

Direct Action

For workers' direct control of industry

Inside—The French strikes
Report from Vietnam
T & G pays the freezers
The floating republic

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION (IWMA)

Vol.8 No.8 (74)

August 1967

Sixpence

TRANSPORT WORKERS MUST UNITE

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the NUR instructed the London strikers to return to work. By an overwhelming majority of 66 votes to 11 the London militants were beaten.

A few days before conference Sidney Greene called the London strike leaders to his office and warned them that Conference's decision would probably go against them, because he would have to inform the delegates "that he could get no further."

Greene took an hour to deliver his report on the dispute, but the report can be summed up in a few words. "Brothers, we have missed the boat, many other railwaymen had already lost their jobs because of reorganisation schemes and we did nothing effective. It's too late now."

London railwaymen were beaten before they started the dispute: (1) The official negotiating committee was prepared

to accept the Board's terms and (2) the NUR executive supported the dispute by the smallest of majorities.

The NUR leadership realised the strike was slowly starting to spread; this they certainly did not want, therefore they took a calculated risk and referred the decision on the question of a national stoppage to Conference. The NUR leadership knew full well that if they could prove that no one would get the sack they would get backing of Conference.

I think it is fair to say that railwaymen at this period of time are in general demoralised. They see their jobs being cut to pieces with no way of preventing it. The Party and Government they pinned their hopes on has carried on the Tory policy of murdering the railways. Brothers, politicians are the past masters of expediency, and who ever goes to the wall in the process it is either "just too bad" or "for the good of the country".

This is not the first time railwaymen have been taken on. Wilson talked them out of a national stoppage with promises of a bright future. When the future was due to become a little brighter on went the Wage Freeze and railwaymen were well and truly frozen. Their recent wage demand submitted to the TUC hatchet committee has received a very cool reception, therefore they have the very doubtful honour of supporting very many workers in the wages scale.

DIRECT ACTION has made this point so many times before: *sections of public transport cannot hope to win their struggles on their own.* While acting independently you black on each other, but with a combined effort at rank-and-file level you cannot lose. Until this is achieved victories will be small and defeats a common occurrence.

BILL CHRISTOPHER

ETU exposed again

THE ETU will refuse to allow any of its members to join the

Divisional Boards of the nationalised sector of the steel industry. The reason they give is that nominated members would find it uncomfortable sitting astride a fence not knowing which side it was safer to fall. All very commendable, but the ETU has no serious objections to trade unionists sitting on Boards that have no connection with the industry, such as R. Smith when he was General Secretary of the Union of Post Office Workers sitting on the Board of BOAC. The ETU stands exposed, they do not take a class position on this issue but purely one of tactics.

Franco jails five more

FIVE MEMBERS of the Iberian Libertarian Youth Federation (FIJL) appeared before Madrid's Tribunal of Public Order on July 4 to face charges of illegal association, carrying false papers, illegal entry into Spain possessing arms and, in the case of three prisoners, detaining a person against his will.

The last accusation apparently referred to the kidnapping last year in Rome of Mgr. Ussia, Franco's ecclesiastical envoy to the Vatican. According to the Barcelona paper, *La Vanguardia* (4.7.67) "this had not been proved"—not surprisingly, as none of the five were in Italy at the time of Ussia's detention by the anarchist First of May Group, in support of the campaign to free Franco's political prisoners.

Our five comrades had been under arrest since October last year . . . the mills of fascist justice grind exceeding slow . . . and, thanks to FIJL activity abroad, legal observers from France, Holland, Belgium and England (Lord Gifford) attended the trial. Their presence may well have had a modifying effect on the sentences imposed on Alfredo Herrera (3 months and a fine of 20,000 pesetas) and Alicia Mur (3 months and 35,000p).

Luis Edo, however, received a prison term of 9 years, three months and a day, plus a fine of 30,000p; Antonio Canete, 3 years, 3 months and 20,000p; and Jesus Rodriguez, 3 years and 15,000p. Total value of the fines is more than £700.

Building employers support pirates

ARISING from the Ministerial Inquiry on the recruitment of labour in the building industry, the employers came out heavily in favour of labour-only subcontracting. They claim it is one of the best ways of getting high output and there are no industrial disputes. The Building Trade Employers claim their support is not based on any desire to attack trade union organisation or weaken its influence.

I for one would not dispute this claim by the employers, it's the *site rank-and-file organisation* they want to destroy and on this they have the building unions as their allies.

Labour only is a very effective method of destroying site organisation, because it can offer men bigger wage packets. The growing strength of labour-only contractors is the direct result of the past and present pussyfooting of the building unions. In wage negotiations they are notorious for dragging their feet. But for disciplining their members they are top of the hit parade. Sunleys and Myton are classic examples.

Rank-and-file organisation (not politically orientated) is the only method whereby building workers can defeat the pirates. It will be a hard struggle fighting on two fronts: union and employers. While the unions are opposed to labour only, they are just as opposed to rank-and-file organisation and the former is the lesser of two evils in their eyes.

JUST ANOTHER CINDERELLA

FARM WORKERS have just submitted a wage claim to the Agricultural Wages Board for a 30% increase in wages. The TUC were informed of the claim in April and were horrified at the amount. But being fair-minded people and realising that farm workers are among the lowest paid workers they allowed the claim to go through—knowing full well the Wages Board will never agree in a million years: 3% is more in line with their thinking.

