

The Red Mole

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THE UGLY FACE OF BRITISH FASCISM

indo-china / czechoslovakia / marxism
bottle of ...

SOLIDARITY WITH BENGAL

The constant flow of contradictory information which continues to pour in from Bengal makes the task of drawing up even a preliminary balance-sheet extremely difficult. Nevertheless as unconditional supporters of the Bengali struggle for national self-determination, we have to draw some conclusions from the outcome of the last few months.

It is now clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the West Pakistani army Generals had decided to embark on a massacre in Bengal soon after the results of the General Election had become known and the Awami League rank-and-file had made clear its refusal to compromise on the Six-Point programme (cf. *The Red Mole*, Vol. 2, No. 5). From then on it was only a question of enlisting the propagandistic support of Zulfikar Bhutto, and waiting for the most opportune moment. Yahya's negotiations were, therefore, designed as a time-gaining cover to allow troop reinforcements to be poured in to East Bengal and thus prepare the last act of this tragedy. It was a mistake for Mujibur Rehman to fall into the negotiations trap and it was a mistake which probably cost the latter his life. The minute sufficient troops had arrived the negotiations were ended. What followed was one of the most brutal massacres ever carried out in a civil war since the Indonesian counter-revolution. Hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians have been butchered in cold blood; the student hostels of Dacca University have been very consciously shelled and student leaders killed. The unwillingness of the Awami League leadership to prepare the Bengali masses for a protracted armed struggle (owing to its petty bourgeois nature) against the West Pakistani army is the main reason for the success of the massacre in the cities. There was plenty of time to arm a peoples militia and educate the masses in order to prepare them for all possibilities. This was not done and the lesson has been learnt at the cost of hundreds of thousands of Bengali lives. However if the Army really thinks that it can terrorise a people into submission it

has surprises in store for it as its imperialist masters know full well from their Indo-Chinese experience. The Bengali people will not submit silently and even today the heat of the furnace is producing hardened cadres who will lead the struggle in the coming period.

The response of capitalist governments has been characteristic: a hypocritical display of sympathy for the Bengali leaders, but a refusal to control the West Pakistani military machine, representing the armed might of West Pakistani capital which they subsidise and encourage. On the other side, the Soviet bureaucracy displays a curious concern for Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's life (compare this to its shameful silence when Aidit was executed and thousands of Indonesian communists drowned in blood by the butcher Suharto). The Kremlin expresses "concern" at the danger to the existing peace in the region. These wretched bureaucrats forget the magnificent struggle of the Vietnamese revolutionaries not so far away. They are only "concerned" with safeguarding the status quo. But these reactions were only too predictable.

What is more surprising is that the Chinese leadership has quite clearly learnt nothing from its opportunist errors during the days of the Ayub dictatorship. Instead of expressing solidarity with the struggle of the East Bengali people (as it does with the West Bengalis), it limits itself to publishing press communiques distributed by the Yahya clique. Thus the Chinese Embassy in London refuses to accept a letter addressed to the Chinese government from Bengalis in Britain and appealing for support. It claims that to accept the letter would constitute an "interference" in the "internal" affairs of Pakistan. In this way does the complete short-sightedness of the Chinese bureaucracy manifest itself. Their inability to understand that the struggle in Bengal can only be successful if it alters the social and economic base of the country, is a terrible indictment of their politics. What other way is there of

extending the Chinese Revolution to the rest of Asia. They choose to ignore the obvious fact that Bengal, which has historically been in the vanguard of the struggle in the entire sub-continent, could become the Yenan and start the process of the Indian Revolution, thus completely upsetting the calculations and the military strategy of U.S. imperialism and aiding the magnificent struggle of the Indo-Chinese people in the process. Thus they keep the Chinese people misinformed and hide the truth from them, but they will not be able to succeed in this deception for too long. The truth has a funny way of travelling and we are confident that it will reach the Chinese masses who will then settle accounts with those who tried to keep it from them. The only international organisation which has predicted, understood and supported the struggle of the Bengali masses has been the Fourth International and this fact will become obvious to many Maoist militants who are struggling today in West Bengal, together with the Trotskyists, to bring down Indian capitalism.

The future of the struggle in East Bengal, therefore, depends to a large extent on the rapidity with which a revolutionary organisation can develop. The subjective factor thus assumes a phenomenal importance. Despite the fact that the odds are stacked heavily against the Pakistan Army—it is hopelessly outnumbered in a sea of 75 m. Bengalis—an organisation is vital to ensure the defeat of the invasion forces. The latter is a relatively easy task. The supply lines of the West Pakistani armies can be disrupted without too much difficulty and with the approach of the rainy season, which makes the countryside almost impassable, limited commando actions could seal the fate of Yahya's mercenaries. Another factor which the Army will have to take into account is the uneasy calm in West Pakistan. A situation could well develop where Bhutto's brand of politics could easily be surpassed. A few days before the invasion, the workers in Lyallpur (the industrial centre of the West) occupied

their factories and flew red flags in defiance of the capitalists. Chauvinism will not hold them down for too long, given the serious economic situation in West Pakistan. Indeed one of the reasons for the army's brutality is meant as a lesson to recalcitrants in the West, but it is a useless warning and will not be effective. Apart from everything else the Army soldiers will be reluctant to massacre their fellow brothers in the West!

The new period which has opened up, apart from marking the death of Pakistan as a state, will, despite the usual fluctuations in the pace of the struggle, lead to a period of intensified warfare. Even now the West Pakistani bourgeoisie realises this and is thinking in terms of a confederation with Iran and Afghanistan, but even if this new rump of reaction in South Asia emerges as a geographical entity, it will not last long. History is moving far too rapidly and will sweep aside the cobwebs of American imperialism in Asia.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE BENGALI FREEDOM FIGHTERS! SELF-DETERMINATION FOR EAST BENGAL! FOR A UNITED SOCIALIST BENGALI REPUBLIC!

West Pakistani socialists have set up a committee called WEST PAKISTANIS IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENGAL and appeal to all W. Pakistanis who agree with them to get in touch. The four-point programme is:

- 1) To unconditionally support by all possible means the national liberation struggle in East Bengal and to give all possible assistance to the Bengali Action groups abroad.
 - 2) To attempt to draw the maximum numbers of W. Pakistanis to this committee by a programme of intensive education on the realities of the situation in E. Bengal following the invasion.
 - 3) To use all possible channels to filter the truth through to the West Pakistani masses, where a strict military censorship is in force.
 - 4) To continue these efforts till the total liberation of Bengal has been accomplished and the invaders have been forced to withdraw.
- Founding members: Hamza Alavi, M.K. Janjua, Nasim Bajwa, Reza Ali, Mohd. Akhtar, Tariq Ali, Mohd Shuja, Ali J. Khan.
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THE TORY BUDGET

The Tory budget was a blatant class budget. However, the highly technical nature of the British taxation system obscures an understanding of the effects of some of the more subtle Tory proposals. Some indication of the nature of the budget can be gained from the following comparison: An ordinary worker with a wage of £20 per week, married with two children, will pay £36 a year less in direct taxes whereas a single man earning £20,000 per year will pay just under £2,000 a year less. For the benefit of those who feel that even the big bourgeoisie don't have such high salaries, it should be pointed out that the chairmen of the Nationalised Corporations get between two and three times this amount.

Let us go through the announcements made in the budget speech:

1. An increase in the Old Age Pensions of £1 for single people and £1.60 for married couples. This brings the basic pension rate up to a whole £6 for single people and £9.70 for married couples. It does not need much intelligence to realise that these amounts are pitifully inadequate and represent the minimum amount of increase that the Tories thought they could get away with. Undoubtedly a lot more old people will die of cold and hunger next winter.
2. The increases would not take effect until September and in any case they were being paid for, not out of the taxes, but out of increased Flat Rate and Graduated National Insurance Contributions.
3. Some adjustments of allowances dependant on the National Insurance Retirement Pensions. These were of a technical nature and were not dwelt upon since the Chancellor wished to get down to the serious business of handing more money to the rich.

ii) The basic tax on the new system to come in in 1973/4 is 30% on all income—this is equivalent to allowing earned income relief on investment income as well!

4. Husband and wife are able to elect to have their earnings taxed as though they were separate individuals, on condition that the husband receives the single person's allowance instead of the marriage allowance. This was hailed by the radio as a victory for Women's Liberation. But let us consider what this means. If a husband and wife are not surtax payers they lose out by the difference of the marriage allowance and the single person's allowance (i.e. £165—£325—£145) taxed at 7/9, i.e. about £60. Clearly they will lose out if they make this election. Who, then, is gaining? To find out we must look at the surtax payers. Surtax is a graduated tax, i.e. it is charged at 2/- in the £ on the first so many pounds, 2/6 in the £ on the next so many pounds, and so on up to a rate (for the last year) of 10/- in the £. At present there is only one such set of rates for a married couple, whereas under the new legislation there will be a set of rates for each of the husband and wife. To take a simple example, suppose that a husband and wife had £400 of income liable to surtax, under the current legislation they would be charged (say) £200 at the 2/- rate and £200 at the 2/6 rate, but under the new legislation they would be charged £400 at the 2/- rate.

5. Investment income of young children is no longer to be taxed as though it was the parent's income. This means that a capitalist will be able to invest capital in his children's names and set off his children's personal allowances against the income. This will enable him to receive a total of £325 tax-free investment income per year per child.

extra retirement pension (but since they're not working class, it's called an Annuity not a pension). It is roughly equivalent to the Graduated National Insurance of the State—for which incidentally there is no tax relief!

7. Alterations in the Capital Gains Tax. In general terms this is a tax on gains realised by buying and selling such things as stocks and shares, land, etc. (nothing that ordinary people can afford). The gain is the Selling Price less the Buying Price and certain expenses. Previously if this was less than £50 it was exempt from the tax. But now, if the selling price is £500 or less then the gain is exempt. This means that a capitalist with a competent accountant could probably make a good £400 a year tax free.
8. No Capital Gains to be charged on death. Previously when a person died he was considered to have disposed of all his assets at market value and Capital Gains Tax was charged on any gain. This is no longer so! More money is to be inherited!

9. Starting point for Estate Duty raised from £10,000 to £12,500. Clearly a sop for the small and middle bourgeoisie.

10. Increase in Premium Bond Prize. Clearly intended to distract attention from the rest of the measures. And from the way the commentators on my radio kept returning to this subject, it seemed to be a successful diversion.
11. Alteration of Shortfall in Corporation Tax. Shortfall is a provision such that if the directors of a closed company draw more than a certain amount of salary, the excess is taxable for Corporation Tax as well as the directors' income and surtax, e.g. suppose the amount allowable for a certain director is £3,000 and his Salary for that year is £3,500, then the excess £500 is liable to Corporation Tax (payable by the Company as well as personal Income Tax) and

12. Corporation Tax is to go down by a further 6d in the pound, making a total of 1/- in the pound since the Tories took office.

13. There follows a fairly involved talk about reforming the tax system. It concealed two important facts:

a) Earned Income Relief is being extended in two ways. At present Earned Income Relief allowed as follows:

Two-ninths tax free on the first £4,005 earned, one-ninth on earned income between £4,005 and £9,945, and none on any income above £9,945. The idea being that any salary over £9,945 isn't earned, it's given! This allowance is not given on investment income. This being altered as follows:

b) Under the present Surtax system a payer in the top range would pay 17/9 in the pound in Income and Surtax. This is reduced to 15/- in the pound: equivalent to a cut of 2/9 in the pound on the surtax rate (what price now the '6d in the pound off Income Tax!)

14. Increase of Child Allowance by £40—and a lot of good that will do for the 4 million unemployed and the low paid who are not paying tax. The demand must be—increase Family Allowances, not Tax Allowances!

