

# **solidarity**

**FOR WORKERS' POWER**

**VOLUME 3 NUMBER 12**

**6<sup>D</sup>**



# THE KING HILL STORY



On Friday, November 19, in the High Court, Mr. Justice Lawton sent Brian Lomas and Roy Mills to prison for 'contempt of court'. This decision is a landmark in the struggle, now over 3 months old, between the Kent County Council and some of the homeless people in its 'care'. It has deep implications for all those concerned with civil liberties and basic human rights.

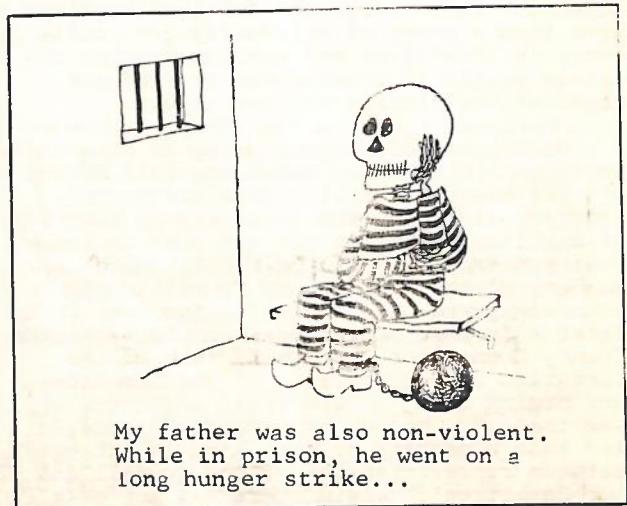
Brian Lomas is a 24 year old stoker. He is partially blind from cataract and the father of a 4 months old girl, also affected by this condition. Roy Mills is a 34 year old lorry driver. He has 6 children including 1 year old twins. Mrs. Lomas, Mrs. Mills and all the children are in the King Hill Hostel at West Malling, Kent, described in our last issue.

On November 1, at a hearing in which no witnesses were called and in which affidavits from hostel officials were accepted as gospel truth, the Judge had found both men guilty of contravening a 'mandatory injunction' granted to the Kent County Council by Mr. Justice Roskill, on October 4, which forbade husbands from sleeping with their wives at the hostel.

Following extreme pressure from their 'defence' Counsel (whom they had only met a few minutes before the court proceedings started) Brian Lomas and Roy Mills had given certain undertakings to the judge. They had undertaken only to visit their wives and children during the 'official' hours stipulated by the Health and Welfare Committee of the K.C.C. (At their meeting of October 20, this committee had arbitrarily decreed that visiting would only be allowed between 10 am and 8 pm on Saturdays and Sundays).

The two men had also accepted the judge's ruling that in the case of an emergency at the hostel they would first proceed to the local police station (at West Malling, some two miles from the hostel) and there explain the nature of the emergency to the policeman at the desk - or presumably to someone further up in the hierarchy if the policeman could not himself decide whether the matter was urgent or not. They were then to proceed - by means unspecified, but under the escort of a constable - to the hostel, there to cope with the emergency under the benevolent eye of the Law.

On Friday, November 5, realising the intolerable nature of the undertaking, the two men asked to be released from it. They announced publicly that they no longer felt bound by its provisions. Their letter to the court was fully published in 'Freedom' (November 13, 1965) and fragments appeared in several other papers.



On Friday, November 12, Brian Lomas and Roy Mills, together with 9 other husbands, announced in a signed press statement that after full discussion of the situation they had agreed 'that it was their primary duty as husbands and as men to be with their wives and families during this period of great strain and humiliation'. They 'challenged the K.C.C. to justify the bureaucratic restrictions which split families in their hour of greatest need' and stated that 'to draw attention to this monstrous denial of common humanity they had decided to remain with their families, in the hostel, on the night of November 13. The 'sleep-in' proceeded uneventfully.

The judge's decision to send Brian Lomas and Roy Mills to prison was not based however on their participation in this 'sleep in' (as suggested in the Guardian, November 20, 1965). It was based on the decision of the two men to revoke their previous undertaking and on their unshakeable determination to be bound by a human law higher than the law of the land.

While the long drawn out struggle in the courts was proceeding, a systematic campaign was being waged by a committee elected by the residents at King Hill Hostel, comprising one mother from each of the blocks and a number of 'resident' husbands. This campaign had a three-fold objective.

The first aim was to bring the facts to as wide an audience as possible, through leaflets sent to trade union branches, shop stewards committees and other sympathetic individuals and organizations. The second objective was to bring pressure to bear on the Kent County Council to revoke its arbitrary decisions concerning visiting times, the separation of husbands from their families and the eviction of families overstaying a three months period.(1) The third objective was to weld the families together, give them a sense of solidarity and confidence in themselves and perhaps inspire homeless people in other areas to struggle together for certain minimum rights.

On October 23, at a meeting in King Hill Hostel, 'A Charter to Make King Hill Hostel fit for Human Habitation' was unanimously adopted, signed by the overwhelming majority of families in the hostel and sent to the Chairman and Clerk of the K.C.C. and to all members of the Kent County Council. No acknowledgment was received. Two weeks later a further letter was sent to each Kent County Councillor, informing them of the formation and composition of the Committee and urging them 'to use their influence to see that the Charter is properly discussed and that a meeting of some kind is arranged between representatives of the Council and our Committee'. Again there was not even an acknowledgment.

## KING HILL APPEAL

Financial help (for publicity and legal expenses) is urgently needed by the King Hill Appeal Fund. Please give generously.

Donations - all of which will be acknowledged - should be sent to:

Dr. D. Banister, 27, Meadow Walk, Wilmington, nr. Dartford, Kent.

Instead, throughout the whole of this period, the K.C.C. continued to issue eviction notices to mothers who had overstayed the arbitrary three months limit. These notices are a subtle form of blackmail. If a family is evicted, the children are automatically taken away as being 'in need of care and protection'. A number of further problems then arise before the parents can eventually get them back. To date 11 eviction notices have been served. It is not as if space were needed for other homeless families. The hostel to this date remains half empty.

A number of demonstrations have been held. Some have attracted wide publicity. On October 25, Mr. Richard Crossman, Minister of Housing, was addressing a Labour by-election meeting in Erith when the fate of the King Hill families was loudly brought to his attention by the people concerned. It must have been a sour experience as he had come to Erith to talk about the 'security of tenure' people were to enjoy under his proposed new Act, from the 'benefits' of which the inhabitants of half-way houses are apparently excluded.

(1) It is not generally known that earlier this year the Labour Government itself (through the Minister of Health) had invited the K.C.C. 'to review its policy and in particular the inflexibility of rules which prevent husbands from occupying temporary accommodation with their wives and families and which, in any circumstances, restrict the stay of a family in such accommodation to a maximum period of three months'. At its meeting of May 19, 1965, the K.C.C. 'decided not to vary its policy, being firmly convinced in the light of experience of the practical issues involved, that the existing arrangements were, in general, adequate and constituted the most effective and economical means for the discharge of the Council's statutory duty'.

Quoted from Quarterly Report of the K.C.C. Health and Welfare Committee October 20, 1965.

During another by-election meeting in Erith, on November 4, Mr. Robert Mellish, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Housing, was also confronted with homeless people from West Malling, despite vigorous efforts by Labour Party stewards to ensure he spoke to a half-empty hall. The dozens kept out made their voice heard and despite violent assaults by 'democratic socialist' hatchet men (see 'Socialist Leader', Nov. 13, 1965) the message got through. The facts were widely reported. Even the 'Daily Express' (November 5, 1965) commented that their reporter 'could see no cause for the violence with which (questioners) were ejected'.

On November 17 a number of King Hill families and several of their friends staged a demonstration at the quarterly meeting of the Tory-controlled Kent County Council. They protested at the endless time wasted on trivial administrative problems before the urgent human needs of the King Hill families had even been considered. The Council Chamber was full of plain-clothes policemen. The gallery was closed although only half full. The whole building was crawling with characters wearing size 11 or larger. By various means, to be revealed in the fullness of time, a successful demonstration was nevertheless achieved (see 'Kent Messenger', November 19, 1965).

On Wednesday, November 24, the Kent County Council resumed its deliberations. Every councillor had been sent an article by Audrey Harvey (2) on the background to homelessness, together with a copy of the article you are now reading (up to the end of the previous paragraph) and - on House of Commons notepaper - an appeal to read all this signed by Eric Lubbock, Liberal MP for Worpington (Kent). Only last year Eric Lubbock had described King Hill Hostel as a 'concentration camp'.

