

WORKERS'

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THE SHOP FLOOR TRIUMPHS

NOTICEBOOK

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EDITORIAL



TGWU Rejects Social Contract

Its nearly 6 years since we last saw Jack Jones publicly moved almost to tears. Then, as now, it was not because of the plight of workers, our suffering and hardships, but rather the blatant exposure by the shop-floor of his own betrayal of the working class.

In 1971, while the dockers were overwhelmingly rejecting the industrial relations act, Jack Jones was busy selling them out. The Jones Plan it was called, and pictures of him waving aloft a piece of paper and making 'peace in our time' speeches, were soon replaced by photographs of a sad, tearful man, having been rejected by his members and even assaulted.

This month he was again rejected, this time much more positively. At the TGWU Conference, the shop-floor overwhelmingly rejected the social contract that he had so carefully helped to bring into existence and preserve. This was a fitting send-off for a man who has consistently sacrificed the interests of workers to those of the employers and ruling class.

But it is not merely the shop-floor of the TGWU that has stood up to be counted this month.

Miners Reject Social Contract

Earlier on, the miners by a large majority, rejected Joe Gormley's plea for 'moderation' and a phase 3. They voted for £135/week for face workers by November 1977, a blatant rejection of the social contract. Equally important, they rejected new productivity deals which would have intensified the already brutal and difficult lives of miners.

SOCIAL CONTRACT SHATTERED

These developments, coupled with the previous rejection of any phase 3 by engineering workers, effectively shatter the social contract. What a great day it is for the labour movement, for these developments have broken the Labour Party's con-game in the trade union movement; they are vital steps forward in all of our consciousness, in the resurgence of power at the shop-floor within trade unions, and they are vital steps forward in breaking the hold and influence of corrupt and anti-workingclass trade union officials.

DANGERS

But we should not underestimate the power of the state or these officials. They will strive in every way to find other means of shakling workers to preserve the capitalist system that nourishes them.

We must be on our guard. Rejection of this social contract mustn't be diverted into acceptance of another. We rejected the industrial relations act, yet found ourselves accepting the social contract. We shouldn't make the same mistake again.

This will mean facing the full force of the state, for if they cannot persuade us, they will beg, and finally attempt force.

But we can face them.

This fight to protect our living standards, our jobs and wages will strengthen us, strengthen our organisations, our understanding of the system as it really is, and force us all to seek alternatives, revolutionary socialist alternatives, and ways of achieving them.

The Labour Party's phoney 'socialism' is a dying force. We workers have the future in our own hands.

The march of 15,000 workers from all over the country in support of the Grunwick workers demonstrates again the class solidarity and power we have. Let's direct it, not only to protecting our living standards and democratic rights, but to changing our life, changing society, so that it serves the majority, the workers in Britain.





WHAT IS

AT

The Grunwick strike is no longer an ordinary struggle. It is a fight by the working class to defend the basic democratic right to unionise. On the one hand, there have been vicious police attacks, government threats and a press and TV slander campaign, and on the other, misleadership and betrayal by the trade union bureaucrats, reformist Labour Party and the so-called "Communist" Party.

Reaction Lines Up

The racist boss, Ward, who said, "I can buy a Patel for £15 a week", has the backing of reactionaries, like Tory M.P. John Corst and the National Association For Freedom, run by people like Viscount de L'Isle, one of the richest men in Britain, and Brian Crozier who used to run an organisation called 'Forum World Features' for the U.S. C.I.A. The police and Special Patrol Group have viciously attacked and arrested pickets to get scab labour into the factory. The Government has issued various threats against the pickets and Post Office workers who are still blacking Grunwick's mail, despite suspensions. Their action is taking on the entire forces of the state and law.

HAPPENING

GRUNWICK



False Friends

Whilst Ward is the main enemy, the biggest brake on the struggle has been the sell-outs by such union leaders as Tom Jackson of the Union of Post Office Workers, who tried to stop the blacking of Grunwick's post, even though to deliver the post would mean his members crossing picket lines! The TUC has refused to mobilise the entire Trade Union Movement and close down the factory by cutting off gas and electricity. Roy Grantham,

secretary of APEX, has tried to divert the struggle down reformist lines, such as government arbitration, and when these methods have failed, will still not rely on the workers' own strength and mass struggle. Instead he said pickets would be limited to 500 so as to "stop violence", thereby blaming the pickets for the violence.

Cutting through the Lies

The Strike Committee's reply exposed these betraying tactics. "We were not consulted about the statement on picketing today, and we totally reject the views expressed by Roy Grantham. Today's violence was caused by the Special Patrol Group.....Unless we escalate the picketing and blacking of vital services to the company, we will be outside the gates trapped in a legal wilderness for another 10 months."

Faced with repression and betrayal, large sections of the working class have mobilised in support of the strikers, rejecting the mis-leadership of the Trade Union bureaucrats who put in the odd appearance at the picket for the television cameras and who pose as leaders of the struggle. An important feature has been the multi-racial class solidarity, despite the attempts to split the workers along racial lines.

Relying On Your Own Strength

This strike has shown that the Labour Government, police, press and TV, trade union bureaucrats, Labour Party reformists, are all tools of the capitalist class to maintain this society of cruel exploitation. It has also shown that militant mass action can defeat brute force and intrigues, and win concessions from the capitalists. If we have the strength to do this, then surely we have the strength to sweep away all oppression and misery forever!

SUPPORT THE GRUNWICK WORKERS

All workers should support Grunwick in every possible way - either by joining the picket lines or raising money and support for the strike in your trade union branch and among your friends.

Bonuspool and Trucolour films should be boycotted, as should the following chemists in London, who all use Grunwick:

Atkins Chemists, 124, Holloway Rd., London N7; Mayfair Pharmacy Ltd., Head Office, 11, Ludgate Hill, E.C.4; Paul Edward Chemists Ltd., 50 Newington Green, N.16; and 824 Caledonian Rd. N1; P.J.Chemists Ltd, 3 Goswell Rd. and 199 Old Street, EC1.



HIGH RISE

FLATS ..

BIRMINGHAM EVE MAIL
JUNE 22 '77

by BILL LUDFORD and JUNE WALTON
FAMILIES were trapped on the roof of
a blazing multi-storey tower block in Bir-

mingham this afternoon. The blocks, containing 240
Fire crews battled one, two and three-bed-
through smoke and choking roomed maisonettes and flats.
flames to reach them are also unfit for housing
almost 200 feet above elderly residents. The flights
the ground. of stairs and unreliable lifts
are just two of the factors
to be taken into considera-

tion. The blocks have been deteriorating slowly but
surely over the years. The
two buildings have been
dogged by decay, dereliction
and vandalism. Everything
started off well enough
nearly 20 years ago.

After being trapped several storeys up in a
fire recently, Birmingham tenants of a high-
rise block refused to move back into their
flats and demanded rehousing.

The action of these people highlights the
day-in, day-out nightmare of living in high
rise blocks of flats. Living in these cheerless,
concrete boxes is hell. Damp seeps through the
walls, and the lifts are forever breaking down -
which is no joke when you're on the 14th floor.

Yet thousands and thousands of these flats have
been built. Successive governments virtually
ordered local authorities to build them. And by
the mid-1960s, nearly one quarter of all council
"homes" were flats, five or more storeys high.
But these multi-storey blocks are more expensive
to build and maintain than ordinary houses.

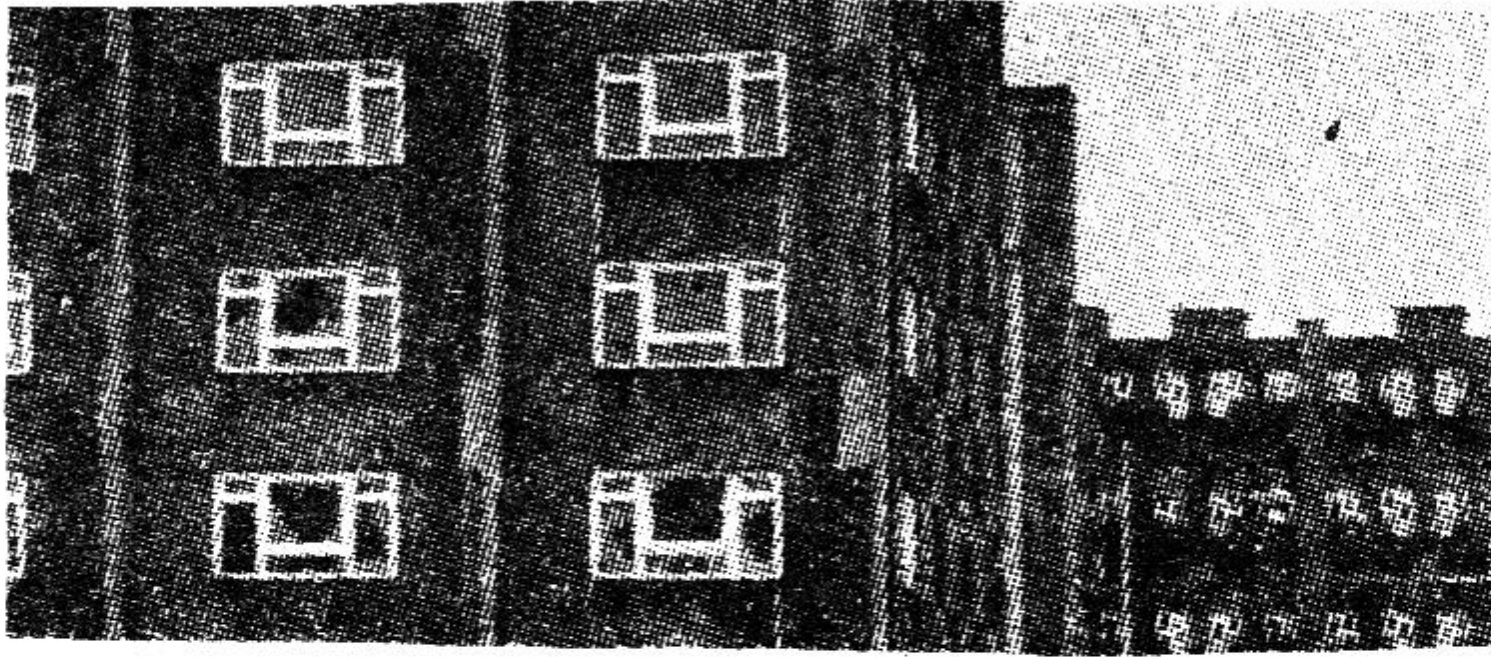
MAJOR safety
checks were being
made today at Bir-
mingham tower
blocks after part of a
balcony on an eight-
storey block plunged
40 feet to the ground.