15. The abolition of Purchase Tax and the Selective Employment Tax, and institution of Value Added Tax. As Socialists we are again all forms of indirect taxation since it is always the lowest paid who suffer.

16. A final snippet. International Companies like ICI and Beechams will shortly be able to switch their earnings in one country for investment in another.

ACTION COMMITTEES

What they are and what they can do!



For Marxists, the comfortable conventional division between political power and "industrial relations" is a meaningless one, since the key to political power lies in the control of the creation of the wealth of a society. Indeed, the creation of the illusion of such a division is one of the main ideological props of capitalism. It is reproduced by the hack worthies of the trade union bureaucracy, such as Victor Feather, and among many workers who try to make a distinction between economic and political action. To break down this division is one of the main tasks of Marxists.

SHOP-FLOOR NEGOTIATIONS

In Britain, this division was fostered by actual conditions in a historical period now rapidly drawing to its end. Through the later fifties and early sixties the most significant gains could be made, not by nation-wide union-employer negotiation, nor by political action, even in conventional democratic terms, but, it seemed, by shop-floor negotiation with a local management. The main development of workers' power was in shop stewards' committees, negotiating in local plants for better local wages and local conditions. The piece-rate payment system fostered this localism. It cannot be said that it has been very successful in comparative terms. The overwhelming emphasis was on wage increases, and even in this respect continental workers were catching up on their British brothers in the whole period, and have now overtaken them. But wage increases are quickly eliminated by inflation. The European emphasis on shorter hours, longer holidays, earlier retirement and better pensions and security benefits involves gains worth a very large sum in cash terms, and in living quality.

Nevertheless, a shop stewards movement has grown, patchy in its distribution, but with a considerable power and confidence. The correct approach of Marxists to this movement at the time was clearly the development of a workers' control movement, which offered the hope of developing and generalising the control which militants were fighting for in the local work place. Such a movement was developing around the workers' control conferences, but political differences emerged between those who wanted to develop a movement at the base, and those who hoped to orient it in a direction tinged with academism and linked to the more radical union leaderships. The latter won a considerable part of the resources becoming available and split off into the Institute of Workers' Control, becoming increasingly irrelevant.

WORKERS UNDER ATTACK

But the very conditions which fostered the

in the professional amateurism and caricature class arrogance of the public school system, ensured that British economic growth did not match that of its European rivals, even during the expansion period. Britain thus felt the present worldwide crisis earlier and more sharply than the others, and the result has been a three-fold attack on the workers, to stabilise labour costs and make them more predictable to assist investment planning, and to try to retain profit margins at the expense of the share of wages in the national economy. The three aspects of this attack are productivity deals, incomes policies and anti-union legislation. Both Tory and Labour governments have encouraged the former, against a mounting resistance; the Labour government emphasised incomes policy, and the Tories, in the most determined onslaught of all, are intent on literally destroying the trade union movement as we know it by legislation.

WHAT ARE ACTION COMMITTEES

It is in this context that committees of action become relevant. For localism, parochialism, and the divorce of economics from politics are quite meaningless in this period. A desperate rallying of the militant sectors of the working class against the whirlwind has to take place. But the institutional framework of the labour movement is largely ossified. Union branches are poorly attended; most are stultified with bureaucratic procedures and petty office seekers, related to layers of time serving and unimaginative district officials for whom anything more than run of the mill is the greatest and central enemy. Most of all a union branch is limited to its members; it divides the working class among its unions.

Trades councils frequently suffer from similar bureaucratisation. While some are militant, most are not. The chief concern of the officials of many of them appears to be to avoid entering into communication with any organisation not affiliated to the TUC. Above all they are delegate bodies, and are thus very mixed in their representation, reflecting the weaknesses of the local union branches. As for the political wing of the movement, the Labour Party has no significant attraction for the militants in whom the strength of the movement lies, and while they, and the rest of us, will no doubt vote for it if the opportunity arises, it is without any illusions that a significant change can be effected, although such illusions do persist to some extent among broader masses of workers. This is why it is a political mistake for tiny left groupings with no mass following to concentrate their efforts on calling for a Labour government with socialist policies. The militants with

tively harmful in the *Workers Press*. The actions of the Communist Party which, apart from the Labour Party, is the only political force of any significance in industry, reflect its political problems. In most areas it has been oriented overwhelmingly to electoralism, as per its programme, and its own industrial work reflects its own bureaucratisation, being largely concerned with place-seeking in union machinery to the neglect of the development of a militant political base. So its response to the current situation has been very ambivalent. While there is a recognition of the extreme danger, and an essential political move in the development of the Liaison Committees for the Defence of Trade Unionism, which have so far been the most significant force in the campaign against the Bill, these bodies are themselves restrictive and bureaucratised, often composed almost exclusively of leading Communist Party union bureaucrats and sympathetic bureaucrats, and as a result are inflexible and lack dynamism.

ACTION COMMITTEES ARE INSTRUMENTS OF STRUGGLE

Committees of action are thus becoming meaningful to more and more militants. If we had been able to develop the workers' control movement in a different direction there might already have been a nucleus of organisations in existence which could have formed the basis of committees of action. As it is, they must be developed largely from scratch. They have many advantages. Firstly, they can unite militants from different unions and industries in a locality, without restriction. Secondly they are not bureaucratised, and not limited as to what may be discussed or how it can be discussed, what actions may be taken or how they may be taken. Thirdly they are a location in which members of Marxist groupings and industrial militants can interact, and thus deepen and broaden the understanding of militants and help to develop the sensitivity of Marxists to the problems of relating analysis to meaningful action, without which analysis itself becomes sterile and distorted. Fourthly, the best sections of the student body can be involved in action for and assistance to a committee of action. Already at least one university student federation in Britain has overwhelmingly voted resources and assistance to a committee of action in its struggle against the Bill. Fifthly, committees of action can revitalise some of the existing institutions of the labour movement by acting as pressure groups on trades councils, union branches and bad officials. They are of course not alternatives to or in opposition to such bodies, but supplementary to them.

Labour leaderships believe either.

PROPAGANDA CENTRES

The development of action committees is the central political task of Marxists in this period. While local conditions vary, in order to establish itself, an action committee seems likely to need to satisfy the following criteria. Firstly it must have resources—access to a duplicator and someone with typing skills are essentials. Secondly, it must become known as the centre in its area for propaganda against the attacks on the working class and the reasons for them, organising public meetings with local and national speakers, producing factory leaflets, etc. Thirdly it must be known as having an educational aspect: organising schools on productivity deals, measured day work, producing regular factory bulletins for groups of militants, or union branches where these are militant. Fourthly, it must be known as providing assistance to workers in dispute, whether in the form of producing leaflets to publicise or inform workers of the issues involved, helping with picketing, organising collections for strikers, attacking redundancies and assisting the unemployed (as the Bill is implemented, more and more militants themselves will be in this category, and the Committees can become important in helping to prevent demoralisation).

It seems most unlikely now, in view of the capitulation by the T.U.C. with its leadership of crass mediocrities, that anything can be done to stop the Bill becoming law. The scene shifts to the struggle against its implementation. The old localised tactics by which a factory committee was an island in itself, engaging in what were seen as purely economic struggles, are a recipe for certain defeat. The Committees of Action are essential in developing strategies for defence, and for moving towards an offensive for socialism if struggles are won. This is as true even if the attempt to implement the Bill together with all the other anti-working class measures of the Tories generate sufficient power to force an election and the return of a Labour government, for the same attack will only recur in different forms and clothed in a different rhetoric. Build the Committees of Action.

C. Singh

LETTERS

The proletarian revolution and our old friend Coatsky

Dear Comrades,

Your report that this journal and I myself are engaged in promoting a marriage between the *Morning Star* and *Tribune* is, not to put too fine a point on it, a lie. The fact that it is a ridiculous lie mitigates it slightly, and harmonises it with a great part of the rest of your content, but does not bring it nearer the truth. Moreover, this is not the first such lie you have told in recent months, and I am interested in the reasons for this.

Is there a personal explanation, simply that the comrade compiling the paper is something of a liar? Or is there an underlying social cause consisting of some material pressure upon you which causes you to need to lie? Or do you collectively believe that lies are alright, provided they are useful?

Yours fraternally,

Ken Coates,
The Spokesman,
45 Gamble Street,
Nottingham

THE RED MOLE REPLIES:

We are pleased to receive such a vigorous denial from Comrade Coates. The fact that it is pathological rather than political seeks to obscure the grim reality of the political evolution of both the journal to which he refers and the *Institute for Workers' Control* which he directs. We did not suggest that Comrade Coates was himself engaged in the technicalities of the afore-mentioned merger. We merely implied that the politics of his journal was aimed at producing this rather bizarre consensus.

Not only do we stand by this story, but we wish to make it clear to Comrade Coates that his clear and open renunciation of revolutionary politics has not gone unnoticed. While the process of this renunciation had been taking place for some time it has only recently been formalised by two letters in the bourgeois press. The first signed by Comrade Coates himself appeared in *The Listener* (Feb. 11, 1971) and berated the latter for ascribing revolutionary aims to him.

"Mr Wintour quotes a short passage from one of my tracts, saying that I and my colleagues 'make no secret of our revolutionary aims'. Well, that is truly no secret, because we want to see a transformation which will ultimately lead to the development of a classless co-operative community; and that without cant amounts to a 'revolution'. But it is also no secret that I and very many other colleagues have argued, at some length, that such a revolution can only be brought about by the general growth of a profoundly democratic sentiment arising from the painstaking development of practical, active democratic institutions at every level of the present political economy. . . . For this reason bodies like the *Institute for Workers' Control* do not condemn out of hand any of the existing democratic institutions, but rather work to ensure that all the democratic potential within them is taken."

After several more inches of similar waffle Coates proceeds to a dangerously ambiguous discussion of how to resolve the "differences of interest which exist between one worker and another, or one group and another." He writes: "Indeed, why would democracy be needed if it were not for the long-term need to provide institutions which can mediate equitably between divergent interests, and convert the clash of interests from a disruptive social force into a motor for all-round social advance?" There follows another choice formulation: "None of the liberal criteria of democracy would be invalid if the media were self-managed in a self-managed economy."

Just in case there was still doubt as to the politics of the IWC a similarly abject letter appeared in the *Times* (March 8, 1971) which took the latter to task for including the IWC in its articles on "The Revolutionaries". The letter was signed by a close colleague.

"The statement that the Institute is 'attempting to translate Marxist aspiration into fact' is misleading. The truth is that the majority of our members are not Marxists at all: they find their commitment to workers' control coming from a variety of Humanist and socialist traditions. . . . Its (the Institute's) influence so far as it exists expresses itself through the established organisations of the Labour movement. It is the function of these bodies to carry workers' control into effect and the Institute has no wish to usurp these functions. . . . If your correspondent believes the pursuit of industrial democracy by such means is utterly fruitless, surely he is conceding out of hand the case made by the 'revolutionaries' whom he criticises."

With their pathological sensitivity to misrepresentation Comrade Coatsky and his "colleagues" will claim that we have quoted selectively, and we would advise readers to consult the relevant papers at their local library.

If Comrade Coatsky would like a political discussion on relevance of the dictatorship of the proletariat or any other Leninist theme, we would offer him our columns, as we have always done in the past. Moreover the statements which we have quoted are not the first examples of revisionism to have emanated from the bowels of the IWC. We leave it to our readers to judge whether there is a personal explanation, simply that Coatsky is an inveterate revisionist and capitulationist himself. Or is there a material pressure on him from sections of the Labour aristocracy which causes this revisionism. Or perhaps the IWC collectively believes that revisionism is alright, provided it is useful to trade union bureaucrats in their campaign for re-election or leads to an amalgam of decrepit Stalinism and senile reformism!

