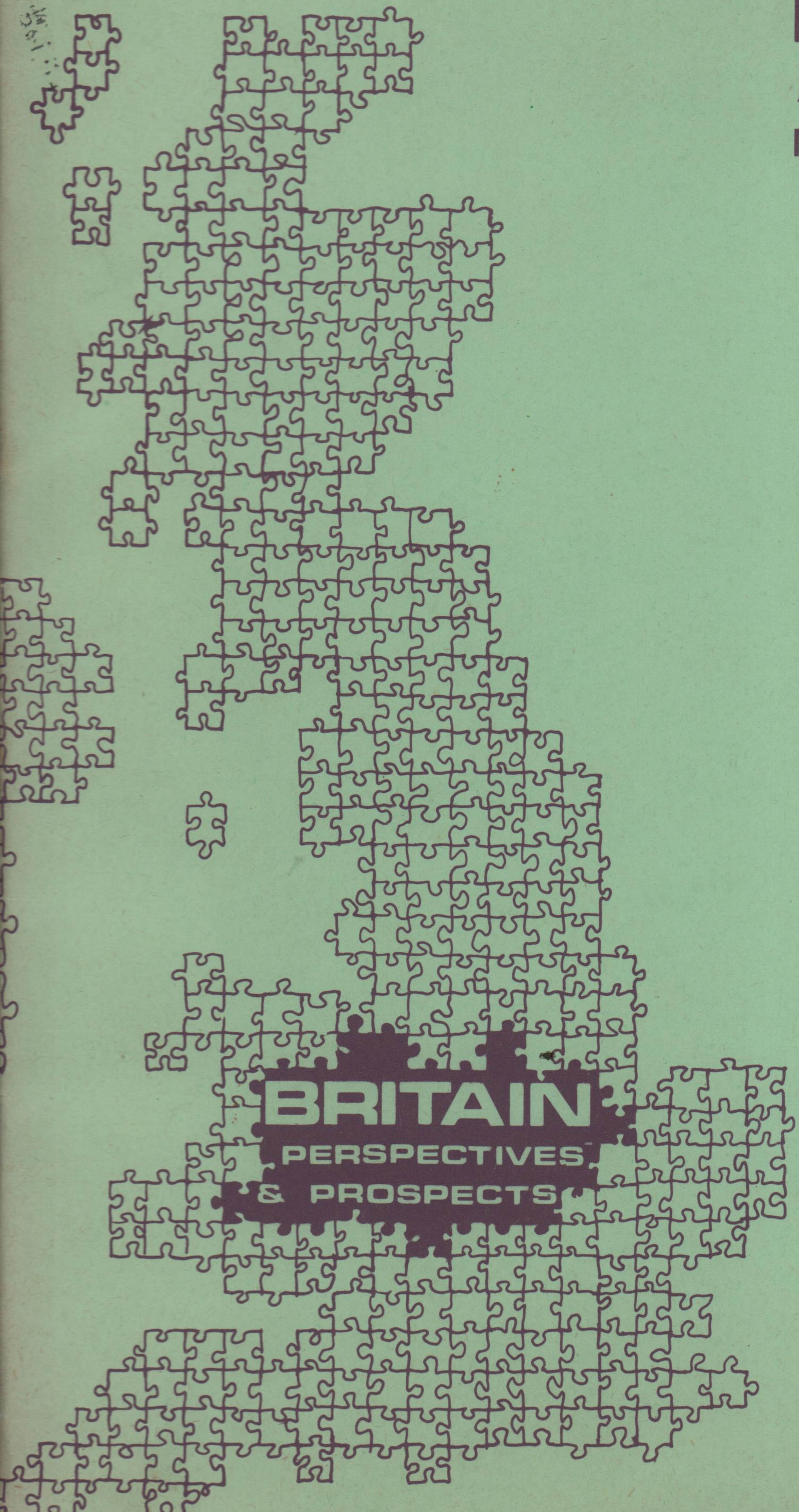


MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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BRITAIN
PERSPECTIVES
& PROSPECTS

MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

BRITISH PERSPECTIVES AND PROSPECTS

By TED GRANT

MEXICO —

A REPORT BY A COMRADE IN MEXICO

BRITAIN: AN INTRODUCTION

What distinguishes a Marxist from a dilettante or do-gooder is that a Marxist has a perspective. For Marxists, the problems, struggles, advances and setbacks of the working class only have any meaning when measured against the decay of Capitalism and the overall struggle for socialism. No way out exists for the workers within the confines of the present society. No lasting or meaningful reform of Capitalism can be achieved. The first task of a Marxist is therefore to analyse all the complex interacting forces at work at any given stage, in order to see as clearly as possible the line of march in which society is moving. It is essential to start from the movement at its own level at every point; but also to understand to the marrow of one's bones the direction it is taking and the challenges, confusions and obstacles it will face in the future.

Nowhere more than in Britain today do we see the wretchedness of blindly reacting to news, blindly sticking to outworn schemas and slogans. The labour movement is racked with confusion and crisis. The official 'Left' of the party clings to vapid and utopian reforms which would merely clip the fingernails of the ruling class; the ultra-left petty-bourgeois sects look with disdain on the Labour Movement and indulge in meaningless adventures, thus proving that they too have taken the present state of society for granted. Only the penetrating light of Marxism can show the way forward.

The Tory government has been forced by the harsh realities of the strength of the organised Labour movement to pull back from the aggressive, vicious stance of 'confrontation', 'lame ducks', 'stand on your own two feet', 'Selsdon Man' and the rest. The miners, railwaymen and dockers have thrown the Industrial Relations Act back into the face of the Tories. But they have found that collaboration with the Trade Union bureaucracies is a little harder after two years of union-bashing than it was in the softer days of the Labour government. The apparatus of the wage-freeze has been pulled back out of the cupboard, but with inflation raging uncontrolled for food and rent alone it will be ineffective.

The catastrophic fall in the position of British imperialism will only accelerate. The pound is dropping daily in value with the Tories scared to commit themselves to a new parity before they are forced to. Entry into the E.E.C. will only speed up the decline of Britain's old traditional industries, starved of investment and rotting into obscurity. Britain's per capita production has now dropped to seventeenth place, well behind Iceland and only narrowly beating Libya and Puerto Rico!

The capitalists cannot afford the luxuries of the post-war boom and of their former imperial grandeur. The bland liberal mask, the trappings of democracy, healthy fighting organisations of Labour, all these must be cast overboard if British capitalism is to survive. When Spain lost her empire, she paid the price of a succession of acute convulsions, the overthrow of the monarchy, a workers' rising, a reactionary Bonapartist regime, a new movement of the workers, a rebellion of the officers, socialist revolution, a treacherous intervention of 'Popular Frontism', three years of bloody civil war, a massacre of the Labour movement, and thirty five years of fascist terror. The British Empire has fallen harder and further even than the Spanish. The ruling class will also have to take similar measures to preserve its position - but it is faced with a working class enormously bigger, stronger, more confident, more experienced. The Tories are not surprisingly fighting shy of confrontation today. To resort to an all-out clash while they have any alternative would be foolhardy.

Instead they have once again taken to the road of bribing, flattering and blackmailing the leaders of the Labour Movement. On the one hand we see the charade of the Downing Street talks, and the gentlemanly pose of Feather even after the inevitable breakdown of the negotiations. On the other hand there is the ruthless scheming of the press barons to build up the Centre, the 'men of integrity', the Liberals and renegades from Labour, the Tavernes and Cyril Smiths (another ex-labour turncoat). In this way they hope to head off in a harmless direction some discontented Tory voters, and at the same time exert an eloquent electoral counter-pressure on the Labour Leaders to stand firm and resist the radical impulse of the Labour workers.

One cannot blame them for looking with dread on the Labour Movement today, spurred and steeled by two years of Tory attack, emerging stronger and prouder with the scars of victorious combat. Spontaneously the workers have thrown up ingenious and brilliant fighting tactics: the mass picket in the miners' strike, the mobile flying pickets of the builders' and dockers' strike, the wave of sit-in strikes and occupations which have sprouted overnight in every engineering centre. Meanwhile, the capitalist press is calculating, building up Powell, pacemaker for reaction. The issue of the Ugandan Asians has shown the depths of hysteria which sections of the press tycoons are prepared to whip up, as a diversion from the misery of Toryism. The National Front is enjoying only semi-clandestine links with the Tory Monday Club, and is even having discussions with Craig's ultra-reactionary Vanguard Movement in Ulster.

It is the comrades around the **Militant**, the Labour Party Young Socialists, who have adopted a Marxist programme, the forces who have campaigned around the Shipley resolution, who can gain the support of thousands and eventually millions for the only policy that can fundamentally transform society and end the horrors and fears of capitalism.

It is to arm the Marxists in the Labour movement with clear theoretical perspectives amid crisis-torn Britain, faced with stormy and even violent upheavals in the years to come, that we are re-printing here a recent analysis by Ted Grant of British perspectives, it should be read in conjunction with previous articles on the same subject in **MIR**. We hope that readers will find that in this way we can help to shed light on the tasks and challenges that lie ahead of all of us.



BRITAIN

PERSPECTIVES AND PROSPECTS

The world background to events in Britain is particularly sombre from the viewpoint of British capitalism. Despite the collapse of the crushing predominance economically of American Imperialism events on the American market have an immediate effect on the economies of the so - called 'free world'. The sickness of American capitalism with the staggering balance of payments deficit resulted in American Imperialism forcing the other major powers to undertake some of the burden by revaluing their currencies while the dollar was devalued to a modest extent (7½%). Meanwhile industrial production and the GNP dropped in most of these countries, including a steep drop in production in West Germany and especially in Japan. From a growth in real terms of 10% Japan dropped to 5% in 1971. Every capitalist power, to a greater or lesser extent was affected by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This with other factors led to the first world recession since the war. However the fall in annual industrial production was not yet a drop in production itself but only a steep drop in the *rate of increase* of production. In most industrialised countries this year will see a further increase in production and possibly an even higher rate next year. But within a few years there will be a big drop in production with an even bigger 'recession' or small slump.

The rhythm of the post - war economic upswing has been broken and a more 'normal' interlude of boom and slump has taken its place instead. All capitalist countries are effected by the sickness of inflation, with relative stagnation and inflation of the economy at the same time, the bourgeois economists even coining a word for this phenomenon of the post war period 'stagflation'. Politically the apparent stability of the capitalist regimes has been undermined by the underlying economic weakness. In Italy a pre - revolutionary period has existed for a number of years, the treachery and passivity of the leadership of the workers organisations resulting for the first time since the fall of Mussolini in the beginnings of the organisation of a Fascist counter - revolution and even the danger of a Bonapartist coup by the armed forces. However the enormous strength accumulated by the workers in the intervening period, the numbers cohesion and militancy of the workers which is at a greater pitch than in 1918 - 22, the great power of the Trade Unions and the workers parties in spite of the criminal reformist policies of the leadership, all this means that any attempt at a Greek style coup, or a fascist attempt at a seizure of power would inevitably lead to civil war. The tradition of the Italian workers and the experience of fascism is such that they would react on Spanish lines at any attempt at setting up a fascist dictatorship. The bourgeoisie would hesitate many times before committing itself to a course which posed the risk of losing property and state power.

In France the restlessness of the workers, particularly the youth, has assisted in gaining support for groupings to the left of the Communist Party, if only to a small extent in organisation in comparison with the C.P. itself. In West Germany the first big strikes have taken place. In the smaller industrial countries of W. Europe similar processes have been taking place. In North America (Canada and the U.S.) mass unemployment as a reflection of the organic illness of capitalist society remains and tends to increase. For the first time since the unparalleled boom of the economy, Japan, France and W Germany are experiencing the beginnings of mass unemployment. This affects too the small industrial countries of W Europe. Italy remains with unemployment of over a million. Spain is experiencing unemployment with the beginning of the end of the period of labour shortages in W Europe. In addition the reawakened Labour Movement at the cost of many sacrifices and victims is commencing the struggle against the Franco regime. Strikes in practically every part of the country under difficult illegal conditions mark the beginning of the end of the now Bonapartist regime. The sympathy of the white collar workers, the students, of the professional strata of the middle class, of the small businessmen and of the as yet silent peasants is with the working class. Spain is at the beginning of a pre - revolutionary period. The scattered clashes are the beginning of the process whereby the workers feel themselves as a class. The new generation has overcome the effects of the terrible defeat in the civil war. The regime rests solely on the apparatus of the state, police and armed forces are its only real props. This year or next, possibly the coming winter will see strikes and clashes with the armed police in one industrial centre or another, leading possibly to a regional general strike. This in turn could lead to a general strike throughout Spain and the fall of the Franco regime. The Spanish revolution would have begun. We must not be caught by surprise by such a development but must prepare in advance campaigns on the Spanish question. Revolution in Spain, because of the treachery of Stalinism taking on a Republican hue at first as in 1931. Such an event would have a profound effect on the whole of W. Europe, in E. Europe, and of course in Britain.

COLLAPSE OF BRITISH CAPITALISM

The position of British capitalism economically, diplomatically and militarily continues on the path of slow decline. The countries of the former Empire are not only nominally independent, but attempt to play off the other countries of Imperialism and even the Soviet and now Chinese Bureaucracy against each other. However their dependence on *Western* not British capitalism has been enhanced by the fall during the last two decades in the price of raw materials and food in comparison with industrial goods. In many cases not a relative fall but an absolute fall in price in such commodities as cocoa and coffee.

The change in world trade indicated by a further expansion of the trade between the industrial nations, to a much greater extent than trade between the under - developed countries and the more advanced industrially, on the one hand and the shattering of the power of the former dominant W. European nations, on the other, has forced these nations to try and organise an economic and political power grouping in the EEC. The great trusts and monopolies in Britain, affected by the collapse of British world power on the one hand and the smallness, comparatively to the productive forces, of the British market, are endeavouring to find a solution in this Bloc. Hence Heath and the Conservative Party's main task for this year is to push through Parliament the entry into the European Community

They have many illusions as to the effect that this will have on the British economy and the power of British capitalism. Entry at the inception of the EEC would undoubtedly have assisted British capitalism. But at that stage illusions in British power led the capitalists to reject any such arrangement, and in fact EFTA was formed as a counterweight. Now at a time of growing unemployment and when all the economies of the EEC will be effected by the change in the world and European economic climate, benefits can only be problematical. What the British capitalists can gain on the one hand will be cancelled out on the other hand by the concessions British capitalism has been compelled to make by abandoning the traditional policy of the importation of cheap food. The giant monopolies and the most modern industries will benefit, even so, not to the extent which they believe; many small businesses and the antiquated trades will lose, some going to the wall.

However the increasing parasitism of Big Business and its reliance on the State as a crutch, have been further reinforced by the developments during the last few years, despite the warnings and the forebodings of their tame economists and experts; the amount invested in industry has continued to decline in comparison with that of their rivals. Between 1965 and 1968 Gross Domestic Product and Productive investment increased faster in her main rivals than in Britain.