A man narrowly
escaped injury as the rail-
ings on a fourth floor
balcony crashed on to a
lower balcony and plum-
meted to the ground.

railings gave way as
Lewis, of Comp-
e Meadway,
was water-
balcony.

Trapped

● An 89-year-old widow
was trapped under pile of
rubble when the plaster-
board ceiling of her five-
year-old Walsall council
flat on the ground floor
collapsed this afternoon.
Neighbours rushed to the
aid of Mrs. Lilian Bake-
well of Bescot Street.
She was released by Wal-
sall firemen and taken to
all General Hospital
entering from shock.
Walsall Housing officials
were called into investi-



So why were they built? Who stood to gain? For it certainly wasn't the people who have to live in them!

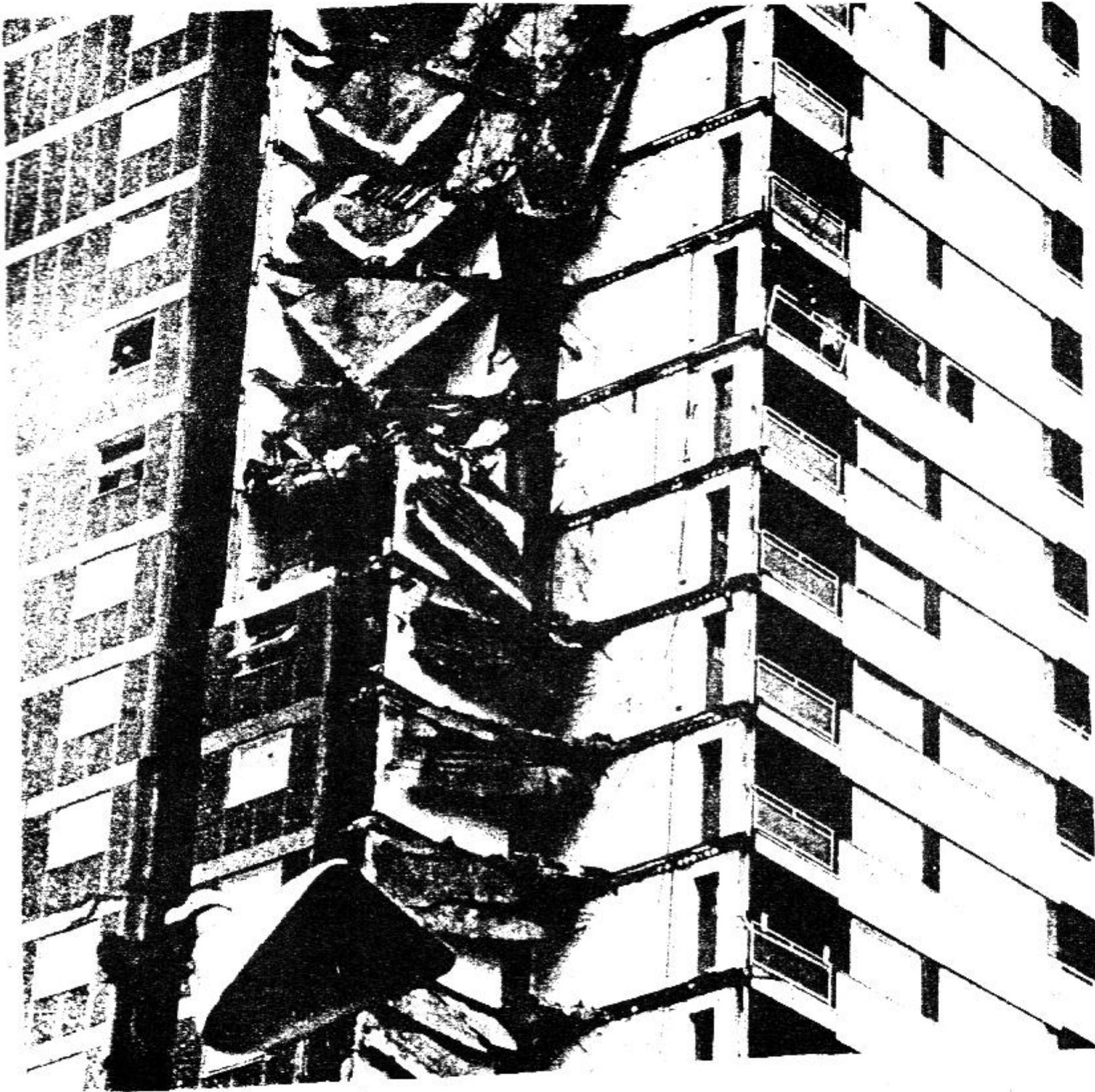
As always under capitalism, it was the profit-mongers who won out, - this time the huge civil engineering and construction monopolies, such as George Wimpey, John Laing, Taylor Woodrow.

In the 1950s, these firms were trying to develop new technology, new mass building techniques, so that more buildings could be produced more cheaply but for more profit. They developed what's termed "industrial systems" building; such are the high-rise flats.

These firms also needed building contracts to try out their new methods and ofcourse to push up the profit. With the demand for private housing changing so suddenly, they soon latched on to the local authorities' building schemes as their best bet for long-term profits. The "slum-clearance" programmes would mean a steady demand for building, high profits and a chance to try out the high-rise flats. Even better, the local governments gave these huge firms subsidies to build these monsters! What a prospect for these money-grabbing capitalists!

A final bonus was that since these multi-storey buildings called for special technology and machinery, it was only the huge firms who could tackle them. The small and middle size firms could be squeezed even more out of business, and become easy pickings for takeover by the 'Biggies'.

What was a nightmare for the people living in them, was a real 'dream-come-true' for the construction bosses.

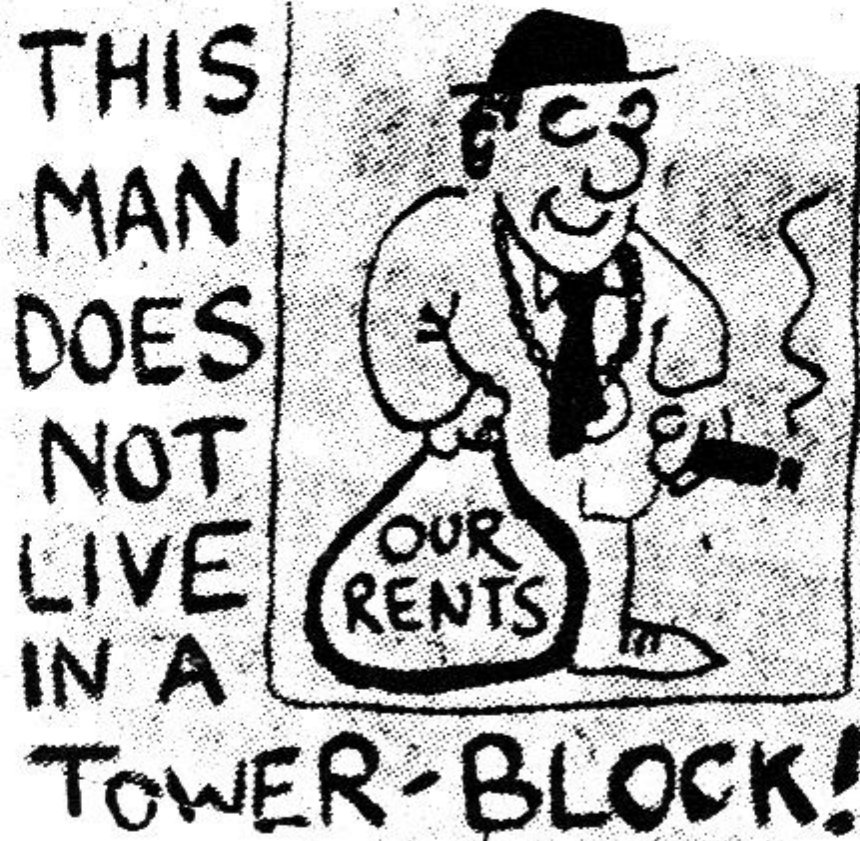


RONAN
POINT

Tenants' protests, together with such disasters as Ronan Point, when one side of a high-rise block collapsed, have led to local authorities abandoning the building of multi-storey flats. But the profits have been made - and the big firms have moved on to pastures new in office building. They've left behind them the people who are still trapped, living 20 storeys up in concrete boxes. For them there is no hope of new pastures, little hope of escape. With the chronic housing shortage and recent cuts in council house building, they have no alternative.

Pseudo-socialist council housing policies are not drawn up with the workers in mind, who are going to live in these council "homes". The housing policies are used by the big construction firms for their profit. They're used by the local government councillors (Poulson, T. Dan Smith etc.) for their profit.

Housing under capitalism is always for profit not people!



Do you know

The fares on British Rail are forever going up, while the state-run company claims a yearly deficit.

In the meantime, British Rail is to spend £15,000 on name plates for more than eighty of its Inter-City locomotives. British Rail believes that £180 spent on each locomotive will mean a bigger return when they are scrapped.

Plates from old steam engines are now changing hands at up to £500 each. This then is how British Rail invests our money! How does this help us, who have to fork out more and more money, if we ever want to travel by train?

There are now at least 149,000 school leavers without jobs.

Thousands have been unemployed ever since they left school last year. The numbers will swell even more in the next two months.

What has the future in store for all these young people? What can they do? Society just guiltily tries to ignore them and their problem, by providing some miserable dole money and a few training or retraining schemes which have long waiting lists and a promise of unemployment at the end!

How much a subcontractor for general outside gardening jobs gets and how much he pays his workers?

On an ordinary day two workers may lay down 500 yards of turf, for which he pays them £10 each.

