information, funds, etc.
- 3) Assistance in developing a shop stewards' movement, but one which is not left isolated; instead it should be linked with the Labour Movement.
- 4) Challenges to managerial prerogatives, i.e. demands to 'open the books'.
- 5) Equal rate for the job regardless of sex or race.
- 6) Continued demand for an extension of public ownership with workers' control.

The forum reached this point in its discussions with contributions from various quarters, in particular from Tony Topham. It was then that John Saville took the argument further in a concluding suggestion that the Left should begin to formulate its alternative policy to capitalism. To do this we on the left must begin to discuss and decide whether we want a national minimum wage, how we are going to relate wages to social services, what we are going to do about differentials, whether we want a "free for all" which goes against unskilled groups, etc., etc. What is needed therefore, the the forum concluded, is a co-ordinated policy for the Left in this country set out as our next step, like the miners in the 1920s. As yet we are only in the very early, but hopeful, stages.

When the Prime Minister delivered his studiously "impartial" attack on the seamen, who have at last rejected the kind of serfdom which is represented by one of their slogans - "Would you work 56 hours for £14 a week?", he spoke for some powerful people. We can confidently predict that he will receive a good press, as he did when he revealed the consistency of his principles by his (rather different) handling of the doctors' dispute. This time, however, his good reception will not simply result from the dispassionate admiration of the newspaper owners: for the seamen are going to be the victims of an altogether more sinister press coverage.

Mr. Sam Aaronovitch, in his book "The Ruling Class" pinpoints at least one focus of newspaper opposition to the strike: listing the main centres of financial power in Britain, he takes up the enigma of the fortunes of Sir John Ellerman:

"The veil of secrecy is such that only guesses are possible. The Sunday Express of January 10, 1960, may be usefully quoted as stating that Sir John Ellerman's fortune must exceed £50 million and may approach £100 million. The Sunday Express goes on: 'The king-pin of his fortunes is Ellerman Lines, which operates about 90 ocean-going liners, totalling more than 600,000 tons. The cost of replacing these ships has been given as £100 million...the company has built up an impregnable strong position - with reserves of £45 million. But his wide-ranging investments extend far beyond shipping. He has substantial interests in real estate, in newspapers (notably in the Daily Mirror and the Sunday Pictorial), and in other industrial securities' Ellerman House, at 19-21 Moorgate, is certainly the centre of a widespread net, and if we follow the connections of H. Davenport Price (and C. Snelling), chairman of three Ellerman trusts, and of E.S. Birk (a solicitor of Nicholson, Graham and Jones whose offices are also at 19-21 Moorgate) we find among other important connections, A.E. Reed, Associated Television, Illustrated Newspapers and subsidiaries, Inverest Paper, as well as the property companies and the Sunday Pictorial/Mirror. Most of the companies are private, but if we were to put together the public companies - like the combined Mirror-A.P., A.E. Reeds, Illustrated Newspapers, Inverest Paper - we would have easily the biggest group in paper and printing next only to Bowater (if not bigger than Bowater)."

Sitting on these shoulders, the Prime Minister will find that his voice will carry a long way. How deep it will reach to the hearts of the people remains to be seen. We think that many will share our opinion that Sir John Ellerman's millions are of less weight for socialists than the feelings of the seamen, who are quite right to refuse to continue working 56 hours a week for £14. We hope that the dockers will share our view, and not the Prime Minister's, when the Royal Navy streams in to blackleg on our sailors. And when the soldiers march in to blackleg on the dockers, every trade unionist in Britain must surely stand ready to act.

Nothing could underline more clearly the need for Labour to draw back from its fatal capitalist incomes policy, and to make a fresh start on the road to socialist advance.

There are three main reasons why the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign should put its main emphasis on winning the working class movement for its ideas:

- (1) Only the working class movement has the power to take effective action to stay the hand of the Government should it take a direct part in the Vietnam war;
- (2) Because we have a Labour Government we should take advantage of its links with the trade union movement to put pressure on it; and
- (3) The concept of solidarity is one which is part of the tradition of the working class and its organisations; as such it will evoke a far more ready response than purely pacifist propaganda.

