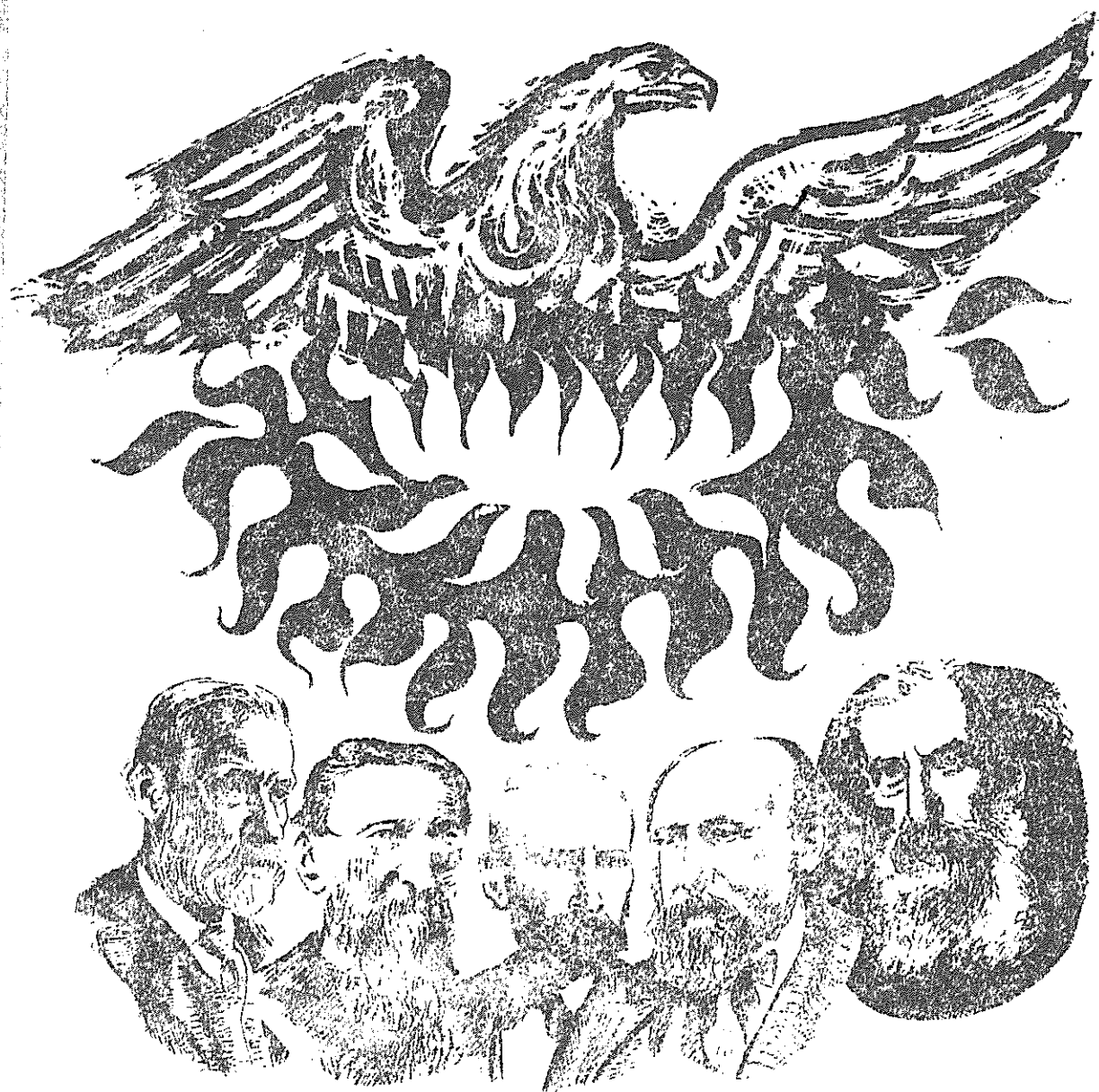


# THE

No. 19

# WORKERS REPUBLIC

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# THE WORKERS No. 19 REPUBLIC

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## EDITORIAL

### **VIETNAM — Full Solidarity**

President Johnson has again sent an extra draft of troops to Vietnam, while official US casualty figures rose higher for the first six months of this year than the whole of 1966. Still the peasants of Vietnam resist and repel the massed onslaught of the most powerful army in the world, backed by the latest science and technology.

A report in the London Observer stated that "Two out of every three Americans, according to the polls, accept the fact that the war is not going well ... The much-heralded American sweep in the Mekong Delta seems bogged down in a waterlogged

stalemate; in the Northern provinces a division of Marines has been regularly battered by Communist attacks ever since the beginning of the year; and even the pacification programme in the villages in conceded recently to have shown disappointing results." The report continues: "... despite all the bombing raids, Communist strength in Vietnam has increased by over 150,000 men in the last 18 months. It is not just that that figure inevitably casts doubt, if not blank disbelief, on the regular American weekly estimates of thousands of Communist casualties in the field; it also pointedly raises the question of what exactly has been gained over the past two years by the loss over North Vietnam of more than 600 American planes." (9th July 1967) If the NLF casualty figures have been wildly exaggerated (an American major was quoted as saying, after a press handout: "That's the third time that VC battalion is supposed to have been wiped out") it's reasonable to suppose that the converse is true, and that official figures for 1967 of 5,000 US dead and 33,000 wounded must be added to before a realistic estimate emerges.

Coupled with the military activity of the NLF in the rural areas has gone an increase in the industrial activity of the workers in the urban centres of South Vietnam. By means of the mass strike the working class has given concrete aid to the NLF. Such is the level of industrial militancy that at times severe damage has been done to the Imperialist war effort. For example, a strike at the RMK construction company involved 15,000 workers and held up work on airfields, ports and depots totalling 1 billion dollars. Even scab labour often fails, as happened at Cam Ranh, where Philippino and Korean workers imported to sabotage a strike of Vietnamese workers, actually downed tools in support of the strikers.

US 'mastery' of the situation does not look like improving in the near future. A Congressional Report recently stated that "... it is beyond question that the effectiveness of the American military presence in South-East Asia ... depends on the security of the American bases in the Philippines." Not only does the above example of the solidarity of the Philippino workers bode ill for that security. The HUKS (= Army of National Liberation, with a policy of large scale agrarian reform and industrialisation) have recently been regaining some of their past strength. The New York Times commented not long ago that the guerillas "have been able to become the most powerful political force in the country." Time magazine recently stated that they already control in varying degrees 1,400 square miles and 500,000 people, but their political power is growing even faster than their geographical boundaries.

In North Vietnam itself, morale is high despite the incessant bombing. Expert planning and co-operation keep the country moving, and could probably continue to do so indefinitely - though any bombing of the dykes would have far more serious effects. An eye-witness report published in the Observer last January described "How

N. Vietnam Survives": "Burnt trucks, destroyed locomotives, twisted bridges - and yet things still move. For every bridge that stands the Vietnamese have one or two in reserve made of bamboo, wood or boats, ready to be thrown up. Detour routes are prepared in advance. Everywhere there are mounds of earth and stones, sleepers and rails, waiting to be used." If fuel or roads failed, bicycles would still be used, pushed on dark paths through the night: "They are often in groups of ten. Each reinforced bicycle can carry up to 6cwt: bricks, rice, everything that can be loaded on such a machine ... 10 cycles loaded with 6 cwt. each replace one small lorry."

To outwit the bombers "The decentralisation of the economy and the administration ... has robbed the planes of big targets. ... The big factories evacuate to the country part of their equipment, staff and management... Some surgical wings of Hanoi's hospitals have been dispersed to the provinces, where they continue to function." The report concludes: "The thousand-and-one inventions of the Vietnamese have been applied in such a way that the air raids could last years before resistance broke. The authorities do what they can to enable the people to live 'as before'. The cinemas are full, the circus is open (except that the large animals have been 'decentralised' into the countryside) and the artists sing and dance in the music hall."(1.1.67)

Back in the States, opposition to the war is growing daily, and, with the prevailing demand that Imperialism should get out, is on the whole on a far higher level than the innocuous Peace in Vietnam committees here, with their tame plea for 'negotiation'. Out of the growing number of young war veterans, groups throughout the country are forming to oppose the war, and are rapidly linking up nationally. With elections coming up next year - the only time when the politicians bother about what the people think - these pressures from within could be a real help to the liberation fighters in Vietnam.

With cannon and mortar the Vietnamese peasants are holding down sufficient troops and equipment to bring the US economy into serious trouble. Inflation has added dynamite to the smouldering anger of the unskilled negro workers who, despite the keyed-up war economy, have no hope of a job in the foreseeable capitalist future. In the midst of all the segregationist, 'Afro-American' nationalist confusion, is a budding internationalist identification with the workers and peasants of Vietnam, perhaps summed up in the figure of Cassius Clay in his almost symbolic combination of physical strength, confusion of ideas, and solidarity with the Vietnamese because the US negroes and the Vietnamese are ground down by the same oppressors. The hungry of the Great Society are quick to spot the hypocrisy of those horrified by the 'violence' of their attacks on property and cops, when the same voices support, actively or passively, the mass murder in Vietnam. Some may even take pride in the inevitable nuisance it must be to the 'War Effort'.

It would be an act of treachery to the Vietnamese fighters to take

these facts complacently and sit back in rosy satisfaction declaring that the war is as good as won. It is not yet won. Though Vietnam receives pitifully little help from Russia and China, there might well be room for some treacherous horsetrading, if either of them gets the chance, in the tradition of Geneva 1954 - where the actual victory of the Vietnamese was frittered away and the US given time to step into the old French position in Vietnam.

One thing is certain. The imperialists would like nothing better than negotiations. This would open up all sorts of possibilities for consolidating their power in the area, with full freedom and leisure to get the best out of the situation, either directly or through the UN; the CIA would have a free hand to manipulate the political puppet strings; and a face-saving cover would be found for Moscow. At worst, - if the fighting resumed - the strategic military advantage of time to regroup and recoup would have made the exercise worthwhile for the Pentagon.

Advocates of Negotiation - often under the heading of Peace - range from Johnson, the Pope and Harold Wilson to the honest CP and IWP rank and file member who, horrified by the disgusting nature of the war, thinks he is helping the Vietnamese by calling for the reconvention of the Geneva Conference. The Vietnamese know that the original Geneva was responsible for their present predicament. It is perhaps only because of the shocking plight of such fine people, that working class militants in Europe who in a strike would not dream of 'returning to work so that negotiations can begin' (who would regard this as a defeat) fall for the CP line.

But such people are not helping the Vietnamese. This approach confuses the nature of the war and helps Johnson weaken resistance in the US. It helps our own puppet-politicians in Ireland and England to dismiss opposition to their support of US Imperialism by claiming that the solution "lies in Hanoi". It is based on the assumption that the Americans' right to be in Vietnam should be negotiated by the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese do not think so; they have chosen to fight for victory.

The decision in this matter must remain with those who are being bombed and gassed and burned and tortured. As long as they choose to continue fighting - and, if the picture of US difficulties is even half-accurate, their choice is not only heroic but entirely logical - it is up to us to give them all the support and solidarity we can. Like the US negroes we best aid the NLF by stepping up our own struggles to weaken and overthrow capitalism in our own areas. And we must advance the slogan of genuine solidarity - **VICTORY FOR THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT!**

OCTOBER 22nd VIETNAM MOBILISATION --- as a sequel to the April 15th protest mobilisation, the (American) National Mobilisation Committee is calling a march on Washington in October. The October 22 ad hoc Committee is calling an action in solidarity with the march on Washington by a rally in Trafalgar Sq. and a march to the US Embassy on October 22nd. If you wish to help with publicity, distributing leaflets etc., contact: October 22 ad hoc Committee, 49 Rivington St., London EC 2. Telephone 739-6952.

# Setback for the Arab Revolution

by Rachel Lever

British and US Imperialisms, which between them extract from the Middle East almost its total wealth, have won a victory over the drive of the Arab masses to break their stranglehold on the economy of the area. That the victory was by proxy does not make the fact any less real, nor the resultant situation any less favourable to Imperialism. There can, of course, be no question but that Imperialism has gained from Israel's Pearl Harbour. The Daily Telegraph had commented editorially before the fighting started that "An Egyptian success ... would mean the end of all Arab governments well disposed to the West." (6.6.67)

Before the Israeli victory, Imperialism had been getting edgy about its Middle East situation. With Arab Nationalism rising in pitch in places like Aden and Yemen, US oil interests in Saudi Arabia could have been threatened. Matters were brought to a head when Syria (which had already nationalised all her own oil fields in 1964) for a time stopped the flow of Iraq Petroleum Co. oil through its pipeline to back up demands for extra levies and unpaid arrears. The victory of Imperialism's Zionist allies has somewhat altered this situation.

Now the British in Aden and their stooges in the Federation of South Arabia, the Royalists in Yemen, and all the feudal elements who play along with US Imperialism, particularly Saudi Arabia, have been strengthened by the rebuff to Egypt and Syria. Their part in the 'war alliance' had been mere demagogy, with the exception of Jordan, where Hussein was forced into war by the expansionist Israelis on one side and the threat of a popular insurrection on the other. Of course the readiness of the bourgeois-nationalists like Nasser to do a deal with these people contributed enormously to their current advantages - and to the Nationalists' own current disadvantages.

That the victory was delivered into Imperialism's hands by some of the remnants of a people recently decimated by another section of world Imperialism, only demonstrates once more that so long as it retains control in the most advanced areas of the world, Imperialism is on the commanding heights and capable of utilising even the remnants of one of its most tragic victims against a new, current victim. But not only does Imperialism use the Jews physically; it also utilises the memory, the horror at the system's past crimes against them. By equating this nation of technologically advanced European supremacists - Israel - with the Jews as a persecuted minority in Europe, they smokescreen a new crime, this time against the Arabs.

## THE LEFT

As a result, we have seen the kind of reactionary hysteria which is usually whipped up to cover white colonialists in their massacres of native victims, by pretending that the victims had been themselves planning a massacre of precious whites. This hysteria over the threat of a mythical massacre was sold packaged with genuine sympathy for the genuine past massacres of Jews. And not only was it successfully sold at large, but it has also gripped large areas of what is tolerantly known as "The Left". The 'New Left' such as Hefner and Rose, the men with pretensions

to clear thinking as well as the old left like Silverman without such pretensions, but whose hearts are sometimes in the right place.

What is the reason for this deliberate blindness of people who support the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Anti Apartheid and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland? First, of course, the unbelievable political level at which the British Left exists, a level without principles, clarity, coherence, a Marxist world-view, a serious perspective, or even a serious hope for socialism. And at the same time the composition of this left. It has a large sprinkling of Jews who turned leftward during the rise of fascism in the thirties, only to be miseducated by the CP. Not having become internationalists, they naturally remained conscious of belonging to a particular set of people, and were further pushed in this direction by events under fascism.

They suffer from the added befuddlement that Israel is a Socialist state (!! ) and are ready-made victims for the Imperialist view of the Middle East, as the Israelis are "ready made" allies of the west against the Arab masses! Perhaps the most pertinent question, then, is how the Israeli Jews, many of whom would call themselves socialists, have wound up in this bloc with Imperialism?

### ZIONISM

There are now 12 million Jews in the world - 5 million in the USA,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million in Russia and about 2.6 million in Israel. Their state was established in 1948: the first for 1900 years. The conscious expression of the drive to found this state can be summed up in one word - Zionism.

Zionism was a reaction against the pogroms of Eastern Europe in the late 19th century, and anti-semitic propoganda in Austria, Hungary and Germany at the same period. While 5 million Jews emigrated to America, the Zionists saw the solution to anti-semitism in Jewish colonisation of Palestine. Initially it was a 'utopian' Nationalist movement, holding that Jews of every class had more in common with their co-religionists than with other members of their actual class.

Since the beginning in 1897, the tactic of Zionism has been to serve whichever of the world powers had Palestine within its sphere of influence. Herzl, its founder, courted Turkey, and the first Congress moved a "Resolution of thanks and Devotion" to the Sultan. Later it was Germany, after World War I British Imperialism (which has just received Palestine on a League of Nations Mandate). Since World War II it has been US Imperialism.

Arguing for concessions from the Great Powers, early Zionist leaders promised to combat socialism among the many young Jewish workers, remove socialist Jews from the scene, and "dissolve the revolutionary Parties in the Jewish People". In this respect Zionism was a mirror-image of the anti-semitism which also agitated for the removal of the Jews: Herzl presented Zionism to anti-Semites such as the Tsarist Minister Von Plehve precisely as a means of clearing out the Jews. These promises were not entirely groundless. In Russia arose the strange phenomenon of Left Zionism, whose theoretician Ber Barochov created an ingenious marriage of utopian nationalism and the forms of Marxism. Seeing the Jews as a unit in abstraction from society, Barochov observed that there was an overpreponderance of middle class and

upper class elements. In the Jewish people the normal class pyramid was inverted: only by assembling the Jews in a National Home could a normal class structure develop - and only then could the class struggle in the Marxist sense germinate within the Jewish people. Armed with this international Stages Theory Left Zionism was to play a very important part in future developments in Palestine.