The 30% demanded raises the farm workers' basic wage to the fabulous amount of £14 per week before stoppages. Such a wage per week will put farmworkers in the surtax class but it will take more than resolutions to achieve it.

DIRECT ACTION REPORTER

THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS' REVOLUTION

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by BILL CHRISTOPHER

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Help fight Wilson's bid to hamstring the working class
by giving this pamphlet a big circulation.

NO WONDER THEY'RE NOT FIGHTING THE FREEZE

HERE ARE some figures on the wages drawn by TU officials in Britain. They come mainly from the capitalist press. TU journals are frequently shy of revealing such facts, for reasons which can only be imagined.

Frank Cousins received a rise of £500 last year when he went back to the T & G General Secretaryship, at £3,750 a year. Last month it was announced that Holy Twins Cannon and Chapple, President and General Secretary respectively of the ETU had each got a rise of £900 putting them both on £3,000 a year.

Sidney Greene of the NUR gets £3,700, his two assistants £2,800 each. Lord Bill Carrion ("I've enjoyed every minute of my life"—BBC Home Service last month), AEU President (retiring), cops £2,000 a year, AEU General Secretary Jim Conway the same.

Tom Jackson, Gen. Sec. of the Postmen's Union, has just had a rise from £2,550 to £3,352 a year. His predecessor, Ron Smith, now on £15,000 to £19,000 at the National Steel Corporation, gets a year's salary of £3,352 as gratuity and, at 60 (he's 52 now), a pension of two-thirds of his salary, £2,234 a year.

Clive Jenkins, Gen. Sec. of ASSET, gets "over £3,000" a year. The Gen. Sec. of the Association of Scientific Workers is paid £2,275. The two unions are to merge—one body with two Gen. Secs. This'll give them a joint income that's still less, however, than that of Walter Anderson, Gen. Sec. of NALGO, on £5,760.

Top-paid union boss in Britain is Sir Ronald Gould, National Union of Teachers, on £6,000, while his senior officials get around £3,000.

Her Majesty's Privy Counsellor George ("No time for militancy") Woodcock, CBE, presides over the whole happy family as General Secretary of the TUC at £3,500 while his assistant Vic Feather gets £2,700.

All these figures, of course, exclude fees for sitting on regional and national boards, etc., not to mention TV, radio and newspaper appearances, talks and articles, all full of well-paid words of wisdom.

MARK HENDY

● The SWF has reprinted its leaflet, "A Cheap Holiday", attacking tourism to Franco Spain. Copies are available at 1s. 6d. for 100; 15s. for 1,000, postpaid.

DIRECT ACTION PRESS FUND—June & July, 1967.

Sheffield, M.T. 10s; New York 25, R.S.C. 8s 6d; Tadworth, N.W. 2s; Liverpool, G.F. 18s 6d; London S.E.9, M.H. 13s 4d; London W.14, J.E. 3s; London E.C.1, T.McA. 1s; Tynemouth, P.R. 10s; London N.W.1, D.P. 10s; London N.W.3, K.H. 10s; Sales of CNT "Spain Today" Cards 6s; SWF London Group £4 4s. Total £9 6s 4d.

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UNHOLY ALLIANCE

The 1966 Seamen's Strike: an Analysis
by GEORGE FOULSER

(9d. postpaid; bulk orders 6s. a dozen)

BEHIND THE FRENCH STRIKES

OVER the years capital in France has become more and more concentrated; State capitalism now plays an important role (it has entered sectors it has previously neglected such as agriculture and trade). At the same time technical developments and international competition are causing upheavals. Notably, automation is destroying the traditional working methods.

All this causes the development of a bureaucracy whose power extends to every part of the economy and of the State; resistance to the results of these changes which were too oppressive for the workers showed itself as social conflict, but this resulted only in consolidating the power of the bureaucrats by increasing the incorporation of the unions in the apparatus of management.

THE BASIC FORM

In this way the miners' strike of 1963 allowed, throughout the nationalised industries, the putting into operation of rigid wages control by committees formed from the union and the Government which have operated ever since. But the miners' strike also marked the beginning of a new period in the working-class movement. Several thousand miners in Douai demonstrated their hostility in front of the offices of the CGT, and so they showed, without realising it, that the unions were now on the side of management.

Basically this is the form of the current strikes in France; but there are often important variations—the role of State capitalism varies considerably: the tendency towards unofficial strikes is not apparent in all the disputes. Temporary factors may obscure the basic features. For instance, at the beginning of 1967, the elections on one hand, and the economic preparations for entry into the Common Market on the other, somewhat obscured the real situation.

For their election attack, the various opponents of Gaullism needed to make use of working-class discontent; the workers believed the political parties and the unions could defend them and also that their standard of living was under attack; especially since a section of the employers was adopting a harder line in order to meet increased competition. Systematically at Marseille, at the Berliot factory in Lyon, at Dassaults in Bordeaux, the employers met industrial action with lock-outs.