The Council meeting was a farce. Despite an excellent speech and a courageous attempt to move the reference back by Councillor Josephs (Ramsgate) the Council, by an overwhelming majority, endorsed the report of its Health and Welfare Committee. The Charter was not discussed. The behaviour of the leaders of the Labour Group was pathetic. At a time when two working men were in gaol as a direct result of actions initiated by the K.C.C., at a time when evictions were being threatened against helpless women and children, and when King Hill Hostel had achieved nation-wide notoriety, all that these self-satisfied windbags could do was propose the setting up of a further committee 'to enquire into the matter'. But the Health and Welfare Committee had beaten them to it. It had set up its own sub-committee to do precisely this. There was not even a fight for the available stocks of whitewash.

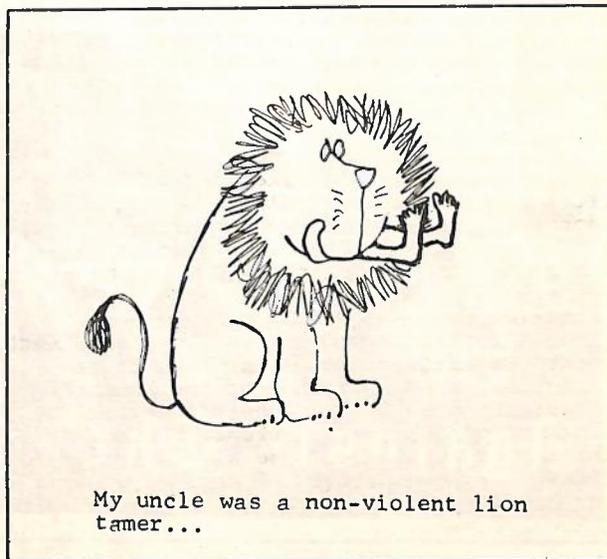
On Saturday, November 27, 1,700 leaflets were distributed in London to marchers demonstrating against the war in Vietnam. Over £7 was collected in the streets for the King Hill Fighting Fund. Several people promised to start collections at work.

On Sunday, November 28, a demonstration organized by the Friends of King Hill was held outside Brixton Prison, where Roy Mills and Brian Lomas were still being held. About 100 people attended, over half of them women, children and husbands from the hostel, who had come up by chartered bus. Posters read: 'House the Homeless, but not in Gaol!', 'The Law of the Courts or the Law of Man?', 'Labour in Power and Homelessness a Crime'. After a short march round the gaol, a meeting was held in Lyham Road, a dingy back street just beyond the walls of the prison C Block. Over a powerful loudhailer Mrs. Mills told her husband she was proud of his action. Jim Radford and Terry Scott (of Bromley Socialist Action) and Andy Anderson (of Kent Solidarity) also spoke. Three loud cheers were raised for all those, in all lands, who were being wrongfully detained. Several prisoners waved back from behind their bars. The recently convicted Chief Constable of Southend, a Brixton inmate, was not recognized as one of them. He was said to be having tea with the Governor.

The campaign continues.

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(2) Author of the Fabian pamphlet 'Casualties of the Welfare State' and of the recent Penguin 'Tenants in Danger'.



## ABOUT OURSELVES

We have been busy. Our pamphlet No.20, 'VIETNAM' by Bob Potter has sold well. The first print of 1,500 was sold out in a week. We have reprinted and it is still going well. This pamphlet contains a mass of little known material on the background to the Vietnam war.

We have also embarked on a programme of reprinting some of our more important pamphlets. Those already done include 'THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM' by Paul Cardan and 'SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM', both of which have been out of print for some time. We hope to reprint others in the near future. Suggestions from our readers on which ones they would prefer would be most welcome. The stencils of Pamphlet No.4, 'BY THEIR WORDS YE SHALL KNOW THEM' are too worn for further use.

After a rather premature announcement our pamphlet on the bitter Mount Isa strike in Australia will soon be out. We welcome orders. Any of our readers who may have contacts with lead or copper miners in any part of the world (South America, Australia, Central Africa or the USA) should order some extra copies to send to them.

Another pamphlet soon to be published (jointly with the Bromley Socialist Action Group) will deal with the struggle at the hostel for homeless people at West Malling, Kent. It will be more than a history. It will develop the struggle further.

There are institutions like West Malling in every county and major town in Britain. In many cases the conditions are as bad as those in Kent. The families in these places need help to help themselves. The methods and lessons of West Malling could and should be used as a model for similar campaigns in every area of the country, campaigns in which revolutionary libertarians can help the families in these places to take direct action. That is why this pamphlet should be sold at every such hostel that can possibly be reached, so that those unfortunate enough to live there can read what can be done to place the authorities on the defensive and to improve their conditions of life.

### APPEAL TO READERS.

In the last 2 issues we have asked our readers to help us increase our circulation. Firstly, by getting us more subscribers (a sub. costs 10/- for 12 issues), and secondly by taking on bundles (or increasing the size of their present one) for sale amongst their friends and workmates. There has already been a substantial response but we still need help. Our paper is easy to sell. We need many more sellers. Why not you?

## RESISTANCE



See the latest Resistance for the first real exposé of the Challenger affair.

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from:  
32a Fellows Road, London N.W.3.

# BRICKIE'S BROADSIDE

## SOME RECENT HISTORY

Our union (the AUBTW) is greatly concerned with loss of membership, year after year. They discuss it at all levels: Executive Council, District Committees and Divisional Council, at poorly attended branch meetings, everywhere, except on the job.

Just after the war the membership was high (about 90,000). We all had great expectations at that time, with a Labour Government in. But the decline set in and continued over the years. In the last 4 or 5 years it has accelerated to an extent that is worrying the national officers very much.

Round about 1958, District Organizers in London were allowed to shortcut the routine mode of entry. They were allowed to make members and issue cards on the job. Well it certainly got plenty of people. They got entrance fees but I don't think they got many trade unionists.

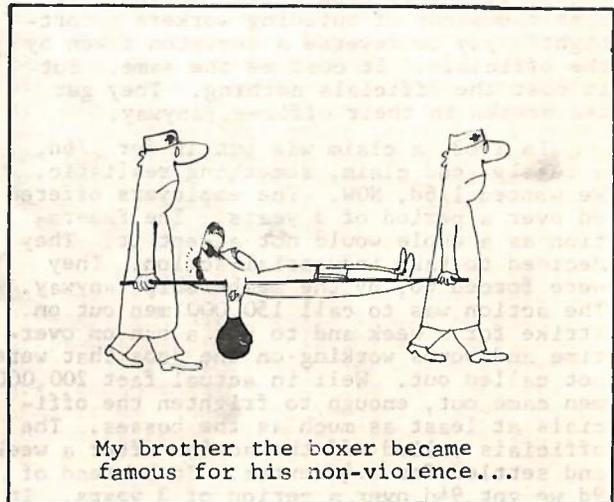
Last winter, our organization decided to advertise on the Underground. Other societies (the 'Prudential', the 'Refuge', the 'London and Manchester') advertise there, so I suppose the officials thought they might have a chance that way. But nothing came of it.

In 1949-50-51, there was a lot of activity in London. There was a Wages Campaign Committee operating. There were mass meetings at Friends House. Some of the branches convened mass meetings with the national officers in attendance, like Kings Cross, for instance, and numerous other places. The branches at that time were full

and members listened eagerly to any reports brought back by delegates. There was a sort of enthusiasm about.

But this 'unofficial body' (the Wages Campaign Committee) suddenly liquidated itself. The reason given was that it was 'creating disunity'. Personally I hadn't noticed any disunity in my branch, or among the workers on jobs where I'd been. With whom the disunity was caused I don't know, but that was the only reason given. I was a bit naive at that time so I accepted it. Now I wonder why.

Attendance at the branches was fairly good until 1957 or 58. Then the rot set in. At quarterly meetings you might get about 10% of the membership. At other meetings, ordinary meetings, there'd be practically nobody. The branches are nothing more than a place where you pay your dues. Very little activity takes place in them. One wonders why, what's the cause of it.



My brother the boxer became famous for his non-violence...

In my opinion one of the causes was this farce of year after year putting in wage claims and failing to secure them. Year after year we put in for a tanner an hour... and got anything from a penny to twopence or nothing. The membership was never consulted except on one occasion, in 1954, when there were arguments whether we should take strike action or go to arbitration. Unfortunately we let it go to arbitration. But we were never consulted before or since.