The Pilkington Book

Dear Comrades,

I want to take issue with the very hostile review by Alan Jones of the recent study of the *Strike at Pilkingtons* by Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts (in *Red Mole* 1-15 Feb), not simply because it was unfair to the book and its authors, but because it raises some important questions about the outlook and strategy of the Left in Britain.

First, some points of detail. Alan Jones sees fit to sneer at the authors because they include the firm of Pilkingtons in the list of those they thank in the Acknowledgements. This is contrasted with the work of IS and the SLL, who are "at least genuinely attempting alter society in a way that would get rid of the dirty form of class structure represented by the Pilkington family." The implication is that Lane and Roberts are compromised, and their real position exposed, by their "thanking" Pilkingtons. Well, in the Introduction to his book on Enoch Powell, Paul Foot, a prominent and deeply committed member of IS, is obliged to declare with evident embarrassment that he is "grateful" to Mr. Powell for his help. No one has, to my knowledge, suggested that this reflects adversely on Paul Foot, and no one who has read his book could suppose that it has in any way caused him to moderate his criticism of or hostility to Powell's role in stirring up race prejudice. Similarly, no one who, despite Alan Jones's review, actually reads *Strike at Pilkingtons* can be in any doubt as to where the authors' sympathies lie. They lie, or lay, with the Rank and File Strike Committee. What is more, they managed to win the confidence, or the trust, of the RFSC (see the note on p.179).

Now this is particularly significant when we consider what Alan Jones called "the most sickening part of the book", the very short section on the influence of the influence of such

most important point made by Lane and Roberts is that the approaches of these groups were treated with great suspicion by the RFSC. This may be a very unpalatable fact as far as Alan Jones is concerned, but I see no reason to suppose that it is not true. The fact is that groups of working people, involved in a difficult and, for them, very risky, struggle are apt to be suspicious of anyone whom they suspect may be trying to use them, or manipulate them, in some way. This suspicion may be unjustified, but it is there, and it is a fact which Socialist organisations have simply got to take into account. I know nothing of how IS or the SLL may have acted at Pilkingtons, but Lane and Roberts do quote one RFSC member as saying: "There was one man, X, who used to speak down to us and he really got my back up. I know he wanted to help us but the way he spoke marked me, and a lot of other people felt like that too."

It simply is the case that a lot of the approaches made by Socialist groups to workers are insensitive and counter-productive. This is sometimes a matter of unexperience, but is equally likely to be a question of dogmatism, of people coming from "outside" a particular situation with an air of knowing what it is all about, what the answers are, without having to be told anything about it. Workers welcome support in their struggles, and the Pilkington RFSC were no exception to this, as Lane and Roberts make clear. But they do not welcome being told how to do things, and they are understandably cautious about putting their trust in outsiders. It is therefore to the credit of Lane and Roberts that they were able to win the trust of the RFSC at Pilkingtons.

It is of course possible that most readers of *Red Mole* are in Alan Jones's position and have such a thorough understanding of strikes that they will learn little from this particular study. In which case, include me out, as they say. Not being an industrial worker I found this a very useful study, particularly since it is not written from an angle of either hostility or careful neutrality. As I say, the authors' sympathies are obvious, and it is this which enables them to write with perception about the causes and character of this strike and of strikes in general. Of course, it is open to Alan Jones to denounce the authors as "liberals" if he wants to (and to label me as another for defending them), but there seems little more to this than a demonstration of one's own credentials as a militant or a revolutionary. There is little enough written these days which shows any understanding of why workers strike, or any sympathy for strike action, that I would have thought the appearance of this study, which will, with luck, reach quite a large audience, ought to be welcomed. That Alan Jones saw fit to damn it suggests that he has little contact with the climate of opinion outside the small world of the militant Left. But this self-enclosed quality of the Left is not a virtue, but part of its disease.

Anthony Arblaster, 41 Westbrook Bank,
Sheffield 11.

ALAN JONES REPLIES:

Comrade Arblaster unfortunately does not appear to have properly read the review which he is criticising.

1. I did not simply give the book a "very hostile review". What I actually said was "definitely buy the book" (hardly a damning suggestion calculated to limit its audience), but I gave a certain reason for getting it, which was to buy it "for the contribution of the Pilkington strikers, not for the contribution of the authors". In other words the quotations from, and descriptions of, the strikers' activities, speeches, views, etc. are very valuable. The contributions of the authors, on the other hand, add virtually nothing. In order to see why this is, we need only discover what can make a book valuable from the point of view of a revolutionary (and of course I make no pretence to

nothing more than that it gives facts gathered in a relatively scientific manner. On that criteria the book falls down heavily; as I pointed out when I wrote, their sampling method was so inadequate as to render any results worthless. Cde. Arblaster does not even try to refute that in his letter.

The other way in which a book may be valuable is in a theoretical sense, i.e. it contains ideas which lead to a better revolutionary practice. But here again the book is inadequate in that it simply sees strikes as a function of complexity and therefore produced not by one particular form of society but produced by something totally unrelated to classes at all. In other words it is a liberal explanation (as the title of the review points out). The authors may have all the sympathy in the world for the strikers but that is not what the term liberal refers to. Liberalism is a utopian leftover from 19th century capitalism, one of whose main functions is to provide "classless" explanations and "remedies" for the obvious oppression of the working class. Nothing could be a better example of that approach than the Lane and Roberts view which I quoted. ("The fact is that no large firm can completely banish friction from the shop floor. Problems such as clerical errors cannot be organised out of existence.")

3. As for the suspicion of strikers towards revolutionary groups, unfortunately Cde. Arblaster does not distinguish two reasons why strikers are suspicious of such organisations. One is undoubtedly that some "revolutionaries" have a very manipulative approach to politics. Another factor is that many revolutionaries show an organisational incompetence which quite rightly the working class rejects. (If it did not reject it, it could not survive for two seconds in the struggle against capitalism). All these are good reasons for suspicion, and an even better one is the natural suspicion of organised workers to members of the petty bourgeoisie—this suspicion reflecting the type of experience which workers have had at the hands of M.P.s, Industrial Relations experts, doctors, lawyers, etc. Other reasons for suspicion reflect not the best parts of the present consciousness of the working class, but its most backward sides; refusal to take women seriously, dislike of people who have long hair, who dress in certain ways, etc. Some cdes. appear to believe that if only we could get over these prejudices, then all would be well. Unfortunately this is not the case. The ultimate reason why workers are suspicious of revolutionary groups is because they reject their politics. This may not accord with the views of those who see the working class as innately revolutionary, anti-capitalist, etc. but it is an unfortunate fact of life. What complicates things is that these politics also happen to be necessary and no amount of sympathy in the world can replace them. Often this means that revolutionaries will be greeted not merely with suspicion but with open hostility. But faced with that situation, what does nobody any good is to drop the politics. That might overcome the suspicion, but it also means giving up the reason for being a revolutionary. This is what Lane and Roberts have done, as I pointed out in my review, and in point 2. above. (Of course Lane and Roberts may never have seen the revolutionaries, which would certainly explain the arguments in the book, but would also mean their politics were hardly of use in the first place, let alone when the book was written).

I can only conclude as I did in my original review by urging readers to buy the book for the benefit of the contributions of the strikers themselves. What I should also have added in my original review was that a far better account both of the strike and of the politics involved is available in the pamphlet *The Pilkington Strike* produced by the I.S. group.

N.B. As for the reference to the Enoch Powell book, that is up to the author to answer, not me. But far from there being no criticism of the Preface to the book, certain members of Paul Foot's own organisation, let alone anyone else, have commented on the passage Cde. Arblaster refers to, in terms which the press usually describes as "immoderate".

THE ANTI-BLACKS CHARTER: an appraisal

Comment around the latest Immigration Bill is concentrated on the detail of its provisions and attacking the new codified definition of what is a wog. Little attempt has been made to set the Bill in the overall scheme of a developing racism as the capitalists adjust to changing national and international economic pressures.

But the fact is that British capitalism has programmed its racism most carefully, and has introduced its repressive measures at precise three-yearly intervals over the last decade with a clockwork regularity, irrespective of changes of government. Interspersed with the Immigration Bills have been other repressive measures, such as the "White" paper, Race Relations Act and the formation of government agencies for attempting to control black dissent and diverting liberal outrage. Indeed, Labour's nationalisation of the entire Race Relations Industry (not a commanding height of the economy) enabled Wilson to posture for a while as a friend of the blacks and provided a cover for his repressive measures in the same way as Powell's mouthings enable Heath to avoid extremes of criticism.

Immigration and Capitalism

We must accept that whilst racism to an extent establishes its own dynamic, there are basic economic reasons for this situation. A certain bedrock level of immigration has always been of benefit to the capitalists because of its anti-inflationary effect. But in periods of economic stagnation and high unemployment, such as we have now, immigration is no longer necessary to capitalism. Those sceptical about the likelihood of compulsory repatriation being introduced in the future should note that the number of white workers unemployed is now greater than the number of black workers employed. An increase in unemployment beyond the present level of three-quarters of a million, or indeed a stabilisation at this figure for a long period, will inevitably fuel demands for deportation. It was necessary to allow the black population to develop to its present size before a "black problem" became sufficiently viable as a means by which the working class could be divided, and it is possibly for this reason that the black population has been allowed to grow beyond the level of actual economic need.

But the existence of large numbers of discontented and potentially militant black people in Britain has also become a threat to capitalism. Therefore they must be cowed by threats of expulsion and, failing that, expelled.

In this way the British experience has paralleled that of developed Europe generally which has sucked in labour from its underdeveloped fringes and in some cases is taking steps now to reverse this process. Germany, for instance, is about to expect 40,000 Turks, euphemistically referred to as "guest" workers.

From Gaitskell to Wilson

During the ten years in which this process has been taking place the whole area of public liberal debate on the race issue has travelled inexorably rightward in step with each next piece of legislation. It is a far cry from 1962 when the otherwise right-wing Hugh Gaitskell mounted a Parliamentary hue and cry over the Tories' first Immigration Bill and insisted on more ringings of the division bell than Harold Wilson has mustered for the Industrial Relations Bill. But since, there can be no doubt that Labour's ever-alert response to the economic dictates of British capitalism has done more to foster racism than has been done by the Tories. It is in this field more than any other that the final demise of the Labour Party as a liberal

of the sixties was given over to the abandonment of socialist posturing, then the second half was used to throw off unseemly liberal hang-ups and to establish Labour as a right-wing party.

It would, however, be mechanistic to see the Bill and its predecessors only in terms of a response to the economic needs of the capitalists and in terms of a useful weapon with which to set worker against worker. The injection of racist impulses into the political body sets up processes which have their own momentum, taking actual circumstances as their base but travelling beyond the limits of any precise need. We should remember that the Tories are racists. It is part of their life style and training, a cultural and ideological fix, and we can therefore expect them to take measures which are not justified in their entirety by reality.

Immigration Bill?

For this reason, the present Bill needs some special explanation beyond that given above. For a start, the Bill is a misnomer. The truth is that there is no significant immigration taking place at the present time, and the Bill is not justified in terms of curbing the number of blacks coming here. It is not an Immigration Bill. In every year since 1966 the number of permits issued to immigrants from the so-called "new Commonwealth" has been less than 5,000, of which approximately half are estimated to come into the doctor/dentist category. Last year only 2,000 black workers came here. So, at the present rate, the number of black workers would only increase by around 20,000 in ten years. Of course there is immigration of dependants (mainly in respect of previous immigrants who came when there were less tough restrictions; this figure reduces annually and will soon tail off in direct relationship with current and any future immigrants). Current alien-white immigration is running at around ten times the figure for blacks. After allowing for some dependants later joining the work force, it is clear that in future years there will be no significant increase in the number of black workers beyond natural increase. So we are forced back to the conclusion that, effective immigration having been halted by Labour, there is no real arithmetical need for this Bill. This is not to play the numbers game of the liberals, but a fact to remember before one can get behind this Bill to examine the real reasons for its introduction, which clearly have little to do with its ostensible purpose of cutting immigration. At this point we can underline this by saying that the Bill extends the right to come here free of work permit or voucher to a greater number not only of whites, but also of blacks, than have this right at the moment. It is estimated that there are for instance around 1,000,000 Anglo-Indians who will now be classed inadvertently as patrials and will have the same entry status as Canadian or Australian patrials. As the Bill is certainly not about Immigration control, we must look elsewhere for its purposes.

