

This is a grass roots activist's view of the first wave of C.N.D. and why it failed. Understanding why the peace movement failed the first time is important if we are to ensure that we succeed this time.

To the memory of Allen Skinner & Will Warren, respectively the clearest thinker & most dedicated activist of the First Wave.

Also dedicated to all those who were in PYAG, & to Pat Arrowsmith with whom we were in almost permanent conflict over tactics.

The slogan, "Serious politics begins with the Bomb" was George Clarke's watchword in the 50s, - I don't know if he coined it, - & so my thanks also to him.

This reprint of AA III came about in part due to the prompting of the anglo-catholic socialist group *Jubilee*, though *Jubilee* never actually decided to sponsor the reprint. Had it done so, this would have carried an introduction looking at the issues from an explicitly Christian radical viewpoint, & examining the extent to which christian radicals need to take note of the record of events here described. It would have also carried Fr Ken Leech's prefatory note on the author which is included in this edition.

The *Jubilee* connection is given considerable relevance by the sad death - while this reprint was being prepared - of Fr Michael Scott, whose contribution to the DAC is recounted in the pamphlet only very imperfectly. Fr Michael, while he took part in civil disobedience with the DAC, didn't actively intervene in the group's internal life, except insofar as his personal influence on individuals was passed on, but his earlier work in Africa had been an inspiration to anyone considering the adaption of NVDA to Western circumstances. Certainly some, including the present author, of the DAC activists would have found it more difficult to come to NVDA as a political method, if it had not been for Mike Scott; perhaps all.

Laurens Otter

College Farm House
Mill Lane
Wellington
Salop TFI IPR

Preface

I have known Laurens Otter for 25 years, since his arrest and imprisonment after the Swaffham demonstration of 1958. He has been closely associated with the anti-nuclear movement and with civil disobedience against nuclear policies continuously over this quarter of a century. I have learnt a great deal from Laurens over those years, and he is in a strong position to reflect on the issues which concern the anti-bomb movement today. We need to learn from our own past, and this pamphlet should help, though many people will be angry and irritated by parts of it. Laurens is not a party-line man, and his pamphlet should shake people into rethinking some entrenched positions. But it will also help those who are new supporters of the movement to understand its history and struggles.

Kenneth Leech

The Jubilee Group
St Mary's House
East Way
London E9
01 986 8159

SERIOUS POLITICS

BEGINS WITH THE BOMB



**Taking up the Socialist Challenge
on the lessons of the First Wave**

Anarchist Arguments III

Cost: 50p

Published by Anarchist Arguments, College Farm House, Mill Lane,
Wellington, Salop TFI IPR
Designed & Printed by Redesign, 9 London Lane E8.

Many thanks to Peace News for uncredited NVDA photos.
Other photos from Imperial War Museum.

Introduction

Serious Politics was written as a reply to the International Marxist Group's (IMG) *Lessons of the First Wave*. However, CND has been misrepresented not only by the IMG (now Socialist Action) but also from the right. Politicians who are unable to answer either the moral or the practical arguments for unilateral nuclear disarmament instead resort to labelling CND as a puppet organisation of the Kremlin, and allege that we are financed by the Russians.

Just how sincere Tories are in making such allegations is demonstrated by the way they recently deported a Romanian political refugee. He had been imprisoned as an industrial militant and 'our' government, which devotes much time to lip-service support for Solidarnosc but which treats its own industrial militants in a way that General Jaruzelski might envy, was not going to encourage such militants to come to this country. It shipped him back to prison at home, pausing only to have him beaten up in Ashford Remand Centre – 'pour encourager les autres'.

World alliances are always a matter of convenience to the right. In the 1930s they admired Mussolini and Hitler; then in the 1940s we were told that dear 'Uncle Joe' Stalin was the great defender of democracy. This alliance between communists and conservatives in the latter years of the second world war went quite far. In by-elections the Stalinists provided the most enthusiastic canvassers for Tory candidates, labelling any critics of conservatism as agents of Hitler and, at the end of the war for the 1945 general election, the Conservative Party published a book in which they asked people to vote either for themselves or the Communist Party (CP). Friendship with Russia would be, they said, the over-riding political issue in the post-war years. The one thing Stalin hated most was Trotskyism and it was alleged that both the Liberal and Labour parties – to say nothing of the Independent Labour Party and Common Wealth – were Trotskyist. A year after the end of the war the line changed again.

People whom the Tories denounced during and immediately after the war as 'enemies of our friendship with Stalin' were soon thereafter to be denounced as communist dupes for advocating exactly the same policies. Knowing that the slander changes according to convenience, unilateralists are not unduly concerned with the name-calling, but we are forced to answer it so that others are not prevented from considering our case.

Allegations are made that we receive Russian money. Although the CND headquarters staff frequently invite the slanderers to examine the books and see for themselves (not an entirely wise procedure as all too frequently such examinations are followed by letter bombs to supporters, or lesser acts such as threats, pressure to employers to sack CND supporters, and so on), none amongst those who have examined the books and failed to find the expected signs of Russian gold have had the decency to apologise for making an unfounded slur.

The basic philosophy of unilateralism is that we start with the evil for which our own country is responsible. This does not mean that we do not oppose the evils done by others, but that we believe that the people of this country can only hope to control their own government, and that it is for the people of other countries to tackle theirs. Thus CND has always given priority to opposing British weapons, although from very early days it has been committed to supporting unilateralists in every country and has long been active within an international alliance of unilateralist movements. But this priority does not mean that we have neither organised nor supported demonstrations over the actions of other countries.

Opponents of CND often allege that no similar movement could exist behind the Iron Curtain, even though there is now abundant evidence of 'unofficial' peace groups and demonstrations in East Germany, the Balkans and even Russia itself. Such opponents

should recall that several years before CND was launched they, or their political ancestors, were much heartened by the account of a defecting NKVD (predecessor of the KGB) officer, Colonel Tokaev, of oppositional groups within the Soviet Unions. One such group, the Tolstoian pacifist movement from Siberia, the Monaashii, had already organised demonstrations against the construction of Soviet nuclear weapons sites.

When the various anti-CND groups allege that there is no difference between CND policies and those of the Communist Party, it is as well to remember that when CND was launched in February 1958, and when the first Aldermaston march took place at Easter 1958, the *Daily Worker*, – predecessor of the *Morning Star* – denounced the unilateralism. It was alleged to be a Trotskyist plot to split the broad unity of the peace movement by posing a maximalist demand, and that this was being done on behalf of the American warmongers.

It should be further remembered that the CP remained hostile to CND for two years. It then took up the slogan 'unity between unilateralists and multilateralists against the warmongers', which allowed it to say that it supported CND while continuing to oppose its aims. It only adopted unilateralism after a disruptive ploy within the campaign backfired.



Even after the adoption of a unilateralist position in theory, the CP as late as 1963 was pushing the line now embraced by the right wing of the Tories that American nuclear weaponry in this country should be handed over to the control of the British government. This policy presupposes continued British possession of nuclear weapons, and as such was opposed to unilateralism.

When the witch-hunters claim that civil disobedience has only been mounted by British, American and European unilateralists against NATO weaponry and say, in the words of many a Tory politician's speech or newspaper letter: "I would have some respect for CND/the Greenham Common women if some of them demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy", it is worth recounting that

- * Before the launch of CND, the Direct Action Committee (DAC) and later the Committee of 100, made its opposition known to all nuclear tests by pickets at embassies of countries that conducted tests. All embassies.
- * As far as man/woman power was available, there were demonstrations on all occasions of Soviet tests at the Soviet embassy just as there were at other embassies when their countries tested warheads. Emyln Warren was fairly severely assaulted when on a lone picket at the Soviet embassy at a time when the bulk of DAC supporters were in prison and so unable to join him.
- * The American Committee for Non-Violent Action, the equivalent of the Committee of 100, with the cooperation of the DAC and the Committee of 100 just before the two merged, organised a Washington to Moscow March in 1961 which used civil disobedience to cross the East German, Polish and Russian borders.
- * Several hundred Committee of 100 demonstrators were arrested in that and subsequent years at various actions at the Soviet embassy, most serving prison sentences. The present writer and his wife spent part of their honeymoon in prison for this reason. CND organised simultaneous demonstrations.
- * The Committee of 100 held a demonstration in Red Square the

next year, 1962 with the industrial sub-committee writing the leaflet.

- * War Resisters International – the pacifist international which had an overlapping membership with the Committee of 100, and to which probably all members of the earlier DAC had belonged – organised simultaneous demonstrations in every European Warsaw Pact country, also in 1962.
- * There was a series of sit-ins in the Soviet Embassy by sub-sections of the Committee of 100 throughout the 1960s, not only on the issue of the Bomb, but also on civil rights issues.
- * There are Russian dissidents now being feted around the west as 'victims of communist terror' and upheld by the right wing, who were first heard of over here as a result of these Committee of 100 sit-ins. These sit-ins were derided at the time by right wingers, who now look to such emigrés for a justification for their prejudices. Bukovski, in particular, who has denounced peace activists in the west as agents of Kremlin terror, only came to public attention through such a sit-in.
- * Even after the Committee of 100 had wound up in the late 1960s three of its former sub-sections cooperated to hold another demonstration in Red Square.

We cannot expect those who allege that nuclear disarmers are all agents of Moscow to be much interested in these facts. There were multilateralist campaigns in the days prior to 1958 when CND as formed and they were attacked in much the same terms by those who now claim to be multilateralists, and as multilateralists 'true disarmers'. The newly found desire on the part of western leaders for multilateral disarmament, so that the world may have no nuclear weapons, is ironical when one remembers that at the end of the second world war there were years when only the west had such bombs. There would have been no need to bargain for Russian disarmament had western leaders then sincerely wanted a nuclear-free world. Indeed the sincerity of such multilateralists was recently shown by the howl of protest when Ken Livingstone, in order to promote multilateral peace talks in Northern Ireland and having already spoken to 'loyalists', then went to talk to republicans.