Round about 1959 or 60, things got a bit brisker in the building industry. It was possible to get more than the rate, in fact, much more than the rate. Today the trade union rate looks sick besides what's actually paid. It's miles below the market value of labour. The bricklayers' hourly rate is something like 6/6d or 6/7d, while what's actually being paid is anything from 7/6d to 12/-d an hour and perhaps more. One only has to look at the building trade ads in the Evening News to see the amount offered by builders to secure labour. They compete against each other all along the line. Yet our organization has never been able to get anything substantial out of them.

1961 was the only time one of our wage claims was met. A claim was put in for a tanner an hour and we got it. But at what cost? Well, tea breaks, an amenity we'd enjoyed for a considerable period, were bartered by the officials in exchange for the tanner an hour. At the same time we got the 42-hour week. We got a tanner an hour, the 42-hour week but we lost our tea breaks. The net result was that the '42-hour week' turned out to be 44½ hours. Because we'd have to work an extra half hour every day and an extra 15 minutes on Saturdays to make up for the tea breaks.

The membership in London would not accept it. They took strike action. It cost thousands of building workers a fortnight's pay to reverse a decision taken by the officials. It cost me the same. But it cost the officials nothing. They get tea breaks in their offices, anyway.

In 1963, a claim was put in for 1/6d, a really good claim, something realistic. We wanted 1/6d, NOW. The employers offered 9d over a period of 3 years. The Federation as a whole would not accept it. They decided to take industrial action. They were forced to, by the membership, anyway. The action was to call 150,000 men out on strike for a week and to put a ban on overtime and bonus working on the jobs that were not called out. Well in actual fact 200,000 men came out, enough to frighten the officials at least as much as the bosses. The officials called off the action after a week and settled for a ½d extra. So instead of 9d we got 9½d over a period of 3 years. It

cost the men involved in that dispute a week's wages. The men who weren't directly involved but had taken solidarity action, had sacrificed overtime and bonus earnings. Substantial losses were incurred by the membership through this action. But of course it cost the national officers nothing.

In my opinion this sort of carry-on is not conducive to recruiting. It does not make active members feel enthusiastic about going out of their way to get members. Militants have expressed the opinion that 'recruiting is the job of the organizers, so let them do it'. Of course that is not a good attitude, but it is the attitude that prevails. A lot of members, elderly men especially, just stay in the union for sentimental reasons. They've always been in. They're past their sixties now. It's hardly worth their while falling out. There's no enthusiasm.

## INVESTING IN CAPITALISM?

Now this is a really sad state of affairs. What can be done about it? In my opinion the root of the matter is the conception which the national officers, and the trade union leadership as a whole in this country have, of the purpose of a trade union. They see the union as a friendly society rather than as a militant working class organization.

National officers, and the General Secretary especially, are always spouting about the friendly society benefits we enjoy, about what we get out of the union. But this would not cause any worker to join a union because he could get all these benefits outside. He's not interested in that. If that's the function of a trade union, he needn't bother, he can get it elsewhere.

Recently the General Secretary has been so annoyed about the declining position that he's spoken sharply to the membership on this. He's been telling them that they've no respect for their union cards if they allow nons to work on a job and get away with benefits we pay for and they don't. The general tone of his report was like that of a Prudential bureaucrat. His conception is that members equal income; loss of members equals a loss of income. When he speaks about 'expenditure' he speaks about it in grudging tones. If strike pay is less this year than last year, it's a good thing! 'Fortunately it did not cost us so much, etc.' When referring to strike pay paid in 1963 he was 'relieved it was so little'. 'It would have cost much more if the strike had lasted longer. Fortunately it lasted only a week.' That was his attitude.

Now the amount spent on strike pay in our organization since 1950 is less than a farthing per member per week. They can hardly blame strike pay for the loss of income or the bad financial situation that they're in. We invested in various stocks and shares, whose present market value is less than we paid for them. This is a practice I don't agree with. It actually means that we put money into the exploitation of the working class.

About 6 or 8 months ago, in the Building Standard, there was an article over the caption 'This is a fine example of trade unionism'. The article referred to a German trade union. It said that the German unions are in a very strong position, that they own the fourth biggest Bank in Germany, that the Bank carries on the business of an ordinary bank, it lends to industry, etc. In other words trade union funds are being invested in the exploitation of the working class. Now that's hardly the function of trade unionism!

The article went on to say that this sound position was only attainable because a realistic contribution rate was being paid: an hour's wages per week.

Now what I want to know is this. What do the German rank and file get out of it? The unions have plenty of cash. But in what way does it benefit the rank and file? Are the funds used to fight the bosses? Or are they used to provide salaries for trade union officials? And salaries for Bank managers? This may be a desirable state of affairs for careerists but its no good as far as the rank and file are concerned.

Up to last year our contribution here was a third of the grade A rate. But this wasn't enough to keep up with the expenditure of the union. So after a ballot and in order to save the organization from bankruptcy, the rank and file agreed to a change in contribution: from a third of the rate it should go up to a half the grade A rate, in installments of 3d per week per year. Each year your contribution would be 3d more until such time as it reached half of the grade A rate.

At the same time the union increased other things as well. It increased the pay of branch secretaries. They had been finding it difficult to get secretaries and they thought a little more monetary inducement would bring people along to do the job. But of course that's nonsense. A trade unionist who becomes a branch secretary does it because he is a trade unionist not because of what he gets out of it. If he is that sort of a bloke he is not much good as a trade unionist. A number of branches had to amalgamate. One secretary had to look after two branches because the lads are not coming forward for that kind of job now.

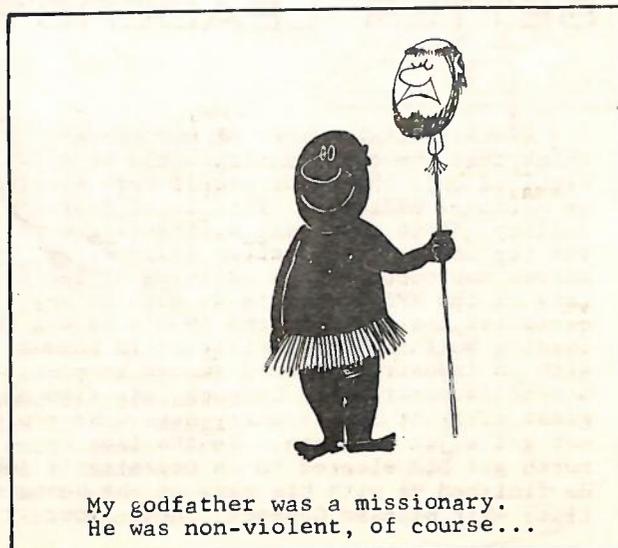
## OR IN MILITANCY ?

The strike benefit is also to increase. It was raised from £3 per week to £3/6/-d this year, and is to go up by 6/-d a year until it reaches 50% of the grade A rate. Now 50% of the grade A rate is equivalent, in actual earnings, to about 12 hours pay. It's certainly not 2 days' pay. So if a man is obliged to take strike action (and it was 'official', recognized, etc.) and he was drawing strike pay he'd be drawing a pittance.

Now if our organization instead of investing its money in stock and shares and wasting it on advertisements in the Underground, were to invest in militancy, if they raised the strike benefit as quickly as possible to a full week's pay, so that if the lads felt obliged to take action they'd know there was something behind them, an organization backing them up, no make-believe back-up, it would arouse enthusiasm among the building trade workers and respect for trade unionism.

Today if you ask a bloke to join the union he'll laugh at you. He'll say: 'What am I getting out of it? It won't get me 5/-d or 6/-d over the rate! So there's no respect for the union. The militants themselves don't feel inclined to ask people to join. They'd be ashamed to bring them to an ordinary branch meeting, for instance.

The rank and file will never be enthusiastic about trade unionism as long as the union officials continue to act as they do, nearly every time there is a dispute.



In 1958 in London a famous strike took place at South Bank. The contractors were McAlpine, well known for their hostility to trade union organization. The London Divisional Council, which comprises some of the most militant building workers in London went on record in support of the men's strike. A week later the Divisional Council reversed their decision. Pressure had been brought to bear on them from both the 'left' and the 'right'. During the course of this strike our General Secretary wrote a letter to McAlpine, to the effect that no dispute existed between our organization and his, despite the fact that many of our members were engaged in this dispute. Now this in my opinion is something that only the most notorious scab would be capable of doing! A union official actually scabbing on 'his' members while they are on strike. McAlpines of course made the most of this letter. They had posters all over the site giving the contents of the letter.