At the beginning of the century, when Zionist immigrants came into Palestine, they found to their surprise that it was already populated by Arabs. How were they to deal with them? Instead of the normal method of colonisation which seeks to exploit native labour, Zionism represented the plebeian version of European colonisation, wanting to create a class of Jewish workers as part of a new homogeneous Jewish nation. They wanted not to exploit the Arab labour but to take over the area and totally replace the Arabs. The Zionist Left particularly insisted on "Jewish Labour Only", using the funds of Zionism to compensate Jewish employers for the difference in cost of Jewish and Arab labour. They also used other methods. Tony Cliff in his pamphlet "The Struggle in the Middle East" relates that as late as 1944 "a rumour spread that a couple of Arab workers were employed at the back of a cafe in Tel Aviv. The result: a crowd of thousands went and smashed the windows and broke up the furniture."

With European capital and know-how, Zionism began expanding as a cellular growth within Palestine, buying land from the Feudalists, driving Arab peasants off the land they had acquired, and savagely boycotting the cheaper produce of those that remained. The development of an Arab bourgeoisie was stifled, so Arab peasants driven off the land could get employment from neither Jew nor Arab. Thus Zionism came into unremitting conflict with the whole Arab society it had found in Palestine. Only the Feudalists benefitted by selling their land, and these, while of necessity adopting the most extreme anti-Zionist stance in public, made many secret deals with the Zionists.

The British meanwhile played ring-master and judiciously exploited Jewish/Arab conflicts to maintain their own power. The Jews, however, remained a small minority of the population until the rise of fascism in Europe once more forced Jewish immigration to a flood. On the eve of the Second World War they numbered  $\frac{1}{2}$  million as against  $1\frac{3}{4}$  million Arabs. Many of these newcomers, in contrast to the early Zionists, were petty capitalists, particularly in the years immediately after Hitler took power - 1934/35.

1936 saw an upsurge of the Arab masses, with a partially successful General Strike in Syria against French Imperialism which was to hasten Independence. The Palestine Arabs followed the example and declared a General Strike. But what role did Zionism play? True to form, it took the chance, armed with an influx of refugee capital from Europe, to oust Arab commerce paralysed by the strike. The 'socialist' Zionists naturally broke the strike, eagerly playing along with the British manipulators of divide and rule, who then diverted the developing anti-Imperialist movement into nationalist communal strife as they had done in Northern Ireland.

#### AFTER WORLD WAR II

The War, with Palestine a major British garrison and the British imports which had retarded the economy now unavailable, led to a major growth in Palestine's economy, particularly the Jewish sector which was already best prepared for expansion by the



events of '36. By 1942 6,000 Jewish industrial enterprises, producing at a rate of £20 million p.a., employed 56,000 workers. Since '39 production had doubled and trebled. But the end of the war brought about an abrupt slowing down of the economy, aggravated for the now dominant Jewish enterprises by the re-appearance of Britain as competitor. This, with the ever-growing number of Jews in Palestine and conflicts with Britain, balancing between Arabs and Jews as usual, over its restriction of further immigration of refugees from Hitler's camps, brought a change in Zionist politics. Previously opposing it, they now demanded Independence. Zionism was borne aloft on a wave of world sympathy and the turn of most Western Jews towards it, and had a further asset in that 50,000 Palestine Jews had gained military training and experience in the British Army during the War. The Arabs, on the other hand, had no comparable military training and were demoralised by the defeat of German Imperialism, to which they had looked for support <sup>against</sup> both the British and the Jews.

Zionism was also breaking with her former ally and transferring her allegiance from British to US Imperialism. Palestine's Jews had indeed grown into a nation, with a dynamic economy, army, ideology, language and political parties. Their economic interests demanded an end to direct colonial rule. Britain, expecting to have her mandate and authority renewed, referred the situation to the UNO. But now Zionism's rapprochements with US Imperialism paid off. UNO opted for partition - and Britain at the last minute resorted to new methods, organising the then stooge armies of Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Transjordan to invade the new State of Israel. Mercenaries without spirit, they were defeated, and this defeat was a major factor in generating the Arab Revolution that has since developed.

Not only war decided the outcome: secret talks between Zionists and King Abdallah of Transjordan led to their joint partition of the part of Palestine allotted by the UN to the Palestine Arabs. From the part of it that was to become Israel, they were driven out by terror. In the village of Deir Yassin 254 Arabs - all the inhabitants - men, women and children, were massacred, and photographs of the mutilated bodies were widely circulated to terrorise the Arabs into getting out. In July '48 in the towns of Ramleh and Lydda 30,000 Arabs were forced at gunpoint to leave within half an hour, on foot and barehanded. Similar treatment was meted out by the Haganna and Irgun to the Arabs of Jaffa, Acre and Tiberiad .... at least. And to spur them on they had the memory of ten years before, when the Haganna was zealous in helping the British to suppress the Arab upsurge by burning villages and shooting 'suspects'.

And thus was established the State of Israel, 20,000 sq. km instead of the UN's allotment of 14,000 sq. km. This status quo continued until June this year, when the Israelis expanded their territory to three times its former size to create a new status quo, which they will now try to consolidate.

The most complete losers in '48 were the Palestine Arabs, deprived of their homeland and turned into refugees. Those who remained in Israeli territory have lived under the severe repression of military rule, as a conquered population in their own land. Since '48, 34,000 of them have had their land expropriated, the average cultivated area per person in the villages dropping from approx. 2 acres to approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre. Land is taken, and houses demolished by force under a variety of excuses but with one purpose - to make the Arabs landless and homeless. Nearly 10,000 are now migrant workers trying to scrape a living on building sites, as domestic servants and in the orange groves, forced into accepting lower wages than Jewish workers and

accommodated in sub-human conditions in unfinished buildings and disused cattle sheds.

The Arabs form 11% of the population, yet they constitute only 1% of the students, 2% of the state employees, and get only 2.5% of the housing credits. There is no Arab-language daily newspaper! Arabs must have passports for internal travel, which must anyway be specially authorised, and are subjected to curfew. In many respects the position of the Arabs is comparable to that of the American Indians at the turn of the century.

#### WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY IS ISRAEL ?

And what of the myth that Israel is a socialist/co-operative state, where all the main parties are Socialist Parties, where the Trade Union Federation is the dominant economic force ..... where there is Democracy.

First of all, as we have seen democracy is in fact only for the privileged. The "socialist" parties are Nationalist Parties, which were in the forefront of the boycotts and terrorising of the Arabs throughout the history of Zionism, which collaborated in Suez and which stand resolutely against the Arab masses - all, from neo-fascist Herut to "extreme left" Mapam, receive funds from the world Jewish Agency. The famed and powerful "trade union" organisation is also Zionist, excluding Arab members; it was the main instrument of the "Jewish Labour Only" campaign, its purpose being not to represent, but to create the Jewish proletariat. Being also the main employer of labour in Israel through its ownership of giant enterprises, banks, transport etc., and running the main health service, it exerts a tight, bureaucratic control over the workers, who often face the prospect of losing their jobs and health insurance at once in any unofficial strike against the Histadrut. Its entrepreneurial activities have placed it in control of the major part of the economy and from a sideline have become all-important. The Histadrut unions tend to approximate to 'company' unions - and no less so because the company was initially generated by the union. Thus, far from being an instrument of the workers, it ensures that they shall have no instrument at all and rigidly excludes the possibility of free trade unions. The famed Kibbutzim also exclude Arabs, are subsidised by Zionist funds and integrated into the capitalist economy. Their membership has anyway never exceeded 5% of the population, and they are now increasingly employing outside labour, towards which they naturally behave as any capitalist employer.

#### THE PRESENT ROLE OF ZIONISM

Zionism had projected a Nationalist solution to anti-semitism. But Israel as it exists encompasses less than 1/5 of the world's Jews. The creation of the state to remove racialism has meant that an Arab minority is subjected to racial oppression as bad as that of South Africa. Even dark-skinned Jews from Arab countries are themselves placed in an underprivileged actual position as the country's unskilled workers. The logic of Israel's position, intruded into the Middle East, compels her to line up with the Imperialist forces which have milked dry the Arab people. She fears a strong Arabia as the Imperialists do, and is a permanent Imperialist ally and garrison in the Middle East.

Internationally Israel backs up reaction actively, supplying the Portuguese in Angola with arms, supporting the French in Algeria, and apparently accepting feelers

from Saigon about advising on the control of the Vietcong. When the French and British wanted to retake the Suez Canal, Israel was available, ready with her own fish to fry and eager to play the role of running dog in the invasion of Egypt. In return for this role, Israel is granted protection, aid and the solidarity of Lyndon Johnson, Chiang Kai-shek, Premier Ky (who also admires Hitler...), the Cuban exiles and "Veterans of the 'Keep Algeria French' campaigns (who) paraded the boulevard chanting "Israel Will Vanquish" to the same rhythmic beat as they once chanted "Algerie Francaise". (See Cliff, *ibid.*) Israel is indeed the "Pampered child of Imperialism."

Relying on the protection of Imperialism, Israel places herself athwart the march of the Arab millions. It is no accident that she has covert friendly relations with the Arab Feudalists - and a common interest, in Eshkol's words: "Arab apprehensions of Nasser are indeed legitimate, as the Yemen has proved. Nor has Nasser refrained from subversive activity in other countries of the area, if in a less open form.... A day will come when the Arab countries which are a target for his stratagems will realise that the true division is not between Israel and the Arabs, but between lovers of peace and aggressors..." ie friends and enemies of Imperialism (Knesset, 17.5.65). It is clear that the Israeli leaders know better than to take seriously their demagogy and recent talks of a Jihad or Holy War.

The virulent nationalism for which the Left Zionists shelved their 'socialism' has taken its inevitable toll: complete and utter transformation of would-be socialists into racialists and choiceless militants in the Imperialist interest against the Arabs - because it is the only way to serve their own interests in the situation they created.

#### ARAB NATIONALISM

On the other side, the other nationalism: Arab Nationalism, an organic movement of the masses against Feudalism and Imperialism. Even in its bourgeois form, typified by Nasser and the Syrian Baathists; this is progressive and absolutely to be supported. Internally these have carried out extensive land reforms, nationalisation of large sectors of the economy including foreign-owned interests, and drastically stepped up reforms in health and education. In relation to Imperialism they have shown resistance to its exploitation of both their own countries and the Middle East in general. Egypt aided the Algerian independence struggle, and is at present backing up the Republicans in the Yemen in a full-scale war against the Royalists and Imperialism. But their bourgeois limitations both prevent effective mass direction against Imperialism, and fix the Israeli workers in their nationalism, particularly when it takes the form of blood-curdling threats of genocide from people like Shukairi.

The initial aggression, however, has always been that of the Israeli 'socialist'-nationalists, and they have periodically reminded the Arab Revolution that they are a bayonet pointed permanently at its throat. In this case, evidence indicates that, Arab demagogy apart, the Israeli leaders had a fairly clear idea that Egypt had no intention of starting a war, that she was off the alert and being restrained by Russia, her army manoeuvres simply backing up diplomacy. Roy Bennet in *Tribune* (11.8.67) argued that "at a state level the Arab approach - with which Israel was completely familiar - was quite different", and that on that level Israel's leaders could have averted a war - if they had genuinely feared a massacre. But Bennet

further reports that "a qualified source in the Pentagon told me on the Saturday preceding Israel's attack that Washington's estimate was an Israeli victory in seven days if war occurred." So this was clearly one more example of Israeli expansionist aggression disguised as self-defence. Undoubtedly Israel received the go-ahead from Washington to strike first.

In the recent war as in the past, all the actual crimes, as opposed to threats, have been committed by Israel against the Arabs. On the second day of the war they bombed with napalm a UN camp near Jericho housing 60,000 refugees, intending to drive them still further away. Over 200,000 fled from the West Bank, and were immediately barred from returning, despite the publicity given to a handful of exceptions. Israel has since announced that others will be 'welcomed', but is meanwhile erecting a barrier of red tape - at which they are past-masters - to discourage any numbers returning. The offer is also conditional on 'good behaviour' in the occupied territory - ie, it is no more than a bait. Reports circulated amongst journalists in London that Israeli occupation soldiers wore special shoulder flashes marked: DEIR YASSIN. No rumour, but fact, is the sheer terror of the Arab masses, based on experiences of '48. No rumour either, and certainly no accident, is the fact that for the first time ever the Israeli Cabinet acquired during the war a Minister Without Portfolio: Menachem Begin, former Irgun leader responsible for the massacre of Deir Yassin. He had one speciality and the Arab masses knew it.

In view of all this, to dawdle politically or actually support Israel on the grounds that the Arabs might get rough is about as ludicrous as it is despicable. In fact there never was a prospect of the Israelis being wiped out. The Arab leaders' talk of Jewish destruction is really the demand for the destruction of Israel as a specifically Jewish state, with racialist laws and racialist oppression. Is it not usual, in any case, that the oppressed are massacred by the oppressors and not vice versa? However bloody the threats, they should not blind anyone to the reality. And whatever our criticism of the Arab nationalist leaders this must come second to outspoken solidarity with the Arab masses against Zionism and Imperialism.

Having said that, the criticism is extensive. They remain incapable of mobilising the Arab masses effectively; they are confined in their conception of the struggle to formal warfare (though there was a hint from Boumedienne recently that the war might be continued with guerilla tactics); they continue with the old sterile counterposing of nationalism against nationalism when the only solution is a class solution. They have never distinguished in their propaganda between Israeli workers and capitalists, and are incapable of appealing to these workers for solidarity. Sometimes they rebuff them, as at the Havana Tri-Continental Conference when they combined with stalinists to exclude delegates from the Israeli working class movement. Above all, as bourgeois the Nassers, Boumediennes, Farthists, are themselves partial defenders of the status quo - frightened of the masses, joining hands even with the <sup>B</sup>ritish puppet Hussein.

#### LONG TERM PROGRAMME OR IMMEDIATE DEFENCE ?

The obvious solution for the Middle East situation is class unity of Israeli and Arab workers. Linking together to drive out their respective bourgeoisies, they must abolish all discrimination against the Arabs in Israel, reinstate and compensate the refugees and establish a de-Zionised, multi-racial state with an anti-Imperialist foreign policy. A tremendous leap forward could result, with pooled resources,

allowing Israel to integrate with the Middle East and co-operate in establishing the Socialist United States of the Middle East, with rights for minorities like Jews and Kurds. This programme must be the conscious perspective of Arab and Jewish revolutionary socialists. It is still the only solution which revolutionaries in Israel itself can present to the working class.

But meanwhile, when a sharp clash develops (and the Israeli workers are still tied to their bourgeoisie) where do we stand? Neutral, passively advocating the 'abstract' programme? No. The battle for socialism is not preaching but struggle - and not always for the final goal. The early Comintern, breaking decisively with the tradition of the 2nd International "for which only white people existed", laid down as a basic principle full active solidarity with and support for all anti-Imperialist struggles. This applies to us in relation to the Arab Revolution. Whatever we would like to see happen in the Middle East we, and Israeli revolutionary socialists, cannot avoid taking the stand of Israeli defeatism: we cannot in the manner of sectarians escape the issue by placing an equals sign between an artificial bourgeois state acting as a frontier guard for Imperialism and the undoubtedly bourgeois Arab states struggling, in however limited a way, against Imperialist domination. This is not academic: the conflict is not over and neither is the war.

In the long term, can the Israeli working class, bound to their own ruling class and Imperialism by the logic of their position and a common ideological nationalism, disengage and ally with the Arab workers against capitalism and Imperialism? In his pamphlet Cliff compares the Israeli workers with the South African white workers and the French Algerian workers (both militant in their own right but closer to their white bourgeoisie than to the native fellow-workers). Recalling the past anti-Arab record specifically of the Left in Israel, he concludes that they cannot disengage. While it is best, if the stick has to be bent at all, to bend it against Israel (at a time when some of the platonic pseudo-Marxists hide behind the abstract programme and the existence of the Israeli workers to avoid defending the Arab Revolution), it is to be hoped that Cliff is here unduly pessimistic. A return to the slump conditions which immediately preceded the war will renew that growing conflict between the workers and bourgeoisie which the war nationalism so neatly papered over. Other possibilities would be opened up in the event of a genuine democratic workers' state in any of the Arab countries, which would talk a different, non-nationalist language to the Israeli workers.