Strikes of such length have not been seen in France for many years, a month in the Marseille docks, nearly one month for the Breton trawlermen, 208 days at Dassaults (aircraft), 4 weeks at Rhodiaceta (artificial fibres), 62 days of the white collar workers of St. Nazaire (naval and aircraft construction), 40 days in the iron mines of Lorraine.

IMPORTANT REGIONS UNAFFECTED

But these figures, though they may reveal the workers' considerable fighting ability, must not give rise to any illusions. There has been nothing, at the beginning of 1967, that might compare with the great periods of struggle of the French working-class movement, particularly in June, 1936. The present struggles have remained extremely localised; 3,000 dockers in Marseille, 1,700 metal workers at Dassaults, 16,000 workers at Rhodiaceta, 3,000 staff at St. Nazaire, 13,000 iron miners in Lorraine.

The most important industrial regions, around Paris and in the north of France, have not had one important strike: the region around Lyon, apart from Rhodiaceta and Berliet (trucks), has scarcely produced a mass movement. The attempt by the unions to extend the movement in the iron mines to the Lorraine steel industry was quickly checked.

It is difficult, in a few lines, to set out all the basic reasons for these struggles or the particular context they have developed in; transformation of the aircraft industry at

Dassaults, mechanisation and increased exploitation in the docks, working conditions and unemployment at Rhodiaceta, closure of the mines and regrading in Lorraine, automation and regrading for technicians and draughtsmen at St. Nazaire, industrialisation of fishing methods in Brittany, but these very different reasons have one thing in common. They are all examples of what capitalism imposes on men to ensure its own survival and that of an exploiting society.

This was not obvious in the majority of disputes. From the moment the unions took them over by making them official, all that emerged were wage agreements (everything is settled with money) and the creation of commissions to prevent the recurrence of similar disputes, i.e. to make the workers accept the conditions capitalism wanted to impose on them. At Dassault, at St. Nazaire, or at Rhodiaceta it all ended with talk only of wages; in Lorraine, the unions joined with the employers and management in a general reorganisation of the steel industry.

FOUR DAYS TO OVERCOME

Attempts by the workers to control the struggle themselves remained isolated; the unions took the control. There was never any direction of the fight by the workers themselves, still less an occupation of the factory, even in response to a lock-out. However, in Lorraine and at Rhodiaceta the strikes had broken out spontaneously, also there were strong picket lines completely blocking the entrances to factories and mines. At Lorient the seamen, and in Marseille the dockers attempted at certain times to impose their own methods of struggle. But this didn't stop the unions from putting an end to the strikes in the most bureaucratic way possible by signing agreements and ordering a return to work. Only at Dassault did they have the agreement of the workers, but this was the only strike over wages. Elsewhere the unions clashed more or less violently with the workers who wanted to continue the strike. In Lorraine the trains carrying the iron ore were blocked after the unions had given the order to resume the transportation of the ore. (This blocking of the trains was the principal strike weapon.) At Lorient, the fishermen continued the struggle alone for eight days after the unions had signed agreements with the shipowners and the Government.

THE STRUGGLE—REAL AND POLITICAL

But it was at Rhodiaceta, in the most characteristic of these disputes, that conflict between the workers and the unions took a violent form, like the end of the miner's strike of 1963—mentioned at the beginning of this article.

The strike had started in the factory at Besançon with the manufacturing workers, the most exploited, following an attempt by the employers to treat paid rest days as unpaid holidays. It spread to other factories of the group in Lyon. The unions took control of the strike and finished by signing a wage agreement in Paris, without consulting the workers. A spokesman announced from Paris that the pickets would withdraw from the factories. At Besançon, it took four days for the union to overcome the workers who were fighting for better working conditions—on Thursday March 23 there were fights at the factory entrances; inside, the manufacturing workers were defending the entrance with fire-hoses; at the gate were the white collar workers who wanted to return to work, together with the union officials, throwing stones and insults at those blocking the entrance. At Lyons (Vaise) there was a return, but the same manufacturing workers were back on strike a few days later because the unions had not satisfactorily settled their grievances. This new strike lasted four days, completely isolated in the factory, and as one newspaper put it, it needed "all the skill of the the union

Direct Action

Published monthly by the Syndicalist Workers' Federation,
British section of the International Working Men's Association

They're all in it together. . .

"GO ON murdering us and we may, just may, start acting up a teensy-weensy bit rough." That's about the message of the recent Biennial Delegate Conference of the TGWU to the Labour Party.

Frank Cousins, General Secretary, laid down the line. He would have none of the 15 resolutions calling for the end of Union support for the Party. He got the delegates (?) at Blackpool to refrain from even discussing them. Instead, he persuaded Conference to swallow a statement by the Executive on Loyalty to the Party, and to pass an executive-backed resolution whose effect is to hold over the heads of T & G-backed MPs a very vague threat of withdrawal of financial support.

A GOLDMINE DOWN THE CORRIDOR

There are 26 of these lucky ladies and gentlemen in Parliament just now. Each receives direct personal support from the T & G in the form of constituency expenses. Eight of the 26 are Ministers. Last year the T & G's support was worth £12,833 all told, paid over to Constituency Labour Parties to play around with. The highest sum paid to a single party was £638. On top of this £12,833 the T & G is reported to have paid out another £16,540 in expenses for last year's General Election. Making a total in 1966 of £29,373—or an average of £1,129 per MP.