Some time after the strike, disciplinary action was taken against some of our members who played an active role in the dispute. Some were expelled, others suspended. Brian Behan was one of those expelled. There was no reaction to this from any of the London branches, most of which were under 'left wing' influence. Only the Lambeth and Hendon branches sent strongly worded resolutions to the EC demanding the reinstatement of Behan. The Hendon resolution, with a covering letter requesting publicity, was sent to the Daily Worker. The Daily Worker also remained silent... it didn't even acknowledge receipt of the letter!

## BETTER LEADERS?

A substantial number of our members think that the organization would be all-right if only the right people were elected as National Officers. This is of course a fallacy. I've seen real militants get to the top and we're no better off. Harry Weaver now occupies the position of Secretary of the NFBTO (that's as high as any careerist can go). In the 1930's he was the leading building trade militant in London with an industrial record second to none. His predecessor, Dick Coppock, was also a great militant in his early days. He could not get a job anywhere. So the lads up north got him elected to an organizer's job. He finished up with his name on the Honours List: Sir Richard Coppock. Why? Your

## SOLIDARITY SCOTLAND

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Glasgow, W.5.

guess is as good as mine! Harry Adams, another well known militant of days bygone, reached the exalted position of President of the AUBTW. At a mass meeting on wages at Friends House, Euston Road, Harry Adams, on the strength of his 'left wing' reputation, was used as a cover for the right wing. He said that 'we in London were under the impression that our thoughts on the question of wages was representative of the country as a whole'. He then stated that 'he had travelled round the country extensively and he heard nobody outside London raise the question of a wage increase!'

The structure of union organization, the whole set-up is such that when a man is in office, after a time his whole attitude changes. He becomes destroyed as far as the working class is concerned. The membership themselves, if they want a trade union, must seriously consider this question. It must think not in terms of 'good' or 'bad' leaders but of what sort of organization they should have and what should be the object of that organization.

What kind of an organization do we want? Do we want an organization that accepts capitalism and relies to a large extent on attracting members by Friendly Society benefits? One that goes through the motions of making annual wage claims to appease its members, never making any serious attempt to realize the claim and finally settles for any sop the employers wish to offer, the size of the sop of course being determined by whatever the employers think expedient on any particular occasion.

Do we want an organization that believes in class collaboration, that says that the bosses' interests and those of the workers are identical, that says that if his business allows him the boss will give you a wage increase, but that if he's not making much profit then he can't help you.

Or do we want an organization that is a political weapon as well, that recognizes the insoluble conflict of interests between workers and employers, whose purpose is not only to secure wage increases but to participate in the struggle to do away with the wages system altogether.

What are we to do? We should first of all recognize that our unions have become, under modern capitalism, cogs in the machinery of exploitation. Their function is to discipline the workers, to ensure they meet the requirements of capitalist economy. George Lowthian, our esteemed General Secretary, in a pathetic letter in the current 'Illustrated Carpenter and Builder' (a trade journal) only sets himself up as a Labour Merchandiser. You play ball with me. Please don't make a farce of our wage negotiations. And I guarantee to supply you with all the craftsmen you require. The impudence of the bastard appalls me.

It is obvious to me, and it must be to any worker who is not purblind, that to attempt to capture and reform our bureaucratic organizations from within is a waste of time. Our best militants, when elected to the higher official positions, have become rotten. Some of them hold exalted positions in our organization now.

Should we NOW attempt to form new and better unions, revolutionary unions, socialist industrial unions, call them what you will? Here again experience has shown that the baby recapitulates organizationally the history of the parent, condensed of course, and that in a relatively short time it becomes indistinguishable from that which begot it. It would appear that Mendel's Law also applies outside the field of biology.

The answer is rank and file organization in every job, site and shop. Organization on the basis of militancy, not card holding, as at present. Works committee that recognize and accept the implications of the class struggle. These committees should be linked locally, regionally and nationally. Their function should not only be to conduct the day to day struggle, but in so doing to lay the foundations for socialist industrial unionism, similar in aims to those envisaged by de Leon, sixty years ago.

## FROM KEN TO KEN

Dear Ken,

Why all this 'See I don't really mean it, boss' anti-Soviet bilge? That centre spread equating Russia with USA (Solidarity vol.III, No.10), for example. Who is Dean? A nutter?

Unless you are pathological, or paid, you must know that constructive, even severe criticism of the USSR is useful. All this lunatic-fringe stuff doesn't even serve its original purpose - confusing the workers.

Still, it aint no good, is it? The ability to see wood for trees is missing. That is why all these splinter movements drone on for a while - and disappear.

Ken Geering.

Dear Ken,

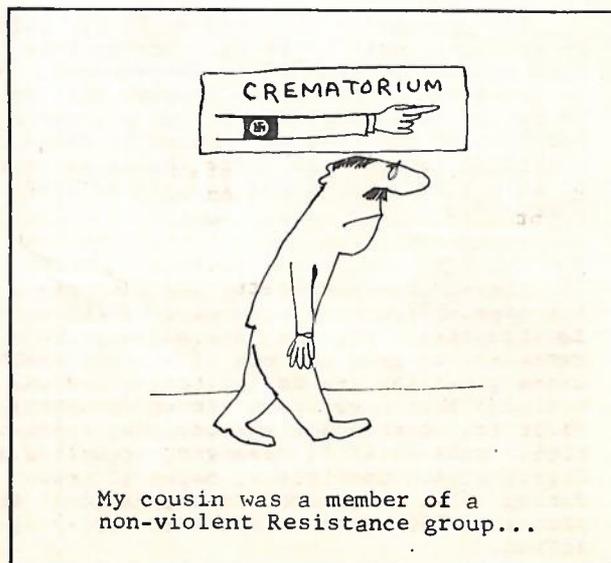
Many thanks for your brilliant satirical letter. It caught the authentic tone of 'discussion' of the Communist Party, say in the middle of the Moscow Trials.

The crack about being either pathological or paid was especially neat (I liked the alliteration). The trouble is who would pay us for equating the USA and the USSR? China perhaps? or France?

You don't mind us publishing your letter in full, do you? Our readers would hate to miss it.

Yours fraternally,

Ken Weller.



# APPRENTICES IN STRUGGLE



The abominable conditions suffered by young apprentices will be no news to SOLIDARITY readers. Although apprentices have a fair chance of surviving until their 'sentence' expires, differences between their existence and feudal bondage or chattel slavery are largely academic.

The apprentice is shackled to his gaffer by contract until he is 21. During this time he is paid from £3 to £6 per week. He is forbidden to strike to improve his lot. In return he is supposed to get a training, but much of the time he is used as cheap, unskilled labour. In short, he is expected to work like a horse and is treated like horseshit.

Demands for better pay and conditions for apprentices have been part of AEU policy for 11 years. But the Carron-Conway-Boyd bureaucratic gang who run this union (and whose loyalties are to capitalism and the Vatican) have never seen fit to do anything about it. Consequently a militant apprentices' rank-and-file movement, organized as Direct Action Committees, began to appear during 1964. Last October the National Apprentices DAC began to consider strike action.

## What happened?

This Committee contained Healyites (1), one Pabloite, a minority of rank-and-file YCLers, one YCL apparatchnik (Joe Bush), some supporters of the syndicalist journal 'Industrial Youth', and others of no political tendency whatsoever. When the date of November 2 was proposed for a strike, both species of Trots correctly pointed out that the necessary organization was still lacking, and that more time would be needed to build it up. However, when the majority of the delegates agreed on a November strike, all but the Healyites accepted the decision.

The Healyites, no doubt furious that the value of their 'correct leadership' had not been recognized by the apprentices, split off. They formed their own Committee which called for a strike on March 29. This was energetically campaigned for in the Clapham press. This press also engaged in a continuous barrage of sewage-squirting at all those who had supported the November 2 call, (i.e. the majority of militant apprentices) smearing them as supporters of Stalinism.

The role of the Stalinists, in fact, was very limited. Certainly the CP, with its long experience of trade union work,

knew full well that a November strike, based on the still flimsy apprentices' organization, would be unlikely to succeed. Yet, they failed, in my view deliberately, to point this out to the YCL official Joe Bush (probably a Stalinist) or to the YCL rankers (probably not). They failed to point out that support of an early strike call would probably damage the movement as a whole - by causing defeat. Further, the CP/YCL organization seems to have done little in other towns to organize support for the strike, once it had been called. All they did was continue with routine sales of 'Stallenge' (pardon!), which supported the November 2 strike call.