#### BALANCE SHEET OF ZIONISM

Zionism, battering on anti-semitism, never aided the Jews against slaughter by decaying capitalist society in need of a scapegoat. Maybe insofar as Herzl was right in his promises, insofar as Zionism detracted from the socialist struggle in Europe and contributed to the defeat of the revolutionary workers' movement, it can be said that it aided the pre-condition for Nazi atrocities: the defeat of the German workers. Zionism only became dominant as a result of these atrocities - and the twisted logic of a capitalist world leads it now inexorable not merely to commit its own specific atrocities, but to assist in the monstrous atrocity that is each day of Imperialist domination of the Middle East. Like every other Utopian 'colony', this one has turned out a prototype of the world beyond. Every element the colonists sought to escape has re-emerged within Israel: demonstrating yet again that there is no solution in attempting to escape the real world by going into the "wilderness". The only escape is the revolutionary socialist struggle to transform it.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Pressure on space in this issue has forced us to omit our usual reprint "From the Arsenal of Marxism", and also to postpone the final article by Rachel Lever on Russian Art since the Revolution. This will appear in the next issue.

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# STALINISM, RELIGION and the WORKERS' FIGHT

It's really like one of those old Hollywood movies of the 1930s: 'boy meets girl' - then we have 90 mins. of 'misunderstanding' during which they row and slang hell out of each other, only to wind up in an embrace, recognising each other as true soul-mates after all. Maybe the 'affaire' between the world stalinist movement and Christianity hasn't yet reached passionate embraces, but the sight of these two reactionary forces huddled in a tete-a-tete - officially called the Dialogue between Marxism (!) and Christianity - is startling enough to provoke thought.

by Anthony Mahony

Joint conferences have been organised, international as well as national, in which Jesuits of the first draft confer with stalinist old women of easy intellectual virtue, jesuits of the second draft who in their time have given one more twist to the concept of jesuistry. Reports are published in religious journals. The extensive press of the British CP has carried a rash of articles on the growing mutual understanding between 'Marxism' and all brands of Christianity. The editor of 'Marxism Today' discourses on the subject for the readers of the 'Morning Star'. And across the Irish Sea, old Raftery - Pope John's Vicar on Earth - rambles on month after month in the Irish Socialist about the new IWP articles of faith, "Progressive" Papal Encyclicals. The CP youth are also being infected: large portions of Challenge are given up to exploring the brave, foggy new world of obscurantism, and the YCL Internal Bulletin Cogito (!) produced a special number entitled With God On Our Side. It carried an article by a Christian vicar and one by an old stalinist deacon, Pat Sloan! The Party put its official seal on all this with a statement of Ideology in which it invites not only religious laymen to become Party members (which would be correct in certain circumstances) - but specifically declares the Party unconditionally open to ministers of religion.

## SIGNIFICANCE

For the CPs the capitulation to religion and philosophical idealism is just the latest symptom of their complete abandonment of the Marxist evaluation of the world - and of revolutionary attempts to change it. In itself it is not new. In places like Italy and France (particularly the former) The Parties are only marginally different from mass social democratic electoral machines. Ideologically also, the edges long ago became blurred. At the funeral service long ago of militant atheism (and much else besides) officiated Hewlitt Johnson and a Russian Orthodox priest. Stalinism and religion have never been incompatibles.

But with the more cordial phase of the collaboration of the Soviet bureaucrats with Imperialism coinciding with the Church's exploration of the possibilities of coexistence in stalinist society with the bureaucracy, there has been a rapid throwing down on the part of the CPs of all remaining barriers to religion. One more birthmark has gone.

For its part, organised religion plays along in tune with western rapprochement with

Russia and in response to the far-gone assimilation of the CPs in the west as a stout prop of the capitalist system. It has long been obvious that religion can thrive in stalinist society, as witness Russia itself; there the Orthodox Church and the Bureaucracy have for decades been on friendly terms. The post-war East European Church-state conflicts, with their spectacular trials of Church dignitaries, were not primarily conflicts about ideas but material conflicts. They were part of the stalinist reorganisation of the old class structure of eastern Europe, in which the Church had been paramount in its share of the spoils. (In Hungary, for example, the Church had owned about 50% of all the land.) But the Church, however much it would like to restore its fortunes in eastern Europe, has always known how to adjust to changed reality, and these events are 20 years old.

### RELIGION IN CRISIS

But Christianity itself has been going through a deep crisis in all its sections and on issues from birth control through celibacy to high theology. The traditional concepts of a personalised god and even serious belief in an afterlife have given way in whole areas of organised Christianity to something very much like a general pious agnosticism. Even many nominal Christians remain 'believers' only in the sense that the uncleared debris continues to clutter their minds.

Of course the continuance of social uncertainty, heightened by the possibilities of nuclear destruction, means that the conditions which have maintained mass religion (born of uncertainty before nature) still persist. Despite this, the clean winds of the class struggle can lead to growing belief in the power of the workers to alter the world: scientific Marxist education never had a bigger opportunity, particularly where the CPs are mass parties and could give broad layers of our class the rudiments of a scientific education.

In this situation of great opportunity, the CPs step into the breach .... and choose rather to abandon demonstratively the struggle against religion and bend their strength to buttress superstition as they have long buttressed capitalist society. Trying to cash in on the broadest of broad alliances for the pettiest of petty reforms within class society, the CPs lend their prestige to help bolster up Christianity in its crisis and decay. Two parasitic growths intertwine, with the mutual design of feeding off each other. Those workers disappointed and betrayed by the CPs in their struggles and aspirations towards socialism are now offered instead a sedative from the opium-pot of the ages.

Significantly, the leading role in palming off religion on the rank and file has fallen to men like Pat Sloan (author of that once-famous work of light fiction "Soviet Democracy"), and James Klugman (who wrote a eulogising article on "The Constitution of the New Yugoslavia" in the Modern Quarterly, 1947: a few months later, when Stalin broke with Tito, the same Klugman wrote a famous book which 'proved' Tito to be an old fascist. Its title? "From Trotsky to Tito"; its fate? 'withdrawn' in 1955!.) Of course one can easily see why these other orphans of Stalin should also need the consolation of religion in their guilty old age.

But this new alliance of religion and the old-established imaginative writers of the CP is a formidable combination: who knows what may result from it? We may yet

see a mass return to religion if Sloan and Klugman set their minds to providing as convincing proof of the existence of god as they once provided proof of the existence of workers' democracy in Russia! The seer who described in detail the workings of a non-existent democracy should have no difficulty in providing the faithful with a detailed description of the features on the face on god! However that may be, how appropriate it is that high priests of the Stalin cult should now don gleaming new white dog-collars over their fading OGPU tunics!

### MARXISM AND RELIGION

Marxism, scientific socialism, is the antithesis of the mystical fog of religion. It is impossible to improve on Marx's own exposition of the scientific view of religion:

"Man makes religion, religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self consciousness and self-feeling of man, who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatt-ing outside the world. Man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, a reversed world consciousness, because they are a reversed world. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its universal ground for consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realisation of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore mediately the fight against the other world, of which religion is the spiritual aroma.

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and a protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is re-quired for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion.

Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chain not so that man will wear the chain without any fantasy or consolation but so that he may shake off the chain and cull the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusions man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve round himself and therefore round his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolved round man as long as he did not revolve round himself.

The task of history, therefore, once the world beyond the truth has dis-appeared, is to establish the truth of this world. The immediate task of philo-sophy, which is at the service of history, once the saintly form of human self-alienation has been unmasked, is to unmask self-alienation in its unholy form. Thus the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the critic-ism of religion into the criticism of right and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."

(Contribution to the critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Marx & Engels on Religion p.41-2.)



Militant atheism is an integral part of the world outlook of Marxism, insisting that the only reality is material reality, of which mind is a function, one form.

Lenin: "The philosophical basis of Marxism... is dialectical materialism,... a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and resolutely hostile to all religion. Let us recall that the whole of Engels' Anti-Duhring, which Marx read in manuscript, is an indictment of the materialist and atheist Duhring for not being a consistent materialist and for leaving loopholes for religion and religious philosophy. Let us recall that in his essay on Ludwig Feuerbach, Engels reproaches Feuerbach for combatting religion not in order to destroy it, but in order to renovate it, to create a new "exalted" religion, and so forth.... Religion is the opium of the people - this dictum of Marx's is the cornerstone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion. Marxism has always regarded all modern religions and churches and all religious organisations as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend exploitation and to drug the working class."

(Marx-Engels-Marxism  
pp 273-4)

### DISTORTION OF MARXISM

Against this Marxist background of militant materialism, how do the CP think-boys justify their new line? Dr. John Lewis, one of the Party's leading intellectuals contributed an article to Comment (20.5.67), aimed at the broad CP membership. It is typical rather than exceptional. The title, "Religion, Friend or Foe?" sets the tone. He begins by stating that Christianity is not necessarily always the enemy. "In some ages, some sections" (I presume he means a minority) "have been the enemies of progress." Other sections have at the same time been progressive. Some past progressive classes have based their ideology on religion. Lewis continues with a turn of phrase which will be familiar to any student of Stalinist line-changing technique: "A Marxist will not forget, therefore, that Christianity has never meant the same thing to everybody." Trading on the fact that Marxism recognises the complexity and relativity of the world, these people claim the right to arbitrarily emphasise whatever aspect best suits their interests of the moment, quashing any objections with the magic word "dialectics." Not only, says Lewis, have there been Francos and Spellmans but Father John Ball, the Puritans and in our own day, such luminaries as Hewlitt Johnson and the Labourite Donald Soper! The Archbishop of Canterbury has talked of using force in Rhodesia, and the Pope (like LBJ!) wants negotiations in Vietnam - and so on.....

The point of thus emphasising the trite facts of current Religious "progressivism", and the fact that past revolutionary movements have often taken their ideology from some form of religion, is that Lewis wants to say that the same thing can happen for the modern working class movement! He nearly says as much, discussing the social role of religion: "It can ... lend powerful supernatural support to the authority of the ruling classes and the monarchy on the one hand, and can give courage and inspiration to revolutionary movements." (My emphasis) One wonders if Lewis realises the support this sort of rubbish can give to the ruling class today? The implication is that the working class can get inspiration from "progressive" religion. Presumably he thinks that the liberation of mankind is not sufficient inspiration, and/or that the inspiration of a false religious consciousness can play a serious part in the final, proletarian, revolt - against class society as such. Though all this is qualified by (as an afterthought) a ritual endorsement of Marxism (!) at the end, the article is itself a repudiation of all Marxism.

What served for previous revolutionary classes is useless and harmful to the working class struggle. To even conceive of the workers taking power demands a level of conscious understanding which was unnecessary and anyway unattainable for the march of those classes. Because in the bourgeois revolution the aspirant ruling class had already a degree of wealth and control of the means of production, they were able to improvise any ideology, feeling their way from their growing economic power, adapting elements of religion to fit their needs: the revolutionary political changes followed, more or less as a reflection and extension of their developing economic control, more or less piecemeal. Their non-rational ideology was an expression precisely of their immaturity, a mark that they were merely a link, not the end, in the chain of class societies.

By contrast, the proletariat does not develop control of a portion of the means of production within the old system: it remains in slavery up to the point of taking power and expropriating the capitalists, when it must deliberately smash the old state and establish a new workers' type of state to secure its victory. The conscious workers' struggle based on science, the prelude to the conscious domination of reality, is central to the Marxist theory of the proletarian revolution. And an absolute pre-requisite for the members of the revolutionary Party aiming to lead the working masses out of slavery, is a consistently scientific, therefore materialist world outlook. Only such an outlook, rigorously pushing aside all obscurantism and reliance on "powers" other than human activity, can show the working class what its historic interests are and how it can serve them. Dialectical materialism is not an optional but an essential weapon in the struggle of the working class to remake the world.

The founders and leading contributors to the development of Marxism therefore made war on religion as superstition, dream compensation for slavery and anointing oil of class society, providing some of the ideological cement for that society. In the historic Marxism there was no place, as we have seen, for gods or for the agnostic indifference now becoming fashionable.

#### HOW TO BE PRACTICAL

Lenin fought tooth and nail against all flirtations with religion and against attempts to tamper with the philosophic basis of Marxism, even on the finest theoretical points whose significance was far from obvious to most of his own Party. He ruthlessly split the Bolshevik faction at a time when it was already weakened by the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution, rather than co-exist with a group, the God-builders, which attempted to marry religion with elements of Marxist socialism. To the pseudo-practical politicians now calling themselves Communists, who have always gladly traded all the 'books' of Marxism for deals and alliances, latterly known as co-existence, Lenin's action must seem utterly impractical, the epitome of sectarian dogmatism. But there is practicalness and practicalness! The only revolutionary practicalness is that which educates and mobilises the workers to fight for power. Opportunist concessions on theory are in direct opposition to this goal; on principled and theoretical questions, the only practical preparation for this goal is Leninist intransigence. His practical success, the only one so far, in leading the working class to take and consolidate power is in no way separable from this. And for us, an understanding

that theory was the fundamental bedrock of the original Bolshevik Party, is essential to the building of another such party.

### RELIGION AND THE WORKERS' PARTY

Perhaps the classic statement on religion is Lenin's May 1909 article "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion" (Marx-Engels-Marxism pp.273-286). Discussing Engels' attitude in the 1870s to a 'super-revolutionary' declaration of war on religion by some semi-anarchist fugitives from the defeated Paris Commune, Lenin comments:

"Engels blames the Blanquists for failing to understand that only the class struggle of the working class masses could in fact, by comprehensively drawing large numbers of the proletariat into conscious revolutionary social practice, free the oppressed masses from the yoke of religion."

Demanding that religion should be made "a private matter" in relation to the state - ie complete secularisation, no subsidies, no religious tampering with education, complete freedom of conscience and worship for all believers coupled with complete freedom for atheist propaganda - Lenin, and later the early Comintern, insisted that religion was not a private matter in relation to the revolutionary party.

The German Social-democrats had, under the slogan from their Erfurt Programme "Religion is a private matter", opposed persecution of the Catholics and even advocated freedom for the Jesuits. But these correct tactics had become such a routine matter that a new distortion of Marxism had been engendered - in the direction of opportunism:

"This point in the Erfurt Programme has come to be interpreted that ... our party considers religion to be a private matter, that religion is a private matter for us ... as a party." Lenin pointed out that already in the 1890s Engels himself had opposed this view by insisting "that Social-Democrats regard religion as a private matter in relation to the state, but not in relation to themselves, not in relation to Marxism, and not in relation to the workers' Party."

Using an old CP technique of isolating one aspect of Marxism from the rounded whole, Lewis attempts to duck this issue. He hides behind the fact that one cannot eliminate religion in society as a whole by mere simple 'preaching' to the broad masses (pretending this is the whole of Marxism on religion), to justify abandoning any struggle against religion within the "Workers' Party" and at its periphery. But if Marxism has it that the changing of society by the workers is necessary before the vapours of religion among them can be dispelled, it also stresses, as we have seen, that the elimination of religion in the advanced layers of the workers, ie the Party, is one of the pre-conditions for changing society, and so abolishing religion.

Lenin in his article went on to point out that any apparent contradiction in the Marxist attitude to religion was illusory. "It would be a profound mistake to think that the apparent 'moderation' of the Marxist attitude towards religion is due to supposed "tactical" considerations, by the desire not to "scare away" anybody, and so forth. On the contrary, in this question too the political

line of Marxism is inseparably bound up with its philosophical principles.... We must know how to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses materialistically. The fight against religion must not be confined to abstract ideological preaching. The fight must be linked up with the concrete practical work of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion.... "Fear created the Gods", Fear of the blind forces of capital - blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people - a force which at every step in life threatens to inflict, and does inflict, on the proletarian and small owner "sudden", "unexpected", "accidental" destruction, ruin, pauperism, prostitution and death from starvation - such is the root of modern religion which the materialist must bear in mind first and foremost if he does not want to remain an infant-school materialist. No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of the masses, who are crushed by the grinding toil of capitalism and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until the masses themselves learn to fight this root of religion, the rule of capital in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.

".... Social-Democracy's atheistic propaganda must be subordinated to its basic task - the development of the class struggle of the exploited masses against the exploiters...."

"A Marxist must be able to take cognisance of the concrete situation as a whole, must always be able to determine the boundary between anarchism and opportunism, (this boundary is relative, shifting and changeable, but it exists) and must succumb neither to the abstract, verbal, and in fact empty 'revolutionism' of the anarchist, nor to the philistinism and opportunism of the petit-bourgeois or liberal intellectual, who fears to fight religion, forgets that this is his duty, reconciles himself to the belief in God, and is guided not by the interests of the class struggle, but by the petty and mean conception of offending nobody, repelling nobody and scaring nobody - by the sage rule: 'Live and let live'....."

### RELIGION IN IRELAND

As far as our local Stalinists, the Irish Workers Party, are concerned, prostration before religion is old hat. For years they have been hiding their dim light under a bushel of ecclesiastical glimmerings and Pope Johnisms which, on demonstrations in Dublin, they brandish in preference to revolutionary slogans.