What is the Bill really about?

Firstly, the Tories wish to codify and consolidate Labour gains in this field and establish with the electorate an equal record in black bashing. Secondly, they have an ideological and spiritual need as a party to satisfy their own internal urges and racist lust, particularly in terms of Heath's leadership manoeuvres with regard to Powell. Thirdly, the Tories have a message that they wish to communicate loud and clear to black workers in this country—that they should keep out of industrial militancy; thus the Bill should

Industrial Relations Bill. Fourthly, the passing of this measure makes it possible for them (or Labour) to pass the next measure in this series. One other additional factor in Tory calculations is pressure from Common Market capitalists. With their own adequate supplies of cheap labour from European semi-colonies, they have no wish to see blacks entering the back door of Europe via Dover. Indeed, the Tories are tying through their teeth when they contend that the Bill is intended to remove the distinction between aliens and Commonwealth citizens. Far from reducing black immigration to the level of that of aliens, it will reduce it below that level if entry to the Common Market takes place. Under the Treaty of Rome there are provisions, irrespective of nationality, for European workers to have equal "rights" to compete for jobs in different countries (thus averaging down European wage rates). If Britain were to ratify this aspect of the Treaty, it would mean that European workers would have a superior preference over New Commonwealth-non-patrial-aliens (blacks for short), as far as work permits are concerned. Revolutionaries should not find themselves in the position of complaining that white workers from Europe will have a better right to come here and do the shit shovelling and scrub jobs than blacks, but this can be instanced both as a further installation of the racist nature of the legislation and of the way in which the Common Market capitalists are exerting pressure on the British prior to entry.

Whereas the provisions of the Bill will not affect large numbers of future immigrants, it is important to consider the flip side of these measures. Every measure against a future immigrant will affect the working conditions and racial climate, not to mention the nature of police repression, under which black workers here at the moment will live. This is another Tory con, because we see the Bill's unwritten consequences will bear down principally on existing black workers. And there is the constant knowledge of the likelihood of the Bill's provisions being actually extended to cover all black workers, irrespective of when they came here. But here again there is a difficulty because the main provisions of the Bill do not appear in the Bill. The government has taken powers to slacken the Bill (if more workers are needed) by adjusting the regulations with regard to work permits being granted. It has also taken powers to repatriate. Repatriation decisions can be made by Government fiat according to regulations to be made "from time to time". This means in effect that repatriation is outside the scope of Parliament. Of course we should have no illusions that Parliament would not back any Tory or Labour repatriation proposals. The purpose of making this an administrative rather than legislative matter is to prevent the development of black protest, by making Government wishes immediately effective. We should not overlook the fact that a form of compulsory/voluntary repatriation already exists; both for those who break the law and for those who fall foul of the Social Security goons, who by withdrawing benefit can coerce black workers into being repatriated. It is intended that Social Security should continue to have this function and be armed with new powers as yet unspecified. Liberals who are raising the demand that the Bill should be amended to transfer the registration procedures from the pigs to the SS are here falling into a trap. A situation could develop where unemployed blacks would not claim their unemployment pay for fear of being processed out of the country.

deter blacks from applying for work permits. The high cost of a passage from India or Jamaica is not a sensible proposition without a guaranteed right to stay for more than one year. Questions as to what happens when a boss goes bankrupt and this year is shortened have not been answered. In any case, the large numbers of unemployed make it almost certain that the government will not be issuing many work permits; these are conditional on there not being suitable alternative local labour available. At the moment the only categories where work permits might be granted are for *au pair* girls and doctors and dentists. In some categories—domestic servants, for instance—there is no right to bring dependants at all, and in all other cases this right is conditional on an immigrant showing he is able to support his dependants and provide suitable accommodation before they will be allowed here. We may see a situation where a black postman is denied the right to bring his wife and six kids because his wage is inadequate to keep them. It is highly unlikely that new immigrants will be able to show this ability as their very situation will force them into low-paid jobs and high-cost, special ghetto type accommodation; building societies and council housing lists will not be open to them, as they will be unable to show they are going to be here long enough to acquire a mortgage or a high enough place on the monster waiting lists, which are often in any case rigged against blacks already here.

Under the new act the ability to arrest at will a whole social group, including young blacks, will be extended to all black people. Powers of arrest will exist if any thick fuzz "... with reasonable cause suspects that a person may have committed or attempted to commit an offence ..." under the new laws. So, if you're black you could be an illegal immigrant. As it is an offence to assist anyone to break the laws, you could be arrested if a black guy with or without your knowledge over-stays his permit and sleeps under your roof for a few nights. It will be dangerous for black people to visit the seaside, as this is where illegal immigrants land. Racists making malicious calls to the police to identify their neighbours as suspected illegal immigrants will be in their element, and the police will be only too happy to take up such "information". It is here that the passes come in. To avoid spending a few days in the nick whilst enquiries are made at the Home Office to prove that you are not over-staying a permit, it will be very wise to carry papers proving that your work pass has not expired or that you came here some years ago before the restrictions. It is those blacks who have been here for some years that have the most difficult problem for they have to prove a negative in order to go free. They have to prove that they are not illegal immigrants and that they have a right not to prove they have a job with boss X in town Y. Virtually the only documentation that will satisfy is a passport, bearing a date of entry.

All these provisions in the Bill point to an urgent necessity: it is vital for all revolutionary groups to organise together with black organisations and thwart the operation of the law. Unit United fronts like the *Black Defence Committee* have a crucial role to play in a situation where racism could increase very rapidly. We would therefore urge all revolutionary groups and individuals to help increase the weight of this committee and make it a strong anti-racist force.

[The Black Defence Committee, 101 Park Avenue North, London N.W.10]

—Red Mole Reporters

The Face of Br

The crass accusations of "Fascism!" now hurled at the Tory Government by hundreds of anxious militants conceal a great danger—a refusal to seriously evaluate the very real opportunities now materialising for genuinely fascist organisations. It is essential that these confusions be straightened out.

The facts about British society at this time need stating and restating. The dramatic and striking failure of the Left to effectively shake the entrenched, traditional leadership of the working-class movement, in spite of the telling experiences of a series of Labour governments, now stares us in the face. The current, tough economic environment of a declining domestic capitalism is yielding major onslaughts on the everyday living standards and the past economic gains of working men and their families, in direct attempts to re-establish sound profitability for industrialists. As fares, rents and prices accelerate, the State ventures to assault trade unionism to combat wage increases. Real frustrations and resentments amongst workers become widespread. It is crises of precisely this nature that highlight the grave political weaknesses of the labour movement. As unease and anxiety mark the horizon, the lack of a credible Left alternative, widely seen to challenge the impossibly discredited Labour Party "opposition", is readily apparent. The eyes of thousands amongst the rank-and-file are fixed upon a movement beheaded. This article points to one dangerous consequence of this harsh reality.

INTO THE VOID

Anger expressed through militancy is the first and immediate reaction of workers on the shop floor. To counter the growing economic stresses, strikes and demonstrations mount, involving numbers unparalleled in recent years. Where it has proved possible to establish and maintain Action Committees to assist and organise the new energies, the confidence of workers in their own strength has been boosted and extended. But the important issues clearly transcend local initiatives and basic economic frustrations remain unchecked for many. The explanations and propaganda of the revolutionary left cannot at once stretch to all the confused and concerned members of the working class—into areas where traditions of militant class struggle are weakest, amongst casual labourers and small, divided units of workers—the means are not in existence. Into this void, this wide area of increasing impatience and potential desperation, steps the ignorant and puzzled figure of the fascist. Still only a fringe of muddled groupings and notions, the extreme Right in Britain today shows clear signs of changing to face the new openings before it, thrown up by the current tide of discontents—clear storm signals for the future. *To spell out this reality is not to scream alarmist appeals. It is to examine present trends and to prepare for tomorrow.*

THE RIGHT RE-SURFACES

Noting and warning of a Rightist advance in a previous era, Trotsky wrote "Fascism is a product of two conditions: a sharp social crisis on the one hand, the revolutionary weakness of the . . . proletariat on the other."¹ As the present crisis in this country gathers rapid momentum, demonstrating the possible realisation of both of those conditions, the fascists in Britain painfully and spasmodically pick up the lessons. The first significant development emerged late in 1967. On 7th October that year, the near-total disarray of the fascist Right, lost in the depths of a crude and blatant nostalgia for Nazi sloganising that lingered still from another time, gave way to the broader-based structure of the "National Front" at its first Annual General Meeting. Formerly warring and divided factions joined hands. Sensing the disillusionment of thousands with the policies

Rightist presence at the moment of disenchantment. The wild terminology of the years before was abandoned. Those who had once openly proclaimed "Only those of British or kindred Aryan blood should be members of the Nation . . . citizenship should be denied to all those of alien race, including the large coloured and influential Jewish communities . . . For the protection of British blood, racial laws will forbid marriage between Britains and non-Aryans. Medical measures will be taken to prevent procreation"² now fell silent, respectfully, before the commanding voice of their new "Policy Director", A. K. Chesterton. He advised them, "There is definitely more strength in a disciplined movement than in wild talk and rabble-rousing."³ The appearance of the National Front signalled the rebirth of the extreme Right. Its initial demonstrations and interventions forced it, in time, to the notice of the socialist press.⁴

It was the National Front paper *Spearhead* that commented, "Now, with the steadily worsening national situation, and the resulting disillusionment with the old political remedies, this unification of forces has come at exactly the right time. The Right looks like at last having an organisation large enough and strong enough to have a chance of breaking the stranglehold of the old parties . . . We line up behind the National Front."⁵

CONFUSION AND CONVULSIONS

Too soon for the new knights of fascism, their resurrected crusade for national and racial salvation proved founded upon the feeblest of theoretical bases. The major weakness of fascist groupings, their devastating inability to comprehend the forces shaping their own growth, commenced to plague the new alliance. The resultant internal clashes have only now worked through the organisation of the National Front, and have been reflected inside other groups, with threatening results. This is the Achilles heel of fascism—*legitimate* doubts and grievances as to the nature of existing society are transformed into inhuman hatreds through the medium of fantasy. Practical problems of unemployment and cramped housing forge a genuine quest for solutions that the far Right pursue with zest—in completely mistaken directions. The key to combatting fascism is understanding this process of mystification, and knowing why it occurs. To find it is to read through the most depressing and tragic writings of our time.

An illuminating indication of the total lack of serious theory on the extreme Right was penned by A. K. Chesterton himself—"We have repeatedly expressed the view that the history of our times can be understood only in the light of a conspiratorial interpretation . . . there are several conspiracies . . . the master conspiracy, which beyond doubt is the ultimate establishment of World Government."⁶

On the basis of this method of reasoning, an entire demonology springs up. Crazy examples fill the pages of fascist journals. "The Wall Street giants who incubated the Bolshevik baby have looked after their monstrosity ever since . . . they do not work through capitalism alone—communism is also their child."⁷ "The aim of modern art is to prepare the way, mentally and culturally, for . . . that vast amorphous mass of miscegenated humanity which, controlled by UNO police troops, will represent the joint ideal of both Communism and the International Finance Power and will constitute the final annihilation of the individual."⁸ However, the absurd pictures painted in these lines by the "theorists" of the far Right have real roots.