The subcontractor gets paid £3.20 a yard which makes £160 - a da

A Real Life Story

* * * * *

The GLC is the biggest employer of construction workers in London. It has agreements with the Construction Workers' Union that it will not engage in the practice (which is now rampant throughout the industry) of sub-letting work out on the basis of a lump sum of money for a certain amount of work, no questions asked. - THE LUMP.

Nevertheless, although the construction workers' union chiefs never tire of claiming to have "fought long and arduous battles" (poor souls I feel sorry for them) to get these agreements with their buddies in the Labour Party, there is not a single GLC contract of any size in London which does not employ this type of labour. Not many workers are surprised at this discrepancy between promises and practice, because it is quite clear to anybody with even half a head that you cannot win at the conference table what can't be won on the battlefield.

THE LUMP

The struggle against the lump, most building workers will tell you, has for the last few years been very sharp. Workers have served imprisonment. Injuries, some serious, have been sustained, strikes galore, Labour Party ministers have promised 'action', Bills have been passed, so what? Not only is the lump still being practiced, but it is more widespread than ever!



FAITH IN THE MASSES

Having no faith in the masses is an infectious disease caught from the capitalist class by most leaders of the so-called 'Labour Movement! For although 'paying homage' to the working class and worming their way into the leadership of the workers' organisations, with a mixture of sweet words and the dexterous use of the elbows, they in fact aspire to the capitalist way of life and firmly believe that 'history is made by heroes!

Just the same there are times with everything seemingly stacked against them, (even their own organisations) when the workers have shown how successful the 'mass line' is in solving the problem facing the people. I was privileged to have worked on a job, where four labouring men, Union members, decided they had had enough and would have a go at changing things themselves. Four labourers (to begin with) took on the mighty Labour-controlled GLC, the Construction Union social-democratic and revisionist chieftains, wild-cat lump employers, and the Metropolitan Police and won!

The GLC Construction Dept. started work on one of their many sites in London's Bessborough Road, in 1973. Bricklaying, carpentry, concreting, electrical work etc. was all sub-let out to a lump contractor named in this case (he has been known to go under other names) as O'Conner. Also on the site to do all the sweeping and cleaning up, unloading bricks, cleaning lavatories and such like were four directly employed labourers. These were: Tim, a 60 year old Irishman, who since leaving his country 44 years before had scraped out a living working for the construction bosses. He had been insulted and kicked around morning, noon and night for most of that time. Alan who hailed from Jamaica, was 53 years old. He had suffered the indignity of contract work under the racist cotton farmers of Mississippi in the 1940s. Steve, a young man of about 24 who had fallen under the evil practice of drug-taking, and Tom, a local man from the surrounding estate. All of them knew plenty about trouble, but by and large had managed to retain the fine qualities of the working class of modesty and hard struggle.

On hearing about the agreement between their Trade Union, UCATT and the GLC, from Tom, Alan thought it strange that he had not been made aware of it before. Tim said whatever the reason for the union not letting the rank and file know about this agreement in a widespread fashion, now they did know it was their duty to turn it into reality.

Electing Tom as their steward, it was agreed that he should go into the office and inform the management that they were failing to carry out the agreement between the union and employers, that the contract which they had with the lump merchant was illegal and should be revoked. Also that the men working for O'Conner should be taken on direct by the GLC with no loss of wages. Failure to do this, Tom added, would result in the GLC workers taking action that would ensure the implementation of the agreement.

THE FOUR FIGHTERS

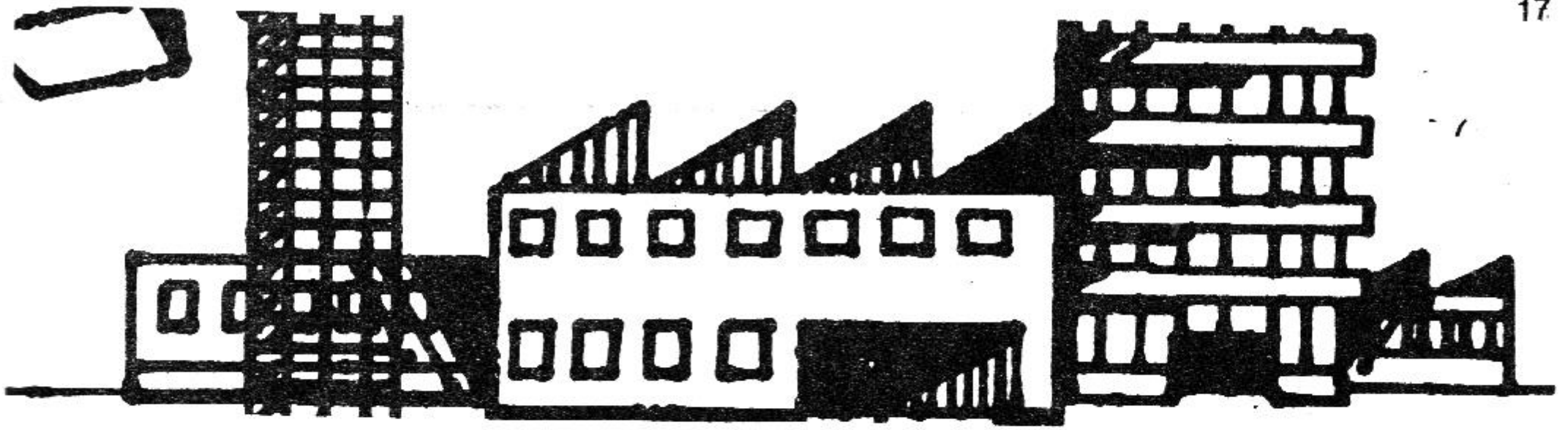
The roar of laughter that went up in the General Office when Tom put this to the Site Manager, nearly brought the roof down. The Manager, a Mr. Linetreader, stood there his big belly shaking up and down with laughter. Tears streamed down Mr Bullyboy's, the General Foreman's face. Mr. Grovel, the timekeeper, grinned behind his hand. "You a representative!" squeaked Linetreader, "A representative of the 'Bog House Gang'!" roared Bullyboy. "Go away, son," said the Manager, "before I sack the lot of you. You take action?" he continued. "The four of you together couldn't knock the froth off a pint of beer!" Tom left the office followed by peals of laughter.

After a short meeting the four decided to call an organiser. Having to use the office phone, the manager was able to hear quite plainly that the 'Bog House Gang' were getting in touch with UCATT. Tom was told by his union that "someone will be down to see you."

THE PICKET STARTS

The next day the 'Bog House Gang' were told by Linetreader that they were all being transferred immediately to separate sites scattered across London. Putting their heads together, the 'Bog House Gang' decided to ignore the transfer order which meant they were sacked and picket the job.

Next morning the 'bog House Gang' stationed themselves, two at each of the site's main gates, with their home-made placards demanding justice. The first car-load of O'Conner's men drew up outside the job. Approaching old Tim and Tom the self-employed builders asked what was going on. When it was explained to them they just got back in their car and went back home, with the parting remark that they would rather eat grass than be a blackleg. Not one workers attempted to cross the 'Bog House Gang's' picket-line. Even the postman refused to leave the mail and took it back to his office.



Linereader, Bullyboy and Grovel didn't find it so funny now, being on the big building site all alone with no workers to push around. After a week or so, the workers still refused to pass the picket-line, even to the extent of most of the self-employed being sacked by O'Conner for not attempting to force their way past the poorly-manned picket-line. It became clear that the construction bosses and leading trade union officials were working in cahoot against the 'Bog House Gang'. They agreed to close the job and leave the four labourers outside 'roasting'.

SUPPORT ARRIVES

In struggle, once you have stuck it out and passed a certain point, the rest seems easy. The 'Bog House Gang' found things starting to fall into place. First of all, some of the self-employed came back to give money. Trade Unionists in the area started to arrive to help man the picket-line. Women shoppers got to know about the struggle and even brought cups of tea from their houses and flats. Donations started coming in from other building sites; £30 from Higgs & Hills, Balham Hospital. £45 from McAlpine, New Covent Garden, and many more.

One of the most amazing things was the transformation of Steve. For a long time on drugs he had been given to deep fits of depression and despair. But now on the picket-line and everything that goes with it, he visibly changed. He straightened up, the chest went out and a kind of sparkle came into his eyes and one could see what a fine lad he really was.

Using inside information supplied by a sympathetic office worker at the GLC HQ, the 'Bog House Gang' obtained the addresses of shop stewards in other GLC contracts. They sent them letters explaining their struggle and informing them that they intended widening the fight to counter the moves to isolate them and that they intended to picket 'The Priory', a big GLC contract in Richmond on a certain day and bring it to a stop.

Two of the 'Bog House Gang' arrived at the gates of the vast GLC Priory Road site at about 8 am. on the appointed day. But they weren't the first. A big crowd of building workers from other sites were already there and by 10 am there were hundreds with banners and placards showing their support for the 'Bog House Gang'. The workers on the 'Priory' held a meeting including the self-employed workers, then they came out and joined us altogether. Seven GLC construction sites and two big private sites stopped work that day.

THE LABOUR BIG SHOT AND BROTHER KIDEM

At 2 pm. a large car drew up, followed by two police cars. Out stepped a Labour Party big shot from the GLC. Making his way to the entrance of the site, he said in a well-cultured voice, "I am an official of the GLC. Remove that banner from the entrance. I wish to enter the site."

"To go in there, mate, you'll need the permission of the picket leader," a man told him, "He's over there."

Coldly he looked at Tom, slowly from tip to toe. Flanked by the police sergeants he said, "Well, my man, are you going to allow me to pass or not?"

Tom looked at the well-groomed big shot, his throat went dry, he felt like he was back in the imperialist army facing a 'Redneck' (a long-serving aggressive NCO). Tom's courage began to wane under the glare of the big shot, when a rough voice close behind him said, "Tell him to get stuffed!"

Drawing strength from the man close by, Tom replied steadily, "No. The site is closed." The mass of builders pressed forward towards the police escort. All the wind seemed to go from the big shot's sails. The police looked at each other uncertainly and scurried away with their Labour Party pal buried in their midst.

