

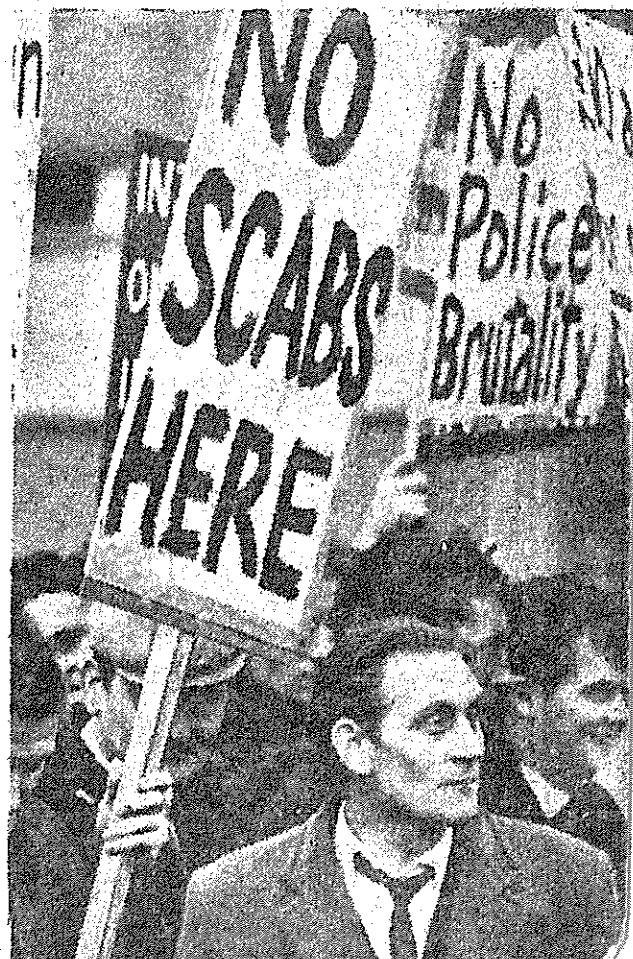
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# WORKERS' FIGHT

## UNITE



# AND FIGHT

# WORKERS' FIGHT

## No. 6 May '68

All correspondence, reports, articles, etc., should be sent to the Editor, Rachel Matgama, 31, Leicester Road, Cheetham, Manchester 8.

## POWELL OUTBIDS CALLAGHAN

When thousands of workers, including the most militant in industry, stop work in support of the calculated demagoguery of a 'civilised' Tory barbarian, it is a grim warning to all socialists and all thinking elements in the labour movement. A wave of reaction is creeping up on us. And it could gain greater force as the Labour Government grinds slowly, and by all appearances inevitably, to an ignominious end.

There is a general atmosphere of crisis and helplessness; an atmosphere of bitter and savage disappointment with the Government. The pressures of rising unemployment and cuts in living standards are increasing. There is widespread confusion as to causes and solutions. Socialist explanation is noticeably absent from the scene: the level of general socialist understanding of the overall picture is at its lowest ebb. Widespread cynicism with politics is like a creeping fog, and working class action in response to and in face of the treachery of the "workers' Party" has narrowed down to industrial action. Though immensely promising, the raw material of progress and the beginning of socialist wisdom, this is not enough. Though industrial action today has unavoidable political implications, it has not brought about, for the workers as a whole, a clear consciousness of working class politics and solutions. Socialist leadership on a mass scale is non-existent. The official Labour Left becomes more pathetic and more loyal to Wilson with each new day and each new Government outrage.

And the pressures become still more intense. In the absence of a socialist consciousness and an effective socialist movement to fight for it, the workers are now, more even than usually, wide open to the lying demagoguery of press and politicians. We even see the Tory Party making political capital out of Labour legislation on the Trade Unions!

In this situation racialism, endemic in this country as the former colonial master of Africa and Asia, is a handy weapon; it both sets up a scapegoat for the workers' anger and at the same time provides a means of dividing the workers at a time when capitalism finds it necessary to tighten the screws and inflict defeats on the class. And in the mad rush of politicians to use it, their leapfrogging has produced a rapid escalation of the disease.

Ten years or so ago one had to be a professional back-street racist to harp on about the supposed 'problems' created by immigrants. Now we hear it daily from the mouths of Cabinet Ministers and their shadows, and the fascists proclaim themselves vindicated, emerging into the brightly-lit highways of respectability. Peter Griffiths was able to call Callaghan a racist over the Kenya Asians! Racialism has been sanctified in Acts of Parliament setting the seal of officialdom to the ignorant bigotry about 'overcrowded island' and 'strains on the social services'. Labour and Tory are quite bipartisan about it - they vie with each other in the use of it. Labour's reaction to Powell was that of the man outbid, and Tory leaders hastened to stress that their disagreement was with Powell's language, not his meaning. (A source of some of the sympathy for Powell, leading to the demands for 'free speech').

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Given all this, the pressures, the fears, the misinformation and demagoguery, and the lack of any socialist leadership, we get the nightmarish amalgam of militancy and racialism, on the London docks and elsewhere. It reflects the backwardness of even industrial militants, and at the same time provides irrefutable proof that industrial militancy doesn't spontaneously grow into the appropriate socialist consciousness. If anything it pinpoints the chasm between these. The militant London dockers took up first place in the shameful parade of suicidal confusion, seeing it as just another measure of self-defense.

They are facing massive redundancy as a result of their inability to defeat the Devlin scheme last Autumn. (Cousins, like a good liberal, deprecates the dockers' racialism: but as one who betrayed them last Autumn he is actively responsible for their openness to the influence of Powell.) The great militancy was not sufficient to allay the threat to the industry which the coming automation poses, and the lack of a socialist alternative to Devlin in that struggle enormously contributed both to the defeat then and the confusion now. Nor have they even the most minimal political outlet. In the past they would have placed their hopes in the Labour Party, voting for it as the political action to back up militancy: fight on the job - vote Labour. Now they are disorientated because of the lack of an alternative socialist programme and organisation, and have blundered into the first blind alley: one consciously constructed to make them less effective.

