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MR. WILSON STILL BACKS U.S. ON VIETNAM from a Parliamentary correspondent

Mr. Sydney Silverman, Labour M.P. for Nelson and Colne, asked Mr. Wilson in a private question: "what action he proposes to take to promote a peaceful solution in Vietnam in view of the most recent air raid on North Vietnam by U.S. forces?". The Prime Minister replied that the urgent diplomatic activity to obtain a cessation of the hostilities was continuing.

To this statement, Mr. Silverman countered, that the raids went "far beyond the hostilities of earlier days," and "Do they not amount to an act of plain, naked war?". Mrs. Ann Kerr, Labour M.P. for Rochester and Chatham, commented that large sections of the people of the United States would welcome a statement by the Labour Government dissociating itself from the attacks on the North.

After Tory boos, Sir Alec Douglas-Home got up and assured Mr. Wilson that the Conservative Party was behind him and would support him "in the action he has taken so far in this," and anything he thinks "necessary to support our American allies in this matter."

Readers of The Week should spare no effort to back those Labour M.P.s who are struggling to alter Labour's policy on this matter.

U.S. CONSIDERING NUCLEAR BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM

All the leading ^{U.S.} news agencies have reported rumours that the U.S. is studying the selection of possible targets in North Vietnam for nuclear bombing. The agencies say these targets were discussed during the talks General Harold Johnson, U.S. Chief of Staff, had in Saigon last week. The reports also say that the sending of more combat units to the South ^{was discussed} originated in Washington on March 12th.

These reports inspired a march in London from Manette Street to the U.S. Embassy on March 16th. Only 50-odd people took part but this is not surprising as there has been a news 'blackout' of these agency reports.

NO FILIPPINO TROOPS FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

According to Manila Chronicle of March 14th, the Philippine Committee on National Defence has ruled out any obligation by the Philippines to send troops to South Vietnam to help the U.S.. The Vice-Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives, Salipada Pendatun, disclosed on March 5th that the U.S. State Department was still pressing for the despatch of Filipino troops to South Vietnam. The report of the Committee also 'strongly recommended' the re-examination and revision of all military agreements with the U.S. It stressed the need for Philippine consent before U.S. bases on her soil could be used for foreign operations. It seems as though the British Government could learn something from a country which has usually been considered an American puppet on how to stand up to U.S. pressure.

Another part of Arabia under British influence is the scene of trouble. Five thousands Arab oilworkers, employed by the Bahrain Petroleum Company, began a strike on Saturday 13th of March. Since then there have been demonstrations, clashes with the police, damage to property and vehicles and arrests of 'ringleaders.' The company and the Government, of course, blame the trouble on 'Nationalists', 'Communists' and 'Baathists', claiming that recent redundancies have been exploited for political reasons.

On March 14th, 43 demonstrators were arrested, after the Government had issued firm orders to security forces to break up demonstrations. After this, executives of the oil company expressed the opinion that they ^{last} hoped the strike would collapse. Bahrain is virtually a British possession, and when there was a political upsurge the Tory Government deported the leaders to St. Helena. It is to be hoped that the Labour Government does not emulate them in helping to prop up a completely undemocratic and reactionary set-up.

Editorial note: Next issue of The Week will contain a background article on Bahrain.

BRITISH COMMUNISTS OPPOSE RUSSIAN LINE ON CONFERENCE

by Dave Windsor

After a meeting last week end the executive committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain announced that it will oppose the calling of a preliminary consultative conference of the 81 Communist and Workers' Parties on world international problems. It gave as its reason an opinion that such a conference will only become possible when the main parties are agreed on its composition and convocation. The statement said that the C.P.G.B. had participated in the recent Moscow conference on the understanding "that it was solely a consultative meeting.". It endorsed the call of the meeting for efforts to strengthen the unity of the international Communist movement, and other aspects of the statement issued after the meeting. But when it came to the suggestion of a preliminary consultative conference it said: ".we do not regard this proposal as practicable so long as the present problems, which have so far prevented the meeting of an inclusive conference, remain unsolved."

The statement concluded: ".we urge renewal of the bilateral talks between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China with this aim in view." This act of independence from the 'Moscow line' is yet another symptom of the irreversible break-up of the former Stalinist monolith. Whilst in most countries this has led to what the Chinese call revisionism, the net result can only be beneficial because of the likely improvement in the exchange of ideas between different sectors of the working class movement.

BERKELEY UNIVERSITY HEAD QUILTS

from Jill Westby

Readers of The Week will remember the reports of the struggle in huge University of California for free speech. The demonstrations have led apparantly to the decision of the University's President, Mr. Clark Kerr, to resign. A similar decision was announced by the Acting Chancellor of the University's Berkeley branch, Mr. Martin Meyerson. Neither offered any explanation.

Editorial note: An article giving the background to the struggle, written by a Berkeley student, appeared in Week, Vol. 2, No 23/4, which is still available for 1/-.
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The Financial Times of March 15th carried, as its lead story, a despatch from its United States' staff outlining the opinions of American big business on Britain's forthcoming Budget. This article was extremely revealing and is worth quoting at length to illustrate the kind of pressures which are being applied to the Government from its chief 'ally.' The article commenced:

"Mr. Harold Wilson's speech next month to the Economic Club of New York will have to contain at least some promise of economic sacrifice by Britain unless it is to prove utterly pointless. Wall Street will welcome further (sic) assurances from the Prime Minister that the Labour Government intends to use all the forces at its disposal to defend the parity of sterling. But his remarks will make little impact if they have been preceded eight days earlier by a Budget containing enough inflationary elements to threaten these defences. Even business economists in the U.S., though typically less sanguine about the merits of deflation than most financial men generally, agree that Britain, having spent beyond its means in 1964, must now be prepared to tighten its belt for a time....