The Emergence of the Campaign

It is saddening for a nuclear disarmer to relate that in large part the foundation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was a cynical manoeuvre. It is however necessary to recall this if we are to understand why the first wave failed to achieve more than it did.

Following Bevan's "Naked in the Council Chamber" speech at the Labour Party Conference of 1957, (when he astounded his associates by opposing unilateral moves to disarmament), the *New Statesman* carried an article by JB Priestley and AJP Taylor, criticising Bevan for having made a bad compromise with Gaitskell.

Priestley and Taylor were not against compromise – indeed it is the essence of politics – but this was a bad compromise. They therefore wished to attain a better compromise.

In order to do this, they said it was first necessary to rebuild the Labour left. This in turn necessitated that the remains of Bevanism find a way to harness the radicalism of youth. This could only be done by posing an impossible demand.

Unilateralism was such a demand. Posed, it would bring radical youth into the Labour left (which – by implication – was not to be committed to the demand) which would then be able to make a new compromise with Gaitskell.

The *New Statesman* editors appended a note saying that some years before GDH Cole had, in their pages, argued that both in Stalinist communism and in reformist social democracy the essential aims of socialism – workers' control, internationalism, abolition of economic differentials – had been lost.

Cole argued for a reassertion of these fundamental socialist aims. The editors, on that earlier occasion, had suggested that those

who agreed might form a new ginger group movement. From this the World Socialist Movement (WSM) – later the International Society for Socialist Studies (ISSS) – had been born. They now made the same suggestion for unilateral disarmers, or for those who wished to use nuclear disarmament to harness the radicalism of youth.

The article was later, quite rightly, claimed as the origins of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Seeing as neither the WSM nor the ISSS ever reached a thousand membership, neither ever made a serious impact on politics, whatever Cole's intentions. Given that, the intention was that unilateral nuclear disarmament should be posed only to harness the radicalism of youth. It was seen as an impossible demand – and therefore not one to be posed seriously. This radical youth was to be channelled into a non-unilateralist Labour left, which would then barter its own principles to get a better compromise with Gaitskell. The campaign was not founded to attain nuclear disarmament, its ostensible aim.

Consistent with this: when it was launched, CND was initially intended to be "a movement for unilateralists, but not an unilateralist movement". It was only when the majority of the people at the founding conference were obviously considering getting up and walking out to form a rival campaign that the executive allowed a motion committing the campaign to unilateralism to be put to the vote.

Thereafter, until 1960, the CND executive made certain that no conference would be in a position to vote on motions that would bind the campaign; opposition to NATO was not allowed on the

conference agenda until 1960. When the 1959 conference voted that – in order to put nuclear disarmament in context – CND should be committed to the aims of war on want and colonial freedom, the resolution was just ignored – despite the fact that only Kurt Weisskopf had voted against it.

The Art of the Impossible

Obviously no movement founded merely on such a manoeuvre would have gained the support that CND won.

Nor indeed would the authors of the *New Statesman* article have set out to harness the radicalism of youth had it not been for very tangible evidence that there was an awakening of radicalism amongst the young, after almost a decade of political apathy.

That awakening was chiefly manifest among the Universities and Left Review Club (U&LRC). The club had weekly got larger attendances for meetings than had been seen in politics for a long time. Largely under the driving impact of Ralph Samuels, it had begun to make a significant impact on the Labour left, and had reawakened interest in political ideas amongst groups of people who had previously been bored by the approach and priorities of the traditional left.

The *Universities & Left Review* and its northern equivalent – the *New Reasoner* – which were later to fuse as the *New Left Review*, had to some extent laid itself open to being harnessed in this way, since a slogan widely current in such circles was that socialists should “explore the limits of reform”.

Exploring the limits of reform provides a clue as to why Taylor and Priestley should so value an impossible demand. An impossible demand is obviously one that goes beyond the limit of reform. Remembering that no state has ever willingly abandoned its major weapon of coercion, unilateralism does go beyond the limits of reform.

The classical way for every government to maintain power over its own subjects is to point to the enemy at the gates. States divert the attention of their subject away from their own ills to the supposedly greater ills of those who live under an alien regime, and dwell on the horrors that would be imposed by foreigners invading.

Throughout the period of the cold war when workers asked for better wages, when blacks asked for integration, when the homeless asked for houses, they were said in the West to be manipulated by communist agitators and thus to be agents of those horrible supporters of Russian tyranny who were, even then, pointing nuclear weapons at Britain. While of course posing the equivalent demands in the East meant one was an agent of the capitalists, no doubt acting under fascist orders to restore the Tsar.

The economic system had become vastly more centralised than in the past, and the exigencies of national security – or rather the secrecy such ‘security’ imposed – had permitted enormous inroads into personal civil liberties, as well as permitting new methods of

surveillance and sizeable extensions in the powers of the police. This in turn had permitted governments to tell the House of Commons that the nominally sovereign parliament had no right to discuss – or indeed be informed – of certain matters.

Parliament was not told – nor indeed was Shinwell, Secretary of State for War – of the British manufacture of the atomic bomb; and Strachey told the Commons that it had no right to discuss the continuance of conscription.

The Bomb had become a symbol of centralised, violent society. It was inconceivable that any government would willingly abandon it, and to prevent it being remade by a subsequent government – particularly in the heat of a war – would involve a more far-reaching change than a mere parliamentary decision. Unilateral nuclear disarmament would have meant a break with the whole direction that industry, the economy and society were taking. It would have meant a halt to the growth of government ‘security’ and a lessening of police powers.

Limits of Reform

Consciously or unconsciously Taylor and Priestley were harking back to an older socialist vocabulary when they called unilateralism an impossible demand. They meant, clearly, a demand that conflicted fundamentally with the whole of orthodox and consensus politics. When, ninety to a hundred years ago, socialists first divided into revolutionaries and reformists, the latter were called ‘possibilists’ because they accused those who wanted a fundamental change in society of advancing impossible demands.

The possibilists were those who confined their aims to what were consistent with the preservation of an essentially unchanged society. They offered palliatives and repairs to make that society more appealing.

This then tied in with the slogan of those who were to become the new left about “exploring the limits of reform”. It was a slogan reached in part from a desire to reconcile a belief that reform was inadequate and an objective need to break out of the isolation in which the non-reformist left then found itself. Also in part, no doubt, it sprang from the marxist dialectic, in which limits and surpassing limits are fundamental. But while this was no doubt a subconscious factor, it was not an obvious constituent of their theory.

The aim of pushing reforms to and beyond the limits that are imposed by constitutionalist desires (to preserve class society) characterised the embryo new left which, either by instinct or thought-out implementation of such policy (and as I recall it, it was a bit of both), had already posed the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament and had begun to make links with the traditional pacifist movement. This conjunction had created the conditions for the emergence of the campaign, and had arguably created – in embryonic form – the campaign itself.



Vulcan Bomber

RAF Museum

Spring Awakening

Aldermarch '58

That the campaign became more than a pressure group owed little to the official leadership.

The first mass Aldermaston March – that of 1958 – was proposed by the Direct Action Committee (DAC) late in 1957. When potential support for it began to grow beyond the limits that its proposers had envisaged, and it had become endorsed by most of the traditional pacifist left and the pacifist movement generally, it was also endorsed by the Universities and Left Review Club and by Victory for Socialism. This last had been formed – or rather reformed – by a number of MPs largely in response to the despondency that followed the 1957 Labour Conference. They were also hoping to win the same sort of support that the new left was gaining.

The march was eventually endorsed by CND officially – a fortnight before it actually occurred. Of course, all the groups that had previously endorsed it were unilateralist, and most of their members had already joined CND, but at that stage only the CND executive officially represented the Campaign. Even if all members of the Campaign, other than the executive, had been involved, the non-involvement of the executive would have meant the non-involvement of CND.

An Aldermaston March Liaison Committee and a larger Liaison Committee to which it reported were formed – it was a sub-committee of the latter that produced the ‘broken cross’ nuclear disarmament badge – and when CND finally endorsed the march, Peggy Duff represented the campaign on the liaison committee. In her autobiography, she later said that this became the London regional council of CND, which is near enough to the facts to be allowed to pass.

A week after the march the Labour Party held a rally in Trafalgar Square. They too were anxious to harness the radicalism of youth and had decided to open a series of meetings, planned to be held all over the country, to call for multilateral disarmament.

CND as an organisation lost the opportunity to make an impact. Not prepared to pose unilateralism as a principle it was not ready to ensure that there was a unilateralist presence in the square. Three separate unilateralist contingents were present, however.

The U&LRC had a large party standing in front of the National Gallery with a deceptively uncontroversial banner which dropped open when Bevan came to the microphone to say “Come back to us Nye, Unilaterally”.

The DAC had hastily planned and advertised on the last day of the Aldermaston march to get a scratch contingent. It nevertheless had succeeded in getting several hundred present, arriving before the official demonstration.

The Trotskyist groups – for once working together, though predominantly under the impact of what was soon to become the Socialist Labour League – had managed to persuade a large number of Constituency Labour Party contingents to come with unilateralist slogans and signs superimposed on Labour Party banners, and they gathered in a centrally placed phallanx opposite the plinth and platform party.

Together, the three unilateralist contingents constituted about two thirds of the whole demonstration, but even with the unilateralist contingents the Labour Party rally was far smaller than the initial and final rallies of the previous week’s march. That of course was the last that was heard of the Labour Party’s peace campaign. Harnessing the radicalism of youth might appeal: allowing radical youth to make its presence felt on a Labour demonstration was a different matter.

Spring Constitutional

That Spring there were two twenty-four hour pickets of Whitehall organised by unilateralists, one organised by the DAC, another by an ad hoc group which gained nominal endorsement from CND officially, but no real participation.

Given its ideas, it is understandable that CND drew back from anything suggesting ‘activity on the streets’, and did not like to be connected with marches and pickets which offended its constitutionalism. It is less easy to understand why it even failed to support lobbies. There were two that spring.