The vile white racialism has as its driving force the current pressures on the workers - hardening consciousness of differences into ignorant prejudice. But we should not forget that it is usually easier to move workers in line with official ideology and propaganda rather than against it. The habit of demonstrating politically must be developed and channelled in the right direction, against the real culprits. (The possibility of this happening has not escaped certain sections of the ruling class.) This is the ever more urgent job of socialists.

Some lessons are clear: don't soft-pedal on the politics. Don't tail-end after simple syndicalism. There are no vacuums. It will be either working class politics, or Powell's and the Daily Express's, or even, in a deeper crisis, worse. There is an enormous gap between the pressures and the consciousness of the workers involved. Only the socialist movement can bridge that gap, and it now lags enormously behind what has to be done as the pressures increase and the gap widens further. The fear of politics as 'sectarianism' only helps perpetuate this, as just one example shows.

The "Communist" Party, which has some influence on the London docks, violently opposed including the necessary politics in the fight against Devlin: as a result, Dash didn't dare show his face for the two weeks that the dockers went mad. The picture presented in the papers of C.P. EC member Lyons standing forlornly at the dock gates flanked on either side by a Catholic and Protestant priest as the workers streamed contemptuously past, is one that socialists should not forget in a hurry. If this is the only answer to Powell, we have lost before we start. Thus it can be a short road from denouncing as 'sectarian' the politicising of a strike, to playing the altar-boy at the dock gates.

After the Notting Hill riots, and in face of the mounting campaign of prejudice-fostering propaganda and misinformation, the Left should have launched a massive campaign to counteract this, and to integrate the immigrants in the Labour movement. That this wasn't done is one measure of the feebleness of the Left. If we don't do it now, we will surely be pushed aside by the bandwagon which Wilson and Callaghan set going for Powell.

# Teachers' Conference

Teaching all day and every day, I suppose, reduces the capacity to learn in some proportion. Certainly the teachers seem to have learnt little from their effort at banning school meals (reported in W.F.4). There were many who talked of great gains and victory, of militant spirit and solidarity in the Union. Yet, and these are the facts - a) our wage claim was for a 25% increase and we've got peanuts b) the Margate Special Conference called for sanctions followed by strike action and yet negotiations were started after the first smell of gunfire and no progress has been made in 6 months, c) on school dinners sanctions, the national agreement recently made gets worse conditions than already operate in sanction areas d) according to Conference decisions, school dinner duties and patrols were to have been banned from April 1968 anyway. Some victory!

In Coventry, one of the areas chosen for militant action because of a unanimous vote, 1,200 teachers turned up to cheer ex-President Gilbert say "We're fighting this salary issue to the finish." When the NEC agreed to negotiate and suspend sanctions, 600 turned up to hear the reasons why, and weren't allowed to put resolutions or speak. After that, 70 turned up to discuss the resolutions. Some victory!

At the Conference, even Max Morris, Communist extraordinary of the NEC, talked of gains made. He accepted an NEC amendment to his salaries resolution calling for the NEC not to be hidebound by the Margate Special Conference (i.e. the strike call) when negotiating with the Government. He attacked the TIMES Education correspondent Brian Macarthur who had written that the NEC were trying to back down on the militant Margate resolutions. Macarthur, an honest and sensible reporter at least and no Lunch-

time O'Booze, said to me, "What the hell is Max Morris on about, surely it's obvious to everyone what they're up to. Are you teachers blind, asleep or what?"

Maybe it's the Blackpool air, no wives, all expenses paid, free tennis and putting that deadens the senses - some people can get thrown into the gutter and the boot put in hard and still feel nothing. And so moderation and naive optimism ruled the day. To affiliate to the TUC we have to go through a painful referendum instead of doing it there and then; the school meals situation was accepted although obviously unsatisfactory. The respect with which the Conference, full for the first time, received the new Education Minister Ted Short, and clapped his every cliché, was disconcerting when you consider the "Signposts for the Sixties" promises all broken, the overcrowding, the slum schools, the education expenditure cuts, poor pay and now the possibility of unemployment among teachers.

But this is where you have to start from and there are some encouraging signs. The Young Teachers are clearly dissatisfied and on the look-out for any and every sign of treachery. The magazine "RANK AND FILE", despite its limitations, is an attempt to reach left-wing teachers and organise them. Certainly there is a crying need to point the political lessons for teachers of their struggles for better pay, conditions and a better education system. This is particularly so in the present situation where even the minimum reforms which involve money cannot be made. All teachers' demands, more pay, 30 to a class, new schools, have become political demands and should be seen as such. As Class conflicts deepen this will become more obvious to teachers. A job of work needs to be done in the N.U.T. Politics must be introduced as a matter of course and T.U.C.

affiliation pushed so that local branches are brought into contact with other Trade Unions.

P.S. In its report of the N.U.T. Conference THE NEWSLETTER calls for a new leadership for the NUT. The report follows a common pattern: attack the CP, and a new one now, attack the I.S.Group, and call for a new leadership (the SLL?) built in the teeth of the C.P. and I.S. Fair enough, but how do you build this

new leadership? The SLL has a number of teacher members, yet had nobody at last year's Scarborough Conference or at the Margate Strike-call Conference. The magazine LABOUR TEACHER they used to sell no longer exists. At this year's Conference, the two delegates supporting THE NEWSLETTER made no more forthright and clear-sighted contributions in the Young Teachers' meeting than anyone else, yet succeeded in antagonising those closest to them.

Dave Spencer

## LETTER

# THE C.P. AND VIETNAM SOLIDARITY

The Editor

Dear Comrade,

the March 17th demonstration was the biggest demonstration of solidarity with the Vietnamese that this country has yet seen.

Apart from the coolness - to say the least - of the Communist Party and the YCL to the demonstration, many members of these organisations, including myself, took part in order to express solidarity with the Vietnamese and to call for Victory to the National Liberation Front.

It is true that the demonstration was advertised in the Morning Star and also in Challenge. But there are ways and ways of advertising. In Challenge the advert for the demo called by YCND the following Sunday, March 24th, was in large block type; that for the March 17th demo was in much smaller type.