The next man on the scene had quite a different attitude. Getting out of the car was a well-known UCATT official, Brother Kidem. Breezing among the workers with a "Hello lads" every so often, he made towards Tom, slapping him on the back and looking around himself like a hen seeking somewhere to lay her egg. Brother Kidem informed Tom that there was a big meeting at County Hall between UCATT officials and Mrs Dimson (GLC Housing Chairman), and could he be present as a representative of the 'Bog House Gang'?

THE FIGHT WAS WON

Seated around the great oval table, Tom faced the 'united front against the workers' committee, comprised of social-democratic and revisionist chieftains of the GLC and Trade Unions. They tried everything: the stick and the carrot, but Tom stuck to his guns, knowing that the battle had been won on the battlefield. After two hours, the revisionists and social democrats huddled together blowing down each others' earholes. At last, coming across to Tom, Mrs Dimson said, "Alright, You win." The Bog House Gang was to be reinstated on the Bessborough Road site and to remain on the site with their elected steward.

When the Bessborough Road job started up again the 'Bog House Gang' marched in first, taking full steps, chests out and heads up. The women waved from the flats on the estate, the postman gave a whistle and a wave and dumped a sack of mail on the office step. Linetreader, Bullyboy and Grovel peeped from the office windows with faces that looked six months dead.

As to the question of the lump and the right to work, that problem can only finally be resolved when the revolutionary movement builds a party to lead the working class victoriously through the revolution and starts to construct the foundations of socialism.

Alan looked at Tom. The old black face had a quiet look of satisfaction, the big eye closed in a wink and he said, "That was a good little fight, but the big one's yet to come."

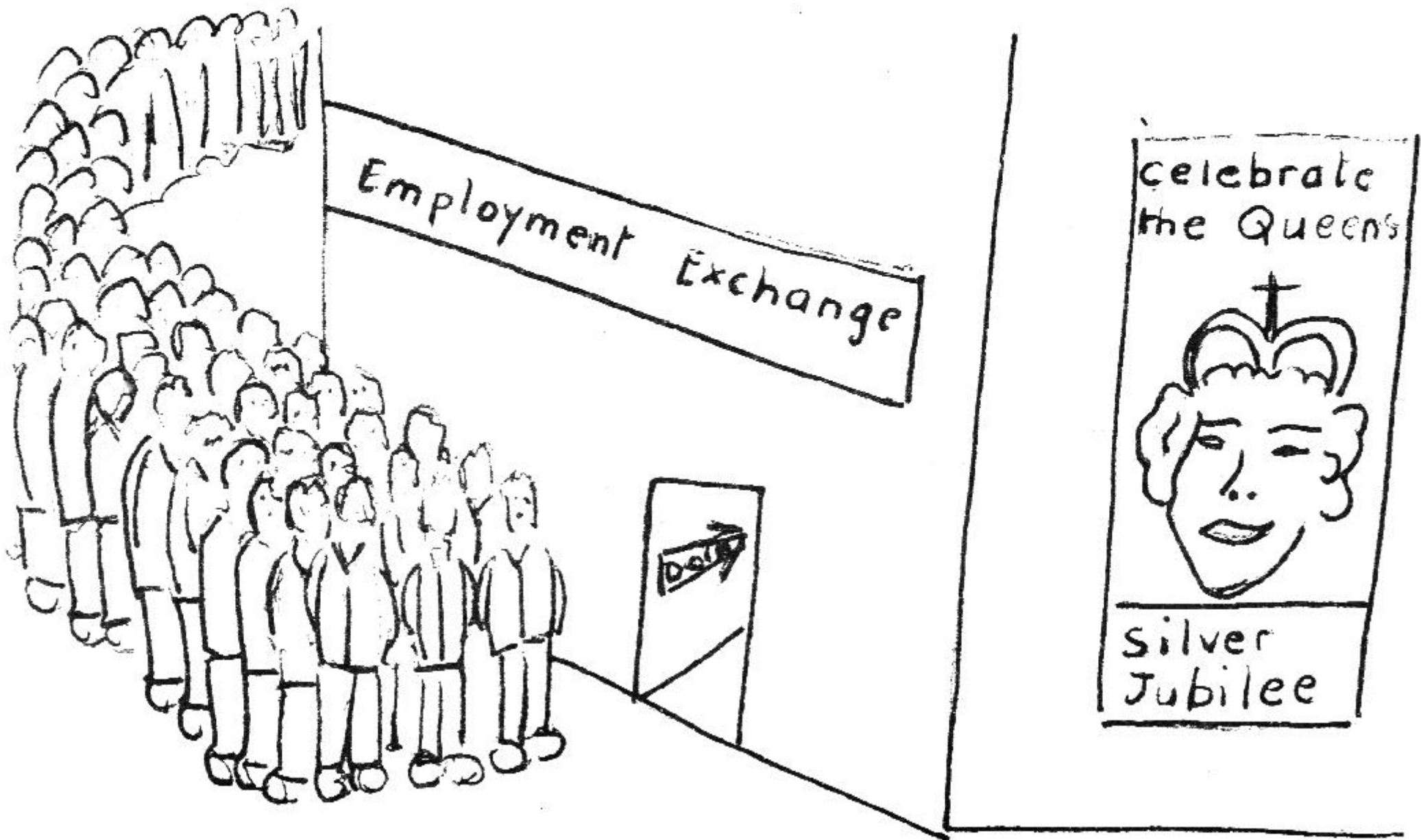
Tom thought, "Yes, and when it comes there will be millions of people with the same spirit as the 'Bog House Gang' who will make victory for the workers certain."

* * * * *

"Keep smiling, Jack!
At least we've got
each other!"



thoughts on the jubilee



LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your article about our dispute with the management of Albion Bottles in the last issue of 'Workers' Notebook'.

The article presented the true picture of our dispute, as opposed to all the lies that appeared in the local press. The article showed the collaboration of Management and the full-time Union official, the District Secretary of Birmingham West (AUEW), as they tried to defeat the workers. The District Official made various statements in the local press against the workers, and made false accusations against us and our shop stewards.

I would now like to bring your readers up to date with the present situation.

The management has broken three agreements. Each time the District official has simply refused to force the management to honour the agreements. Each time he has intimidated workers into accepting management's proposals without any form of guarantee.

This was clearly a betrayal of the workers interests by the District Official.

We were locked out for 12 weeks, during which we received support from many workers in the area. Collections were made on our behalf, and resolutions of support were submitted by various AUEW branches in the region. We personally approached the District Committee for help several times. Despite all this, no support was given to us by the District Official. Letters were written to the Executive Committee, but no support has been received.

Some workers have now been forced to return by the District Secretary and Management on a new contract of employment and with worse conditions. They are forced to do two men's work for less wages.

Others are still locked out and some have been threatened by the management not to come on the picket line or else they would have no chance of being reemployed even on new conditions of work.

Because of the lack of support from the District Committee and Executive Council the workers have been forced to withdraw the picket line. We appeal to all other workers to support us by denouncing all corrupt union officials, and by forcing the Executive Committee to intervene in our case. We hope this magazine will continue in presenting the workers' case - for other disputes all round the country.

From AN ALBION BOTTLE WORKER.

The article on the dispute was in the last issue of 'Workers' Notebook'. The workers of Albion Bottles, Birmingham, demonstrated against the Social Contract by holding a day of protest on April 20th. As a result most of them were suspended and their shop stewards dismissed. Since then they have been locked out. Union officials have refused to support them. Management, in collaboration with the Union official, have restarted the factory, with some of the previous workers reemployed on new, but worse, contracts.

Editor.

WE ARE THE ENGINEERS

by
Ewan MacColl ©

Two joined hands was our device when our banner first unfurled,
Hands that knew the feel of tools and helped to build a world,
Two hands became a million hands and fashioned down the years
The machines that make the world go round,

THE SHIPS AND PLANES AND THE DIESEL TRAINS
THE WEAVING FRAMES AND THE BUILDING CRANES,
WE ARE THE ENGINEERS!

We tamed the fire and harnessed metals, learned a thousand skills,
Our hands have made the tools men use in factories, mines and mills;
Ours the hands that throw the switch that puts the world in gear,
That make the plows that turn the soil,

AND THE SHIPS AND PLANES AND THE DIESEL TRAINS
THE WEAVING FRAMES AND THE BUILDING CRANES,
WE ARE THE ENGINEERS!

Jails and transportation hulks faced union pioneers;
Police and spies at every turn, a world of doubt and fear,
Our union sprang from poverty, from hunger, blood and tears,
But we fought the cruel laws

AND WHEN WE LOST, WE ROSE TO FIGHT AGAIN
FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK AND LIVE LIKE MEN,
WE ARE THE ENGINEERS.