The first, initially suggested by Sheila Jenkins and largely organised by a group she recruited, did win token endorsement. This usually was given when a large meeting was planned to which the executive was invited to send a speaker.

This was the occasion of the first publication, clandestinely, of an official secret within CND. The CND officialdom, which had not been active in planning the demonstrations, became very active during the demonstration, trying to prevent distribution.

An article on spy planes had been published by an Oxford undergraduate in the student magazine *Isis*, based on knowledge he had gained when doing his national service. He and the editor were being tried at the Old Bailey. The U&LR, out of solidarity – a solidarity that was not appreciated and was indeed greeted with murmurs of breach of copyright – reprinted the article for distribution within CND. The article was directly relevant to CND as the spy planes had been flying along the border between East and West Germany.

Most of the marshalls on the demonstration were being supplied by the U&LR Club, which had also handled the marshalling of the Aldermaston march. At a briefing meeting, they agreed to distribute the leaflet while they were marshalling. This was done with the agreement of the ad hoc group that had planned the demonstration, who were present at the meeting. A briefing sheet had been produced for the guidance of demonstrators, giving times of various events and suggestions, and it was simple to hand out the leaflet with this.

We were told, some time after the demonstration had started, that the CND executive had prohibited the distribution of the “illegal and subversive tract”. This view was not endorsed by the ad hoc committee, which backed the marshalls distributing it surreptitiously.

Canon Collins and Peggy Duff were running round telling marshalls to be on their guard. They must watch for, catch and stop those evil people who were using the campaign’s demonstration to hand out an (unspecified) unauthorised leaflet and they collared Michael Howard, Clive Jenkins and Ken Newton, who were it happens already in charge of distributing fresh supplies to marshalls, to help them in this.

It was somewhat hilarious as one of the latter three would come up and say loudly: “I have been asked by Canon Collins to ask you to ensure that no-one is giving out an unauthorised leaflet” and then adding sotto voce: “have you got enough, do you need some more?”

The second lobby was a semi-spontaneous one launched by the new left a few weeks later when Emrys Hughes learnt one lunchtime that later the same day parliament was to debate setting up rocket bases. He let the U&LR Club know.

The two Front Benches in parliament must have agreed to keep the debate off the Order Paper, for it was only at 1.00pm that Emrys Hughes learnt that the debate on rocket bases was to take place, and even that seems to have been by accident.

He notified the Club, which ran the Partisan Coffee Bar, and

everyone who called there was given a sheet of telephone numbers to ring to ask members to leave work early and join the lobby, and if possible to get down to the club and collect a sheet of numbers of their own to ring.

Two and a half hours after the U&LRC first heard of the debate – at 4.00 pm that afternoon – some 800 of us were on the lobby and more arrived later. Given the total lack of prior notification to MPs that there was to be the debate, that had some impact. Once again the success owed nothing to the official campaign.

The Leaders Led

No doubt the birth of the campaign cannot be seen purely in terms of visible demonstrations. The real basis was the growth in local areas, the foundation of various organisations – regional councils and specialist groupings – within the campaign. Local groups mushroomed in every area, some to die away again fairly rapidly, some to be absorbed as larger groups were founded, and some to flourish on their own account.

The official campaign histories all stress that this mushrooming was independent of the campaign executive. Some commentators have assumed that all the local groups came from the earlier National Council Against Nuclear Weapons Tests (NCANWT), itself a product of the Women's Guilds of the Co-op, and particularly of fellow travellers within these. It is not, however, explained how, in this case, CND, with a far more radical basis than the NCANWT, should have become within three months of its foundation, more than twice the size of the parent organisation – parent in that the Executive of the Campaign was recruited from NCANWT sponsors.

Many of the former NCANWT activists were now opposed to CND. The old organisation had official Liberal Party support and that of Nye Bevan and his supporters, and the leaders of both opposed CND. The Communist Party had also supported the NCANWT, and in 1958 it alleged that CND was a Trotskyist plot designed to split the broad unity of the peace movement on behalf of American warmongers.

Also, belief that there was a simple transference of members does not explain why so many of those who attended the founding conference of CND in February 1958 only joined after the conference, or why many – probably the same people – had nearly walked out when it had appeared that CND would not be unilateralist.

Having been present at the birth of over a dozen CND groups in that first year, and having travelled round the country to most CND and DAC demonstrations for the next three years, my impression is that most local groups gained impetus from one of the earlier peace movements – Peace Pledge Union, Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Quakers, Mike Howard's 'A-Bomb Committee', Third Way – or from the new left or other recent ex-communists. There was in most areas a nucleus of people with previous peace action experience derived from these, and that nucleus attracted others to form local groups.

Official histories give the birth of CuCaND (Combined Colleges and Universities CND) and Youth CND (YCND) as being in 1959 or later. There was however a CuCaND banner on the 1958 Aldermaston march; and at a London regional conference of CND groups held in the spring or early summer of 1958, there was a motion (fortunately unsuccessful) to fix a minimum age for YCND at 16. The mover of the motion had a 14 year old son who was neglecting his homework for canvassing.

CuCaND also, in 1958, sent out a call to set up a CND political section committee. The executive did not bother to acknowledge the letter, and so the organisers were forced to look elsewhere for a speaker. Allen Skinner went, and the Political Action Committee as a result was closely linked with the DAC. Dick Acland¹ (of the

¹ During the war, Acland was the principal force in founding Common Wealth, the main wartime socialist opposition to the Coalition Government. Joining Labour at the end of the war, he resigned his seat in 1954 to fight a by-election in that constituency against nuclear weapons. However a general election was called before the writ was moved.

executive) did turn up to a subsequent meeting when the question of independent candidates was mooted but, despite his own previous independent campaign, he grew quite abusive about those who wished to run CND candidates.

The regional conference in London just mentioned was not official, though it led to the launching of the London regional organisation. Again the executive played little or no part in it. Acland did make a brief appearance, and Peggy Duff was there giving the apologies of the rest.

The One-Summer Swallow

The first demonstration that the executive did organise was a march on London in June or July 1958. It was a series of simultaneous marches of about 5 or 6 miles from the suburbs to Trafalgar Square. The idea was sound, not the implementation. Being out of touch with the campaign rank and file, the executive did not ask any CND grouping – local group, regional, youth or student section – nor any affiliated body to supply the marshalls.

Instead, it turned to the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF). The MCF had in those days recruited hefty marshalls to restrain the League of Empire Loyalists. They were mostly members of the Communist Party and hence not unilateralists. They brought their own banners, which did not carry unilateralist slogans and did not carry the nuclear disarmament symbol. Not merely that but on at least three of the spokes of the march – there were eight as far as I remember – they threw out of the march anyone who was carrying unilateralist banners or shouting unilateralist slogans.

Moreover, they called the police in to separate the contingents, those carrying unilateralist banners being cordoned off from the 'official' CND march. There were a number of physical attacks on unilateralists, particularly those who had left the CP over Hungary. As a result, there were official CND contingents opposed to unilateralism, and rebel or unofficial contingents advocating official CND policy. Pat Arrowsmith tells me she believes that even this was organised by an ad hoc committee. This is not my recollection, but whether one says the executive did nothing in the real campaign or whether it did one thing badly is hardly a major difference.

The Founding Hard Core – the New Left, the DAC and Later the Committee of 100

Given that we are dealing with an 'impossible demand' – a demand which cannot be met within the context of conventional political action – it is obviously unfair to blame the CND leadership too much for failure. It is necessary to understand the leadership's first rule – abide by established political conventions, the maintenance of which mattered more than the abolition of the Bomb.

There were within CND, however, groups which had advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament before the campaign was founded. Some of these were not committed to support for the political establishment, and it is of interest to judge their success. It is laudable, to this extent, in *Socialist Challenge*, that it set out to do this in "CND 1958-65, Lessons of the First Wave". However some of the historical material and treatment therein fall short of accuracy, and there are remarkable omissions. Some of the deductions are perverse, others are deduced logically but from false premises.

The tone is set by its inadequate treatment of the new left, and earlier the groupings that were to fuse to form the new left – the *New Reasoner* and the U&LR Club. Initially formed by those who left the CP over Hungary (many had previously been 'revisionist' dissidents following the Khrushchev revelations), these were joined by a number of 'Bevanite' members of the Labour Party – disillusioned by the inadequacy of Bevan's opposition to the British invasion of Suez – and by a sprinkling of Trotskyists, anarchists and other left critics of Stalinism.

It was these progenitors of the new left that in the six months prior to the formation of CND had prepared the ground for the

campaign. Moreover, in the six months after the formation, this proto-new left played a decisive role in all CND activities. The name new left incidentally was a literal translation of the French 'nouvelle gauche', the tradition that in France was at the time in process of forming successively the Union de Gauche Socialiste and the Parti Socialiste Unifié.

To begin with, the new left was one of the main reasons that when CND was formed, its members voted to commit the campaign to unilateralism. Then, during the spring and summer when CND had no organisational structure, the new left provided the only viable liaison and organisational structure. The executive did not regard the campaign as a democratic movement and argued that it would lose its efficacy if it became so. At a time when CND branches were springing up all over the place there was no means whereby groups might liaise or consult other groups; nor could the executive so liaise, even if it felt inclined. The new left supplied the marshalls for most demonstrations, handled all the advertising for the first Aldermaston march, and initiated more demonstrations than did CND officially.

The Labour A Bomb Committee was asked to organise the loudspeaker vans and passed this job over to the new left, who provided groups to leaflet tube and mainline stations, to staff poster parades, to make posters and so on. That summer saw attempts at western intervention in Iraq, in the Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East and saw British crimes in what is now Malawi. Each time as the news came through at the Partisan Coffee Bar groups spontaneously went to picket, and each time ad hoc groupings within CND sprang up to fight the issue. It was these that came to coalesce as the informal structure of CND, from which in time formal organisation evolved.

The mass lobby publicity was similarly staffed from the new left. Sheila and Clive Jenkins were already a political force on their own, but they were in those days closely linked with the new left.

