


No.5

Sixpence

WORKERS' FIGHT



BLURRED
VISION

58 -
68

C.N.D.

AND ALL THAT....

WEINSTOCK is Redundant !

"There will be more redundancies from other mergers; indeed one cannot get sufficient higher productivity without them." This was how a **TIMES** editorial received the news that over 5,000 workers at the A.E.I. factory, Woolwich would be thrown out of work. It graphically sums up the attitude of the employers, who will do anything in their relentless drive for bigger profits. Last year G.E.C. shares were standing at 44s, just before the A.E.I./G.E.C. merger they stood at 73/9d; they are now fluctuating between 87/9d and 98/6d !

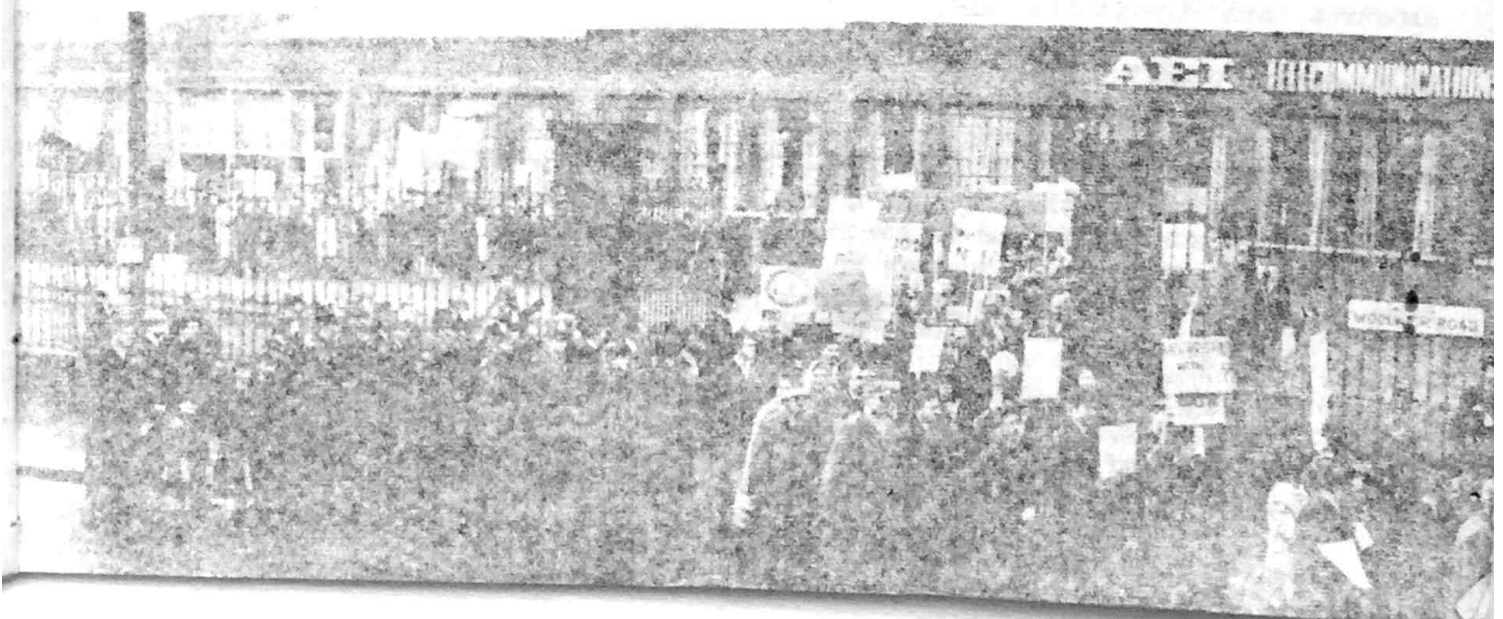
The value of take-overs and mergers during 1967 is estimated at more than £1,000 millions - a fantastic development, considering that the average value of such transactions in the late fifties was less than £400 millions a year. In January this year more mergers and take-overs took place or were being seriously negotiated than in the whole of 1967! The total value of the major bids alone during this month was £750 millions.

What is the real reason for these colossal developments? Is it to enable these companies to benefit the 'nation' by being more efficient and productive? Is it so that they can pool their research

costs and stop the duplication of effort? There is no doubt that a desire to cut costs plays a major part in the merger movement. However, it is difficult to see how the business operations of Imperial Tobacco 'overlap' with those of HP Sauce, which they took over, or to explain the link between British American Tobacco and Yardley's, or Schweppes and Typhoo. Clearly the main motive of these mergers is to concentrate larger blocks of capital in fewer organisations. As the **FINANCIAL TIMES** put it, "the ambition to dominate and consolidate has been the main factor."

The mergers have been occurring at such a pace that even the major banks are finding that their credit facilities and commercial organisations are too limited. This has resulted in the merger of the Westminster and the National Provincial, to be quickly followed by the merger of Barclays, Lloyd's and Martin's. Only the Midland, a vast concern in its own right, now stands outside these groupings - in a few weeks the phrase "the big five" has become "the big three".

The Labour Government's attitude to these developments is quite clear: it supports them. Courtaulds has been allow-



ed to acquire more than 40 companies since 1962, mostly under the Labour Government. They have been allowed to knock gaping holes in the textile industry - closing mills at will and destroying thousands of jobs. Wedgwood Benn, the Minister of Technology, commented at the news of the A.E.I. Woolwich close-down that there would be many more mass redundancies as a result of Government-backed mergers.

The Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, a Government body, brought about the take-over of Elliot Automation by English Electric. It also instigated the G.E.C./A.E.I. merger and the Leyland/B.M.H. merger. The Government provided £15 million to help English Electric out and £25 million of public money went to the Leyland/B.M.H. deal. Yet the 'nation' is so hard pressed that the Wilson Government has to take a $\frac{1}{3}$ of a pint of milk away from school kids over 11! Neither can 'we' afford to provide pensions to those already over 85! This is all the more nauseating when one remembers that only last year the ship-yard owners got a hand-out of £32½ million.

Labour Government grants to millionaire concerns, coupled with cuts in the Social Services, which can only lead to a deterioration in the health of workers and their children, is bad enough. But it is especially galling when Mayhew, Labour MP for Woolwich East, says that closures are inevitable and, echoing the SUNDAY TIMES, that there "is no sense in resisting them." Furthermore the SUNDAY TIMES is of the opinion that "the available evidence suggests that most firms are now acting with reasonable humanity." Apparently, they are not aware that several months' notice is not much good when there are more workers in an area than jobs, or that a few hundred quid redundancy pay lasts only a few months.

In the case of A.E.I. the Government have been full of protestations about the transfer of jobs to the 'develop-

ment' areas. This, however, is nonsense; A.E.I. are sacking 6,100 workers, 5,000 of whom work at Woolwich. They are not creating 6,100 jobs at their plants in Scotland or in the North-East - they are cutting their total labour force. Even if they were simply transferring jobs it wouldn't have much point.