	A	B	C	D
United Kingdom	2.8	2.8	5.8	13
France	5.7	5.4	9.1	17
Germany	5.1	4.5	6.6	19
United States	4.0	2.5	4.4	12
Japan	10.2	8.6	15.5	24

A — GDP in real terms per annum 1965 - 1968

B — productivity/labour

C — Productive investment as proportion of GDP

D — Investment/Productive Investment

During the last few years this disparity has further increased. There was an actual fall in manufacturing industry investment in 1972 of 7% in Britain.

This made ludicrous the propaganda of the Tory Government of 'lame ducks' which should not be helped by the State, the need to cut State Expenditure, and the bracing effect on the economy of real competition and 'standing on your own feet'. This delusion on the part of the Cabinet was swiftly dispelled by reality. Instead of cutting state expenditure they have had to increase it. The first glad measures of cuts in the social services and general cuts in state expenditure have been abandoned. But it is not back to Butskellism, as the Economist termed it that they have retreated in panic. It is back to reliance on the State for Big Business. UCS is to receive £35 million in order to render palatable a suggested subsidy of £50 million to the shipbuilding industry.

Thus there will not be social reforms but the intertwining of Big Business and the State will be increased. 'Free Enterprise' Capitalism and 'competition' in the old sense of the term are not lame but dead ducks. They have sunk forever in the post - war world. Now rather, it is competition between national capitalisms which is on the order of the day. Heath, like Nixon, has had to abandon the policy of Balanced Budgets, cuts in state expenditure and all the shibboleths of Toryism in the past.

Under pressures of economic necessity they have had to abandon their cherished programmes and adopt the opposite of the policies for which they stood. Instead of a sound dollar and a sound pound, the stagnation of the economy has forced them to adopt what they would have denounced as inflationary policies because of the failure of the measures they had announced to get economic growth and the development of the economy.

'Pump priming' had a modicum of sense in the pre - war period. But in reality it was the freeing and development of international trade which was one of the main reasons for the development of the economies of the West in the post - war economic upswing.

In 1971, economic growth was 12% in the Gross Domestic Product. A magnificent achievement! The only trouble was that more than 11% of this was due to inflation. The growth in real terms was only 1%!

The failure of the previous Budget proposals to promote economic growth resulted in the 1972 - 73 Budget. This in turn with bigger doses of the same medicine will accelerate the tendencies within the economy making for inflation. This is a massive dose of pump - priming or Keynesianism. It will make only the slightest dent in unemployment.

The mergers promoted by the policies of Labour and Tories and the general increase in productivity of labour have resulted in massive redundancies and the general increase in capital expenditure throughout the capitalist world in their turn have led to the beginnings of mass unemployment. This year it is most likely that production will increase by 2½% to 4%. The first time for many years that the economy will not be in a state of chronic stagnation as the British economy has been, among other reasons, because of the 'interference' of the Governments, both Labour and Tory, which promoted the economic phenomenon of 'Stop - Go'. Thus the dogma of the sovereign pound, which reflected the position of the Bankers and finance capital has been abandoned. The enormous balance of payments surplus of £950 million accumulated this year and the big balance from last year at the expense of the standards of the working people, will disappear like drops of water in the furnace of inflation.

Devaluation

The growth of production at former 'European' levels will be at the expense of the stability of the currency. The 'money supply' according to official figures increased by 25% last year. It will be even greater this year. The increase in the currency alone is a sure guarantee of steep increases in prices. The former sober British bourgeois, on preparing to go to new 'haunts' in Europe with the Common Market, is adopting 'European' habits. Like a man who has acquired a thirst, caution is thrown to the winds. The principal fact for the greater inflation in Britain, in comparison with her main rivals was the devaluation of 1967.

However devaluation did not solve British capitalism's problems. They tried to stave it off as long as possible. Having learned nothing, the Left Labour leaders had announced that they would turn to devaluation if they got into balance of payments difficulties. The Tories have stolen their clothes. They can be as reckless as the reformists, they have in effect, decided. Moreover, what is there to lose? The path of capitalist virtue left them way behind their profligate rivals in economic growth and therefore power. Why maintain the value of the pound when it cost them so dear? Investment dropped and their relative position in power compared to the other capitalists also worsened.

The present measures of the Tories, besides increasing inflation mean an *inevitable devaluation* within two or three years! This under a Tory or Labour Government! But devaluation, like the junkie's increased dope will merely increase the problem and lead to either 'old - fashioned' deflation to restore the currency or even worse inflation, posing the problem of still yet another devaluation. But devaluation above all is a cut in the standard of living by indirect means. With the developing mood of the working class under Conservative Government, this would mean a direct confrontation between the classes, far more strained and bitter than the present confrontation.

Production in Britain will probably increase a few percent this year and somewhat less than that next year. Perhaps the biggest growth of post - war capitalism for two years in succession. But by 1974 or somewhat later, the sickness of world capitalism, revealed by the world recession, will become even worse. A deeper recession on a world scale will break out. The British ruling class has taken the primrose path too late. Whatever advantages may have been gained in the past by these policies will be cancelled out by world developments in the present period.

The Government came close to the brink of bitter conflict with the organised trade union movement. 'Orthodox' economic policies would have fanned the flames of this conflict. Consequently the stupid and empirical government of Heath, Barber, Davies and Maudling, not without some nudging from their paymasters of the CBI, drew back — if only temporarily. The enormous resources accumulated with the world boom and the growth of production and capital even in Britain during the last 25 years, provides a layer of fat which enables them to do it. Like the aforementioned drunk, British capitalism takes to the path of an inflationary binge. Only to remain intoxicated requires ever larger doses of the poison.

However the complete reversal of policy indicated that the Government will last longer than had previously been calculated. Heath's most pressing task for British capitalism is to get into the European Economic Community. That will take the Government into 1973 and by 1974 it would be the normal span. So that contrary to our previous calculations the Government will probably last into 1973 and even possibly 1974.

Of course the events abroad, the outbreak of revolution in Spain, the developing crisis in Italy and France if it broke out into open conflict would have an enormous effect in Britain. Also low production in America, W. Europe and Japan would have a big effect on the British economy. Two thirds of Britain's trade is now with the developed world, especially W Europe and N America. That explains one of the main reasons for the change of direction of British Imperialism from the former Empire to the EEC. But Britain still endeavours to maintain her grip in the Sterling area, or what remains of it. She is still the main foreign investor in these regions of the former British Empire. It still remains a big source of 'invisible' exports even if trade with the regions has declined relatively. Thus while directing her attention to W Europe, British capitalism still keeps an eye cocked to watch developments in the former Empire. Part of the price paid for entry will be to give a share to her former W European rivals in the joint domination of the former colonial Empires of Britain and of France. But Britain intends to retain her advantages in investment in the area, as the freeing of all restraints for investment in this area, which includes South Africa and South West Africa, have been lifted in the 1972 Budget of the Conservative Government. Thus upheavals in these colonial, or rather, economically dominated neo - colonial style countries can have repercussions economically and politically in Britain too.

The Labour movement must be on guard against the acceptance of the apparent stability of the political and economic situation in the West and also in Britain itself. Processes which have been decades in preparing can reveal their explosive force. This is now the epoch of sudden and sharp changes in the situation as revealed by the events in France in May 1968.

This means that we must be prepared for such changes even in specific industries, Unions and regions, such as Scotland, Wales or the North West for example. The situation in Northern Ireland, and the general strike in Southern Ireland following the Derry massacre, are further and concrete examples which should affect us immediately. We must be prepared for the tasks that loom ahead. In Britain and Ireland, we must be able to react immediately in any area, industry or regional upsurge. A concrete example is the question of housing and the new Rents Bill of the Tories, which can provoke explosive movements of the workers and tenants in different parts of the country.

With the change of course of the Tories (the Rents Bill is a legacy of their former policy of confrontation), the basic weakness of British capitalism is laid bare. Their turn away from confrontation is dictated by a weighing-up of the relationship of forces on a class basis, the possibility at this stage of concessions, and the long-term organic weakness and decline of British capitalism. As every post-war Tory government understood, it would cost the capitalists far more than they gained to embitter the workers by direct assaults and attacks. It would launch the nation, ie in their terms the ruling, class onto uncharted seas. They have had this lesson renewed by the experience of the bone-headed Heath government, who have adopted the policies of their predecessors for the time being at least.

Thus the ruling class tested out the resistance of the trade union and Labour movement, and of the organised working class in the local government workers strike, the postal workers strike and above all, the miners strike. It is this last that convinced them that all-out conflict was too dangerous. The active support the miners received from the students and the sympathy of the professional and small business layers of the population, revealed the dangers. Thus the possibility of an all out show-down with the workers, in the immediate period ahead, has receded. The possibility of a general strike has been postponed to the indefinite future.

It is the pressure of the CBI which has sounded the retreat politically and industrially. They have demanded crutches for all those industries in difficulties and for the State industries to bear the load for the benefit of private monopoly. UCS is at least partially bailed out, among other considerations for fear of a social explosion on Clydeside. Manna for all!

Workers Power

It is a decisive fact recognised by all serious political and economic commentators that the miners inflicted a serious defeat on the Government. It was the organised strength of the miners, assisted in the main, by the rank and file militants, and the sympathy of the mass of trade unionists, which led to the victory. What an annihilating answer to the fussing and fiddling and ultimatic attitude of the sects to the 'left' of Trotskyism, although self-styled 'Trotskyists' who have given up, if not in words, then in deeds, the official Trade Union movement as hopeless. This was an official strike, which enormously increased its power, led by the official Union leaders. True, there has been a renewal of the Union by the election of more Left elements, committed to militancy at least in words, and under the pressure of the militancy of the directly participating section of the rank and file in the trade union branches, and of the area representatives and delegates, close to the rank and file.

The Tory Government was forced to eat its words and abandon precipitately its 8% unofficial pay norm. The miners blew a great hole in the whole strategy of the Government. 21% was the wage increase conceded when industry was forced to its slowdown and power cuts spread chaos:

But this was the whole essence of the problem. The revival of the workers, showed the viability of the traditional organisations of struggle especially the Union movement itself. And this, at the first beginnings of struggle and militancy of the new generation. Thus the miners strike reinforced our arguments on the need to work conscientiously and patiently in the official organisations as well as the organs of struggle that may be thrown up during the course of a conflict.

The complacency of Heath, Barber, Davies and Co. received a rude shock. It was carved on their noses, empirically, that now was not the time for a direct and 'final' showdown with the workers and their organisations, which would cut them down to size. It was the size of the Tory Government which was cut down. They had to convince themselves that direct attacks on the standard of living would provoke savage reprisals on the part of the workers. Only indirect attacks are on the order of the day and they too can bring in their train big movements on the part of the workers.

Consequently once again the snare of 'collaboration' is offered to the TUC and the Unions. The organisations of the working class are more powerful than the Government potentially. Without the toleration of the powerful Union organisations and the TUC the Government is out on a limb. The enormous power, of the hundred-fold strengthened working class, since the pre-war clashes, has been amply demonstrated. Thus the Government and the ruling class find it less costly, economically and politically to attempt to conciliate the Union leadership, rather than engage in head-on conflict. This has been the position during the whole of the post-war period. It will remain until the development of events economically and politically turns really desperate for British Capitalism. But in order to make such collaboration palatable to the rank and file the Government and the employers are forced to try and make concessions to the Unions and to the workers. But such concessions can only be illusory like the meagre increase in pensions and the tax concessions of the 1972 budget. The suggested Threshold Agreements on wages advocated by the TUC, may be adopted, but with a false cost of living index, could not hold back the struggle for better wages and conditions, for long in the face of inflation.

Nevertheless one of the principal tasks in the coming period will be to campaign against all collaboration with the class enemy government, by the organisations of the working class. For a full independence of the Unions from the state, a process reflected in the rejection of Right Wing collaborators and the election of militants at the bottom in the miners union, the AUEW and the T & GWU, and the election of Left wingers to the leading positions.

Above all for the independence of the Unions and the election of a *working class* Labour Government pledged to Socialist policies. For the TUC too, to commit itself to Socialist policies and a Plan of Production.

Alternative class policies on all the questions facing the working class can gain a response within both the Labour and Trade Union rank and file at the present time. Lower ranks of the officialdom can be influenced and even possibly sections of the top leadership, such is the mood developing within the working class. Against the TUC policy of Threshold agreements must be put the sliding scale of wages based in an index of prices worked out by the TUC and taking

account of potential production, with a minimum wage. In face of mass unemployment the demand must be for a sliding scale of hours to share out the work without loss of pay, a crash scheme of public works including housing at low rents and the various transitional slogans put forward from time to time. These transitional slogans put forward to demonstrate the incapacity of capitalism to solve the problems of the working people.

The Tories cannot consolidate support for any length of time. The illusions in the continued growth of the economy, through membership of the EEC from 1973 on will be rudely dispelled. The failure of economic growth for a lengthy period and the continuation of mass unemployment fluctuating at best around the million mark will undermine the basis of the government. The Tories will not be enabled to consolidate support. The attempt to get growth on a stable basis has come too late. The policies of Stop - Go dictated above all by the interests of Finance Capital and the City of London paralysed the economy during the past two decades. The attempt to restore the rate of profit by cutting down on the share of the working class has ended disastrously. The Tories have been caught by the other horn of the dilemma of capitalism, that this has undermined the market by cutting into the purchasing power of the working class.

For decades the bourgeois economists have been complaining about the 'propensity to spend of the consumer in Britain and America, in comparison with the thrift of the West German and Japanese population', they found in this the cause of the high rates of investment of these economies in comparison with their own. Having forgotten yesterday's plaint used by the way to justify trying to hold back the growth of wages, the Keynesianists are now complaining about the increase in national savings to the record sum of £733 million last year. They find in this the cause of the collapse of the market, and with the collapse of the market the *actual* drop last year of investment in industry. The real reason has been sketched in our periodicals and our material generally in the catastrophic decline in the rate of profit.