If in general a revolutionary Marxist Party can only be built on the basis of science, in Ireland there are even extra reasons why this defence of materialism is a vital practical question. Here religion has become entwined over the centuries with the social divisions and struggles to a degree that makes Ireland unique in Western Europe. Here the religious divisions of the divided Irish bourgeoisie - linked with the political expression of their interests, Orangism and Tory Nationalism - have bitten deep into the masses of the working class in a demonstration of the vicious destructiveness of bourgeois ideological domination of the proletariat. In Ireland religious bigotry, Protestant and Catholic, with its division of the workers into supporters of Orange and Green Tories, is one of the most reliable props of bourgeois and Imperialist interests. Its elimination in common working class struggle is a pre-requisite for any serious revolutionary class politics.

To refuse to fight religion as such in these circumstances is to internalise inside the revolutionary movement the very religious sectarianism which we must overcome. Only a scientific Marxist organisation, in this connection as in others, offers any road out. Precisely because the mental level of reaction is that of the 17th century, revolutionaries must be demonstrably of the 20th century. Irish conditions in particular demand an approach which seeks to sink the bourgeois-religious divisions under a scientific working class approach.

Thus the <sup>open</sup>capitulation of the IWP in the South to Catholicism is doubly criminal - and is one of the most glaring expressions of the fact that it is a Little Republic Party. In the North we can expect that the NICP will keep closely in step with its political father.

The struggle against religion is first of all against passivity: people on their knees before an ethereal mirror-image of themselves will never build socialism. On the more directly practical level, to fail to fight for demarkation of the members and supporters of a revolutionary party is to leave dangerously divided loyalties lying around - to allow people bound by strong threads to bourgeois society and its ideology in a position to sabotage the fight. Unfortunately the predominant approach in Ireland today is a continuation of what has been the tradition of even the best Irish socialists - of a frankly opportunist attitude to religion. The nearest thing to repudiation of it rather resembles the antics of students 'going through a phase': loud criticism of aspects of the church and religion, as a verbal overcompensation for the essential timidity of not breaking with it as such - snapping at its heels and yet feering to bite. But if the Irish Left in all its history has withheld blows from the Church - she has never pulled her punches from it.

We must break with the old tradition here - and come out in the Marx-Lenin tradition. It is no exaggeration to say that without that Marxist tradition no Party can fight for working class unity against the influence of Green and Orange Tories. The way we fight religion must be guided by the dialectical approach of Lenin - but fight it we must. Those 'socialists' and Republicans who take the 'easy' road and accomodate to religious sectarianism merely put the stamp of impotence on their own politics.

One problem Marxists face is the appearance of small groups of self-proclaimed "Christian Marxists", whose "Marxism" amounts to agreement with some points in the socialist programme, while they retain their idealist religious outlook on the world (eg the Slant Group.) But to think that agreement on some or even all the concrete proposals in our programme makes these people Marxists is itself to substitute empiricism for Marxism, which is an integral conception of the world. So long as such groups remain little intellectual cliques they have nothing to contribute but anti-Marxist confusion: if they develop a working class following then we should certainly work with them concretely. But then in particular there can be no question of ideological peaceful co-existence: merciless criticism is obligatory towards idealism - and particularly when it 'fuses' with a socialist programme.

We have tried to show that the struggle against religion and for science is not optional for revolutionaries who are serious: without Marxism we are blind. But when revolutionary science and the working class unite - then indeed we can dispense with Gods, and control more or less at will the world in which we live. Fighting on that perspective we can well abandon the old miracle shops to the Stalinist and bourgeois tricksters.

# FENIANS: RISE & DECLINE

by Bob Mitchell

Fenianism is generally thought of as the archetypal physical force movement, directed towards establishing an independent Irish Republic. It was founded in Dublin in 1858. It organised the unsuccessful Rising of 1867. Segments of it played a leading role in the Land League agitation in the 1880s. One of its strands helped to organise the partially successful Rising of 1916.

Fenianism was in the line of that Republicanism which has for seven generations now been the vehicle of radical protest against exploitation and oppression in Ireland. At different times Republicanism has been formalised in a variety of movements reflecting the needs of the moment and the specific class content of the revolutionary impulse which called them into existence. In the era of the French Revolution it was the United Irishmen. In 1848 the Young Irelanders. In 1867 the Irish Republican Brotherhood, popularly known as the Fenians.

In the first of these the leadership was in the hands of representatives of a budding native bourgeoisie, soon to be emasculated by the effects of the Act of Union. In the second, upper middle class elements and even aristocrats were still predominant. But in the leadership of the third the educated middle classes of the old sort were conspicuously absent. Symbolically William Smith O'Brien, he who in 1848, in armed rebellion, had asked the landlords for permission to cut down trees to build barricades, came out publicly to warn the readers of *The Nation* against the Fenians. Fenianism, in Marx's words, was "characterised by a socialistic tendency (in a negative sense, directed against the appropriation of the soil) and the fact that it was a lower orders' movement."

The social changes reflected in this divorcement of the upper middle classes from Republicanism and uncompromising separatism are the essential background to an understanding of Fenianism.

## COLONIAL IRELAND

At their inception the Fenians found Ireland a depressed and desolated country. Frederik Engels, describing this country during a visit in 1856, wrote:

"Gendarmes, priests, lawyers, bureaucrats, squires in pleasant profusion, and a total absence of any and every industry, so that it would be difficult to understand what all these parasitic growths found to live off if the misery of the peasants did not supply the other half of the picture. 'Strong measures' are visible in every part of the country, the government meddles with everything, of so-called self-government there is not a trace. Ireland may be regarded as the first English colony and as one which, because of its proximity, is still governed in exactly the old way, and here one can already observe that the so-called liberty of English citizens is based on the oppression of the colonies. I have never seen so many gendarmes in any country, and the drink-sodden expression of the Prussian gendarme is developed to its highest perfection here among the constabulary, who are armed with carbines, bayonets and handcuffs." (Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence,

Ireland in those days did indeed present a depressing picture. Ever since the Union the weaker Irish economy had been absolutely unable to make any industrial progress in the teeth of British competition. This meant that for the vast majority of the population the only means of livelihood remained the land.

Further, the pre-Famine Irish landed aristocracy did not develop the bourgeois characteristics of their English counterparts, but continued to live the life of bastard feudal magnates, expending most of their income on vast rambling retinues and uncontrolled debauchery. The result was that despite their ruthless exploitation of the peasantry they tended to fall heavily into debt.

#### THE FAMINE AND AFTER

The so-called Famine of 1846-8 heightened the bankruptcy of the landlords and produced even more disastrous effects for the peasants. So overcrowded was the agricultural land of the country, so close to subsistence was the vast majority of the people, that the slightest fluctuation could force millions into starvation.

The peasants grew potatoes for food and sold livestock and grain to pay the rack-renting landlords. Though the potato crop suffered from the blight for a number of years in succession, 'til finally it failed entirely in 1848, there was no famine in the sense of unavoidable natural calamity. What took place was a mass murder of the peasants by way of forcible export of grain and other food far in excess of the value of the potatoes destroyed. Connolly: "Thus in 1848 it was estimated that 300,000 persons died of hunger and 1,826,132 quarters of wheat and barley were exported."

The 'Famine', coinciding with the Repeal of the Corn Laws, led to an agricultural revolution in Ireland. Corn-growing peasants, unable to compete with virgin lands and East European wheat, began to be replaced by sheep and cattle. The Irish agrarian system yielded to the English, the system of small tenantry was replaced by big tenantry. Thus the depopulation begun by the famine was continued by the developing economic situation. This process of clearance was aided by the iniquitous 1838 Poor Law under which starving people were refused the meagre relief of a place in the workhouse unless they gave up any farms bigger than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre. A further stimulus to land clearance and consolidation was the Encumbered Estates Act 1849, which set aside the traditional laws of entail in respect of the most bankrupt of the Irish landlords, enabling their estates to be sold and allowing a horde of property speculators to buy up vast tracts of land. By 1857 one third of Ireland's agricultural land had changed hands.

The new capitalist landowners were even more out of sympathy with their tenants (and certainly more efficient at the business of rack-renting) than the old aristocrats had been. They had invested their money and they expected a good return on it. The most economic method of getting this was to create bigger farms with fewer people. Thus the amount of produce consumed on the land was reduced and a higher rate of exploitation became possible.

A friendly government assisted this rationalisation by passing two Acts of Parliament reducing the legal formalities connected with evictions and making the process cheaper and easier. Between 1849 and 1860 there were 37,000 evictions

affecting about 200,000 people. Bitterly, Marx commented:

"What can be more ridiculous than to confuse the barbarities of Elizabeth and Cromwell, who wanted to supplant the Irish by English colonists ... with the present system, which wants to supplant them by sheep, pigs and oxen! The system of 1801 - 1846, with its rack rents and middlemen, collapsed in 1846. (During that period evictions were exceptional, occurring mainly in Leinster where the land is especially good for cattle raising.) ... Wool and meat became the slogan, hence conversion of tillage into pasture. Hence from then onwards systematic consolidation of farms. ... CLEARING OF THE ESTATE OF IRELAND! is now the one purpose of English rule in Ireland."

#### THE GOMBEENS GET FAT

As farms were consolidated and the surplus product of agriculture grew, more agricultural produce became a commodity on the market. Thus the terrible drain on population, even though it was accompanied by a slight reduction in the gross output of agriculture, meant an actual increase in the commercial life of the country and stimulated the growth of a new native middle (gombeen) class. But this class was predominantly involved in the service and distributive industries, and Irish society remained entirely dependent on Britain for manufactured goods. In fact the gombeen classes were merely middlemen between the British producers and the Irish consumers, and tended to degenerate into that category of anglicised lickspittals known as Castle Catholics.

Ireland had become a land of colonial capitalist agriculture. If in normal capitalist countries the expropriated peasantry are absorbed in industry, Ireland had no industry, with the single exception of linen in the north. The only option left to the masses was emigration - to where the industry was. The home market shrank - with it the income of shopkeepers, artisans, tradespeople, even while the volume exported to England (which the remaining masses in their poverty could not consume) increased: only the gombeens benefited.

#### MASS BASIS OF FENIANISM

The suffering resulting from the agrarian convulsions of the 1840s and '50s was borne by the broad masses of the tenant farmers and landless men in the country, and by the artisans, labourers and urban petit bourgeois in the towns. The qualitative point in the transferring of Ireland into England's biggest pasture land, reached in '64-'65 was, in Marx's estimation, responsible for Fenianism becoming a mass movement.

The steady worsening of living conditions which had followed the Union militated against its acceptance as a permanent settlement by the masses: taken together with the results of the exploitation of Ireland's agrarian economy this meant that all popular movements had both an agrarian and a separatist character.

What were the solutions to Ireland's economic problems? Marx, in 1867, believed that Ireland needed 1) Self government and independence from England; 2) an agrarian revolution; 3) protective tariffs against England. Previously Marx had thought Ireland's separation from England impossible. He now came to believe it was inev-



itable: "Though after separation, may come Federation." Separation, in Marx's view was necessary not merely in Ireland's interest but also that of the British and international Labour movements. He observed that the great reserve of strength of the English landed oligarchy was their proto-feudal private backyard in Ireland. He saw the bitter antagonism between the English workers and the emigrant, starving Irish workers thrown onto the English labour market as being mainly responsible for the impotence of the British labour movement. The main barrier to unity of British and American workers lay in the bitterness of the Irish-Americans towards the British working class whom they regarded as a dupe of their former oppressors.

Marx therefore concluded that the liberation of Ireland was the lynchpin on which hung the emancipation of the British workers with all its importance for the European Socialist Revolution, and also the unity of a large section of the International Working Class. He felt that the overthrow of the English landed oligarchy would be impossible so long as it remained entrenched in Ireland. When the Irish people took charge of its own destiny, elected its legislators and appointed its government without external coercion, the destruction of the landed aristocracy who were for the most part English landlords, would be much easier than in England because in Ireland the landlords were the detested representatives of foreign oppression. The removal of direct Imperialist control from Ireland would be the signal for an agrarian revolution to take place.

#### TRENDS IN THE IRISH MOVEMENT

Ireland needed self-government, agrarian revolution and protective tariffs against England, and not only Marx saw this. This was the natural programme of the National Democratic Revolution. But what were the real possibilities? Which classes could carry out the separatist, agrarian programme in a situation where, as we have seen, the 'liberal' bourgeoisie, the Castle Catholics, were either benefiting from the agrarian changes or profitably acting as agents for British manufactures?

There had been two trends in the Irish movement. The first was a spontaneous peasant resistance to landlordism - the Ribbonmen, Whiteboys, etc., endemic to the history of landlordism in Ireland. By its nature it was local and isolated, and could never become a general form of political struggle. The second, the liberal national opposition of the urban bourgeoisie, had its natural leaders in the lawyers and came to the fore after the Union, after the defeat of the revolutionary republicanism of the United Irishmen. Needing peasant support, it had to search for slogans that would appeal to the masses. Thus O'Connell found one in Catholic Emancipation and later in the Repeal of the Union. These gombeen tricksters were not for full national independence and were quite incapable of organising a radical, peasant uprising even in the most exceptional and extreme conditions, as witness 1848. Apart from a brief period later when it allied itself with the Land League its destiny was to be that of a constitutional, lickspittle Irish bourgeois opposition, expressing its aims in timid political demands and collaborating after 1870 in legal adjustment of the land question.

#### PERMANENT REVOLUTION ?

In the 1850s and 1860s, with a crying need for agrarian revolution, helplessness of the peasants and feebleness of the bourgeoisie leading to their collusion with

the colonial power, Ireland resembled many of the colonial countries today. But with some cardinal and illuminating differences. Even in backward countries today, where industrial workers are organised it is in big concentrations, associated with large scale modern industry, and they can thus acquire a social weight out of proportion to their actual numbers. In certain favourable conditions, a class conscious working class in such a situation, armed with the Marxist programme, can lead the peasants, push aside the bourgeoisie and begin a process of permanent revolution ending in workers' power. But in Ireland at that time the working class was germinal and there was only small scale industry. Thus the spontaneous peasant movement was helpless; the liberal bourgeoisie were not interested; and the workers did not possess sufficient social weight and could not play the part of leader and organiser in the manner in which they were to do in Russia 50 years later.

Thus arose a peasant and workers' movement, wedging itself between the other trends, agrarian socialist in tone, taking in the disaffected of the towns including the Irish in Britain: Fenianism. Connolly quoted Pigott on the social position of this 'lower orders movement': "It is notorious that Fenianism was regarded with unconcealed aversion, not to say deadly hatred, not merely by the landlords and ruling class, but by the Catholic clergy, the middle-class Catholics, and the great majority of the farming classes. It was in fact only amongst the youngest and most intelligent of the labouring class, of the young men of the large towns and cities engaged in the humbler walks of mercantile life, of the artisan and working classes, that it found favour." Beginning as a secret revolutionary organisation on the Blanquist model, it evolved after the MacManus funeral in 1861 into a mass movement, though still formally a 'conspiracy'.

### THE POLITICS OF FENIANISM

Desmond Ryan wrote that "Fenianism was conceived in the defeat of an insurrection, amid the horrors of famine and born in betrayal of an all-Ireland constitutional and social movement". In the wake of '48, O'Connell's Repeal Association and Gavin Duffy's League of the North and South - the first primarily a Home Rule movement, the second principally concerned with Agrarian Reform, both severely legal and constitutional - had collapsed in a web of involvement in English Party intrigue and outright personal place hunting. Only a few cowed MPs remained.

Against this background, and from the knowledge of some of the leaders (notably James Stephens and John O'Leary) of the petit bourgeois revolutionary movements on the continent, the Fenians started out by drawing a number of conclusions.

- 1) Equating constitutional politics with O'Connellism and its aftermath, ie the trickery of the lawyers on the peasants, it concluded that involvement in constitutional Imperialist Party politics led inevitably to meandering and corruption.
- 2) No worthwhile reforms for Ireland could be expected from the English Parliament: therefore Parliamentary campaigns on issues such as land reform, extension of the suffrage, etc. were irrelevant and a sham - they wanted a national revolution and not just a feeble piece-meal campaign of the old sort. Thomas Clark Luby wrote "The Irish people know that any tenant right manufactured in the Imperial Parliament would be fraudulent and delusive in its workings.... for in a British Legislature, no matter how popularly elected, there could never be justice for Ireland... Irishmen know that till independence be got, a system of national manufactures

cannot be created." Therefore they stood for the overthrow of British rule, regarding all political activity not directed directly towards the establishment of national independence as a waste of time. They realised that this could only be done by the armed overthrow of colonialism, and opted for the tradition of the United Irishmen, disgusted with mealy-mouthed gombeen constitutionalism.

3) The drain of emigration and the progress of land clearances gave rise to a justifiable fear that if something were not done quickly it would be too late. The Fenians laboured constantly under a feeling of the greatest urgency. "Day after day" observed the Irish People editorially "the Island is drained of its best and dearest blood... and the conviction is hourly forced on the blindest that British domination ... at last strikes at the very existence of the Irish race." "Soon or Never" was the urgent belief that spurred the Fenians. They realised that no reforms acceptable to the British ruling class at that time could have allayed this, and that only Independence, tariffs, etc., could make any difference.

