Economic blitz is met by direct action

The new post-war Leftism, which equates nationalism, chauvinism and bureaucracy with progress, has been shaken by the recent strike of Ghanaian workers. The Government of Nkrumah, while the big man led them to a few months' holiday in Russia and other Iron Curtain countries, launched an economic blitz directed, in the good old-fashioned way, at grass roots, and against the workers.

The workers at once protested that the fiscal measures increased their cost of living by 20%, while the State, in turns, took 5% of their wages in compulsory "savings". As to the latter, Ghana's workers, by their cynicism towards borrowed pie in the sky, showed

ROOTES WORKERS FIGHT FOR A PRINCIPLE

Wild accusations about "extremist disruptive elements" which aimed to wreck Britain's motor industry and cause "industrial anarchy" were made by Lord Rootes and his brother, Sir Reginald Rootes, when they announced the sackings of 8,000 workers from Coventry, Luton and Dunstable, because of a strike at the Rootes' Luton factory. The Workers Metal Pressings girls walked out, and once again the bogey-man of "Workers' Control" was paraded by the capitalists to justify their attacks.

The Rootes brothers may earn themselves the applause of the AEU (which has no room for them in this dispute), which began on September 4, but the workers at Rootes, who know that men do not sacrifice pay packets for six weeks simply to satisfy the political jugglers of the Communist Party or Labour Party, would deal with the four unions concerned. Faced with this situation the 1,000 Rootes workers came out solidly. About half their number belong to the AEU and, within a week of the strike beginning, these were threatened with expulsion from the union by President W. J. G. Caron. A return to work was also ordered by the executives of the National Union of Vehicle Builders and that of the National Society of Metal Mechanics, but the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers quickly declared the strike official.

The BLSP shop organisation, which has long had a militant reputation, remained solid in face of all attacks and they have had the support of many other sections. On October 3, for example, a meeting of AEU stewards from 35 factories in the Park Royal and Acton area called for the resignation of Caron and those of the union executive who supported his anti-strike stand. And on October 10 strikers marched on AEU headquarters at Finsbury, carrying such banners as the pointed query: "HOW MANY SHAREHOLDERS ARE REDUNDANT?" In view of the firm's increase in profits, from £1.6 million in 1958 to £3.5 million in 1959, the question answered itself.

The strikers were given notice by the firm, expiring on September 28. But the BLSP workers have maintained their ranks intact. It is worth recording that, as a result of past struggles, skilled and semi-skilled at the factory get the same wage rates—and that they have always been generous in support of others in dispute.

This battle between workers organised at the point of production, irrespective of union, and the combined forces of employers and trade union leaders is one that sets the pattern of other struggles to come. The BLSP workers deserve the support of all their fellow in industry. Contributions to the strike fund should be sent to Bro. F. Cole, 100 East Acton Lane, London, W.3.

What about it, Mr. Foulkes?

In the current wage claim for 120,000 workers in power stations, put forward by the federated trade unions, F. Foulkes, Communist president of the ETU, acted as spokesman to the National Joint Council for the industry.

In the electrical power industry, he said, manual labour costs formed but a small part of the whole cost, so that a wage increase here would not be so serious as in most industries. Speaking of the low wages paid in this nationalised concern, he said a man with a wife and three children on National Assistance would receive £29 19s a week. A power station labourer received for 42 hours £9 9s, minus overtime, leaving £5 16s minus, possibly, income tax. Skilled men received £13 16 9d.

In the past year sales per head of employee had risen 8.8%, wages for manual workers by 5.4%. The last rise was in August, 1960, and this year was 10% to 116 points. To stand still, even, they would need a rise of 5.5%.

Wages under nationalisation were below those of comparable capitalist industries. For the power stations, labourers were paid 67% from the top of the Ministry of Labour list of wage rates. "The industry," said Foulkes, "should at least pay the equivalent of rates being paid by the advanced section of private industry."

Fair enough, Mr. Foulkes, but the Communist-controlled ETU, which naturally is in a privileged position in the industry, makes nebulous boasts of the high wages it has won for its members, while the ETU, Communist Party and Mr. Foulkes called for the nationalisation of the electrical power industry. And the policy of the Communist Party is to nationalise ALL industries.
Nkrumah does not do wrong
—a discredited slogan!

“To say that the Government of Ghana is introducing dictatorship is nonsense. After all, every five years we shall go to the polls and the people will decide their Government. As for me, I am competent and calm. I have big eyes and ears and shall continue to do certain things in this country as Prime Minister because I see that as the only way by which I can put you on the path of true parliamentary democracy.”

Dr. Nkrumah (10.05.57).

Today, forty years later and only four-and-a-half since independence was won, Ghana can boast (according to figures given by a Ghana High Commission spokesman in London) between 200 and 300 political prisoners, detained without trial under the Preventive Detention Act passed in July 1958. Ghana’s brief history is peppered with repressive measures—press censorship and deportation of foreign correspondents, bans on opposition meetings and rallies, dismissal of dissenting University teachers, political imprisonment or banishment to special areas of the country for people whose presence is “damaging to the cause,” the setting-up of a special division of the High Court to deal with offfences against the State. The new masters of Ghana have indeed proved adept pupils of the old masters.