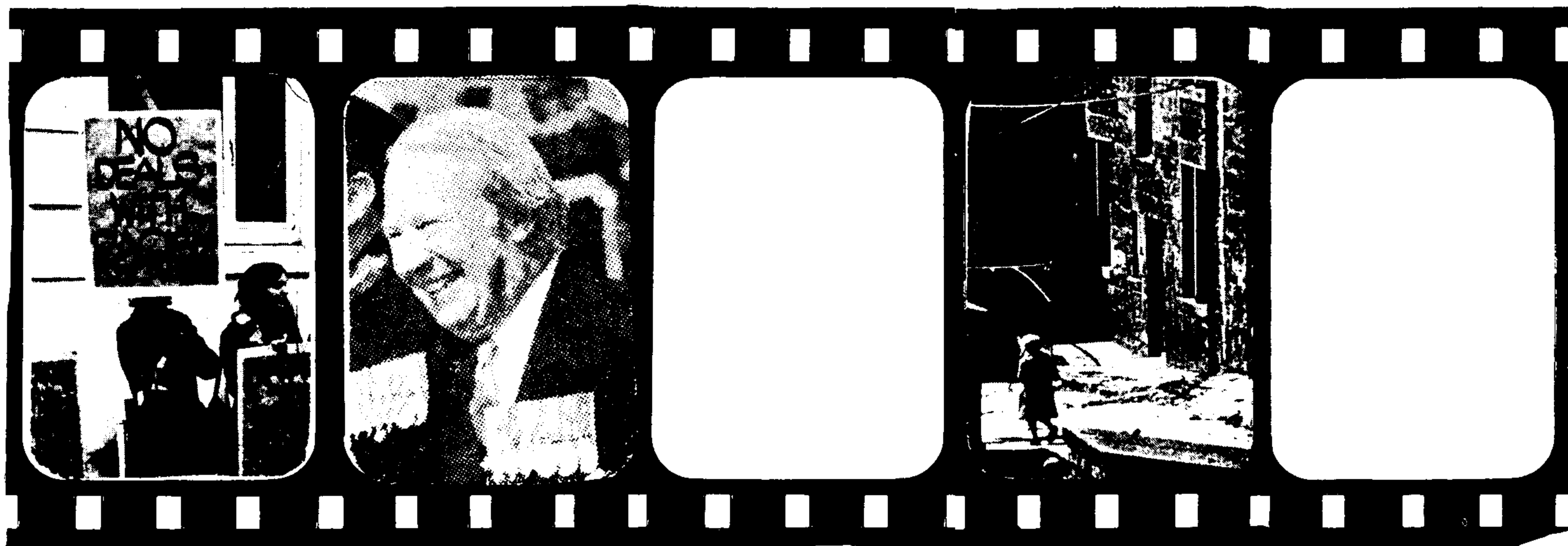
Stoking up consumption, a will - o' the - wisp at that, with the present rate of inflation, by the tax measures of the Government will not lead to any great increase in investment over the calculations already made by the capitalists. Productive potential and imports can deal with the modest increase in the market foreshadowed. But the increase in the circulation of money, especially in currency, will further stoke up the fires of the inflation, the increase in prices will accelerate, with the Government using the excuse of the collapse of the unofficial norm. Increased state expenditure in one form or another, will be but an additional burden on industry and on inflation. The resort to the printing press, preparatory to a new devaluation will undermine the stability of the £ and the stability of British society.

A new devaluation would have to be accompanied with similar deflationary measures such as those of the Labour Government. A second devaluation just a short period after the first would not only undermine faith in the currency but undermine faith in capitalist society. It would result in a bigger measure of social explosions than that engendered by the tensions released by the devaluation of the last Labour Government.

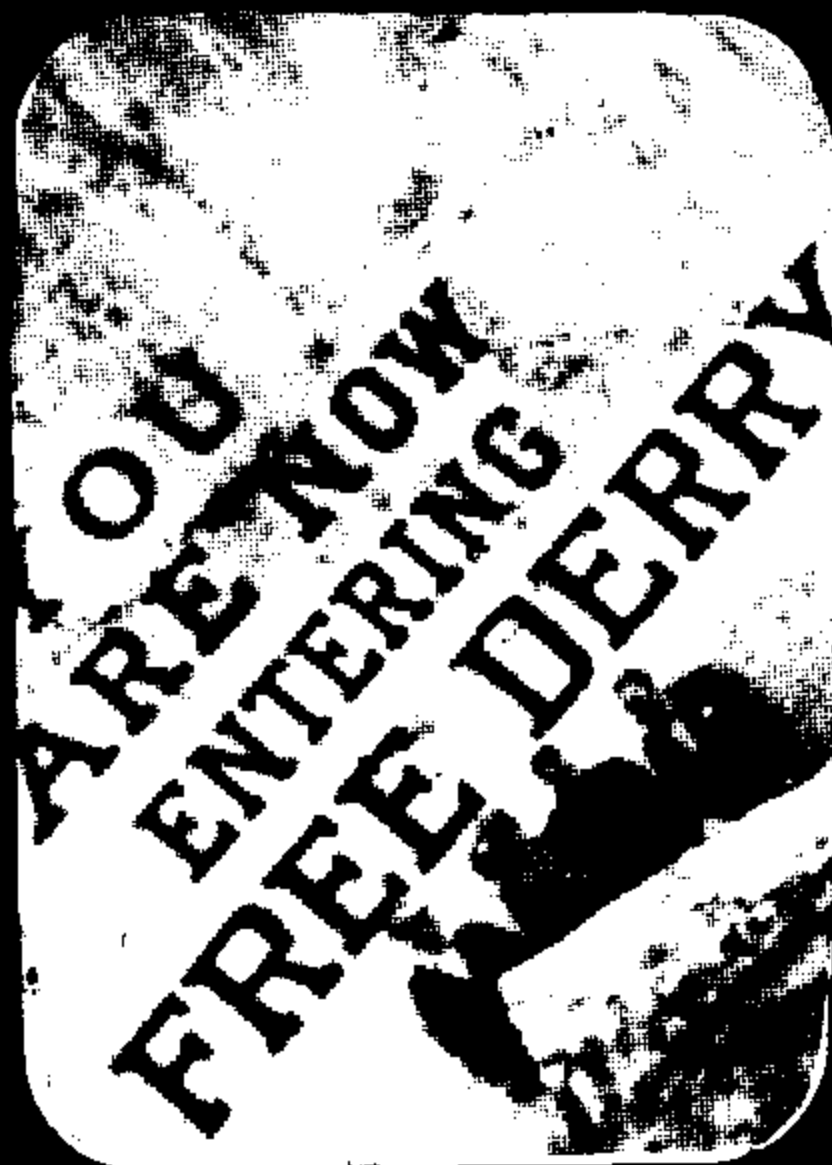
If the former John Bulls are complacently facing the melting away of the stability of the currency it is because they have recoiled in fear before the deflationary alternative. In this too they have borrowed from the reformists, Right and Left in the Labour Party. Rent, and rates are already steeply increasing. New taxes will be added to this by Value Added Tax after entry into the EEC next year. Support for the Tory Government will melt away.

They, through the whips of Heath, have already released the forces of the class struggle latent in the Labour and Trade Union movement. Even measures of genuine reform, which they have no intention of carrying out, would not dispel this. The process of radicalisation will be further intensified in the coming months and years, and disturb even further the relations between the classes. The still, musty air of British society was blown away by the attacks of the Tory Government. Now the fresh breezes of the class struggle will dispel even further the relative stability which British Capitalism achieved during the course of the last decade. Inflation, while not solving the problems of British Capitalism, will act as a spur.

The second term of the Tories is extremely unlikely. Clashes with the workers, with the organisations of the workers, on the lines of those with the miners will not be long delayed. In an atmosphere of feverish inflation the demands of the Unions will be increased far higher than the levels at the present time. A new questioning, especially among the youth of all the assumptions of a class society will begin.



The Problems Of Northern Ireland



As many times in the history of Britain, Ireland becomes a key question for the movement. The chickens of imperialism are coming home to roost. They created the sectarian problem artificially with the aim of operating the old imperialist game of divide and rule. They have played the Orange Card for more than a hundred and fifty years. The partition of Ireland is now an unnecessary excrescence as far as British capitalism is concerned. They would like to achieve the unity of Ireland, under the domination of British capital. What stands in the way is the monster of Protestant Sectarianism, which was created by British Capitalism to serve its ends. Now this has become a monster stumbling block. The perennial Irish problem, with the discrimination and oppression of the Catholic minority in the North, has once again erupted, in a far more serious guerrilla war than in the history of the North since partition. With the petit-bourgeois fringes of the Provisionals in a frenzy, Belfast and Londonderry threaten to be turned into ruins—at least the business part which hits at imperialism in its softest spot—in the pocket. The attempt at repression with the brutal murders in Londonderry failed in its objectives. The North has become a running sore.

The attempt to find a solution, first in repression and then in concession to the minority, is doomed to failure. There may be a partial solution through the exhaustion and defeat of the IRA, especially its Provisional Wing. With the bulk of the population against them in support of the Protestant workers and farmers for British Imperialism, the IRA will face even in the long term, inevitable defeat. With the weariness and disgust also of the Catholic workers and middle-class at the senseless terrorist excesses of the IRA, a partial solution may be achieved in an attempt to 'reconcile the communities'. Proportional representation with the Catholic petit-bourgeois and bourgeois in the Government of Northern Ireland, phasing out of internment, and with the overall responsibility of a British Minister in Belfast, could patch things up. But not for long. The real issues are jobs and homes, and general discrimination. This will inevitably continue.

Meanwhile the constant goading of the IRA has had the effect for which they apparently have been working; the 'Protestant backlash' is now beginning. Vicious counter-terror to the terror of the IRA in its most extreme and reactionary form is now beginning to manifest itself. Reprisals and counter-reprisals could escalate to a state of anarchy and chaos. The Provisionals have the delusion that in some mysterious way on the basis of ruins, North and South, this would lead to a United Ireland. Nothing could be further from the truth.

However, the class struggle in Britain, and in Ireland, North and South, can cut across sectarianism. Big events in Britain will inevitably have their effect on the North, particularly in the only non-sectarian mass body, the Trade Unions.

The guerrilla actions of the Provisionals on the one hand and the murders in Londonderry by British imperialism on the other hand, have once again raised the national question in Ireland, also as a key question for Britain. The general strikes in the North of the Catholics and the mass of the working class population in the South, following the massacre in Derry, were an indication of the process. Unfortunately, without a strongly organised tendency of Marxists in the South, the paralysis of the Labour movement by the reformists led to a situation where, although the Trade Unions led the strikes and the mass demonstrations of protest, these were skilfully taken over by the Church, and by Lynch and the Fianna Fail Government. They rendered the movement harmless in pious Christian lamentation. At least for the time being.

In Southern Ireland, unemployment of 7% (77,000 people), threatens to become more than double that by the end of the year. With the development of mass unemployment in Britain, the safety valve of emigration is closed, or at least partly shut. This raises the social questions in an aggravated form, just at a time when the fresh and militant Irish working class is critical of the incapacity of Lynch and company to help the minority in the North. No more than British imperialism can the Irish bourgeoisie solve the national question and the problem of the border. They are afraid of even really bold steps in a bourgeois-democratic direction, such as complete separation of Church and State, contraception and divorce, the abolition of censorship. Even less are they capable of raising the level of social services, of pensions, and of the National Health, to reach those of the British conditions north of the border. A United Ireland in the eyes of the Protestant workers, would be an Ireland where they were in the position of the minority, discriminated against and suppressed by the Catholic ruling class. No matter that Southern Ireland, though nominally independent, is in fact a British dependency. As far as the mass of the Protestant population are concerned, the South has no attractive power whatsoever. Consequently, in spite of aspirations of the Irish people in the south for national unification, and the abolition of the border, this cannot be accomplished under the auspices of the bourgeoisie.

If Lynch and the Irish bourgeois are incapable of winning over the Protestant workers and the Protestant population, even more impotent are the IRA Provisionals. Their tactics of terror and guerrilla war are directed, not only against the British troops, but against the Protestant civilian population. There is nothing in their programme, policy and tactics to attract Protestant workers. Indeed, the only attraction that they have for Catholic workers is fear of the bigots and sectarians of the Protestant UVF. The support they get, in particular from young workers, is born out of despair, resentment against discrimination, and desperation. Events, particularly internment and the brutal repression of the British and Ulster governments, have acted as recruiting agents—for a time—for the IRA, especially the Provisionals. But the tactic of guerrilla war, antagonising the rank and file of the British troops, antagonising the overwhelming majority of the Protestant population, plays into the hands, in the long term, of British imperialism. Guerrilla war, even on classical lines, cannot be won where the majority of the population are in support of the armed forces.

It seems to be the calculation of the Provisionals that they will force a sectarian backlash, a pogrom of the Catholic population, which would then involve the Irish army and the people of the South. British imperialism could not allow such a holocaust. It would undermine completely the power of the British government, not only with a large segment of Irish workers in Britain, but of the British working class as a whole. While the troops remain loyal, and the IRA Officials and Provisionals are making certain of this, and while the guerrillas have a basis only within sections of the country—ie. in the Catholic enclaves, the small number of troops killed and wounded, can only act to embitter and harden the troops against the insurgents. It is an entirely different situation to that of Vietnam, where the overwhelming majority of the population is hostile to the puppet government and to American imperialism, and where moreover, the war is being waged, not merely as a national struggle for independence, but as a struggle for social liberation. It is the combination of these factors which our 'World Perspectives' as long ago as 1965 explains, made inevitable the defeat of American imperialism. Moreover, American troops in a hostile environment, in a strange land, and with perceptible casualties of a few thousand a year, and above all with the anti-war feelings of the working class and radical youth in America, doomed the adventure of American imperialism to defeat. The war waged in Northern Ireland by the IRA is more akin to that of the war waged by the Chinese Stalinists in Malaya.

That was doomed to defeat, in spite of the fact that the guerrilla war and the guerrilla resistance was far greater than that of the IRA, because British imperialism could lean, at least temporarily, on the support of a slight majority of Malays and Indians. The struggle was of far greater intensity in Malaysia, but despite the support of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population, the guerrillas were defeated. The IRA in the North has even less possibility of bringing the campaign to a successful conclusion. The tactics of the IRA, of urban guerrilla warfare, can only assist British imperialism in brutalising the troops without the possibility of a successful outcome.

Neither the trade union movement nor the Northern Ireland Labour Party has been capable of winning over the Protestant workers against Unionism to an independent class position politically. Sectarianism keeps them tied to the coat-strings of Orange Unionism. As Connolly long ago explained, on a capitalist basis, it is impossible to unite the Irish working class.

The Official IRA, after the majority within it had been conquered by the Stalinists, tried to turn in a Socialist direction. But they did this in a half-hearted and inconsistent way. In order to compete with the Provisionals, they have out-Provisionaled them, and taken to the road of individual terror with the attempted assassination of Stormont Ministers, and the bomb explosion at Aldershot. This wing is far more amenable to the ideas of Marxism, although the same thing is true of sections of the rank and file of the Provisionals. Although they understand that it is only the social questions which can unite the Irish people, particularly the Protestants and Catholics in the North, they do not bring this to the fore in their propaganda. In the recent period, they have made a turn, becoming alarmed at the deliberate provocation of the Provisionals in their efforts to fan the flames of a senseless and fratricidal sectarian civil war, without real aim or perspective. But by their inconsistency, they make it impossible for them to have any effect on the Protestant workers either.

Backlash

The Provisionals have played into the hands of the most vicious and reactionary quasi-Fascists equivalent to the German Freikorps in Germany after the First World War. The Protestant back-lash has already begun with a campaign of counter-terror and counter-assassinations. Craig has threatened publicly before a meeting of tens of thousands to draw up a list of republicans to be liquidated, ie. really threats of a pogrom and lynch law in the Catholic areas, particularly in Belfast.