Local CND branches mounting their own activities and needing help could not turn to any official wider organisation. They could and did get help from the new left. This did not of course remain the case permanently.

The drive for the new left in large measure came from Ralph Samuels, whose organising skills were notable. But by Autumn 1958 he appeared to have been surfeited with success, and needed to find new areas of work to absorb his energies. Thereafter, though many individual members of the new left were prominent in CND and vice versa organisationally the link was lost and the two movements went their own ways.

Casting the Harness

Frank Cousins achieved such prominence that summer that by and large the Priestley-Taylor aim of rebuilding the Bevanite left without

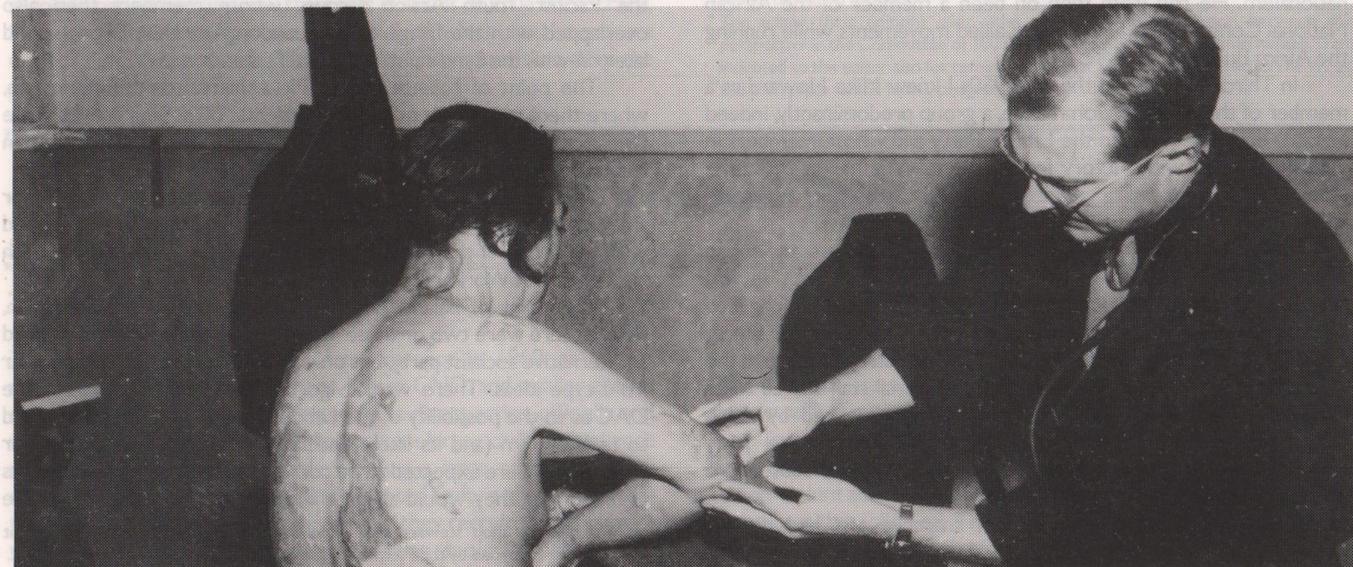
Bevan was already achieved. Strictly speaking there was no longer a need for CND, in the sense that it had been founded merely with this in mind. All that happened in and around CND after that first summer was going beyond the initial intention of the campaign's founding executive.

CND as a living and democratic organisation emerged during the summer, ignoring the disapproval of the executive. Though the new left as an organisation played a decreasing role in the campaign after that summer, the spontaneous growth of liaising organisations within CND reached the point where there was no longer the same need to rely on affiliated groupings. John Cox and John Greaves were complaining, with some considerable justification, by the winter that the new left had lost interest in the campaign and were considering forming a distinct organisation of new leftists, or socialist humanists as they were generally known, who were still active. Nothing came of this as far as I know.

Many new leftists did of course still play a leading role in the campaign – one only has to think of George Clark, Ernie Rodker, Allen Lovell and Mike Craft as examples. And it would have been hard to find a leading new leftist who was not also a moderately active local CND member. But within the U&LR Club it was possible to differentiate between those leading CND members who happened to be in the new left and those leading new leftists who were also – in consequence – CND members. There were very few who were noteworthy in both.

The Cousins-type Labour left talked of 'unilateral initiatives towards disarmament', a circumlocution used by Michael Foot addressing a recent Scots Labour conference, and it was clear that this was not intended to be the same as unilateral disarmament. This was underlined when Gaitskell had dismissed the campaign as "neutralist and pacifist"; and Cousins went to some pains to disclaim the neutralist description. This occurred at a time when the rank and file of CND generally described itself as 'positive neutralist'. The campaign executive was broadly happy to accept the Cousins formula. CND conferences were not. Both Victory for Socialism and the new left were similarly polarised.

The summer not only saw CND regional and other structures evolve, it also saw the evolution of a specifically CND consciousness. It would still be a broad coalition, still be multi-faceted but thenceforth – if only in the sense of developing a common vocabulary – there was a minimal agreement apparent on all CND demonstrations. From then on they were CND demonstrations, not DAC or new left ones. Very often it was much more than a minimal agreement, and soon it was apparent that CND members in the Labour Party had more in common with unilateralists in the Liberal, Communist or any other party, than any such CND members had with non-unilateralist members of their parties.



The DAC

Political Composition

Socialist Challenge in its pamphlet describes the DAC's members as "mostly resolutely hostile to party political involvement by campaigners". This is far from the truth.

Between the summer of 1958 and November 1959 – when the then members of the DAC were imprisoned for planning Harrington, and the first of three replacement committees took over – twelve people served on the committee – of whom Donald Soper and Sheila Jones resigned in 1958 when civil disobedience first started. They were: Pat Arrowsmith, April Carter, Hugh Brock, Dr Soper, Sheila Jones, Mike Randle, Allen Skinner, Francis Jude, Harold Steele, Will Warren, Frances Edwardes and Fr. Mike Scott.

Besides these, members of *Peace News* staff not on the DAC committee and five people prominent in CND regional organisations were very public sympathisers with the DAC, despite considerable tactical disagreements, and though outside they had more influence on the committee than did many of the civil disobedient demonstrators: Inez Randall, Austin Underwood, Damaris Parker Rhodes, John Dennithorne and Mike Howard.

Of these Austin and Hugh were certainly Labour Party borough or county councillors, and whether or not Inez, Damaris and John also were, they were certainly well known and influential within the Labour Party. All of these were in the Hardie-Lansbury-Slater tradition of Labour Party pacifism, that has more recently achieved notoriety through Peter Tatchell, (though they were personally more militant than Hardie, Lansbury and Slater). They would have differed as to whether they entertained any great hope of converting their party to the pacifist socialism they professed. Soper was obviously optimistic. The rest, in varying degrees, were somewhat less so and the divergence no doubt widened.

That Labour Party perspective would have been shared broadly by Francis Jude and Harold Steele, though they sat looser to organisations and organisational work.

Demaris, Will and Frances Edwardes had resigned from the CP over Hungary and were part of the new left. Later Will and Frances were to move to anarchism (Fran was the daughter of Sean White, a well known anarchist militant in the Irish Citizen's Army and so, for her, it was a return to anarchism). Fr. Mike had been in the CP during the war, left the British party when it became too uncritical of the coalition, and remained in the South African Communist Party until the latter made an unprincipled compromise with Afrikaaner nationalism. He had from then on been a member of the African National Congress and a number of allied movements while running the Africa Bureau.

In Third Way days in the mid 1950s I knew Mike Howard as a member of the A Bomb Committee, a group predominantly, indeed possibly exclusively, within the Labour Party and whose members in 1958 overlapped with Victory for Socialism. Whether at that time Mike Howard was still a member and what other organisational affiliations he may have had I do not know.

Only Mike Randle – of the committee members and more influential supporters – was in 1950 a declared anarchist. He was prepared to defer overall anarchist struggle and tactics, believing it to be possible to achieve unilateral disarmament – probably not simply nuclear – in isolation and thus gain time for other struggle, though the three younger members of *Peace News*' editorial staff shared Mike Randle's 'philosophical anarchism' and, while influenced by Allen Skinner, supported voters' veto campaigns. They were fairly orthodox new leftists, as has been emphasised by their subsequent political evolutions.

Allan Skinner, who was not an anarchist and had distinct reservations about direct action methods, was at first the only DAC

member who totally rejected an orientation to the Labour Party. He had been London chairman of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in the early 1930s, having previously been an active Guild Socialist. His aim, in 1958, as it had been for the previous thirty years, was to create a mass socialist party on the lines that Maxton had envisaged: a party which would use parliament for propaganda purposes only, and would rely on industrial action as the chief medium of social change. He viewed the Labour Party as the efficient party of capitalism, and the quintessence of political militarism. He consequently considered that any votes for non-unilateral Labour candidates was a betrayal. He believed unilateralists should demand of candidates of all parties that they pledge themselves to vote for disarmament in parliament if elected, and that otherwise CND members should refuse to vote. For many years he had been editor of a trade union journal, and can hardly be said to have opposed involvement in the labour movement.

Involvement

It is obvious that, far from being "resolutely hostile to party involvement", they were for the most part deeply involved in Labour Party activity. Of the minority who were not in the Labour Party, most had recently left the CP, and not therefore hostile to party activity as such. There was in fact only one totally uninvolved (but not resolutely so) in party political activity. One, only, was resolutely opposed to involvement in the Labour Party. Allen was on the Executive of Common Wealth (CW), the remnant of a wartime semi-mass socialist party, which by then had an anarchist wing, and which – as a party – after Allen's death moved further towards anarchism. Many DAC rank and file supporters also belonged to CW, both to the anarchist and non-anarchist wings.