Mind you, all this is on top of the affiliation fees the T & G pays the Labour Party nationally. At Transport House, HQ of both the T & G and the Labour Party, the Union's bosses just flit down the corridor with the cheques. No wonder

SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Manchester, Sunday, September 24, 1967.

For further details write to the Secretary, 34 Cumberland Road, London, E.17.

GROUP NOTICES

ABERDEEN: Enquiries to 42 Mathews Rd, Aberdeen.

BELFAST: Contact Tony Rosato, 103 Deer Park Road, Belfast 14.

BRISTOL: Contact Adam Nicholson, 10 Bellevue, Bristol 8.

GLASGOW: Contact R. Lynn, 2B Saracen Head Lane, Glasgow, C.1.

HULL: Contact Jim & Shelagh Young, 3 Fredericks Crescent, Hawthorn Avenue, Hessle Road, Hull, Yorks.

LONDON: Weekly meetings at Lucas Arms, 245 Grays Inn Road, WC1 (5 min. Kings Cross). Wednesdays at 8.30 p.m.

August 2 Group business meeting.

August 9 Sources of Syndicalism—talk by Ken Hawkes.

August 16 General discussion of "Direct Action".

August 23 Discussion of SWF Conference.

MANCHESTER & DISTRICT: Contact Jim Pinkerton, 12 Alt Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

POTTERIES: Contact Bob Blakeman, 52 Weldon Ave., Weston Coyney, Stoke-on-Trent.

WITNEY: Contact Laurens Otter, 5 New Yatt Road, North Leigh, Oxon.

Labour's cut the East of Suez forces: Wilson and Co. have found a goldmine on their own doorstep!

Now the T & G Executive holds over the MPs the threat to vet their voting record in Parliament in future. They've already set up a record, though. In umpteen Parliamentary divisions over the Freeze NOT A SINGLE LABOUR VOTE'S BEEN CAST AGAINST IT. If the T & G will stomach this it'll stomach anything. So all the Conference's decision is ever likely to mean is talk; and talk, like the man said, is cheap.

Cousins summed up the MPs' prospects by saying: "We don't want to tell them what to do, or what to say or what to think." And, "What we are seeking to do is to ask them to come back and report to us on their stewardship." (Note: TU officials have been known to call stewards some names before now, this is only to be expected, but to compare them to Wage-Freezing MPs is a new one.)

NOT TO BREAK THE RULES

To debate, even debate, the motions for complete withdrawal of T & G funds from the Party would be a disservice to it, said Cousins. And he was right. The whole stinking political game is better left in the dark. Good light stops play. The politicians hate to have the facts aired.

Some of these facts are: that the working class won the right to organise and to strike, the right of free speech and of freedom of the press without the help of a single Labour MP. While the Labour Party was supposedly formed to gain further legal rights for the unions, 61 years after its formation, or more than 70 years if you count the ILP, it is still unable to force employers to concede TU recognition. To give but one example, since March last year the TGWU itself has been in official dispute with the Square Grip Reinforcement Co., Newhouse, Lanarkshire, over the issue of trade union recognition. After a year idle the strikers were told by the Union in April this year to seek other jobs. No reason was given. Compare this with the eagerness shown by the T & G National Executive, in its choice of resolutions, not to offend bossdom's rules on "Parliamentary privilege". There's little chance of the T & G's MPs having to look for other jobs ever.

The T & G Conference shows how phoney is the supposed difference between the Right and Left Wings of the Labour Party-TU machine. George Brown, architect-in-chief of the Freeze, is a T & G-sponsored MP. According to Cousins, a Left Winger, however, he can freeze wages as he likes and go on drawing Union money.

Indecency in court

FOR protesting, in a Brighton Methodist Church on October 2 last year, against the hypocrisy of Harold Wilson and George Brown reading lessons dedicated to peace, at a Labour Party pre-Conference service, Nicolas Walter and Jim Radford are now serving prison sentences of two months.

Their appeals against conviction under the Ecclesiastical Courts Act, 1860, was rejected at the Law Courts in London on July 7. In a previous issue of DIRECT ACTION (May, 1967) we reviewed the pamphlet issued by the original seven defendants in the case at Brighton (the other five were fined). Its title was "Indecency in Church." It could well have a sequel, "Indecency in Court," devoted to the obscene antics of bewigged mummies who prop up the Establishment with their archaic laws. The Brighton case is an outstanding example of this.

SPELL INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY. Ball pens, red-and-black case lettered "CNT. Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo" (National Confederation of Labour of Spain) in gold. Blue ink, refillable. Retractable point, strong metal clip and tip. 2s 6d postpaid (US & Canada 30 cents) or 27s a dozen. Money with

FIRST-HAND REPORT FROM VIETNAM

Can Tho, Vietnam

FROM military post to post, always the same story: mortars and cannon firing by day and, especially, night. Against what? From the officers always the same reply: these volleys ensure safety. And that is true: they fire at random, to create a dangerous perimeter for the Vietcong, who take their chance around the camps. Every day planes make an average of 100 raids on North Vietnam, but the average of those on South Vietnam is 500. Half these raids are not to support ground troops. A reconnaissance plane finds an objective that the observer considers useful—straw palliasses in an uncontrolled or contested zone; a suspect sampan on a canal. He sets up the hunt and, when the fighter-bombers arrive, marks the target with a smoke bomb and the blind mission begins. The pilots see only a column of coloured smoke rising from the ground and smother the area with napalm, fragmentation bombs, rockets, incendiary bombs, etc. The first result is that civil hospitals are overflowing with war wounded. In the children's wards, each bed has two occupants. In most of the uncontrolled villages there remain only women, children and old men: they are the ones who get hit.