IMPERIALIST CULTURE

They reflect the contradiction between the pressing problems of today—capitalist exploita-



Fascism in the '30s did create an anti-fascist awakening, but only after it had triumphed cannot be destroyed by propaganda, but has to be smashed physically.

East—and the ideology of the past. British culture is shot through and through with the theories that grew up to justify the long decades of imperialism. Much of the consensus of ideas held by the older generation alive today survives as a reflection of the colonial postures of Britain earlier this century, prior to the assumption by the USA of the leading role in world capitalism. These imperialist values are the values of the modern Rightist. He seeks to perpetuate the ideological trappings of the old order, in the face of an utterly altered world.

The importance of antiquated imperial ideas to the fascist produces the notorious emphasis on race. The culture of the colonialist shines through fascist works appearing in Britain—"It is sufficient to look around the world today and observe where the highest levels of development and the highest living standards exist. The areas that top the list are—Northern Europe, North America, Australasia, Southern Africa, Japan. In all but one case these are areas dwelt in by people of mainly North European stock . . .

these theories have been applied all over the world, and have simply failed to work. As a result, many people have come to realise the importance of ethnic factors."⁹ In short, precisely the propaganda once propounded by the British ruling class at the height of Imperial splendour. To conceal the economic facts of exploitation, the classic division-and-rule through racial discrimination and blame.

The Victorian dream of a world dominated by Union Jacks finds in present-day fascism its final stronghold. "Of all modern nations on earth, the British alone have shown any talent for influencing peoples of other races."¹⁰ The serried ranks of the Right are the last, shuddering defence of the vanishing power of British capitalism.

RESPONSE TO THE LEFT

These same quotations also provide a further clue to the jigsaw puzzle of fascist "theory". The themes of the fascist are not just yesterday's discredited notions. They are produced as a

British Fascism



any. The lesson is obvious: fascism

sterical fear of the Left stalks the press and utterances of the extreme Right. To be anti-fascist is deemed a worthy philosophy of life itself. "Our own definition of Communism must not be repeated too often: — Communism is imperialism of money of the highest order of magnitude and concentration of control...¹¹ Soviet Russia, World Jewry created a Frankenstein monster that has got out of control."¹² Are not such lines the most vivid affirmation of how fascism takes the fears of a scared individual, based on genuine problems—the power of financiers, the doubt of stern bureaucracies—into the realms of nonsense?

EFFECT ON NATIONAL FRONT

These disastrous calculations can totally remove extreme Rightists from understanding the situation they are actually working in, except where the realities are just too obvious to be ignored. The various conspiracy "theories" employed by the National Front to analyse the

that it was the working class that suffered most from disillusionment with the Labour government and that consequently rebelled most against its policies.—"The National Front... must place greater emphasis on attracting the support of the ordinary working man... the N.F. must win Labour voters",¹³ they agreed by 1970—yet the organisation never grasped the appropriate strategy to match the situation.

Conceiving the enemy to be ruthless, cosmopolitan conspirators out to undermine the sacred National fortress, the far Right at no time questioned the machinery of State. All failings and errors on the part of the governmental system were and are the fault of "subversion" by the external forces of disruption. Therefore, the system of parliamentary electoralism is the inviolate depository of the popular will, worthy of trust. The old political parties have burnt themselves out, it remains simply to replace them by Nationalist heroes elected to the green cushions of the House of Commons. This formula brought about a strong concentration of fascist forces on contesting local and national elections. The clear ideal was the eventual triumph of the Right at the polls, the inauguration of a Front-dominated government that would at once slay the dragons of Bolshevism and finance capital.

"Probably the main activity, and the one which, Mr. Pirie said, had gained the most publicity during the year, was the Acton election... local elections were very good practice for our branches," noted the Front's second annual report.¹⁴ For the far right of contemporary Britain, there were no social or economic centres of interest outside of the hustings and the Palace of Westminster. Class conflicts were a secondary phenomenon, to be resolved with the passage of time and the fruition of "private enterprise operating under a system of National Guidance to eliminate the injustices",¹⁵ a set of problems to disappear with the crushing of subversion. This very incapacity to analyse society finally provoked a violent internal confrontation within the National Front.

DECLINE OF ELECTORALISM

Since its inception, the National Front scorned involvement in Tory Party circles, however right-wing. "The Monday Club has a useful purpose as a rallying point and recruiting ground... it does not serve as a reliable source of guidance for Britain's future."¹⁶ But it had accepted the Tory philosophy of seeking political rule through Parliament. After all, others on the Right had failed through underestimating the respectability required to utilise the official system—"Our quarrel with Mosley is on strictly political grounds... he committed an undoubted error in the 1930s by identifying himself too closely with continental fascism. This was an error, although no crime."¹⁷

However, with the transition to Tory government in mid-1970, reflecting the sharpening economic crisis, and the subsequent employment of even heavier weapons against the interests of the working population, the public disillusionment with the very process of parliamentary politics, with the system that had conjured up first Wilson and now Heath, penetrated at last into the unthinking brains of the new Rightists. It was the State machinery itself that suddenly drew the wrath of an increasing number of extreme right-wingers. For too long, they had relied upon the methods of a discredited parliamentary scene. The moment had arrived to bypass the "middle ground" of British politics and to descend into the streets.

DANGEROUS THREAT

A rift shook the National Front. The defenders of the old strategy resisted and fell. Wild accusations of "wreckers" and "sabotage" could not withhold the new currents. In December 1970, a thorough campaign by a newly-formed "Action Committee" swept Chesterton from his leading

breathless membership—a ruthless exploitation of the atmosphere created by Powell, no matter what his differences with the Front's particular demonology; an end to respectability, to tactical avoidance of overt race hatreds, to the former electoral emphasis; a major re-orientation towards physical interventions and street demonstrations.

This is the situation now. A stronger rightist threat grows today than the working-class movement has had to face for decades—a threat aimed at the meetings, rallies and homes of the labour movement tomorrow. There is time available now to prepare for the contest.

THE ANTI-FASCISTS

How to respond? The socialist Left recognises, by instinct, the first germs of fascism. Its mind is scarred by the memories of the triumphs of the German-Nazi party over the largest and most confident working class movement in history, a movement that filled the squares and cities of pre-war Central Europe with teeming demonstrations of mighty and hopeful workers' power.

The forests of red flags borne by the German Left gave way to the total desolation of Majdanek, of Auschwitz. The reasons for the resultant horrors are even today unclear to sections of the Movement. Serious weaknesses persist.

With the gradually enveloping atmosphere of conflict and the appeals to secure the "national interest", many on the Left cling, trapped, within the long-accepted liberal tolerance of only yesterday. "No, the growth of racialist propaganda among the working class can only be combatted by reasoned argument and a presentation of facts"¹⁸ claimed one militant in the Independent Labour Party not long ago, justifying his party's offer of a *public debating platform* to the National Front! For socialists enmeshed in vistas of new, defiant dawns of fraternity and love, evolving from flowering discussion and democracy, the painstaking methods of education and open debate seem obvious. Alas, history shatters beautiful dreams with its relentless shocks. Hard economic pressures are straining working class families. If racism and nationalist demagoguery promise improved housing and steady incomes fast, then the worried and confused will embrace them despite reason and logical argument.

NAIVETE AND "FREE SPEECH"

The extremists of the Right have never accepted the limits of polite, democratic discussion. They can never do so. Their theoretical clothing is threadbare, their analyses pathetic. The chants of "Wogs out" and "Britain first" are above all slogans for the streets and housing estates. To extend debate and discourse to organised fascist groupings at a time of developing tensions and dissatisfaction is to bow to the most innocent of liberal fantasies at the precise moment when the realities—intensifying wage conflicts and rising prices—demand immediate concentration on deepening and sharpening the class struggle. The call of "free speech" for the most dangerous elements in society at such a time, is a plea to open the working class to the crude prejudices of the Right.

Setting aside the liberal and pacifist tendencies that can damage the Left as the rightist threat germinates, other difficulties remain. The only forces within the socialist movement with recent histories of active anti-fascist experience are diverse and ill co-ordinated. This is natural in view of the relatively new nature of the reborn Right. A minority of Left organisations and of individual branches inside such organisations have been effective here. To these can be added small bands of militant anti-fascists from the immigrant and Jewish communities, with often confused concepts of who the enemy are and what strategy can defeat them. The hour is ripe for lucid and forthright explanation by the Left. An organised working class, alive to this

THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Firstly and urgently, the "fascist" tag must be removed from Heath and the Tory government and employed only for the real extremists of the Right. When capitalism meets acute crises with the mobilisation of large-scale fascist movements, politicians of the Heath variety are nowhere to be seen.

Secondly, the revolutionary Left must reach out as far as it is able to direct the frustrations of the working class against capitalism. The development of a mass socialist movement wipes out the potential recruiting grounds of fascism and narrows the area of bewilderment in which the germs of racism flourish. *The establishment of a dynamic, expanding Left is the paramount task when the existing order of society is in disarray*—a Left not seen to be an appendage of the old system in decline, but independent and revolutionary, a thorough alternative.

Thirdly, as a lesser and defensive task—the coordination of measures taken by different Left groups against the attacks of the new Right. Proposals for active cooperation should be advanced and debated now. Information and analysis of developments on the fascist fringe of politics should be extended and militants made aware of the potential dangers. A simple system of liaison between separate socialist groups can neutralise fascist interventions and should be erected with care.

The tattered and ugly spectacle of semi-Nazi and fascist thoughts and journals re-emerging from the past is no excuse for hasty responses. Fascism is no more a conspiracy of brutality and evil than the incredible nightmare conspiracies which it blames for the indignities and sufferings of mankind. It is the desperate resort of a dying capitalism. And as such, it can be erased.

R. Neubauer

NOTES

- 1 "Germany, Key to the International Situation", written November 1931.
- 2 "Official Programme of the Greater Britain Movement", written by John Tyndall, 1964. Tyndall became a leader of the National Front when he led his movement into the unification.
- 3 Speech reprinted in his paper CANDOOR, October 1967.
- 4 The BLACK DWARF of 16th May 1969 reported at length on the National Front. SOCIALIST WORKER has carried a fairly regular coverage of fascist activity that is very useful.
- 5 John Tyndall in SPEARHEAD, September 1967.
- 6 A. K. Chesterton in CANDOOR, April 1970.
- 7 A. K. Chesterton in CANDOOR, November 1970.
- 8 John Bean in SPEARHEAD, Nov/Dec. 1968.
- 9 SPEARHEAD, January 1970.
- 10 A. K. Chesterton in SPEARHEAD, Sept. 1969.
- 11 CANDOOR, June 1970.
- 12 SPEARHEAD, Nov/Dec. 1968.
- 13 John Bean in SPEARHEAD, June 1970.
- 14 SPEARHEAD, Nov/Dec. 1968.
- 15 SPEARHEAD, June 1970.
- 16 SPEARHEAD, March 1970.
- 17 John Tyndall in SPEARHEAD, Jan/Feb. 1969.
- 18 Letter to the BLACK DWARF of 26th November 1969.

THE EXTREME RIGHT IN BRITAIN

The leading groupings of the far Right today are:

- National Front (newspapers *Spearhead*, *Candour*, *Facts*)
- Union Movement (headed by Mosley, newspaper *Action*)
- British Movement (headed by Colin Jordan)
- National Democratic Party
- Racial Preservation Society
- Immigrants Control Association
- "Trade Union Anti-Immigration Movement" (called "TRU-AIM")

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: AFTER THE TRIAL

The trial of the comrades of the Czech Revolutionary Socialist Party reconvened on Friday 5th March in the foreboding Palace of Justice at Spalena Ulice. Needless to say, the "judges" were true to their role as cops and avoided the questions that Comrade Uhl, in the name of all the defendants, had asked them.