“We in Ghana are so happy with the steps being taken by our leader to purge the nation of all quiblings and imposters known as ‘suitors’,” said an anonymous correspondent of the socialist transformation of Ghana life. “We as a people are fighting hard—with our Osagyefo in the leadership—to destroy and remove all traces of the British colonialist system and erect in its place a new system—in that system, that philosophy, that ideology, that scientific teaching is Nkrumahism, the peoples movement of Africa.”

Ghanaian Times (11.10.61).

In theory, at least, all power is concentrated in Nkrumah’s hands. As President, both the army and the police are under his direct control, and the Convention People’s Party is “The Party is the State”, as its General Secretary and Chairman of its central committee, as well as its leader in the legislative assembly, Nkrumah is the party.


Slogan of the Young Pioneers of the Convention People’s Party.

Even in the Bolshevik totalitarian states there has, not since Stalin, a parallel for the measureless adulation showered upon Nkrumah by his apostles. He is called Osagyefo, “the victorious Leader”, his head appears on Ghana’s postage stamps and currency, his 20-foot bronze effigy has been erected in one of Accra’s main streets, the village hut where he was born is being preserved as a national monument, and, like the Queen, he has an official birthday, known as Founder’s Day.

Nurtured by idolisation are Nkrumah’s grandiose dreams of becoming Osagyefo of a united black Africa, dreams largely responsible for the squandering of the reserves of £250 million which Ghana inherited on independence day. Ghana Airways loses millions on its pointless and wasteful pan-African services, the extravagant Temple of the Sun, the massive Amevi, the lavish hotel in Accra, and Ghana, with a population of only 6 million, spends more on colourful representation abroad than Nigeria, with some 35 million people.

Under the British, the army and police combined were about 6,000 strong in comparison to the Workers’ Brigade, whose recruits, like those of the factory brigades of Russia’s satellites, receive military training. And now 400 cadets are being sent to Russia for training. If Ghana’s new rulers feel that such forces are not enough, they have only to blame, with their irresponsible plot scares and their suppression of civil liberties, the puny parliamentary force of the Opposition United Party, which recently disbanded the traditional hierarchy of tribal chiefs and the small urban middle class, has been broken by detentions and deportations. Now “Napoleon” and his “Squires” (to quote a favourite phrase of the Osagyefo) have turned on the “snowballs”—the non-conformists—of their own party.

But it is not in the political sphere that the true opposition to Nkrumah’s authoritarian travesty of socialism is growing. As long ago as 1955 the Times correspondent reported: “In the great seaport...”

LIBYA—On September 27, following the failure through internal dissension of a general strike for higher wages, amendments to the labour law were announced making strikes by Government employees illegal and prohibiting strikes by other workers before arbitration procedures have been exhausted and a fortnight’s notice given.

TOM BROWN
of Takoradi-Sekondi [centre of the greatest militancy in the recent mineral workers' strike] and their opposition is from within the trade union movement, particularly its left-wing elements. They say that the CPP [Committee on Public Works] used them to climb to power and then kicked the ladder away; they cite the disparate rates of pay between workers and CPP members of the Legislative Assembly, and they fear that an independent Gold Coast government might suppress trade unions altogether.

Since independence, inequality, far from being reduced, has multiplied, and the working class of Ghana is hardly likely to be mollified by Nkrumah’s new ruling that, “to conform to modern and simple way of life”, capitalism and the ideals and practice of the CPP must be “abolished”. "Constitution". Ministers and officials must surrender to the State properties in excess of certain limits which, in the case of two regional commissioners, are given as: two houses of a combined value of £200,000, two cars, and plots of land with a total value of £500.

While Ghana’s trade unions have not been suppressed, they have been bound hand and foot. Those still remaining outside the Trades Union Congress were forced to hand in their 1959 registration, which is also a condition for membership of the United Ghana Workers’ Council, the National Council of Ghana Women, and the co-operative societies whose international relations are being compulsorily severed.

In August, 1960, announcing pay increases of over 30 shillings a month for all workers earning less than £30 a year, Nkrumah boasted of Ghana’s “remarkable record of wage restraint”, but they are a reflection of the government’s determination to combat “inflation” and drastic measures against those who incite workers against the interests of the State.

In January, 1959, Kojo Botsio, one of the Ministers who has just fallen into disfavour, told a Party conference that “it is ideological homogeneity and discipline of our Parties members that the trade union to elect a non-party worker as leader of their organisation...our party must support our friends within these unions to make sure that they do not let their leadership return to the hands of CPP leaders.”

Labour leader who falls within this particular category and does not accept the “new order” cannot claim to be a party labour leader and must be dealt with accordingly.” Such words are a sure indication of widespread disenchantment within the trade unions, even among Party members, J. K. Tetehsah, despotistic general secretary of the Ghana TUC, who was re-elected as its president at the 1960 annual congress. In our view Ghana life must be industrialized, not for war but for peace, not for destruction but for service, not for aggression but for production, not for feudalism, but to free our people’s minds of a colonial heritage.

British trade unionism was condemned in a statement by the Ghana TUC executive, made shortly after independence, “as a conservative and therefore capitalist-inspired system, bureaucratic imposed on poor colonial peoples and based on master-and-servant relations.” It added: “It is true that the TUC is a political party in its own right, but it has never reached such depths of servility as official trade unionism in Ghana. Fortunately the “despicable rackets” (as one Minister called the striking workers) are not as easily shackled as their unions.