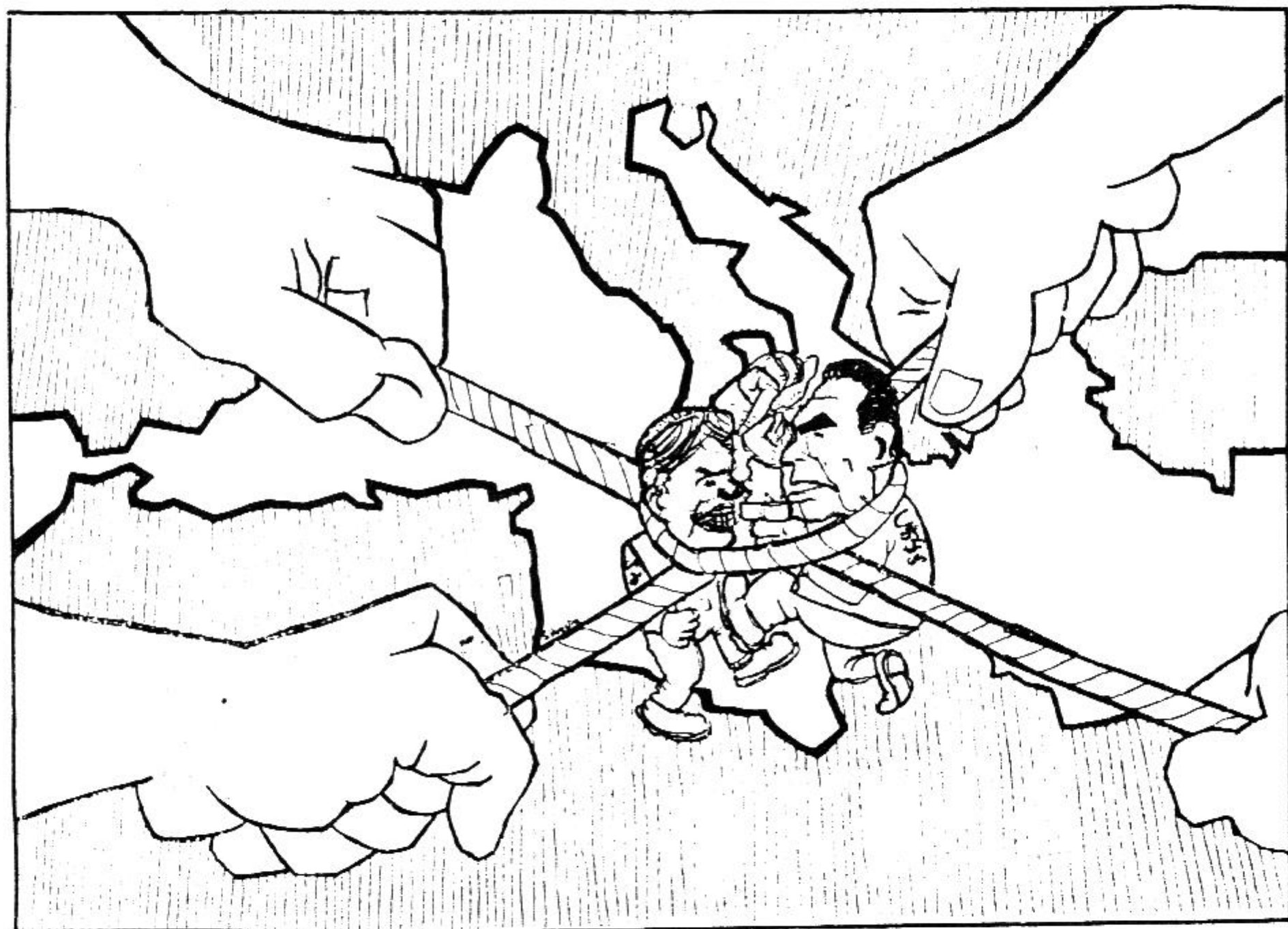
We've stamped our feet in the morning queues, known unemployment's
Known hands go soft in idleness, the slow death on the dole;
The rusty lathe and the silent factory mark the hungry years,
And the grass growing green on the shipyard floor,

AND THE ENDLESS BEAT OF MARCHING FEET
AND MEN DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO EAT
AND WORK AS ENGINEERS!

And we, the youngest engineers, now march to claim our rights;
For we have learned that nothing's ever won without a fight.
Every battle fought and won reveals a new frontier,
And a world to be won by those who build

THE SHIPS AND PLANES AND THE DIESEL TRAINS,
THE WEAVING FRAMES AND THE BUILDING CRANES,
WE ARE THE ENGINEERS!

INTERNATIONAL COMMENT



The next 50 to 100 years, beginning from now, will be a great era of radical change in the social system throughout the world, an earth-shaking era without equal in any previous historical period. Living in such an era, we must be prepared to engage in great struggles which will have many features different in form from those of the past.

Mao Tse-tung

RUSSIA

WHAT WENT WRONG ?

The Soviet Union is today the most dangerous country in the world and the biggest single threat to world peace. In her search for world domination, she is trying to penetrate to all corners of the globe under the guise of 'friendship', 'co-operation' and 'socialism'. She claims to be a socialist country, but despite her heroic past, in reality, the working class is no longer in power, workers are exploited for profit as we are, and capitalism is being actively restored. Russian domination in different parts of the world oppresses small and less developed countries, and the very name and traditions of international communism are broken, abused and distorted.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE FOR THIS
ONCE GREAT SOCIALIST STATE TO
DEGENERATE?

This article is the first of a series of articles dealing with these questions. In this first article, we explore overall perspectives.

soviet union under socialism

The Soviet Union was the world's first socialist country. The October Revolution of 1917, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, smashed Tzarist rule and imperialist intervention, and began the task of building socialism in Russia.

The achievements of the years that followed astounded the world. In 20 years, up to 1939, from one of the most backward countries, the Soviet Union became industrially, socially, and politically one of the most powerful, and stable countries in the world. In 20 years it had surpassed what it had taken Britain 200 years to achieve. Throughout the period of the world capitalist crisis of 1928-33, the Soviet Union alone stood free of depression, inflation, unemployment, industrial standstill and decline - a beacon to the people of the world, showing what the working class with revolutionary power was capable of.

Shattered were all the theories that the bosses and wealthy 'educated' classes were necessary for a modern 'civilised' industrial state;

Shattered were all the theories that the rich and 'educated' classes were there because they were born that way, because they were more intelligent, or that 'God' had made them rulers;

Shattered were all the theories that revolution was impossible, was evil, or couldn't work;

The advances and achievements of this revolutionary workers state were hailed all over the world. People flocked to the Soviet Union and in the words of Hewlett Johnson, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, "... I have seen the future, and it works! ".

It was this working class power in Russia that was responsible for the major part the Soviet Union played in the defeat of fascism in Europe; and a magnificent sacrifice it was in the service of world peace - 26 million men, women, and children.

Rightly, workers and oppressed peoples of the world looked to the Soviet Union as the bastion of hope, the future, of socialism...

WHAT WENT WRONG?

How was it possible for this great socialist state to degenerate into its present position of oppression at home and abroad, of aggression, of imperialism, and anti-communism?

Was this inevitable, as the Trotskyites in their confusion proclaim?

first socialist state

Historically, what we were witnessing in the foundation of the first socialist state, was the birth of socialism as a living reality; the start of a new epoch, a new world social system, a new mode of production, with consequent new relations and forces of production, and a whole new superstructure of politics, culture and manner of life.

A similar saga had unfolded itself some 500 years earlier in the birth of capitalism as a new world social system out of the feudal order. The first capitalist states had to struggle desperately against the forces of the old world system of feudalism in order to survive. But, as the new social system had in general, historically, become possible and necessary, more and more individual societies were inevitably forced to take the road, building the new system, and learning from the advances and mistakes of the earliest adventurers, in general, becoming more and more stable.



against trotsky

This did not mean that it was impossible to build capitalism in one country unless all countries became capitalist.. (as Trotsky insists applies to socialism); nor did it mean that the earliest states were not capitalist; but it did mean that the earliest capitalist states were charting new historical ground, both objectively and subjectively, and that the contradictions inherent in the then existing class relations, were more acute and unstable.

In looking at socialism in Russia, however, many people, including Trotsky, forget this. Because we want socialism; because it is possible to achieve it, because for the first time in history, socialism as a social system necessarily involves the conscious movement of the mass of people, actually liberating themselves and society in the process, we come to expect absolute achievement and deeds, and deny development, or quality from quantity.

We forget that historically, we are dealing with the 'infant charting new historical ground', standing up and falling down ... and we assume that the standing up cannot be socialist, and that the falling down proves it! Therefore, there can only be 'adult' socialist societies occurring co-incidentally, because youth is adventurous, inexperienced and unstable. What follows is disillusionment and idealism, for socialism becomes an impossible dream, an absolute, and as we saw in the case of Trotsky, confusion and betrayal. Russia's achievements under socialism were so spectacular, historically, because she was building socialism alone in a capitalist world, and at the same time charting the way forward as a socialist infant. The day will come when similar achievements are not spectacular, but the expected, because historically the way is known and so many of us have taken the path.

If therefore we are genuinely trying to account for what went wrong in Russia, it can only be in the overall context of the first socialist state hesitatingly, yet boldly, opening the door to, and treading the path of the new socialist order in a hostile and decaying capitalist world, bent on destroying the infant state.

class struggle

But it is not merely a question of external forces in contradiction with the new state. Socialism is not a classless society, nor does the class struggle within it disappear. On the contrary, it becomes fiercer with each new advance or achievement. Each advance strengthens the new order and weakens the old; each development consolidates the working class and the masses, and weakens the bourgeoisie. The more spectacular these developments, so the more bitter, and necessarily hidden, the class struggle becomes.

At the same time, spectacular achievement carries its own dangers, for enthusiasm and spirit of revolutionary change encourages the conviction that anything can be achieved simply by doing it! - that man can transcend objective reality, can defy it. This erroneous conviction inevitably leads to certain failures. In themselves, these failures help to restore the balanced perspective, the overall process of transforming the world according to its laws. But, in class terms, failures sharpen the class struggle. Any setback or difficulty, any failure, brings the class struggle into the open; difficult problems become the weapons which the bourgeoisie uses to attack the new state in a desperate attempt to disillusion the masses and blunt their revolutionary fervour.

