

THE BULLETIN

FOR SOCIALIST SELF-MANAGEMENT

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PRELIMINARY CANTER FOR THE WAGE-FREEZE STAKES

The meeting between Heath and the TUC leaders on Tuesday last can be seen as a sham. The centre of Heath's proposals is the attempt to hold all wage increases over the next year at £2 per week. Since it is only three weeks ago that the TUC congress specifically rejected any form of wage freeze we cannot believe that Heath thought that his proposals had any chance of being accepted.

A few things should be noted about the background to the present situation. First we should understand that the original policy of the Government i.e. beating the unions, was smashed by the miners and dockers earlier this year. Also there has been mounting pressure on the Government by employers to reverse its policy. This, as we can see, has now happened. In fact practically every policy that Heath has tried to enforce since he came to office has been either smashed or thrown into reverse. Second, Heath obviously wants to present the public with a picture of his 'reasonable' proposals being rejected by the unions so that he can proceed to enforce the freeze on wage increases by law. In this way he hopes to lay the blame for the situation on the trade unions, i.e. the workers. Third, the top leaders of the unions and the TUC are caught in a dilemma. As much as Feather would like to do a deal with Heath, it is clear that there is too much pressure from the rank and file for this to happen now.

The immediate reactions of even right-wing trade union leaders indicate that they cannot voluntarily accept the £2 limit. Given the present mood on the shop-floor there seems little likelihood that even a £2 limit imposed by law will be accepted by the rank and file. However given that the Industrial Relations Act is still operative, we can expect to see a further drive against rank and file militants, while the trade union leaders sit back with the excuse that their hands are tied by the law.

Whatever happens now it will almost certainly be a hot winter. No doubt Heath will attempt to split the solidarity of the rank and file that has been built up over the last few years by appealing to 'fairness' and 'benefitting the low-paid'. The answer to that must be that we are all low paid compared to the profit taking class and their podgy friends Heath and Feather.

The danger for militants is that Heath will try to call a 'snap' election when he has whipped up 'patriotic' support for his freeze and come back to office with an increased majority and then proceed to renew his union bashing.

INDOCHINA

The blockade of the ports of North Vietnam, the most frenzied bombardment and devastation than ever, meteorological and electronic war; meanwhile Washington awaits the destruction of the dykes and the cataclysm which would thus afflict the country: these are the measures which American imperialism resort to in order to avoid the total debacle of its puppet regime in Saigon. We have never, in the history of humanity, witnessed such an outburst of barbarity on the part of the greatest military power thoroughly utilising its arsenal of the most perfected arms against a small country, struggling essentially, thanks to the fantastic courage of its inhabitants. Yet how long will the peoples of the world stand idly by without practically reacting to the destruction, to the catastrophe, to the unprecedented carnage that the outburst of the most powerful imperialism inflicts on the Vietnamese masses?

Can we relax our efforts at such a moment in the face of what is happening in Vietnam, especially recently, by emphasising for example that this cause is 'outside' us, for it is henceforward entrusted to the fate reserved for it by the secret deals between Washington, Moscow and Peking and the subsequent 'compromise solutions' by these powers?

Can we afford to loose our sensibility at this moment and almost passively witness the crusade of destruction, the most ever systematic undertaking in the history of an entire people and even the conditions of its survival?

The present governments of the USSR and China, who shield the Hitler of Washington, who hobnob and contrive with him, who always hesitate to raise the challenge lanced by him to all the revolutionary forces of the world by the blockade and bombardment, who refuse to give the Vietnamese the much needed up to date arms against the planes and warships of this monster, who exercise their pressure for the Vietnamese to bend to the demands of Washington, have undoubtedly unmasked themselves as instruments of an egoistic, narrow minded nationalist bureaucracy, cynically sacrificing the world revolutionary cause to the narrow interests of their own base.

There is no 'wisdom' in such a policy that the unconditional apologists of these bureaucracies want to breathlessly 'explain' and 'justify.' History will record the ignominy of their present incredible attitude in face of the deluge which afflicts the 'brother' country of Vietnam.