IRELAND

BLIND WORKERS STRIKE AT ELECTION TIME

IT SEEMS a true reflection of the morality of our society that when Ireland went to the polls on Wednesday, October 4, 78 percent of blind workers in the Department of Health and Welfare should have the option to vote and not to vote. The fact of cake baskets and lamps should have been in the centre of the campaign, the issue of the need for more efficient public transport, and the issue of the development of the country. "We believe in the future under their guidance, these poor workers were forced to struggle through Dublin to publicise their disgraceful allowance from a government that had the temerity to exhort people on their patriotic duty to vote Fianna Fail.”

The election campaign itself was carried out in a big way by the two main parties representing capitalist interests, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. While Fianna Fail daily inserted half-page advertisements costing £250 in the daily newspapers, a small party, the National Progressive Democrats around Dr. Noel Browne, fought the campaign on little more than that amount. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael to all practical purposes commandeered the radio station, using it the enlistment of a police with their own propaganda. A small handful of NDP people put up a limited number of posters around Limerick and Fianna Fail played legions to turn them down as quickly.

However, despite the censored Press, the controlled radio, the employed thugs, the use of the “Communist bogey” and the dirty tricks (see below), the election campaign could not be described as anything but a farce. The Fianna Fail candidate, Jack McDonnell, was faced with the same tactics, he tipped the poll.

A third NDP candidate, who lost his seat, noted that 140 voters in a first try. This outline of the campaign seems to prove that “parliamentary democracy” is just another form of fascism.

The reformist Labour Party did very well, losing one seat, but gaining five. Their victory was mostly in the rural areas and Cork. There is only one Labour TD and one NPD TD in Dublin, but 23 representing capitalist interests. When the full results were out, it was clear that the Labour Party had gained the majority, the position being Fianna Fail TD 70 (78), Fine Gael 47 (40), Labour 16 (12), NPD 2 (2), while asserted small bourgeois parties and independents scored 9. Whereas formerly there might have been some doubt about the outcome of Fine Gael and Labour, the Labour Party made it clear in their campaign that they would maintain their independence—and they scored their extra seats on that basis. So, to the great anger of the Fine Gael leader, James Dillon, the Labour Party stayed aloof and Fianna Fail, with the support of two Independents, formed a government.

The major question now is will the people turn to the reformist Labour Party, which clearly would not make any more fundamental changes in society than did the British Labour Party in Britain in 1945-51.

The working class must realise its own strength and take control instead of letting the means and instruments of production and setting up a national workers’ council, representative of workers from each socially useful industry, and excluding the parasites. PAT KELLY.

UNION SELLS OUT WORKERS

LIKE MOST OTHER so-called white collar and professional workers, teachers are in general more reticent for a self-delusion that they are not really “workers” than for militancy. However, however, two bold knights, Sir David Eccles and Sir Ronald Gould, are making a valiant effort to change all that.

With Sir Ronald’s defiant blast on his war horn still echoing in their ears, the teachers’ men-at-arms suddenly hear that their captains have surrendered.

Demarcations of their executive’s tab in the back poured in to the NUT headquarters from all over the country. Among demands for the resignation of the national executive were one from nearly 300 Coventry teachers, and a movement was launched in London to organise a mass resignation of teachers from the NUT unless the executive members who supported capitalism resign.

In many schools, teachers walked out of classes to show their disgust and anger at a “despicable and cowardly decision.”

The reason for the capitulation is clear. The Government’s threat to introduce legislation imposing a settlement made the bold Sir Ronald and his captains quail so much that they did not even defend themselves against the statement made on behalf of the Burrough Committee that it would not oppose Government plans to exercise greater control over salary negotiations for all public employees as long as teachers alone were not discriminated against.

And so, without the democratic decision of their followers for a one-day strike, the NUT oligarchs have sold them down the river. Teachers will have learned more about the world in the past two weeks than they’ll ever learn from their text-books.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN...

A patriot complaints that people do not respect the National Anthem at the end of cinema performances, but edge towards the exit. One cinema owner said, "I often think of Dorothy, eyes fixed on the “God Save The Queen” until “God Save The Queen” ended. When he looked around, he was alone—not only that, he was locked in!” BBC TV broadcast.

ERITREA—On October 12, Emperor Haile Sellassie ordered an inquiry into a clash between police and farmers demonstrating against the government. Two farmers were killed and six wounded by police fire.
IWMA CONGRESS CALLS FOR REBEL LINK-UP

The need for closer collaboration between revolutionary and libertarian workers throughout the world was a theme of the XI Congress of the International Working Men’s Association, held at Bordeaux, France from September 22-24. One of the IWMA’s main tasks, it was unanimously agreed, must be to establish firm contact and co-operation with all working-class movements which opposed capitalism and the state.

Sections of the IWMA represented at the Congress were the National Confederation of Labour (CNT) of Spain, the National Confederation of Labour of Bulgaria in Exile, the Regional Workers’ Federations of Argentina and Uruguay, the Syndicalist Union (ITU), the National Confederation of Labour of France, the International Working Men’s Federation of Norway and the Syndicalist Workers’ Federation of Britain. The Friends of the IWMA in Venezuela, together with representatives and affiliated delegations from Sweden’s Social Democratic Central Organisation (SAC), the Dutch Syndicalist League (NSV), the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth (FUI), International Antifascist Solidarity (SIA) and the Bordeaux section of the National Federation of Corporations.