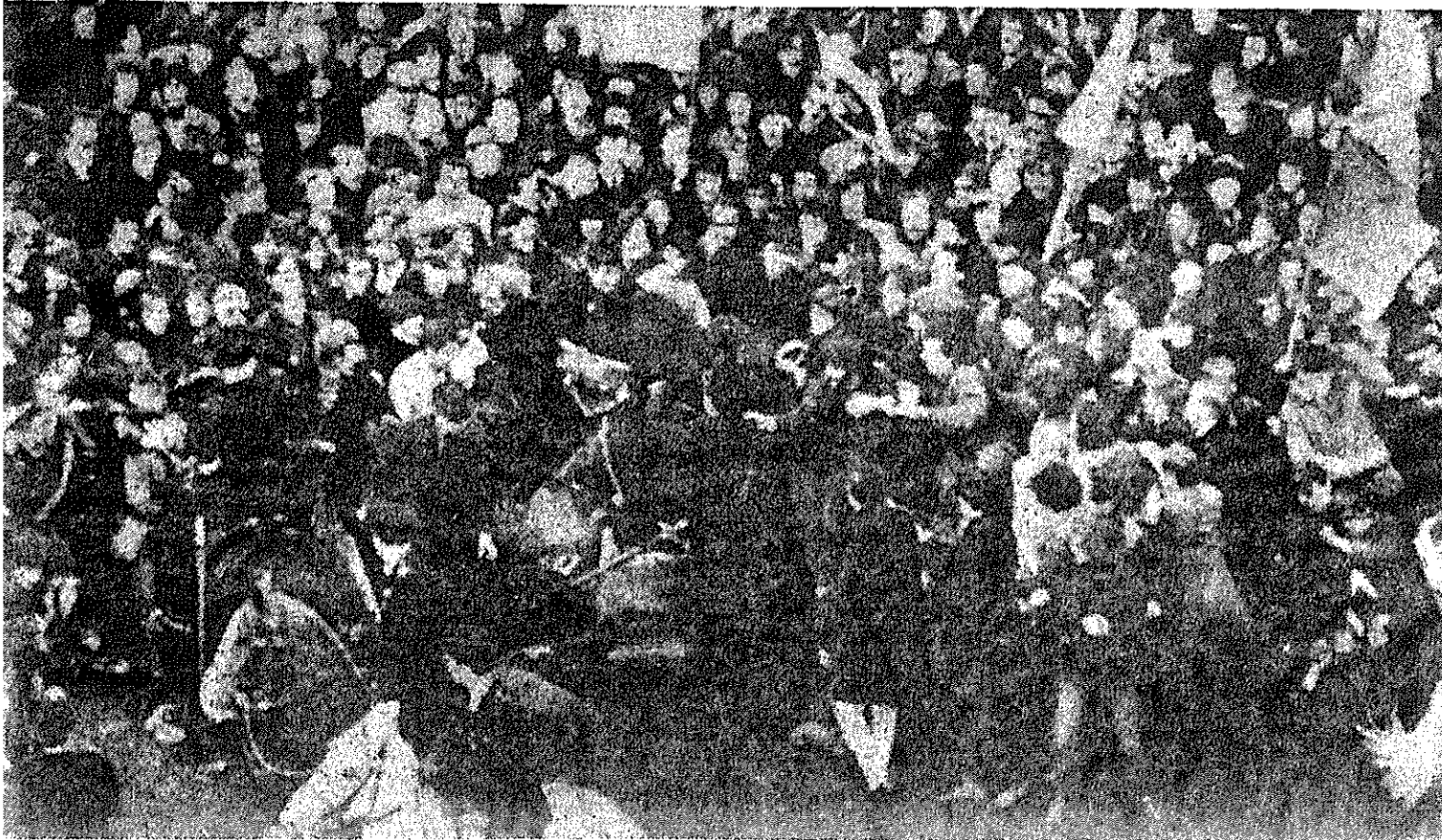
Most YCL and CP members cannot attend two demonstrations on consecutive Sundays in London. It was made clear in the YCL and CP that the more important demonstration was the March 24th demo for peace, as opposed to the March 17th demo for solidarity with the Vietnamese. In spite of this, 15,000 showed solidarity on March 17th, whilst 6,000 sang folk songs on March 24th.

The level of official support by the CP and YCL was reflected in the absence of national and district banners. I saw only two YCL banners, both of them from London branches, compared with the tens, possibly hundreds, of V.S.C. banners. And where, might we ask, was Youth for Peace in Vietnam (YPV), the Vietnam youth organisation which the YCL officially supports?! This organisation, uniting fourteen organisations, was nowhere to be seen. Rumour has it that it was involved in the Christian-"Communist" dialogue that day - within itself.

The MORNING STAR (18.3.68) attempted to excuse the meagre support by CP branches by saying "In the confusion it was impossible to do more than pick out some of the names on the banners - with no guarantee as to how representative they were" Obviously having difficulty in finding a CP or YCL banner. I can tell the MORNING STAR reporter that the main banner was that of VSC, and the main slogan VICTORY TO THE N.L.F.

And who was represented on the march?

"They came from a wide variety of political groups. Young Liberals, Young Socialists, Young Communists joined with young people from leftist groups whose banners and posters were much in evidence." (Ibid) So at least the MORNING STAR admits that the adult CP wasn't present. I feel sure they would have mentioned it if it was. And why does the MORNING STAR dwell so much on the youth of the demonstrators? There were many adults present with trade union banners including branches of the London dockers. This kind of reporting only helps to foster the divisions between youth and students, and the older working class. And who were these "young people



from leftist groups"? And why did the MORNING STAR conveniently forget to mention that two Trotskyists (by the MORNING STAR's definition) - Pat Jordan (The Week) and John Palmer (I.S.) - were amongst the speakers, while mentioning all the other speakers? This convenient 'ommission' of mentioning political opponents is no better than telling the lies of the capitalist press.

Since this large and militant demonstration on a revolutionary slogan the YCL leadership have found it necessary to do some rethinking. This is shown in the April edition of CHALLENGE, in which the YCL claims it played a major part in the 'battle' of Grosvenor Square - and the slogan is now "Victory to the Vietnamese".