It has been rare that a ^{protest} movement in Britain has been able to influence foreign policy in any decisive manner. But in those cases where it has the movement has been based upon the working class - the most notable example being the "Hands off Russia" movement of the early 1920's which culminated in the "Jolly George" incident. On an international scale we see that seamen in Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, etc., have refused to sail ships for Japan. Dockers in those countries and others (notably Mexican and Greek) have refused to load war material for Vietnam. The Vietnamese themselves understand the importance of working class solidarity: witness their appeal to trade unionists for solidarity action.

We must face the fact that because the majority of workers have been influenced by years of anti-Communist propaganda our task will not be easy. However there are certain concepts and arguments which we can use to great effect:-

- (1) That in Vietnam the majority of the working class support the National Liberation Front (the slogans of this year's May Day are case in point). We can therefore argue to members of the Labour Party and active trade unionists that if they were in Vietnam they would almost certainly be in the National Liberation Front;
- (2) That just as when a strike takes place the press always to try to raise the red herring of outside influences the talk of aggression from the north is a diversion. This will be readily understood by militant workers;
- (3) That the regime in Saigon is clearly anti-working class as examination of its record will show. Also the workers will understand the meaning of an 80% rise in the cost of living without any increase in wages.

We should seek to make a special appeal to working class organisations by having a really well-organised go at getting speakers into trade union branches, trades council, Constituency Labour Parties, Young Socialist branches, etc. In each locality where we have supporters of the campaign we should ensure that all these organisations are circularised and a speakers' panel is organised. In each case we should endeavour to get the union branches, etc., to become supporting organisations so that there is an identification. If after one year of activity we could get 100, 200 or so workers organisations in effect affiliated to our campaign this would have an immense effect.

A very important factor for this kind of work is to get well known trade union leaders and active Labour Party members to identify themselves with the campaign. It counts for a lot in union and Labour Party circles to have well-known and respected leaders of the movement supporting a campaign. The campaign should have a drive to get sponsors of this type. This year's T.U.C. and Labour Party conferences will be extremely important events in the fight against the Vietnam war. We should make special plans to ^{have} the maximum influence at them. (this will be the subject a separate paper.

Since 1945, the Daily Mirror has had pretensions to being a paper of the left. It supported the Labour Party enthusiastically in 1945, 1950 and 1951, rather less enthusiastically in 1964 and, after sitting on the fence as long as it decently could during the pre-election campaign, in 1966. But for the Mirror, support of Labour has been confined to the parliamentary field. Cecil King and his fellow-magnates know that the capitalist system and their gigantic profits will not be seriously threatened, no matter what the size of Labour's majority. in the House of Commons.

Whenever it comes to a real fight by the workers for more pay and better working conditions - issues which constitute a genuine threat to capitalist profits, the Mirror does not hesitate to declare its position firmly - and invariably it comes down against the workers. Nowhere is this shown more clearly than in their front page article on Monday, May 16, headed "Calling All Seamen..." written in the Mirror's usual chatty style, it has the impudence to call the seamen's demands "blackmail." One has to read between the lines to appreciate that whoever wrote the article is perfectly aware that the seamen have an unanswerable case and that their demands, to say the least, are moderate compared to the recent awards to the doctors.

"The seamen," says the Mirror, "are demanding featherbedding for their industry. What they are saying, quite simply, is this: 'If the shipowners cannot afford to pay us the money and give us the conditions we want - well, the Government must pay up'" What is so preposterous in this demand? If privately-owned industry is not prepared to sacrifice some of its swollen profits in order to give its workers decent wages and decent working conditions, then it is high time to take that industry out of the hands of so-called private enterprise. Let the Labour Government take over Britain's shipping industry, sack all the directors and set up committees of working seamen to run it.