Greetings and apologies for non-attendance were sent by the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA), War Resisters’ International (WRI), Confederation of Uzbekistan Worker’s (CTV), Libertarian League of USA, Sydney Anarchist Group, International Anarchist Commission, the Anarchist Federations of France, Italy, Uruguay, Mexico, Chile and Japan.

The secretariat’s report showed that steady progress had been made since the X Congress in 1958. Groups of Friends of the IWMA had been formed in a number of countries. The section existed, notably Chile and Guatemala. The existence of three strong groups in Chile—that in Santiago had 30 members—prompted the re-constitution of a section there in the near future.

Owing to the existence of the IWAM in the USA, no attempt had been made to form groups in that country. The Congress expressed the hope that contact between the IWMA and IWAM would be possible in the near future.

Also hoped for was the re-affiliation of the SAC and NSV, both of which had withdrawn from the CNT following tactical disagreements. An interview with one of the three Swedish delegates, Evert Arvidsson, revealed that the SAC’s membership had increased from 16,000 to 18,000 during the past three years. The Swedish organisation remained in full agreement with the IWMA’s principles, but would like to be associated in a more permanent way with the Federation.

One of the Bulgarian delegates, a young comrade of 32, who had spent ten years in jail as a political prisoner and succeeded recently in his battle for the report of the emergence of a new generation in Bulgaria, who were bitterly opposed to the Communist regime and had embraced libertarian and syndicalist ideas.

The sessions of Congress were held in the meeting hall of the local unions of CNT-FED, who entertained delegates to a party on the last evening. The hall was well decorated by CNT comrades, who tape-recorded all the debates.

To enable the Secretariat to carry out the various tasks assigned it, Congress resolved to increase the number of members from 200 to 300 a year. The Secretariat was re-elected for a further term of office, with Germinal Esqalens remaining General Secretary.

The IWMA’s present statutes were ratified, but it was agreed that a sub-committee of the Secretariat should prepare a new draft on the basis of suggestions received and that this, with the various proposals made, should be sent to sections for discussion before the next Congress, in 1963.

This was not a congress at which millions of apathetic card-carriers were represented by politically-ambitious leaders, but one of organisations believing in workers’ control as a real alternative to the horrors of private and state capitalism. The discussions were conducted in a serious, but friendly atmosphere, without the acrimony which marred international congresses. The XI Congress marked a small, but significant step forward for our International.

KEN HAWKES
The Committee of 100

The biggest in a series of Committee of 100 demonstrations against nuclear war and for unilateral disarmament by Britain took place on September 17 in Trafalgar Square, despite a Government threat that anyone found in the area could face a three-month sentence. The meeting was attended by a packed assembly and a sit-in in Parliament Square, as part of a national campaign to launch a mass resistance movement throughout the country, to demonstrate the bankruptcy of the traditional political structure and restore the initiative to the people. This resulted in 1,314 and some demonstrators were beaten up by the police. The civil disobedience was so energetic that it helped to create the impression that 57 members of the Committee the previous Tuesday were unprecedented. Millions were made aware that survival is the issue.

We publish an eye-witness account of the “Battle of Trafalgar” by Laurence Otter, an SWF member who has been fined for direct action against the Bomb and was one of the anti-Polaris favourites at the Holy Loch. His criticisms are all valid, but there are a few points on the credit side worth remembering when assessing the role of civil disobedience in the revolutionary struggle.

It is clear that the fight against war is our concern; more than this, our lives are involved. For, as one of the means suggested to us in the crisis to the next, like the sword of Damocles, the megaton child of capitalism genius is suspended delicately over the defenceless heads of all humanity. Logic tells us that even the power-crazed politicians cannot be bound by the logic of their own advantage, but study reveals that if both Britain and the U.S.S.R. were so geared to nuclear technology that conventional warfare on a global scale is regarded by military authorities as no longer being practicable.

It is for this reason that a mass resistance movement has emerged, and that, judged by the jingoistic logic of the Government, must take priority before any of its policies.

Let us be frank, this is the only issue which could have made any difference to the immediate issue of the Committee of 100. The unity of all those who would not otherwise be united is very much strengthened by certain demands which come to our door. We should not worry unduly, therefore, if the new movement does not immediately adopt a Syndicalist approach to industrial matters and the State. One can detect among supporters, not only a reaction against all political parties and the ballot box, but also against all groups which have entered the nuclear age with unmodified lists of imperatives.

To all who consult neither Marx nor the Gospels before acting, the empirical approach of the Committee must seem attractive. The starting points were: aim, resistance to nuclear war; method, mass civil disobedience; principle, non-violence. All these assumptions are explicitly stated in the Committee’s practice. The participants have learned to keep within this framework. This does not mean to say that any of the apparatus of the Committee seriously thought that to attack nuclear war would not constitute an attack on war altogether; nor that if any successful outcome was reached, the basis of society, as it stands, would not be undermined. All these arguments are constantly being discussed within the Committee and among its supporters, with a view to creating a flexible and long-term programme which goes far beyond the banning of the bomb.