The Americans know their victims are mainly innocent, but they don't mind the paradox and at many civil hospitals have attached military doctors for a year's service. This is of propaganda value: the American contribution to the Vietnamese civilian sector! But the American doctors know the 15-year-old I saw in agony on a hospital bed in the Delta, burnt by napalm, was an innocent victim of their Air Force colleagues; military discipline prevents them doing more than note the fact; there is no question of any complaint.

That should give pause to the idiots who do not want to condemn the army as a whole, on the pretext that it includes some fine individuals.

But there are also the involuntary bombardments. Government villages and even US troops are often attacked by their own people. And more often than one might think. If American families knew how 17 Marines, attacked by their own planes, were burned alive by napalm, perhaps they would change their minds about the value of the sacrifice involved in dying for the "Free World".

THE AMERICAN WAR EFFORT

The American military, realising they cannot dislodge the Vietcong from their underground tunnels, mountains and rice paddies, seem intent on pursuing to the maximum a scorched earth policy, to isolate them from the general population and destroy anything that can help them survive.

Southern propaganda having failed to gain the support of the civil population, it is a question of shifting people to bring them under control or, at least, prevent them from feeding the Vietcong. As the US forces cannot catch the fish, they have decided to do what no angler would envisage: pump out the water.

A military spokesman recently declared: "When we have cut off the Vietcong from the entire civil population, then

they can starve to death in their mountains . . . their fate will not interest us." Recent US operations have clearly been to this end.

When, in August 1965, the town of Pleiku was virtually in the hands of the Vietcong, the US surrounded with men and materials the area of Route 19, leading from the port of Qui Nhon to the high plateaux, through An Khe, Pleiku and Kontum. Each of these towns is now a giant garrison, with aerodromes and a belt of advance posts. Almost everywhere the US have been forced to build a colossal infrastructure, which ensures their presence—always disturbed, but impossible to eliminate completely. The largest bases, such as Tan Son and Da Nang, have been attacked many times. The most recent attacks (20.5.67) were against the airbase of Bien Hoa and the missile base at Da Nang. At the moment all the bases present an aspect of half-completed construction sites. The last phase has been reached: that of fortifying. The airplane runways are being widened (as at Da Nang); a metal runway is being replaced by ferro-concrete (as at Lai Khe); port installations are being set up (as at Cam Ranh). Here is what the press says about present work at Cam Ranh, which is costing 100-million dollars: the warehouses built already contain 200,000 tons of military equipment and an aerodrome accessible to B52 strategic bombers is to be built nearby, with a hospital of 1,000 beds, and a monster arms and explosives depot.

AMERICAN BASES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

This gigantic military infrastructure is supported by US airbases at Guam, the Philippines and Thailand, by the Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin and by the Strategic Air Command's B52 fleet in Thailand (but tomorrow at Cam Ranh?).

Raids on the North rarely originate from South Vietnam. Most are carried out by F.105 Thunderchiefs. The only base in the South from which planes are sent to the North is Da Nang, which has no F.105's. These are based in Thailand and other raids are from aircraft carriers of the Seventh Fleet.

On 18.1.67 the US Ambassador in Bangkok revealed that US forces in Thailand had risen to 35,300 men, of whom 8,000 were employed "on building and maintaining roads and means of communications, port installations, stores of goods and other installations essential to the security of the region."

This eternal mania of the US Government to ensure the "security" of others. . . .

Six large air bases are at the disposal of the US in Thailand. A Special Forces unit is training Thais in anti-guerilla methods (these carry out most of the dirty work in Vietnam, as the Foreign Legion did for the French Government; they are called élite troops). The situation is broadly the same in Laos, where important battles are already taking place, needing the intervention of the US Special Forces. This intervention is masked by discreet silence, as is the parachuting of commando destruction units into North Vietnam.

The problem of the war in Vietnam, therefore, already has as its real context South East Asia as a whole.

VO CHIN PHU

From "Le Monde Libéraire", July-August, 1967. To be concluded.

HELP SPANISH TOURIST BOYCOTT

FROM the Spanish comrades of the exiled CNT in this country, the SWF has received the gift of 1,000 two-colour postcards, in aid of our Press Fund. These beautifully-produced cards, 7x4 in., with the CNT imprint, depict four aspects of Franco Spain that Costa Brava tourists usually miss: photographs of a Spanish prison gallery, political prisoners, slums in Madrid and armed Civil Guards on patrol. By using these cards, which have the normal spaces for greetings and addressing, readers can help both the Spanish Tourist Boycott campaign and the SWF Press Fund. They are 6d. each, 6s. for 12, plus postage (24d for single copies, 6d for 12) from SWF.