4) Their PROCLAMATION of March 1867 contained these words: "... The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish People, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State. We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justice of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England; our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields - against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our blood and theirs. Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom."

(Compared with this, how parochial, pious, peurile and fossilised appear our latter-day "Fenians"!)

5) They associated reform, which they tended to see as pretty impossible anyway, with the cap-in-hand politics of the gombeen /Clergy constitutionalism - which in fact achieved nothing until the Fenians themselves had frightened the British Government. They had no specific programme of reform and social reorganisation because they believed, in some ways rightly, that this could only be achieved after Independence. Thus they turned their eyes and attempted to turn the social discontent on which they thrived, towards the necessary pre-condition for any decisive changes - Independence under a democratic republic. (There is an interesting analogy here with the Chartists, in the relationship between the single revolutionary political goal and the genuinely lower-orders, socially motivated mass movement of which it was the expression. For the Chartists control of Parliament was to be the key to the social reorganisation which the mass ferment demanded. For the Fenians, it was Independence. It is no doubt true that had the Chartists achieved the suffrage in their revolutionary manner, the use to which it would have been put would be entirely different from the results that flowed after it was granted in entirely different circumstances, piece-meal from the 1860s onwards; and no doubt had the Fenians achieved their democratic Republic as they projected it in '67 the results for the masses would have been entirely

different from the outcome of the present semi-Independence.)

6) The organisation was secret, highly disciplined and highly centralised. In theory at least each cell or circle elected a representative to the next level of the organisation, and so on up to supreme head centre, initially Stephens and then Kelly. Under Stephens the organisation tended to be run almost completely along military lines.

### THE POSSIBILITIES IN 1865/67

Such was the organisation which, by 1865, had some 100,000 members (15,000 of them in the British occupation forces). What were the objective possibilities open to it at that time? In an article in 1882 Engels, probably accurately, considered that in general "An Irish revolt has not the slightest hope of success unless there is a war or danger of a war externally" (ie England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity.) Without these conditions England, with its superior military power, was able to suppress any Irish revolt. But there was a possibility of war between the USA and ex-pro-South England just after the American Civil War: "...if it had come to a war Ireland would within a few months have become a member of the United States, or at least a republic under its protection. The sum which England so readily undertook to pay in the Alabama case by decision of the Geneva arbitration was its price for buying off the American intervention in Ireland."

(Marx & Engels on Colonialism. p.230)

Up to that point a serious Irish revolt might have created such a situation as to force serious concessions from Britain or even American intervention at the end of the Civil War.

In discussing the failure of Fenianism the major question, therefore, is why the chance was missed in '65. When it came to the actual rebellion finally in March 1867 the objective possibilities of victory no longer existed. After the danger of war with America had passed "the police sufficed to settle with the Fenians" Engels, *ibid.*) Without a doubt that Rising in '67 which was over in one night could have been improved upon, but at that late stage it is unlikely that any other final result was possible, however efficient the organisation. The initial mistake was made in '65.

The explanation is that the movement had serious structural and intellectual weaknesses which militated not only against its long term success but even against the full utilisation, even at the most favourable point, of the forces at its disposal. These must be examined.

### FORMAL WARFARE AND AMERICAN ROMANTICS

The Fenian movement was the first Irish revolutionary organisation to enlist the active support of Irish emigrants in England and America. Hundreds of thousands of Irish soldiers and officers who took part in the American Civil War (the outbreak of which forced the abandonment of Fenian plans for an early Rising) did so with the intention of building up an army to liberate Ireland. The general scheme was that the American wing was to raise money, buy arms and recruit Civil War veterans for the struggle at home. In practice little money arrived (between '58 and '67 only £32,000) and no arms. Such veterans as turned up showed little aptitude for revolution whatever may have been their abilities in formal warfare.

Meanwhile the American Fenians squandered their money on hairbrained schemes of their own such as the farcical invasion of Canada. In 1865 the American movement split. Though the Fenians in Ireland had been led to believe that 100,000 rifles were on the way, none whatever arrived. This romanticism and unrealism was one reason for the frittering away of the opportunity. Closely connected with this reliance on the purely military aspect was the failure of the Fenians to appreciate the necessary connection between the national revolution unavoidably led by a hard organisation seriously prepared to fight the occupation forces, and the social struggles of the masses. As we have seen, the Fenians were overwhelmingly peasant and worker in membership. They assumed that independence would inevitably lead to peasant propriety - and indeed this was their purpose. They distrusted the upper and middle classes. They made consistent anti-landlord propaganda in their paper and they were at war with the Catholic Church (which actively supported the UK connection) in such an outspoken way as has not been dared by any group since - yet they did not see the need to link up directly their secret revolutionary organisational work with the concrete struggle of the masses, in the manner of, say, the United Irishmen who recruited agrarian secret societies and embryonic trade unions.

They were predominantly peasant in their support but they did not see the need to organise the direct seizures of land, and they failed to work for unity of this kind of action with their military plans. They tended to regard all social and economic struggles not directly, militarily connected with the national question as diversionary, irrelevant and likely to split the ranks of the freedom fighters. This was partly a reaction against the impotence of the peasant secret societies. It was undoubtedly in consonance with the thinking of the dominant European petit bourgeois revolutionism of that period. However, in its insistence on revolution as opposed to reform it had merit; and particularly as this meant that it stressed the overall struggle for state control.

But its failure to link up with the social agitation taken together with the guiding conception in the 1865-67 period of an Irish Army confronting and <sup>the</sup> English Army in open conflict on a date set by the leadership, was the main cause of ineffectiveness in '65 and the fiasco in '67. It involved procrastinating, a waiting approach, playing for time, waiting for arms which never came. In '65-'67 it meant postponements and delay time after time until the Fenian-infiltrated regiments had been withdrawn from Ireland, until the leadership had been arrested, until it was too late for an effective Rising to be attempted. Connolly, in his insistence on rising in 1916 was undoubtedly sharply conscious of the lessons of this and other lost opportunities.

Lenin in his letters to the Central Committee in 1917 urging and insistently demanding that they prepare an insurrection lest the tide turn and the chance be missed, demanded "TREAT INSURRECTION AS AN ART!". The Fenians, despite their formally conspiratorial character, did not do this, despite Devoy's urging on the leadership to turn out the Fenian soldiers and let them spearhead a movement of the masses. But he was overruled by Stephens and the American 'experts' trained in the school of formal warfare. Because of this, where there might well have been a popular mass upsurge, there took place no formal warfare. They had missed the tide.

AFTER 1867

Fenianism did not achieve, and in the circumstances perhaps simply could not have achieved an Irish Republic in 1867. But the Fenians did help to scare the English ruling class into the first feeble legislation on tenants' Rights: Gladstone's Land Act of 1870. And even in the '80s the "mysterious background of Fenian Armed Conspiracy" remained, together with the Land League struggles, an effective element in forcing concessions constitutionally.

The Fenians, reaching for the main lever to change society - the state - never elaborated a specific programme relating to the concrete facts of life of the masses. This had meant a loss of effectiveness in struggle, splitting apart of elements, social and political, that were in fact complementary, divorcement of the independence struggle from direct and immediate connection with the problems of the masses. It also meant that specific agitation on the conditions on the land was left to the gombeens, lawyers and clergy, ie that the land question would become under their influence constitutional land reform and not agrarian revolution.

Always a serious weakness, after the rout of the prospects of immediate sharp struggle for Independence in March '67, this divorcement meant that the Fenians let the Gombeen constitutionalists catch the wind from the continuing ferment. They let the issue of social alleviation become divorced from the question of Independence. In the wake of '67 came a growth of land agitation, and also of Amnesty agitation for the Fenian prisoners. In some areas pitched battles took place between supporters of these two strands and by their stand here the Fenians furthered the schism and helped buttress the gombeens in leadership of the peasant masses for at least a decade longer: the liberal bourgeoisie became spokesmen for tenant Right under the Empire.

Fenianism first arose out of disgust with gombeen politics; and later, in the mid-'70s, a section of it became frozen into the characteristic "Hillside Man" posture of physical-force-on-principle so familiar today, because of a second wave of disgust - this time with Buttism. The physical force 'Advanced Party' acquiesced in the launching of Butt's Home Rule movement in 1873. In the early '70s they took part in election campaigns sometimes in competition and sometimes in uneasy alliance with the Home Rulers, with Butt (the Fenians' lawyer) as bonaparte. Not opposed, when the prospects of a Rising had gone for the time being, to attempts at Home Rule, they were rightly sceptical and impatient. In 1874 a leading Fenian said: "I make no objection ... that the Home Rule Platform should be accepted as a compromise ... but we must be told when it is going to be finished, for I don't want, and I will not be a party to seeing, the ambition of a certain class of people satisfied while hunger exists in the land and the emigrant ships take our best men away to be slaves of other nations." (D.Thornley: Isaac Butt and Home Rule, p.243).

It is probable that an agreement was reached between them and Butt to 'try out' his methods for three years - after which, if he failed, they would revert to other tactics. It is a fact that until 1877 Bigger and Power, members of the IRB Supreme Council, were also members of Parliament, in fact they resigned in refusal to obey the IRB decision to withdraw from Parliament. In 1876, finally disillusioned, the Fenians once again began to break up Home Rule meetings. Fenian leaders like Daly and Doran, formerly uneasily acquiescent with Buttism, now broke "totally and irre-

-vocably" from Constitutionalism. That was the real turning point, after which some of the Fenians became sectarian physical-forcists-on-principle, confusing means with ends. But many of the ex-Fenian rank and file remained in the constitutional movement. In Britain the majority of the Fenian element was in the English Home Rule Confederation by 1876 and from there were most vociferous in demanding the sort of Parliamentary tactics later used by Parnell. Thus the mass basis of Fenianism was harnessed to Parnellism, and transmitted to his successors. As a Nationalist conglomeration Fenianism contained many tendencies: after 1867, in its decline and gradual isolation from the masses, this expressed itself in splits. When Davitt, after the New Departure in 1879, led a serious attempt to apply revolutionary methods to the land struggles, this was resisted by many die-hard Physical-forcists-on-principle defending the pristine purity of an abstract "National Movement". (The Land League, as a result, was incongruously allied politically with the rather tame demand for Home Rule.) The IRB-type revolutionaries who lasted into the 20th century were a complete anomaly, as those who have survived in the sluggish waters of Irish politics to our own day are a positive monstrosity. Their anachronistic influence has led to a succession of abortions and derailments of the masses - in the capitalist interest.

In power, having religiously maintained an intellectual vacuum where social policy should be, they begin as vaguely left wing petit bourgeois opportunists and quickly degenerate under the class pressure of the bourgeois rulers and imperialism into timid pragmatists and outright conservatives. (MacNeill and the Free Staters of the '20s; the early Fianna Fail; Clann na Poblachta in the '40s). If the Fenians proved incapable of taking power when it would have meant something, their epigones are incapable of using it even when they have it: more or less tamely, sooner or later, they step into line with the native and imperialist powers that dominate the workers and small farmers.

#### THE HERITAGE

The centenary of the 1867 Rising has been marked by disagreements amongst the various nominally revolutionary groups in Ireland. These differences are not academic - they are intertwined with the divisions that rend the Irish would-be revolutionary movement. How one sees the Fenians seems to depend on how one sees current politics! Naturally the remaining physical forcists applaud blindly. Criticism has come from a number of quarters with accusations that Fenianism was just a conspiracy divorced at all times from the masses. Of course there is need for a detailed discussion on the characteristic features, and the serious faults, of the Fenians: but only those who appreciate and attempt to emulate the positive sides of past revolutionists have a right to disparage them. Unfortunately those on the left who dismiss the hardness of the Fenians without more ado as 'Blanquist', are usually anti-revolutionary, incapable of even conceiving of an insurrection and least appreciative of the need for a hard, seriously organised revolutionary organisation in our own conditions. Others have projected backwards, in an un-historical fashion, the sins of present and recent petit bourgeois 'Republicanism' onto the Fenians. But the only continuity in this respect is in their common inflexibility of tactics - elevating into principles tactics and certain methods of struggle (which should be judiciously derived, in relation to goals, from concrete conditions). Here again those who most vocally criticise the physical forcists of 100 years ago are themselves equally inflexible and unmarxist, but in the opposite direction, rejecting insurrection and Physical Force in any circum-

-stances - such are the Connolly Association and the Irish Workers' Party.

But how, then, must we evaluate the Fenians?

In its best period from 1861-67 Fenianism had been a mass movement of the common people, embryonic 'socialist' in tendency, in conditions where the struggling masses were either directly connected with the land or very close to it. It did not develop any sort of scientific socialist consciousness. Whether it could have is merely a matter of speculation: there were a few very weak branches of the International Workingmen's Association in Ireland at that time. But in its relations with the International the Fenian leadership was initially unfriendly, and became only a little less so when the International played a big part in International Amnesty agitation. Perhaps the only thing that could have ensured an easy transition from the imprecise Fenian conceptions to Marxist socialism for most of the Fenians would have been the influence of a serious socialist force amongst the British workers. This, of course, was lacking at that time. Whatever the possibilities, the Fenian following was absorbed by the Home Rule movement.

Absolute condemnation of the present physical force element is necessary (and of the Sinn Fein ex-physical forcists) because they lag absolutely behind the knowledge, needs and potential of the times. But our criticism of the elements of this to be found already in the early Fenians is very relative and highly qualified. They were more or less of their time - Marx apart, and even his programme for Ireland then was that of the Fenians themselves. Viewed historically, we can see the great merit of the Fenians, existing when a mass revolutionary labour movement in Ireland was probably not yet possible: it is for the same reason that we condemn their epigones who have none of their merits, and stand in the way of the revolutionary workers' movement which is not merely possible but inevitable. Thus we best honour the real merits of the Fenians as they were by condemning their biggest detractors - their epigones.

We must know with the Fenians how to keep the goal of power firmly in mind - but also how to mobilise the forces of the only class now capable of revolutionising society, the proletariat. We must know how to link its day to day struggles together in a movement aiming for power. The Fenians wanted to take power for the masses according to an unclear conception of the state and a concept of an amorphous petit bourgeois Jacobin democracy. We have a more specific and therefore more realisable goal - Workers' Power.

Fenianism was a movement in the revolutionary pre-history of the Irish people. Events over the last hundred years, mostly terrible events, have crystallised out from those masses the modern proletariat, now obviously capable of playing that decisive role in society which was beyond the ability of its embryo a hundred years ago. If Fenianism was the expression of the Irish masses in the 1860s, the revolutionary socialist movement must be the Fenianism of today, only more precise in its aims, more clear in its methods and the expression of the most revolutionary class in history. When the Phoenix of a mass revolutionary movement rises once more, it will be a Red Phoenix. Then the proletariat will finally establish the Irish Republic. The Republic it establishes will be the Workers' Republic!

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# WORLD LABOUR NEWS

## BRITAIN — Struggle in the Ports

by Sean Matganna

The spectacle of a strong man being abused and bled by a swarm of vermin is an arresting one, and particularly so when the man is well known to be fast on his feet. The sight of Britain's 65,000 hyper-militant dockers being manoeuvred by a bevy of Government finks, port employers and scab union officials into accepting, against their own interests, a total reorganisation of the ports is just as startling.

On September 15 casual labour ends in the ports, as the first step in a complete reorganisation. Decasualisation has long been a demand of portworkers - but the present change, in response to technological developments, is not designed to serve the docker. The new system which has flowed from the report of the Devlin Commission will mean a sharp increase in the power of the employers to discipline dockers (all such powers now reside in the National Dock Labour Board), a big intensification of work, and the right of the employers to farm out dockers on non-dock work. In particular, the new system is the prelude to redundancy - massive redundancy: the number of dockers fell by 20,000 in the last decade, and the potential reduction in the labour force is estimated by official authorities as anywhere up to 90%.

The key to all this is the coming technological revolution in the ports. The industry, which has remained on a 19th century level of technique based on armies of coolies, is rapidly being mechanised. The means of cargo handling are changing beyond recognition. Bulk containers, which can be rolled on and off ships, are all set to become general in a very short time. The government is offering handsome grants to step up investment in the ports - and talks of nationalisation by 1970, anticipating that this will be necessary to complete the modernising process.

In face of these changes (and in preparation for large scale reduction in the labour force) they need to tighten up, introduce factory discipline, achieve mobility of labour - and in general increase the freedom of the employer to squeeze out every possible extra minute's work from a diminishing labour force. In many other industries this is the trend in this pre-automation period, a period of big changes, with major problems for the employers and government in conning the workers into accepting adjustments which mean the dole at one end and increased profits at the other.

The docks, while typical of this trend, are an extreme example because of the scale of the changes and the fact that tightening up can't just be achieved piecemeal - or at least, not until after an open transition to a new system. In that the government is forced to make a series of dramatic and open changes in the ports, the issues affecting the working class generally are posed more clearly without the usual camouflage. This creates the likelihood of a sharp class showdown between the system and some of the most militant workers in Britain. It would seem to be a unique situation, and one holding out prospects of the biggest class battles in many years. It is a fact that the Devlin report was so doubtful about its own prospects that it made provisions for shelving itself should the workers' resistance make implementation impossible!