The workers at A.E.I. in Woolwich are demonstrating just how these lies and closures should be fought. They have pointed out that in the Woolwich area the number of jobs available between 1951 & 1961 fell by 12%. Yet the GLO is planning a New Town close by, to house 60,000 people, requiring at least 8,000 new jobs! The workers refused to take 'their' Labour M.P.'s advice to accept the 'inevitable', when a mass meeting greeted his apologies for Government policy with uproar.

The A.E.I. workers categorically rejected the proposal that "there should be no redundancy without alternative employment being available". They have seen this proposal for what it is - a very vague promise about alternative employment, but what employment, on what conditions and at what pay, the workers are not told. By a massive majority they have said that they will give support to any action suggested by the Shop Stewards' Committee.

On the 11th of February, shop Stewards from all over the A.E.I. group met in Sheffield and voted for a one-day token strike for March 12th. The technicians at all G.E.C. and A.E.I. factories have banned overtime. The A.E.I. stewards at Woolwich have been widening the struggle and getting support from other factories in the area. The Post Office Workers' Union was quick to point out that the factory made equipment that the G.P.O. was buying abroad. They also demanded that the Government nationalise the factory and hand it over to the G.P.O. The rapid development of the struggle against the closures was noted in the TIMES on the 10th of February, when they said

that there was a real danger that this kind of opposition to Government plans might spread and threaten the future plans of the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation!

The attitude of the workers at Woolwich is absolutely correct. We must oppose all attempts to make us pay the cost of the 'rationalisation' of industry. Our demand must be full employment and we must fight all redundancies. The responsibility lies fairly and squarely with a Government whose policy is determined

by the pressures of the financiers and the vagaries of the capitalist system. There are more sackings to come: the Port of London Authority claims that it has 1,300 too many people, as a result of container traffic. The railway contraction could eventually lead to 100,000 fewer jobs! This is the future that capitalism faces us with and, unless we fight and take the initiative from the financiers and their tame "socialist" government, we can only expect an increase in unemployment and poverty.

Don Milligan.

N.E. tenants demand:

TAKE OVER THE FINANCE COMPANIES !

The new Teeside Tory Council hopes to introduce a vicious scheme of steep rent increases - the bitter pill being 'sugared' with the insult and indignity of a Means Test. The scheme embodies a 30s. a week increase over 3 years, with some 'lucky' tenants getting a small rebate at the end if they can plead poverty. Of course, they will first have to undergo a degrading examination of their personal lives.

This scheme comes as part of a general attack on working class living conditions. With wages frozen stiff, prices rising and a whole incomes ice age looming ahead, workers are being sucked dry in the interests of profit. Any increase in rents is a further wage cut, with the benefits this time going directly to the parasite financiers. They, the finance companies, have raised interest rates; we, the workers, have to pay - so we're told. Furthermore, if we lie down and let them walk over us, they'll have us divided amongst ourselves, scrapping over whether Mrs. J should pay an extra shilling a week to the rent collector to atone for the sinful fact that her son

has got a paltry wage rise. Oh yes, the bosses and their financier friends will love that! They'll try it on all over the place - a divided working class makes lovely meat for the bloodsuckers.

THE BIG LIE

One division that has so far been successfully fostered is that between council tenants and 'owner occupiers'. The notion is spread around that council tenants are subsidised out of owner occupiers' rates. This is absolutely untrue. Last year £100 million was contributed towards council rents, yet £150 million was paid back to owner-occupiers in the form of tax relief. However, even with this small concession, owner occupiers are just as much squeezed by the finance companies as are council tenants. To pit one against the other would only serve these self-same interests.

As long as the economy is in the control of a handful of these moneylenders, then rents, rates and mortgages will continue to rise. It is these parasitic sharks we must go out to settle with. Councils, who

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do the finance companies' dirty work whether they be Tory or Labour, will continue to behave as tools of these gentlemen. As an example of this, take the Middlesbrough and Redcar councils, both of which will be in the new Teeside County Borough.

Last year the Housing Revenue accounts read like this:

Middlesbrough: Income from rents: £1,251,202
Interest paid to Finance Cos.: Over £1 million.

Redcar: Income from rents: £217,275
Interest paid to Finance Cos.: £218,526

Without having to pay interest, both rents and rates could be a fraction of what they are. Redcar could have charged no rent at all and been better off than now!

THE FIGHT ON THE TEES

The wage-cutting, divisive plans of the Teeside Council have not gone unchallenged. All over Teeside tenants are organising and constituting themselves into Tenants' Action Committees. So far, meetings have been held on Easterside Estate in Middlesbrough and the Roseworth Estate in Stockton. Similar meetings are being called in the near future on the Lakes Estate in Redcar, the Brambles Farm, Thorntree, Netherfields, Grove Hill, Park End, Pallister Park and Whinney Bank Estates in Middlesbrough.

EASTERSIDE MEETING

At the meeting on Easterside Estate on Monday March 3rd a packed meeting of tenants cheered and clapped proposals from the floor to form a Tenants' Action Committee on the basis of "NOT A PENNY ON THE RENTS - IT'S A WAGE CUT! THROW OUT THE MEANS-TEST RENT REBATE SCHEME!" They also called for Government interest free loans to make cheap housing a reality - and for the Government to take over the finance companies if they could not meet this demand out of existing re-

sources.

Easterside Tenants have set the tone for the coming campaign. Their committee of workers and housewives will take the fight into every household on the estate and into the factories.

WE CAN WIN!

This scheme can be defeated by determined action and solidarity on the part of the tenants. It is impossible to evict or otherwise victimise thousands of tenants when they are properly organised and really united. The defeat of the scheme would strengthen workers in their struggle to maintain **present** living standards. And it would be a resounding blow to the bosses, financiers and their Town Hall lackeys throughout Britain.

Stan Lomax.

(Anyone wishing to offer help in this fight should contact the Tenants Action Committee, 123, Burwell Road, Netherfields, Middlesbrough.)

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In Solidarity with VIETNAM

The V.S.C. case

The war in Vietnam is not a mistake. Both sides know what they are fighting for, and both are still determined to win. The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is based on recognition of this fact. Unlike the peace movement, many of whose members don't care which side wins as long as the war is somehow stopped, we care very much which side wins. We have come together to campaign for support for the National Liberation Front ('Vietcong'), and to give it all the solidarity we can. We recognise it as the representative voice and arm of the vast majority of the Vietnamese people, who are fighting for self-determination in order to make an end of an oppressive social system.

Land reform is the biggest domestic issue in Vietnam. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the population owns 50% of all the land. Where the Saigon puppet government has control, absentee landlords extort rents as high as 60% of the produce of a farm or field. Most of the peasants are forced to take a second job in order to make ends meet and feed their families. In these circumstances, the so-called 'aid' sent by the landlords' American friends and protectors is hardly the solution: but in any case, it never arrives, being lost into the voluminous pockets of the officials on the way. Festering corruption is a way of life for the puppet government and its officials. Every job worth anything has its price - a price which is redeemed by further graft.