Subscribe to DIRECT ACTION

Yearly subscription rate 6s 6d (USA & Canada \$1—dollar bills preferred to cheques owing to loss in negotiating latter) from 34 Cumberland Road, London E.17. Cheques and p.a.'s payable to Syndicalist Workers' Federation.

No third week at Reyrolles

THE OFFICIAL STRIKE by high-grade craftsmen was reported in last month's DA. It ended after 18 days and left a legacy of bitterness just when solidarity was most needed to press the claim for a third week's paid holiday.

We don't want anyone to think DA is against any group of workers getting higher pay, particularly when it encourages others to make similar claims. But when a strike—official or unofficial—sabotages a major claim by all the production workers, to which the strikers themselves are a party, we take a different view—the view of the majority at Reyrolles.

The effect of the official strike was not just to lay off 3,000 men. It has meant the Third Week claim is lost for this year—the holiday being on by the time this reaches readers—indeed many laid off have used up their savings. And it has meant that workers are divided, to the management's delight.

No wonder the Area Organiser of the AEU, and strike Committee chairman, CPer Ken Coonie had to have police protection. But when laid-off men and their wives sliced pennies at him we must disagree: there is no point in wasting your money on someone who's already achieved a militant lack of consciousness with remarks such as: "What does disturb me as a trade unionist is that these men are demonstrating against official union action."

The motives of the AEU National Executive in calling the strike remain obscure. It certainly shows how out of touch they are. Maybe they just wanted to help the management. Possibly there was a connection with the elections. Edmondson is a local candidate, the CP is backing Labour Leftover Scanlon, both may be competing for Reyrolles votes. But voting at presidential elections is a minority interest among rank and filers; they know that fiddling around with a micrometer trying to find differences between candidates has no bearing on what they do in office. Even "Maoist" Reg Birch failed to second a move by DATA president Ron Whiteley, during the recent shipyard lockout, to call off talks between the Confed. and the Employers Federation.

A more typical view was put forward by a CP AEU steward at a recent Tyneside Shop Stewards Defence Committee meeting when he suggested the Executive, the Pimps of the Peckham Road, be evicted by the rank and file, as in 1912.

My view remains that the only way to make these people redundant is by building up organisation from below on issues like the Third Week through bodies like the Tyneside Convenors' Conference, linked nationally.

DIRECT ACTION REPORTER

SEAMAN'S VOICE

THERE are still some copies available of *Seaman's Voice*, by George Foulser (published by MacGibbon & Kee, 18s). This describes his life as a seafarer in quite a few ships and ports, particularly British, American and Australian. It concludes with an account of the successful seamen's strike of 1960.

Readers with any time at all for a rare tale of the life and struggles of fellow workers afloat are urged to give this worthy book a good home. In doing so they will also help our Press Fund. Each copy has been signed by the author and will be sent post-free for the above price.

Subscribers who are about to change their addresses are asked to notify us of the new one in advance. This way, we keep track of our subscribers and they go on getting "Direct Action" without any interruption.

Syndicalist Workers' Federation

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION seeks to establish a free society which will render impossible the growth of a privileged class and the exploitation of man by man. The SWF therefore advocates common ownership and workers' control of the land, industry and all means of production and distribution on the basis of voluntary co-operation. In such a society, the wage system, finance and money shall be abolished and goods produced and distributed not for profit, but according to human needs.

THE STATE: The State in all its forms, embodying authority and privilege, is the enemy of the workers and cannot exist in a free, classless society. The SWF does not therefore hope to use the State to achieve a free society; it does not seek to obtain seats in the Cabinet or in Parliament. It aims at the abolition of the State. It actively opposes all war and militarism.

CLASS STRUGGLE: The interests of the working class and those of the ruling class are directly opposed. The SWF is based on the inevitable day-to-day struggle of the workers against those who own and control the means of production and distribution, and will continue that struggle until common ownership and workers' control are achieved.

DIRECT ACTION: Victory in the fight against class domination can be achieved only by the direct action and solidarity of the workers themselves. The SWF rejects all Parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.

ORGANISATION: To achieve a free, classless society the workers must organise. They must replace the hundreds of craft and general trade unions by syndicalist industrial unions. As an immediate step to that end, the SWF aids the formation of workers' committees in all factories, mines, offices, shipyards, mills and other places of work and their development into syndicates, federated nationally. Such syndicates will be under direct rank-and-file control, with all delegates subject to immediate recall.

INTERNATIONALISM: The SWF, as a section of the International Working Men's Association, stands firm for international working class solidarity.

FRENCH STRIKES (CONT.)

leaders to get them back to work"—with words and nothing else.

Thus the resistance of the workers to the bureaucratic apparatus is clearly shown. Apparently without result, for this is only the beginning of a development which may be much clearer inside the factories than in the strike movements. Since the beginning of May there have been practically no strikes of this size in France; this shows that the unions know how to use the struggles, blow them up and then stop them when they are no more use to them. The workers' struggle takes in, bit by bit, the experience of the bureaucracy to the extent that all the bureaucracies, the unions in particular, become part of the apparatus of management.