A similar pattern could be observed among the 82 DAC supporters who sat down at one or other of the Pickenham (Swaffham) demos in December 1958. The spectrum there ranged a little wider (the DAC took a poll of the civil disobedients, and one of the questions asked was political affiliation), extending on the Right to include five members of the CP who had not resigned over Hungary, a similar number of Liberals, 15 Labour (two of whom were Stalinist), and on the Left to include a greater number of anarchists, as well as members of the ILP, the Fellowship Party, and Common Wealth. The anarchist members of CW were mainly connected with the Pacifist Youth Action Group, whose members then also overlapped with the fringe of the London Anarchist Group – and later on with the Syndicalist Workers' Federation (SWF).

The point of balance at the Pickenhams, (or at Harrington, where there were two or three Trotskyists of varying groups¹) like that of the Committee gave a centre that was overwhelmingly in favour of working in the Labour Party.

Thus, while there was no agreement within the DAC, nor amongst its supporters, as to which party it was hoped would bapped with the fringe of the London Anarchist Group – and later on with the Syndicalist Workers' Federation (SWF).

The point of balance at the Pickenhams, (or at Harrington, where there were two or three Trotskyise elsewhere trying to build an alternative socialist party, but only a few. A few others had popular front-type ideas. There was a vigorous debate in and around the DAC as to the possibility of the Labour Party ever being converted to unilateralism (and its likely sincerity if it were), but anti-Labour Party views were expected to be confined within the group, as it was assumed that they would alienate supporters. I, for one, was twice

¹ One Coventry shop steward was expelled from the SLL for taking part at Harrington. Healy had by then terminated an earlier attempt to take over the DAC.

dropped from the list of potential civil disobedients, for stating too emphatically that the Labour Party would never be unilateralist in any real sense of the word.

One can only suspect that *Socialist Challenge* must be misled by its own tendency's past propaganda: that it has not noticed that it has itself changed its policies. The Nottingham Marxist Group (NMG), from which the International Marxist Group² – the main component of *Socialist Challenge* – is descended, was in 1958 deep entrust. It was normal for it in those days (and indeed for anyone else dogmatic about the need to work in the Labour Party) to pretend that all socialists who openly advocated socialism were therefore opponents of political involvement. Presumably NMG members were not at the time so foolish as to believe this – fools are more dangerous than crooks in politics – but they and those with whom they were successively associated steadfastly maintained this fiction.

No doubt the insertion of the word "party" before political involvement in this pamphlet is a shame-faced gesture towards accuracy.

Purpose, DAC and the 100

The pamphlet says: "There was an unresolved contradiction among the exponents of direct action . . . was the purpose of sit-down demonstrations . . . to win public sympathy and support? . . . was it on the other hand directed towards immobilising the military and state machinery?" (p.10) and "The DAC had always insisted that its sit-down demonstrations had an essentially symbolic meaning." (p41).

Not only are the two passages in mutual contradiction, but the pamphlet is wrong in both. There was certainly a division among DAC supporters (though not within the DAC itself) as to whether the aim was to convert the workers at the actual base or arms factory at which we were demonstrating, or whether we aimed at the wider public. But no-one was under the illusion that fifty or so demonstrators could immobilise a base by themselves – let alone the state.

The committee and most supporters did believe that government power depends on the willingness or otherwise of peoples to implement that government's decisions. That the state and military machinery might certainly eventually be immobilised if we could actually persuade sufficient workers actually involved in the manufacture, maintenance and transport of weapons (and if we incidentally persuaded other CND members to adopt our methods). But not by us, rather by those employed in such jobs refusing to continue working.

There were, certainly a few who talked in terms of 'act of witness' or symbolic action, but the symbolism was seen as a self-effective sign, the act of witness as a non-violent 'voting with their feet'³. Thus although those who spoke in such terms disclaimed revolutionary intent and saw their acts in terms of 'true democracy', inherent within their case was the stuff of which revolutions are made. I did not appreciate this at the time, any more than does the pamphlet now.

Return to Non-Violent Direct Action

The Committee of 100

The Committee of 100 came into existence in 1960, as a large section of the new left and London region CND, and smaller groups elsewhere, began to ask CND to endorse direct action officially, and when this was refused, decided to create a larger civil disobedience movement. They hoped that by creating a large committee they would avoid having the organisers arrested before the demonstration – as had happened at Harrington. So they recruited a number of well-known names, some of whom had been 'sponsors' of the DAC,



There was another quite different, but perhaps parallel, division with the Committee of 100 which in some way corresponds with the passage in the pamphlet. Ralph Schoeneman used the slogan 'fill the gaols', and believed that 15,000 committed activists could bring the state to a halt. Those of us who had been around longer replied that if this were done the state would open internment camps.⁴

The Schoeneman perspective led the committee during its first few months to confine its activity to sitting in large deserted London streets and squares – presumably for the benefit of the press, though they thought it was for the pigeons. There our actions did the minimum possible damage to the state and the military machine. This set an example later slavishly followed by the Vietnam Solidarity Committee (VSC) in which *Socialist Challenge*'s forebears were influential. Although accompanied by revolutionary verbiage, the tactic of sitting down in Trafalgar Square – or indeed throwing stones in Grosvenor Square – was more strictly 'purely symbolic' than anything any supporter of the DAC ever wanted.

² Since, of course, changed again to become the Socialist League.

³ Voting with the feet is how Lenin described the desertions from the Tsarist army in 1917.

⁴ Possibly at the Harrington demonstration which took place during the imprisonment of the DAC committee and so attracted people on a solidarity action basis, there may have been a majority of 'act of witness' symbolists. Certainly some of us regarded the resulting demonstration as a farce, and for once the committee supported our criticisms.

⁵ The editor (first edition) adds: "the most obvious connection between this perspective in the Committee of 100 and VSC activity was Schoneman himself." I am indebted to the editor also for reminding me that Schoneman adhered to *The Week*, the then paper of the NMG, progenitor of *Socialist Challenge*.

and wanted to organise their own demonstrations, so that December 1961 saw a series of simultaneous demonstrations at a number of bases, but with more than three-quarters going to Wethersfield. They allege that a number of supporters were in consequence questioning the underlying philosophy.

In fact a lot of people left because when they tried jail once it was worse than they had realised, and they did not want to risk a further bout. Moreover they saw that there was little likelihood of the police bothering to arrest more than the jails could hold, or the state collapsing in consequence. Perhaps there may have been some who psychologically needed the mass concentration of numbers to heighten their morale, though others would equally have been heartened by the ability to demonstrate effectively at a number of bases.



Far more people just were not prepared for the leap from purely token actions in London – praised with faint damns by the media – to the more openly seditious policy of going to the bases. Especially when the judiciary underlined the difference by singling out six of the committee and finding them guilty of conspiracy. They had apparently conspired outside the committee framework, even though they had never met together other than at the committee, never telephoned each other and never written to each other, and it so happened that they had never been an occasion when all six were at the same committee meeting.

I recall the governor of Oxford Prison coming to my cell after the Brize Norton demonstration to argue that the Committee of 100, by going to the bases, had turned from “a near constitutional and democratic protest movement to a treasonable organisation” and, presumably not having read my DAC record, making a personal appeal to me to leave an organisation which “though honourable before” was no longer.

People were indeed questioning the political content of the Committee of 100, but hardly in the way the pamphlet suggests. The authors fail to mention a far more significant factor. There was an enormous growth of active CND membership. This was partly, Labour Party members who had been nominal members of CND starting to attend CND branch meetings – perhaps for fear that they would not otherwise recruit the radical youth in CND – and partly because the CP became unilateralist. The CP had organised, under the British Peace Committee (BPC) label, a national disarmament conference which it advertised in writing to all CND branches, as if this was part of the campaign. Many unwittingly appointed delegates. London region CND in its newsletter suggested that branches press a unilateralist resolution. They did but were ruled out of order. Many got up to walk out. The platform made derogatory remarks about unilateralists. More got up to walk out. The platform gave in and suddenly announced that the BPC was to be unilateralist from now on. The CP followed suit.

This growth of CND branch-going membership also gave rise to new ventures like the campaign caravan. The Committee of 100 recruited from the hard core of the earlier CND was naturally

involved, and many of its supporters became so active in these newer groupings that they had little time to spare for the committee.

Fiction

Discussing the DAC, the authors give us an interesting but totally fictitious account of what happened at the first Pickenham demonstration (p31). It may be that they are purely trying to compete for the Prix Goncourt and that it is pedantic to want truth. But it seems more likely that it fits their political prejudices.

They say: “some of the workers, with the connivance of the bosses and the police, began to beat up the protestors, who responded with non-violence. Other workers, disgusted by the attacks, fought to defend the pacifists”.

The truth – as told to us the next day by the shop steward from the site – is that the workers – all the workers – had been told by the bosses that a gang of thugs had been hired by the Communist Party to go down with iron bars and beat up the workers. The fact that the CP did not at the time support unilateralism and never supported direct action was obviously not going to deter a good lie. The workers – all the workers – therefore, when we reached the centre of the site away from press photographers, piled into us with a will.

They began to notice that we were not resisting. The first to desist was in the process of hitting an elderly woman. He stopped, went and stood aside and thought. He was abused by foremen and the police – RAF and civil – for doing so, all yelling at him “come and get stuck in”. After about four minutes he went up to Will Warren and asked to shake his hand. That done he walked off, ignoring cries from his bosses.

We were sitting in front of a lorry. Dorothy Glaister’s leg – sunk in the mud fortunately – was actually under the front wheel. She was to have pain in it, from that, for the rest of her life. Three successive drivers got in with management urging them to drive forward over us. One by one, they would get in, switch on, reach to put the lorry in gear and then refuse to go further with sweat pouring off them. More and more workers refused to continue. There may have been an isolated instance when one worker who had stopped then restrained his mate, but there was no fighting between workers as described.

We were then dragged out by the police. That evening and again next morning the shop stewards came out from the base to talk. They told us they had been told lies, and had acted on them without thinking. They said they had never previously considered the Bomb. They had now: they had held a site meeting – after we were evicted – and had unanimously asked to be moved to alternative work³. They had also proposed motions to their union branch meeting opposing the Bomb.