This rotten police regime would not stand for two minutes against the anger and hatred of the Vietnamese if it were not for the genocidal fire-power of the US Armed Forces. This, coming in a variety of hideous shapes and sizes - all reeking of painful death - has already claimed the lives of more than a million women and children.



The US war effort has primarily been directed against the civilian population because of the nature of the war. The unity of the people and the NLF in their common struggle against US imperialism is so great that the US armies have had to adopt a method of casual and indiscriminate slaughter of the whole population. The US army cannot tell the Vietcong from the Vietnamese peasant because they are one and the same. In the recent battles, US bombing reduced many towns to rubble - "in order to save them"!

The US imperialists play world-policemen - ostensibly in the defence of 'freedom' and the 'Free world'. Whoever else may be fooled, these self-appointed 'saviours' are quite clear about why they are there. What is at stake is Imperialism's licence to exploit the natural wealth of South East Asia, and ultimately the whole of the under-developed world. There is tin, rubber, tungsten and other valuable raw materials to be bought, and a market for the advanced countries' industrial produce. This 'arrangement', dominated by Imperialism, means the continual impoverishment of the backward countries, and the continual enrichment, at their expense, of the profit-coffers of Imperialism. Private investment in the area is worth thousands of millions of pounds and dollars. Britain's investment in Singapore and Malaysia alone is worth £700 millions - which is why Wilson, the gentleman's gentleman of British capitalism, continues to give full and wholehearted support to Johnson's war.

If (or rather, when) the NLF wins in Vietnam, other liberation struggles in Asia, in South America, in Africa, in the black American ghettos - indeed, even the struggles in this country against a belligerent ruling class - will be tremendously aided.

In Asia, the 'domino theory' is not just propaganda. In Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines and Korea the people are arming behind organisations similar to the Vietnam NLF, with the same aims:

land and other social reforms; and the ending of their country's subservient relationship with Imperialism, so that their natural resources can be used to bring advancement and prosperity to their own people. This is the only solution to the 'problem' of these areas - not charity, either private or at government level.

Because we support these struggles we give unconditional and active solidarity to the NLF, the vanguard of this Asian struggle. We feel that those in the peace movement who in effect call upon the NLF to negotiate their own defeat tend to blur these very real issues. It must be remembered that negotiations are a means and not an end: and if these means do not serve our ends they are worse than useless. The pacifists would be both more honest and more logical to simply tell the Vietnamese to lay down their arms and give in to oppression.

In past negotiations like the Geneva Convention the sacrifices and struggles of the Vietnamese were thrown away by 'diplomacy' and promises, which the Vietnamese were pressured by Russia and China into accepting. Though appearing to many at the time as a good 'negotiated, peaceful' solution, this simply laid the basis for further oppression. Any negotiations entered into while the US can dictate terms will only mean that, after a respite, the Vietnamese will have to fight again another day. The only permanent peace in Vietnam will be the result of the victory of the NLF and the complete and immediate withdrawal of US forces.

This is the reality of Vietnam - one side must win. In terms of the success of the campaign in this country against the US aggression, it is a fact that a neutralist opting out of reality can never gain the support of any significant number of the working class - the only people whose action actually could affect the war. These are the people we must win. And they know that the outcome of a strike - which, despite the hard-

the indignities of rigid control over receiving visitors (of any sex and particularly the 'opposite' one), their comings and goings, and even what they wear at meal times.

A big issue at all times, and especially so at present, is the question of Grants. Always inadequate, they are in affect being pared away further. The Means Test makes most students dependent on their parents even after they are married, and often beyond the age of 21 - and many parents just don't pay up what the Whitehall boys decide is 'their share'.

In addition to the general rise in the cost of living and the extra rise caused by devaluation, students face a drastic increase in fees for halls of residence. These, already amounting to more than half the total grant (assuming the student received the total) are to rise by about 23% in London and 13% in Liverpool. Other universities are reviewing their fees - which, of course, only cover lodging and partial board for the academic year of 36 weeks. These fees are at present £5 a week. As this is prohibitive for many students, and as there are anyway insufficient places, large numbers must find their own accomodation: this can be equally costly and often involves serious overcrowding.

These increases will come into effect in October '68. At that date there is also expected an increase in grants. But this

increase, which is to be announced in May by a tribunal that has been studying the cost of being a student, is to be calmly halved at birth according to Mr. Wilson's idea of economising. By the time they have paid the extra fees, rents, fares, food and clothing prices, the 'increase' will have amounted to a cut of something like 10s. to £1 a week as compared with standards 5 or 6 years ago. And, of course, the wages they will get for vacation jobs have also been cut, frozen and package dealt under the Wilson regime.

What this amounts to is a sudden realisation by students of the world 'outside'. They are getting the treatment meted out to the workers, for whose struggles over wages and conditions students have previously felt little but disdain. And it is only by a process of breaking out of their seclusion, only when the students are shaken up by what happens outside the universities, that they will move in any numbers - either on university issues or general political ones.

The vast majority of students come from a middle class background. When they finish their time at university they settle down into the professions, or go into industry as managers, executives or technicians. Neither their background nor their future environment is particularly noteworthy for encouraging political consciousness or militancy. But for a brief period at university they have the chance of pushing back the **narrow**

horizons induced by their secure, sheltered class position. Nevertheless, and despite the ample opportunities open for political activity (lots of free time, few of the responsibilities that make workers think twice before, say, traveling to London for a demonstration), in normal, stable periods few students do engage in political/militant activity. The vast bulk are not interested, and a substantial number are actively right wing.

It is usually possible, on the basis of ideas, to win a few individual students away from the middle class environment and bring them into revolutionary, working class politics. A larger number of individuals can be won to a soft-centred centrist kind of 'Marxism'. But, although the conditions described above are perennial - to date, indeed, universal - only rarely are any numbers moved to act in the way they have begun to in the last few months, or in the way we rather enviously see them doing in other countries.

It appears then, that however bad conditions are within the universities, students will generally put up with this if they are satisfied with the state of society. If they take for granted the wisdom, morality and sanity of their 'elders', they are more likely to give them the benefit of the doubt in academic decisions. 'Elders' in this sense being not so much a different ideology or a different system, but the system and ideology which they basically accept but do not yet have to practice rigidly. Where these are questioned, or doubted, or consciously understood and opposed, then 'elders' stands for a much more serious enemy than simply a short-term difference in generations.

The US Government is killing millions of men, women and children (particularly the latter) in Vietnam in order to retain the supremacy of the Great Society - which cannot even afford to clear New York of its plague of rats, or raise the standards of its 36 million American

citizens living on less than 17s. a day. This has been the most powerful factor behind the demand for 'Student Power'. In Japan, galloping inflation and not-so-galloping wages have contributed to the students' violent hostility to the US aggression in Vietnam. In Germany, a fairly severe economic recession a year ago shook the trusting faith in capitalism which had been indoctrinated into the country's youth. After years of quietism they began to feel the oppression of the new Emergency Laws; of the take-over by the extreme right-wing Axel Springer press of half the country's papers; of the brutality of the police; of the latest service to capitalism of the Social Democrat Party in its present coalition; and of that Government's support for the US in Vietnam. The violence of the student explosion has even swept up schoolchildren - in Freiburg they tried to storm the jail! (Picture opposite: Berlin students fight police.)