Only months ago to suggest any 'victory' slogan, even such a 'mild' one as this which avoids specific mention of the combat force, in the YCL was to bring down charges of 'Trotskyism' upon one's head. Those organisations like V.S.C. using victory slogans were "splitting the peace movement", according to the CP and YCL leaders. Note Betty Reid's article entitled "Diversion in the fight for Peace" (COMMENT 17, 2.68) in which V.S.C., the main organisation involved in the March 17th

demonstration, was described in these terms: "The V.S.C., as we have seen, explicitly campaigns against the concept of a broad united movement, and not only that, but it seeks to bring into the movement adventurist policies stemming from the whole Trotskyist analysis."

If, by "campaigns against the concept of a broad united movement" she means that V.S.C. does not compromise or water down its aims and slogans for the sake of winning vicars, she is quite right. V.S.C.'s policy is not to tag along behind various middle class pacifist elements who do not even differentiate between aggressor and victim, 'uniting' on a minimum slogan as the YCL does in an opportunist manner with its allies in Y.P.V. But the V.S.C. is a 'united front' group, 'broad' within the limits set by a serious attitude of solidarity. It contains many elements from various organisations, and it has many different organisations and trade unions affiliated to it. In my area it campaigns for affiliation of the YCL and YPV. How then can it be "against the concept of a broad united movement"? What Betty Reid really objects to is not the structure of V.S.C., but its politics, its aims, and its slogan. But she dare not say this. Meanwhile, the YCL (nationally) has refused affiliation, being against any "broad united movement" where it might include Trotskyists.

As for V.S.C. bringing into the movement "adventurist policies stemming from the whole Trotskyist analysis" one can only suggest to Betty Reid that she should read Trotsky, specifically his condemnation of Stalinist adventurism.

The YCL is now changing to the slogan "Victory to the Vietnamese" is hoping to jump on the bandwagon, and at the same time trying to placate the militant elements within the YCL who have been advocating a policy of complete solidarity with the NLF - and not only saying it, but joining in the activities of V.S.C. The YCL has previously insisted that we need a mass movement, a broad united front, and that to get this we must not advocate "victory" slogans or we might frighten away the 'dears' we want to unite with. (Or maybe it's just that the leadership is anyway on that level?) Now that they have been pushed into using a 'victory' slogan, they are still doing their best to keep it nice and safe: instead of Victory to the NLF (who they claim to accept as the representatives of the Vietnamese people) they confine themselves to Victory to the Vietnamese, as a good compromise to hold together their militants and their vicars. I hope that the militant YCLers will recognise this manoeuvre for what it is.

The acceptance in that form of a 'victory' slogan by the YCL, as a result of pressure, doesn't make me feel that the YCL will change its policy on V.S.C. or Y.P.V. Even in this version, the 'victory' slogan is unlikely to be pushed or propagandised. We certainly can't expect the YCL National Committee banner on future demonstrations to bear the slogan Victory to the Vietnamese.

YCL members, including myself, will insist on the full use of the slogan along with the slogan VICTORY TO THE NLF. We will insist on building up a movement of solidarity with the Vietnamese based on the working class, and will work together with the VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN to do this. Wilson will only dissociate from US aggression in Vietnam when the working class movement is strong enough to make him dissociate; lame pleas to dissociate can only give him momentary amusement.

The YCL and CP are stagnating and are hindering the efforts of militants to build a working class leadership. Nothing shows this more clearly than their shilly-shallying over Vietnam.

Yours fraternally,

A Yorkshire YCLer.

(Name and address supplied.)

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# LUTHER KING: LOST ARGUMENT

The Reverend Martin Luther King epitomised the drives and aspirations of many middle class negroes in the striving for formal equality within the framework of American capitalist society. He played a genuine role in the organisation of the initial period of self-awakening of the American negro masses. However, precisely because his outlook did not go beyond the capitalist system, he was outpaced in the last few years by the black workers in taking matters into their own hands.

As a pastor in Montgomery, Alabama, King intervened in 1955 against the arrest of a negress who refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. After 382 days King won out, and established himself as the leader of the local negro community. 1956 brought the Freedom Rides and sit-ins. The Reverend King formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and was instrumental in setting up the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC). Throughout the late fifties and early sixties the movement for Civil Rights gathered momentum and with it the illusions in non-violent, gradual change which this seemed to offer, in the absence of other leadership. Nevertheless, intimidations and assassinations were stepped up in this period. The local police and even state police were often in the front line in these actions. In 1961 the Albany police played a central part in defeating efforts to desegregate public facilities. In 1963 King's followers, who were all lined up in their Sunday best "as quiet as mice", in the words of Pete Seeger, were met with truncheons, hoses and dogs by the Birmingham cops.

By this time, groups of King's followers in the South had decided to take defensive measures against racist attacks: non-violence wasn't going to keep them alive. Underneath the apparently unified

Civil Rights movement large splits were under way. Black working class conditions were worsening and racist provocation was not decreasing. The movement reached its climax with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Formal equality was granted - but conditions were no better for the negro masses.

Amidst the pious platitudes of Civil Rights 1964, the Harlem ghetto uprising erupted like an angry volcano. The northern negro workers, never really part of the King movement, were on the march, and King's own movement split under the impact. Formal rights were not enough in conditions of worsening economic degradation, mass unemployment and provocation and brutality at the hands of racist thugs and cops. The revolt which has since become a characteristic feature of the black ghettos is not to be revoked. Whatever the shortcomings of the Black Power movement, it does rest on the self-reliance of the black masses and challenges the basic premises of the US capitalist system.

The demands for decent housing, jobs and all the other economic needs of the black American working class cannot be granted by the profit system. It is for this reason that the negro revolt is so deep going and so dangerous for the US rulers, despite the fact that it is still cut off from the mass of the white workers and still lacks a conscious revolutionary programme. It is for this reason also that the King movement's programme of non-violent reforms has been by-passed by the northern workers.

The traditional Civil Rights groupings, including King's, rest on the essential premises of the capitalist system. But the black masses responded to his murder not by prayer or submission, or requests for new laws, but by hitting out at the



symbols of oppression - the crooked storekeepers and money-lenders and property owners who dominate their lives.