Could it be that actually what happened there does not fit the theoretical predilections of *Socialist Challenge*? That the pretty little picture of ‘wet’ pacifists being defended by half the workforce from the other half better fits their theories (or preconceptions) than the actual fact that a whole site full of workers was – at least to the extent of needing to excuse themselves and perhaps further – challenged and possibly converted by non-violent direct action? Could the authors have deliberately tailored events to fit such prejudices? Surely not!

³ Since writing the first draft of this Pat Arrowsmith and another veteran of the demonstration have both said to me that though the shop stewards said this they doubted that it was true. That might be so, but the fact that they felt it worthwhile to say it – even if only as hypocrisy, the tribute to vitruv – still testifies to a considerable impact. Coupled with the evidence we saw of the workers desisting, even a desire to excuse themselves was an achievement. Nor do I accept Pat’s judgement – she moved up to the East Midlands and did not picket other Norfolk bases in the next year, and so would not have encountered the very changed reception when canvassing that the Watton team experienced.

Pat has also suggested that Colin Johnson’s action was an important factor in the workers’ apology. Colin got into a ‘hopper’ from which he could not be removed and refused to get out until he received an apology for the violence. But as I recall by the time he did come out most of the workers had left and it was mainly police still there. If Pat’s recollection is correct the workers came to apologise on two subsequent occasions, and Colin himself insisted at the time that it was not his action alone which changed the workers.

Other Traditions

Entrists and Other Trotskyists at the Time of the Aldermaston March

Given that the *Daily Worker* – as the *Morning Star* was then called – denounced unilateralism and the organisers of the first Aldermaston march as a Trotskyist plot, it is perhaps understandable that *Socialist Challenge* devotes considerable space to the current activities of Trotskyist groups, despite the fact that the combined membership of all such groups at the time would have been well under 500, and that none of them were particularly active within the campaign. It must be admitted that there were even fewer anarchists and other ‘ultra-leftists’, but we were at least active.

Curiously, while discussing Trotskyist actions, the authors did not give the one tale that might have been relevant. Perhaps they did not know it. The SLL, in the spring of 1959, approached the DAC for a merger. This would have gone through had not a faction of the SLL, without authorisation, published a pamphlet consisting of three articles – previously editorials in the SLL’s *Newsletter* – attacking the DAC *inter alia* for its non-violence. Copies of this were produced by Peace Youth Action Group (PYAG) at the conference of DAC supporters at which the merger was discussed. This was the only time a PYAG position ever won a majority.

The authors appear unaware that the positions of the Trotskyist groups changed, and so they describe them as they were at the end of 1959 and subsequently, and backdated such attitudes to early 1958, when in fact they were almost totally reversed. When in 1958 CND was formed, all Trotskyist groups except the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) were deep entrists. Moreover, all such groups except, surprisingly in view of subsequent positions, the RSL, this time with the addition of Socialist Current – which had only a year before left the RSL – played down the significance of CND, arguing that the bomb was not an issue of interest to the working class.

The SLL, or rather the *Newsletter* group, since the SLL was only officially launched the next year and even the intention to form it was

only mooted in September 1958, did however publish a pamphlet by Peter Fryer in which he argued that socialism could not possibly be defended by the indiscriminate slaughter of the proletariat. Developing this, he argued that Soviet possession of nuclear weapons did not defend the workers’ movement, while obviously such possession menaced the workers of the West and provided Western capitalists with a propaganda weapon. He said that while the *Newsletter* group was firmly committed to the defence of the Soviet Union, it denied that this could be done with the Bomb, and indeed the very desire to defend the Soviet Union made it oppose Soviet nuclear weapons, as well as those of NATO countries.

When the Aldermaston march was endorsed by the Labour parliamentary left, the price of that endorsement was the the DAC scrap its earlier proposals to leaflet the base at the end of the march with the message that workers should leave and refuse to continue working there. Also that the DAC scrap the banners fitting this call. It will be recalled that the DAC has been formed from the earlier Non-Violent Resistance Group (NVRG) – an exclusively pacifist group – and had initially recruited support from the radicals within the traditional pacifist movement; that it had been from the beginning anxious to break out of the isolation that this imposed. The sectarianism of the pacifist old guard had been seen as a barrier to growth. It had been able to reach the traditional ‘ultra-left’ since this had had a long history of war resistance and work within the peace movement, but the DAC had needed to build bridges to the non-pacifist Labour left.

Building such bridges involved cooperation with reformists. With hindsight the Trotskyists may say “well, there was us”, but in those days no entrist Trotskyist group would have risked cooperating with anyone who had not first secured an alliance with Labour parliamentarians. Only when the latter were enlisted did the entrists



brave Transport House's ire. The Aldermaston march was no exception. It was endorsed by the entrists only after getting the support of VFS and *Tribune*.

The DAC was faced with a choice. It could insist in principled slogans and remain isolated or compromise for that particular demonstration, leaving the slogans and leaflets to be used at a simultaneous vigil at the Aldermaston gates while the march was on, and for use on subsequent demonstrations. The DAC unwillingly accepted the conditions, held the separate vigil, and held a nine-week camp-picket at the base through the summer, leaving leaflets and posters for vigil and picket but allowing the march to be partially emasculated. The SLL and *Socialist Review*, both of which only endorsed the march after this emasculation, opportunistically attacked the DAC for its "pacifist refusal to use a 'black the base' slogan". They might perhaps have been justified to criticise the DAC for agreeing to compromise, but they pretended – in terms reiterated by *Socialist Challenge* in its current pamphlet – that it was the DAC's "apolitical pacifism" that prevented it thinking in such terms. The RSL, like the DAC, had unwillingly accepted the compromise.

'The Workers' Bomb'

Naturally, given the context, the pamphlet is concerned with the fact that *Socialist Review* (later International Socialism and now the Socialist Workers Party), "made no difference between the imperialism of the USA" and that of the USSR, and takes this as the sole reason for that group having opposed Soviet possession of nuclear weapons. It does not – of course – see any need to elaborate this mentioning that *Socialist Review* points out that profit is extorted in the Soviet Union as well as in the west, that workers in the east stand in the same relation to party and managers that workers in the

west do to owners and managers, and that because of this *Socialist Review* considered the Soviet Union to be state capitalist. (Though *Socialist Review* held this in a somewhat half-baked way.) *Socialist Challenge* and various other groups, have a somewhat touching faith that despite the reactionary nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, state ownership and property ensures that in a deformed and degenerate way, the Soviet Union remains basically a workers' state. Though they would deride the idea that the workers in any sense own or control the state that owns and controls the industry.¹

However, in 1958 it was not just *Socialist Review* amongst the Trotskyist groups that opposed Soviet possession of nuclear weapons. I have mentioned Peter Fryer's pamphlet which the SLL continued to sell until 1960, even after they split and expelled Fryer. A faction of the SLL, it later emerged, opposed the Fryer position all along and its advocacy of the 'workers bomb' won majority support during the summer of 1960.

The RSL (which wound up in 1959) and its immediate heirs took the Fryer line at least until the winter of 1960/61. *Socialist Challenge's* ancestors – the NMG – left the SLL with Peter Fryer and joined *Socialist Review*, where they stayed until 1963. They made no hint – outside *Socialist Review* – that they supported the 'workers bomb' until that time. Indeed senior members of their groups were to be seen with others of *Socialist Review* singing satirical ditties about the absurdity that revolution could be achieved by wholesale destruction.

The only other Trotskyist paper then on open sale, *Socialist Current*, regarded the Fryer pamphlet as, if anything, too tentative in its opposition to Soviet nuclear weapons, though it followed the same line of reasoning. Indeed it stills holds the same position.

¹ This touching faith in the socialist nature of the Soviet Union is based on the fact that 45 years ago Trotsky argued that it was then the case. The fact has escaped them that he held it could not so remain for a whole generation and that, before his death, he also insisted in his Testament, first written in 1938 and revised and published in 1940, that it would not survive the end of the War "now beginning".

Labour Movement and Stasis

Confusion

The authors state: "CND never had a consistent strategy towards the Labour Movement" (p28) which, since there were a variety of strands in CND and a similar variety of strands within the labour movement, is hardly surprising. It is a somewhat bureaucratic conception to think such a uniform strategy was possible. The authors go on from there to confuse the labour movement with the Labour Party. When, prior to 1968, the ancestors of IMG (*Socialist Challenge*) were buried deep within the Labour Party and did not admit to existing, such a confusion was normal if hardly admirable. However, since IMG has existed for about fourteen years as an identifiable and independent socialist organisation, through many of which they have insisted rightly that it is impossible to achieve socialism through the Labour Party, it suggests IMG has no consistent strategy.

The fact is that different levels of CND aimed at differing levels of the labour movement:

The Executive – and this includes prominent non-Labour Party supporters such as Lort-Phillips – saw themselves as able to do a deal with the Labour left-centre. If they could amass significant support and be in a position to channel this into the Labour Party if they saw fit, they believed they would attract the Labour centre's support and put *Tribune* in power. They would have countered Gaitskell's claim that a unilateralist position would lose Labour votes.

VfS and the new left were oriented to the parliamentary Labour left and its trade union allies. Whereas the Executive saw itself as winning non-socialists to the Labour Party cause, VfS and the New

left saw CND as a recruiting ground, where they could convert people to their conception of socialism.

Beyond these, others varied from those who saw the campaign as transforming the Labour Party to those for whom the Labour Party is merely parasitic, whether on the trade unions, homeless and other economic struggles, the anti-imperialism, peace, anti-racist or other such movements, which together constitute the real labour movement.

Not only is it nonsensical to pretend consistency of strategy was possible, but equally so is the idea that CND was not itself part of the labour movement. There is a common intellectual sleight of hand whereby people who are quick to insist when it suits them that 'workers by brain' (white collar and intellectual workers) are as much workers as 'workers by hand', forget this fact when it comes to castigating others. Even if *Socialist Challenge* were taking the narrow definition and pretending that only manual workers constitute the labour movement they would still find, if they checked, that CND compared favourably to its own ranks in terms of working class membership as a percentage.