In Spain, students were inspired by the Asturian miners' strikes to act on their own demands - mostly for academic freedom - against the fascist regime, staging mass sit-in strikes and demonstrations in University City, Madrid.

In this country the social-political tensions and polarisations, though increasing daily, are still comparatively mild. Even so, such things as the laws against trade unions, cuts in the social services (including education of course) rising unemployment and large-scale technological redundancies have made their mark on student consciousness and produced the beginnings of a movement among large numbers of students - as opposed to the few individuals. There was the campaign last year against the raising of fees for foreign students, and the LSE struggle for a students voice in university 'politics'. These days Government and pro-US speakers get a rough ride where-ever they go. The activities become cumulative in subsequent struggle against the victimisation of participants of earlier actions; which also happened in Poland. The major campaign now

looming up will be over the cuts in the new Grants.

All this activity is most welcome, and is also an indication of the state of this society in general. However, spectacular though it is, student activity has serious limitations. Basically it is a protest movement. The class nature of the students reasserts itself in all but a very small handful, as the temporary pressures ease off. The constantly shifting personnel prevent the crystallisation of a clear-cut, conscious understanding of what they are protesting against. As it is essentially cut off from the inescapable pressures that bear down on the

working class (even when it is the fact of these pressures that has moved the students) this kind of protest tends to be very unstable, and will ebb and flow according to such vaporous elements as 'mood'.

The only thing that can stabilise and harness student militancy is permanent and close links with the working class movement. Those individual students who have themselves joined the working class struggle must work to establish such links. Meanwhile such groupings as the Radical Student Alliance are a welcome, if still very feeble, step towards the cohesion and co-ordination of the rising student militancy.

Jackie Cleary

(Opposite page: Above: Madrid students stone police. Below: Japanese students march against a US battleship at Sasebo.)

That was THE WEEK that was !

It will not come as a surprise to discerning readers of THE WEEK that this journal is to cease publication on March 31st. (see statement in February 28 issue). The fall in political significance and viability had become increasingly clear over the last few months. The paucity of original material and the contraction in the number of contributors has been obvious over the last two years at least, reaching an all time low in recent months. The political significance of this decline now becomes obvious.

It is worth analysing the statement made on February 9th because it contains some contradictions and confused thinking, and these are indicative of the basic confusion of THE WEEK. Firstly the statement says -

"It has been felt that the original aim of the journal, that of becoming the expression of an organised left inside the Labour Party and trade

unions, is unlikely to be achieved in the near future. The main reason being that the mass left wing opposition to right wing policies of the Labour leaders - which we all expected in 1964 has not materialised." At the bottom of the same page we find -

"We still feel that there is a need for a substantial printed weekly to act as an organiser for the left..."

What are we to make of these two items? On the one hand there is the fact that defeat is conceded, but this is apparently blamed on 'objective' circumstances. The question which should be posed here is, if THE WEEK set out to organise the left, how much of the blame can be apportioned to its role for this failure? But this question is avoided. Clearly there is no sense of a dialectical relationship between the 'organiser' and those to be 'organised'. The failure to

workers' fight

mid-March/April • 1968

All correspondence, reports, articles etc., should be sent to the Editor: Rachel Matgamma, 31 Leicester Road, Manchester 8. The next WORKERS' FIGHT will be out in May; WORKERS' REPUBLIC No. 21 will be out in April.

Labour Racialists

As the list of this rotten Government's crimes grows longer, the awful stench of Wilsonism becomes ever more putrid. To the already formidable list it has now added a piece of the most blatant and frank racist legislation this country has known. Not racism in a distant colony, or 'decently' (if transparently) dressed up as in the past - but the most uninhibited exhibition possible. The politics of the crank right wing groups and of such Tories as Powell and the sometime pro-Nazi Sandys were taken up and rushed through Parliament by Callaghan with the full backing of the cabinet. As usual, there was only a token backbench opposition from a tiny handful.

This was panic legislation in servile and automatic response to the wide-spread alarm which the Tory right fringe and the hyena press had whipped up. The Kenya Asians had been given the option of British citizenship in order to smooth the reorganisation of the old Empire in East Africa. On trying to use it they now find the door to the "motherland" locked and barred against them. The Tories made the promises - and Labour, under pressure of the very same Tories, has disgraced itself in breaking them: disgraced itself even by their standards, let alone the traditions and principles of the working class movement.

Even the less rabid and less debased section of the ruling class demurred and looked away in embarrassment as Wilson-Callaghan, with exquisite crudity, embraced the racism of an Ian Smith or a Peter Griffiths. In fact, they have merely taken their cue from such 'pioneers'. Griffiths' shock victory over Gordon Walker at Smethwick in the '64 election followed a viciously racist campaign. And not many moons passed between Wilson's first reaction - the proverbial tribute of vice to virtue in the "Parliamentary leper" incident - and the racist White Paper on Immigration. This proved to be only the first of a whole series of Acts and actions in the Griffiths style. Back in 1962 the Labour leaders promised to repeal the Tories' Immigration Bill. Now they are falling over themselves plugging up the loopholes and stiffening the penalties. This Government is so reactionary that Iain Macleod and the Archbishop of Canterbury must seem enlightened by contrast.

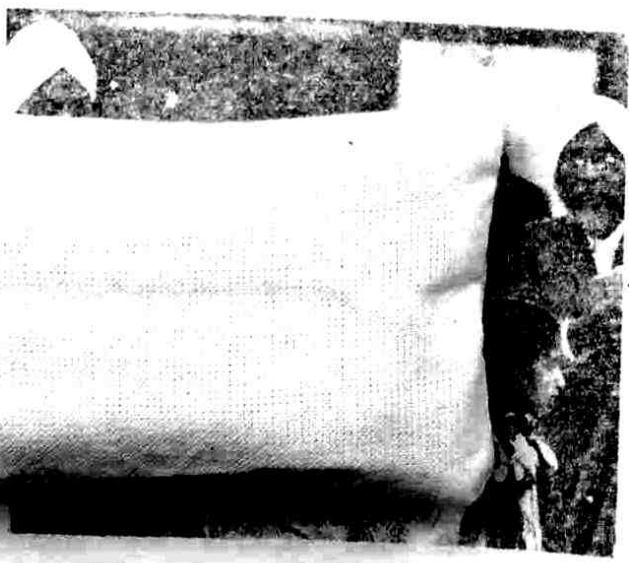
The Government's motive was to gain a cheap popularity amongst the more backward sections of the electorate; THERE IS NO OTHER EXPLANATION FOR THEIR ACTIONS. The official explanation was the usual one - 'inability to cope with' the supposed problems of an increase in the coloured population. Always a shallow evasion of the real issues, in this case it has many times less 'justification' than usual, even by the standards accepted by the Government. Sociologists and other experts testified that this particular group of immigrants would prove very easy to assimilate. They said that 25,000 a year of these skilled, educated, English-speaking middle class Asians could easily have been absorbed. But "Socialist" Callaghan didn't want them. He set a quota of 1,500 p.a., and at first resisted even the demand for an appeals

mechanism! There could be no pretenses: the issue was COLOUR. The hollow bourgeois fiction of citizens' equality before the law was publicly scooped out thinner by the Government's open declaration that not all citizens are quite so equal - and that brown skin is a decided dis-equaliser.