And yet, astonishingly, we are within a hairsbreadth of the change-over without any serious large scale resistance from the dockers!! In the two years since Devlin was put out only feeble attempts have been made to organise resistance. The dockers have been shuffled along by a mixture of bluff, professional propoganda and downright lying about the effects of modernisation by all concerned, trading on the discontent with the present system. This is backed up by the imaginary carrot, the sweetener of a £15 minimum wage, imaginary because it is so organised that to qualify, in a situation of compulsory overtime, a docker an flat rate will be faced with a compulsory return to the 44 hour week. Above all, the collusion and active support of the union leaderships has been a major asset to Devlinisation.

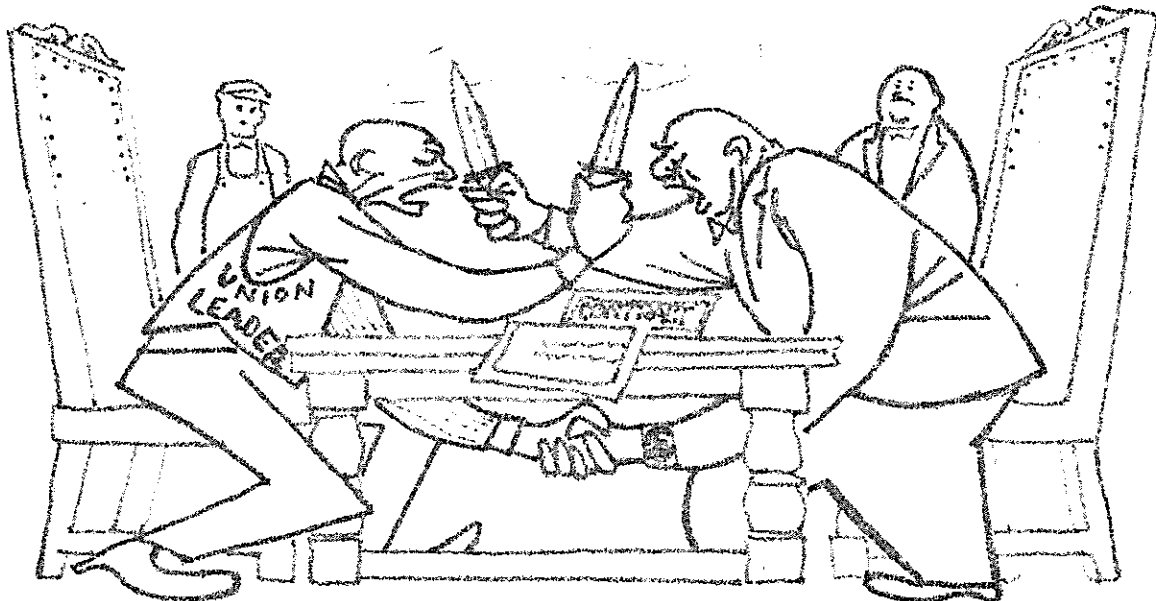
THE UNIONS

The unions are in a special position on the docks. Since 1947 all labour is controlled by the NDLB, backed up by local boards composed of an equal number of employers and "workers' representatives" - ie union officials. The result has been that the utterly bureaucratized Docks Section of the T.& G.W.U. (already notoriously alienated from its members), with its non-elected officials, has shared responsibility for labour discipline. It has not hesitated to use this position to have militants sacked. Placed on top of the membership at work as disciplinarian, and with a closed shop until 1955, the T & G Docks Section has been integrated with the employers and their state to an extent that can only be surpassed in a corporate or stalinist state. Despite the 'left' face of Cousins this is still true today - as only witness the automatic acceptance of the Devlin scheme without even consultation with the membership. And despite the participation of such as Jack Jones in Workers' Control conferences, whoever has gained control from union involvement in running the docks it certainly hasn't been the workers.

Faced with a perpetual united front of 'their' representatives and the employers, the bitterness of dockers towards these renegades is hard for outsiders to appreciate. After repeated frustration in efforts to break the entrenched powers of the bureaucracy, a turning point was reached in 1954 when 16,000 northern dockers made a 'break-out' from the semi-company union and joined the ( "ELUC" ) National Association of Stevedores and Dockers, hitherto centred in London. But for a variety of reasons this attempt to build a genuine dockers' union failed: a 6-week recognition strike in 1955 was sold out by the frightened leaders of the union in London. Since then NASD has steadily declined in the northern ports: the T & G, capitalising on its exclusive negotiating rights (when most job rates are negotiated separately day by day) has regained lost ground. There

Labour Fakery at work

A De Leonite view



is now some non-unionism as well. The NASD now exists as a tiny union, somewhat more militant than the T.& G. and still retaining some of the old militants, but becoming more and more integrated in the establishment, though this varies from port to port. It too has accepted Devlinisation and in some areas now functions as a second string fire brigade for the employers, more useful because verbally more militant. Most damaging, its existence has up 'til now served to discourage the formation of new rank and file movements. Thus neither the T.& G. nor NASD offer any leadership. Yet struggles will come inevitably when the new scheme begins to bite - if the present vacuum of leadership continues, these are all too likely to remain on the level of isolated guerilla strikes. If not the T.& G. or NASD, and in the absence of a developed rank and file movement, who could have given the necessary leadership?

Resistance to the employers' reorganisation raises organically, in such a situation of drastic technological change, the question of control in the industry. The dockers, simply to defend themselves, needed to be steeled and armed against the propaganda and double-dealing. With retention of the present system an uninspiring slogan for successful struggle, a working class alternative was necessary, with a programme of reorganisation and transitional demands posing complete workers' control. In a sharp upsurge such a programme could have gripped large numbers of dockers: at the very least a large scale class confrontation in which the vital issue of control was linked up with industrial action was possible. But the pre-condition for this was that very practical preparation which was absent, just as the absence of a workers' programme of reorganisation makes proper resistance to the Devlin reorganisation difficult. The programme and the practical activity are each mutually necessary to the other; and insofar as either was put forward separately it made for ineffectiveness. For us the relevant question is why the various 'marxist' tendencies with influence in the ports have played no serious role in preparing and organising the dockers for the coming onslaught.

#### THE OPPORTUNISTS . . . . AND THE SECTARIANS

The CP certainly had the resources to play this role: with responsible and realistic activity the SLL just might have. In the actual event neither has. The CP, with its customary treachery, has done nothing at all, not even to mobilise its own supporters, and has confined itself to a few ritual faking articles in the Morning Star. It has no perspective, on the docks as anywhere else, of sharpening the class struggle. It has been left to CP rank and file militants to attempt rather belatedly to organise national link-ups.

For its part the SLL has traditionally had contacts and some influence in the ports, particularly Liverpool, going back to before it helped launch NASD in the north. Here was a situation where they had a chance to show themselves better in practice than those they live by vituperating - and from them it was reasonable to expect better things. And on a literary level at least they conducted a consistent and serious campaign right from the appointment of the Devlin Commission. Their record here is good. However, except for Liverpool, their activity has been just that. And worse. They bring to the docks situation as to all others their peculiar characteristics as the Exclusive Brethren of the Left. They confine themselves to denouncing . . . of precisely those elements that could be mobilised in a united front, when these do not agree 100% with the SLL. Thus in their practice they counterpose their sectarian conception of the "party" to the needs of the living movement and thereby both obstruct the building of the party and hinder the concrete struggle. Not merely are the CP leadership denounced, but rank and file militants (eg the elements in the London Liaison Committee who produce the DOCKWORKER) moving and attempting, perhaps inadequately, to struggle, are treated as if they were all brother apparachniks of Ramelson.

The obvious need is to strive for unity in action, to reach and link up those militants who are prepared to fight. But the Newsletter directs its hostile fire on the weaknesses of such people: not to correct them (the way to do that is not shrill denunciation) but to give the sins of the CP yet another verbal hammering. They treat the docks as raw material for their propaganda, aimed at their own youth, and this propaganda always has priority over the actual struggle. In fact they are far, far too devoted to their own virtuoso shadow-boxing performances to actually muck in and come to grips in a real-life fight. The class struggle goes by the board while they recite their ritual litanies.

Curiously there runs through the sectarianism a thread of opportunism ... towards the Blue Union: despite the fact that the possibility is long past of it developing into a militant union, the SLL still keeps the opportunist side of its face turned towards it - and has yet to shed fully its ridiculous illusions in this spent rocket. Even now their tone and language, even when critical, is a gentle oasis in the strident pages of the Newsletter when dealing with the Blue Union.

### UNOFFICIAL COMMITTEES

When then are the possibilities? With the T.& G. and NASD both bureaucratised, the form militant actions are taking is a new growth of rank and file committees: there has already been an attempt to get a regular national link-up. These are the normal militant supplement to the unions in many industries, as they were in the docks before the northern ones were absorbed in NASD. The beginning of the decisive eclipse of NASD signals their rebirth, allowing for rank and file unity in action and freedom from bureaucracy. The growth and extension of such committees is unconditionally to be welcomed.

Can these Committees now provide the leadership the absence of which has led to the present situation? Yes - and no. At best these can be a sort of sub-trade union, but closer to the workers, more responsive and more loyal. Potentially they can lead class action at the highest pitch - but other forces determine whether this will be the case. Like Soviets such committees can play either a positive or a negative role in relation to the needs of the class at a given moment: it depends on the content. Had there been well organised committees linked up nationally in the past two years, no doubt the resistance to Devlinisation would have been better prepared. But the situation poses deeper questions such as ownership and control which require a more long term viewpoint: only a revolutionary perspective of eventual working class transformation of society opens up the possibility of even practical defence where the pressure of technical change and capitalist competition forces the government and employers to a complete reorganisation. Only a movement guided by consciousness of the basic issues can fight effectively here; and no 'simple' rank and file movement achieves that automatically.

The task on the docks is to build and link up genuine rank and file committees, and at the same time to understand that simple broad committees are not enough. We need highly conscious, generalised, consistent activity, responding to an enemy which is prepared, conscious and served not only by its own class state but also by the union leaderships. Only a Party of marxist activists, with groups in the different areas of the struggle, including the rank and file committees, can suffice here. Broad rank and file committees are no substitute.

But if sectarians tend to counterpose 'the revolutionary party' to the broad rank and file, others tend to see the role of socialists as that of handmaidens of the rank and file movement. They lose sight of the need to fight for a revolutionary content within the forms, and of the fact that only a serious party can ensure this.

# DISCUSSION: a labour viewpoint

by Donal O'Connor Lysaght

## After the Famous Victory

June 28th was D-Day. Day of Decision: Day for Dublin. It might also have been Day of Disaster. The forces of Red Ruin and the Breaking up of Law looked like being able to end the sound administration that Dublin had enjoyed for so long. But they had not bargained for the alertness of the Irish Government. With its customary intelligence in invoked the noble democratic procedure of gerrymander. Labour had to reconsider its position quickly. Even so, it gained eight seats. It is now the enemy of the establishment within Dublin as apparently as it was always in fact. However, and without any desparate measures, the tide of anarchy was checked elsewhere. Fine Gael managed to consolidate its position, and Labour made a net loss.

Part of the reason for the Labour Party's comparative failure lies in the very Programme that was expected to sweep it to victory. There can be no doubt that its publication was a mistake all the greater because of the Party leaders' observance of Fine Gael impotence and Wilsonian retreat. From these they should have learnt the lessons, firstly, of Social Democratic impotence in a neo-colonial position, and secondly of the impossibility of winning decisive support in modern Ireland for an opposition programme of less than revolutionary policy. Fine Gael's announcement of its own, too similar, local government proposals attracted to it, as the bigger party, many who might otherwise have supported Labour. (Sinn Fein, of course, was even more handicapped in a similar way.) Only in Dublin, where class-consciousness is most developed, could Labour surpass Fine Gael. And even there, it has done no more than restore its position to that of pre-Clann na Poblachta days. Its weakness was well revealed by its futility against the assaults of such single-minded opportunists as Jack Torpay and Lauri Corcoran. Both of these would be today in their natural political limbo, but for bad policy and organisation on the part of their opponents. It seems likely, too, that the Programme's basic fault will bepeated in other Labour policies.

What is this basic fault? It is what one would expect of a document that seems to have been drafted by a carefully chosen group of Rightists. It is Social Democratic. That is to say: it is a compendium of piece-meal reforms of varying values put forward without reference either to the present hegemony at home and abroad or to the Socialist hegemony that must succeed it. Of course there are excuses. It can be argued that the Socialist future may never be and that we needs must gather ye rosebuds while we may. But to say this is to ignore the possibility that Socialism may yet be achieved and also to avoid the reality that means influence ends influence means. Nor can it be denied that it is foolish to reform, to strengthen the weaker elements in society unless one intends to remodel society to let them take control. This is because under present circumstances society itself exists on terms necessitating the present power structure.

But denunciations of "Social Democracy" must be qualified by the recognition that, even by Social Democratic standards, the policy is unduly opportunist. In some ways it is more significant for what it excludes than for what it mentions. Thus it is well known that administration of the Greater Dublin area is stultified by the proliferation of authorities within it. Probably even a Fianna Fail Government will have to fuse them into one body before the next local elections. Nonetheless, Labour proves itself as reluctant as Fianna Fail and Fine Gael (& Sinn Fein) to face this fact.

Certain national aspects of it are wholly <sup>acceptable</sup> (as are the local proposals to further them). The demand for a full scale National Health Service is a great advance on the Party Constitution. The proposal on a national roads policy is welcome too. If the proposals on education mean what they appear to mean (the effective substitution of comprehensive for vocational education) they too are welcome. The proposals for local taxation are also acceptable in their intelligent elasticity.

But that is all. On the points where there is most scope for radicalism, the programme becomes studiously vague. The outstanding example of this prevarication occurs whenever the question of the credit organisations is raised. It is written in the Labour Party Constitution that the banks be nationalised. This clause has been expanded at successive conferences until it is now recognised generally that under Labour rule the provision of credit will be a state monopoly. No-one who was introduced to Labour via its new local government programme would have guessed this. It is full of proposals for "controls" of Building Societies, Insurance Companies and banks, but this is all. There is not a hint that, under eventual Labour rule, the Irish state will not have to control because it will be. This is sinister. It provides grounds for foreboding that some bright young man in a policy committee somewhere has been reading Crosland not wisely but only too well. If this be true he should look across the Channel and watch what happens to a Labour Government in a developing neo-colonialist situation when its leaders have failed to make the country the master of its credit.

Of course it will be remarked that we are dealing with a policy for local government; credit will be considered in detail in the finance programme. In any case, local victory cannot result in a national credit take-over. The first reply to this is that the national programme is considered in other contexts, as we have seen. But there is the more immediate point that credit is an essential consideration in local administration. If the credit bodies preferred not to be controlled they could always withdraw facilities from a Labour Council and take them elsewhere (as, indeed, seems to have happened in Wexford Town during the past seven years.) An immediate programme, such as this is, should consider the possibilities of trade union backing for an all-Labour credit system, or even for municipal banks to oppose the finance cartels. But in any case, a local programme should never ignore completely a national programme as this one does. Such an attitude can only breed opportunists.

Again, much has been made of the national proposal for the municipalisation of building land. But this provision would be more impressive were it explained in more detail. As it is, even in skeleton, there are discrepancies. When does land become building land? Once established that it is building land, how does it change ownership? These questions have been bamboozling British Social Democrats for the past two years. On the present evidence, there is no reason to believe that Irish Labour would be more successful. This is the greater pity in that, theoretically, municipalisation is the correct answer to the ground rent problem.

What is more, the election results would seem to imply that Irish Labour would lose little by an honest avowal that in agriculture as well as in housing communal ownership of land would be a solution to many problems. The same reluctance to work to the logical end is shown in the immediate policy for housing supply. There is no logical reason why Labour councils should prepare land for private (as opposed to co-operative or public) building except as a last resort. Again, it is probable that fear of too unco-operative credit bodies militates against the more open avowal of a socialist policy. The same phenomenon appears in the national policy on rented and leased accommodation. Control of terms for leases is an obvious immediate policy - and one which

must be pressed. In the long term, however, the aim of municipalisation of leases and rents must be stated, as itself part of the national immediate policy that will precede the ultimate aim of the provision of housing as a social service.

A major omission in the local programme lies in its whole ignorance of the local structure below council level, as opposed to its valuable proposals at that level. It is just not enough to say that Labour "will recognise" local associations. That is the least it can do. In areas where such community spirit is non-existent it should encourage such bodies. Properly, no development plan should be considered by a Labour Council until its parts had been scrutinised by the relevant local associations. Most especially Labour should work to prevent divisions between tenants and residents' associations; these differences are, at any rate in Dublin, objectively superstructural and can be proved to be merely aspects of the same exploitation. For the past year, tenants have been paying rates.