As these assemblies are constantly being discussed within the Committee and among its supporters, with a view to creating a flexible and long-term programme which goes far beyond the banning of the bomb. As these assemblies are constantly being discussed within the Committee and among its supporters, with a view to creating a flexible and long-term programme which goes far beyond the banning of the bomb. As these assemblies are constantly being discussed within the Committee and among its supporters, with a view to creating a flexible and long-term programme which goes far beyond the banning of the bomb.

The Trafalgar demonstration of September 17, clearly showed the confusion between two ideas of resistance and that, by trying to satisfy both conceptions, the Committee of 100 is satisfying neither. The desire for publicity caused the Committee to look for big names, rather than people with knowledge of non-violence and with revolutionary experience. The newspapers were full of how Vanessa Redgrave had been persecuted as to what to wear, how Shelagh Delaney had sedately walked to the police van, rather than suffer the indignity of being carried and how Andrew Osborne, after saying he was not afraid of prison, paid his fine.

At the briefing meeting on the previous Tuesday, a detailed account of the meeting was made over an opposition with respect to “our Leader (Bertrand Russell).” Too many petty dictators of the Left get appointed Marshals for the rally and proceed to give conflicting orders to all and sundry. At one stage 20 Marshals came along at short intervals to say that, “the marches have just had a meeting which discussed everyone should wait till midnight, then march to Parliament!” (Mike Nolan was asked by one demonstrator: “Are you someone on the Committee, or are you just in authority?” and answered, “Yes I am on the committee: no, I am not in authority. I came here to protest against authority!”). Until it is realized that one point of non-violence is to get people to take responsibility for their own actions, rather than blindly obeying governments and that this can be done only by people who are doing just that themselves, not blindly following leaders, we have achieved nothing.

Various Leftists have been glorifying in petty legal triumphs, such as getting police to admit that it was not they that arrested the people concerned and have wanted to prosecute police for violence. These are demonstrations of the fact that the police are violent when they think they can do it without being seen, and while it is worth getting maximum possible publicity for such violence, it blurs the image to go to law to prosecute them. It also blurs the image of the people, who, in carrying out the action, are truly the people, not just publicists. It is still the duty of all who are genuinely opposed to the war, to develop a popular campaign in their areas.

Great strides towards organizational democracy have been accomplished and important decisions are usually reached after discussions by all members of the Committee. The day to day work is carried out by a working group, which consists not of an elected few, but of all those who have the time and the inclination to work. Any member of the Committee can participate in the working group or sub-committee meetings, should he wish. Autonomists Committees are springing up all over the country, notably in Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, the North West, Coventry and in the Clyde. Regional demonstrations are being planned. The London-based organization is fast becoming a South-East regional committee. Decentralization is regarded as the key to avoiding bureaucracy and the need for a group of leaders. The point is that some contacts are being established and a Committee of 100 is being formed in Germany. The next few months will show whether democracy in intent will mean democracy in practice, what impact civil disobedience will have on industry. After the sit-downs and occupation, there will be mass strikes. Remember the Rank-and-File slogan, “a general strike against war”. If success is possible, this must be the aim. If success is not possible, or if the movement does not live up to expectations, total disaster seems highly probable.

T.S.

—but why the gasworks?

The Direct Action Committee was started in 1957 with two basic good ideas: first that if one wishes to oppose a social evil, the best way is not to worry about the gas-house at Westminster, but to go to the workers who are engaged in putting that evil into effect and show them how that same effect can be stopped by the Press and other establishment publicity, it is necessary to physically demonstrate one’s arguments, to convince by actual obstruction.

The Committee of 100 was conceived last year with two other such ideas; one that though matches, pickets and suchlike used to return demands something more definite and, since Direct Action had always got publicity, it seemed logical to suppose similar methods would fill the bill, the other that it is possible to obstruct Government totally and voluntarily by the right combination of direct action and popular support. The last year has been true to its theory and has not, perhaps, sufficiently considered the logic of its ideas; nor, because of the conditions under which it worked, was it capable of avoiding a bureaucracy minimal in its own beliefs; but nevertheless it was within its lights consistent.
The lonely isle

ALL ENGLISHMEN, perhaps all men, love an island. For this reason, as well as the human pathos, few will not share the sorrow of the 290 people of Tristan da Cunha, now they have had to leave their island home of 1,600 miles west of Cape Town and 2,000 east of Montevideo, with nothing but water between. Tristan is often called the world’s loneliest island. But although little more than a mountain top, now a volcano, Tristan has supported a small community since 1816.

With their stone-built cottages, resembling the crofts of the Scottish Western Isles, their potatoes, fish and mutton and their homespun clothes, wool and flax, they shared a communal life in which each helped the other and money, until the recent introduction of a crayfish canning factory, was unknown. Happier, certainly, than their far distant fellow workers, who have television, cars, spinners and cocktail cabinets.

Those who have lived with the islanders, such as the previous British administrator, have testified to their happy nature, courtesy, kindness and contentment. Half hidden in many books are warm and detailed accounts of this kind and happy people. Strangely, many of the poorest of remote communities are among the happiest. The Eskimo, who live the hardest life of all, are acknowledged to be the happiest.

It will be said that the folk of Tristan have known no other life, in a capitalist society, there are countless cases where the poor have also known no other life, yet have been unhappy.