The treatment of the Kenya Asians was not just a passive reflection of the racialism whipped up by the press and the Right Tories. It is the sanctification of racialism as official government policy - and therefore the nurturing of the seeds of racialist poison directed against the immigrant workers already living in this country.

The 'problems' associated with immigration - primarily houses and jobs shortages - are problems of capitalism and its inability to organise life decently and securely. The Government, servicing capitalism, victimises coloured immigrants as easy scapegoats for its own failure to solve any of the problems of capitalism. Callaghan 'justified' himself in terms of the need to ensure "Fairness to the people of this country"!! The 'fairness' of wage cuts, wage freeze, unemployment and 'consumption-cutting' price rises? The 'fairness' of legislation against the trade unions in order to enforce all this? The 'fairness' of cuts in spending on housing, health services and education? The 'fairness' that means finally turning the Labour Party into a racialist Party?

The Government's motive is to distract attention from its and the system's sorry failures. The effect is to create and widen divisions in the working class by injecting racialist poison to do its work in conjunction with the social pressures of the system (without which it couldn't exist at all). Objectively this can only enfeeble the working class in the struggle against the Government attacks on our standards. Either way the Government benefits - and we lose. Racialism is nothing other than a virulent cancer cell in the labour movement. In certain conditions it could destroy it altogether by turning it against itself.



'SOME ARE LESS EQUAL THAN OTHERS'

For its own defence - if for no other reason - the labour movement must repudiate this racialism and denounce its perpetrators: the Government, the Judas-'left' in the Cabinet, the MPs who voted for it - and those who hadn't the guts to stand up and fight it. Socialists in the Labour Party must agitate and organise in opposition to this latest demonstration of the deep capitalist decadence of the Labour leaders. The first step to cleansing the atmosphere must be the repeal of all the racialist Immigration Acts.

We can only combat racialism by organising the rank and file of the Labour movement against it, utilising the strength of the working class. We cannot expect to look to the organs of the capitalist state to abolish what is essentially in its interests. After all, it is Michael X they have locked up - not James Callaghan....

ALDERMARCH 10

At Easter 1958 5,000 people participated in the first Aldermaston march. Some had long hair, some had beards - and the newspapers could afford to ridicule the affair. By Easter 1960 there were 100,000 people, and the ridicule began to sound a bit like hollow laughter. Easter 1961 saw 150,000 in Trafalgar Square - the biggest demonstration since Chartist times. But today the forces that CND can mobilise are only a fraction of its peak performance. Because of the ever-present nuclear sword of Damocles, CND has survived. Yet, though the nuclear peril is heightened in the present international situation, CND is nearer to its 1958 strength than the peak of '61.

The fact is that even at its peak CND was not very effective, appearances notwithstanding. In its upward curve it captured the Labour Party Conference in a Pyrrhic victory at Scarborough in 1960. It lost it at Blackpool in 1961. This Labour Party experience was crucial for CND, posing as it did the questions: effective opposition or mere protest? Advance or decline?

Unilateralism raised fundamental issues because maintenance of the arms industry and the defence of capitalism are fundamental. Nuclear weapons were and are tied to capitalist society by more than can be changed in a conference vote on unilateralism. And this is no accident: the drive of capitalism towards war, towards conquest of territory or spheres of interest (exemplified today by the war of annihilation being waged against Vietnam) is built into the economy. Imperialism is driven towards defence of its control over what is left to it of the world, on pain of economic slump and suffocation on its home base. Even if British capitalism were now to abandon the Bomb and bank on US bombs, this would still be true. It is going to be true on a world scale until we disarm capitalism not only of its bombs but down to its last policeman.

Only the fundamental enemy of capitalism

- the working class - can finally do this, because only the working class can today totally take over and re-mould society. Therefore an effective peace movement, taking itself seriously, must turn towards the working class. It must also see and propagate the connection between nuclear weapons and capitalism, between the wage freeze and war and between the struggle for socialism and the battle against barbarism.

CND casually - too casually - 'taking' the Labour Party, was unprepared for such an undertaking: it did not even see that it was objectively challenging capitalist society in its entirety. Nor that it was doing so with the loosest possible organisation, behind professionally weak 'champions' like Foot.

Unilateralism, running fundamentally against the interests of the British ruling class as it saw them at the time, was too serious a breach in the bipartisan foreign policy front to establish itself in the Labour Party without a deep struggle - one that went deeper and broader than just one issue. The opposition to unilateralism was organically connected with the safety of the capitalist system: it was not to be vanquished by a loose coalition based only on that one issue. And, faced with the entrenched resistance of the agents of capitalism in the Labour Party, the unilateralist vote was reversed in 1961.

Rebuffed in the Labour Party (the trend was obvious by early '61) the unilateralist movement ran for cover down a blind alley - the civil disobedience campaign of the Committee of 100. This too was based on underestimation of what was at stake for capitalism, and of the power of the State. In defence of capitalism the State can stand up to a general strike where millions are far from passive. How ludicrous to imagine that even millions sitting passively in the road could affect policy on this vital question. The sit-downs, once the euphoria was gone (and it was gone soon ((Continued on p.22))

CZECHOSLOVAKIA:

A "CULTURAL REVOLUTION" ?

by
Sean Matgamna

The unique liberalisation of the frozen regime in Czechoslovakia and the echoes across the border in Poland inevitably recall the events of 1956. That time, a series of shocks and explosions, beginning with the 20th. Congress of the CPSU and continuing with the workers' uprising in Posnan and the formation of the Polish Workers' Councils, rapidly led to the Hungarian Revolution: a spontaneous rising of the working class to take power from the bureaucratic regime and the Russian Army. The spark which ignited Hungary was not only the mass action in Poland, but also the limited liberalisation there: a liberalisation from above which allowed the bureaucracy, led by Gomulka, to ride the tiger of the proletarian revolt without being gobbled up. Those who took to the streets of Budapest initially in solidarity with the Poles, soon found themselves travelling much further and faster than the people they set out to emulate. Here the bureaucrats needed Russian tanks to reassert their domination.

Today the reforms in Czechoslovakia are beginning to look like having as disturbing an effect as had the Polish thaw 11 years ago.

At the beginning of January Antonin Novotny, last except Hoxha of the old-style top stalinist party bosses, was removed as First Secretary of the Czech CP. He retained the post of President of the Republic. Clearly this was because of the delicate balance of forces within the Central Committee, where his opponents only have a small majority, rather than any excess of liberalism on the part of the reformist faction of Dubcek. The reformists' victory was far from assured. During the struggle in the C.C. an attempt was made by General Sejna to bring the army into the balance in support of Novotny. Now Sejna's defection to the USA (where all the good stalinists seem to heat these days!) has further discredited and weakened the Novotnyites.