The Healyites were correct when they alleged that the Stalinists intended the strike to fail. But it is one thing to condemn the cynical neglect of their responsibilities by the Stalinists, and quite another to churn out insinuations that the strike itself was engineered by King Street, or that all who supported the strike were the conscious agents and supporters of Stalinism. Healyites even went round factories in the North West urging apprentices not to support the strike (as it was 'communist organized') and persuading pickets to leave their posts. The Healyite innuendoes were even directed against the Syndicalists. Now it is impossible to find any trace of Stalinism in the syndicalist journal 'Industrial Youth' which circulates widely among apprentices in the North, and solidly supported the November call. This journal has two main themes: (1) the fight against the bosses; (2) unreserved contempt for all politics.

## Inverted Stalinism

A Pabloite friend of mine (let me make it clear that I am no Pabloite, though I think their approach was correct in this particular struggle) once commented that the Healyites were 'inverted Stalinists'. The facts seem to bear this out.

Both Stalinists and Healyites had a common aim, directed against the wishes of the mass of the apprentices: to blow the November strike sky-high. In the case of the Stalinists, this was merely in pursuance of their time-honoured tradition of 'betrayal', itself the outcome of their policy of 'peaceful coexistence' between Western capitalism and Soviet managerialism (otherwise known as 'Exploiters of the World; Unite!').

The Healyite motive was different: they honestly believed that they could call a successful strike on March 29, and so gain recognition from the apprentices for their so-called 'revolutionary vanguard'. They made genuine efforts to organize strike committees in various cities. But their sabotage of the November strike left them isolated in the movement. As March 29 approached, they were forced to postpone the date. Later the proposed strike was cancelled altogether.

The November call must have seemed to the Healyites a god-sent opportunity to discredit all other tendencies in the movement, and to influence potential supporters outside the apprentices movement and outside the militant areas. Syndicalists, ILP, Pabloites, etc., were all branded as 'Stalinist supporters' for their support of the November strike. This was 'inverted Stalinism' with a vengeance! In the '30's, when Fascism was spreading in Europe, the Stalinists branded all socialists (whether right or left wing) who dared attack Russia for its bureaucracy and police terror, as 'social-fascists'. In doing so, they split the working class movement, which helped Hitler to take power. The Healyites used a similar tactic in the apprentices movement. It will not be surprising if it leads to similar results. The apprentices may well rally round the Stalinists with whom they have been lumped indiscriminately by the unscrupulous Healyites. The CP/YCL set-up did at least give formal support to the apprentices' strike. The Healyites could have used many good, straight sticks to beat the Stalinists with - they preferred to use a boomerang. This could set the apprentices movement back several years.



## Our Views

We say to the Stalinist satraps in King Street: we know your role is one of betrayal and connivance with capitalism. It is only bettered by the role of the trade union bosses. Crawl back to the Kremlin you idolize, guzzle caviar and vodka with Brezhnev and Kosygin (or whoever happens to be at the top when this is published) if you like; you have no place in the working class movement. Get out or be thrown out!

We say to the power-mad, self-appointed 'vanguard of the proletariat' in Clapham: the working class is better off without your so-called 'correct leadership'. You have wrecked a promising, militant rank-and-file apprentices' movement. Follow the 'correct leadership' of Lenin and Trotsky - to the grave!

We say to the comrades around 'Industrial Youth', and to all apprentices oppressed and exploited by capitalism: we are with you 100% in your struggle against the gaffers. Pay no attention to the gangs

of degenerates who want to 'lead' or 'organize' you. They seek only to use your militancy as fuel with which to stoke the boilers of their monstrous political engines.

But do not despise 'politics', for this concerns the understanding, development and progress of the class struggle throughout the world. This struggle goes on not only on your own factory floor, but in every part of the world, in many different forms, in both 'advanced' and 'backward' countries. It flares up on a Midlands assembly line and in the jungles of Vietnam, in the streets of Budapest and in the tin mines of Bolivia, and everywhere where workers and peasants fight their bosses. Study these events. Understand them. Only by doing this can you hope both to overthrow the gaffer and prevent another - using 'socialist' phrases - from stepping into his shoes. Organize your fight yourselves. Accept support from anybody, but 'leadership' from none.

We do not offer you leadership, but solidarity. We will help you in any way we can. Only if workers of all trades, all creeds, all countries and all colours fight side by side can the bosses be smashed and socialism - that is workers' management of production and an end to exploitation - be built.

John Chappell.

## NOTICE

It has come to the notice of the Management that employees have been found dying on the job and either refusing or neglecting to fall over. The practice must cease forthwith. Employees found dead in an upright position will immediately be struck off the Company's payroll. In future, if a foreman notices an employee has made no movement for a period of one hour, it will be his duty to look into the cause, as it is almost impossible to distinguish between death and the natural movement of some employees. Foremen are advised to take very careful note and investigate by holding a pay packet in front of the suspect corpse, as this is considered to be a very reliable test. (There are cases where the natural instinct has been found so deeply ingrained that the hand of the corpse has made spasmodic clutches after 'rigor mortis' has set in). The most successful test is to whisper 'Sunday work'. This has been known to restore movement to a body which has been motionless all week. The foregoing test should not be applied to foremen or assistant foremen, as in these cases movement of any kind is unnecessary.

# A MAOIST PARTY IN ACTION

Between the First and Second World Wars, and for several years thereafter, Communist Parties in Western Europe and elsewhere consistently based their policies on what they considered to be the requirements of Russian foreign policy, rather than on the needs of the working class in their own countries.

The record (Britain, 1926; China, 1927; Germany, 1932-33; France and Spain, 1936-39; India, 1942; USA, 1942-45; Greece, 1944; France and Italy, 1945-47, and France again during the long drawn-out period of the Algerian War) has been amply documented in innumerable Trotskyist, Anarchist and libertarian socialist publications. Even social democrats have not been averse to fishing in these muddy waters. Although the social basis of this communist conservatism has certainly altered over the years - and although the traditional 'explanations' of it are no longer adequate - the facts are irrefutable.

Since the explosion of the Moscow-Peking dispute, Communist Parties of an allegedly different type, 'Maoist' parties, have appeared on the scene. They talk 'left' because of the current state of relations between Russia and China. But are they really very different? Would they react differently to the sort of situations that led to the Stalinist 'betrayals' of the inter-war years?

The text published below seeks to dispel illusions on this score. It describes the attitude of the Japanese Communist Party (a Peking-oriented Party) to the proposed General Strike in Japan, in April 1964. This attitude may prove a prototype and preview for similar 'capitulations' by Maoist parties in the future. Quotes are provided from current Japanese Communist Party propaganda. Their mixture of slimy insinuation, cynicism and incredible double-talk takes one back thirty years or more, to the heyday of Stalinist rule.

This article is based on a text first published in July 1964, in the international edition of ZENSHIN, organ of the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League. This is a marxist group which has played an active role in working class and student struggles in Japan, in the last few years. Copies of their paper - in English - may be obtained from: Zenshinsha, 1-50 Ikebukurohigashi, Toshima-ku, Tokyo.

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## 1. THE BACKGROUND

Year by year the bureaucratization of the labour movement of Japan has increased. The gap between the labour leaders and the rank and file workers has widened. The leaders of SOHYO (1) have thrown off all pretence at militancy. They now talk of 'wage increases proportional to the development of the economy'.

The transformation of the official Japanese trade union movement has been accompanied by:

- (i) progressive abandonment of the strike weapon and increasing reliance on negotiations with management or government;
- (ii) total negligence of the struggle against rationalization and the aggravation of working conditions;
- (iii) bureaucratization of the unions by means of rigid centralization and exclusion of all opposition tendencies.

Every spring the officials of various unions in nationalized industries ask the Central Labour Committee (a government body) to fix a 'reasonable' wage. They always accept its decision, regardless of the actual needs and demands of the workers themselves.

The Telecommunication Workers Trade Union did in fact nothing when the Rationalization Bill (which included the sacking of many of their men) was discussed in the Diet last summer. Workers are left defenceless when confronted with these mass sackings. Seven militant leaders of the Tokyo Air Port Section of the Post Office Workers Union who had organized a wild cat strike in the Tokyo area last year, were recently suspended from activity in the union and laid off for one year by the management.

As for the trade unions affiliated to the ZENRO (2) they have long become completely integrated. They are under the

complete control of right wing Social Democrats. These unions watch workers in the shops and 'stir up the will to work'. They call for improvements in productivity, for co-operation between capital and labour, etc.