Although called "the lonely isle", Tristan’s sons away from home have said they knew only loneliness in lands and cities abroad, which testifies to Francis Bacon’s statement: “A crowd is but a gallery of faces.”

Tristan was free from most of the stresses and strains of class society. Not only do direct class relations strive to tear society apart, but many of what we think of as personal problems and aberrations have their roots in our mutually antagonistic society—possibly far more than we accept.

Nor is the division one only of capitalists and the rest. Capitalism has grown strong because it has been able to identify itself, in some degree or other, a large “patriotic middle class”, who, even when they work for a wage less than a lorry driver, call it “salaries” and show an unhappy determination to treat their hungry-fisted fellow workers as if, like Dives and Lazarus, “between them was a great gulf fixed.”

D. M. Bowy, who during the war lived on Tristan as a naval radio operator, spoke of how this miserable, mothballed station was introduced to the island. “At first the islanders were too shy to mix with the ratings, who had established a radio station. There were the islanders, the nine naval ratings and a third community—singer, a lieutenant-commander, with his wife and children, a nursing sister and the chaplain. They made up the quarter-deck society and lived a life as remote as was ours from that of the islanders.”

In the diary of a member of Scott’s famed South Pole expedition we are told how the rear party missed the brief fine weather, in which they were to have retreated to the ship. Condemned to stay for nearly a year, they made a room lined with snow deep in the ice. There were seven officers and two NCO’s of the British Navy, so a line was drawn down the room, the officers sat and lived on one side, the NCO’s on the other. Two societies in one hole, when all needed to draw on every scrap of memory and variety of personality of his fellows.

Recently mentioned this to an official of the Falkland Islands Survey, the British body for the Antarctic. He must have some story about it being done for the sailors’ benefit and told me of another case, about ten years ago, of one of his Antarctic parties, there for a three-year stay. One man was left alone by the others, but when he was no wrong, they made no charge against him, they found no fault in him, but they talked to one another, not to him. The poor man committed suicide.

Poverty of spirit can be more harmful than lack of commodities. All around us is this lack of communication, this fear of one’s fellow.

I am indebted to Sally Belfrage’s "A Room in Moscow" for this appropriate quotation from a Russian poet.

"Stranger, if you passing meet and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to you?"

T.B.

IWMA world call

THE TENTH CONGRESS of the International Working Men’s Association (Toulouse, September, 1958) agreed to support the formation of “Groups of Friends of the IWMA” in all countries where sections have not yet been set up, with the aim of gathering sympathy for our International and of spreading its principles and propaganda as widely as possible.

We address ourselves especially to comrades and sympathizers in Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas, Uruguy and Argentina expected.

It is desirable that “Groups of Friends of the IWMA” should keep close contact between themselves in each country and they will receive our Press, propaganda and news of other countries from the international secretariat.

A group can be formed by five, ten or more members. It will give us the chance to maintain regular contact with the IWMA and of being in touch with the international movement.

All interested in this proposal should write to the IWMA Secretariat (AIT-CNT), 4 rue Belfort, Toulouse (H.G.), France.

LIBERIA—Monrovia, Liberia’s capital, returned to life on September 14 after a general strike which paralysed industry and communications. After the arrest of two union leaders on charges of organising unofficial strikes, 15,000 workers marched on the presidential palace. President Tubman demanded drastic emergency powers to quell labour unrest.

SOUTH AFRICA—Imposing fines of £5 each or ten days’ imprisonment on 136 Africans who took part in a strike for higher wages at a Durban match factory, the magistrate said that he was taking into consideration the loss of their jobs. (Times, 23.8.61).
Mahler's fifty-year fight against injustice

Special to World Labour News

NEW YORK CITY

H. EBERHARD MAHLER, 70, oldest labour defence organiser in the United States and one-time General Secretary of the militant Industrial Workers of the World, died in Columbia Presbyterian Hospital on August 17 after a long illness.

He is remembered for outstanding achievements on behalf of American workers falsely accused of crimes, and for being one of the prime movers in organising the conference here which helped to prove the innocence of five CNT opponents of the Franco dictatorship in Spain in 1932. He is survived by his wife, the former Bessie Freiberg.

At funeral services attended by more than 175 people, tribute was paid to Mahler by Numa Daumas, long-standard-bearer of the IWW in the United States, and three veteran IWW members, Charles Phillips and Richard Braier, fellow-prisoners of Mahler in Leavenworth penitentiary following conviction in 1918 for opposition to US participation in the European war. Sam Weiner, for decades a speaker for the IWW, and John Nicholas Beffel, editor, author, and publicist, had an eventful career. Born in Chatham, Ontario, on November 6, 1890, he went to British Columbia where about 18 and became a "boat boy" on the Inland Waterways. He was rugged, and by 1912 joined the IWW and began signing up loggers in the Pacific Northwest and migrant construction and farm workers West of the Mississippi River.

He was quick to see the potential of the IWW as an industrial union, which could present a solid front in strikes in contrast to the craft form of the American Federation of Labour. By 1916 Mahler was IWW secretary in Seattle, Washington, on the West Coast. There was much resistance to the organisation's members, who had widely adopted the term "Wobblies," an enemy epithet for them.