That American imperialism have been able to easily exploit the unusual tension between Moscow and Peking, is overwhelming proof of the fundamentally noxious character of these bureaucracies, baffling in paralysis from the fears, the suspicion, the narrow-minded nationalist calculations flowing from their lamentable antagonisms and their congenial fear of the free development of the world revolutionary movement.

The cause of heroic Vietnam as well as all the peoples of Indo-China struggling for their national and social liberation, must be defended with extreme energy by revolutionaries and the progressive forces of the world.

Let us be prepared to intervene with our own forces in the field of battle in Vietnam and Indo-China, since imperialism is hurling all its power of destruction in the balance and the governments of the States claiming socialism only give limited, ineffective aid, destined to compel the Vietnamese to accept the 'compromise solution.'

Let us demand our Vietnamese comrades to accept internationalisation of the war on the part of the revolutionary forces, who must share the fate of the Vietnamese masses and by struggling where they are, to sensitise other than by words and protest, going well beyond public opinion of their respective countries.

LET US SUPPLY BY OUR OWN MEANS, UP TO THE PORTS OF VIETNAM, MEDICINES AND AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS, PRODUCTS WHICH THE CHILDREN, WOMEN AND MEN, THE FIGHTERS OF VIETNAM, KILLED BY BOMBS AND BURNED BY NAPALM, HAVE A PRESSING NEED. LET US URGENTLY CREATE IN EACH COUNTRY UNIFIED ACTION COMMITTEES TO REALISE THIS

Let us straighten ourselves, let us act, let us respond to the wild outburst of imperialist escalation by widening real revolutionary action, by initiatives and exemplary practices.

International Secretariat of the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency.
10.7.72

Since the above communique was issued by the International Secretariat, the consequences of the secret diplomacy expressed in the visits of Nixon to Peking and Moscow, have unravelled themselves so clearly and succinctly it leaves no doubt about the nationalistic counter-revolutionary role of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies.

In February, while Nixon was in Peking, American imperialism was coldly calculating to escalate the war in Vietnam. And while Nixon was clinking glasses with Brezhnev in May, American imperialism escalated its war of annihilation of the Vietnamese people. Thus while the two bureaucracies were entertaining the butcher of the Vietnamese people, the latter were systematically being destroyed. What is the motive and price for this treachery?

One would have thought that since Peking is an unwavering champion of 'Third World' peoples, there would have been the characteristic vituperative noises against American imperialism. For some reason this has ceased: perhaps the paper tiger has changed its spots! But since the Chinese bureaucracy is naturally inherently nationalistic, its acquisition of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (remember how they used to call it a thieves' kitchen), plus diplomatic recognition from everywhere and the concession that Taiwan is not the 'only China' which, eventually, will be followed by trade deals with all the imperialist powers. All these concessions therefore require reciprocation on the part of American imperialism. The most obvious and best concession the Chinese bureaucracy can give is to ignore and throttle the Vietnamese peoples' struggle. The bureaucracy's national interests are of supreme importance. Thus China's revolutionary verbalism about proletarian internationalism becomes transparent to the fighters in the 'Third World',

On the other hand the Russian bureaucracy's readiness to normalise relations with American imperialism, at the expense of Vietnam, flows from its desire to secure trade deals with credit provisions, as well as a European Security Conference involving the recognition of East Germany, from American imperialism. But whatever the outcome of these manoeuvres, whatever the practical economic gains for these bureaucracies, the Vietnamese people must not be allowed to be completely exterminated. It is the duty of the international revolutionary forces to give practical aid to Vietnam.

1.10.72.

HIGH INTENSITY OPERATIONS

One of the symptoms that epitomises the twilight period of any ruling class is the way in which it openly advocates violence against the people. Since the state is an instrument of coercion, of violence, it is not surprising that this should emanate from the army officer caste who are the most violent guardians of the system of exploitation and alienation. Take any country you like and you will see that, when circumstances compel the mass of the people to engage in struggles to ensure their existence, the military responds either by shooting them, and/or in an un-parliamentary fashion it installs a military dictatorship. Thus when social conflict reaches an acute form bourgeois democracy is laid to rest. On this score there is a very interesting book called Low Intensity Operations which is a study designed to mentally prepare the army officers for the gathering storms in the second half of the '70s.