Out of about 60 seats in the courtroom, 20 were empty. People in Prague wondered what had happened to the special guard—the "workers'" delegation—that was there on the first day. Were the cops afraid that revolutionary ideas might even spread in their own ranks? Petr Uhl and his comrades were handcuffed and escorted by two heavily armed guards each. And outside, in front of the Palace of Justice, cordons of "popular militia" stopped anyone going into the court. Many people had come to demonstrate their solidarity with the defendants. A short distance from the court they organised a demonstration of support, in which the sons of the victims of the '50s trials—Slansky and Sling—participated.

When charged with accusations which try to make out that their revolutionary activity is simply a crime of common law, those on trial have shown real unity. From the first day, Frolík, the spokesman for his comrades, declared that there was no doubt that this was a political trial. He denounced the act of accusation: "How dare you call us anti-socialists when we are led by Marx, Engels and Lenin?" he exclaimed. The judge was so embarrassed he did not reply. And when Frolík denounced the fact that, contrary to the constitution which guarantees freedom of opinion, the 19 defendants are victims of a trial based entirely on opinion, the judge then rebuffed: "You are not on trial for your ideas but for your acts!" But Frolík would not cede: "We have only acted in defence of our ideas." It is over the thesis contained in the 98th article of the Czech penal code, accusing the group of anti-socialist activities, that all the comrades have fought with the judges.

The defence has insisted several times on the following question which it has asked the defendants: "Is the defendant for or against the abolition of private ownership of the means of production?"

Oddly the judges find that this question has no relation to the trial.

To definitely conclude the discussion, Comrade Suk, on Wednesday 10th March, asked Petr Uhl: "Do you think that our activity helped imperialism?" The latter replied, pointing to



Petr Uhl

the judge, "We are dealing here with the 40-year-old product of Stalinist cooking which has become part of the contemporary myth." The judge then protested violently: "If you repeat the word Stalinist, the counsel of accusation will be enlarged."

What is the use of bureaucratic legality?

For over a year the Czech revolutionaries have been in prison. And this has not been long enough for the bureaucracy's henchmen and political advisors to establish any concrete proof of a "plot", like they used to be able to do in the past. They have, however, used the same range of methods as in Slansky's day: from psychological pressure to moral and physical blackmail. Why were Comrades Hoffman and Taskova only able to stand up for ten minutes at the tribunal? Who is responsible for their state of health? Why is Comrade Frolík now blind?

On Monday 8th March, Comrade Sustrava revealed the way the judges have been able to

force "confessions" out of Thomas Sigmund. The self-criticisms she made strongly resemble those of her fellow defendants in London's book. During her interrogation, the following bargain was proposed to Sustrava: she would be allowed to look after her three-year-old daughter if she first denounced the group for being anti-socialist and then showed them where her fiance, who they have been looking for for several months, was hiding. Isolated in her cell, she eventually gave in. But once the group were reunited in the courtroom, she retracted. What sort of blackmail have they used to get the small confession they did out of Sigmund? It has been this show of solidarity that has forced the judges to sweep aside all formal legality even further. From Monday, only the defendant actually being tried was allowed in the courtroom.²

Having already shown just how much they respect their own law, the judges have deliberately omitted recording the exact words of our comrades. Thus, for example, they have forgotten (and we understand their bad memories) the word Petr Uhl used to describe their activity ("Stalinist cooking"). In the same way they have grabbed up Comrade Plogstedt's "confession" (read London), which admits she did handle "subversive" literature. The recorder has replaced the word "Marxist" by "subversive". Do they mean the same thing to the Prague bureaucrats, then?

Police version of history—anticipated

On March 8th at 8.30 p.m., Rohacek, a zealous commentator on Radio Prague, gave his own irrefutable proof the accused men's guilt. Although the trial had only just begun, he already knew the verdict. Among the crimes attributed to the Czech comrades, there are some real gems, such as: first of all—and for a cop journalist, this is irrefutable evidence—the group had contacts with the Fourth International. Rohacek, who is certainly up to date, tells us that "the Fourth International's Berlin functionary, Ernest Mandel" was known to be in contact with the Czech revolutionaries. As added proof, he went as far as to read off a list of foreign names (taken from the Cedok travel bureau, no doubt), innocent tourists who have probably never heard of the International. Another of Rohacek's arguments confirming the existence of an international plot is an example of how a police conception of history can mean

abandoning even the most elementary common sense. He pointed out that the "Open Letter to the Unified Workers Party of Poland" had been published in Czech. This, he said, was written by Polish "revisionist and deviationist agitator" Kuron and Modzelewsky, "who are quite right in prison in Poland."³ This eminent dialectic is quite correct to point out that prisons are the same in Prague and Warsaw.

In the '50s there was no need for people like Rohacek & Co. because the "confessions" were broadcast direct over the radio. Today, these are luxuries that the bureaucrats cannot allow themselves. Because these defendants will not admit anything. Their sole defence is their revolutionary programme, and this defence is an accusation against the bureaucracy. The combativity and courage of the defendants has aroused the admiration of the people of Prague. Hundreds of workers, students and intellectuals have come forward: aren't the trials public? E the police, while scared that some of their revolutionary ideas are spreading among their own ranks, are keeping the court well guarded, and even reinforced the cordons when Petr Uhl was on trial.⁴

Confronted with this tribunal of bureaucrats, the revolutionaries continue to struggle for socialism.

—D. Richard, E. Mathias

NOTES

- 1 The same one who massacred the Polish workers on the Baltic coast.
 - 2 Johannes Agnoli, left-wing teacher at the Berlin Free University, who came as an observer on the request of Sibylle Plogstedt, was refused entry on a pretext which makes even Pompidou's judges seem tame: "As the jury's debate is public, there is no need for you to attend." [sic]
 - 3 We can teach these gentlemen that this document was published by the students' parliament and authorised by the authorities in power in April 1968.
 - 4 On the same day Uhl's lawyer was forbidden to take away the personal notes he had taken during the trial.
- POSTSCRIPT: The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation is at the moment attempting to send a commission to go to Prague, consisting of eminent personalities such as Chomsky, Lawrence Daly, Maurice Dobb, Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill. While the terms of reference the commission are a bit vague, it is to be hoped that they will demand to see Comrade Petr Uhl and inquire into the circumstances of the trial.

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MARX'S 'GRUNDRISSE'

an interview with David McLellan

David McLellan has just been translated sections from Marx's *Grundrisse*. He is also author of works on Marx and the Young Hegelians and the early Marx. He is at present working on a major biography of Marx.

Marx's *Grundrisse* is his collected notes for *Capital*. It covers even more ground than that work and contains Marx's fullest exposition of his views on revolution, automation, the effect of increasing working class standard of living, etc.

—In what way does the translation of the *Grundrisse* modify our interpretation of Marx's thought?

The essential point is that, in the century or so since his thought has become widely known and studied, Marx has been interpreted in an almost incredible variety of ways: the two central approaches were either to read him as a rigidly determinist economist—as with the German Social Democrats at the turn of the century reinforced later by Stalinist doctrines—or as a philosophical humanist at home in the existentialist movement and having affinities stretching as far as Zen Buddhism. This latter interpretation has been current in the West and inspired, to some extent, by anti-Communist tendencies. Both these interpretations emphasised the writings of one period of Marx's life at the expense of another—either the Marx of *Capital* was supposed to be the authentic Marx, or the Marx of the 1844 *Manuscripts* was held to contain the real humanist inspiration that became desiccated in later economic studies. In fact, even in their own terms, these interpretations were mistaken: a careful reading of *Capital* would show that it is not mere economics (in the current sense of the word) and that its writing was set in a context of political activity that gave the lie to any strictly determinist reading of his work. And too much attention was paid to the philosophical aspects of the 1844 *Manuscripts* without realising that they contained much economic analysis as well. However, with the publication of substantial extracts from the *Grundrisse*, we can see the essential continuity in Marx's thought. The *Grundrisse* is a very long manuscript, getting on for 1,000 pages—in which Marx sketched out, in 1857/58, the result of the 15 years of study since he first became a communist; it contains lengthy meditations on themes that Marx intended to include in his *magnum opus* on economics, of which he only ever completed the first section entitled *Capital*. Thus the answer to your question is that acquaintance with the *Grundrisse* would change our interpretation of Marx in two important respects:

Firstly, it shows that there is a continuity in Marx's thought: all his writings, including the later ones, are dealing with human needs, man as a social being, the alienation of men in contemporary society, and the construction of an unalienated society through communism. The earlier writings are, in a sense, deficient as these concepts are not integrated into the somewhat sketchy economic analysis. And the later writings could equally be held to be deficient in that Marx did not include in them—he did not have the time or space—many of the themes broached in the *Grundrisse*.

Secondly—and closely related—is the conclusion that Marx's writings are unfinished: *Capital* is only a fragment of what he intended to write. Thus his work is open-ended and quite unlike the sort of closed system with which he has so often been saddled.

—What has been your criterion in selecting passages from the *Grundrisse* for your edition?

I have translated about 150 pages of the 800-page manuscript. In choosing my selection, I went for passages that either seemed to illuminate themes obviously central to other of Marx's writings or those that moved into areas



the problem of automation would be a case in point here. Although my choice is necessarily to some extent subjective, there are long passages in the *Grundrisse* that could only be of the very slightest interest to anyone; however, I did also check with all the authors who had commented on or quoted from the *Grundrisse*—Marcuse, Klages, Schmidt, Nicolaus, etc.—and compared the list of passages that they referred to with the one I compiled. They more or less coincided.

—In what way would your assessment of what is important in Marx as a Marx scholar differ from the estimate made by a political activist?

That's a rather difficult question to answer as I have to interpret the mind of a political activist. Still, it is quite clear to me that what I am trying to do as a Marx scholar is to interpret the mind of Marx in description and commentary: to try and convey what he said and what he was getting at. And it seems to me that what should be important to me as a Marx scholar is what was important to Marx, and this can only be understood by a close study of what Marx said and what he meant by what he said. The latter in particular involves a thorough acquaintance not only with his actual texts but of the context in which they were written, the questions they were trying to answer, etc. This is not, of course, to deny that there are other possible—and even useful—activities, such as asking what Marx's views might have been on such and such a question, whether the implications of Marx's views on certain questions could be carried further than he carried them, or even what Marx's views would be on certain contemporary problems; though this latter—and here we

arrive at the crux of the question—seems to me to be rather a dubious enterprise. For Marx was a nineteenth-century thinker employing nineteenth-century concepts to answer nineteenth-century questions. It is a quite legitimate enterprise for a political activist to pick out certain ideas in Marx and apply them today, because they illuminate, for him, the particular aims with which he feels concerned; and—again to him—these are no doubt the things that are most important in Marx. But he has no right to call these ideas "the essential ideas of Marx" or "what Marx really meant". Importance is a relational concept and we must ask: important to whom. What was important to Marx and who is important to a contemporary political activist may well be very different. To ultra-montane Catholics it seemed that the most important text in the New Testament was "Thou art Peter and upon this rock . . ." etc. whether Jesus considered it to be absolutely central to his message can only be discovered by looking at the context in which it was uttered, asking the meaning of the word "rock", whether the whole thing is not simply a pun, etc. You see,

meaning is bound up with intention, and Marx simply couldn't have intended many of the things that political activists are now interested in. It is the job of the scholar to illuminate these meanings and intentions. In as far as the political activist places himself in a tradition descending from Marx, there will be an overlap of meanings and intentions where what is important to the scholar and the activist will coincide, though they will be important for different reasons. And, incidentally, this over-

lap occurs to a great extent in the *Grundrisse* which I consider in a sense Marx's most basic work and which at the same time contains Marx's views on societies that were highly developed technologically. But this does not apply to all Marx's work and goodness knows that the understanding of past utterances is difficult enough without importing into it conceptions and attitudes from a different age that can do nothing but obscure the meaning.