The strong and continuing resistance to the long overdue unfreezing of the political regime has led the reformist faction to accelerate rapidly the speed of the reforms. The effect has been an explosion of liberalism all the greater for the fact that it follows a regime which has long lagged behind the political innovations of the other East European bureaucracies.

In practice censorship has ended and there is freedom of expression. The Writers' Union, deprived of its too critical paper only last Autumn, * has had its right to publish restored. There has been a purge of the top Novotnyite hatchetmen, including the Chief of the Secret Police and the Minister of the Interior. A tidal wave of criticism threatens to wash away the abuses of the system. Nothing is sacred any more, and criticism is encouraged by the reformist faction. The government is criticised, the Party is criticised, the leadership is criticised. Novotny is openly attacked and in turn has gone to the factories agitating to the workers against the new "intellectuals'" regime. He is replied to - but not as yet interfered with.

SPLIT

And this is obviously a major key to the situation: the split and open struggle of two bureaucratic factions. In this there is a certain analogy with China - only on an immensely higher level of development and culture, and with immensely more favourable

* See article in WORKERS' FIGHT No.2 - "Ripening seeds of a New October".

possibilities for the working class to go over the head of both bureaucratic factions and take direct control of society. Apparently after January Novotny still seriously entertained hopes of a comeback, using his entrenched supporters, and banking on suspicion and diffident reserve on the part of the working class in face of the new economic policies. The conservatives have thus pushed their opponents further than they would otherwise have gone in relaxing bureaucratic control - and no doubt further than the whole ruling caste can allow to continue as a permanent arrangement. In turn if there emerged an immediate possibility of the working class, as yet aloof, intervening with sharp anti-bureaucratic demands (as opposed to criticising aspects of past bureaucratic rule) the interaction could go the other way and strengthen the conservatives in a comeback bid. This has been the immediate effect of the Czech events in Poland, where exploitation of anti-semitism by the regime is only one of the old and supposedly dead stalinist manipulation techniques to crawl out of the woodwork.

What are the driving forces making for this unprecedentedly thorough reform from above? What is the background? What are the perspectives?

MASS BASIS

Except for East Germany, Czechoslovakia is the most advanced of all the so-called satellite countries. It had an established industry in the nineteenth century and even before World War Two Czech industry and construction accounted for a big majority of the labour force. It was a modern industrialised country, with bourgeois democracy and a well-established, militant labour movement. It was therefore radically different from all the other, predominantly backward and agrarian, satellite countries. It had a very strong Communist Party, which already in 1938 had 80,000 members (out of a total population of 14 million). The deep mass roots of the CCP is a major factor in the present situation, lending a certain stability and a genuine, if highly distorted, communist tradition to look back to in the current reorganisations.

It was a mass Party, with communist aspirations, enrolling the most militant workers and supported finally by the majority of the working class. But it was by no means a healthy party. How deeply it was poisoned by Stalinism is shown by its chauvinistic persecution of the Sudeten Germans and the Hungarian minority in the country. Before the War a sizeable proportion of the Party membership had been German, but now all class criteria were forgotten. During the war-time junketings it became a stern advocate of total expulsion from Czechoslovakia of the Sudeten Germans.

After 1945 the 2½ million remaining Sudetens (the Nazi ones had fled) were persecuted: they had to wear special armbands; they weren't allowed to use public communications; they were officially allocated the same rations as the Jews had received under the Nazis; they were conscripted for forced labour in the uranium mines. Finally they were expelled. The C.P. was actively responsible for this nationalistic viciousness. From 1945-50 Germans (except exiles) could not join the Party. Even old members could not rejoin. The Hungarians - also 'enemy nationals' - were similarly treated: 650,000 were deprived of citizenship and 100,000 were simply expelled.

During the War the Party, active in the resistance, (particularly in Slovakia) had gained enormously, aided by the prestige of Russia and the Red Army. In the 1946 elections it got 38% of the votes, emerging as the biggest party. There can be little doubt that the CCP could have made a revolution in its own right after 1945. Of course it, like the French, Italian and other parties, did no such thing, accepting Stalin's policy of living with capitalism. The Slovak CP in 1945 fused with some left social Democrats, and was all set to lead a revolutionary take-over: it was stopped by Soviet

agents parachuted into Slovakia especially to hold it back.

Led by Clement Gottwald in the Government, and with control of key ministries such as the Interior, and the Police (ie of key sections of the state re-established after '45, in a twisted and bureaucratic version of dual power) the Party began to entrench itself. It had patronage, growing power, the Russian Army on its borders, and a mass base. It grew phenomenally in this situation. The 8th Party Congress in 1946 reported 1,159,164 members. By November 1948 there were $2\frac{1}{2}$ million members - or one in three of all Czech adults! Of all the open takeovers (in response to the deepening chill of the Cold War) by the East European CPs in the '47-'48 period, the so-called "coup" in Czechoslovakia was the least like a coup. It was a popular revolution, but one distorted and corrupted at its inception by the direct Russian Stalinist influence and by the bureaucratized stalinist nature of the mass party itself.

STALINIST STRAIT-JACKET

After February '48 the Czechs entered the Stalinist strait-jacket in earnest. As in all the East European countries there was a purge of the Party: in 1952 Rudolph Slansky was deposed, tried and hanged together with a dozen of his supporters, as a Titoist. Party membership was somewhat reduced, but even so the Czech CP remained uniquely large. In 1960 it was 12% of the population, as compared with the Russian Party at 4%.

In 1945, the retreating Germans abandoned - with little war damage - the Czech property they had confiscated: it amounted to $\frac{3}{4}$ of all industry. The first independent Government, faced with chaos, nationalised this property - and carried out some land reform. After 1948 nationalisation was extended to cover most of the rest of industry. The economy was organised after the Russian model - with rigid bureaucratic control from above of almost every detail. The workers were rigidly controlled and suppressed (though they still had the highest living standards of all the stalinist states, including Russia). There were the forced labour camps. The planning was divorced from the workers, utterly inflexible and undemocratic, with emphasis arbitrarily on heavy industry. Nonetheless, the economy, taking off from a very high base, made serious progress. Between 1948 and '61 National Income rose by 167%; industrial output by 185%; construction by 354; farm output by only 10% and personal consumption by 107%.