The author has a very rich experience in crimes against humanity, especially black and brown humanity. His counter revolutionary field of operations is world wide, though of course he can only boast of pyrrhic victories in countries of the 'third world' i.e. Malaya and Kenya. But apart from the author's barbarous escapades his personal role is objectively intertwined with an economic system: that of British imperialism. The global interests of this wonderful system moulded certain personalities who determine and dictate what type of violence to be used in order to keep the system intact. Hence the reality of institutionalised violence which defends, promotes and protects the interests of minority classes.

The underlying motive of the book is quite clear: to inwardly orient the army from its previously outward looking role, to establish a duality and flexibility in its striking power. But this cannot be done overnight; it requires systematic rebrainwashing on the new global role of the army, on the re-training of its cadres in 'counter-insurgency' and 'counter-subversive operations'. Why the orientation? Because from the end of the second world war to now the army has been involved in 36 operations (including Northern Ireland), most of which have been against black and brown peoples. It is quite easy to poison soldiers' minds to shoot black and brown peoples, but when it becomes a question of the home base, that is, protecting the bourgeoisie from 'his own white' workers, suppressing and shooting them, is an exceptionally difficult task which calls for a rethink on how to go about it. As the book points out counter guerilla war against the peoples of Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Aden never presented a serious problem to the army. The relatively weak working classes in these countries could not have inflicted a decisive victory over the British army. But now, faced with the indigenous giant - the British workers - the General Staff is in trouble. Let's see what advice Brig. Gen. Frank Kitson has to offer his higher-up colleagues on the General Staff.

Apart from the NATO, Cento and SEATO commitments, the army will inevitably be called to maintain law and order in the UK. Listen to this: "...Recent events in Northern Ireland serve as a timely reminder that this cannot be taken for granted (class peace in the UK) and in the historical context it may be of interest to recall that when the regular army was first raised in the seventeenth century 'Suppression of the Irish' was coupled with 'Defence of the Protestant Religion' as one of the two main reasons

for its existence..." However the Irish thing won't be a long drawn out affair because "it is reasonable to hope that the present emergency will be resolved within 5 years". (Ch.1 p 24) So by 1975 the Catholic minority will be completely cowed, status quo unchanged and an equilibrium established with British imperialism in the saddle! Peace and tranquility is thus restored!

Let's see what's on the agenda for the working class. Listen: "...At the end of the Second World War the army contained individuals or specialist units capable of carrying out all sorts of civilian functions. For example it could run ports, railways, power stations and sewage works as well as supervise the operations of mines and many types of industrial plants..." because "... even within the United Kingdom a situation might arise in which the army was required to provide men for this purpose." (Ch.10 p. 187) Here the detached observer would ask: why should trained army specialists do these things of a civilian nature? Because "... the only other point that needs making is that the government should be in a position to keep the country running during a prolonged period of strikes and civil disturbance, and to this end either the police or the army should have men available who are capable of operating essential services such as power stations and sewage systems with relatively little assistance from civilian experts." (Ch.5 p 93) For it is difficult for the British bourgeoisie with a tradition of internal stability (England is not the black dominions) "to imagine disorders arising beyond the power of the police to handle, (remember Saltley) but already there are indications that such a situation could arise, and this at a time of apparently unrivalled affluence..." (Ch. 1 p 25)

To avoid a repeat performance of Saltley or the Pentonville 5 where the workers defied the bourgeois state and took the 'law into their own hands' Kitson doesn't think the ruthless application of naked force (like in Kenya or Malaya) is likely to be successful although the Government has the power to do so. This is what Kitson wrote before Saltley and the Pentonville 5: "... An excellent example concerns the way in which the Law should work. Broadly speaking there are two possible alternatives, the first one being that the law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal, and in this case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public..." (Ch.4 p 69).