In addition to all this, national policy must give the local associations status and powers within the local hierarchy. Of course, it is true that in many cases such bodies are basically instruments of Parish priestly control. Nonetheless, they can provide useful checks to the bureaucratic lay establishment. And their very existence is a sign of the weakening of that control's absolute nature. With determined participation by local Labour branches these organisations could become expressions of direct democracy. It is as such that the Workers' Republic will recognise and cherish them.

At the end of the Programme it is proclaimed as being "the first step in creating a new Irish society". Its welcome by the forces of bourgeois publicity, with their stake in the old order, should have given the Party ground for doubt.

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#### STRUGGLE IN THE PORTS. Contd. from p.35.

This line of least resistance towards the existing movement, whether justified by theories of reform from below, or the need to avoid the caricature 'bolsheviks' remains a serious barrier to really transforming the labour movement. Revolutionary socialists must bring Marxist consciousness to the Labour movement. It is of course correct as Comrade Colin Barker says in I.S. 28, to reject the sort of 'bolshevik solution' which the sectarian abstentionists propound and counterpose to the living working class movement. Bolshevism must be concrete and work in the living movement. But what is its work there? It can only be to attempt to dominate, organise and direct it into revolutionary socialist channels. This requires the construction of a clearly defined Marxist organisation - even if only in nucleus - which actively intervenes as a revolutionary force with its own class goals, which knows how to incorporate industrial militants and transform them into revolutionists - which refuses, above all, to coexist passively with the rank and file movement as it springs up. After Sept. 15th the present unease towards Devlinisation of most dockers will change to practical experience of what it means: serious struggles are then bound to erupt. Everything must be done to strengthen the rank and file movement, to make these actions as effective as possible. More than ever, it is precisely Bolshevism solutions that the movement needs, even for limited struggles. Not verbal, sectarian pseudo-bolshevism, but a bolshevism which lives, grows, develops and builds with the mass movement neither shrinking from it for fear of contamination nor submerging in it. Neither attempting to make the Party a substitute for the broadest rank and file and trade union movement nor imagining that a broad loose movement can serve for a Bolshevism Party. It is only when a complementary relationship is achieved between these essentially complementary aspects that the kind of effectiveness in struggle now so sparingly lacking can be attained.

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# Boom Years for



Militant Trade Unionism: A re-analysis of Industrial Action in an Inflationary Situation.

V.L.Allen. Merlin Press. 12/6.

As the subtitle suggests, this book is concerned with British unions as a whole, with very little differentiation between the bureaucracy and the rank and file. Though Allen puts the proportion of unofficial strikes at 95% of the total, his definition of militancy ignores the role of .... the militants.

Allen begins by pointing to the structural features of capitalist society which inevitably lead to workers combining into trade unions and employers banding together against them. The labour-capital relation leads in any period to struggles over wages and benefits. The bourgeoisie personify the drive to accumulate capital; the workers accordingly organise to resist and to fight to better their conditions. Among other useful figures, he gives that for growth of membership from 1913 (just over 4 million) to 1964 (just over 10 million.)

A breakdown of this figure shows that the most spectacular growth periods have been 1914-18; 1940-45; and since; periods when the inevitable combination of full employment and inflation has been dominant. Allen goes thoroughly into the factors which make inflation unavoidable under capitalism, such as the growth of 'service' - ie non-productive - industries, the drive to augment capital which increases costs, the gro-

wing necessity for social benefits to produce a "healthy, well fed working class" a la Beveridge, escalating arms expenditure and others. He ably exposes the myth that trade union militancy and rising wages are the sole cause of rising prices and inflation.

On the contrary, periods of inflation present the worker not only with added opportunities, but also with extra pressures. At a time when full employment strengthens bargaining power, come speed-ups and encroachment on living standards in the form of higher prices. However, not only 'industrial' unions have increased their membership at such periods.

In the post war boom years white collar jobs have been increasingly mechanised, thus lowering the cost of production of the labour power on them by simplifying them. The overall differentials between these and manual jobs have narrowed considerably. Also, as more service workers (who take a slice out of the surplus created by the production workers) have been created by the system, attempts have been made to economise on their wages. In fighting this, the tradition-



-ally most conservative layers have been drawn into trade union activity. Between 1950 and 1964 the five major white collar unions had an overall increase in membership of over 80%.

As might be expected, measures have been attempted by the other side, with varying degrees of success, to counteract the effects of the drive of the organised working class to better conditions.

### COMPULSION

Since trade unionism became legal there have been a number of occasions when, statutorily speaking, the unions have been curtailed or even shackled. For instance, in 1915 there was the Munitions of War Act which enforced compulsory arbitration and, in consequence, made strikes illegal. But in 1915-16 350,000 workers were involved in strikes. Action was taken against only 1,612. There were also a number of memorable occasions when workers' action secured the release of jailed strikers. In 1940, Order 1305 - which forbade strikes - was invoked and between 1940 and 1944 1½ million workers struck; yet prosecution was initiated against only about 5,000 and less than 2,000 convictions were secured.

The forces making for militant trade unionism, then, cannot be stopped merely by legislation; it would require decisive defeats for the working class before the state could rigidly enforce such legislation. On the other hand Allen should have pointed out that legislation is not irrelevant, particularly in periods other than those he here spotlights. Given rising unemployment and a government exerting itself fully, anti-union legislation can have real teeth, can help to hold back wages and strengthen the trade union bureaucracy. In certain conditions it can also be an aid to employers and government in a serious clash - one where

a decisive defeat for the workers is any way posed. Above all it is an elementary duty of socialists to fight this sort of legislation every step of the way.

### GROWTH OF GOVERNMENT - TU COLLABORATION

In a further effort to contain the workers' struggles, the trade union tops have been increasingly drawn into the machinery of government, and the major unions have become ever more powerful - only 5.9% of the unions organise 80.1% of trade union labour. In the inter war years the trade union bureaucrats were strengthened; negotiations by then took place on a national level between the trade union leaders and the employers. It was then that the trade union leaders were first brought into the decision making process on any real scale.

Trade union representation on government committees, from Cabinet level down, increased from 12 in 1939 to 81 in 1951 and the tendency continues whether Labour or Tory governments are at Westminster. With the trade unions growing in membership and drawing nearer to the State, they have become more and more open advocates of wage restraint policies. In 1948 a meeting of trade union executives agreed to a wage stabilisation policy contained in a government White Paper, but laid down 5 conditions under which unions would be justified in claiming wage increases.

In 1950 another meeting of trade union executives went even further in agreeing to hold back wage claims and suspend sliding scale agreements without any other stipulations. And, as we know, in 1965 the union leaders agreed to the Prices and Incomes Policy, and in 1966 and '67 supported the standstill and severe restraint.

### TEACHING THE BUREAUCRATS

Having described the structural forces

of capitalist crisis, (and despite being subjectively on the workers' side) Allen reveals himself as the prisoner of bourgeois sociological concepts and finally offers a 'solution' which is passive, idealistic and pedagogic, particularly when dealing with the trade union leaders.

Instead of starting with a historical analysis of the trade union movement and the social basis of its leaders as the labour lieutenants of capital, he starts from their ideas and values. He sees their treacherous behaviour as being the result of working in an "anti-strike environment" and due to the "socialisation effect" which tells them that strikes are wrong. Similarly, he sees the commitment to petty-fogging parliamentary constitutionalism as the result of "a fully internalised value". "The internalised commitment of union leaders to political democracy" ?? "and hence to the sovereignty of democratically elected government, causes them to collaborate in the act of restraining themselves...."

In spite of a number of empirical investigations that Allen has conducted in the past on trade union leadership, he is unable to break out of the subjectivist approach that has pervaded sociology from Max Weber to Talcott Parsons, the modern mini-Weber - nor, apparently, can he escape sociological jargon!

The conceptions and values held by individuals and groups have to be explained by their material life experiences, not vice versa. But all that Allen's statement boils down to is that the trade union leaders collaborate because collaboration is in their conscious make-up!

It follows then that his perspective must be fittingly idealist. He ends up by proposing a "resocialisation policy". For the benefit of the uninitiated, this means a drive to eradicate false notions

and substitute the correct ones of class struggle and militancy, by way of "education and propaganda". One wonders just who he expects is going to be naive enough to undertake what amounts to sitting down with a gang of conscious and experienced judas goats and lecturing them into turning themselves inside out. On the other hand, if it is the workers who should be taught about class struggle and militancy - as is suggested by the last chapter in which Allen addresses himself to workers - one could say that it is a little incongruous with the rest of the book, where the workers hardly get a look in.

P.S.

H I S T O R Y U N T O L D

The Years of The Great Test 1929 - 39.  
The 1962 Thomas Davis Lectures.  
Ed. Francis MacManus. Mercier Press.  
10s.

Each of the contributors to this collection is an expert in his own subject, but in Irish politics it is not how much a man knows, but rather how much he is willing to tell, that counts.

Dr. David Thornley writes rather inadequately about the Blueshirts, limited both by his adherence to liberalism and his dependence on published reports and newspaper files. In his account of O'Duffy's failure he takes no account of the working class.

O'Duffy fell for a number of reasons. One factor was that De Valera, determined to block his march to power, formed from the ranks of the IRA the force known to history as the "Broy Harriers", known today - T. Desmond Williams notwithstanding - as the Special Branch. It was composed, then, mainly of Republicans with Civil War experience, men to whom the killing of a Blueshirt was merely another shot in that war.

Another factor was the composition of the Free State Army. In its early days, there were three main groupings among the officers. The first was composed mainly of pre-truce, northern officers of the IRA, unable to return home after the establishment of a Unionist state in the northern counties. Their only desire was a permanent stable job, and they saw the army as a disciplined force along British lines whose task would be to back up and enforce the power of the bourgeoisie as expressed through parliament. The other two groups were composed of different sections of the IRB, headed by Dick Mulcahy and Joe McGrath.

Taking advantage of this division, Kevin O'Higgins had O'Duffy installed as Inspector General of the Army, to ensure a well-disciplined force of career soldiers and smash any mini-Caesars with jumped-up Napoleonic ideas. O'Duffy did his job well - too well for his own later success, for he then found that he could not rely on the officers to disobey the government when he needed them to.

On the weekend of 12/13 August 1934, when the Blueshirts' "March on Dublin" was due to take place, the Dublin working people stood ready to resist; the police, having had a nod from the Government, turned a blind eye as members of the IRA moved through the streets with Thompson sub-machine guns barely concealed in brown paper parcels and violin cases. The Free State Army remained in barracks but handed over its armoured cars to the Broy Harriers, who took up strategic points in Dublin.

But the working class were not taking even the Broy Harriers on trust. In the Five Lamps area, local working class militants - led by an old Larkinite - made sure that the guns of the Broy Harriers were pointing in the right direction: they insisted that the rear door

of the armoured cars be kept open, while a local lad with a machine gun stood on the back platform!

#### STOLEN BANNER ?

Donal Nevin, in his contribution "Labour and the Political Revolution", gives a weak description of the struggles inside the Labour Party: first over the insertion in the constitution of the demand for a Workers' Republic (in 1936) and then three years later, over the parsimonious retreat from this demand by the same leadership under pressure from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation. Nevin hints at the manner in which this pressure was applied, but declines to probe into the negotiations it gave rise to behind the scenes, or even to name the trade union concerned. The interesting thing for us, of course, is that the real content of Labour's collaborationist politics remained unchanged regardless of whether or not it was decked out with the Workers' Republic banner. Nor should it be forgotten that a re-adoption of that banner at any time in the future will mean as little unless it is accompanied by real determination and a fighting programme to achieve state power for the working class.

The rest of the contributors are a mixed bag. David Kennedy, described a "Professor of History at St. Malachy's College", writes on the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. St. Malachy's College is, of course, a Catholic boarding school in Belfast, and Mr. Kennedy teaches history there. This means that Mr. Kennedy's employer is the Bishop of Down and Connor, which perhaps explains why he neglects to mention that the present inferior education available to working class Catholic families in Northern Ireland is largely due to the dogmatic intransigence of Belfast's bishop, and the fact that the Nationalist leaders - publicans and solicitors and the like - know that whatever hardships

the working class Catholics might have to endure, they could always afford to send their children to St. Malachy's College.

Vincent Grogan, S.C., the man the BBC found to defend the Irish censorship laws last year, uses legal hairsplitt- ing to prove that De Valera did not take the oath on 10th August 1927, or, if he did take the oath, that it was no oath. He uses the same logic to prove that the permanent existence of coercive legis- lation is the fault of the people who have been the victims of this legisla- tion. This reminds one of Hitler's statement that if there were no Jews in Germany, there would be no anti-semitic laws.

T. Desmond Williams naively informs us from his ivory tower that the Special Branch "has been dissolved". And Nich- olas Mansergh, a Cambridge professor, lets us into some secrets about the negotiations leading up to the Statutes of Westminster. These regulated the new relationships between Britain and her former colonies, and the compromise formula was worked out by Lord Balfour, the butcher of Mitchelstown, the man famous for his other compromise formula which simultaneously promised Palestine to the Arabs and the Jews!

There is still a need for a Marxist history of the period. Meanwhile, this will have to suffice.

G.L.

ALL PROCEEDS TO . . . .

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists.  
Robert Tressell. Panther. 7/6.

I always had the impression that this book, whose title I knew (as most peo- ple do) from countless socialist book lists, was about working class do-

gooders. It used to conjure up terrible visions of the Salvation Army; and since I never actually came across a copy of the book, these visions persisted until I read it recently (now out in paperback and unabridged): then they disappeared very quickly.

It turned out that the misleading title was in fact extremely apt. It refers to those workers who, without a thought for themselves or their children, toil their lives through to fill the bosses' bellies; workers who passively speak of "the likes of us" and allow themselves to be deluded and cheated day after day without even a struggle.

This is the main theme of the book. But what makes it great is that the bitter- ness towards these 'philanthropists' is constantly tempered by a thorough understanding of all the pressures and conditions that constantly weigh on the workers. Every action, every reaction- ary attitude, every non-action, is seen in the light of a minute, concrete des- cription of the conditions surrounding and giving rise to it. And yet, for Tressell, explanation is not the same as justification. Reactions can vary, and constantly the human element is that which itself understands and becomes conscious of its condition. As various characters come to understand, they gain a degree of domination over at least their own actions, they no longer res- pond automatically to their conditions, and they are able to exercise the choice to fight against them.

They do not, of course, all develop this way, and for those who do, the progress- ion is very gradual. The catalyst is Owen, the socialist worker whose mates all think him mad. For varying reasons, they coax him into giving 'lectures' in the lunch hour, long discourses on cap- italism and its workings, in which Owen's rational understanding usually triumphs over the superficial and silly objections of the defenders of the system.

But victory in arguments does not win fighters for socialism, though attitudes imperceptibly change. The final note of optimism is certainly not delirious, and is occasioned principally by an affirmation of the necessity to struggle - "anyhow, the children are worth fighting for". And indeed, any easy glibness at this point would be unthinkable considering the stark recognition of reality which is the hallmark throughout.

Around a central core which is the working and living conditions of a group of housepainters, emerge the various pillars of capitalist society, the beneficiaries of the philanthropists' endeavours: the employers, the church, the corrupt local council, the thieving shopkeepers, the charities set up in benevolence to relieve the poverty of unemployment - which do great work, if only for the deserving case of their paid secretaries; and parliamentary elections. While the central theme is described in such vivid detail as to leave nothing to the imagination of the most sceptical reader, this is relieved by the delicately satirical treatment of the sub-humans, whose names, for instance, express the essence of their lives - J. Didlum & Co., Smeariton & Leavit (the decorators), Mrs. Starvem, the Rev. Belcher, Mrs. Knobrane, Lady Slumrent, Dr. Weakling, Snatchum (the undertaker) and Sir Graball d'Enclose-land (the Tory M.P.).

However, if their characters are treated with humour which might almost be childish in another context, their dealings are exposed from every side. The parts fit together to form a whole which, even without the long lectures of Owen and Barrington, is so patently revolting that I doubt if anyone who reads this could afterwards consider defending it - assuming, of course, that he would have wanted to in the first place. On one side is the misery, the degradation,

the drudgery and the insecurity of the workers; and the complement, on the other side, the greed and stupidity of the capitalists and their friends.

The 'theory' is perhaps a little superfluous, and certainly tends towards repetition. But it does not, it could not, mar the excellence and enjoyment of the whole even for those who think they already know it all. For those who don't, it makes a first rate introduction to socialist ideas. And it was, after all, intended as such.

R.M.

DEFENDING THE N.F.A.

The Farmers' Fight.  
Colman Richards. 2/6.

In Colman Richards, the NFA has as good an apologist as it could wish. An experienced journalist of known socialist Republican leanings, he is an ideal choice for selling the Deasy line to many who would be unlikely to accept it. He has failed with at least one of his readers.