'SLUMP'

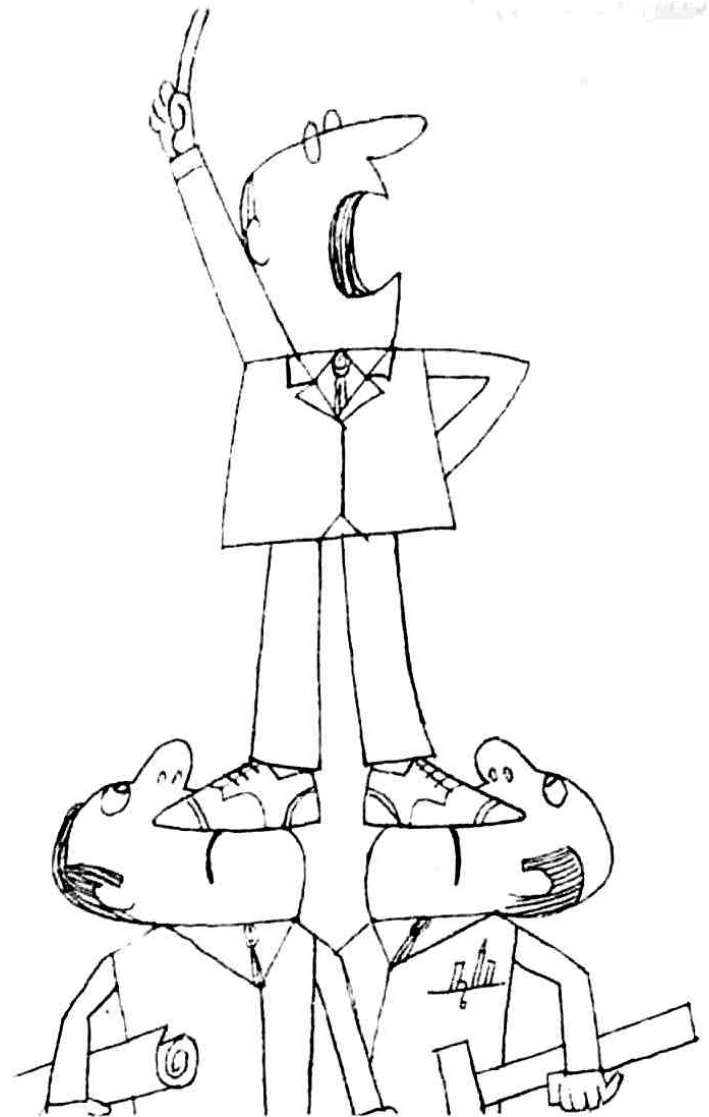
In 1961 National Income rose by 7%, a slight drop but still respectable. Then in 1962, when it came to totting up the figures, it was found that National Income had risen by only 0.5%!! For the next two years the slump continued to keep the economy stagnant. The figures tell the story: 1949 to 1960 Gross Product and National Income rose respectively by 8.6% and 8.2% p.a. From 1961 to 1964 the figures were 3.3% and 1.6% p.a.

The Stalinist economic dead end illustrated in these figures, and the attempt of the bureaucrats to find a way out of it - while avoiding the only real solution: direct workers' control, management and planning of the economy - is the basic driving force which has generated the present situation. It reflects the economic pressure on the bureaucracy for innovation, and the counter pressure of a rigid and immobile old-stalinist regime which had remained pretty well undisturbed (apart from minor concessions) by the events of '56 and after.

What had happened was this: up to 1961 the economy had expanded under the impetus of the nationalised and planned structure imposed after '48. It had done this despite the bureaucratic waste and bungling of the regime. But by 1961 the physical resources, raw materials and labour power available to the economy were exhausted. The possibilities

of crude physical expansion on the given level of efficiency and labour productivity had been used up. No more resources could be drawn into production. There was an acute shortage of labour. Incapacities of essential industries like steel were felt throughout the economy. It became clear that production could only continue to expand on the basis of a better use of existing resources to increase productivity, and of a more efficient division of labour, internally and externally. The inability of the stalinist bureaucrats to really plan and integrate the economies of the various countries they dominate was felt most acutely by highly industrialised Czechoslovakia, dependent as it is on effective international division of labour. Moreover, as a result of the waste and irrational patterns imposed on the economy by stalinism, industrial equipment fell behind, leading to further problems for a country based on export of machinery and import of raw materials.

A more intensive use of resources was vitally necessary: but the typical old-fashioned Stalinist organisation of industry (with its massive dead weight of non-productive bureaucracy, its clumsy bureaucratic planning, its stultified and inaccurate pricing and accounting, and with the workers alienated and their initiative stifled) was not suitable for this. For example, the personnel of a typical factory, a small clothing factory in the town of Banska Bystrica, was deployed as follows: 270 production workers; 6 directors, 14 security officers and time checkers, 49 accountants and clerks, 7 planning officials, 9 statisticians and 21 social workers and educational and political personnel. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 26.7.63). No wonder there was a labour shortage!



The acrobat.

Tukor (Budapest), November 7, 1967

By 1962 the 3rd. 5 year plan had had to be abandoned. The old type of bureaucratic planning was at a dead end. The period since has been one of attempting to break out of the cul-de-sac. The crisis was an intimation that the bureaucratic strait-jacket had become an absolute brake on economic development. The bureaucracy had two alternatives. It could sit tight and wait for an explosion from below. Or it could attempt to find different methods, to adapt itself while retaining physical and manipulative control, as well as the privileges deriving from this control.

'SOCIALIST MARKET ECONOMY'

The course the bureaucracy chose was a version of 'libermanism' - a limited restoration internally of the free play of the market and a loosening of central bureaucratic planning in favour of a certain autonomy for local bureaucrats. After a slow begin-

ning in 1963, by early '65 40% of the factories were put under this new regime. Enterprises - ie local bureaucrats - were free to produce what they liked. From the returns, assuming sales, they paid taxes and paid the state for factory 'capital', and from the remainder paid wages (above a minimum) and salaries - their own cut - which could rise steeply according to returns. They could also plough back receipts into the enterprise.

The economy began to improve. In the middle of 1966, after a conflict in the Central Committee, it was decided to put the whole economy on the new basis in January 1967. The bureaucracy broke with central planning of the old sort in favour of something called a "socialist market economy". Ownership was to remain public. So was broad general control in the form of five and ten year plans. Basic wage rates would continue to be fixed, and big investment decisions would continue to be centralised. Within this framework there would be free play of the market economy. Thus the extremes of the economic pressure forced Czechoslovakia, so stagnant and conservative politically, to become an economic innovator second in daring only to Yugoslavia.

The contradictions in this new "market socialism" are pretty clear. The new method has been praised in the west for its flexibility, and its wide application is urged. It is more 'sophisticated' than the crude bureaucratic ukase of old. Naturally the bourgeois economists feel reassured and flattered about their own system.

But socialists have always pointed to the irrationality and tremendous waste of the capitalist market economy. Some of these ill effects of the law of blind averages, the crude fluctuations and short-term profit chasing, are bound also to appear even within the structural planning envisaged by the bureaucracy. Some factories will get richer; some will be squeezed out, creating unemployment - or, as it is called there as well as here, "redeployment". There will be the waste of overproduction in some fields, shortages in others. There will be a growth in economic privileges for the managing bureaucracy - and much else. What is being done in Czechoslovakia is to substitute one wasteful method for another. The differences are marginal at best: the results so far, seen in the 1967 figures, have been much less rosy than expected.

SOCIALISM OR BUREAUCRACY ?