The Mirror admits that the sailors have grievances and that they are justified, nevertheless it characterises the seamen's action "as an exercise in sophisticated sabotage, a...body blow against all the people of Britain in 1966." As usual, the Mirror like the rest of the big businesspress identifies the interests of the "people" with that of the capitalists. This has always been the language of reaction. There is not a single word of criticism of the ship-owners. If the Mirror is really concerned about the "people" why does it not issue a "Call to All Ship-Owners" and urge them to give in to the just demands of the seamen.

During the last war, when the seamen were braving the high seas and the deadly peril of German, Italian and Japanese mines, bombs and torpedoes, Ernest Bevin told them that they would never be forgotten. Like so many of the war-time promises this one also failed to materialise. The seamen have been immeasurably patient. This is their first strike since 1911 (when they demanded a minimum weekly wage of 35/-). They deserve the unqualified support of the entire Labour movement.

JAPAN TO TAKE OVER SOUTH KOREA?

from Hsinhua

Japanese monopoly capital is stepping up its infiltration into South Korea, and the Pak Jung Hi clique is in ever greater debt to Japanese big business, according to reports from Seoul. The unfavourable balance of trade between South Korea and Japan in the first quarter of this year amounted to 24,840,000 dollars— an increase of 12,610,000 dollars as compared with the figure for the end of February, according to the South Korea news agency, Dongwha Tongshin, quoting official data from a ministry of the South Korean puppet regime. By April 13th the Pak Jung Hi clique borrowed or decided to borrow from Japanese monopoly capital 'commercial loans' to the tune of 211,407,000 dollars, according to another South Korean news agency, Hapdong Tongshin, quoting official data of the puppet authorities. The interest rates on these loans vary from 5.75% to 8%, and they are to be repaid within five to seven years. The Pak Jung Hi clique has to make payments of more than 14 million dollars every year just to cover the interest on these loans. With the infiltration of Japanese monopoly capital, dealings in Japanese currency are growing in South Korean cities. In Seoul and Pusan, the total amount of transactions in Japanese currency vary from 5- 10 million yen a day. This not only creates "chaos in the system of foreign currency exchange management" in South Korea, but also causes "greater damage to the South Korean economy as a whole", the report said.

INDONESIA: MCNAMARA LETS THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

Testifying on U.S. foreign aid before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 11th, Secretary of Defence McNamara declared that, in retrospect, past U.S. military 'aid' to Indonesia had been well invested. He emphasised that this "aid" had enabled the United States to maintain "contact" with the Indonesian military leaders "who had much to do with the recent change in government".

DEMONSTRATIONS IN NORWAY AGAINST U.S. ROLE IN VIETNAM WAR

Three hundred Norwegians demonstrated in the harbour of Moss (near Oslo) on March 13th, against the U.S. loading of ammunition for South Vietnam. A U.S. warship anchored in the harbour of Moss. It was due to sail on March 15th with a cargo of ammunition. The ship was said to be bound for the United States, but the real port of destination was South Vietnam. The demonstration was sponsored by the Norwegian Committee for Solidarity with Vietnam.

AUSTRALIAN SEAMEN'S UNION REFUSES TO HANDLE VIETNAM SHIP

The Federal Executive of the Seamen's Union, E.V. Elliot, has refused to man an Australian ship taking military supplies to Vietnam. Mr. Elliot said that he had been approached by agents of the Commonwealth government who said it was intended to send the Australian National Line ship 'Boonaroo' to Vietnam. The ship was to leave Sydney on May 19th with a cargo of tractors, trailers, ordnance stores, building material, barbed wire and sandbags.

U.S. ESTABLISHING BASES IN N.AFRICA

from 'Le Nouvel Observateur'

An agreement on the reactivation of the Bizerta base has been signed between the U.S. Tempa Ship Repair Company and the Tunisian Government. Under the agreement, the American company will provide capital and technicians for putting into operation in time the four dry docks, several repair shops, an underground command-post, an anti-atomic shelter and an airforce base with runway for jet planes. The United States and Tunisia have reached a tacit understanding by which the U.S. sixth fleet may use the base freely. Since the French troops withdrew from Bizerta on October 1963, the U.S. has been seeking to turn Bizerta into a repair dock because its ships- civil and military- were primarily undergoing repairs at Villefranche and Malta. It was impossible to expand the base further at Malta and the French Government had ordered U.S. withdrawal from Villefranche. The U.S. has been active in seeking new naval and airforce bases along the Mediterranean off North Africa since they were ordered to withdraw.