A general strike for one day, like that of May 17, called by all the unions and supported by all the opposition parties, is nothing but a political and electoral tactic; even if a majority of workers take part (it is difficult to say because there was no electricity or transport and many workers made up for it the next Saturday) it remains without any follow-up and far from the real working class-struggles of today.

HENRI SIMON

THE FLOATING REPUBLIC

ON EASTER SUNDAY, April 16, 1797, the Admiral of the Channel Fleet at Spithead gave the order to weigh anchor. In ship after ship the men refused to work the capstans. The sailors of HMS *Queen Charlotte* manned the foreshrouds and "gave three ringing cheers, echoed ship by ship throughout the eager lines." Thus broke out the greatest naval mutiny in British History, the subject of *The Floating Republic*, by G. E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée (recently republished by Frank Cass, 50s).

In 1797 Britain was at war with France, the great rival for world trade. In the struggle the Navy was all-important, "the country's right arm". Though the Battle of Waterloo gave Britain final victory, it was on seapower that the Empire was built. In the half-century that followed the great mutiny the British Empire, unchallenged after the final defeat of France, was trebled in area. But, "as parliamentary government developed, the Empire expanded, and the national wealth increased, so the lot of the sailor deteriorated."

GRIEVANCES

And how it deteriorated. While the rulers of Britain spread "civilisation" and "Christianity" among the heathens and, quite incidentally, amassed the fortunes that financed the Stately Homes and the Industrial Revolution, they wanted their Empire on the cheap. The sailors' pay had not changed since 1652, though prices had at least doubled. A man might wait up to 15 years to be paid up in full. When he was paid up he was battered on by a parasitic hoard of pursers, peddlars and ticket agents.

Pay was the first grievance, then, followed by the disgusting food, usually rotten and always sold short on board ship. The sick were often totally neglected or "treated" by "surgeons" who no butcher would have hired as assistant.

There was no shore leave, and no pay for those wounded in battle.

THE DELEGATES

Harshest problem for the men was the discipline. Officers ran their ships as they saw fit. If the captain was incompetent, or the first lieutenant, the men tended to get more floggings as the scapegoats. "To be flogged was to be tortured." The Regulation limit was 12 strokes of the cat (even this left a man with little skin on his back) but "nobody took any notice of the rule." Deaths from flogging were common, and one captain at least would look on and say, "I'll see the man's backbone, by God!"

So when the mutiny broke out the men immediately began to send the worst of the officers ashore. At Spithead, they didn't return. This outbreak, though not timed exactly, had been carefully organised. The sailors had already sent petitions to the Admiralty, who shelved them, fearing to

throw a further burden on an already groaning taxpayer with whom the War was becoming more and more unpopular (though it went on almost without a break till 1815).

The sailors were careful to word all the petitions, one from each ship, the same. Throughout the mutiny which was completely successful at its starting place Spithead, the men showed they were masterly tacticians. To some people this will be difficult to understand, since nobody's ever uncovered a leadership in the mutiny. A committee of elected Delegates met in the Admiral's cabin or rowed back and forth keeping the different ships in touch. Weaker-minded vessels were brought up and moored between two militant ships, so that the same unity present in the wording of the original petitions was maintained.

Thus although the Admiralty tried every trick of the trade to break the mutiny (they even tried to introduce a pay differential to split the old salts from the newer element the War had brought in) the men stood solid. They declared their loyalty to the King all the time: but they weren't putting to sea (unless a French invasion threatened) till their demands were granted by Act of Parliament and the King's Pardon in writing given to all.

The Press, too, chimed in with its typical way, naming "ringleaders" just as it does today in industrial disputes. Such splitting tactics were without effect: the organisation of the Delegates was too strong.

THE FLOATING REPUBLIC

Attempts to spread the mutiny to the Nore in the Thames Estuary were at first highly successful. Again the men took command of the ships (often by the simple means of turning the guns aft), and deposed the worst of the officers.

It was the North Sea Fleet at the Nore that got the name "Floating Republic". The Nore ships, too, petitioned the Admiralty but eventually the mutiny collapsed, for reasons that the authors don't really explain. The Delegates here seem possibly to have taken on airs and graces. They elected Richard Parker "President of the Fleet". When the Admiralty tried to starve them out the sailors blockaded London, which seems to have done a lot to isolate them from sympathy ashore. Also, there seems to have been far less preparation for the struggle. Lack of vigilance on the part of the delegates allowed the Admiralty to destroy the navigation marks so that the ships were bottled up in their anchorage, the final demoralisation. In the end a few of the mutineers escaped to France, others ashore in Britain, but the vast majority surrendered to face possible hanging, flogging or imprisonment.

LIGHTS A GRIM PERIOD

Looking back to these events, there are questions one would like answered such as why the Spithead mutineers didn't resume their revolt when the Nore ran into trouble. Perhaps the authors of *The Floating Republic* don't know. You can also find fault with their rather cooler attitude to the unsuccessful Nore mutiny while being so sympathetic to the Spithead, even though they admit that "the authorities seemed determined to incite the mutineers to extremes."

Nobody could accuse the authors of having a militant working-class outlook. Nor was the majority opinion among the mutineers revolutionary: most wanted a mere share of the spoils. However this story of the struggle of the slaves against their tyrants is well worth reading. It lights up a particularly grim period of our history.