On November 5 of that year a boat named the Verona, bearing some 300 Wobblies assembled in Seattle, sailed for Everett, a lumber town 30 miles North, to carry on a free-speech fight. Sheriff's deputies and many local citizens, some armed, were on the dock to prevent them from disembarking. Shots were fired, and seven persons were killed—five IWW members and a deputy and another Everett resident.

More than 200 Wobblies were arrested and charged with murder, and 74 of them were held on counsel hearing. Wobblies immediately formed a defence committee, serving as its secretary, and has been credited with organising the first labour jury in a murder case, a group consisting of men from half-a-dozen unions who reported to the judge to establish the labour press which they observed in the subsequent trial of a defendant, Thomas Tracy.

Awaiting trial, Mahler discovered that at least one agent provocateur, a Pinkerton detective, flushed himself into the crowd of free-speech champions on the decks. Tried in Seattle, Tracy was acquitted, and charges against the 73 others were dismissed. A shining victory had been scored.

In September, 1917, the Department of Justice staged a nationwide raid on IWW centres, and 100 officials and journalists were jailed, accused of obstructing this country's war effort. Mahler hastened to Chicago and formed the General Defence Committee, an autonomous unit, which has continued active since.

Soon after, 11 of the defendants were convicted and sentenced to serve up to 20 years in Leavenworth. Mahler was given a five-year term.

In June, 1923, President Harding released more than half the prisoners. Six months later President Coolidge committed the sentenced to the federal penitentiary and in 1933 President Roosevelt gave unconditional pardons to all 94.

Mahler was elected general secretary-treasurer of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1931, serving until 1933, when he withdrew from the organisation in 1936, but did not for his activities on behalf of its members, nor for the welfare of other workers.

In 1933, he had become secretary of the Athos Terzani Defence Committee, which blamed Thomas Nevin, chairman. Terzani, faction leader in the Italian Anarchist editor, was abundant with murder in 1934 (it is still unsolved) and was accused of killing a friend, Antonio Fierro, in a free-for-all battle in the streets of the city. The two, with others, had gone to the battle and a fight started when someone booted an energetic man of Mussolini.

Investigation, guided by Mahler, turned up evidence that Fierro was killed by Frank Moller, bodyguard of Art Smith, Khaki Shirts in the slums of Chicago. In late May, 1934, the Tammany-in-chief, a jury acquitted Terzani in 32 minutes, and after the defence committee had brought great pressure to bear on a resistant District Attorney. Moller and Smith were sent to prison, the latter as an agent, in the absence of evidence that he was in the interested of the four prisoners. He organised the Tammany Defence and began a searching investigation. In the transcripts of the various trials (one defendant had been killed; the other three others who had been realised) he found radical conflict and contradictions.

Al Benson, one of the defendants, had been accused of firing a heavy rifle from a window of a YMCA building on a high hill in the small town of Chicago, thus killing a man perhaps 1,000 yards away in a valley. Mahler's inquiry, in which several of the prisoners were used, demonstrated (and was supported by new pictures) that the photographs introduced at the prosecution in Benson's trial were inaccurate at the autopsy level. And a state expert testified that if Benson had been in the store building on the murder date he could not have seen the site where the victim stood, even with a telescope, because foliage completely blocked any possible view.

An appeal for clemency was brief, detailing the new evidence, was submitted to the Governor's office. But Justice in Kansas was slow and Mahler had to find ways to bring new pressure to bear. Fortunately he was able to earn editorial support from the liberal "Louisville Courier-Journal" and finally the combined effort resulted in a full pardon for all four miners on January 22, 1941.

Several years ago Mahler organised picketing of the New Republic offices here as a protest against an article by Wallace Stegner, which he said was a fraud, with his old friends in the IWW declared a libel on the memory of Swedish-born Joe Hillstrom, better known as Joe Hill, a famous songwriter (and author of the famous satirical song, "Pie in the Sky"), who was executed by a firing squad for alleged murder in Salt Lake City on November 19, 1901. The New Republic responded by publishing a 3,500-word letter to Stegner from the protesting group.

When Mahler spoke here this year at the memorial for Ralph Chaplin, former editor of the IWW weekly "Industrial Solidarity," fellow-prisoner in Leavenworth, and author of internationally famous "Willie" speeches, and when he spoke at a demonstration of Labour's Martyrs held in the League of the Militants headquarters here last November, his and the other speeches were tape-recorded, and are available.

STORM OVER THE TEACUPS

EXTENSIVE STRIKES in defence of that splendid British Institution, the Tea Break, have recently occurred in the building trade, including one at 10, Downing Street (by the workers, not the inhabitants) and in the motor industry.

Trade union leaders have recently been willing to sign away all the afternoon break and most of the morning one, in return for a slight increase in the weekly wage. As a result, there have been often doubtful, if not full, strikes and when they have been called, workers have been called in and held. Indeed, the first big showdown happened at No. 10, where building workers are on a job of reconstruction (the fabric of others, not of Cabinet), but almost at once the 10.000 or more of others in London and its suburbs, with banners and war cries, "We want our tea," have been marching through the city. The crowds, it seemed that more than half the strikers were Irish. There was a good sprinkling of coloured workers from...
Jamaica and West Africa and at one point we met a group of Greek workers with the Tea Break banner.