(This French weekly in another article disclosed that the U.S. was conducting negotiations with Morocco on the reactivation of its air force bases there. It was seeking negotiations with the Spanish authorities for a similar purpose. The article suggested that it was clear from these moves that the U.S. was seeking to turn Spain and Morocco into the "strategic pivot of all American intervention in the Mediterranean basin and in Africa".)

WORLD BANK LOAN FOR THAILAND

The World Bank has notified Thailand authorities to send delegates to New York to negotiate on a 36 million U.S. dollar loan to build four strategic roads in Thailand. This followed Thailand's decision to send naval and air aid to South Vietnam. Totalling 768 kilometres, the four roads will be completed within two to three years. The Nakorn Sawan to Chiang Rai road will be 420 kilometres long and when completed will link Central Thailand with its Northern border.

BIG ITALIAN STRIKES

About 200,000 Italian workers employed in all city and inter-city public transport went on a 24-hour nationwide strike on May 12th. The strikers demanded the renewal and improvement of their collective agreement, higher wages and the full safeguarding of their trade union rights. At the same time, the travelling postmen also held a nationwide strike in protest against the intensification of their work shifts.

One million Italian building workers conducted a 48-hour nationwide strike on May 11th, for the renewal and improvement of their collective agreement and for full employment. Mass demonstrations and meetings were held in Rome, Milan, Florence, Bologna, Bari, etc. This was their third nationwide strike in two months. In Rome, over 15,000 farm workers delegated by 1,000,000 labourers from all over the country paraded through the centre of the city and held a meeting before the Colosseum. They demanded full employment and improved social security.

AN OPEN LETTER TO WLADYSLAW GOMULKA AND THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE POLISH WORKERS' PARTY

by Isaac Deutscher*

I am addressing this letter to you in order to protest against the recent secret trials and convictions of Ludwik Hass, Karol Modzalski, Kazimierz, Radawski, Ronsald, Smiech, Kuron and other members of your party. According to all available reports, these men have been deprived of liberty solely because they have voiced views critical of your policy or certain aspects of it, and because they have expressed disappointment with the bureaucratic arbitrariness and corruption, which they see rampant in their country. The charge against them is that they have circulated leaflets and a pamphlet containing 'false information detrimental to the state and its supreme authorities' the Public Prosecutor it seems did not accuse them of any crime or offence greater than that.

If this is the accusation, then the persecution of these men is disgraceful and scandalous. Several questions must be asked: Why, in the first instance have the Courts held their hearings in camera? Surely, no matter of state security was, or could have been involved. All the defendants have been academic teachers and students, and what they have tried to do was to communicate their views to fellow students. Why have they not been given a fair and open trial? Why have your own newspapers not even summarized the indictments and the pleas of defence? Is it because the proceedings have been so absurd and shameful that you yourselves feel that you cannot justify or excuse them; and so you prefer to cover them with silence and oblivion? As far as I know, prosecutor and judge have not impugned the defendants' motives or cast any serious doubt on their integrity. The accused men have proclaimed themselves to be, and have behaved like, devoted non-conformist Communists, profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of revolutionary marxism.

I know that one of them, Ludwik Hass was, even before the second world war, a member of the Communist, so called Trotskyist, organisation, of which I was one of the founders and mouthpiece. He then spent 17 years in Stalin's prisons, concentration camps and places of deportation. Released in 1957, he returned to Poland and so free from all bitterness and so strongly animated in his faith in a better Socialist future that he at once decided to join your party, and he was accepted as member. No one asked him to renounce his past, and he did not deny his old 'Trotskyist' views even for a moment- on the contrary, he upheld them frankly and untiringly. This circumstance alone testifies to his courage and integrity, Do you, Wladislaw Gomulka, really believe that you have in your 'apparatus' and administration, many people of comparable disinterestedness and idealism? Look around you, look at the crowds of time servers that serve you, at all these opportunists without principle and honour who fawn on you as they fawned on Bierut, and as some of them fawned even on Rydz-Smigly and Pilsudski. Or how many of these bureaucrats can your Government, and even socialism, count on in an hour of danger, as it can count on the people you have put in prison?