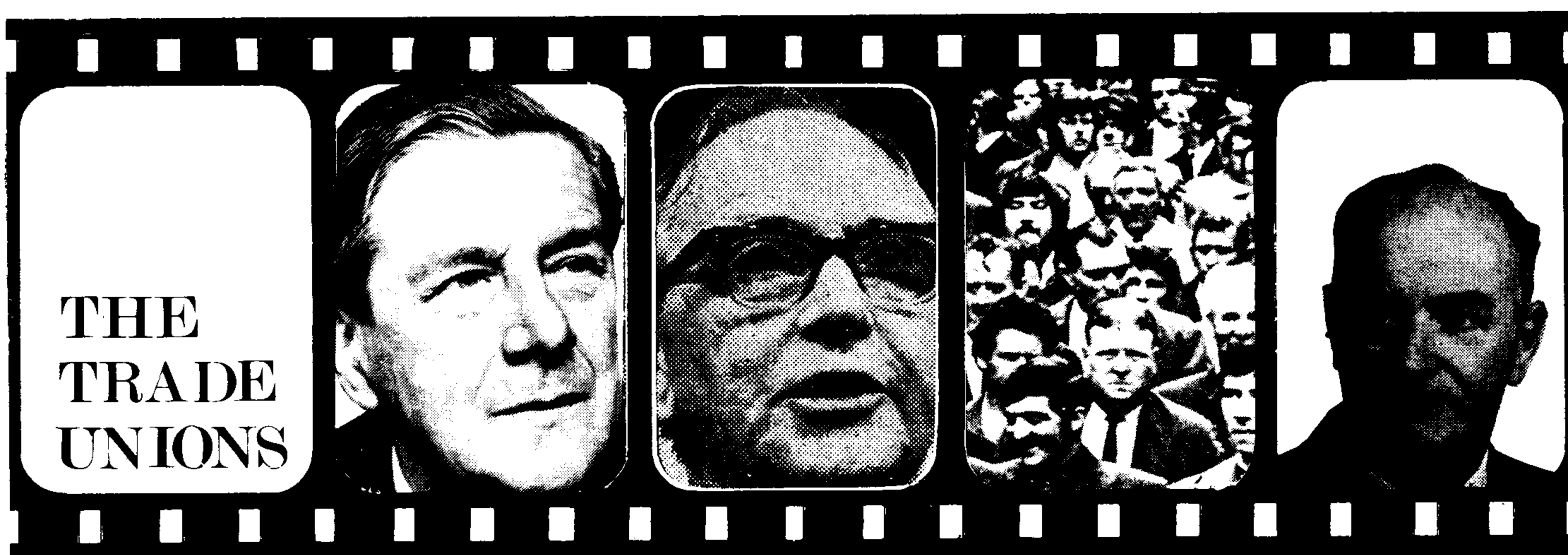
Reprisal and counter-reprisal can only draw a line of blood between the workers of both communities. On this road there is no way forward for either the Protestant or the Catholic worker. The only way out is in *class unity* on social questions. The fear on which the sectarians on both sides feed, could only be allayed by a joint defence force, composed of Protestants and Catholic workers. Such a defence force could only be provided by the Trade Unions. Hence our consistent campaign on this question; but defence against sectarian attack, while vital, is still not sufficient. It is also a question of defending and expanding the rights and standards of the working class. This can only be through transitional and general slogans leading to a United Socialist Ireland. This is the only possible unity which can be attained in Ireland.

The growth of the Labour movement in the South could have an effect also on the North. But at the moment it can result in a stirring and agitation of the mass of Irish workers. In the North, the ideas of Marxism can still gain support in the decimated ranks of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. This goes too for the Social Democratic Labour Party, but even more promising in the North is especially the youth of the Officials, and also of the Provisionals.

The so-called 'Trotskyist' tendencies have forgotten even the ABCs of Marxism. They have not understood that in this epoch, the bourgeoisie is incapable of solving the national question. Only the working class, by fighting for a Socialist programme, can carry through the last tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Ireland, by placing itself at the hegemony of the nation.

The Provisionals have gone further and penetrated deeper into the Catholics in the North – and even in the South – than in any previous campaign of the IRA. All the others ended in utter defeat and collapse. Brave and self-sacrificing youth was squandered in these futile endeavours. They have gone further this time – but the successes are even more phantasmagoric than the previous campaigns. They cannot bring victory, but only crushing and overwhelming defeat. However, many of the best elements of both IRAs can be convinced on the basis of friendly, if implacable, criticism. By maintaining the banner of Marxism, the best elements can be made to understand that the gun in and of itself solves nothing. That it is necessary to win the majority of the population, and then to win over the workers in uniform, before success can be achieved in the form of a United Socialist Ireland.

That is what makes the idea of permanent revolution and the ideas of Marx even more true today than ever before. The struggle of the Irish workers is intimately linked to the struggle of the British workers, especially with the large number of Irish workers and people of Irish descent permanently settled in the main conurbations of Britain. The work is intertwined with the work in Britain. Events interact from one country to another. They are indissolubly linked. The revolution in Ireland can never be successful without the support of the workers in Britain. On the other hand, events in Britain would have an instantaneous effect on both North and South of the border.



The rejection of the Industrial Relations Act and the refusal to register, has been an indication of the enormous power of the trade union movement. The attempt through the Industrial Relations Act to bind the unions to the State, has failed. Despite waverings and hesitancy on the part of the union leadership, including the lefts, the pressure of the militants in the rank and file has been sufficient to force this through. Even the right-wing unions, such as the General and Municipal Workers and National Association of Local Government Officers and the softer white-collar unions, have in the main been compelled by the pressures of the rank and file to follow the lead of the more militant AUEW (engineers) and Transport and General Workers Union. Only the seamen, bank employees and shopworkers have broken the ranks, and the Seamen's union has now been suspended by the TUC.

However, despite this insistence on the independence of the Trade Unions from the apparatus of the State – and on the basis of this independence – the TUC has nevertheless attempted over and over again to compromise with the government. And under modern conditions, with the growth of power and influence of the trade union movement to an unprecedented extent, where 40% of the working population are organised, either the TUC and the unions must be forced to adopt an uncompromisingly Marxist policy of class struggle, or there is no alternative but to try and arrive at an agreement with the State, which is now intimately linked with monopoly capitalism. The pressures of capitalist society and of the State itself work in this direction. However, despite all the attempts even of the leadership of the most right-wing unions – and they have this in common with the left-wing unions – to attempt to arrive at some sort of conciliation and compromise with the Capitalist State – this breaks down under the pressures of the contradictions of the situation.

Thus, this constant alternation of compromise and conflict between the tops of the trade union movement and the bourgeois state. Capitalism works best when the government can corrupt and suborn the leadership of the unions under the banner of the interests of the nation, which they interpret as the interests of monopoly capital. However, as we have seen in the last period, this collaboration and co-operation breaks down under the pressure of events. But in order to adopt a completely consistent and independent position would require conscious Marxists at the head of the organisations of the working class. The Marxist tendency must constantly strive to give such leadership to the unions. Those which have a progressive left leadership and also those where the right-wing bureaucracy exerts a stranglehold. The hesitant and conciliatory attitude of Jones and Scanlon, the most left of the trade union leaders, is an indication that without a conscious Marxist purpose, pressures on union leaders of bourgeois public opinion, of the mass media and of the tops of the government, have their effect on that leadership, however left it may be. The suggestion of Jones, that an "independent arbitration tribunal should be set up to settle disputes" and even that "its decisions could be made

compulsory", is an indication of this process and the incapacity to think things through to the end. Independent tribunals, like that of Wilberforce, in their decisions, depend on the relationship of forces; in the case of the miners, conceding a battle they had already won.

However, the attempts of the TUC and of the individual unions to compromise with the government in the period we are entering, cannot be of a long lasting character. The pressure of the rank and file in the face of the realities of inflation and the crumbling standards of living which this means builds up a position of explosion. Consequently, the leadership each time will be compelled to break off all attempts at agreement, with shrieks about deception and betrayal of promises and undertakings on the part of the employers and the State.



The process that has begun in a more hesitant form among the postmen and council workers, was brought forward precipitately by the miners' strike. For a while, the miners had been led by the nose by the leadership and the National Coal Board. But the exasperation and indignation of the miners, especially of the more class-conscious and militant sections, culminated in the most explosive strike for two generations. The militancy of the miners was a foreshadowing of the process in the working class as a whole. Tomorrow, even more determined and even more militant actions on the part of sections of the workers, will be apparent. The elan and capacity for organisation of the working class shown in the strike, will act as an example to other sections of the working class. The miners' strike gained the support of the overwhelming majority of the working class, especially of its organised and active sections.

Engaged in a bitter struggle, they had the sympathy and support of large sections of the students and despite the discomfort and inconvenience caused by the power cuts, of probably the majority of the white-collar workers, the petit-bourgeoisie and the small business people. There in outline was a picture of the struggle which the working class will wage in the coming years. It was the pressure of the rank and file that produced a change in the leadership, and further pressure that in turn led to this leadership declaring the strike, in the face of the intransigence of the government and the stooges of the NCB. But once the strike was organised, the active militants in the rank and file, together in many instances with the Area lower officials, took over. The mass picketing of power stations, railways and docks, a new departure for the miners union, adopted on the initiative of the rank and file, fired the mood of the rest of the working class. The miners gained the support of the power workers, dockers, railmen, engineers and other sections. Large sections of white collar unions also rallied round. The militancy of the miners frightened not only other union leaders, but even their own. But the latter had no alternative, under pressure of the enormous mass movement of the miners, but to carry the strike through to a victorious conclusion.

In the miners strike was demonstrated the viability of the mass organisations of the working class and their responsiveness to mass pressure under conditions of an aroused and active rank and file. Even more the invincible power of the working class when led by mass organisations and when that power is directed to aims in the interests of the working class. The drive for the movement came from below. The initiative from the active and conscious sections of the rank and file. But despite the undialectical view of the ultra-left factions and sects, it was through their own mass organisations that the miners moved. The mass picketing, as always under these conditions was on the spontaneous initiative of the rank and file. If only the haughty 'theoreticians' of the ultra-left sects had an iota of the instinctive drive of the active ranks of the movement, both fighting within their organisations and through their organisations, and at the same time giving a push to the latter from below, they would have the beginnings of a Trotskyist understanding of the need to work within the mass movement.

Once the miners were on the move and with the active sympathy and support of the bulk of the working class, caution was imposed on the Government and the ruling class. Under conditions like that the masses learn lessons speedily and well. Consequently, the ruling class has to tread very carefully if they didn't want to prepare an open confrontation with the State which would be understood in class terms by the mass of the working class. Consequently the action of some obscure local police chiefs in arresting miners pickets in Fifehire was hurriedly changed. The ruling class feared a direct clash.

Already in the miners' strike was posed processes which will occur over and over again in the coming epoch.

Impelled by the struggle against the Coal Board and against the Tory government, some of the most militant and active of the pickets, especially the younger lads, were already raising the question of the Socialist revolution as the

solution to the problems of the working class. Again and again, in the coming clashes, this question will be raised episodically at first, among the advanced layers. The struggles themselves pose the problems in this way. But at this stage, and at the early stages of future struggles, only among the most advanced elements, who are already drawing the most extreme conclusions. As far as the masses are concerned, they will still look to the traditional organisation, the Labour Party. This in its turn will act as a powerful pull to the advanced workers also. To these advanced workers, we have to explain the problem of winning over the mass of the working class as a key question. They need to go through the experience with the more politically backward layers before we can arrive at the stage of socialist revolution.

Of course, at this stage, such moves are largely episodic. Once the miners went back to work, the mood would ebb, but it is an anticipation and a harbinger of the future. It indicates the uneven and contradictory process whereby the working class will arrive at the consciousness of the necessity for socialist revolution.

One miner, active in the union and the Labour Party, won to the banner of Marxism is worth a hundred sporadically active workers. One active trade unionist in any industry, is worth a thousand unorganised workers. One branch secretary, shop steward or active worker, is worth a hundred passive members of the union. It is to these layers that greater attention must be paid. As the crisis of capitalism grows, more and more workers will be participating, not only in the unions, but drawing the political conclusions within the framework of the Labour Party as well.

The leadership of the unions itself has been rendered cautious by the explosive possibilities latent among the working class, which were demonstrated by the miners' strike. In spite of all the efforts of the leadership to avoid direct confrontations and clashes on the one hand, and attempts at conciliation of the leadership, by the Government, on the other, latent in the situation are such sharp collisions.

New layers of the working class will constantly be brought forward and awakened by the development of events. Clashes with employers, leading directly on to clashes with the state, pose political solutions. The atmosphere will become more embittered, with the mass media hysterically conducting propaganda against the union leaders and against the unions. A dress rehearsal for this was the poisonous propaganda against the local government workers, against the postmen, and especially against the power workers. A continuation on these lines posed the stark realities of the class war too clearly in terms which had not been reached in any period since the end of the war. At this stage, it posed unnecessary dangers for the political system, especially in Britain, where 'compromise' which has been the essence of the method of British capitalism in dealing with the workers, and especially the unions, threatened to be discredited. Consequently, in relation to the miners' strike, the radio, TV and press were far more cautious and careful in their approach to the question. In spite of the inconvenience and losses due to the breakdown of power supplies, there was no attempt to bait the miners as they baited the power workers. Under pressure by necessity, this will change in the future, and the stark realities of class society will be opened up in front of the eyes of the advanced layers of workers. Our press and other material are important to demonstrate to the militants the method of Marxism.

The desire of even the most left of the union leaders to temporise with the bosses, is not shared by the active sections of the working class. This is shown by the failure of the Engineering Union Confederation to take action against the employers after the rejection of the engineering claim. The pressure of the rank and file militants, of the shop stewards, is indicated by the mass movement in the Sheffield and Manchester areas, as the beginning of similar movements throughout the country. A wave of struggle which will result in strike action unless big concessions are made to the workers by the employers, seems to loom ahead. But, instinctively, these workers in these areas are exerting pressure in the local and area organisations, within the unions themselves.

More politically backward and reactionary unions are beginning to catch up. The special conference of the General and Municipal Workers Union unanimously reflecting the pressure of the membership, has repudiated the Industrial Relations Act and refused to register under it. This is in effect the beginning of mass pressure of the rank and file. The same processes which developed within the Transport and General Workers Union, are now beginning also in the G & MWU. The pressure of unofficial strikes and bitter struggle by the rank and file of the G & MWU, is having an effect on its ranks. Changes will probably be speeded up after the retirement of Lord Cooper as the representative of a bygone era. Developments in this union have confirmed the position taken up by our tendency in comparison with that adopted by all the other tendencies of the 'left', including the Communist Party and Tribune Tomorrow, the same process will take place in the EEUPTU. The pressure of unofficial strikes and the general atmosphere in the country, the awakening of the movement, will have enormous effects on all the union organisations.