Socialism demands detailed planning and conscious control. It is a great irony that Czechoslovakia is, materially, one of the workers' states most suited to this advanced planning. But who plans? That is the key. Bureaucratic planning of every detail from on high has always proved wasteful and inefficient. The irremovable, uncontrollable bureaucracy, living on the backs of the workers, cannot plan rationally. When they attempt it they are like a blind man in the dark threading a hundred needles simultaneously. Hence the bungling and the waste, despite the advantages of nationalisation (demonstrated so graphically in the growth of the 1950s). Hence the blind alleys of the last few years.

But there is another type of planning - planning by a free working class in full democratic control of its own life. It is impossible to achieve full detailed control of a modern economy and plan efficiently unless the planning is done by those most intimately involved in production. That is socialist planning. But this sort of planning will of course be won by the elimination of the bureaucracy by the working class in a Political Revolution.

Significantly, the bureaucrats chose the road of limited market freedom rather than even the hint of working class democracy. The bureaucracy opts for a capitalist-style

rationalisation rather than proletarian socialism. Naturally! Leon Trotsky remarked on the dual nature of the bureaucrat in a workers' state where the bureaucracy has usurped power. Their position rests on the nationalised economy and is inseparable from it. But they yearn for ownership to stabilise their privileged position. The new reform, while hoping to protect them from the workers, gives the best of both worlds to the bureaucrats. It is a bureaucratic millennium of increased freedom for individual bureaucrats: 'autonomy' within the nationalised economy. Empirically they have found an 'alternative' to their old blind alley, aimed at preserving and even enhancing their own status while freeing the blocked pores of the economy and society.

TENSIONS

However, the old habits of the apparachniki persisted even while implementing the new economics. A liberalisation of the social-political set-up was urgently demanded to make the looser economy function. Throughout 1967 the conflict between the Novotny regime and the needs of the innovated economy made itself felt in growing tension and economic confusion. The students and intellectuals were the spearhead of the discontent. They faced suspensions, had publications banned and fought battles in the streets against the Police. Finally in January this year "a number of pressures that had been building up for a long time suddenly created a sort of opposition coalition in the Central Committee. There were the reforming economists, dismayed that the introduction of market principles and other changes agreed in 1966 had been reduced to chaos by half-measures and political interference. There were the writers who were formed into an unexpectedly solid front by clumsy attempts to curb them. Student demonstrators had made it impossible to ignore the alienation of youth. And then came the grievances of Slovakia, put forward by Mr. Dubcek, which were a catalyst." Also there were old Party people, from pre-war, who had not forgotten socialism, and were becoming more active... (TIMES 11.3.68). So Novotny was out. Today the struggle is about whether he stays out. Tomorrow it may be about whether all the bureaucratic factions get thrown out.

'HUNDRED FLOWERS' ?

In the past there have been brief liberalisations in deformed workers' states - the Chinese Hundred Flowers period of '57 for example. Each time the apparatus has reasserted itself very quickly. As in Hungary 1956, attempts to do so can lead to explosions and to the movement passing over the heads of the bureaucrats. There is as yet no sign of this in Czechoslovakia. Newspaper correspondents depict Czech workers eagerly watching the debates on television rather than taking to the streets. But events in Czechoslovakia have already called forth echoes in Poland: students, shouting "Long live Czechoslovakia", have demonstrated for more freedom. They leave no doubt what sort of freedom they mean by singing the Internationale in the streets.

PROSPECTS

It seems certain that there will have to be some attempt at a clamp down once the reformists have consolidated themselves. The bureaucracy cannot allow full freedom of discussion for long. It would inevitably lead to a growing consciousness by the workers of their historic opposition to bureaucratic interests, followed by attempts to do something about it. The economic oppression which lent so much explosiveness to the 1956 situation is not quite so intense. But even so the bureaucrats know that only through confusion and in the dark can they survive. Democracy would rapidly lead to a giant growth in real socialist consciousness amongst the workers and to a movement to oust the bureaucracy for good. The emergence of a genuinely revolutionary workers' Party to lead and organise the fight against the bureaucracy would be inevitable.

Though a clamping down is very likely in Czechoslovakia, the recent and continuing economic shake-up makes the situation unprecedented. Many of the intellectuals who have the stage at the moment are obviously striving to prevent a situation where the workers would intervene. There are already warnings about not being too 'elemental'. But the bureaucratic faction fight, with its charges and counter-charges hurled about, and its demagogic appeals to the proletarians, will help to rouse and involve them. Likewise when the reformists agitate against the conservatives before workers, they say that they have well paid jobs and privileges for which they are not qualified. They, as a bureaucratic faction, do not question the system of privileges as such. But this sort of talk is bound to bring the very system into question. And it will be the workers, not the bureaucrats, who question bureaucracy as such.

Meanwhile, the political reforms now proposed are an exact parallel to the economic reforms of the last few years. Alongside the reversion to the market economy rather than forward to socialist workers' control, we see the reforming bureaucrats talking, not of workers' councils, but of increasing the functions of the National Assembly. No - these bureaucrats are not about to usher in socialism on a leash!

This new stage of stalinism is one fraught with peril for the ruling caste. Attempting to modify their system they hope to avoid a repeat of 1956. But the unevenness between the various states has already led to upsets in Poland. The really exciting thing about the reforms in Czechoslovakia and the echoes in Poland is that these are the very conditions where the working class can best prepare itself for the overthrow of all the bureaucrats, conservatives and reformists. Stalinism in this new stage is compelled to create some of the conditions for its own destruction. A split bureaucracy is feeling its way forward politically and economically. Even given all its powers of oppression (only temporarily 'withdrawn') and of manipulation (somewhat impaired by the bureaucratic split but nonetheless intact) the situation is bound to be full of the dangers of an independent proletarian intervention to settle accounts with all the bureaucrats.

This, the Political Revolution to achieve political and economic proletarian democracy in any of the workers' states, will be the key to the greatest advances in world socialism since 1917. It will have a tremendous effect on both the advanced capitalist countries, the other workers' states, and also the 'backward' countries. It may be a lot nearer than we think. Reform from above will help generate revolution from below.

((Continued from p.15))

enough) only added to the feeling of helplessness afflicting the unilateralist movement. The curve dipped downwards.

The Cuba crisis of '62 deepened this still more. And the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, plugged and supported by such 'unilateralists'-come-lately as the Communis' Party, was the finishing touch. Since then the movement has vegetated at a low level. There are still many hundreds active in CND. And they must learn the lessons if they want to fight for an end to the nuclear danger:

*That Capitalism and war are inseparable.

*That to attempt to fight the effect and leave the cause is futile and self-defeating.

*That only the workers' movement can fight capitalism.

*That an effective Peace movement must turn to the organised labour movement at a rank and file level, linking up the struggle against war with the struggle against capitalism.

*That the immediate expression of this unity is the struggle of the NLF in Viet Nam. The Peace movement must come out in active solidarity with those, the NLF, who are fighting the H Bomb system, and whose victory is the only road to peace.