The authors view the fact that CND did not regard the T&GWU motion at the Labour conference in 1960 as an overwhelming victory as proof of disinterest in Labour. Had the pamphlet given the wording of the motion they would have had their explanation. Or even had they recalled the fact that Cousins in his speech proposing the motion was very careful to distinguish between the position in the T&GWU motion and the full unilateralist policy as expressed in another motion, for which he intended to cast his personal vote, as distinct from his union block vote.



1964

Romano Cagnoni (Report)

The T&GWU motion was unclear about NATO, talked of unilateral initiatives in a way which would have permitted Gaitskell to pay lip service to the motion without in fact doing anything, had he not insisted on getting it reversed. As no doubt a future Kinnock government will do with the present Labour policy. The fact that Cousins, who regretted that the motion was not more clearly unilateralist, was nevertheless able to reconcile his conscience to a cabinet post which *inter alia* made him responsible for Aldermaston (as successively Greenwood and Benn were subsequently to do), emphasises just how far short of CND policy the motion fell.

Betrayal

The pamphlet correctly describes vacillation by the Labour Party left, and disregard of the significance of the campaign and opportunist approaches to it. Moreover it correctly describes on page 35 how they drew back from running a unilateralist against Gaitskell and instead backed Wilson. But the authors fail totally to show that this was not merely through timidity. Given that neither the Labour left nor the CND leadership at the time minced words about their intentions, once wonders why. Take for instance this extract from an article by Ritchie Calder from the *New Statesman*:

"They cannot 'sack' CND as easily as they can a Labour Youth Group. Nor can anyone else. If the National executive of the CND resigned tomorrow, the movement would still go on. If we disbanded the headquarters staff and removed the strong hand of Peggy Duff, the groups would still function, but without the moderation of a politically responsible, constitutally minded, executive; [a moderation which provoked Direct Action and the impatience of the Committee of 100]. The supporters would 'take to the Maquis'. The greatest spontaneous, political movement in this country since the days of the

Spanish Civil War, with a headforce of decent concern about the biggest human and social issue of today, would break the dam. It shall not happen but if it did, it would carry with it the debris of the Labour Party."

Clearly the preservation of the Labour Party was of greater concern than the abolition of the Bomb. "Ils ne passeront pas" had taken on a new meaning and a new form: "it shall not happen . . ." Not aimed at the right, but at the left.

The campaign's rank and file was amply warned that it would be sold down the river, as soon as its leaders smelled the possibility of a Labour government. Forewarned, we should have been forearmed to survive the betrayal. The authors rightly show that this betrayal came but omit the fact that many active campaigners had warned that it would. For instance, see the SWF's *The Bomb, Direct Action and the State*.

The authors further omit to mention that CND and the Committee of 100 were still alive and active after the Labour parliamentarians had moved out; that CND was, despite the self-crippling 'Steps to Peace', still viable. 'Steps to Peace', which had in fact, if not explicitly, denied that unilateralism was a principle, was published in 1963. It was not in fact the desertion of the Labour parliamentarians – though that certainly happened in 1963/64 – that killed CND. The parliamentarians and their friends in the CND executive had never been particularly active as campaigners anyway. They had merely wanted to use the campaign and their loss did not matter. The worst decline was in 1965-67 which the authors do not mention, let alone explain, though they touch on the trouble obliquely when they say: "CND was to show itself less neutralist than neutered when in 1968 it took a position of neither approving nor disapproving of the massive demonstration of solidarity with the NLF of Vietnam . . ."

But we shall see that its account of this is far from the facts.

Transitional Demands

However, before turning to neutering it is worth considering another curious omission. We saw that the leaders of CND saw unilateralism as an impossible demand. It is curious therefore that none of the Trotskyist groups in the campaign saw it as a transitional demand. The concept of transitional demands is fundamental to Trotskyism and involves posing demands that at first blush appear 'reasonable' reforms but which cannot be satisfied within the context of existing society, because they involve changes which threaten the power of the establishment. Such demands are advanced as an introductory way of approaching workers, to whom the revolutionary implications are then explained.

Examining the qualifications of unilateralism to be so considered:-

1. No state has ever willingly abandoned its major weapon of coercion. It is reasonable to suppose that none ever will.
2. The knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons – now that it exists – is not going to be lost, so that making nuclear disarmament permanent involves ensuring that the state will not in the future – even under conditions of war and national emergency – be able to remake such weapons.
3. The Bomb symbolises and is the product of a centralised and bureaucratised form of capitalism, and in opposing this symbol it is soon found that it is at every level with other iniquities in society.

In other words, not only does unilateralism involve forcing the state to do something alien to its very nature, but it also entails limiting its powers of acting in secrecy and its freedom to manufacture arms. All this is done by a movement challenging the central social ethic of society at a point at which that ethic is in fact fundamental to the economy.

The economic requirements for a state to make the bomb demand an enormous level of centralisation, and that industry is so integrated into the state plan that the Official Secrets Act can be enforced on workers in hundreds of industries – whether making small war components or merely preparing materials for such components as well as on openly military factories. This is equally the case under Reagan-Thatcherite 'free enterprise as under openly dirigiste systems. In turn, this entails curtailment of freedoms – speech, knowledge and communication. Permanent disarmament necessitates that these aspects of modern society also be abolished.

Why is then that no Trotskyist group has appreciated that unilateral nuclear disarmament is precisely the sort of demand that Trotsky deemed transitional? Why can none appreciate that the slogan, advanced by some such groups, 'jobs not bombs' which presupposes that a country can disarm and still retain an almost unchanged capitalist society, is therefore nonsense? Not merely nonsense but it is liable to mislead workers into dangerously underestimating the difficulties of obtaining disarmament.

The authors rightly describe CND as a united front (p27). But they discuss a united front solely in terms of achieving reforms, with tactics suitable for that or for defending workers' conditions against intensified assault by particular sections of the capitalist class, terms inadequate to the implications of CND. The fact that, in calling unilateralism impossible, CND's leadership mean they did not seriously intend to attain it, does not excuse the Trotskyists. Either these similarly were cynically paying lip service to the slogan, or they lacked even the degree of understanding of the nature of the state shared by the executive and were less aware than the latter of the difficulties involved.

Under a Labour Government

Two events in 1962 presaged the parliamentary abandonment of CND. The first was the widespread dissemination within the

campaign of the catchphrase 'unilateralists are multilateralists who mean it' – a slogan which was initially a good, if meaningless, joke but which constantly used by large numbers and as a poster meant the users seriously intended to say something and all it could – in seriousness – mean was that the users were using 'unilateralism' as a mere slogan. They were saying that they were only really multilateralists wishing to appear sincere.

The second was the Cuba crisis and the failure of the campaign officially to do much and then underlining this failure with 'Steps' which, by stressing that its authors saw unilateralism as only suitable to this country, abandoned the only basis on which any effective demonstrations at the time of the crisis might have been launched. Most actions, incidentally, came from ad hoc groupings or extended Committees of 100. The publication of Steps to Peace was accompanied by a much-heralded attempt at a palace coup: the putschists almost immediately abandoned this and made peace with the leadership.

The gap between the official CND and unilateralist activity in the country was widened by the Spies for Peace issue. A group within the Committee of 100 published details of the Regional Seats of Government (RSGs). It was not earth-shattering – even the *Daily Mail* had previously reported that such places existed as bolt holes for top people. But the CND leadership chose to join the government in regarding the publications – by Spies for Peace, not by the *Mail* – as 'subversive'. *Sanity* was censored for mentioning it, the back page being removed from all copies sold.

The increasingly dogmatic constitutionalism of the leadership and the Steps to Peace policy took us back in effect, and in many cases overtly, to advocating summit conferences. Gone were the days of Alex Comfort's ribald slogan, "When we're all arse-upwards what's the use of meeting at the summit?". Gone were the days when CND officially insisted that no politician should be trusted with nuclear weapons, nor the power to decide in the secrecy of the conference chamber their retention.

It was not surprising therefore that when Labour was elected (indeed when it was likely to be elected) that CND was deserted by MPs and their immediate associates. Few of the Honourable Members had ever in fact done any work for the campaign but had merely used its platforms for their own self-aggrandisement and for recruiting canvassers for their Party. They had described as 'impertinent' requests by CND branches to pledge that when elected they actually would vote in line with their professed unilateralism. Needless to say, none ever did.¹

There was a lesson to be learnt when the punch came in 1964 with an alleged leftist elected leader of the Labour Party, and they had a real chance of winning the election, and returned to their vomit. Some had learnt it before and forgotten. Others had only seemed to learn it. The lesson however was clear. Whatever a Labour government might decide, the Labour Parliamentary Party and, a fortiori, a Labour government, cannot be controlled by the Party rank and file. Moreover, as had been demonstrated in the 1959 election it was clear that those MPs who most readily assumed that it was their natural right to grace the platforms whenever they appeared at a nuclear disarmament demonstration would forget to mention the Bomb at all through an election campaign. Some of those who had seen this in 1959 found reasons for thinking that 1964 would be different. Others had been too young to notice.

Nervertheless there was a reason for radicals to be hopeful. The experience of 1959, the hypocrisy of leadership, had caused the most active campaigners to turn to civil disobedience – if in a somewhat superficial manner – as a strategic idea, and it was from this that the Committee of 100 arose. It was reasonable to assume that a further similar experience would lead to a larger and more committed Committee of 100. Why was this hope unfulfilled?

¹ Parallel with the departure of the MPs, the various Trotskyist groups at this stage came to devote most of their energies to a rearguard action against expulsion from the Labour Party and to their own fratricidal internal struggles.