The Black Power drive and the tremendous ghetto revolts are the reaction to ages of passivity, showing an intuitive desire to change society. This fundamental movement rejected King not only for his methods - but also for his reformist horizons.

A gulf there certainly is between King and Black Power. Yet they are also connected. This whole movement is exploding with an astounding speed and force. Its dialectic is still unfolding. Paradoxically King, limited as he was, was to a large extent instrumental in preparing the ground for the present upsurge - as much because he demonstrated what could not be achieved under capitalism, as by what he achieved. The explosion of violent assault on the 'power structure' is an important phase in the mobilisation of the masses, who if they do not yet have clear specific goals and programme, at any rate know that they must go beyond the system: in learning that they have gone over King's head, and also a good deal further than the predominantly white labour movement.

#### RACE AND CLASS

In his methods King remained rigid, advocating 'peace' where there was no possibility of peace except on terms of submission to white violence. His death will have made that clear to many more. Yet despite this and his reformist outlook King was, at the time of his death, moving closer to a deeper, more fundamentalist, economic approach to the problems of the oppressed negroes. Whether he was 'learning' from the Black Power approach, or simply moving under their pressure, is immaterial. In the context of the complexity of the awakening of the masses of US black workers, such actions as the solidarity march in Memphis in support of striking workers, or the Poor People's Campaign, could hold great potential.



This Campaign, now moving in a many-pronged convergence on Washington, was conceived by King as taking the emphasis off race and focusing pointedly on the economics of oppression in America, where it is officially admitted that a quarter of the population live at near starvation. Inevitably in this Campaign there are overtones of petition to the powers that be - but the very course of the march carries a powerful threat which has sent tremours of fear through Washington. Like Imperial Rome where slaves outnumbered citizens, Washington has two negroes to every white. Despite being preacher-ridden, the Poor Campaign could mark a new high water mark in the development of the movement. Even the token force of poor whites, which has so far become involved, holds much promise.

Even if it meant a step backwards from the militancy of the Black Power advocates, any united action that could take place beyond the black confines could have repercussions at least as important as the ghetto explosions. If from this could come a broadening out to bring in sections of the white urban working class - initially the unemployed - we would see a further deep sweep forward which could even result in the formation of some kind of amorphous 'Labour' Party.

Reformist or not, led by petit bourgeois or not, this would constitute an enormous

gain for the entire American working class. It could provide the vehicle for the united action on a mass scale of black and white workers, which will be needed to vanquish US capitalism. Such a movement would be forced before long, by the logic of events and the necessities of life for the working class under capitalism, to leave behind it the ideas of non-violence preached by King and his followers, together with the other ideas of middle class reformism, black and white. It would allow a most fruitful intervention by the US Marxist movement.

All these are possibilities. The only certainty is that the movement is not going to stand still. It is not at all unlikely that it will change beyond rec-

ognition several more times in the next few years. For our part, while recognising that even the as yet passive movement around King's followers is not entirely without potential, we find the spontaneous militant upsurge in the cities still holding out the greater promise of a movement that already aims - in however cloudy a fashion - beyond capitalism.

King had in fact already lost the argument. His death can only lead to recognition of this fact by more and more of his followers. Militant Black Power groupings are evident today on the Washington march - as stewards and marshals to defend it.....

Stan Lomax

**A SAD STORY**

One of the London dockers who had suddenly woken up to the fact that Enoch Powell was the friend of all workers (white ones, of course) was interviewed by a television reporter. He said that if he (or any of us) was in a lifeboat and had the choice of saving either his own mother or a black woman, he would naturally save his own mother.

So would we all - whether the other woman was black, white, pink or yellow. But that is not the situation we are in. A more correct illustration would be the following: There are ten of us in the boat. Of these, 9 are working hard to row it. The tenth person is the boss's wife, grown fat on our sweat and toil over the years, and laden with heavy jewellery and money bags. Because of her status, she naturally hasn't lifted a finger, except to fiddle around with the steering and pretend to be doing something very important.

It becomes clear after a while that something is very wrong with the boat. Though everyone (or nearly everyone) is rowing very hard, it just isn't getting anywhere. The fat lady sitting by the rudder is the obvious person to blame. A scene starts up between her and those actually working the boat, who are about to demand that they should take control of where it is going. But just then she speaks up and points out that one of the people rowing is a different colour from the others. Most of them can see that she is only trying to save herself with this laughable diversion. But some of the people have unfortunately swallowed too much sea water. One of them, against all reason, actually becomes convinced that the boss's wife is his own mother!

What a state of affairs. Meanwhile, fat Mrs. Moneybags sits happily in her corner, and while everyone falls to abusing the black fellow, she gets out her secret store of jelly babies and tucks in. The boat drifts further out to sea.

R.M.

(Reproduced from BROADSHEET No.5, a rank and file publication in the Port of Manchester)

# JAMES CONNOLLY, REVOLUTIONARY.

1868  
1916.

Only two years after the 50th. anniversary of his murder by a British Government, we celebrate the centenary of James Connolly's birth. As he lay wounded, awaiting his executioners, he said to his wife, "Hasn't it been a full life? And isn't this a good end?" Connolly died as he had lived - as a dedicated, and entirely unrepentant, revolutionary.

In Scotland, Ireland and America Connolly had been involved as activist and organiser of the most advanced and militant workers' organisations of that time: the Hyndmanite SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION; the breakaway from it, the SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY; and the INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD ('WOBBLIERS'), the great militant movement of migrant workers which was then in the van of US labour and formed the American wing of the revolutionary syndicalist movement then sweeping many countries. All these were to be contributory streams to the Communist International organised in 1919, when Connolly was no longer alive to participate.

Returning to Ireland in 1910 Connolly found the situation changed enormously. Larkin was abroad in the land, and the unskilled workers were on the move. Since the Belfast strikes of 1907 Larkin's IRISH TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (of which Connolly now became an organiser) had gained momentum: the 'unskilled', the carters, general labourers and dockers of Dublin and the provincial towns were organising themselves with great energy, and already using the new methods of revolutionary unionism. The sympathetic strike, a conception of industrial militancy based on class solidarity as opposed to sectional action, allowed the unskilled to push up their wage levels.