In the big newly installed plants, chemical workers, ship building workers, metal workers, etc., are injured and killed day after day under conditions of speed-up and intensified labour. The union leaders never protest against these accidents caused by capitalist rationalization.

In parallel with the retreat of the labour movement the capitalist offensive against conditions in the shops has rapidly been increasing. The aims of the Japanese bosses are essentially as follows:

- (i) intensification of the labour process through speed-up;
- (ii) introduction of 'wage differentials through job rating';
- (iii) stabilization of the wage within the contract period;
- (iv) reinforcement of 'order' and 'discipline' over the workers in the workshops.

In expanding industries (such as chemicals, ship-building, construction of electric machinery, etc.) harder working conditions have been imposed as the result of the introduction of newly built machines, the installations of which are often accompanied by mass sackings. On the other hand, the workers in the nationalized sectors - in which modernization is relatively delayed - are suffering under rapid rationalization of the older equipment and production techniques. There has, for instance, been both closure and amalgamation of workshops on the National Railways, reduction of public road transport facilities, and introduction of an 'STD' system for telephones between big cities, etc. All of this rationalization inevitably worsens working conditions and leads to sackings.

The aim of wage differentials according to job rating, which has long been established in big Japanese private concerns, is to divide the workers from each other

- (1) SOHYO (General Council of Japanese Trade Unions) with a membership of 3,500,000. Under the leadership of the Japanese Socialist Party (left-wing social-democrats).
- (2) ZENRO (All-Japanese Congress of Trade Unions) with a membership of 700,000. Under the direction of the Democratic Socialist Party (right-wing social-democrats).

through classification of the job and to establish 'order' and 'discipline' in the factories. The introduction of the stabilized wage is no doubt aimed at suspension of the wage struggle itself. To crush resistance in the factories the management has sought to stop discussions, meetings, and other activities of the workers in the shops and to increase the number of supervisory staff.

Behind these attempts lies the capitalist objective of oversea expansion in competition with European and American capital. The Japanese capitalists need to overcome working class resistance in order to maintain and develop 'high productivity and prosperity', especially since the opening up of free trade this spring.

Four years ago a well known Japanese capitalist declared "The last fifteen years have been the age of the workers. But the years to come shall be ours in every way." This objective seems to have been fulfilled in the years that followed, partly through the collaboration of the labour leadership. But has it truly been fulfilled? The answer from the workshops is clearly "No".

The workers are in constant struggle against both employers and labour bureaucrats. While the older workers who repeatedly experienced defeat and betrayal in the postwar period (first under the leadership of the Stalinist party, next under the direction of the Social Democrats) feel frustrated and discouraged under their worsening conditions, many younger workers are eagerly seeking the means to overcome the situation. They support neither the Socialist Party (which commands a majority in the labour movement and has a reformist policy) nor the Communist Party (which remains a minority in the trade unions, criticises the leadership for lacking an 'anti-USA policy' and indulges in organizing rallies in front of the military bases of the US forces, neglecting shop floor struggle).

These young workers have struggled largely independently of the existing leaderships in steelworks, chemical plants, docks, power stations, railways, municipal offices, etc. Where there is independent struggle there is a growing link with the anti-stalinist revolutionary movement, which advocates the creation of revolutionary organizations controlled by the workers themselves, independent of the JCP or SP.

## 2. RANK AND FILE PRESSURE FOR THE STRIKE

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The abortive strike of 17th April was prepared against this background. The intention of the Trade Union leaderships was to regain and maintain their reputation among the workers through a campaign for a moderate wage increase. Otherwise they would completely have lost their control over the men. A significant number of workers have been quitting the trade union or joining other unions through dissatisfaction and disappointment with the existing leaderships. These have even had to face the challenge of 'right wing' currents in the trade union movement who criticise the 'left wing' leaders as incompetent on the wages issue (in spite of their 'militant' talk) and who urge 'co-operation of labour and capital' as the best means of getting higher wages.

The proposed strike, which was to involve all the National Railway and Telecommunication workers, as well as part of the private railwaymen, was the only means left to the labour bureaucrats to keep the workers within their unions.

Although the strike was planned by the union leaders it was the workers themselves who really wanted to fight against management and who actively prepared for the struggle in the workshops. They overcame all kind of obstacles, and it was obvious that the strike was going to be far larger and more militant than the labour leaders intended. The workers considered the strike an ideal opportunity to fight against low wages and oppression at work.

As the deadline approached, the railway workers carried on an uncompromising struggle against threats by the management of severe punishment if the men went into this 'illegal action'. (In Japan strikes are forbidden by law in the nationalized industries such as National Railways, Telecommunications, the Post Office, etc.).

Throughout Japan attention was focussed upon the National Railway workers, who had

always played a leading role in working class struggles in the post-war period. Until their defeat in 1957 the miners had played an important role too. The miners were now pressing for a nation-wide strike after a long period of silence. The younger generation of workers in private industry were especially inspired by an approaching General Strike, which they had never before experienced. They were determined to join the mass pickets of the railwaymen.

Neither Government nor employers at first took the threat seriously. They were soon astonished at the determination of the workers themselves and a full campaign was launched against the strike. They threatened prospective strikers with punishment and deplored the 'inconveniences' the action would cause, complaining "if such an illegal strike is carried out, we will neither eat fresh fruit, or vegetables, nor enjoy holidays owing to train delays", etc. In so doing the ruling class was exposing its impotence when confronted with the workers' determined struggle. It looked like being the biggest strike since the General Strike of 1st February, 1947. Day after day newspaper pages were filled with reports concerning the forthcoming strike. Pictures of workshop meetings were often printed. Whatever the editors intended, these photos showed the workers' determination.

It was in the midst of this heightening social tension and deepening class conflict that the JCP declared its opposition to the strike.

### 3. J.C.P. OPPOSES STRIKE

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On 8th April, 1964, only ten days before the deadline, the Central Committee of the JCP suddenly published in its paper an appeal entitled 'For a persistent struggle against provocation, in co-operation with all democratic forces' (see Appendix 1).

From this day on, the Communist Party actively opposed the strike. Party members distributed leaflets in the workshops, persuading workers against the strike. (Before this the organ of the JCP had never mentioned the strike and individual communist workers had been working as ordinary trade unionists for the strike.)

In some workshops members of the JCP began co-operating with right-wingers and even with the management to prevent the strike, claiming they were defending workers against provocative actions planned by US imperialism (see Appendix 2). Workers noted that the stalinists had never been so active at shop floor level as during this period. The Communist Party headlined reports giving the names of branches and sections of the trade unions which, under stalinist influence, had turned against the strike. At the same time they 'denounced' as 'trotskyists' those who continued to campaign for the strike. (In Japan any militant acting independently of the JCP or SP is labelled a 'trotskyist'. Comrades of the JRCL are, for instance, called 'trotskyists' (3).

The reasons the Communist Party gave for its opposition to the strike were as follows:

- (i) the preparation was inadequate;
- (ii) the strike was a provocation, planned by a joint force of right-wingers, revisionists, divisionists, and Trotskyists, supported by US imperialism;
- (iii) the strike would result in the isolation of the working class from the 'patriotic, democratic, anti-USA forces in Japan' and would cause damage to the national life.

- (3) We have met several of the comrades of the JRCL and they are not in fact Trotskyists. They correctly reject the three sheet-anchors which characterize all variants of modern trotskyism: (a) that Russia, China and the countries of Eastern Europe are 'workers states' of some kind or other ('deformed', 'degenerate', 'very degenerate', 'extremely degenerate', 'the ultimate in degeneracy' etc., etc.); (b) that Social Democratic parties are 'parties of the working class' in which revolutionaries should work (seeking to 'push them to the left', 'to change the leadership', to 'split leftward moving sections', etc.); and (c) that the working class needs a vanguard (Bolshevist-Leninist) party based on so-called 'democratic centralism' - because the working class, left to itself, can 'only develop a trade union consciousness' (Lenin, 1902).

It is widely known that the JCP follows the line of the Chinese Communist Party. It has sought to mobilize workers for anti-American demonstrations in front of US military bases, quite neglecting the struggle in the workshops. Moreover, the Chinese Government had recently been seeking to restore diplomatic relations with the Japanese Government, especially since the French recognition of stalinist China. The policy of the JCP should be seen in this context.