His acceptance of such a task implies a degree of ignorance of the facts of the case. This is shown in a number of small points. It is a grotesque oversimplification to state that, during the Economic War "the farmers had allied their organisation (sic) politically with Fine Gael" (p.5). Small farm emigration to Britain started before, and not after, the Second World War. (p.6)

On top of this comes the basic error. Correct understanding of the Irish agricultural question must take into account the Irish power structure. As this affects agriculture, it is not simply a matter of declining rural population. It is a far older question opposing the subsistence farmer to the trading elements that dominate Irish society, inc-

cluding, traditionally, the large farmers. Since the war, however, these have become subjectively closer to the smaller farmers; partly because the economic crises of the 1950s emphasised their weak position within the Irish lay establishment. Thus the NFA has become the nearest thing yet to an all-embracing organisation of Irish farmers led by the most prosperous elements. Even so, the objective conflict remains. For the small farmer with his intensively cultivated plot, the ranchers of Leinster are already a barrier to his prosperity. It is not surprising that the commodity organisations of the Creamery Milk Suppliers and the Beat Growers have remained aloof from the NFA. Not only are they predominantly small farmers, but their leaders are.

Because Mr. Richards ignores these things he can take the more obviously reactionary policies of the NFA at its leaders' estimate. That it was founded by the bigger farmers was "because of their superior education and also, the organisers claim, because they felt they had an obligation to lead their community and share the problems of the less well-off members." (pp.9,10). The blatantly anti-employee bias of the speeches of the leading farmers (more than just comparisons between town and country incomes as Mr. Richards implies) is similarly explained away. When such excuses are used by open defenders of the employer class, Mr. Richards is correctly cynical; in this case, however, the situation confuses him.

Thus his analysis of the year of the Farmers' Fight is of little value. The NFA's Green Book is portrayed as a responsible move contrasted implicitly with the "political manoeuvring" of the ICMSA, and he seems to sympathise with the Government against the latter. Certainly, he shows no sign of having the rapport with its leaders that he has with those of its rival. If he had, he might have

discovered that it was the ICMSA that employed as its advisor Raymond Crotty, Ireland's leading agrarian economist. What is more, in this position, he foresaw the failure of the Second Economic Programme in such time as the NFA was offering to work within it.

Avoidance of the concept of 'class' has led Mr. Richards to acceptance of the status quo. The NFA has been forced to disturb this by Government intransigence combined with ICMSA irresponsibility. That the rural population can only benefit from ending the status quo and not from NFA proposals in any colour, is ignored. The name MacDyer is never mentioned. Nor is the fact that the vaunted Green Book declares itself to be against collectivisation and for large farmers as long as they are Irish. All that Mr. Richards can suggest for an immediate pacification of the farmers is that the government inform them of its plans. That these might merely add fuel to the existing discontent, is not considered.

What then remains? A somewhat biased chronology of the period March 1966 to February 1967; and a description of the joys of Denmark, though here again no historical background is given, nor is any comparison made between the apparently independent Danish co-operatives and the NFA's dependence on the Government.

Whether or not the pamphlet is worth buying must depend on the individual. My advice is that he save his half crowns to buy instead Crotty's Irish Agricultural Production: a more comprehensive work.

D.O'C.L.

READ

I R I S H  
M I L I T A N T

Monthly, 6d. Order from Liam Boyle,  
37, Salisbury Street, Belfast, 7.

S H R E D D E D M A R X

Essential Writings of Karl Marx.  
Introduction, selection and notes by:  
David Caute. Panther. 8/6.

Not only is the "industry of 'explaining' Marx" waxing, as the blurb on the back of this book says in self-justification, but also the 'industry' of publishing dessicated selections from the founders of scientific socialism. C. Wright Mills on "The Marxists", Bottomore and Rubel with Marx and Sociology, Freedman's Marx on Economics, and now Caute with a general selection (whose 260 odd pages cost the same as the 520 odd of Freedman and Bottomore/Rubel combined). Like the others this one contains editor's interpretations of most of the passages. In his introduction Caute, who regards himself as sympathetic to his subject, manages to run through most of the current 'criticisms' and disparagements: Marx was burnt out at 50... Engels in the later part of his life was a vulgariser of Marx... That nature is dialectical is unproven and most likely one of Engels' vulgarisations... etc., etc. He even manages a dig at the concept of the Crisis of Leadership - which he appears to understand in Healy's 'version'.

Selections like this can do no harm, but they are so like schoolboys' primers, with the tutor always intruding, that the advantages of this sort of 'popular' edition almost vanish. If, however, the shreds lead some people on to the whole, there is some value in the exercise.

J.C.

L O O K I N G T H R O U G H  
F A C T O R Y G A T E S

The Incompatibles. Penguin. 6/6.

This is the second New Left Review volume to be published in paperback in the

last couple of years. It lacks the range and analytical sophistication of "Towards Socialism" but this in itself need not be a major fault: the present volume is a consideration of industrial working conditions and the problem of a socialist response to them. The book is presumably aimed at a more specifically trade union audience, and we are spared the hazards of what E.P. Thomson described as "sliding down the slopes" of New Left Review prose. We are spared too the presence of "passengers" - essays by 'big names' inserted to sell the book. We have our big names here too, but the pieces by Frayn, Cockburn and Philip Toynbee are unmistakably to the point, examining in their own way the mystifications of the "national interest" rallying-call.

The first section deals with the state of the British working class in the sixties. Robin Blackburn examines the "labour contract" under neo-capitalism. Ken Coates writes vividly and with clarity of the spiritual and physical battering imposed by capitalism on the industrial worker. Robert Doyle's testimony on the Print Jungle reinforces Coates' case.

The remainder of the essays concern themselves with the responses of the Trade Union movement to capitalism; on an industrial level how to react to demands for integration, "self-modernisation", and Mondist industrial bargaining in all its most recent forms.

Perry Anderson discusses industrial militancy and its shortcomings. It is accepted by most socialists that the unions cannot transcend the limitations of industrial militancy. Another agency is needed, more comprehensive and fully capable of confronting capitalism totally and coherently. Thus the need for the formation of the "revolutionary party".

This road to socialism has its specific problems too. It should be the function of this journal to examine them. T. MacG.

significance of the clashes over and around Parnell's 'folly'. Parnell headed a mass movement which used the elemental aspirations of the urban and rural poor in an attempt to achieve the political aims of the Irish middle class. The middle class needed the church to 'police' the movement. Parnell's sexual adventures lost him his clerical policemen and the movement fragmented. As John Mitchel said: "Your average bourgeois may make a very good sort of agitator, for here he can be shown, or at least convinced, that his mere material interests are concerned.... A rebel, however, you can never make him, for here the risk is certain and immediate, and the advantage, if material advantage there should be, doubtful and distant."

S.R.

NOT MUCH LIFE

Life and the Dream.  
Mary Colum. O.U.P. 50s.

Mary Colum's autobiography costs two pounds ten. It is not worth it. Apart from her descriptions of Yeats, opening nights at the Abbey, A.E. or the Dublin of the Celtic Revival, the account is boring and trivial. With the betrayal of the national struggle by the bourgeoisie - one aspect of the conflict between the Celtic myth and Irish reality - the energy of the bourgeois intelligentsia dissipated. And it shows.

E.McC.

PILATE IN THE VATICAN

Pope Pius XII and the Third Reich.  
Saül Friedlander. Chatto & Windus. 35s.

This book is an examination of wartime relations between the Vatican and the

Third Reich. The reactionary nature of the Roman Catholic Church is documented, even though there is no class viewpoint implicit in the text.

Unfortunately Friedlander's analysis falls short, far short of making full impact. Indeed, he tends to cushion the Papacy. Because the question is not posed from a class viewpoint, the Church is seen as a separate, isolated entity in society, and not as an integral part of the capitalist class system. Hence there arises a tendency to criticise the Church's position from a purely moral viewpoint and to view its wartime conspiracy of silence as a temporary wandering from the "path of righteousness". Even in the annals of bestial Imperialist barbarism the Nazi acts of genocide are an outrage to humanity; with or without illusions in the RC Church, the question must arise whether their silent complicity was true to form or a temporary lapse.

The fact that the RC Church did not forcefully condemn the Nazi butchers was not out of any sympathy for Catholics in occupied countries, but because of its obsessive hatred of the world proletarian revolution - and the desire to participate in the carve up of lands ensuing from imperialist conquest of the Soviet Union. Here the church showed its real face. A clear example of the position taken in relation to Russia is given by Archbishop Constantini, Secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (a fancy name for brainwashing) in the following statement on the Nazi invasion: "Just as yesterday on Spanish soil, so today in Bolshevik Russia itself, in that boundless land where Satan seemed to have found his instruments and best collaborators among the highest authorities of the Republics - there brave soldiers of our fatherland, along with others are fighting the greatest battle of all. We wish with all our hearts that this



battle may bring us the conclusive victory over.... Bolshevism".

This is the real church, no matter how innocuous it might appear at present. These are the people to whom the pygmies of King Street are crawling in order to prepare for the marriage of counter-revolutionary forces.

The RC Church did not effectively protest against Nazi imperialism and nor does it against US Imperialism in Vietnam. Spellman endorses the US slaughter there, and even his later 'diplomatic' line is a 100% endorsement of Johnson's policy of continuing the murder until the Vietnamese are willing to compromise at the 'peace table'. The Vatican has not denounced him - but confined itself to hints and reservations. The colonial slaves are in revolt - and the Church in its new role comes forward: "peace, my children -- back to your slavery!" At least Spellman is honest.

No. Its 'wandering' was not in the least temporary. To justify its repressions and butchery Imperialism always falls back upon the Church - and is never disappointed.

Despite its shortcomings, this book will make worthwhile reading for workers who have any doubts about the Church.

G.A.

### 'LEFT' IN PICTURES

The Left in Europe.

David Caute. World University Library.  
12/6.

The title betrays the mushiness inside. Mr. Caute effectively (though I'm sure not intentionally) says a good deal about the 'left' when he begins by demonstrating that such qualities and/or aims as intelligence, rationalism, love

of liberty and equality, anti-racism, anti-clericalism etc are not common to all prominent (or self-proclaimed) 'lefts' and therefore cannot be taken as definitions of the term - though the renegades he names stay in his Left category. By their words shall ye know them?

Himself incapable of taking a stand, he is firmly transfixed among them -- by definition. The historical narrative is not as inane as his opening remarks, but still terribly superficial. In that the information is wide-ranging, it might have been useful to someone young in politics; but it would take a veteran to disentangle this information from its thick coating of confused interpretation. This is a book for social democrats - but the illustrations are marvellous.

M.L.



Gracchus Babeuf, leader of the 'Conspiracy of Equals', the "last act" of the Great French Revolution. From 'The Left in Europe'.

THE BIRTH OF 'FREE  
CHINA'

Formosa Betrayed.

George H. Kerr. Eyre & Spottiswoode.

50s.

Immediately after the Japanese surrendered in 1945, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army began to 'liberate' their properties on Formosa. Under the Governorship of Chiang's old friend General Chen Yi, this meant that all stockpiles of food, all moveable machinery and equipment, raw materials and even plumbing and sewage pipes were shipped off to the mainland. Over the murdered body of Formosa, 'Free China' was born.

Formosa had not been part of China since 1895, and under Japanese occupation had achieved a remarkably high standard of living, industrialisation and education. Formosans' one wish in 1945 was for a guaranteed neutrality - but they were instead annexed and occupied by what was in fact a foreign power, in the form of the brutal and greedy dregs of Chiang's army. In February 1947, in response to the shooting of unarmed demonstrators, they rose to demand autonomy and some elementary democracy. Their demands were presented on March 7th, and Chen Yi was not slow to act on them. By mid-afternoon of the 8th, a large force of mainland troops landed, and before the end of the month at least 10,000 had <sup>been</sup> slaughtered in cold revenge all over the island. The troops shot their way into Taipei, and began to systematically wipe out everyone who had ever uttered a word of criticism of the mainlanders, or was deemed likely to. Most of the victims were horribly tortured and maimed before being finished off, their bodies thrown into the sea or wayside ditches. Armoured trucks cruised through every town and village shooting into the houses.

Thus the island was made safe for Chiang's entourage, and easy ground for his manipulations. He started by blaming the '47 massacre on Chen Yi, and had him shot amid general rejoicing, for which he issued

a special ration of fireworks. Still, few Formosans had forgotten his words of March 10th 1947; exhorting them to be peaceable and faithful, he had said: "Thus only can Taiwanese be free from the debt they owe to the entire nation which has undergone so many sacrifices and bitter struggles for the last 50 years in order to recover Taiwan".

Further to convince 'public opinion' both in Formosa and the US (on which he now depended more than ever) of his respectability, the butcher appointed two 'liberals', K.C. Wu and Sun Li-jen to be Governor and Head of the Army respectively. But he made sure that they would be ineffective, by holding a continual behind the scenes purge, organised by his son Chiang Ching-kuo -- second only to his father in power, and surpassing him in unpopularity. Running the Secret Police, he boasted in 1954 that in the past 3½ years he had broken up an average of 13 "communist conspiracies" every month. The reigning MacCarthy era in America meant that this label could stick to dissenting Army, Party and Government officials (not to mention Formosans) despite the fact that there had never been a CP on the island. Further invaluable PR service was rendered by the churches, which in every township in America offered prayers - Catholic, Anglican or Methodist - for the Christian General Chiang who claimed to "Hold the Shield of Love, wear the armour of Freedom, and God's sacred sword of Truth to fight Satan and to bring Jesus Christ's glory and happiness".

The two liberals were ditched after the US Republicans' victory in 1953. Wu, scarcely escaping with his life, reached the 'haven' of America; but when he tried to publicise what he called Chiang's Gestapo, he was soon suppressed by MacCarthy.

Much of Kerr's book is an eye-witness report, for he watched the Taipei scene from the windows of the American Embassy. And his viewpoint remains naively American. It is more in sorrow than in anger that he says: "The Formosans looked to us for help, we armed and financed the Nationalists, and the Nationalists were making

sure, if they could, that there would be no more appeals to the United States and "democracy".

M. Q.

C I N E M A C I N E M A C I N E M A

THE ROUND-UP

This is a Hungarian film, as clean and precise as crystal, which illustrates the phrase 'divide & rule'. Its central plot revolves around the problem facing the rulers of where to make the division. Its subtlety lies in the underlying assumption that psychological control (in a social sense) arises out of physical control.

In the Hungary of the 1860s a random group of men is rounded up from the countryside by the Austrian authorities. Most of them are peasants, shepherds and horsemen who have taken to banditry, and will be suitable, in time, for conversion to cannon fodder. But among them are a number of hard-core guerillas, ex-members of Kossuth's army of '48 who have been fighting a straggling rearguard action under their leader Sandor Rozsa. They mingle with the rest, and are indistinguishable by appearance - and must be weeded out for other treatment. Herded together in an empty compound in the middle of a seemingly endless, bare flat plain, they somehow must be made to betray themselves and each other.

The basic method is the tried and tested combination of threat and promise. A man who has confessed to killing 3 men is told that he will not be hanged if he finds in the compound someone who has killed more than three. Just one man. Initially dignified, he is soon reduced to a grovelling judas. And here we see the police chiefs' economy of effort: when their informer can tell them no more, they put him in a cell 'for his own protection' - but two other cells are left unlocked, and when he is found strangled, it is not difficult to locate the killer.

Bit by bit, by a process of progressive elimination which is seemingly casual but quite deliberate and precisely calculated,

the best of the revolutionaries is isolated. Because of his stature he is less suitable for physical persuasion, threats or promises. But in the course of the weeding out process everyone has been so befuddled and confused by a variety of pavlovian methods, that at the end a relatively simple bit of trickery induces the leader to pick out all his men, thinking they have been amnestied.

From a description on paper it all sounds a little crude. In fact, it is the physical reality of the film that lifts it out of the psychology text book. For in the abstract, taken as free and equal individuals, men do not behave like case-book rats or dogs. Which is where the question of physical control comes in. From the opening shots, the director shows us a microcosm of class society. The men are brought in like cattle in a herd, docile because they are walking in rain which pours down in sheets while their captors ride, and wear some highly protective waterproofing. A detail, but significant.

There is very little overt violence -- very little is needed. The prisoners can't get far across the plain before they are either shot in the back or rounded up by horsemen at an ambling trot -- whichever best suits the rulers. Captive is dependent on captor for food. The surrealist image of the gallows, minute on the vast plain, is imprinted like a recurring nightmare on the mind of every man in the compound, as a clear reminder of his own insecurity. The precision and economy of the police methods is beautifully reflected in the look of the film. Whitewashed walls and inky shadows make the setting, the shots are unhurried and sure, the dialogue sparse and muted; no music. The balance is preserved throughout between interest in the particular incident, and the examination of a general characteristic of class society and imperialist rule. As a picture of the aftermath of a defeated revolution, it must be one that holds very little strangeness for the present generation in Hungary.

GRACCHIA