In 1913 400 Dublin employers came together and declared a lockout to smash the ITGWU. There followed 8 bitter months of struggle, of clashes with the police in which workers were beaten to death. Connolly was jailed and released after a week on hunger strike. During the lockout a workers' defensive militia was organised, the Irish Citizen Army. It survived the end of that battle, and played a major part in the 1916 Rising.

The Lockout ended after 8 months of starvation for the workers - 8 hard but glorious months when all the combined might of employers and state failed to smash the Union, though they weakened it. Then in 1914 Larkin went on a speaking tour of America. Connolly took over as acting General Secretary of the ITGWU.

With the outbreak of the World War in 1914 Connolly turned towards the preparation of an Irish uprising against the British Empire. But his aims were not limited to Ireland. He wrote that such an action could be the spark that would light a fire which would not burn out 'until the last bond and debenture had burned to ashes on the grave of the last war lord.'

Of the connections of the labour movement with nationalism Trotsky wrote in 1916, summing up on the Rising: "The young Irish working class, taking shape in an atmosphere saturated with the heroic recollections of national rebellion, clashed with the self-interested, narrow-minded, imperial arrogance of English trade unionism, and naturally swung between nationalism and syndicalism, uniting both tendencies in their revolutionary consciousness. This synthesis captivated the intellectual youth and individual national enthusiasts who, in their turn, supplied the movement with a preponderance of the green standard over the red. In this way the 'national revolution', even in Ireland, in practice became an uprising of the workers." (Nashe Slovo, Paris 4.7.1916)

When it came to the Rising the main forces commanded by the rump nationalists (the majority were supporting the British Empire) were called off at the last moment: the Citizen Army was left to play a major part. "We are going out to be slaughtered", Connolly muttered on the steps of Liberty Hall on Easter Monday. But he knew that this would be less disastrous than another of the missed opportunities and botched risings which were scattered through Irish history, and which he himself had chronicled so bitterly in his book LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY. And so 1,000 men, commanded by Connolly and Pearse, went out to challenge the strongest empire in the world.

Despite a gangrenous leg wound Connolly directed the week-long occupation of Dublin, while the Irish capitalists denounced the Rising as "Larkinism run amok". Finally they surrendered, to face the vengeance of England, again urged on by the Irish bourgeoisie. Connolly was the last of the prisoners to be shot, and his death on May 12th. (at the hands of the British government in which sat 'Labour' Henderson & Co.) was largely prompted by their screams for the blood of their arch class enemy.

Today their heirs join in the grizzly job of making an ikon of Connolly, a job they share with Labour fakers and trade union bureaucrats busy at this moment conniving at legislation to hamstring their rank and file and ultimately make unofficial strikes illegal. These fakers came riding into the vacuum left in the Labour movement by the death of Connolly: and this itself was made possible by a certain lack of clarity in Connolly's own politics, on such questions as the revolutionary Party. This explains the fact that the revolutionary labour movement built by Connolly was so rapidly derailed after his death, misled by union bureaucrats and the shyster Irish bourgeoisie after 1916.

Revolutionaries are calumniated and denounced: Connolly saw this as an honour and faced it willingly. But for 45 years now his fate has not been that of a prophet outcast - but of the prophet embalmed. In Ireland Connolly is the ikon of all and therefore the prophet of none. Hypocritical adulation on the Left - bowdlerisation on the Right. It is sometimes hard to see Connolly as he was. But the basic elements in his thought are not hard to find: workers' power and direct workers' action to achieve it. The heirs of Connolly are those who fight on this programme.

Below we reprint a short comment by Connolly on the bourgeois Irish Republic now commemorating his centenary.



## LET US FREE IRELAND

by James Connolly

Let us free Ireland! Never mind such base, carnal thoughts as concern work and wages, healthy homes, or lives unclouded by poverty.

Let us free Ireland! The rackrenting landlord; is he not also an Irishman, and wherefore should we hate him? Nay, let us not speak harshly of our brother - yea, even when he raises our rent.

Let us free Ireland! The profit-grinding capitalist, who robs us of three-fourths of the fruits of our labour, who sucks the very marrow of our bones when we are

young, and then throws us out in the street, like a worn-out tool when we are grown prematurely old in his service, is he not an Irishman, and mayhap a patriot, and wherefore should we think harshly of him?

Let us free Ireland! "The land that bred and bore us". And the landlord who makes us pay for permission to live upon it. Whoop it up for liberty!

"Let us free Ireland", says the patriot who won't touch Socialism. Let us all join together and ~~cr-r-rush~~ the

br-r-rutal Saxon. Let us all join together, says he, all classes and creeds. And, says the town worker, after we have crushed the Saxon and freed Ireland, what will we do? Oh, then you can go back to your slums, same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

And, say the agricultural workers, after we have freed Ireland, what then? Oh, then you can go scraping around for the landlord's rent or the money-lenders' interest same as before. Whoop it up for liberty!

After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you don't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under the command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic. Now, isn't that worth fighting for?

And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the poorhouse door to the tune of "St. Patrick's Day". Oh! it will be nice to live in those days!

"With the Green Flag floating o'er us" and an ever-increasing army of unemployed workers walking about under the Green Flag, wishing they had something to eat. Same as now! Whoop it up for liberty!

Now, my friend, I also am Irish, but I'm a bit more logical. The capitalist, I say, is a parasite on industry; as useless in the present stage of our industrial development as any other parasite in the animal or vegetable world is to the life of the animal or vegetable upon which it feeds.

The working class is the victim of this parasite - this human leech, and it is the duty and interest of the working



class to use every means in its power to oust this parasite class from the position which enables it to thus prey upon the vitals of labour.

Therefore, I say, let us organise as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organise to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organise to wrench from their robber clutch the land and workshops on and in which they enslave us; organise to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man.

Organise for a full, free and happy life  
FOR ALL OR FOR NONE.

from The Workers' Republic, 1899.