N.S.O.D.

SYNDICALISTS in the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

by G. P. MAXIMOFF

Direct Action Pamphlet—6d.

(9d. postpaid; bulk orders 6s. a dozen)

From Direct Action, 34 Cumberland Road, London E.17. Cheques and p.o.'s should be payable to Syndicalist Workers' Federation

STILL IN FRANCO'S JAIL

ON AUGUST 11, Stuart Christie, a Scottish member of the SWF, will have been Franco's prisoner for three years of a 20-year sentence. This was for allegedly carrying arms into Spain for the anti-fascist resistance movement. What is Britain's Labour Government doing to hasten his release? Precisely nothing.

Recently Stuart's case was taken up by the *Sunday Times*. Following a sympathetic article which restated the facts and reported that several MP's were intervening with the Foreign Office, to intercede on Stuart's behalf, the *Sunday Times* carried the following editorial on July 16:

"FRANCO'S PRISONER"

"THE FOREIGN OFFICE is pussy-footing around the case of Stuart Christie, the young Scottish anarchist who has spent three years in a Spanish gaol for an offence against the Franco regime. It has urged an end to agitation, for fear of irritating Madrid. It has so far refused to back a new plea for clemency which Mr. Christie will be making in the autumn, although that plea is powerfully justifiable. Mr. Christie was only eighteen when he was sentenced to twenty years, for an offence in which he was the naïve fall-guy rather than the reckless terrorist.

"One factor is evidently prominent in Foreign Office reasoning: Gibraltar. A high-level plea for Mr. Christie, it is said, would prejudice that tortuous transaction. Yet the Spanish position on Gibraltar has been marked by not a trace of diplomatic delicacy. There is no diplomatic balance to be upset. Rather, concerted high-level pressure against Mr. Christie's barbarous sentence would strengthen his solitary plea. The Government should provide it."

Supporting the leader, was an extremely well-informed two-column article by George Gardiner, headed "STUART CHRISTIE: FOREIGN OFFICE BOWS TO FRANCO." He writes:

"Concern is growing among a number of MPs at the apparent reluctance of the Foreign Office to bring any pressure to bear on the Spanish Government for a remission of the 20-year sentence on Stuart Christie, the young Scot imprisoned in 1964 for offences against the Franco regime.

"At a strange meeting at the Foreign Office with a

deputation of MPs most closely concerned in this case of the longest-serving British political prisoner, Lord Chalfont, Minister of State, urged that nothing should appear in the Press about their meeting. 'Whatever we do, we must not irritate the Spanish authorities,' he is reported to have said.

"MPs ascribe this timid attitude to the delicate situation over Gibraltar. They fear that, rather than risk a rebuff from General Franco, the Foreign Office prefers to do nothing for the time being."

Mr. Gardiner suggests the Government's unconcern may have anti-Labour repercussions in Stuart's home constituency of Hamilton later this year, when a by-election follows Mr. Tom Fraser's appointment to two Government boards.

Mr. Fraser attended the meeting with Lord Chalfont. Also there were Niall MacDermot QC, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who interviewed Stuart in Madrid following his trial; Hugh Delargy MP and Alfred Morris MP. After they had asked what they could do to help Stuart further:

"Lord Chalfont's reply was they should do nothing at all. Just leave it to the Foreign Office to support a plea for clemency when officials thought the time appropriate, he urged.

"He would not commit himself to this autumn. The British Consul visited Christie regularly and the whole thing was best handled 'behind the scenes.'"

Mr. MacDermot, a junior minister, naturally accepted the Foreign Office view. So did Mr. Fraser, whose new appointment was announced five days later.

"But Mr. Delargy and Mr. Morris were not satisfied. Since then they have been joined by other MPs, notably Mr. Eric Lubbock, the Liberal whip and MP for Orpington. All these firmly reject the Foreign Office argument that nothing should be said or done for fear of offending the Spanish."

On July 17, the *Daily Telegraph* was equally revealing in an article by Walter Farr, of its Diplomatic Staff. Writing of the Foreign Office attitude, he said:

"In Christie's case it is emphasised in London that contacts with the Spanish authorities have shown that further action at present by the British Embassy in Madrid would be 'premature'.

"It is argued that if Christie receives normal remissions, based on the system of reducing sentences by one day for every day served, this would cut the sentence by half.

"If he benefits from the usual amnesties it is estimated that there could be further reductions which could mean his release within six years."

The *Sunday Times* writer points out that events support the belief that the Spanish Government would be susceptible to outside pressure and adds "There are indications too that the Spanish authorities outside the gaol are aware of the effect adverse publicity might have on their tourist trade."

Stuart has recently been moved from Carabanchel prison to Alcalá de Henares, where he spent his 21st birthday on July 10. So far as the Foreign Office is concerned, he can stay there a long time.

We again urge readers to protest to the Foreign Office at its callous lack of concern over Stuart Christie's continued imprisonment, to urge his immediate release—and to campaign against tourism to Fascist Spain.

● Late Note: "Sunday Times" (23.7.67) reported pressure on Foreign Office had resulted in undertaking to give full support to Stuart's September appeal.

LITERATURE

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