—It is sometimes said that alienation is a concept linking the young and the mature Marx. But did not Marx largely abandon it in his later writings, owing to lack of specificity and concreteness, and substitute concepts like fetishism and surplus value which cannot be banalised as alienation has so often been?

Yes, I do think that alienation is a concept linking the young and the mature Marx; and no, I don't think that it was abandoned later. I know that it was often stated, particularly by an older generation of commentators on Marx like Sidney Hook or Lewis Feuer, that alienation was a concept confined to the early writings. This sort of statement could only be made by someone who had never read the *Grundrisse*. In the *Grundrisse* both the term and the concept occur repeatedly and it would be no exaggeration to say that it is one of the most important concepts—if not the most important one. It is not a different concept in the *Grundrisse*—and in *Capital* for it does occur there—from the concept in the 1844 *Manuscripts*: in both writings there is the picture of man who has alienated his essential characteristics of dominance and control over his work process, the process of his self-creation. On the other hand, although there is not a different concept of alienation in the *Grundrisse*, it is undoubtedly a much enriched one: fifteen years of study have given the idea an economic and sociological depth that it would have been impossible for Marx to achieve in 1844. I agree with you that alienation is a broad concept and I also agree with you that it has been banalised—usually by writers with no sort of philosophical training. But that doesn't mean that more specific notions like surplus value or the fetishism of commodities seemed to Marx to be in any way superior: they were applications of the idea of alienation to particular areas of capitalist society, surplus value explaining the alienation of man in the productive process and fetishism of commodities the repercussions of this in the field of social relationships.

—Do you think that the increasing literature on Marx published in English will lead to a rebirth of Marxism in this country?

My guess in this is as good as anybody else's. Now that Marx studies are a respectable academic discipline, there will obviously be an area of discussion confined to learned journals. The publication of Marx's early writings does not seem yet to have had much effect on Marxism in Britain—as opposed, say, to Eastern Europe. However, the translation of writings such as the *Grundrisse* does mean that New Left groups in this country do now have access to a view of Marx's thought that could be held to be very relevant to the second half of the 20th century. So long as the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* were held to contain the whole essence of Marx's thought, it was difficult to make these direct connections; now it is much easier. The *Grundrisse* deals with such questions as the growth of automation, increase in free time, immense improvements in the material standard of living of the working class—many of the points that crude critics had held to have refuted Marx's ideas. To what extent this will lead to a rebirth of Marxism is an open question. As Marx himself said: "Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice."





JOHN MACLEAN AND THE SCOTTISH WORKING CLASS

There are few revolutionaries who are more universally respected than John MacLean. The Scottish working class movement, especially, remembers him as its greatest and best loved leader. Unfortunately there are few revolutionaries whose ideas and writings have been more thoroughly buried.

Let us drag his ideas out of the cellar. When the dust is blown from them, they will found to be of tremendous relevance for our struggles today. Indeed, until Scottish revolutionaries have thoroughly understood and assimilated them, there can be no reflowering of the revolutionary movement of which he was the pinnacle.

"The working class, when they rise for their own, are more dangerous to capitalism than even the German enemies at your gates."

The Marxist

MacLean's parents had been driven as children from the Highlands to find a precarious life in the Clyde industrial belt, and his father died prematurely. But despite the grinding poverty of his upbringing, MacLean's brilliant mind won him a scholarship to Glasgow University, from where he took up employment as a school-teacher.

He rapidly became radicalised, but the event that changed his life was when he came into possession of a copy of Marx's *Capital*, he read it from cover to cover, and from then on was an unswerving Marxist.

In 1903 he joined the Social Democratic Federation, and one of his remarkable qualities came to the fore—his unbelievable energy. It was nothing for MacLean to address four or five meetings a week, and at the height of his agitation he was addressing up to eight meetings in one day!

Against the War

The most important aspect of MacLean's life was his stand against the First World War. He knew that his speeches had sown the seeds of resistance amongst his hearers, but that this would only make the government more determined to silence him. With this knowledge he stepped up his efforts, trying to spread the maximum amount of enlightenment about the real nature of the war before the inevitable happened.

It did happen. His first trial came on November 15th 1915, but the evidence of the police witnesses was so contradictory and the masses of workers who packed the court and thronged outside were so menacing that the Sheriff gave MacLean a mild sentence. His second trial in May 1916 was a different affair: this time he received three years' penal servitude.

The torments he suffered would have broken many other men. As it was, this started the breaking of his former robust health, which was eventually to kill him.

He never finished the sentence: the seeds he

had sown began to flower; under the impact of the attacks made in the factories and rising prices and rents, the workers of the Clyde stepped onto the stage to fight against Lloyd George and the employers. Through every fight the demand was raised: "Release John MacLean!" On June 30th 1917 he was released.

He emerged from prison to take up his task as *Soviet Consul for Scotland*—an honour conferred on him by the victorious October revolution in Russia.

Needless to say, he merely launched himself into more intense agitation than ever, and in May 1918 he was again arrested on charges of sedition. At this trial he made the classic speech, which must rank as his testament to the workers of Scotland and the world. He used the dock to explain the reasons for the war, and to defend his actions. His defense was that he had acted in the interests of his class. "I have squared my conduct with my intellect... I act square and clean for my principles. I have nothing to retract. I have nothing to be ashamed of. Your class position is against my class position... My appeal is to the working class. I appeal to them exclusively because they and only they can bring about a time when the whole world will be one brotherhood on a sound economic foundation."

He was given five years penal servitude. This was to finish the process of breaking his health. The end of the war, coinciding with ever-mounting working class agitation for his release, resulted in his being freed on November 16th 1918.



JOHN MACLEAN at Edinburgh before his great trial, May 9, 1918.

"I stand here not as the accused, but as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot."

"I stand in the Gorbals, and before the world, as a Bolshevik, alias a communist, alias a revolutionist, alias a Marxist. My symbol is the Red Flag, and it I shall always keep floating on high."

The Worker's Teacher

The fact that the workers of Clydeside especially, and of Scotland in general, were not swept away by the patriotism which affected the mass of the British working class is almost directly attributable to MacLean. Conceive of thousands of workers turning up week after week for a class in *Marxist Economics*. Imagine them passionately following the speaker's every word, in an atmosphere something akin to a revivalist meeting, then streaming out to spread the word amongst their fellow workers.

His lectures were never abstract, they were based on the living experiences of his audience; they would supply him with the raw material of what was happening in the factories and shipyards, and he would explain every move of the employers, showing the economic reasons for their actions and the way in which Marxism explained the situation.

It was the success of this educational work which spurred MacLean to the creation of the Scottish Labour College in 1916. This project, which won wide support in the Labour movement, taught a complete range of subjects, but the core of the teaching was Marxist economics, and its purpose was to train working class leaders, who were conscious of the nature of capitalism, and the interests of their class.

"I have been enlisted in the Socialist Army for 15 years. God damn all other armies."

The Scottish Workers Republic

His stand, after 1916, for an Independent Workers Republic of Scotland, and for an independent Scottish Communist Party, is generally misunderstood. The source of most of the confusion is Willie Gallacher's book, *Revolt on the Clyde*. This particular well is poisoned. Too long this pathetic book has been the standard text on the events of the time. It must be rejected, it is so obviously "ghosted" by the same author as Harry Pollitt's *Serving My Time*, that it is even doubtful how much of it is Gallacher's—it even misspells MacLean's name (McLean).

The book asserts that MacLean's suffering in prison had affected his mind, and presents him as being surrounded by people who fed his exaggerated suspicions. Let us leave aside this non-political explanation.

The significance of his support of the Easter 1916 rising in Dublin is little appreciated. The rising caused complete confusion in the Marxist movement of the time; practically the only people apart from Connolly who understood it were Lenin, and MacLean.

This shows very clearly the vast gulf which separated him from most of the "Marxists" of his day, and proves that he was a Marxist thinker

of great depth and ability. He understood the process of combined and uneven development. His contemporaries did not. He knew that the workers' movement in Scotland was qualitatively ahead of the English movement. This was the result of national differences. The historical development of Scottish capitalism; the creation of the Scottish working class out of a compressed and sharp period of attack on the Highland and Irish peasantry; the different intellectual tradition of Scotland which made ideas more widespread; the subsidiary position of Scotland in the British economy; survival of a national-radical tradition—all of these, combined with MacLean's own contribution, made a revolution in Scotland much more likely than in England. Subjection of the Scottish workers to the pace of the English was to destroy these possibilities.

What MacLean's views on the Communist International were is not clear; it is tragic that he never met Lenin, as there is a good chance that he would have supported MacLean. On the other hand, MacLean may have wrongly counterposed a Scottish Communist Party to "control from Moscow". Until the documents and other material of the discussion, are uncovered, it is not possible to judge. But whether or not MacLean was right to refuse to join the CPGB once it was formed, the important fact that his political views have been suppressed and covered up by the Communist Party of Great Britain behind stories about MacLean's mental health.

The betrayal of MacLean by the CPGB has been compounded by the majority of the Scottish "revolutionary" left. They have simply taken up the slanders of *Revolt on the Clyde*, and consigned MacLean to history.

Those who like Hugh MacDairmid have sought to keep the light of Scottish Republicanism and the ideas of MacLean alive, have been abused and pilloried by philistines like the Socialist Labour League. Events are proving that, for all MacDairmid's idealism, and Stalinism, he understands Scotland better than his accusers.

The resurrection of MacLean's ideas will be taken up by those who understand that Scotland is a nation, and that Scottish politics cannot be understood merely as a segment of "British" politics. A new generation of Scottish revolutionaries will fuse them with the theoretical development of Marxism since his time, particularly the ideas of Trotskyism, which MacLean often foreshadowed, and will recreate the revolutionary movement which MacLean's detractors have destroyed.

Bob Purdie

NOTE

The works by MacLean that are available are: *Condemned from the Dock* published by the Scottish IMG. *John MacLean and Scottish Independence* published by the John MacLean Society. *Plus for a Labour College in Scotland*, *Ibid*. *Ireland's Tragedy—Scotland's Disgrace*, *Ibid*.

The John MacLean Society is currently organising a memorial fund, to erect a cairn near MacLean's birth place, and to finance the publication of his works. Contact Mrs. Nan MacLean Milton, Atholl Cottage, Westfield, nr. Bathgate, West Lothian.

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- OXFORD: Martin Meteyard, 34 Minster Road, Oxford (48127).
- POTTERIES: Jason Hill, Flat 37, The Hawthorns, Keele, Newcastle, Staffs.
- READING: Lawrie White, 24 Ramsbury Drive, Earley, Reading, Berks.
- ST. ALBANS/HATFIELD: Chris Pailthorpe, 6 Watsons Walk, St. Albans, Herts.
- SHEFFIELD: Paul Neville, Ranmoor House,

- STIRLING: Donald MacDonald, 6 Tarduff Place, Stoneywood, Denny, Stirlingshire.
- SURREY
- CHERTSEY: Joe Xavier, Engineering Dept, Botley's Park Hospital, Chertsey (718 2247)
- GUILDFORD: John Masen, House No. 43 Third Court, University of Surrey, Guildford. (71281 x.97)
- KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES: Robin Boni, 33 Effingham Road, Long Ditton, Surrey. (398 0310)
- SUTTON: Patrick Smith, 56 St. James's R Sutton (642 2534)
- WEST LOTHIAN: Anne MacLellan, 5 Victoria Place, Bo'ness, West Lothian.
- YORK: Phil Hearse, Goodricke College, Heslington, York.
- MERCHANT NAVY (at sea): Peter Turner, "Oriana", c/o 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

FILMS

BATTLE OF ALGIERS

The film is about the very beginning of the emergence of the Algerian NLF, its development, but mainly its decapitation by the French imperialists as embodied in the notorious paratroopers.