In accordance with its aim of establishing a 'patriotic, democratic, anti-American united front' the JCP emphasizes co-operation with the 'sensible, patriotic, anti-American part of big business' who wish to develop trade between China and Japan independently of American business interests. The motive of these Japanese capitalists in establishing 'friendly' relations with the Chinese Government is, however, something very different from the intention of the stalinists: it is to obtain markets in China. The JCP considered the strike to be 'dangerous' because it 'would provoke the pro-China, anti-American bourgeoisie of Japan' and 'would prevent the establishment of a patriotic united front against a small group of pro-American treacherous, reactionary capitalists'. The JCP classifies Japanese capitalists and bourgeois politicians into 'patriotic, anti-American forces' and 'reactionary pro-American forces'. For them this classification is more important than a class analysis.

At precisely this period the Chinese Trade Fair was being held in Tokyo. The Chinese officials who had come to Japan for the Fair gave several magnificent classical Chinese banquets for the 'sensible, patriotic, democratic, honourable people of Japan' namely big business, which was eager to develop trade between China and Japan.

It would have been most unwelcome for the Chinese authorities, whose immediate aim was to establish good relations with the Japanese capitalists, to encounter a General Strike of Japanese workers in the midst of the Trade Fair. It would perhaps have been even more embarrassing for them to see the JCP on the side of the workers during such a struggle. In fact after the settlement, the Chinese stalinists were reported to have expressed congratulations to the workers who then visited the Fair. This is what the 'militant' Chinese line really adds up to. The chief concern of the Chinese, as well as of the Japanese, stalinists is not the interest of the proletariat of the world but is the possibility of strengthening their position in world power politics through manipulating workers against the USA.

Faced with the open opposition of the CP, rank and file workers who had devoted themselves to preparing for the strike were infuriated. They tore up JCP leaflets distributed in and out of the factories. Every member and section of the NC-JRCL (which had been the most devoted and militant organizer of the strike in the workshops) denounced the scab action of the CP to the indignant workers.

## 4. SETTLEMENT AND AFTERMATH

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Seeing the confusion created by the stalinist opposition to the strike, the labour bureaucrats who had been surprised at the resolute support of the workers for the strike saw an opportunity to compromise with the Government. They began to negotiate with the Government Committee, while at the same time accusing the CP of betraying and scabbing.

On the day before the strike was due, the SOHYO leaders visited the Prime Minister and agreed to call it off 'believing in the good will of the Government to give due consideration to a reasonable wage increase'. Negotiations between the Government and the labour leaders were reported to have been 'very friendly and smooth'. As negotiations were concluded Prime Minister Ikeda attended a party, where he is stated to have admired the cherry blossoms now in full bloom. As for the workers, they returned to their workshops and removed the banners and flags from the roof of the factories to which they had been hoisted to indicate their will to fight.

Social order was restored. The joint efforts of the JCP, the labour bureaucrats and the Government proved successful. All three parties were well satisfied with the calling off of the strike, regardless of the actual will of the workers. The JCP daily declared that a dangerous strike had been avoided by the 'united forces of the patriotic, democratic people against provocation'. This was 'a workers' victory over the divisionists' (see Appendix 3).

The SOHYO officials boasted that they had compelled the Government to talk directly with them and to promise a favourable solution.

The Government and the bourgeoisie then unleashed their aggression against the workers. Immediately after the calling off of the strike they rushed an 'anti-violence bill' and a 'Telecommunications rationalization bill' through the Diet. The latter led to mass sackings of operators.

A slight wage increase was negotiated. The main result, however, as far as the workers are concerned, is an increased awareness of the need for solidarity in the workshops.

The Social-Democrats, taking advantage of the scabbing of the CP, have begun to drive stalinist members and sympathizers out of the trade unions. This is aimed at strengthening their bureaucratic control of the union apparatus through exclusion of all opposition groups.

Though the strike was called off and though the rank and file workers are not yet strong enough to overcome the bureaucratic leadership, it was shown that the Japanese working class had sufficient militancy and ability to stand up for a nationwide struggle against the capitalist order. They did this despite the many statements of defeatists and opportunists and despite the bourgeoisie, all of whom deny the combativity of the Japanese workers. A prosperous economy, based on intensified labour and aggravated working conditions, will inevitably bring forth further rebellion in the workshops.

The steady progress of the anti-stalinist revolutionary communist movement aroused the attention, hatred, and fear of bourgeoisie, labour bureaucrats, CP and SP alike. It appeared as a 'militant third current' directed against the labour bureaucrats. This was made possible through its strong links and living relationship with the combativity of rank and file workers. The individual, isolated rebellion in the workshops achieved organized militancy and real power through its links and combination with the anti-stalinist left wing.

Not only in the nationalized industries (such as National Railways, Telecommunications and Post Office) but also in the private concerns, both management and labour officials had to face angry young workers. They found 'trotskyists' everywhere, actively engaged in organizing militant struggle independently of the trade union officials.

Throughout this period the confidence of young workers in the union officials was strongly shaken. Within the Youth Section of the Socialist Party a group has emerged and has begun open conflict with the Party leaders. Young workers who have gathered around this group are showing a lively interest in the anti-stalinist revolutionary movement, both practically and theoretically. Several of them have come into direct contact with the NC-JRCL.

On the other hand, stalinist workers have gradually become critical towards the party bureaucrats who forced them to comply with party policy and to scab against the interest of the working class. This resulted in their total isolation from their fellow workers in the shops.

Three months after the abortive strike, the Central Committee of the JCP published a 'self-criticism' concerning the Party's role in the 17th April events (see Appendix 4). They said: "Fundamentally our policy was right. But we should not have underestimated the economic struggle of the workers". The aim of the Party officials in publishing this 'self-criticism' was apparently to preserve their positions in the Party, which had been in a state of serious crisis since the strike was called off. The anti-proletarian policy of the Japanese Communist Party has thus created an inner party crisis.

In this situation we cannot confine ourselves to blaming the labour bureaucrats, the SP and the CP for their betrayal. Our task is to create a revolutionary organization of the workers themselves, which separates itself from the existing leaderships of the labour movement and from the official political parties, theoretically, practically and organizationally through contact with wide layers of workers in the workshops.



## APPENDIX 1

For a persistent struggle against provocation in co-operation with all Democratic Forces.

(Declaration published by JCP, April 8, 1964)

The struggle of this spring now faces an important stage with the forthcoming strike. The Japanese Communist Party once again expresses its support for the workers' struggle... It is quite admissible that workers should resort to strikes in order to defend their livelihood and rights... We cannot, however, refrain from professing deep regret for the proposed strike on April 17. We profess regret as a party of the working class, keenly concerned with the struggle and interests of the workers. For the strike now scheduled would inevitably bring about a remarkable situation. In spite of the demands and expectations of the workers it would exert a deep influence over the life of tens of millions of people. It would give rise to a serious political issue that would involve the whole of our national life.

The cunning Government and the big capitalists have already launched a campaign against the strike in order to isolate the working class from public opinion and in order to disrupt and crush the trade unions, thus defeating the struggle...

The Trotskyists are advocating an adventurist policy of 'general strike'. The divisionists in the trade unions are responding to them. We cannot but regard this as provocation against the unification of the working class and of all democratic forces... It is imperative now to examine again the policy of the forthcoming strike and to establish an effective alternative policy against provocation and for the victory of the struggle.

## APPENDIX 2

Don't listen to the melodies of reactionaries and divisionists.

(Declaration published by JCP, April 14, 1964)

The April 17 strike is approaching and the related problems are still unsolved. The Japanese Communist Party once again appeals to all workers, considering that the anti-communist campaign has been strengthened and that the provocation is continuing.

Some people abuse the Japanese Communist Party, saying that 'the JCP has betrayed the working class', that 'it is inclined to defeatism' and that 'it is trying to hinder the struggle'. But just look behind these words. What is actually being done for the preparation of the strike? What they are actually doing is to depend on the struggle of the National Railway workers. The revisionists and Trotskyists are impatiently waiting for the opportunity of creating disturbances and stirring up adventurism.

The fundamental point concerning the April 17 strike is this. On one side stand the most reactionary groups within the Government and the Liberal Democratic Party. On the other side stand the divisionists in the trade unions. The former deliberately plan to let the workers go into the strike and will then seize this opportunity to suppress the labour movement. The latter intend to smash the militants in the trade unions through urging them into a most adventurous struggle. The two share a common aim in the said strike...

Behind both of them the American imperialists keep watch. The reactionary group of the Government and of the Liberal Democratic Party is a most treacherous force, faithful only to American imperialism. As to the divisionists in the trade unions, they have been trained directly by the hand of American imperialism. They are aiming at the transformation of the labour movement of Japan into a pro-USA movement, through the establishment of contacts with the International Federation of Free Trade Unions.