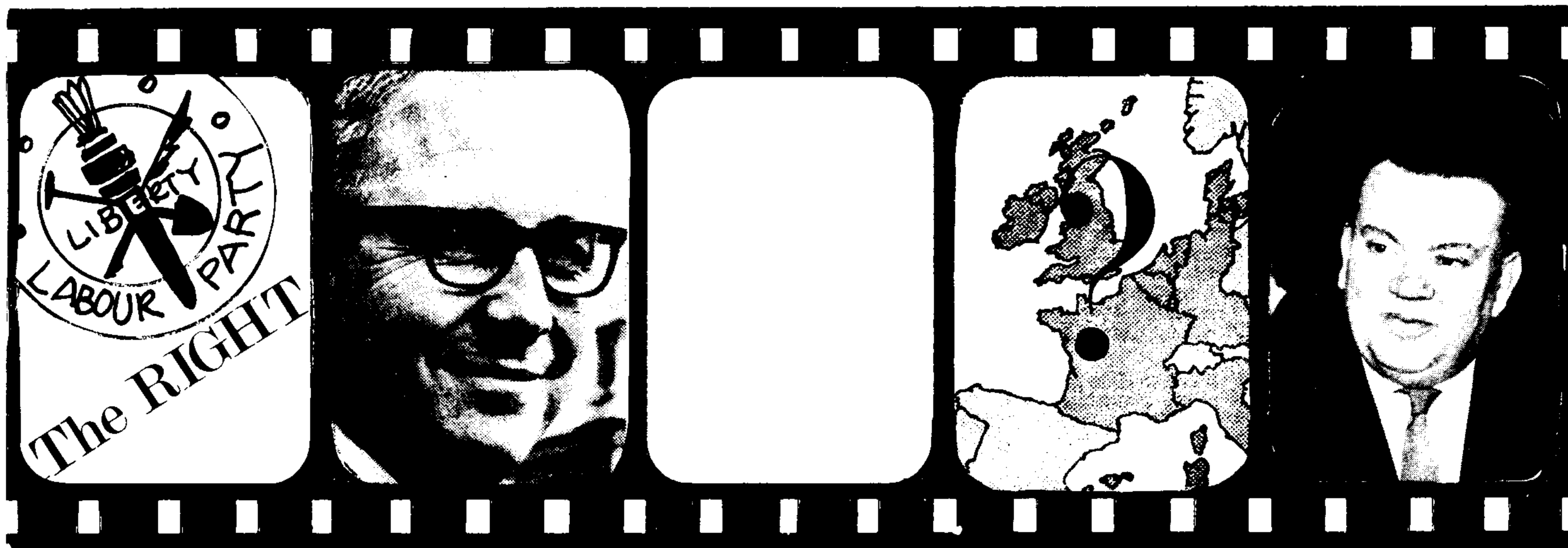
In the present day atmosphere the ideas of *Militant* will gain powerful support in the unions. It is not only among youth, but now among adult workers, that Marxist ideas can gain support. Union work is fruitful and will become among the most fruitful for Marxism. The Young Socialists, convinced of Marxist ideas must work in the unions and in industry. The two phases, political and industrial, interact and dovetail one with the other. To become a mass tendency, it must be rooted not only in the Labour Party, as the political expression of the working class, but within the unions and in industry.

Sit In Strike

The mood of the working class is demonstrated not only by the reaction to the miners' strike, but the development of the sit-in strike as a reply to redundancies and closures. Now this has spread to reprisals against threatened lock outs in response to bans on overtime and piecework in the struggle in the Manchester area. We must be very alert to respond to the initiative of the workers in industrial struggles of this sort. The local, area and national leadership of the AUEW has accepted this tactic, reflecting the pressure of the membership. But this in turn, as with the support by the leadership of the miners' union of mass picketing against the transport of coal, will further reinforce the struggle of the workers. So far it has been only isolated plants in the engineering industry which have taken this action. The response of the Government and the employers has been to pretend, in effect, that the phenomenon has not taken place or that it is within the framework of 'normal' industrial relations. The police have not intervened, because the Government is afraid, even at this stage, of the effect on the workers of a forcible expulsion of the workers, from what they conceive is 'private property'. It would provoke explosions in the area, and even nationally in the industry. But these

first groping movements can be succeeded by occupations in whole areas, first in one factory, then in an entire region such as that of Manchester, and then possibly in an entire industry. The UCS so - called work - in should have been conducted throughout the shipbuilding industry on these lines. However even such a movement as that in France in 1968 is not excluded in the future.

Militant workers in different industries should discuss not only the immediate issues in the unions and factories, but the basic political issues and the tactics and strategy involved therein. The whole situation forces the workers not to regard the problems they face in a narrow way, but makes them appreciate the relationship of their struggle to the general political struggle of the working class.



The token opposition by the majority of Labour MP's to the entry into the European Economic Community, reflecting the mood of the workers and in the unions against the capitalist character of the Community, although in a confused way and even with chauvinist overtones, has nevertheless acted as a catalyst to the differentiation of tendencies within the Labour Party. The Right wing has further extended its organic connection with the ruling class. The long years of upswing have resulted in the careerist upstarts, petit - bourgeois professionals, company directors, lawyers and barristers thrusting themselves forward as parliamentary representatives of the Labour Party. Far less than the classical reformists of the MacDonald type in the pre - war days, have they anything in common with the real ideas of socialism. They are in reality Conservatives or Liberal do-gooders or reformists who could just as easily find themselves at home with the Bow group.

The political physiognomy of this Group was clearly delineated in their vote with the Conservatives on the principal and principle question of entry. They are part and parcel of the capitalist establishment. Like the Neo - Socialists in the Socialist Party of France which split from the Socialist Party, when it took some steps to the left, they represent the past of the Movement. The Neos ended up as a Fascist tendency. They will finish up as an extreme reactionary tendency, Gunter, Brown, Marsh and Robens are typical of this Grouping. They have repudiated even the pretence of standing for socialism.

In the hot - house atmosphere of Parliament they have been almost completely oblivious to the profound and deep - going changes taking place within the working class and within the Labour movement. In reality they reflect a petit - bourgeois current both within Parliament and within the Movement. Even in industrial working class constituencies there has been a large layer of middle class and professional types who elbowed aside the working class members and undertook the secretarial and managing jobs in the wards and constituencies. The older workers remained in the party from habit, and even many of those becoming Councillors, lost all sense of perspective and even of Socialism. They came in tow to these middle class elements, faithfully reflected in the *Fabian Society*. With an apathetic working class, with a period when, on the surface, capitalism could 'deliver the goods' in the so - called 'affluent society', they had their hey - day. Gaitskellism was the perfect representation of this tendency.

They tried to change the Labour Party from a class Party to that of a re - vamped Liberal Party without a class programme. They were defeated in this, at the height of the reactionary tide, by the revolt of the rank and file in the Constituencies and trade unions. But their attempt to alter the constitution of the Labour Party was a mirror image of their craven middle class outlook. They retain a certain support in those constituencies which have not yet begun to reflect the beginning of the radicalisation of the workers. They reflect the 'rotten boroughs' of the Labour Party, the inactive and dead sections, and of course sections of the middle class activists in the areas of petit . bourgeois concentration. The *Fabian Society* is a reflection of this grouping though they are not completely identical. The constituencies which have been reduced to shells with Councillors with decades of sitting on the Councils, and old fogies and fusspots, old ladies of both sexes, without an atom of faith in the capacity to struggle of the working class, are the basis in the Party as the Labour Party begins to renew itself, their support in the Constituencies is shrinking. Even old workers who supported them in the past, on the basis that only reforms are possible, and these 'educated' gentry knew what was best for the Movement and the working class, are beginning to draw back. Their last stronghold remains the Parliamentary Labour Party. They are a shadow of past history and the post - war period.

Not understanding what has taken place in the unions and the Labour Party, they still have delusions that they can gain control of the Parliamentary Party and then of the Movement as a whole. Jenkins' speeches are a classic illustration of where this tendency stands. Jenkins has the delusion that he can replace Wilson, who basically occupies the sa

-me position, but at least has his ear cocked to the moods of the trade unions and the rank and file, and is thus prepared to utter some demagogic phrases about Socialism. Even if his coterie were to gain the majority it would not be for long. It would create such an uproar in the Unions and Constituencies. In any event it is the most unlikely course of events.

Jenkins' speeches on British society and the Labour Party, lauded fulsomely by the TV, radio and the capitalist press, show the class basis of their stand. His plaint was not for a new society or the damage wreaked by the monopolies and combines in Britain. In the tones of the Protestant parsons (but at least *they* moralise on the dangers and sinfulness of wealth!) he declaims against 'selfishness'. The 'selfishness' of the organised working class who earn high wages and are not prepared to forgo part of their wages in the interests of the poor and the lower paid. That is the target of his wrath. The car workers in his constituency as he 'courageously' remarked must make some sacrifices for the benefit of his fellow man. Thus this knight tilts his lance at the working class and not the bosses. He tries to pit the organised against the unorganised, the skilled layers against the unskilled and semi-skilled; the petit-bourgeois against the workers. Though in practice they have nothing to say about the standards of the professional and middle classes as against those of the workers. Thus this odious and hypocritical pretence of 'egalitarianism'. They complain about their Parliamentary salaries, £3,500 a year is surely not enough for this great performance! For their strivings in the interests of the people, surely they deserve better. Far from objecting to the 38% increase in salaries, with the last rise in Parliament, they groan that that is not sufficient.

Encrustations

Like an old ship that has lain becalmed for many years, the Labour Party has gathered an encrustation of barnacles, weeds and various other human muck, at least in the top layers. But in the sea of the class struggle these excrescences will be washed away as the ship of the Labour Party is compelled to move.

Because of the situation this current will not gain the leadership, or occupy remotely the position gained by Gaitskellism in the past. But they will inevitably reflect all the pressures of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois reaction. The uneasy alliance between Right and Left, between the middle class elements and the workers imbued with Socialist consciousness, which the bourgeois commentators call the coalition of the Labour Party will be burst asunder in the next Labour Government. The remorseless pressure of the workers on the one hand to carry through radical anti-capitalist measures, in the interests of the workers and to move towards a real change in society, and the infuriated pressure of all the forces of the old society on the other, the pressure of Big Business and the venal media, which will reveal the real fangs of the bourgeois in defence of their property, will act as two overwhelming pressures on the Labour Government. At 'normal' times the coalition of the thin stratum of ambitious place-seekers and the petit-bourgeois professionals in the constituencies, with the trade unions and the working class can endure. It gives some stability to capitalist society. But like metal under heavy pressure it cracks and splits. The secession of the Jenkins tendency under these conditions is inevitable. The vote of the 69 for the Tories on the question of the EEC is symbolic. To them can be added those who abstained and some who played safe and voted against although their sympathies were with the Jenkinsites. As explained in our last perspectives, within a year, or two years of the next Labour Government they would split and form a new 'National Government' with the Tories.

The Bevanite opposition in the Fifties, reflected, in however distorted a fashion, the pressure of the radical and active members of the working class, especially in the Constituencies. The Gaitskellites leaned on the support of the same petit bourgeois stratum they rest on at the present time, of course the bulk of the Parliamentary Party plus the Trade Union bureaucracies and the bureaucracy and the machine of the officialdom of the Party at Transport House. As the mass media expressed it, it was the voice of the 'sensible, sound, feet-on-the-ground, trade union realists reflecting the patriotic British workman and trade unionist' and reflected in such stalwarts as Watson of the Miners, Carron of the Engineers, and Deakin of the T & GWU. To even give the names of their supporters and the wielders of the block vote of that time is to show the enormous shift of forces that has taken place under the apparent surface calm in political and social relations in Britain.

To give yet another example from the Continental Social Democracy, the Saragat Social Democrats in Italy who split from the Socialist Party are of the same physiognomy and social type. They split from the Italian Socialist Party who were far too radical for them, a tendency at that time far to the left of *Tribune* and the Jones-Scanlon-Daly tendency in the British Labour movement at the present time. The tragedy was that the so-called Trotskyists in Italy were as incapable then as they are today to work out perspectives, policy, tactics and strategy to take advantage of the enormous shift to the Left of the workers, and this Left was taken in tow by the Stalinists, corrupted and ruined. It is a warning that Marxists must take to heart and make certain opportunities are not muffed in the same way.

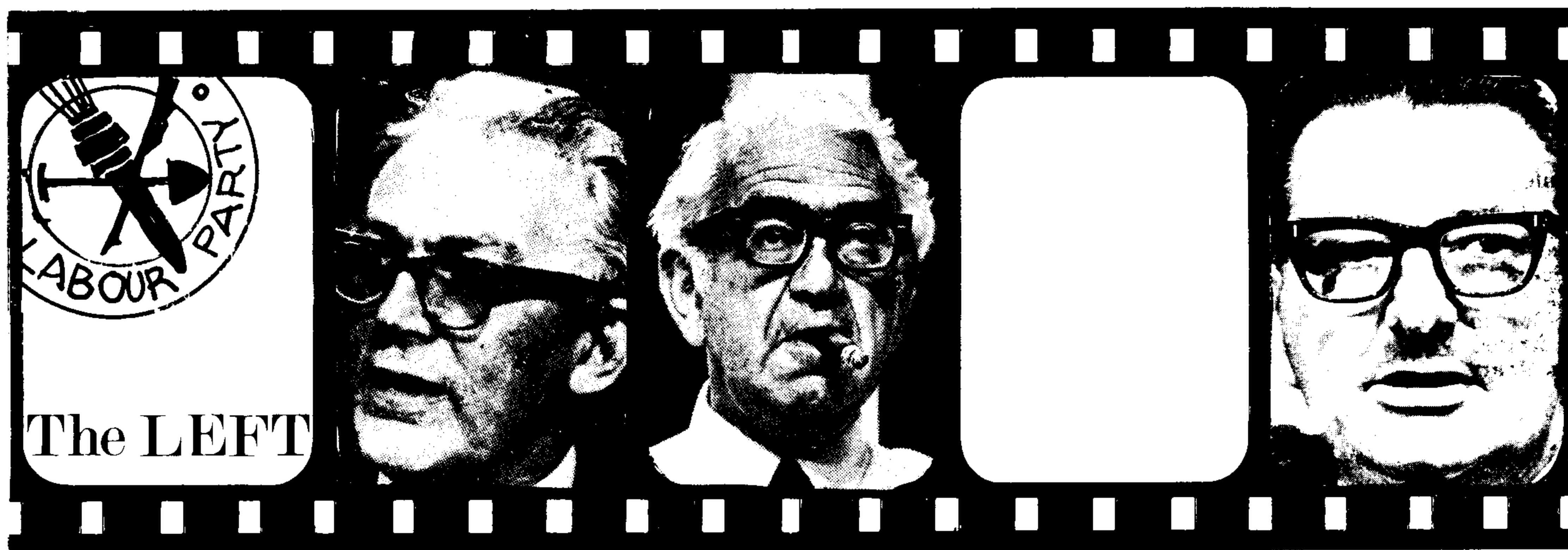
Whereas the Bevanites were anticipating future currents in the Labour Movement, the Right represents nothing but the past of the Movement. They have less of a future than the Social Democrats in Italy. Having been embraced by the Tories, they will be absorbed by them or disappear even faster than the so-called National Labour cohorts of the pre-war National Government disappeared from the political scene. They will have no hope of building an independent tendency. They exist at present as a parasitic growth on the Labour Party because of the collapse of Liberalism.

Jenkins, who will probably pre-empt the Chancellorship of the next Labour Government will eat his present pious hymns to 'equality' - a classless, abstract and bloodless entity, just as the last Labour Government tried to hold down the standards of the workers under the pretense of helping the poorer sections of society. Now Jenkins does a 'mea culpa' in face of the *Fabian* tracts, pointing out how inequality increased under the Labour Government but it was he who began the counter-reforms of the Labour Government and started attacks on school milk, National Health Service and other impositions and taxes which hit hardest the poor sections of the population. Dialectically he will complete the process by doing a political strip-tease over his present promises. He cannot explain why in a worse position he will act better. But such are the dreams of the petit-bourgeois.