Yes, it is true that Portecovo (the film director) does not deal with the most interesting stage of the Algerian resistance for a revolutionary, namely, the re-emergence of the NLF and its breakthrough during the years 1960-62. True, the end of the film—the success of the revolution is presented as if the whole movement had been the work of a conjurer or of a god. The “demos” towards the end appear much more as some sort of mystical dances.

Yes, the “orthodox” Marxists, who will look for a method to “construct the Leninist combat party” will be disappointed. Yes, the ultra-lefts might think they have been vindicated. However, whether delighted or disappointed, all revolutionaries will find the film inspiring. It breathes a revolutionary élan, enthusiasm, initiative, dedication.... in a word: it is of the revolution.

But all this is not why we want to write about the film here, nor why we think that for a revolutionary this film is a “good film.”

The most interesting fact is that the whole “story” or “plot” is seen from a class position and because of this consistency the film can in no way be claimed by the bourgeoisie (not even by its most liberal wing). It is essential to explain what we mean by this as we regard this criteria as extremely important when judging a film.

Let us take *Z* for a comparison. *Z* is a film that sections of the ruling class can see and even enjoy. And that is because, even though it doesn't compensate for bourgeois atrocities, the “baddies” (all the Generals involved in the assassination) are punished within the framework of the bourgeois legality game and what is more through a member of the bourgeoisie itself: young idealist judge (who will have time to form or transform himself). The ruling class, therefore can get away with *Z* by thanking its own system for providing such “just justice.”

Battle of Algiers is nothing of the kind. Justice is done outside the system. It is not granted by the bourgeoisie; it is conquered and imposed by the masses.

The major difference between the two films is that one is a good thriller with a very well-sustained suspense, bringing us a cathartic ending, after which, everything goes back into its place. The other one is a continuous and relentless clash between two classes which must result in the balance of class forces being tilted decisively one way or the other. One could paraphrase Breton on Rimbaud and say that Costa Gavras is guilty for not preventing the possibility of his film being taken over by the bourgeoisie—or rather that section of the bourgeoisie which does not want to acknowledge the existence of the class struggle. Because in a few words this is what it boils down to—the class struggle. If *Battle of Algiers* is unbearable for the entire bourgeoisie it is because it is completely free of any smell of compromise. It does not at any moment and in any way blur the issues or permit for more than one interpretation. Throughout the entire film, it progresses along a confessed and explicit class line as far as both sides are concerned (NLF representative: “Give us the planes, we'll give you the baskets.”/Paratroopers chief: “The Algerians want us to go, we want to stay.”) At last a film which doesn't portray the fascists (paratroopers) as half-beasts, half-men monstrosities whose only motivation is sadism. Fascism is shown here first and foremost under its rational angle—Colonel Mathieu is an intelligent man who knows his job, who analyses it and transmits it in a masterly fashion. It is only then that fascism is shown from the angle of what it leads to and what its logic is: violence, tortures, sadism.

Yes, the film is very violent, but Portecovo is not exploiting sensationalism. Again, here, violence is seen through and reflects class consciousness. There is the aggressive violence of the French petty bourgeoisie which explodes at the slightest incident and wrecks “vengeance” on the most innocent. In the film, it is at the race course that the climax of their hysteria savagely uncoils itself on the child sweet-vendor. It is the violence of that very part of the bourgeoisie for whom the film would either be unbearable or not make sense—violence of those people who because they do not think in terms of classes, think in terms of madness. “Murders-Murder-



ers” throughout the film is the motive this class ascribes to the Algerians. Counterposed to this is the calm and dignity of the Algerians as they sift through the shattered remains of that part of the Casbah blown up by the embryonic OAS. Unfortunately despair can and does affect the guerrillas as well. Hence that impulsive and reckless drive in the crowded city which leads to the death of two Arabs. Lastly, and most important is that strand of violence which has an aim: national liberation on the one hand and imperialist domination on the other.

For the benefit of those who remember only Ali-La-Pointe, Kader, Colonel Mathieu (and maybe also the three women “terrorists”) and who by the way are either those doctrinaires who complain that the masses are not there, or those who are only captivated by the feats of a few, we will try to make them “see” the film in retrospect. Throughout the film, the camera goes from the Casbah to the European sector and back again. Now, this is not merely to follow the actions of the few leaders. What the Casbah epitomises is that very mass of Algerians whose consciousness, of course, is not even, but which is seen

as totally unified—therefore potentially fighting. Proof: the various scenes where Ali or Kader have only got to burst into any house to find some sort of shelter. Also the total unanimity with which the Casbah responds to the call for a general strike. Whoever has not felt the atmosphere prevailing in the Casbah, has not seen the film; indeed has not seen the masses.

A last point about the film. *Battle of Algiers* is probably one of the best films on women's liberation precisely because it is not about it. The NLF women are being used as women only in so far as it can help them to con the French soldiers. Back in the Casbah they are only three militants. Right through the film there is no concession to femininity—not even the inevitable protective male arm round the shoulders for the only woman of the group who is just about to be blown up.

Needless to say, the film should be seen by every revolutionary militant, as apart from everything else, its relevance to Ireland is fairly striking.

Marie-Therese Weal

EVENTS

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

TUESDAY: Oxford Red Circle, 34 Minster Road. Contact Martin Meteyard, 46127.

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

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

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

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

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

APRIL 11th: Clann na h'Eireann Easter commemoration demonstration, Birmingham.

APRIL 12th: West London Socialist Women Group meeting, ring Leonora Lloyd, 574 7407 for details.

APRIL 13th: Central London Socialist Women Group meeting, 8 p.m., George IV pub, Pentonville Road (corner Cumming St), Kings X tube. Ring Felicity Tradd, 837 8987.

APRIL 19th: VIETNAM public meeting. Speaker: Duncan McNiven, 8 p.m., Hanwell Library, Cherington Road, W.7.

APRIL 20th: Women's meeting in solidarity with Indo China. Speakers, including a Vietnamese woman if possible, and discussion, 7.30 p.m., Unity Theatre, Goldington St. In. Mornington Crescent sta. Ring Linda Fryd, 807 8107 for details. London Socialist Women Group.

APRIL 24th: International Day of Solidarity with



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So much for "Vietnamisation" Catch 22 in Indo-China

If the Nixon administration is to maintain its political power in Indo-China it needs at least half a million men. But if Nixon keeps half a million men in South-East Asia, fighting a war, the consequent U.S. casualties and the financial cost will hasten the internal destruction of America and will lose Nixon the November 1972 presidential election. That's the Catch-22 in Indo-China.

"Vietnamisation" was to be the way out of this double bind. Raise Saigon's puppet troops (ARVN) to a million men. Reduce the U.S. Armed Forces to a 'residual' 200,000 men providing ARVN with transport, training, communications, artillery and air support, plus ground protection for the U.S. enclaves and airmobile divisions for serious emergencies. ARVN would carry the ground combat burden and the Pentagon would run the war of machines. As Ambassador Bunker put it, they would 'change the colour of the corpses'. Total costs of the American commitment would be reduced because of the fall in manpower as the war became 'capital intensive'.

The Battle of Highway 9 was to be the peak of "Vietnamisation". This highway runs from Quang Tri on the South Vietnamese coast just below the Demilitarised Zone, to Khe Sanh on the Viet-Lao border through to Sepone in Southern Laos and on westwards towards the Mekong river. Final arrangements for the operation were made by General Abrams and Laird when he visited Saigon during January. At the end of the month the U.S. Air Force began a massive airlift of men and material into Quang Tri and the operational headquarters at Khe Sanh.

The U.S.-Saigon target was to forge across the 50 kilometres of thick jungles and mountains separating Khe Sanh from Sepone in only 4 days. If all had gone well the second target was to be Savannakhet on the Mekong where the Thai and Laotian borders meet. The strategic objectives were first to disrupt the road 'to the front', the supply lines running from North Vietnam down into Southern Laos, Cambodia and finally South Vietnam; second, to capture the arms and food depots scattered throughout the trail complex; third, to engage and defeat the units of the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese Army in the area. For these purposes Washington and Saigon had brought together 45,000 troops, 2000 aircraft (including 800 helicopters), 300 tanks and armoured personnel carriers and 250 cannon. The Battle of Highway 9 was to become the most violent single conflict in the whole history of the Indochinese war.

20,000 elite Saigon troops, including the 'paras', the Marines and the Rangers began the invasion on February 8th, accompanied by a small number of U.S. troops. To the north and south of the highway, 'fire bases' were set up by helicoptered troops. These bases, along with U.S. strike aircraft, the gunship helicopters and the B-52's, were to provide a hail of flame and steel to cover the armoured brigades moving along Highway 9 to Sepone.

The Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese allowed the spearhead to drive deep into Laos. When the invading forces were totally committed the counter-offensive began and the roof fell in. First the fire-bases were surrounded, artillery moved in and a merciless pounding started with cannon, mortars and rockets. The anti-aircraft fire became so intense and was of such great accuracy that helicopter pilots admitted to reporters at Khe Sanh that they were being knocked off like flies.

In the face of this continuous barrage and repeated ground assaults one by one the bases became totally untenable and had to be evacuated. Many American helicopter pilots refused to face the enemy bazookas and allowed the yellow men of the Saigon army to fight their way out on foot.

The difficulty of the terrain, constant harassment by the Liberation forces and the crucial loss of covering artillery support slowed down the armoured column, which now was forced to engage in tank battles with an enemy that knew each trail intimately.

A month after the operation began, the invading forces had still not reached Sepone and the withdrawal was ordered. The uncovered retreat was a carnage and Highway 9 right back to Khe Sanh is littered with burned out vehicles abandoned by the Saigon army.

forces had been driven out of Laos only to find themselves harassed and ambushed at Khe Sanh itself. The battle of Highway 9, the peak of "Vietnamisation", has proved to be its nadir.

The new American strategy has failed its most crucial test. Catch-22 in Indo-China reasserts itself. Washington must now face up to the failure and will seek a new solution of a qualitatively different character. One possibility is that the political will of the American leaders will have been so weakened that a genuine withdrawal will begin. The second possibility is that of escalation combined with fake troop withdrawals, a vital fact to deceive American public opinion. Escalation could take the form of increased bacteriological warfare; for example the introduction of anthrax or the bubonic plague. It could even take the form of tactical nuclear weapons, particularly against 'the road to the front'. It could take the form of a build-up over the months to renewed full-scale bombing of

North Vietnam, including the supply lines to China and the port of Haiphong.

I believe we shall see an escalation, and that the most likely form is 'bombing the North'. It could well be accompanied by a smoke-screen such as a call for a total unconditional cease-fire or an expanded peace conference. It is now clear that in the decisive year that lies ahead, when new strategies are being introduced and counter-strategies sought for, the main ally of the Indochinese outside of Asia, is the Western anti-war movement, chiefly that of the American people. The time has come, and the time is crucial, for renewed efforts in Britain against the war and against British complicity in it—through agitational-propaganda work, vivid small-scale actions, meetings, and demonstrations, like that on April 24th in London. Seize the time!

Frank Pais



International day of solidarity with the Indochinese revolution

Self-determination for the Indochinese people

All U.S. forces out now

End British complicity - Tories out

Victory to the Indochinese revolution

Victory to the Indochinese liberation forces

Recognise the P.R.G.

Demonstration + rally

Sat. April 24th

Trafalgar Sq. 3.30 pm
march to U.S. Embassy

Vietnam Solidarity Committee