"It has read with misgivings, therefore, rumours from London that there is a dispute within the British Cabinet on whether the forthcoming Budget should be expansionist or deflationary...Throughout last November's sterling crisis, speculation against the Pound was less severe in the U.S. than on the Continent, and confidence has grown since that, with a 7% Bank Rate and import surcharges, Britain will succeed in restoring temporary order to its external accounts. Yet in practically any Wall Street discussion on Britain's economic situation, speculation will eventually crop up as to whether devaluation may not have to be resorted to in the not too distant future....

"The most common consensus seems to be...that the Budget should not even be neutral but that for the sake of confidence it should provide for at least a few more spending curbs. Thus, Wall Street will be concerned at any extension of existing welfare programmes while some reductions, too, in housing expenditure is often considered to be called for. New tax measures directed to reducing consumer outlays will also be viewed favourably....Further, the Labour Government would give a powerful boost to confidence by dropping plans for steel nationalisation, as it would by taking more direct steps to implement its venerable incomes policy....

"In the prevailing atmosphere of scepticism and uncertainty, the role of the American Government has been an important one and, up to the present at any rate, a stabilising one. Leading businessmen have been going to the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Board in considerable numbers during recent weeks in search of advice on whether to cut their future losses in Britain and to take as much money and profits out of their subsidiaries as possible while the going is good."

After referring to recent developments, namely, the gold crisis, the American balance of payments message and the declaration of what amounts to a war on the dollar and the pound by de Gaulle, the article continues: "All this has produced a clear sense among officials that confidence has now been made so scarce that results in Britain will have to be seen in very short order if the pound is to survive. And by results they no longer mean simply budgetary and other measures...but, more particularly, those which will buy more confidence and, therefore, time on the international markets...under pressure of the confidence crisis, most of them now seem to feel that at least some of the higher demands of the Continent will have to be met.... There are few illusions in Washington or New York that sterling, even with American help, could easily survive another major attack from which the Continental Powers were unwilling to rescue it."

On March 1st, Mr. Arthur Lewis, Labour M.P. for West Ham North, asked Mr. H Dennis Healey, the Defence Minister, if he was aware that the British Government was assisting the West German Government in its efforts to recover what are known as the Easter Territories by circulating the West German sheet, Focus on Germany, in each issue of the official newsheets published by the British Army of the Rhine. Mr. Lewis went on to ask Mr. Healey if he would stop this distribution because the sheet contained a map which showed large parts of Poland and the Soviet Union as part of Germany. Mr. Healey agreed to this request and said that the B.A.O.R. had been asked to delete this map from future editions.

However, on Monday March 15th, in answer to a further question from Mr. Lewis, Mr. Healey announced that the original order had been rescinded. Mr. Healey claimed that the original reply had been based upon a misunderstanding. He went on: "I have since found that the map shows the 1937, rather than the 1939, frontiers of Germany. Had it been the 1939 frontiers it would have been most objectionable. But the 1937 frontiers are a different matter."

This decision is an important indication of the attitude of at least a part of the Cabinet on the question. It may also reflect West German pressure - Mr. Harold Wilson has been to West Germany between the first and second time this came up in Parliament. The 1937 frontiers included East Prussia (now divided between Poland and the Soviet Union) and Silesia and Pomerania (most of which are now Polish) as part of Germany. The transfer of these territories was agreed at Potsdam. It is inconceivable that they could be returned to Germany without war.

BIG MONEY IN MALAYAN RUBBER

by Dave Windsor

The Financial Times reported on Tuesday March 16th, "Exceptionally big rises ..in the shares of the twelve Malayan rubber plantation companies of the "Guthrie Group" on the news..that they are to be merged in a new holding company, the Guthrie Corporation. Gains in £1 issues ranged up to 13s 4½d in Malacca Ordinary...and in 2 shillings issues up to 2s 3d... in Linggi...Yesterday's prices value the equity of the proposed Guthrie Corporation at about £20 million. This figure excludes the sum of about £2 million which is to be repaid to members of the companies in the scheme. The day's gains added £4-5 million to market values..."

This item would indicate that British big business enthusiasm about the creation and defence of Malaysia is not without cause.

AMBULANCES FOR CUBA FROM BRITISH PEOPLE

from a special correspondent

Four Ambulances were handed over to the Cuban Ambassador by Mr. S. Mayne, vice-chairman of the British-Cuba Association, on March 16th. The ambulances, destined for the Cuban Red Cross, ^{were} the gift of the British-Cuba Association and the Anglo-Cuban Parliamentary group. They had been paid for out of the residue of the £25,000 collected for the 1963 hurricane relief fund.

PREVIEW OF NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE: This will include a number of trade union articles including one on the Exhibition Industry written by a shop steward, a summary of an article by the Editor of the Stock Exchange Gazette in which he argues that it pays to be very tough with trade unions (citing the Denby affair), important material from the United States on the Selma struggle written by participants, and many other exclusive articles.