# ENEMY!

For you,  
Enemy,  
What is the terrible death  
Of centuries of infants  
Already born, or dead  
Within their murdered mothers' wombs  
(Now, in the twentieth prosperous  
century!) -

To the "Birth" of your "Babe"  
In the time of Anno Domini?

Nothing.

For you,  
Enemy,  
What is the timeless agony  
Of an innocent people  
Gun-powdered, whiplashed and tricked  
Into obedience and invisibility  
(Who knew but the forest and shore and no  
hatred) -

To your decadent pleasure in producing  
Generations of despised oppressors?

Nothing.

But for us who reply now  
With rifles and guns and bazookas  
- Many from off your own soldiers -  
The deaths (not births, no) and bondage  
Something. have been



For you,  
Enemy,  
Nothing is left now but to sing  
The last of your Christmas discordant carols  
In the heart of Africa's forests.  
For we have found our tongues and our muscles,  
And our songs are of joyous freedom,  
Our strength is building our country,  
And we too will celebrate birth:  
Not one  
But millions!

---

(From UNITY NEWSLETTER, Lusaka, Zambia)

Above: Mother & sister of a victim of Smith's  
hangman.

# From TET to the May Offensives

For the last two months before the new NLF offensive at the beginning of May, there had been something of a lull in the Vietnam war, and to some extent the centre of attention has shifted to the political sphere: all the reports in the newspapers seem more concerned about the arrangements for talks, the American Presidential elections, Johnson's 'abdication', the reactions in Saigon to the talk about talks, and so on.

Yet it remains a fact that all these intriguing goings on, however much importance is attached to them by both the Press and the pacifists, are nothing but an expression of what is happening on the battlefield. At the very least, it is necessary to make a brief assessment of the military line-up before we can get any idea what is the motive force behind the first mutual agreement to hold talks - and also what might be expected from these talks.

The present situation is the direct result of the Tet offensive of the NLF. In that operation the NLF undoubtedly gained a great victory, and the US suffered a crushing defeat, both to its military/strategic position and to its morale. But the NLF victory was certainly not an unqualified one, despite the superhuman heroism of the combatants. The experience holds a number of lessons for the NLF (and indeed for any other such movement) which solidarity with them demands should be spelt out.

It is of course difficult from this distance to say for certain, but it appears that the NLF was hoping for a total victory from the Tet offensive. Banking on a rising of the workers in the cities, they spread their forces over a fantastically wide area, including practically every Provincial capital and a number of military targets. For the task of actu-

ally taking and holding the cities permanently, the troops committed were relatively very few. The NLF was presuming on mass working class active support in the cities. However, no prior class appeal had been made to the workers. All the propaganda of the few months before Tet had been aimed at winning over bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements who were opposed to the Thieu/Ky government but not actively with the Front. During the month before the attack many feelers were put out to these people, and leaflets and broadcasts spoke of forming a coalition, a broad "Anti-United States National Salvation Unified Front". Saigon was buzzing with rumours, and the Government found it advisable to round up a number of their 'doves' and put them safely behind bars out of harm's way. The FINANCIAL TIMES' Diplomatic Correspondent reports that "dissident but non-Communist South Vietnamese politicians living in Paris, for instance, had been consulted (by the NLF) about their readiness to return to Saigon and take part in a new coalition Government. One or two were actually brought back" (13.3.68)

These overtures were preceded, in the Autumn, by a new political Programme of the NLF, again designed to appeal to such elements rather than to the working class. It was a straight bourgeois nationalist Programme: it included such 'freedoms' as the freedom for business and commerce, and even made some breathing space for landlords. As such it was not entirely unsuccessful in its appeal to the anti-Ky bourgeoisie. Even the South Vietnamese Roman Catholic Bishops - not normally noted for their friendship to the NLF! - appealed for peace. Many intellectuals talked of recognising the Front, and the peace candidate in the 'Black' Election, Truong Dinh Dzu, surprised everyone by coming second in the Presidential poll. (He was soon

whipped off to prison and has again been arrested since Johnson's 'peace' overtures.)

But the working class, militant industrially, obviously was not impressed by this 'broad' programme: the same workers who in the summer of '65 nearly brought down the government with 3 weeks' continuous rioting in the streets, on the whole gave only tacit support to the Vietcong's Tet offensive. The Grand Alliance, with workers at one end and 'liberal' bourgeois at the other, aborted. And without the physical assistance of the workers to clinch the occupation of the cities, the coalition with the neutral bourgeoisie was of course a non-starter: that had depended on total military victory which would have pulled the neutrals into the camp of the victor.

That was not, of course, the only reason why the NLF were dislodged from the cities: there was the sheer ruthlessness of the American bombardments which reduced them to rubble. All the same, it cannot be said that the NLF would not have had far greater chances of a clinching success if the workers had joined them en masse. As it was, they did not even succeed in bringing down the Saigon government.

Despite all this, and despite the loss of morale which the NLF must have suffered through it (and the terribly high casualties) the NLF did emerge in a much stronger position: it gained almost complete control of the countryside, with the Americans set back to their position of 1965. They have complete mobility, giving a choice of when and where and how to fight. The main targets of the Tet offensive remained closely surrounded, with the Vietcong dug in up to the suburbs of the major cities. 15 battalions surrounded Saigon, and have been in a position to cut off its water, power and main food supply any time they chose. Traffic between Saigon and the rice growing Mekong Delta was brought down to a mere 15% of the pre-Tet normal, and it can be assumed that this 15% was delib-

erately allowed through so as not to alienate the urban workers. With all the choices open to them, they could avoid for a time any major confrontation; they concentrated on recruiting, recouping their losses and stocking up supplies.

For about a month after the Tet fighting subsided, the Americans hardly moved out of their positions. They dared not leave the cities open to a 'second wave'. Since then "the staff officers of the US military command .... are working overtime on plans to regain the initiative so dramatically lost to the Vietcong during the Tet offensive..." (FINANCIAL TIMES 22.3.68). Various optimistically-named campaigns to 'totally eliminate' the NLF set out and ludicrously failed to even make contact with any numbers. And they have fiddled about trying to shut off 'infiltration' routes, when all the time the NLF and North Vietnamese were moving about the country behind them with perfect freedom. The latest of these campaigns, 'Delaware', is employing 3 divisions and about a quarter of the helicopter force trying to establish themselves in the Ashau Valley, in the hope that they might trap 2 divisions of North Vietnamese who might, they further hope, be induced to retreat that way to Laos, if they can be beaten in the Hue area by the Air Cavalry. They have already lost 45 helicopters and they don't say how many men. All that is left to them is, it seems, to live in hope.