perspective

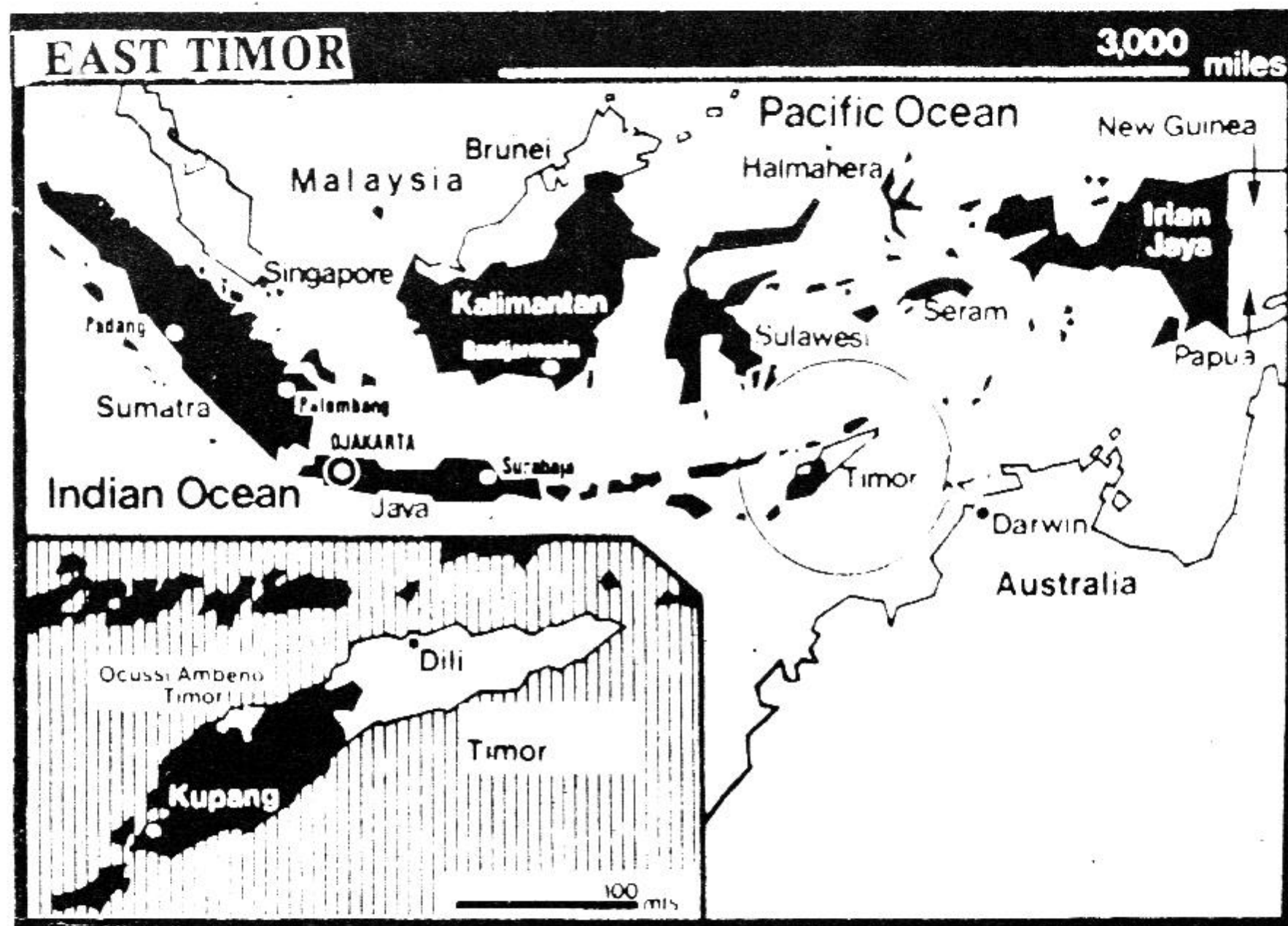
So that when one considers our infant socialist state charting its way forward in a hostile world, with no historical precedents, facing innumerable problems and barriers, the legacy of its past and present, from without and from within, having to wage fierce internal and external struggles at each step, then its achievements were all the more remarkable and vital for the advance of socialism in general. But at the same time, all these factors play their part in its ultimate regression.



NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLES

1.

EAST TIMOR



After more than 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule, the people of East Timor, a South-East Asian country situated between Indonesia and Australia, succeeded in proclaiming their independence on November 28th, 1975.

This was achieved after years of armed and other forms of anti-colonial struggle and resistance.

But only a few days after the declaration of independence, the Military Junta in Indonesia, backed by the United States, moved to annex the territory.

As a result the people of East Timor, led by FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor) had to again organise themselves for armed resistance in defence of their newly-won independence.

The present struggle of the Timorese people is thus a continuation of their long-standing resistance to Portuguese colonialism.

portuguese colonialism

The Portuguese first came to Timor in the early 16th Century, and were soon followed by the Dutch, at that time both powerful maritime countries. The bitter contention that followed for the control of the island and its trade, eventually resulted in the arbitrary division of the island into a Portuguese held Eastern sector, and a Dutch held Western sector.

The primary Portuguese interest in Timor was its sandalwood trade. Apart from this, the Portuguese had no interest in developing the colony, and it remained desperately poor and backward economically and socially, the legacy of colonialism in general.

Throughout the 4 Centuries of Portuguese rule, the consequences of colonialism were devastating. In the final years, of the 600,000 people of East Timor, 97% were illiterate; almost the entire population was without medical assistance; malaria and malnutrition were rampant; and infant mortality stood at well over 50%; not surprisingly, the natural resource of sandalwood was totally depleted.

inspiration

Inspired by the victories of the Indo-Chinese National Liberation struggles and those of the people in Portugal's African colonies, a few young people in 1970, formed a study group in Dili, the capital of East Timor. This small nucleus later evolved into a major movement - FRETILIN.

The fall of Portuguese fascism in April 1974 widened the possibility of open political activity in East Timor. In Dili, workers began striking for higher wages and better living conditions. There was intense political discussion and debate on the future of the country. Eventually, 3 groups emerged, Apodeti, the UDT (Timor Democratic Union), and Fretilin.

reactionary parties

Apodeti was an openly pro-Indonesian party. When it emerged in 1974, it campaigned for integration with the Djakarta fascist regime, that had come to power in Indonesia in 1965 by means of a coup that had led to the death of close to 1,000,000 communists and patriots, men, women, and children, as well as tens of thousands of political prisoners.

The collaborationist nature of Apodeti was so clear, that its sole support came from the Indonesian regime and press.

UDT was formed by members of the local colonial administration who were basically in favour of retaining the 'status quo' that had benefitted them. Many of the members of UDT were also members of the Portuguese fascist party, Popular National Action. Largely composed of a small, native elite assimilated into Portuguese culture, UDT politics was influenced by General Spinoza's book which advocated a federation of Portugal with its colonies, or continuing the empire in a new disguise.

fretilin - independence

It was Fretilin that won the overwhelming support of the East Timor people with its programme of anti-colonialism and anti-racism, its mass work among the people, and its defence of the striking Dili workers. It emerged as the only genuine liberation movement in the country.



Under the leadership of Fretilin many thousands of peasants wage a protracted guerrilla war against Indonesian armed aggression.

Under pressure from Fretilin, the Portuguese government agreed to hold elections in September 1975 to determine the future of the country.

Fearing a Fretilin victory, UDT staged a military coup on August 11 with the active help of the Portuguese Governor, Pires. Although Fretilin leaders had hoped to avoid a confrontation with UDT because of the Indonesian threat, the actions of UDT compelled Fretilin to call for an all-out armed resistance to the coup on August the 20th. This struggle succeeded in crushing the UDT coup and the Portuguese authorities fled the country.

On November the 28th, 1975, Fretilin declared independence from Portugal and proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

Nine days later, Indonesia launched a massive invasion. 6,000 marines backed by air-strikes, the navy, artillery and tanks....
A terrible massacre followed..

Indonesian aggression against East Timor took place with the full connivance of the United States of America. Just hours before the invasion, President Ford had been visiting Indonesia and the invasion had been given the 'green light'.

Faced with this 'all-out' invasion, Fretilin retreated from Dili and concentrated in the countryside. In this way they have contained the Indonesian army to Dili and a few other beleaguered towns.

self determination

On April 12th, 1976, José Ramos-Horta, the Fretilin Foreign Affairs spokesman, told the United Nations Security Council.....

" Seldom in world history has a country of 600,000 people successfully resisted a powerful aggressor of 130 million, which still receives millions of dollars of military and economic aid from the United States of America, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and so on. Against 30,000 paratroopers and marines, against chemical and biological warfare, against tanks and warships, the people of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, under the correct leadership of Fretilin, have shown their unshakable will to be free, and to be masters of their own country during the eight months of heroic struggle against the neo-colonialist and reactionary forces and the Javanese army.
" What, in the final analysis, is an act of self-determination? When a whole nation for many centuries heroically resists the colonialists in such an unequivocal way, as is displayed in the bloody pages of the history of Timor. Is this not an act of self-determination?

When a whole nation - men, women and children - engage in a peoples' war of resistance against the foreign aggressor. Is this not a supreme act of self-determination?

When one tenth of our population has been massacred by the Nazi army of Java, but in spite of this, the whole nation continues the struggle for liberation. Is this not a sublime act of self-determination? "

Fretilin has widened the frontiers of the struggle to include the social and economic transformation of the countryside. Literacy programmes are being spread all over the country, and for the first time, the people are getting medical attention from 200 'bare-foot' doctors, utilising and adapting traditional medicine to present day needs. Many advances have been made on the economic front. Last year, Fretilin cadres opened a small sugar factory that processes sugar from palm, for the liberated areas.

world-wide support

In the diplomatic sphere, the Democratic Republic of East Timor has won wide support from a number of Socialist and Third-World countries, in particular, the Peoples' Republic of China. At the United Nations, and the 5th Conference of Non-aligned Nations, resolutions have been passed condemning Indonesian aggression and supporting the struggle of the East Timorese people. The struggle has also won wide support from progressive people the world over, including revolutionary people in Indonesia itself, the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

The Soviet Union, which has turned its back on Socialism (yet is still falsely called a 'communist' country) refuses to give any support to the East Timorese people. Instead, like American Imperialism, she gives economic aid to fascist Indonesia.

Under the correct leadership of FRETILIN, the people of East Timor will emerge victorious over the Indonesian aggressors and their U.S. imperialist masters and Soviet supporters.

Here in Britain, we in the Communist Workers Movement, salute this small, gallant people, and extend our solidarity and fraternal support to them.

The common bond of workers and oppressed people fighting for liberty, unites us all.



DO YOU KNOW ?

While inflation spirals and the profits of the monopolies rocket, wages in Britain are the lowest in Europe.

In 1975. The Economist wrote:- "Britain is a cheap labour country and fast becoming cheaper."

In 1976 The Economist wrote:- "British manufacturing industry has the lowest labour costs in the EEC."

The Managing Director of International Harvester, commenting on their big new investment, said:- "I do not know anywhere in the world where we can invest a dollar and get a better return than the UK. We will continue to produce high quality tractors at a lower price than anywhere else."

Con-man Harold Wilson said:- "One man's pay rise is another man's price rise".

How can this be, when we have the lowest wages, but the highest inflation in Europe.

And the bosses laugh all the way to the bank!

The Queen gets £1.6 million a year tax free, with a fortune already over £70mill. She also gets perks from the taxpayer of over £4 million a year, like the £200,000 on a special train and the £2 million on the Royal Ship Britannia. And there is also all her family and hangers-on, most of whom have never had to work a day in their lives, for whom life is a continuous round of parties, balls and dinners, all paid for out of taxpayers' pockets.