Recently still your Government claimed with a certain pride that there were no political prisoners in Poland since 1956. This claim, if true, was indeed something to be proud of in a country, the jails of which had always, under all regimes, been full of political prisoners, especially Communist prisoners. You have not, as far as I know, jailed and put in chains any of your all too numerous and virulent anti-Communist opponents, and you deserve credit for the moderation with which you treat them. But why do you deny such treatment to your critics on the left? Hass, Modzalski and their friends have been brought to the courtroom handcuffed and under heavy guards. Eye witness accounts say that they raised their hands in the old Communist

salute and sang the Internationale... How many of your dignitaries, Wladislaw Gomulka, would nowadays intone the Internationale of their own free will and choice?

I have been informed that before the trial, during the interrogation, the official who conducted it alleged that Hass and other defendents had worked in contact with me. I do not know whether the Prosecutor took up this charge in the Courtroom. In any case, the allegation is a complete falsehood. Let us say that if the defendants had tried to get in touch with me, I would have readily responded. But the fact is that I have had no contact whatsoever with them. I have not even seen a single one of their leaflets and pamphlets. I judge their behaviour solely from reports reaching me by word of mouth or through Western European newspapers.

I ought perhaps to explain that since the second world war I have not participated in Polish political life in any way, and that, not being a member of any political organisation, 'Trotskyist' or otherwise, I am speaking only for myself. I should add, however, that on a very few rare occasions I have broken my self imposed political abstinence. I protested when you, Wladislaw Gomulka, were imprisoned and slandered in the last years of the Stalin era. Knowing full well that I could not share all your views, I expressed solidarity with you. Similarly, I do not know whether I can fully approve the views and the behaviour of Hass, Modzolowsky and their comrades. But in their case as in yours I think I can recognise reactionary police terror for what it is and tell slander from truth.

Another occasion on which I allowed myself to have a say on Polish political matters was in 1957, when I explained in a special essay "The Tragedy of Polish Communism between the World Wars." You may remember that your censors, Stalinists of the so-called Natolin group, confiscated the essay when Polityka tried to publish it; and then you, Wladyslaw Gomulka, ordered the essay to be widely distributed among Party members. In those far-off days, just after the "Polish spring in October", you held that Polish Communists ought to know my account of the havoc that Stalin made of their Party, delivering nearly its leaders to the firing squad. You know that I had been one of those very Communists who, in 1938, protested against that crime and against the disbandment and denigration of what had once been our common Party, Moscow "rehabilitated" the Polish Party and its leaders only after 17 or 18 years; and then you, Wladyslaw Gomulka, apologised for having kept silent in 1938, although you had not believed in the Stalinist slanders. I do not believe that you are right now in persecuting and imprisoning members of, your own Party and your critics on the Left; and I cannot keep silent.

May I remind you of your own words spoken at the famous 8th Session of the Central Committee in October 1956? "The cult of the personality was not a matter just of Stalin's person", you stated then. "This was a system which had been transplanted from the USSR to nearly all Communist Parties... We have finished or rather we are finishing with that system once and for all", (Your emphasis). But are you not to some extent reestablishing that system? Do you wish these trials to mark the tenth anniversary of your own rehabilitation and of that "spring in October", during which you raised so many hopes for the future?

In the name of those hopes and your own record as a fighter and political prisoner under Pilsudski and Stalin, do not allow this miscarriage of justice to last! Dispel the secrecy surrounding the cases of Hass, Modzelewski, and comrades. If you think they are guilty, then publish the full report of court proceedings and let it speak for itself. In any case, I appeal to you to order an immediate and public revision of the trial. If you refuse these demands, you will stand condemned as epigones of Stalinism, guilty of stifling your own Party and compromising the future of socialism.

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