However, the most serious and dangerous Right Wing is that which still disguises itself in Left phrases though

banking after incomes policies under fancy names, and in practice wishes to commit itself to the policies of Jenkinsism, with a dash of State Capitalist nationalisation. That Right Wing is the tendency of Wilson and Barbara Castle. They talk in Socialist phrases on occasion, but tend better to reflect the pressure of the workers in the Constituencies and Unions. The encrusted Right Wing is completely impervious to the realities of class society, in its way of life, in its attitudes and social mores, it is closer to and reflects better the attitudes of the Liberal bourgeoisie, hence its almost exclusive concern with such issues as a more permissive attitude in divorce, hanging, contraception and other enlightened causes of the permissive society, which does not cost the bourgeois a penny or trifling sums at worst.

But the Wilson tendency in the next Labour Government will scurry hither and thither trying to patch up this and that, dealing phrases of Socialism to the workers, and even being forced under pressure from the organised Labour movement to grant genuine concessions, only to fall foul of the inexorable sabotage of Big Business, and capitulating to the latter. Nothing will be left of this tendency, not even the phrases, they will be ground to dust between the millstones of the class war.



The Parliamentary Left has grown in numbers and support within the Parliamentary Party and within the organised Labour and Trade Union movement. It still remains a jelly-like mass without cohesion or real goals. Mikardo, Heffer, Foot, Orme and other parliamentarians of the Left are riding on the tide of radicalisation at the present time. The Tribune Group in its turn is linked to the Industrial Left Wing of Scanlon, Jones and Daly. This gives it a measure of power at the present time. They have a formless radical policy which does not differ fundamentally with the Right Wing. Nevertheless, their phrases about Socialism evoke a strong response from the workers in the Constituencies and the Trade Unions. They will grow enormously under the pressure of events in the future. Under conditions of crisis they will grow feverishly.

They reflect, in however confused a fashion the beginning of the swing to the left in the broad masses. In the political sphere they reflect the same process that Scanlon, Jones and Daly reflect in the industrial sphere.

At the present time their paper *Tribune* has a very small circulation, considering the importance of this faction largely among constituency activists. But it is not a true measure of their influence now and what is more important their future influence and role. As pale Left reformists they are more interested in phrases than organising an active movement in the Constituencies and Trade Unions. They lean on the Left trade union leaders for support. They have no real cohesion, and the only difference between their former programme and that of the Right Wing, is that theirs was even more utopian and unrealistic, in the tradition of 'practical politicians'.

They co-exist with the Stalinists because the Stalinists drag at their tail and therefore are willing to forget such trifles as the Moscow Trials, the Stalin-Hitler pact and the somersaults of the British Communist Party line. They did not see the nationalist leaning on capitalism in Britain, and 'independence' from Moscow that did not lead to Marxist conclusions, in the stand of the British Communist Party and the Western Communist Parties, over Czechoslovakia. But in effect publicly embraced the Stalinists, especially as the latter were prepared to grovel and act as foot-stools for the left in programme and policy. This is typical of this tendency.

They accepted gladly the 'conversion to the left' of such opportunists as Silkin and others. They are not prepared at this stage to grapple with the Right Wing, who represent a far more stern and in many ways serious tendency. However under pressure of the radicalisation of the workers, or at this stage the active sections of the trade unions and constituency parties their verbal radicalism at meetings has suffered a considerable increase.

They represent the real threat to the movement towards Socialism in the sense that under the pressure of events they will move much further to the left than they stand at the present time. Their leadership consists in following the movement of the workers. Like the old joke about the man following a crowd who was asked why he was following them and replied 'I have to follow them, I'm their leader!'

Both the Left of the political wing and the Left of the industrial wing will grow enormously in the coming period of clashes. They are a sensitive barometer of the stage at which the working class is moving politically at the present time. This is so especially of the active leaven in the Constituencies and the Trade Unions. Far more than in the last Labour Government, almost from the beginning, certainly within a few months, they will be forced to exert pressure on the next Labour Government, because of the pressure on them of the radicalised working class. They are the

real danger to the movement of the working class, because they will act as a brake on the Movement and try to divert it into harmless channels. However the mechanical conclusion of the ultra - left sects that therefore we must foam at the mouth when speaking of the Lefts, is a complete travesty of Marxism. Marxists must be absolutely clear about the role they will play as a brake on the movement in the future. But even the tiniest step forward they take must be supported, albeit critically and with explanations of the necessary measures which should be taken, and of the next step which must be taken. Criticism must be skilful and friendly. It should be positive, contrasting the Marxist programme, ideas, methods and policies, with the lame and inadequate policies of Left Reformism.

We have already demonstrated on a laboratory scale, the way in which Left Reformists should be tackled, in our press, and in debates and discussions within the Labour Movement itself. Confronted with a choice between *Tribune* and the *Militant*, even now, the majority of the best militants would choose the latter. Confronted with a choice between Left or Right reformism and our ideas, on the situation in Britain, in Ireland, or in the economy the advanced young workers have overwhelmingly supported our tendency. This is a dress rehearsal for the more bitter and serious struggles of the future. Even at this stage it has been possible to contrast the emptiness of reformism with the rich and genuinely realistic ideas of Marxism. The advanced workers in the Unions too, are not completely uncritical of the position of their Left leaders.

The Parliamentary Left leaders try to avoid having to contrast our ideas with their own in open discussion in front of the workers. But they can move far to the Left, even to the ultra - left, in phrases at least, under the pressures of the mass movement, once it really develops. They will place themselves at the head of the mass movement, or in the course of events be borne to the head of the movement by the logic of the development of the struggle itself.

In the next Labour Government they will be forced to a more radical oppositional role than the semi - oppositional role they played in the past. With the departure of the Right Wing the Labour Party itself would move far to the Left, opening up enormous possibilities. This would also be repeated within the ranks of the workers in industry and in the trade union branches.



In the long run the most significant development in the British Labour Movement is the process taking place within the youth section of the Labour Party, the Labour Party Young Socialists. Five years ago, it had practically no basis of working class youth except for in a few areas. The Labour Party officialdom was able to stifle the radical aspirations of the youth by a policy of bureaucratic manoeuvres, leaning on an appointed committee of young careerists who sneered at the ideas of socialism. The opposition was led by the sects into the blind alley of ultra-Leftism, and a cacophony of shrill ultimatums and hooligan inter-factional wrangling culminated in splits, walk-outs and, in many areas the closure of the whole organisation in an atmosphere of poison and bitterness.

By its patient work over several years, the Marxist tendency in the LPYS has won the overwhelming majority of the organisation to its ideas, and its political clarity and enthusiastic approach towards the winning of young workers and students has built the LPYS into the embryo of a healthy revolutionary mass movement, with its roots firmly embedded in the Labour movement.

The LPYS can be made into a vast educational school for the ideas of Marxism. The national organs of the Trade Union movement, area committees, trade union branches and shop stewards committees are sympathetic to the youth and young trade unionists and apprentices are beginning to turn to the LPYS. At the same time, the GMCs wards and constituencies form an arena for work of the Labour Party Young Socialists. In this period the enthusiasm and activities of the youth when coupled with sound arguments, based on facts and figures, are beginning to gain support in the constituency organisations.

The LPYS at this stage, is only at its beginnings as a mass tendency. We are at the earliest stage of the radicalisation, a pre-radical stage of the movement of the working class. With the growth of interest in politics working class youth will turn from football and other pursuits, to trade union and political organisation. With the upheavals and shocks which lie ahead, youth in general will turn towards radical politics. The LPYS, especially with careful and correct policies will grow enormously in the coming period. At the moment, in reality, it is only the skeleton of an organisation. It will become an organisation of tens of thousands, and even possibly hundreds of thousands.



As the fruit of decades of zig-zags and opportunism, decades of existence as a tool of Russian foreign policy, and with the overwhelming mass, especially of the TU organisations, turning towards the Labour Party; the Communist Party has been reduced to a shell of an organisation of the past. As a consequence of turning it into a more left version of the Labour Party, and with the disillusionment in Stalinism, the confusion engendered by the split between China and Russia, the old firm organisational control which the Stalinist machine possessed has disappeared.

At the same time Social Democratic methods of organisation, coupled with cynicism and inertia have reduced the viability of the Communist Party. At the present time only a very small minority of the members are active in the branches. This makes it extremely difficult, despite the more favourable atmosphere, for *Militant* to reach many active members of the Communist Party. As an organisation it has been so enfeebled that without the powerful weapon of the daily *Morning Star* it would tend to crumble away.

It is only the work of their members in the industrial branches in the factories and factions in the unions which give the Communist Party a semblance of real significance. Even here their dragging at the tail of the industrial and political 'Lefts' of the Labour Movement, in reality deprives them of all independent significance. The fact that their programme is basically no different than that of the Left reformists deprives them of any real independent role. The *Morning Star* in its policies, is not fundamentally different from the *Tribune*. They make no criticisms of the policies and attitudes of the Left Trade Union leaders and of the Left parliamentarians, consequently pour all their propaganda efforts into their support.

Nevertheless, they still retain powerful positions within some unions, and retain the support of some of the best industrial militants in certain unions and industries. But the fire and the enthusiasm have been knocked out of their membership. There is no longer the fanatical and uncritical support of the Party line that existed in the past. The CP does not automatically attract as in the past those elements looking for policies to the Left of the Labour Party, especially among the students. It is significant that the big demonstrations organised on the question of Vietnam, of Ireland, and of other issues were not organised by the CP or CP Front organisations, but by one or other of the sectarian groupings to the left of the Communist Party.

However with the movement to the Left of raw masses, inevitable in the coming epoch, the CP will make big gains, though it seems virtually impossible that they could play the role of the Communist Parties of France and of Italy in the future. But they will possibly become a secondary mass organisation, in a period of mass upsurge, what was their strongest card in the past, the link with Moscow, will become their Achilles heel. New crises in any of the countries of the Eastern Europe or of China, will have immediate repercussions in their ranks.

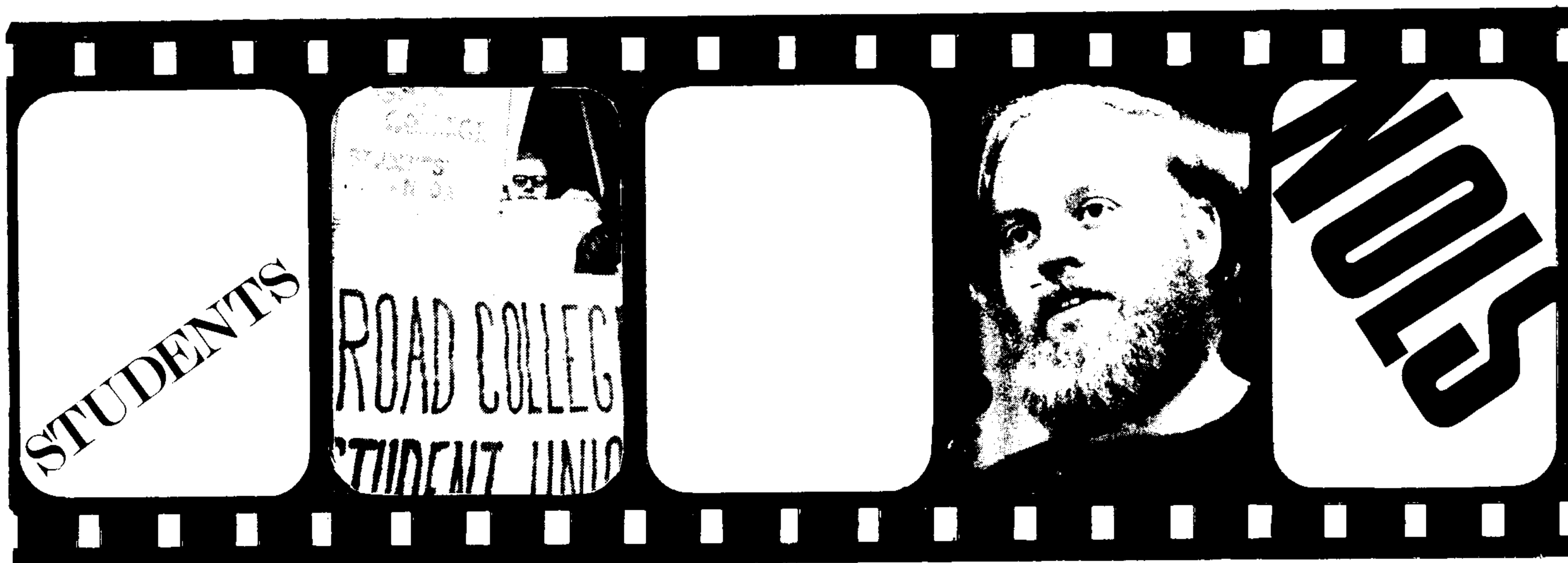
In any event the blatant inconsistencies of their position make it possible even at the present time for the ideas of *Militant* to gain support. One of the main stumbling blocks being the SLL in particular, but also the other sects. The hooliganism and ignorant factionalism of the SLL repels CP workers from what they conceive as "Trotskyism"

Stalinism remains a dangerous and pernicious influence on the lefts in the Labour Party, and the workers in the Labour Party turning to revolutionary ideas. They re-inforce the scepticism, cynicism and prejudices of the Left leaders, those ingrained for years and decades with the ideas of reformism, and those moving for the first time towards revolutionary or even Centrist ideas. Not only in the organisational sense. There are thousands, even tens of thousands, in the trade unions and Labour Party, that are political fellow travellers of the Communist Party, even if they do not support them organisationally.

One of the main aims of our paper in the Unions and Labour Party, apart from combating capitalist ideology and its reformist reflections, is to combat the reformist ideology of Stalinism. This plays an extremely pernicious role, and with the revolutionisation of the ranks of the Labour Party and trade unions, in the coming epoch will be even more dangerous. Genuine Marxists must be armed with the history, methods and policy of Stalinism, nationally and internationally. Our press, especially when it is expanded, must have regular carefully worked out criticisms of the CP, of the Stalinist States, and of the current "line" of the Communist Parties of Britain and elsewhere.

The present return to myth-making in regard to the Soviet Union, by the *Morning Star*, indicating that, for the moment, they have made their peace with the Russian Bureaucracy, provides Marxists with an opportunity to deal with them in the language of reality and facts.

This tendency is incapable of learning, they stagger on empirically from one situation to the next. They will not escape even bigger blows in the future with the development of new crises in Russia and Eastern Europe, which will in turn provoke new convulsions in the Communist Party.



The radical student movement in which the sectarian tendencies have their main base, has suffered a decline in the past period. This was inevitable considering the ultra-Left tactics of the sects. However the reaction to the attack on the autonomy of student unions, led to the biggest demonstrations of students in the history of Britain. The students remain as fertile soil for the ideas of Marxism. The active support of many students; of the majority of some universities, of the miners' strike was a colourful reflection of the changes in British society since the War. It is a reflection of the fact that large sections of middleclass youth are looking towards the Left at this time. This process will be further intensified in coming years.