In general the Americans have fallen back on a long term strategy based on heavily fortified positions, which are now more vulnerable to the heavier weapons the NLF have at their disposal. The bases depend on air support, which can be cut off by weather conditions and/or improved NLF anti-aircraft equipment. Khe San could have been taken: but the siege had already served its purpose. The casualties would have been very high indeed, and after Tet it was apparent that the US is able to brazen out even a major defeat. Dien Bien Phu finished French Imperialism which, weakened as a world power already, had troubles brew-



ing up in Algeria. Such a defeat might not so easily finish the Americans.

Tet, however, showed that there must be limits to brazening things out for the folks back home - especially the folks that count. It was not so much the defeat itself which affected morale, but the realisation that all the 'light at the end of the tunnel' talk had been so much bluff. A recent leading Johnsonian in the State Department Policy Planning Council talked of American involvement in Vietnam possibly continuing "for the rest of the century". The Director of the CIA is reported to have said that the war "could last 100 years the way it is going now". And the Wall Street Journal concluded in an editorial that the war effort "may be falling apart beneath our feet. ... Everyone had better be prepared for the bitter taste of a defeat beyond America's power to prevent." (24.2.68. Quoted SUNDAY TELEGRAPH)

When demoralisation strikes the CIA and the Wall Street Journal, it can lead to action. If the ruling class of the USA does in fact decide that it cannot win the war, this in itself is a major victory for the Vietnamese freedom forces. They can never actually physically drive out of their country the troops and formidable fire-power of the world's richest nation. But neither can the Americans afford to sit it out forever. And if the forces that count in America decide that the war really cannot be won, then they can only withdraw as 'gracefully' as it is possible. When that decision is made, they will have lost the war.

This point has not yet been reached. The stakes are very high for American Imperialism, owning or controlling some 60% of the world's economic resources - and anxious, in the words of former US Ambassador to Japan Professor Reischauer, to prove "that so-called (!) wars of national liberation do not pay." But there are other worries, not least among them the war of 'national liberation' of the black American workers behind their own lines. Twice as many troops were needed

in Washington after King's murder than in Khe San, and the White House stood as a beleaguered island in the black curfew. The cost of the damage to property must be added to the cost of the war.

The ruling class of the US are by no means against the war ending, as witness the general rise on Wall Street when Johnson announced the limiting of the bombing of the North, and again when Hanoi agreed to talks. A consumer boom has been forecast if the war is actually ended, and plans have been drawn up to lessen the inevitable recession that would come with peace. Here of course the US rulers are well aware that nothing is guaranteed by their system, and that the possibility of a serious slump exists. The run on the dollar only shows the basic instability of US capitalism. Economically the US may be caught between the devil of threatened dollar devaluation if the war continues, and the deep sea of slump if it ends.

If they do decide to cut their losses in Vietnam, they will want to do it in a way that least jeopardises their position in the rest of Asia. They can be sure of Moscow's assistance in this, both directly and with pressure on the NLF and Hanoi.

The acceptance of talks by the NLF and Hanoi can only mean one of two things: either that they have indeed been bombed and shot into compromise and de facto submission - or that they are stronger than ever, both militarily and in their determination to win. On all the evidence available, including that of preparations in Hanoi for a new ordeal by bombing if talks break down, we can be fairly confident that it is the latter. And though the principle remains that the Americans have no rights whatever to be in Vietnam and therefore no rights to negotiate their presence or departure, there are no doubt some very compelling practical reasons for the NLF and Hanoi to sound out if the Americans are yet ready to accept their conditions (US withdrawal, recognition of the NLF, reunification of

Vietnam and an end to all foreign interference) in return for a face-saver.

(If this face-saver includes tacit or active acceptance of continuing US domination of SE Asia, American Imperialism will have won a respite and something of a victory. But it would be impossible to accuse the Vietnamese - isolated, and given scandalously little help from the so-called Communist countries who pressured the Vietminh into accepting the situation that developed into the present war - of dishonour or cowardice if they decide they have had enough of being the front-line of the battle for Asia. And however much it may be dressed up by American Propaganda, the lesson will not be lost on liberation movements throughout the world that, given enormous courage and determination, Imperialism can be repulsed - even if not, for the moment, conclusively defeated.)

There are other kinds of face-saving, such as leaving the Saigon Government to defend itself. But, since it can have no illusions whatever in the puppet army, however much it is expanded (which only weakens it more) US Imperialism would have to have decided that it is no longer bent on victory.

In the sphere of 'settling the war politically' there has been much talk of a coalition in Saigon between the NLF and the more amenable puppets, possibly following an American-arranged coup to get the hard-liners out of the way. But this again would only be a question of forms; it would be a form of recognition that

one side or the other has won the battle. On this recognition will depend who really has the power: who controls the guns. Which is why both sides are still fighting to gain the recognition that they have won: since only one side can win, and that is the NLF, it is fighting not so much for victory as for recognition of its victory.

The latest offensive is being frantically played down. On its second day, with over 100 targets under simultaneous attack, it didn't even get a place in most news bulletins: the building chosen for the Paris talks, and heart transplants, were pushed up to the front line in the propaganda war. But the channels of information to the ruling class are not so easily blocked: the war may at last be approaching its vital turning point.

One possible danger ahead is that what is won in the streets and forests and fields of battle may be lost at the conference table, though an exact repetition of the ~~past~~ ~~can be ruled out~~. There is, however, danger. We can be sure, for a start, that the Americans have some ideas up their sleeve for making gains at the conference which they cannot make on the battlefield. It will be up to the NLF and Hanoi to make certain that any agreement they sign exactly expresses reality - and that reality is that Imperialism is losing the war. And having signed, they themselves know well enough from past experience, that that will not be the end of the road.

Jackie Cleary

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