Well, the Tories tried Law and failed; in fact they tried everything in their arsenal except the Armed Forces, to reduce the standard of life of the workers. But the question of power has not yet been settled. So in paying honour to Kitson for eliminating the mystique surrounding the State we say this: the exploiting class is not in power because of its armed state, it is in power because of the treachery of the workers' leaders.

Nobby Clarke

continued from page 8

to find our personality, let alone assert it. Because of our small numbers in-fighting is common: the media play a big part in this, fragmenting us and causing mutual resentment by building up 'leaders'.

What contribution could black people make towards a revolutionary society in Australia?

You're asking me about the future. At the moment we're just at the beginning of the prelude.

DECLARATION

(This statement was adopted at a recent conference of the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency. Since The Bulletin is produced by members and sympathisers of the IRMT we feel that this document will help clarify the situation. Eds.)

Until recently, the name of our international organisation contained a reference to the "Fourth International". We have now dropped this reference for fundamental political and theoretical reasons.

Several groups currently claim to be called the "Fourth International". However, in our view they do not represent the revolutionary Marxism of our times, and their ideas and practice do not relate to the experience and methodology of the historic movement created by Leon Trotsky.

Some of the groups seriously discredit this experience and its tradition. The references to Trotskyism and the "Fourth International" are ambiguous and have confused the new generation of revolutionaries; we no longer wish to participate in this confusion, under any title.

However, the reasons for making our formal title clearer and more consistent go deeper than this. They stem from our beliefs about the socialism we are fighting for, about the content of that socialism and the means of attaining it.

We are fighting for a socialism which has the following basis: the democratic organisation of social administration, in all areas and at all levels, i.e. direct administration by the producers and members of that society. We have been deeply influenced by the results of socialist construction in the bureaucratised workers' states. We have also studied very closely the needs and aspirations of the new generation of workers in the advanced capitalist countries, as expressed in the present variety of their struggles. As a result we have been forced to re-think many of the ideas and practices which belong to past traditions of the workers' movement and revolutionary Marxism.

Our re-thinking has forced us to redefine the role of political parties, unions and generally speaking, all forms of delegation of power by the working class.

In the whole historical, transitional period from capitalism to the achievement of international socialism there is, we think, an absolute necessity for parties and unions. Their basic task should be to assist the proletariat and the working people in managing their own power-struggles by themselves, and to give the same assistance in the society which emerges from the conquest of that power. This means that we are against any socialist "model" or revolutionary strategy which implies that the proletariat should systematically delegate its power to institutions (party, unions, the state) which bear the name of the proletariat and lead inevitably to bureaucracy.

This general conception leads us on to define the essential purpose of Marxist revolutionaries, whose national and international organisation is absolutely indispensable. This purpose is to assist the workers, from this moment on, to prepare in practice and ideology for their own power; this must be done in a more conscious, systematic and effective way than it is by

other political groups who refer themselves to socialism and the workers' movement.

If those people who call themselves Marxist revolutionaries act in this way, they will demonstrate not only to their own subjective judgement but also to history that they truly deserve their name, which has belonged to other groups and currents representing various moments of the consciousness of the proletariat in their common struggle for the socialist revolution.

Coming as we do from various ideological horizons (not all of them Trotskyist or "Fourth International"), it is not for us to create a new international group which has a 'closed' ideology and (above all) a 'closed' organisation - i.e. a group boasting a partly-achieved programme, stating that its own organisational set up is the one where the regrouping of new revolutionary forces must occur, drawing on the world-scale progress of the revolution.

We think, rather, that the framework should be 'open'. In other words it should be capable of change and self-enrichment from ongoing revolutionary experience and the subjective contribution of new revolutionary forces. Hence we also think that our supreme reference should be to revolutionary Marxism in general - not to particular moments of its historical development, which turn it into an issue of personalities and limit its effectiveness in the field of knowledge and methodology.