The students remain a barometer of the moods developing in society, especially of the layers of petit-bourgeois and of the intellectual strata, of whom in this connection we must number the students. The more wild and woolly students, reflecting the tendency of ultra-radicalism when they break out, is attracted by the romantic ideas of infantile leftism. Consequently the temporary successes of the sects, in attracting quite sizeable numbers of students to their ranks. The CP and Labour bureaucracy have not the power of attraction that they possessed in the past.

The pull of the mass movement at a later stage, of course, will have its effects on the universities, as among other sections of the petit-bourgeoisie as well. The bulk of those joining the sects are only sowing their wild political oats in a trendy fashion. It is not of lasting significance. The point made by Trotsky of the ephemeral character of student radicalism is more true of Britain now than of the SWP students of whom Trotsky was talking. In the atmosphere of windy and threadbare radicalism without content, perspectives or understanding, most of the students won by these tendencies will not stay for long. They are transient birds of passage, who as always will blame the workers for their own impotence, as they turn their backs on the movement. However, student comrades, educated in the basic ideas of Marxism and participation in the Labour movement, outside the artificial environment of the Universities can form a valuable haven of Marxism

The Challenge Ahead

THE WHOLE OF BRITISH SOCIETY IS HEADING FOR A GIGANTIC EXPLOSION. THE REVOLUTIONARY EPOCH THAT IS OPENING UP BEFORE THE WORKERS IN EVERY PART OF THE GLOBE FINDS BRITISH CAPITALISM NO LONGER CUSHIONED AND INSULATED AGAINST ITS BLOWS, BUT VULNERABLE AND WEAK. A TREMENDOUS CHALLENGE IS POSED BEFORE THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS. IN TERMS OF ITS OBJECTIVE POWER, AND IN TERMS OF THE CLEAR POLITICAL IDEAS WITH WHICH THE MARXISTS AROUND THE MILITANT MUST PERMEATE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT – THAT CHALLENGE WILL BE MET WITH CONFIDENCE.

Mexico

A report of
developments
by a Comrade in Mexico

Mexico is no longer the model of political stability among the capitalist countries of Latin America. Strikes and independent workers' demonstrations, armed peasant rebellions, rural and urban guerrillaism have begun to cause reverberations which the student movement by itself never could.

Between 22 December 1969 and 15 September 1971, there occurred 24 bank assaults and innumerable raids on supermarkets, post-offices, bus terminal offices etc. Many (but not all) of these attacks were made by urban guerilla groups, operating in major cities in both North and South Mexico. Their most spectacular deeds were the series of kidnappings carried out at the end of last year. Some of those kidnapped and held for enormous ransom sums were: the daughter of Bernardo Quintana, one of Mexico's most powerful businessmen and a heavyweight in the government; Julio Hirschfield, director of airways, and equally influential in the government; the rector of the University of Guerrero, Jamie Castrejon, tied up with the big soft-drink industry in that area; a banker from Guerrero, Donaciano Luna; and a millionaire from Mazatlan.

Meanwhile the militancy of the peasants in the poverty-stricken state of Guerrero who are fighting for the restitution of their lands has not slackened off, in spite of the intervention of the army.

Less spectacular but most significant of all, has been the revival of the independent workers' movement — for the first time in 12 years. The campaign led by Rafael Galvan in STERM (one of the two principal unions of the electricity workers) for trade union rights and internal democracy has gathered momentum throughout the country and given other sections of workers renewed confidence and audacity. Demetrio Vallejo, courageous and long-standing unofficial leader of the railway workers, has begun to intensify the battle against the government-bought leaders of the official union. In an incident in October, a railway worker was shot dead by thugs hired by these "leaders"; shortly afterwards Vallejo was imprisoned. Mass demonstrations outside the prison in Monclova, together with general popular indignation, forced the local authorities to release their prisoner — under direct orders from President Echeverria — after a few days. On November 26, at the invitation of STERM and MSF (the independent railway workers union led by Vallejo), representatives of a whole number of independent unions came together to discuss their common problems and the current situation. They elected delegates to form a Liaison Committee for Trade Union struggle (Comision de Enlace de Insurgencia Sindical) with the task of bringing together all the independent sections in order to unify their struggle against 'charrismo' (corrupt trade union leadership) and for trade union democracy. Most important among the organisations represented were; the Authentic Labour Front (FAT) — controlled by the Latin American Christian Democratic Party, but with many members far to the left of this; the Free Workers' Unions (SOL); the Union of bakers of the state of Mexico; the Amphora Union; the representatives of the peasants, of the teachers and of the students. The "Communist" Party is strongly represented in some of these unions. The Committee immediately decided to draw up a manifesto and programme, and to organise a national workers' demonstration on December 14th. On that day by means of conferences, public meetings and marches, workers all over Mexico declared their solidarity with the electricity and railway workers, protested against the growing unemployment in Mexico, and demanded their democratic rights within the trade union movement, and the rights of all other workers. In Tampico, 7,000 workers participated, in Puebla, 3,000. In Monterrey, Veracruz, Chihuahua, Leon — in all, in 40 cities of the Republic — demonstrations took place, nowhere of less than 1,000 workers. Many students also participated. A similar day of demonstrations and meetings took place in the middle of January 1972. Also in December and January an enormous strike of schoolteachers (for better wages and conditions) took place in Veracruz.

Bonapartism

The government took no reprisals against the trade union demonstrations. Echeverria is Officially on the side of greater trade union democracy, and greater popular participation in political life in general. He is hoping to let out some of the steam which has been accumulating under the surface of economic, social and political life, and so to save the governing party (the PRI), the state structure and his class from an explosion the consequences of which they might not be able to control. So far the trade union movement has made no direct political threat; it has no political programme. Obviously, however its potential danger to the Mexican capitalist class is far greater than that of the desperate, often isolated, guerrillas. Yet, as if as a warning to the whole population of what would be the results of any deviation from the 'legal road' to reform (the legal road in Mexico is the road of bribery and corruption and quiet murders), the government has jumped in to arrest and punish the guerrilla fighters with a viciousness which might surprise even some Mexicans.



'Hired Thugs of the Regime' in Action Against Mexican Workers and Students

Official Terrorism

But the ground for this new wave of official terrorism began to be laid a long time ago. 1968 saw the beginnings. In face of the power of the mass student movement of that year, the government machine set about elaborating a complex organisation of repression, which has functioned effectively ever since, and which consists of on the one hand, 'institutional' repression (by the police and army in uniform), and on the other hand, of the activity of paramilitary gangs (such as the 'Halcones'), whose paid job consists of making attacks 'from inside' on members and supporters of left-wing organisations. Some members of these gangs have now formed themselves into pseudo-revolutionary groups, and it is impossible to know how many of the recent raids and kidnappings have actually been carried out by them —

— in the name of the revolution. What is certain is that the CIA has long considered the formation of these kind of groups as an essential part of their urban counter-insurgency tactics in many parts of the world. Various sectors of these gangster organisations have recently been getting out of the government's control; this explains the reason for the official 'campaign' against some of them last summer. (A few were actually arrested). Most notorious of these semi-fascist 'revolutionary' groups is CARA (Centre For Revolutionary Armed Action), headed formerly (before his arrest) by the well known Halcon nicknamed El Fish; another more recent, is GUIA (United Guard of Latin America). Obviously the purpose of the activities of these groups is simply to confuse completely in the mind of the general population thuggery with political protest — something which, it must be said, some of the most sincere guerrilla groups, by the actions they have chosen, make it very easy for the government to do. The majority of working people in Mexico have no idea what are the aims of the revolutionary guerrillas (they themselves do not all seem to be too certain either), and tend to see them as just one more of Mexico's problems, like the growing number of drug addicts. Most of the groups consist of just handfuls of people, each isolated from the other groups and completely isolated from the population. The government therefore feels it has nothing to lose by wiping out the groups as far as it can at this very moment.

Since the beginning of January 1972 there has been a systematic attempt to round them all up and intimidate all possible sympathisers. Wives, children and brothers and sisters of known guerrillas have been taken for interrogation. Even distant acquaintances of guerrillas and members of other left-wing organisations not associated with guerrilla tactics have been summoned arbitrarily for police interrogation. More than 200 people are known to have been detained by the police in the numerous secret prisons of the Federal District, there subjected to solitary confinement and every kind of torture. Electric shocks are routine treatment, *and only the beginning*.

Vasquez Murdered

On February 2 1972 the famous guerrilla fighter from the state of Guerrero, Jenaro Vasquez Rojas, was killed, allegedly in a road accident, and his companions captured. A week earlier his wife, mother of 6 children, was detained in prison for interrogation. Since 1968 Vasquez had been an outlaw, and his wife had not seen him throughout those three years.

The week previous to Vasquez's death, the alleged kidnappers of Hirschfield (members of the Zapatista Urban Front — FUZ) were arrested.. Vasquez and his group were suspected of having carried out the kidnapping of the rector of the University of Guerrero. Vasquez was enormously well-known and popular throughout Mexico, through his long and courageous struggle beside the peasants of Guerrero. Hundreds of peasants attended his funeral. The government would have been seriously embarrassed at the prospect of bringing him to public trial and allowing him to become the focus of national attention. An accident was from their point of view much simpler and more effective than an arrest.

One interesting thing is that the papers have been allowed to make Vasquez into a kind of hero — a tragically mistaken idealist. The government can forgive him now he's dead — and of course hopes to make political capital out of granting forgiveness just this once, playing, as it often does, the role of a merciful but just father of the Mexican people.

Continually trumpeting on the long-dead slogans of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Mexican ruling class has traditionally used the methods of stick and carrot — vicious repression of all independent movements, coupled with grandiose-sounding reforms, mostly remaining verbal, from above — in order to maintain the "class harmony" which has attracted so much foreign investment to Mexico since the war. But the monolithic structure of the PRI, the party which has ruled political life in Mexico for 40 years, and which embraces in its tentacles the organisations of workers and peasants as well as employers, has, since 1968, begun to show signs of stress. The "reforming" character of the government of President Echeverria (inaugurated at the end of 1970), which as we have seen has gone hand-in-hand with more efficient methods of repression, is due not to a quirk of the President's character but to the necessities of the situation in which the Mexican ruling class finds itself.

The contradictions of the economic system have reached such a crisis in Mexico that the future presents itself to bourgeois economists as full of problems which, if not resolved, will endanger Mexico's "stability" and its whole rhythm of development. And even the country's still very high annual growth rate of more than 6% cannot in itself provide solutions.

The immediate, most pressing problem and the most obvious, is the enormous increase in the national debt, mostly on foreign loans, which in 1970 stood at more than 3,700,000,000 dollars (more than 5 times what it stood at in 1960). Recently the World Bank stated that if this trend continued, then between now and 1976 the debt would reach the figure of 7,400,000,000 dollars. These figures demonstrate the extent of the inherent weakness of the economy, its dependence, its poor export performance in relation to the advanced economies of the capitalist world.

The particular problems are the narrowness of Mexico's internal market; the exaggerated growth of dependent industry (e.g. the manufacture of spare machine parts to be assembled — and the resulting product sold — in the United States), in relation to the growth of manufacturing industry in which everything, the final process included, is completed in Mexico; lack of investment in the industrial infrastructure of the economy; under-exploitation of existing industrial capacity and of the natural resources; lack of investment in and backwardness of the agricultural sector; and poor export performance.

In spite of having a strong native capitalist class, the Mexican economy finds itself, simply by reason of the objective world economic system, under the dominance of the economy of the United States. Big, quick profits are to be made by fitting in with the requirements of United States industry rather than by trying to develop Mexico's own economy in an all-round way. Neither in Mexico nor anywhere else has the capitalist class, as composed of individual businessmen, put the interests of the economy as a whole before the fight for profits. Here the role of the state is evident as the servant of the generalised interests of capital. Using the money of the labouring classes (very few taxes are paid by the rich), the Mexican state steps in to develop the economy in those areas where private capital is not prepared to take any risks or make any large investment. Out of the 100 biggest industries in Mexico, only 36% have participation by foreign capital, but 20% have at least some state participation (all profits of course going to the private owners). The country's basic resources — petrol, mining, electricity, water, etc. are under state control or have strong state participation. But these enterprises don't operate in favour of the whole nation, but in favour of private interests. The administration of these industries enjoy enormous power and privileges; they also provide private investors (in particular, the big financial bourgeoisie) with new areas for industrialisation (as, for example, in the case of the state development of petroleum chemicals). The public industries are served by cheap labour, provide private industry with services at very cheap rates and benefit the mass of the population only secondarily, if at all. (Millions of Mexicans still lack the most elementary services — water and electricity). Thus it is clear that the state is incapable of intervening in the economy in any way which might mean going against the most basic interests of the capitalist class. But to Echeverria and other equally far-sighted members of the ruling class, state intervention of a more radical kind seems necessary to bring some order out of the present chaos.

Increasing Misery

The daily increasing misery of the workers and peasants; the sustained inflation; the growing unemployment (approximately 4,000,000 throughout Mexico); the rush of desperate peasants to the industrial cities and the resultant chronic overcrowding; the rising crime rate — all these are to the capitalist class of course merely secondary problems. In more or less acute form, they have been problems for a long time. Only now is the government and the press beginning to shed crocodile tears over them. Why?

Quite simply, the reason is that these social problems have become a threat to the economic development of the country, as well as to "political stability". There will never be an expansion of the internal market as long as the vast majority of Mexicans live in extreme poverty, and as long as agriculture, which still occupies a majority of the population, remains as a whole the most backward sector of the economy. The skilled work-force necessary to further capitalist development can never be developed as long as millions of Mexicans (over 30%) remain illiterate and millions more lack even the most elementary training, let alone opportunities for higher education. The revolt among sections of the peasantry, the land occupations which have taken place in Guerrero and in the North of Mexico, are not a new phenomenon — but now they are prompting the government to all kinds of "reforms". Odd pieces of land have been returned to the peasants from whom they were originally stolen by speculators. No matter for the time being that the peasants entirely lack the credit and machinery necessary to work their plots. The aim is to placate the peasants as far as possible, then work out ways of improving the productivity of the lands of the big owners, the only lands which really count in the national economy.

A heritage of the 1910 revolution is the ownership by millions of individual peasants or peasant communities of the land still not yet monopolised by the big capitalist owners. Completely lacking financial or technical resources, divided against each other, and thrown into competition with the big owners, the vast majority of peasants will never be able to climb out of their misery as long as the capitalist system exists. That is why Echeverria's proposed agricultural



“reforms” will remain almost entirely at the level of public meetings, conferences, government studies and newspaper articles as far as the vast majority of Mexicans are concerned. Even increasing the number of schools and colleges won’t help as long as the fundamental economic and social conditions remain the same. The most likely concrete outcome of the new “dynamic” agricultural policy is that some big farmers will get increased credit.