It is apparent that the plotters of the forthcoming strike are American imperialism, the treacherous reactionary forces in Japan and the divisionists in the trade unions.

The JCP appeals to the leaders of the JSP and of SOHYO, to union officials in the workshops, to party members of the JSP and to rank and file trade unionists.

The patriotic and righteous struggle of the Japanese people against American imperialism and the Japanese reactionaries, the struggle against the Japan-Korea talks, against the nuclear rearmament of Japan, against the militarisation of Japan, the struggle for the resumption of Japan-China relations have all been making great progress with the working class in the lead. The workers in the workshops have infinite power. Based on the mass of workers in the workshops there is no reason why we could not defend the labour movement of Japan against American imperialism, the reactionaries of Japan and the trade union divisionists.

Workers of Japan, don't listen to the melodies of the reactionaries and divisionists. Workers in the workshops, have nothing to do with the dangerous struggle of April 17. Make this day a starting point for a continuous struggle for a better future!

Long live the heroic workers of Japan!

Long live the unification of all the democratic forces!

## APPENDIX 3

For strong solidarity in the workshops against provocation and divisionist activity.

(Declaration published by JCP, April 16, 1964)

The April 17 strike has been called off. The JCP welcomes this development. The reactionaries and the divisionists have been defeated in their attempt at smashing the militant and progressive forces in the trade unions. It is the heroic workers themselves who defended the trade unions from the vicious intrigues of the reactionaries and the divisionists who were seeking to split the labour movement and to defeat it through pushing the workers into an adventurist struggle and exposing them to the open attack of the enemy.

The calling off of the strike is a great victory for the workers in the workshops over the reactionaries and the divisionists...

All the workers must now carry on the struggle against the Japan-Korea talks and the anti-violence Act, and struggle for the re-establishment of Japan-China relations and for the reconvening of the Coordinating Committee against the Japan-USA Mutual Security Pact under the banner of patriotism and unification. Combined with these struggles, we must also constantly develop the struggle for a better life.

## APPENDIX 4

On the April 17 strike and the present problems of the labour movement of Japan.

(Resolution of the 9th Plenum of the Central Committee of the JCP, published July 15, 1964)

Between the 8th Party Congress and today, we have endeavoured to develop a mass movement and to build the Party. We have struggled to build up a united front against imperialism and monopoly in order to attain and secure independence, democracy, peace, neutrality and a better life for our people as outlined in the programme and resolutions adopted at the last Party Congress.

The struggle of this spring and its outcome, including our own role in this complicated situation, raise some important problems. Through a total analysis of the activity and leadership of our Party during this period, we have come to the conclusion that there were faults in the guidance provided by the Central Committee. We lacked a progressive attitude to the reasonable demands of the workers and to the development of a popular struggle, given the objective and subjective situation of Japan last spring. On several points our actions were in conflict with the resolutions of the 8th Party Congress.

These faults are partial and incidental, in the course of developing our activity towards the fulfilment of the party programme. Since they occurred, however, in the important field of the labour movement and in the course of a nation-wide struggle, and since they had a big influence, we have to analyse the cause of the faults.

In the course of the April 17 strike we should have supported the workers' struggle to achieve their demands. We should have made efforts to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion, respecting the militant energy of the workers and overcoming the shortcomings of the struggle...

We published many documents in our paper concerning the April 17 strike. These were correct suggestions and contained important points to be seriously considered by the mass of the workers preparing for the strike. Notwithstanding, in the course of the struggle and agitation we came to define the strike as a provocation by the US-Japan reactionaries. We emphasized one-sidedly the danger of defeat, provocation and disruption instead of grasping the total character of the strike. As a result we were inclined to regard the calling-off of the strike as our immediate aim, failing to take into account the workers' genuine demands.

When we started from the false proposition that the strike was prepared by the US-Japan reactionaries, we naturally could not grasp the complicated situation before us.

The efforts and devotion of all the comrades of our party during this period were very important, despite the faults of the Central Committee. We have to learn how correctly to apply the resolutions of the Party Congresses concerning the united front, the labour movement and the mass movement, etc. We also have to study Marxist-Leninist theory concerning strikes and the labour movement, not partially but totally.

We feel deep regret and pain in publishing this document which will greatly disturb all Party members. But we must have the courage to do so, in order to strengthen the progress of the Party.....

## MALATESTA - COMMENT

In his review of 'Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas' (Solidarity vol.III, no.10), John Sullivan made the following allegation about the Italian Anarchists: 'This apparently powerful movement put up no more serious resistance to Mussolini than the German Social-Democrats and Communists did to Hitler'.

In fact, the Italian Anarchists, with the rest of the Italian Left, put up very serious resistance to Mussolini; but this resistance was limited by two factors - that Mussolini was himself part of the Italian Left until only two years before he came to power, and that the Italian Left was always deeply divided. Any consideration of the rise of and resistance to Mussolini must include the following facts.

Mussolini began as a Revolutionary Socialist with Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies. He was a leading member of the Socialist Party and the editor of its paper until October 1914, when he suddenly moved from a Neutralist to an Interventionist attitude to the Great War. Apart from this change, however, he maintained his previous political position after his expulsion from the Socialist Party in November 1914, and even after his formation of the Fascist Movement in March 1919. He advocated Nationalism, instead of the traditional Antimilitarism of the Left - but so did many Anarchists and Syndicalists, and both Revolutionary and Reformist Socialists. He was still a member of the Left and an enemy of the Right.

During 1919 and 1920, the Direct Action movement in Italy reached its peak. As long as it remained successful, Mussolini associated himself with it. When D'Annunzio's leftish Nationalists seized Fiume in September 1919, Mussolini expressed his support. When Anarchists and Syndicalists began to seize factories in the north and Catholic Popularists began to seize land in the south Mussolini expressed his approval. When Malatesta returned from England in December 1919, Mussolini expressed his welcome. The Italian Revolution nearly came in the summer of 1920, but it did not come, and the Direct Action movement passed its peak. As soon as it became unsuccessful, Mussolini dissociated himself from it, hesitated, changed sides, and suddenly became a member of the Right and an enemy of the Left.

At the end of 1920, the Fascist movement which had been identified with the proletarian revolution, joined the bourgeois reaction. A new Direct Action movement began, a virtual Civil War against the Left, backed by the capitalist interests, allowed by the State authorities, and carried out by Fascist gangs. All the sections of the Left, including the Anarchists, fought back, but they were confused because their new right-wing enemies had been their old left-wing rivals, and they were also divided among themselves. The Socialist Party had always been split. The Syndicalists were expelled in 1908, the Moderates in 1912, and the Interventionists in 1914. The Reformists sabotaged the General Strike in 1914, and the Direct Action movement in 1920. The Revolutionaries seceded to form the Communist Party in 1921, and the Reformists were expelled in 1922. In 1919 the Fascists and Catholic Popularists had appeared on the scene, and at the critical time the Anarchists, Syndicalists, Communists and Fascists were united in their contempt for compromise and their taste for violence. Most important of all, Mussolini came to power not because the Left was weak, nor because the Fascists were strong. He was not voted into power by the people, nor did he take power by force. He was given power by the Italian Right, just as Hitler was later given power by the German Right. When it came to the crunch, the Left was as irrelevant in Italy in October 1922 as it was in Germany in January 1933.

Thus the resistance of the Italian Anarchists should not be considered in isolation; but even in isolation it was serious enough. An Anarchist strike at the onset of Fascist gangsterism led to the imprisonment of the leaders - including Malatesta - from October 1920 to July 1921. Anarchist influence in the Labour Alliance led to the successful General Strike of August 1922 - the last action of the Left before Mussolini came to power. After that, Anarchist propaganda continued until it was suppressed in 1926. When the cause was lost, Anarchist resistance tended towards terrorism. Individualists had already exploded bombs in 1921, Anarchists made two attempts on Mussolini's life in 1926, and there was a wave of terrorism in the early 1930's. Italian Anarchists fought in the Spanish Civil War (when their leaders Berneri and Barbieri were murdered by Communists), and what was left of the Italian Anarchists took part in the final resistance to Mussolini in the early 1940's.

'Perhaps the Anarchist revolution was merely a Sorelian myth', suggested John Sullivan. Perhaps it was, but no one can deny that the Italian Anarchists fought hard and suffered long for its sake. Perhaps the Socialist revolution is merely a Marxist myth...