If we are to be really faithful to the method and experience of Marx, Rosa, Lenin and Trotsky, this ought simply to mean that we develop the revolutionary Marxism of our times creatively and critically, that we work to the utmost to mobilise, structure and co-ordinate the militant forces of today on a national and international scale, for the socialist revolution.

We wish to devote ourselves to this task, hand in hand with all the new revolutionary forces whose ideological development converges essentially with our own.

BLACK AUSTRALIANS: THE BRITISH EMPIRE LIVES

The racism of the "White Australia" policy is well-known: it reaches such a paranoid level that until last year, for example, there was a law in Western Australia specifically forbidding Africans from owning mines or carrying arms, in the unlikely event of their swimming across. The publicity given to this siege mentality, however, obscures what happens inside the fortress. Black people make up at least 4% of the population of 'white' Australia (this contradiction is overcome by calling them 'Aboriginals' or simply by making them non-persons - till last year they were not included in the census). One of the main participants in the barbaric exploitation of these people - exploitation which makes South Africa look like a rest-home - is none other than the Vestey group, which has played such a big part in the destruction of dockers' livelihoods and communities here, though even the latter would find it difficult to stomach what the Vestey companies do in Australia.

The following is part of a conversation with Bobbi Sykes, a black Australian who is in Britain to publicize their struggle. (The return fare from Australia is quite a size. Address for contributions: ABJAB, 19 Sandwell Mansions, West End Lane, London N.W.6)

What is the specific situation of black people in Australia?

Black people have lived on the land for centuries. The government put us on reserves, but when aluminium, lead and tin were found they turned us off. They have also leased land for pastoral development at incredibly low leases. People have been put off their land to make way for plant and new farming methods, with no compensation or provision for their existence.

What companies have been involved?

The majority are foreign. The Americans bought the Simpson Desert for 27 cents a square mile. The Vestey group own 36,000 square miles of pastoral land - three quarters the size of England - plus the Blue Star shipping line, about three dozen companies. A few years ago an investigator reported on the Vestey pastoral stations that "sanitation and rubbish disposal facilities were virtually non-existent; filtered drinking water was restricted to Europeans; young children were being allocated to jobs... sexual exploitation was common, at one station seven year old girls being ordered into the traffic to assist Europeans in avoiding venereal disease." The situation hasn't changed much since then; blacks live on Government handouts of flour, sugar and tea, of no nutritional value, and the stockmen work from three in the morning till sun-down. When the Gurindji stockmen struck in 1966 Vestey's simply used helicopters to herd the cattle.

What are the immediate tasks of a black movement in Australia?

Malnutrition. Malnutrition is the basis of everything. We have the highest infant mortality rate in the world. The issue of education completely depends on this. Malnutrition causes brain-damage, so even if the kids can get to school, they can't take advantage of it - and what good would it do when they learn about how Captain Cook 'discovered' Australia and gloriously slaughtered the dirty primitive savages? The nutrition programme in itself would need a revolutionary process: the situation has existed for 200 years, to change it implies a revolution.

What about revolutionary organisations?

Self-organised black groups are short-lived. They are banned as soon as they appear, and are not allowed to solicit funds. There has been a Black Panther Party, but the situation is not ripe for it - action got too far ahead of consciousness. The consciousness of the people on the reserves is such that they appreciate the material benefits we can get for them, but resent us because they can't do it for themselves. However, legal and medical services are organized on a community basis, and that's a start. The other self-organised attempt was the "Aboriginal Embassy" which I took part in. We set up a tent on the lawns of the federal capital to symbolize our lost land rights. Eventually the cops came and removed it, not without resistance, and having first been forced to pass a law specifically forbidding blacks to camp on capital territory! But self-organised groups are, financially, impossible - hence our practical need, for the moment, to accept help and co-operate with white groups - students and socialists. There have been cases where individuals in these groups have withdrawn or threatened to withdraw their support if we didn't follow their line, but we won't do this. We'd rather starve to death.

How do you get out of this dilemma?

A strong black movement, militantly organised, could get unconditional support from white groups. But at the moment we are fragmented, still trying