IRELAND

DIVIDE AND RULE

PART 2

The last issue of 'Worker's Notebook' traced how the ruling classes of Ireland, the landowners, the capitalists and the British colonialists, encouraged and used religious differences among the people to split and weaken the workers' and peasants' organisations against high rents and starvation wages. By mid-19th century the ruling classes had succeeded in these tactics, and it was the landowners who reaped the first major crop grown on the sectarian soil of Ireland.

LAND REFORM AND HOME RULE

The developing agitation among tenant-farmers against the landlords and for land reform, which grew particularly rapidly after the Great Famine, led to the foundation of the Land League in 1850. But right from its start it was stunted and weakened by sectarianism, despite its tremendous successes. Realising that the questions of Land Reform and of Home Rule for the Irish had in large measure the same root causes, the leadership of the Land League linked these two issues.

This was a good tactic; indeed, perhaps the only possible one, since at that time the whole social and economic base of British Rule in Ireland was still ownership of the land by British landlords.

All the English invasions and campaigns to Ireland, by Elisabeth, by Cromwell, by William, had more to do with land-ownership than with religion.

Home Rule in the 19th century would not have been possible without Land Reform.

HOME RULE = ROME RULE

Unfortunately, although the protestant tenant-farmers in Ulster were engaged in similar agitation, they would have no truck with The Land League and its "Home Rule" connections. The landlords understood how essential it was for their skins to keep this split, and to keep the protestants out of the Land League. When Gladstone's Land Act of 1881 was passed, giving a measure of security of tenure to the tenant farmers in Ireland, several of the most reactionary landowners were ready to support it because, in the words of Lord Derby, its concessions were "necessary to keep Ulster out of the Nationalist Movement".

Randolph Churchill also understood this well. In 1886, he "played the Orange Card". He visited Belfast just before the Home Rule Bill was to go before the English parliament; he pledged English support for the Ulstermen, fanned the flames of sectarianism, which led to riots in the streets.

From now on, the equation of nationalism with catholicism, and of unionism with protestantism was firmly established.

This was not just a matter of people's sentiment nor of sleight of hand by Churchill and his kind. It was the result of the separate economic interests of the different classes and regions.

In the southern, mostly catholic, areas, the belated development of Capitalism and industry meant that the Home Rule Movement was supported by, and indeed was later to fall into the hands of, the growing Catholic middle class which wanted protection against British capitalism, in order to develop an Irish Capitalism of their own.

In Belfast, industry was by now well-developed and dependent upon British and Imperial markets. Separatism, threatening to deprive them of these markets had no part in their interests.

Throughout the country, the land-owners were indisputably pro-union. Their profits were invested in Britain, their produce was sold in Britain, and their very possession of the land depended on the British Garrison.

The protestant working class was, as has been already explained, hypnotised by the equation Home Rule = Rome Rule. Their suspicion looked all the more well-grounded, in that their very defection from the cause of Home Rule left the Catholic Hierarchy to grow in power and interference.

The only other group, which at this time could be relied upon to support Irish Independence, was the Catholic section of what Wolfe Tone had called: "that respectable body of opinion - the men of no property".

It was these people, the Catholic workers and peasants of Ireland, together with the Catholic middle-classes who were the main supports of Irish Independence.

LARKIN AND CONNOLLY

The new solution which really presented a way out of the impasse of conflicting forces was that shown by Jim Larkin and above all by James Connolly in the early years of this century. Marxism and Marxist methods had their validity proved as the only way real independence and progress in Ireland could be achieved.

Connolly and Larkin showed by their activities in Dublin and Belfast that if a way is shown to remove the economic causes of sectarianism, only then can sectarianism itself be combatted effectively.



Jim Larkin worked in Belfast and Dublin from 1907-10, for a time as organiser of the National Union of Dockers. He led the Belfast dockers' strike, which was followed by a chain of sympathetic strikes in other industries. Even the police, sent to control the dockers' strike, came out on strike themselves. Larkin's work proved that when properly led and organised, with a clear understanding of what they're fighting for, protestant and catholic workers could stand together in solidarity. They could together overcome all the 'agents provocateurs', all the lies and dissimulations of those who benefitted from sectarianism.

Later, in 1913, the Dublin capitalists organised a lock-out to try and break the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, organised by Larkin and Connolly. This lock-out lasted many months. Workers starved, some to death; others were killed by police at mass meetings. This lock-out exposed the southern capitalists for what they really were. Despite their separation of interests on the national question, the Home Rule capitalists of the south were every bit as anti-working class and reactionary as the Tory and unionist bosses of the north.

Indeed, Griffiths, a prominent Home Ruler and later a Free State president actually called for the British troops to be used against the workers!

The First Workers' Army in the World

The work of James Connolly led to another important development, to what was called by Lenin "the first workers' army in the world" - Connolly's Irish Citizens' Army. This was formed in 1913 to protect the striking workers against the murderous police. Its members vowed to sink all religious differences in the common cause of an independent, socialist Ireland.

Home Rule was the burning issue in Ireland when the First World War broke out. But now British imperialism had other worries than Ireland. The various Irish nationalist organisations - The Irish Volunteers, The Irish Republican Brotherhood (or Fenians) and Connolly's and Larkin's Irish Citizen Army - decided to take advantage of this situation to step up the struggle for Irish freedom from British rule.

The Easter Rising 1916

At Easter 1916 they rose together against the British. But bad communications and the countermanding by MacNeill, leader of the Irish Volunteers, of the orders for the rising meant that it was not the national rising as planned. Apart from Dublin, there were only a few other scattered risings on Easter Monday, 1916. But those men that rose fought bravely for the independence of Ireland.

The British were caught unprepared. In Dublin key buildings were seized by the freedom fighters, so that they could command the main routes along which British reinforcements would arrive. At about midday on Easter Monday, the Dublin force, led by Connolly, took over the G.P.O. and raised the flag of the Irish Republic. This is what they

proclaimed:

"Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom....."

"We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible....."

"The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past....."

Barricades were erected in the streets, and for one week the men fought bravely and bloodily for the new Irish Republic. But more and more British troops poured into Dublin. The British guns and shells reduced large parts of the city to flames and rubble. By Friday, the G.P.O. was in ruins, and many many people had died. On Saturday those remaining surrendered.

British imperialism took its bloody revenge on these courageous, Protestant and Catholic, Republican fighters. Morning after morning, in May 1916, the leaders of the rising were shot in Kilmainham jail. Huge crowds mourned their passing.

Speculation is often useless, but in this case is heart-rending. If James Connolly and his socialist-inspired Irish Citizen Army had survived 1916, the train of events in Ireland would have been immeasurably more favourable for the working class of Ireland.

As it was, it was the other trend in the Home Rule Movement which became the dominant factor. Those Murphyite employers who so viciously attacked the workers of Dublin in the 1913 lock out, were now the leadership of the Home Rule Movement. Workers and farmers had bled to death in their thousands for independence, but it was the employers who took the fruits of independence grown on their blood.

Employers Win

The removal of an independent workers' party and army (The Irish Citizen Army) from the scene in 1916 removed any hope that the workers of Belfast would be won for independence. An Ireland ruled by the likes of Griffiths (violent opposer of Trade Unionism and the Labour Movement, who had joined the Irish Volunteers) offered nothing for them. Connolly offered the world!

"For our demands most modest are
We only want the Earth."

When after the First World War the pogroms were started in Belfast to eradicate "Catholics, Sinn Feiniens, unreliable Protestants and Socialists" from the six counties, there was no leadership, party or organisation to combat the Tory Rulers of the North.

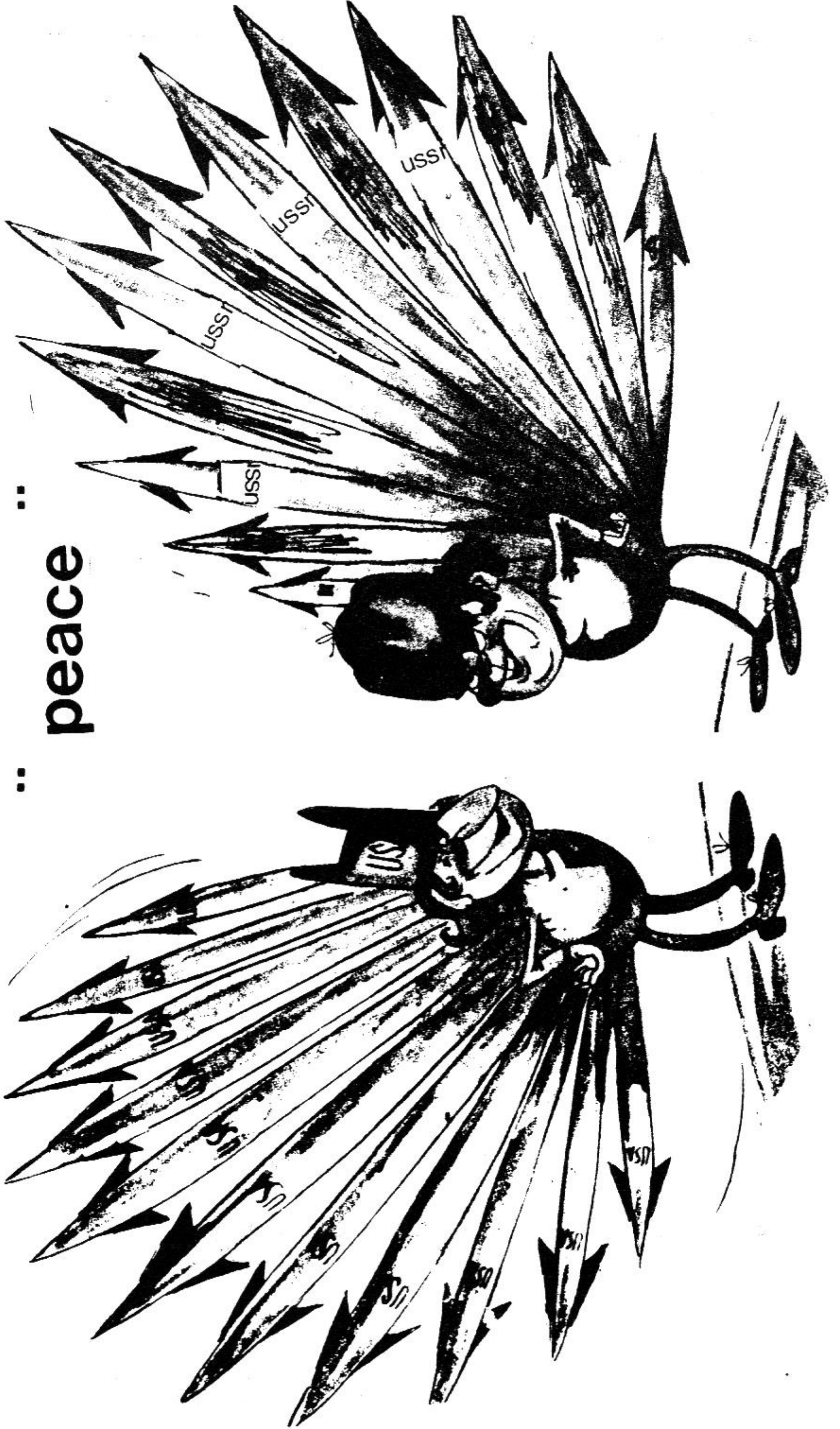
to be continued

BRITISH IMPERIALISM OUT

OF IRELAND!