The movement in the electricity and railway workers’ unions; last year’s strikes such as that of the textile workers of the Ayotla Co. and of the employees of the Adams Chiclet Co., and many other small-scale movements— all these signs, however faint as yet, of growing working-class consciousness, have prompted the government to “open a dialogue with the people”. “Self Criticism” and “dialogue” are the watchwords of Echeverria’s regime. His faction of the ruling class recognises that a truly flexible, advanced economy requires a better-educated, less passive, working class, better able to take initiatives, to adapt to changes, and better skilled technologically.

Thus, for both economic and political motives, Echeverria has begun very cautiously to attack the rigidity of the old “charros”, government stooges who control the unions, and to work for at least the appearance of greater democracy within the trade unions. It is of course unthinkable that the government could ever allow the development of an independent trade union movement on a mass scale, as this would deal a mortal blow to the PRI, basing its power as it does on “the collaboration of all classes”. But a little more flexibility, Echeverria hopes, would help get rid of some dangerous tensions for the ruling class.

In the political field, Echeverria is taking the same line. In order to carry out even the modest social and economic reforms he has planned, he needs to root out the hard-liners within the PRI, and altogether “liberalise” political life not just within the PRI but within the country. One purpose of his much-publicised call for “public dialogue” is to re-legitimise the three central political structures, the PRI, the President and the constitution — badly discredited especially since the massacre of students in 1968 —, and also, what is very important for the Echeverria faction, to win back the confidence of the intelligentsia as well as the middle class in general, and use their support, together if possible with that of the working class, against the most reactionary wing of the ruling class which is still afraid of recognising the necessity for change.

This support cannot be won on the basis of mere demagoguery. The success of a policy of demagoguery consists in its being accompanied by real concessions — however minimal they may be — which are capable of rousing real hopes in the good intentions of the regime.

It is in this context that the idea has emerged among certain liberal intellectuals, headed by the ex-political prisoner Heberto Castillo, of forming a new political opposition party. For Castillo, evidence that there exists a genuine “democratic opening” (for the people, rather than merely for different sections of the bourgeoisie) is seen in the fact that he, Castillo himself, has been freely allowed to travel the country making propaganda for his views. In fact, this is simply proof that the government has made an accurate estimate of the kind of role Castillo can play, and feels it can be useful. When Castillo complained publicly that the existing electoral law made real political opposition impossible, Echeverria two months later — last November — obligingly announced a series of electoral and constitutional

reforms which would make Castillo's task easier. Castillo's group has announced that it bases itself on the Constitution and on the law, that it criticises the negative and supports the positive in Echeverria's government and programme; that it will fight for economic independence, social justice and political liberty. No attempt is made to explain the class basis of society and the class interests served by the government; no real political programme has been put forward. Together with its vagueness politically, the group's attitude to organisational work seems demagogic and non-serious; members seem to have done little more than travel about the country making speeches and showing all the traits of paternalism, improvisation, impressionism and sectarianism. It is nevertheless pretty certain that this group will grow and have far more influence than it deserves: this simply because at the *national* level it is the only political grouping which has been given mass publicity and which proposes an immediate alternative to the frustrated forces of opposition in the country.

The Mexican "Communist" Party, the only other political grouping on the left which can be said to exist on a national scale, is weak numerically, numbering only a few hundred, and, what is far more important, has few real roots in the Mexican working class and a lack of political courage which makes it extremely unlikely that it will ever get such roots. From opportunist "critical support" of Echeverria, the party leadership has, during the last year, swung around to an equally opportunist "total opposition". The only alternative it puts forward is the, at present, universal CP formula of struggle for a democratic coalition government composed of all "progressive forces" — as if such a government could anyway ever be elected in a political system like Mexico's — and as if such a formula took any account of the realities of the class struggle. In Mexico it is particularly glaringly evident that there are no "progressive forces" apart from those — the poor peasantry and sections of the petty bourgeoisie — who are prepared to follow the leadership of the working class in the setting up of a workers state with workers' democracy.

The innovations being introduced by Echeverria's faction have — as already mentioned, met with bitter opposition from the most short-sighted and conservative sections of the capitalist class. This opposition is reflected within the PRI. Echeverria's faction represents the interests of the main financial group concentrated in Mexico City; these groups favour greater economic centralisation and political efficiency, and so favour more centralised government. They have a direct part in the government, since many of their number are PRI ministers. Opposed to this faction are the big industrialists and financiers outside Mexico City who are interested first and foremost in their own immediate businesses, oppose all reform, and resent their lack of direct influence in the government. Recently the faction fights have been coming out into the open — as in June 1971, when Echeverria's enemies mobilised the state's bands of armed thugs against the demonstrating students (killing dozens) — hoping thus to discredit the "popular" image the President was trying to create for himself.

The divisions within the capitalist class sharply reflect the dilemma in which the class as a whole finds itself how to make the reforms which are now necessary for its survival without breaching the dam and losing all. Echeverria may never in fact be allowed by his enemies really to begin.

Revolutionary Tasks

The stage has now been reached at which repression, far from stifling popular movements, can only give them new strength and determination.

There can be absolutely no doubt that an independent mobilisation of workers on a mass scale would at this juncture, be sufficient to wipe out the whole demagogic farce of the democratic process. The

actions of the guerrilla fighters, however courageous, are irrelevant and perhaps even damaging to the achievement of this mobilisation. The workers do not see the solution to their problems in the kidnapping of millionaires and the robbing of banks! And the government can freely persecute the guerrilla groups as long as they remain completely isolated from the working class, not only physically but also politically. The immediate task as recognised by serious revolutionaries is to forge solid links with the working class, in particular with its present vanguard in the independent unions, but also with the workers organised in the official unions and the millions still unorganised.

Solid links with the peasantry are obviously extremely important, as are links with the peasant guerrilla movement, which has a mass base in several areas and is to be distinguished from the urban guerrillas.

Simultaneously with this task goes the formulation of a clear Marxist revolutionary programme, which uncompromisingly separates itself from the ideas of the opportunist tendencies, and puts forward demands based on the concrete issues affecting the workers and peasants, while explaining the necessity for revolutionary Socialist solutions. A long period of preparation and many very difficult battles must lie ahead, but the Mexican working class has taken the first strides forward after many years, and it will not now turn back. It is not alone. Mass working class movements in the other countries of Latin America, most recently in Chile and Bolivia, have demonstrated to the world the direction that will be taken by the Latin American revolution in the period now opening up before us.

1972

Opposition Sells Out

Latest reports from Mexico (November 1972) indicate that Echeverria has already actually succeeded in doing a deal with the present leaders of the trade union movement for democracy.

At the end of October this year, the two unions of the electricity workers - the STERM, led by Galvan, and the other led by the notoriously corrupt Perez Rios - met with Echeverria to officially accept amalgamation of their two organisations. Since taking the initiative in the fight for trade union democracy early last year and challenging the right of Perez Rios' stooge union to represent the electricity workers, STERM had been deprived of its contract with the state-owned electricity industry; and clearly Galvan has now finally succumbed - as do the vast majority of opposition leaders in Mexico - to the enormous pressures put on him by the government.

Echeverria is playing a very clever game. In October he also went down to Veracruz to meet with the tobacco workers and with Vallejo, Castillo and other leaders of the popular opposition. Such friendly discussions took place that they resulted in Echeverria ordering the reinstatement of the 1,800 railway workers dismissed for their part in the great railway strike led by Vallejo in 1959. Instead of spitting on this proposal with the contempt it deserves, Vallejo - himself now getting old, and worn down by long years of imprisonment and persecution - wavered and accepted. Castillo went further, promising to follow the President 'arriba y adelante' (upward and forward) as long as he continued with his present 'nationalist and anti-imperialist policies'.

Nationalisation of the tobacco industry seems to be next on Echeverria's agenda. Further monopolisation of the economy is going hand in hand with increased state control over particular sectors (generally those related to the production of raw materials), the state intervening in the interests of the Mexican capitalist class as a whole - and it is this process which Echeverria represents as the 'next stage in the Mexican Revolution'. Simultaneously he tightens his grip over the workers' movement, by giving some well-timed concessions to the dissident factions, buying off the leaders, and further centralising the workers' organisations to keep them all as far as possible under state control - but now sanctioned by the popular leaders.

The 'revolutionary intelligentsia', at the moment represented in their majority by the Heberto Castillo group, find to their surprise that they really do not have any alternative to this programme, and so end up meekly trotting behind Senor Presidente, father of all the Mexicans.

The apparent ease with which Echeverria has bought off the opposition at this stage indicates only that the radicalisation of the workers in Mexico must be a long process of advances, defeats, and further advances, and that we are witnessing just the beginning. The sell-out of the leaders who lack understanding of the class nature of the struggle is anyway inevitable sooner or later and surprises no-one, least of all the workers themselves. They have been betrayed so many times that they quite expect it, react with a shrug - 'Asi es la vida.' - 'That's life.' - and return to the struggle. The leaders may get out of it, but they cannot. But



what is significant in the present series of deals is that in no case has the leaders' sell out been accompanied by reprisals against the workers (as happened in the sell-outs of the 1950's and 1960's); on the contrary, the government has made real major concessions to the workers involved (dramatically improving wages and conditions for the railway and electricity workers this year). It is this fact which reveals the real balance of class forces in Mexico today: Echeverria has to bribe the most advanced workers because he knows that at this point repression would bring the whole labour movement dramatically to its feet - and not in a mood of defence, but of aggression.

As yet the workers are having to feel their way, and Echeverria is having to feel his: Mexican capitalism can no longer march on regardless.

The organisation of secret workers' committees is now taking place in factories in all the chief industrial cities - in Monterrey, in Chihuahua, in Cuernavaca, in Mexico City. It is in these committees - which are the organising force behind all strikes - that the workers are beginning to form their own genuinely representative and class conscious leadership. The workers may continue to participate openly in the 'democratic movement' of Castillo, Vallejo, and Echeverria Inc. (that is if this movement does not itself wither away in the freezing embrace of the PRI); but their real movement will have to develop underground.

The strength of popular opposition to the regime has most recently been dramatically demonstrated in Chihuahua (Northern Mexico). In the city of Chihuahua, in May this year, a committee for Popular Defence was formed and its authority ratified by a Popular Assembly. The Committee, made up of militant trade unionists and students, proposed the setting up of a National People's Tribunal to sit in judgment on the Mexican regime for its crimes of repression against the Mexican people over the last forty years, and particularly over the last four years (the notorious massacre of over five hundred demonstrators in Mexico City in 1968 has been followed by the assassination of hundreds of individuals, workers, peasants and students who have shown opposition to the regime in the years since). The jury of the People's Tribunal, which sat in September this year, was made up of one hundred and fifty seven militants; the Mexican ruling class was declared guilty of all the crimes of repression charged against it by the Mexican people, and was condemned to abolition. The tribunal called on the working class, together with the peasants, students, and labouring people in general, to carry out the sentence through the seizure of political power, the destruction of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the revolutionary transformation of the existing society. Thousands supported the Tribunal, and its hearings became known nationally. Committees for Popular Defence have also been formed in other areas, and are most active in Ciudad Juarez and in Monterrey.

The complexity of the situation in Mexico calls for a revolutionary leadership which is capable of intervening audaciously in all the many varied forms which the revolutionary struggle is taking, and capable of the greatest flexibility over tactics and the greatest firmness and clarity over questions of policy. This leadership will certainly be forged - is already being forged - in today's battles.

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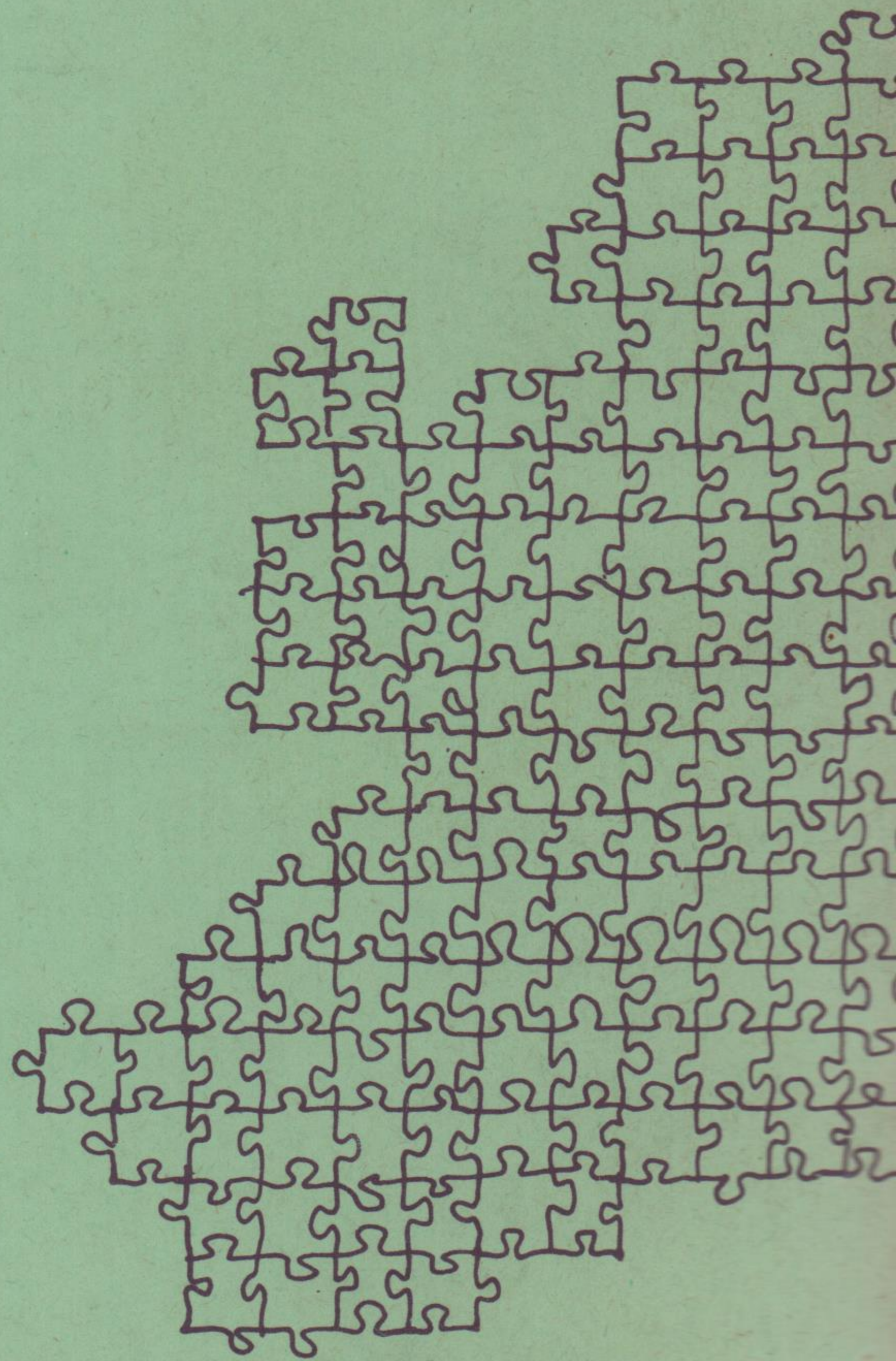
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