Like the great charter, Tea Break cannot be limited to Anglo-Saxony—it has world significance.

The news of demonstrations and strikes in other cities soon came in. In London, building workers demonstrated and announced more marches to come, with 50 Mayside jobs stopped by the strike. At Durham City, workers on the new County Hall decided to continue their strike.

The Oxford strikes occurred at St. Catherine's College and at Marks and Spencer. This time we went back when a union official said tea breaks with pay would be restored, if the men did not abuse the facility. The strike has been against the union officials, as well as the employers.

It is well to recall the history of the "breaks." Many workers are too young to remember the time when it did not exist. With a much longer working day, men travelled, often a long way, too work with little or no rest, and had to work through, often with a hollow anatomy, until 12 and 13 without a bite or sip. Working on building sites, or in a shipyard, in winter was grim enough, even without this fast.

Some took a tea break, quietly of course, nourished by what our brother paper "Progress" calls "concealed diet." The secret eaters grew in numbers, until they became a great host. By 1939, many farmers were giving in and allowing a 10-minute morning break. In the breweries, all-night brewers had nibbled like termites at the foundations of capitalist discipline, and by the coming of war, the walls came tumbling down and soon afternoons, as well as morning breaks became general.

It is well to remember that workers see the wisdom of defending such non-monetary benefits, rather than following the advice of leaders who call it's "mess of potage."—but I've got to finish now.

T.B.

CANADA

INTER-UNION BATTLE FLARES IN ONTARIO

EDMONTON, ALBERTA. Mineworkers in Sudbury, a northern Ontario mining community, should long remember September as a month of needless violence. Union meetings broken up by police using tear gas, union officials arrested on charges of unlawful assembly and court injunctions freezing union funds all bring to mind pictures of a bitter strike, in which the employers are using all their powers in an effort to defeat the striking miners.

In fact, there was no strike, and no dispute with any employer. The whole saga was the culmination of years of strife between two rival unions representing the hardrock miners, members of the United Steelworkers of America and the new local of the American Steelworkers of America. The two unions had merged into one and a strike was called by a rival one, the United Steelworkers of America. They wanted a merger and in order to give them an opportunity to start running the union, without incurring the displeasure of the other two, they offered to pay the Steelworkers a $5,000 dividend to have Mine. Mill expelled and it is a fact that they were granted jurisdiction over all Mine, Mill members as soon as it was officially expelled.

So over the years Steelworkers have spent a lot of time, money and energy, not in winning the battle, but in fighting another union in order to steal its members. Over the years they have had some success in their efforts and have no doubt feel these successes justify the 17,000 members and $52,000 per month in dues, has, of course, been their prime target, but until a couple of weeks ago the Commissar had firmly under its control. Then an anti-Communist was elected and since then they have been trying to gain admission to the CLC. An independent miners' organization in Sudbury would not have a chance and the Steelworkers union bosses at all. They wanted Local 598 for themselves and as such the local officials had firmly under their control. Then an anti-Communist was elected and since then they have been trying to gain admission to the CLC. An independent miners' organization in Sudbury would not have a chance and the Steelworkers union bosses at all. They wanted Local 598 for themselves and as such the local officials had firmly under their control.

This was how matters stood in August, when a mass meeting was called, to be addressed by Claude Jodoin president of the CLC and William Langley, Canadian director of Steelworkers and Larry Setton, CLC vice president and Steelworkers director. Six thousand men jammed Sudbury Arena for this meeting and when fighting broke out between rival factions the police used tear gas to break up the meeting.

Next day police arrested Ken Smith, National President, and four other Mine, Mill officials, charging them with "unlawful assembly." On the legal front Local 598 emerged from a welter of injunctions and counter-injunctions still in control of its treasury and with its business still in the hands of the employers. This seems to have been the result of anti-Communist bias on the part of the courts.

What happened was that the National Officials of Mine, Mill placed Local 598 under trusteeship, charging that its local officials had violated union rules by negotiating with the Steelworkers union, so the National Executive Committee in the right thing to do in appointing an administrator. The local officials of the Steelworkers appealed to the courts against this action and the Chief Justice of the Ontario Supreme Court angrily dissolved the trusteeship and issued an order restraining the administrator from taking any action in the Local's affairs, and ordering the Local's bank account of about $700,000 to the control of the local officials.

Mine, Mill officials then, with the help of the courts against them, and with the Sudbury local firmly in the control of their opponents, seem destined to lose half their Canadian membership. In this they deserve no sympathy, for years many of the Steelworkers local have been a disaster to successful Communists everywhere and would do so again if given half a chance.

There is no moral to this report. Trade Unions have to be run by professionals who know what to make a good living out of selling the labour movement and its members to capitalism business concerns. Socialism, freedom, solidarity and direct action are, to them, dangerous ideas to be sought out. Fought and destroyed. Advocates of those ideas are always, all too often, lone voices raised in the artistic struggle. Given a set of circumstances such as these it is not surprising that trade union officials attach so much importance to extending their jurisdiction and fighting rival unions, if they can win a strong. united working class organization.

Workers who realize the need for a stronger organization should realize also that it must be built outside the control of the old Trade Unions movement and that right from the start control should be in the hands of the rank and file members, not careered paid officials.

BILLY GREENWOOD

LITERATURE

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