birds of

.. .. peace



HISTORICAL NOTES

THE LUDDITES

This year, thousands of workers, for example, in shipyards and steelworks, have been made unemployed through the introduction of new technology. This happens all the time under capitalism, a cross we workers have to bear. It is one of the ways the bosses increase their profit in the face of competition from other capitalists, and they do it irrespective of the needs and livelihoods of workers. Moreover, the swelling of the ranks of the unemployed cheapens the value of our labour power, our wages, and increases divisions, insecurity and misery in our midst.

our history

Throughout the history of our class, workers have struggled to defend themselves against this process, and it is instructive to look back at one of the earliest struggles of workers affected by new technology - the Luddite Movement.

In March, 1811, stocking-makers in the Nottingham area started to destroy the new stocking-frame machines that were being introduced in large numbers. They did so out of sheer desperation. The price of bread, the main and sometimes only item of their diet, was at a record level. The petitions that were drawn up "humbly requesting" the government to provide protection from wages cuts and unemployment, had been rejected out of hand. The organisation of workers into unions had been banned by various laws, notably 1799 and 1800 at the suggestion of "the champion of the oppressed", William Wilberforce.

starve or rebel

The workers had only one choice - starve or rebel. They chose the latter.

For a time they had much success in forcing manufacturers to raise wages or to abandon new machines by employing more workers.

If we look at the bourgeois history books, however, we see the Luddites portrayed as a mindless minority of workers fighting a senseless battle against the inevitable progress of industry. This view reflects the prejudices of generations of bosses, not the reality of the Luddite Movement.

careful planning

The Luddites were far from mindless. There are numerous incidents to show how well-planned their operations were. For example, there was a large workshop which was shared by two manufacturers, one of whom agreed to raise wages when an ultimatum signed by 'Ned Ludd' arrived. Shortly afterwards, the workshop was broken into and some machines destroyed, but only those belonging to the manufacturer who had refused to increase wages. This kind of discipline was typical of the movement.

Moreover, the Luddites were not a small minority of isolated groups. They were a mass movement of workers who presented a very real threat to their bosses and ultimately, to the government of the day.

workers break bosses' machines

The machine breaking that started near Nottingham soon spread to other parts of the country among the new industrial working class that was being forged out of the destruction of the old handicraft workers. It became a national movement involving tens of thousands of workers in Lancashire, and croppers in Yorkshire. The movement was so well supported that more troops were sent to quell the disturbances here in Britain than were sent to

WHEREAS,

Several **EVIL-MINDED PERSONS** have assembled together in a riotous Manner, and **DESTROYED** a **NUMBER** of

FRAMES,

In different Parts of the Country :

THIS IS

TO GIVE NOTICE,

That any Person who will give Information of any Person or Persons thus wickedly

BREAKING THE FRAMES,

Shall, upon **CONVICTION**, receive

50 GUINEAS

REWARD.

And any Person who was actively engaged in **RIOTING**, who will impeach his Accomplices, shall, upon **CONVICTION**, receive the same Reward, and every Effort made to procure his Pardon.

Information to be given to Messrs. **COLDHAM** and **ENFIELD**.

Nottingham, March 26, 1811.

W. Street, Printer, Nottingham

fight Napoleon's armies in the Peninsular War, which was taking place at the same time.

holy secrets

Despite the troops, and the passing of a law making the breaking of machines punishable by death, the struggle of the Luddites continued. After an attack on a mill in Yorkshire two

workers were mortally wounded. As one lay dying, he was refused any medical attention, including a drink of water, until he revealed the names of his leaders. The bosses even brought a clergyman to the man to warn him of the awful fate awaiting him in hell if he refused to confess all he knew. Finally after hours of suffering, the man asked, "Can you keep a secret?". The clergyman nodded and hovered over the dying worker. "So can I", were his last words.

It was this kind of strength and solidarity that led to the widespread use of spies and agent-provocateurs in a desperate attempt to infiltrate and destroy the movement.

In the end, the movement was defeated. The forces of the industrialists and the capitalist state at that time were too powerful. But the fighting spirit, solidarity, and sense of class consciousness were a magnificent part and parcel of the development of our class, and indeed, our history. They fought, not against progress, but against the deterioration of their conditions of work and life, as a direct result of capitalist technological progress; and it is here that we must return to the present.

then as now

One hundred and sixty years after the Luddite Movement, the same basic problem still exists for the British working-class. We too have to make the choice - starve or rebel.

So long as capitalist society exists, new technology may help the bosses, but only at the expense of the working class.

The dole, social security, and redundancy payments are no more than 'sops' without which there would be open rebellion. We pay for them

in each wage packet, knowing that our need for them is inevitable; and we cling onto them. Yet we do not destroy the basis of this need, the root cause of unemployment, insecurity, and misery - capitalism.

This is where the Luddites were wrong. They blamed the machines, instead of the system that abused technological progress, that still abuses such progress in the service of profit and not the well-being of society.

workers' machines

We can convert technological progress to serve the working class. This is what is happening under Socialism in China and Albania. We have to build our own Socialism, our own workers state, with planned economy and industry according to our needs and not the profit of a few, with consequent full employment and guarantees of the right to work, with the newest technology to advance the standards of our lives. And we can!

Standing in our way, the way of the majority of people in society, is the whole capitalist system. It is this we must destroy, not the machines. It is the whole ruling class power, its laws, army, state, priveleges, press and propaganda.

We must make that choice - starve or rebel. The future, the future of our children is in our hands.



FORUM

FOR

DISCUSSION

on class

The question of what classes exist in Britain, and what their interests and relationships with each other are, is an important one for revolutionaries.

Some people argue that there are only two classes in Britain: those who own and control the means of producing wealth and exchange, and those who do not. The former, they say, are the capitalist class, and the latter, the working class. That sounds fine, until the implications of this analysis are considered. If the working class includes all who own no means of production, it must include the police, most of the army and judiciary (the main props of the capitalist state), teachers, professors, doctors, nearly all of the Trade Union bureaucrats and management, most members of Parliament etc. Thus, these are all as much working class as steelworkers, car workers, miners, train drivers etc. - and they all have the same basic class interests!? If the capitalist class includes all who own means of production and exchange, then small farmers, local shopkeepers, craftsmen, perhaps even window-cleaners belong in it!

Logically, such an analysis of classes could mean that communists should urge such members of the working class as Ted Heath and Hugh Scanlon to unite against capitalists such as John Smith, who runs the tobacconists on the corner!

This clearly won't do. It's obvious it could lead to serious errors, with potential allies in the fight for socialism being branded as enemies, and enemies treated as friends. A real, unconfused class analysis should be based mainly on our assessment of the relations of production of the various groups in British society. This consists of their relationship to the means of production (the most important, but not the only, question here is do they own and control the means of production or not; also to be considered is how close they are to the production process) and of their social, economic and political relationship to each other. Such secondary factors as ideology, psychology, culture should also be considered.

The picture of British society which then emerges is quite different. The main classes are the capitalist class, and the working class (of which the proletariat, the industrial working class, is the strongest unit). The first consists of the "big bourgeoisie", those who make large profits from the labour of the working class through their ownership of the means of production and exchange. They are the main enemy of the working class. Other people who own the means of production and exchange, but on a much smaller scale, who work with what they own, who don't directly exploit the labour power of others (or only to a small extent) make up the petty-bourgeoisie. The working class consists only of those directly involved in production, distribution and exchange, or who are essential to this process, who own no means of production, and who have to sell their labour power to the capitalist in order to live. This thus includes

industrial workers, shop employees, trawlermen, etc. but excludes those police, soldiers etc. mentioned above. These belong to various strata in society outside the main classes (strata of fairly unstable social groups, generally made up of people who originated in one of the main classes in society) and should be examined according to their own specific conditions. Most soldiers, for example, come from the working class, but don't have its outlook. People in the higher ranks of trade union bureaucracy generally originated in the working class, but have much higher incomes than the union members; they have bourgeois living standards and values, and are often allies of the capitalist class eg. Hugh Scanlon's, Jack Jones' and Reg Birch's recent stand with management against the workers. It's also the self-styled "communists" among these, who most hate Lenin's term for their kind "the labour aristocracy".

People from some strata can be won as allies of the working class. The most important of these are the intelligentsia, who work with their minds and do not produce surplus value in the production process - eg. teachers, students, local government workers.

A correct class analysis enables communists and those they work with to understand properly who are enemies and who are friends in the struggle for socialist revolution in Britain. Such an understanding will enable them to conduct struggle in such a way as to unite the vast majority of the British people around the working class, led by its revolutionary communist party, in making socialist revolution.

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These views are not necessarily the views of the CWM, but we hope that they will stimulate thought and discussion among readers and workers' discussion groups. We would welcome comments and your own conclusions.

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