VSC – The Missing Factor in the Death of the First Wave and the Real Lesson to be Learnt

Illustration

Expectation that the experience of 1964 should have led to a more active movement was underlined by the fact that at the time the horrors of conventional war were being abundantly illustrated in Vietnam and that the commander of the American forces talked of "nuking" the North Vietnamese. Dangers of that war escalating yet further meant that even the most hidebound 'single issue' supporter of CND, who would have constantly opposed consideration of implications in the past, now agreed that the campaign had no alternative but to oppose this war.

Moreover the use of napalm, fragmentation bombs, defoliants etc., blurred the division CND had made between weapons of mass destruction and conventional war, so that CND, already unilaterally committed to the abolition not only of nuclear and biological weapons, had little reason to stop there.

The war gave additional reasons for wanting what CND had always wanted:

- * it was a reason for wanting to opt out of NATO which linked us with what most saw as an aggressor,
- * it was a reason for refusing to be bound by governmental rules of secrecy which forbade publication of British involvement,
- * it was a reason for delving into murky secrets – investigating military acts,
- * it was a reason for calling for mass activity to make opposition vocal,
- * it was a reason for refusing to trust inter-governmental negotiations, for insisting that the peace movement must intervene directly.

And in all this it added reasons for extending the basis of the campaign:

- * not merely napalm,
- * the early warning system, which CND had earlier considered as the trigger mechanism for nuclear launch, was now seen adapted as the radar detection system in Vietnam with oppressive effects,
- * the arms trade – a matter of concern to most campaigners but not officially of CND – was now manifest in a peculiarly bestial light and though this was on a sub-nuclear level the dangers of escalation were manifest.

There was then abundant reason for an extension and intensification of CND activity and scope for campaigning to get workers to refuse to make arms, not merely nuclear, and for demonstrating the evils of all military secrecy. Not only nuclear weapons were made in hole in the corner ways. All this would merely have dotted the i's and crossed the t's of what was already CND policy, that is, of the policy document passed by the 1960 CND conference.

Sound and Fury – Signifying Nothing

Instead, CND was quite deliberately split. The article in *The Week* announcing the formation of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) made it plain that its aim was to break up both CND and the Committee of 100 so as to build a new campaign from the right of the Committee and the left of the constitutionalist campaign. From its inception, VSC devoted most of its time and activity to denouncing CND as weak-kneed reformists and in claiming for itself a totally spurious revolutionism.

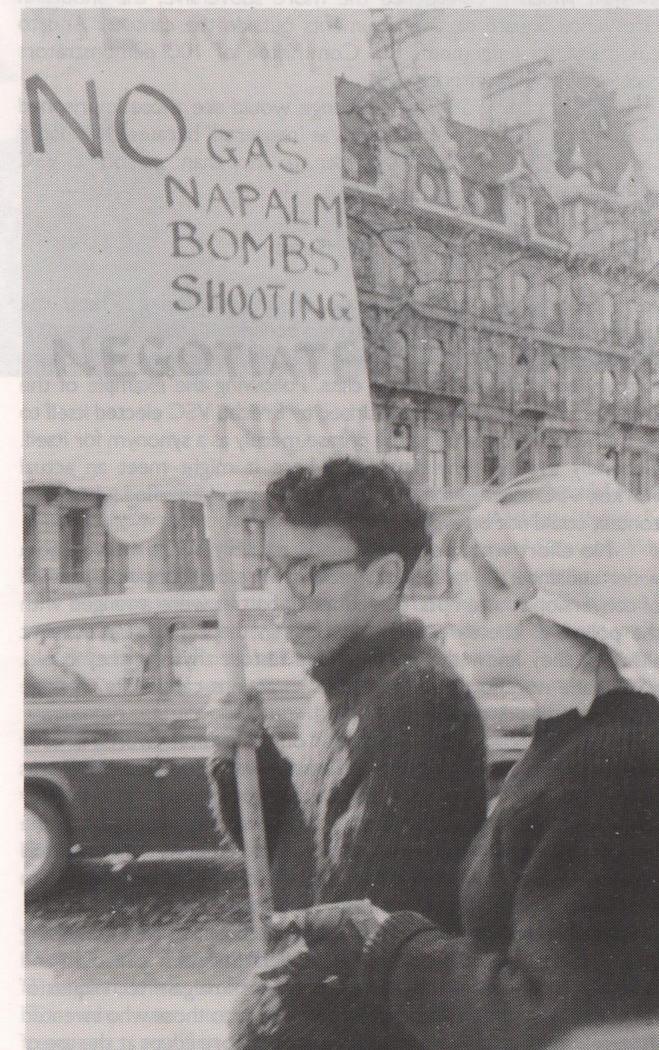
VSC was not prepared to call for opposition to NATO. It refused to work for deserting American servicemen. It refused even to leaflet American bases, let alone attempt to subvert the loyalty of British servicemen who were doing spells in Vietnam as 'advisers'

which was what the American troops were initially called, and it refused, almost to the end, to campaign at factories manufacturing weapons and napalm to be sent to Vietnam. All this, however, was done not merely by the Committee of 100 but by ordinary CND groups.

Refusing to act where it mattered and calling those who did so weak-kneed, VSC and the Nottingham Marxist Group, publishers of *The Week* who launched it, engaged in smear tactics reminiscent of those used by the Stalinists in the 1930s against the NMG's Trotskyist forebears. Anyone who asked awkward questions was branded by VSC as an agent of America just as the CP once talked of Trotsky-fascists.

Socialist Challenge – descendant of the NMG – which now calls CND neutered, fails to say wherein lay the revolutionary nature of VSC, and why it should not accept the castrati label itself, given its refusal to tackle the evils in its own country under the mask of solidarity with struggles on the other side of the world. What grounds do they have for claiming as simon-pure revolutionaries those who ducked the issue of NATO deriding as reformist those who did not.

VSC's revolutionism lay in its oft-repeated solidarity with the



London-Easter Peace March 1965 Romano Cagnoni (Report)

Vietnamese Stalinists. It did not matter to the NMG that the National Liberation Front (NLF) of Vietnam disclaimed, as a libel, any intention of building a socialist state or society in South Vietnam. It did not matter to the NMG that when in 1946 Ho Chi Minh had ruled the whole of Vietnam he had liquidated some 48,000 socialists and industrial militants, of whom some 18,000 – like *Socialist Challenge* and the NMG – were members of the Fourth International. Indeed, the Vietnamese Trotskyist organisation was the second largest party that body ever had. It did not matter to VSC that in 1953, just before the first war of Vietnamese independence ended, when Maung Maung Mi and a large movement of South Vietnamese socialists escaped to the North, they too were immediately liquidated. Nor did it matter to them that China was actually supplying the American forces in South Vietnam with concrete to be used for military purposes while the war was on, and that for the sake of Stalinist unity, North Vietnam was hushing this up. To mention any of these was to be labelled an American agent. For the neutering mentioned by our authors 'neither approve nor disapprove' merely meant anything less than unconditional support for the Stalinists.

The demonstrations VSC launched were notable for sound and fury, but not for constructive action. Held invariably outside a closed American embassy, in a deserted West End square, there was no attempt to reach American servicemen. On one occasion, when VSC had by the lowest estimates 24,000 in the square, the Committee of 100 had just 24 people round the corner outside an American servicemen's canteen distributing literature, chiefly a pamphlet written by deserters from the American Green Berets. On both demonstrations there were 8 arrests. 8 out of 24 of the Committee of 100, 8 out of the 24,000 (or 72,000) of the VSC. The state clearly showed which it considered the more subversive, the shouts in Grosvenor Square or the arguments outside the canteen. And to emphasise its judgement, the Committee of 100 demonstrators received heavier sentences.

But of course *Socialist Challenge* would see those imprisoned Committee of 100 demonstrators as 'neutered' because they dared think they had something better to do than go on a VSC demonstration.

VSC and the Labour Movement

Socialist Challenge's earlier strictures on CND for failing to reach the labour movement and for not having a consistent strategy towards it are, in the context of VSC, amusing. VSC did indeed have a consistent strategy towards the working class. Following the example of the East German communists as satirised by Brecht, VSC elected itself to be the working class, using the phrase merely as a synonym for itself. Generally avoiding any situation where it might meet an actual worker, VSC accused the worker of being bourgeoisified when such contact could not be avoided.

No effort whatsoever was made to carry VSC's message to a wider audience. All its demonstrations were confrontations devoid of conversionist attempts. Staged mock battles were arranged with the police, as these received publicity in the capitalist press, but although they knew the media would distort anything they could, VSC made no effort to ensure that its actions carried its message despite media editorialising.

Either those who watched on television were already convinced of the horrors of the Vietnam war or, as far as VSC was concerned, they were beneath notice. Not merely did they rely solely on the bourgeois media to get across their message, but the fact that they spurned all who had reservations about their uncritical attitude to the NLF meant that they dissociated themselves from those who were trying to publicise the evils of the war.

Right through they behaved like 'thirties Stalinists and in so doing they opened the doors to a revival of 'left' Stalinism – Maoism and Fidelism. These were later to use the same amalgam techniques of slander against VSC's founders and being heirs to those who invented the amalgam, the Stalinists naturally proved more adept at the use of the technique. Even when Maoism had moved to an alliance with

Nixon, as Stalin moved from third period to popular front and thence to the Stalin-Hitler Pact, so was the Maoist progress.

VSC preceded from the belief of its founders that they were a Leninist elite, a vanguard party. At a time when Mao, Castro and others had claimed that the working class in the industrialised west had been irredeemably corrupted by affluence and had deserted the 'progressive' cause. The orthodoxy current was to stand Marx on his head: the worker was no longer the revolutionary force and was indeed not to be trusted.

Lenin had, of course, said that workers cannot progress beyond the limits of trade union radicalism without the lead of middle class intellectuals and that therefore a self-appointed elite party had to be there to lead. It was all too easy from this and similar exegesis to justify many of the condescending attitudes towards the working class manifested. But whereas Lenin had, despite his insistence on the leadership role of the intelligentsia, insisted that the working class was the sole possible vehicle of mass revolution, these latterday Leninists had abandoned that belief and rejected any role for workers.

Even in Lenin, the fact that the workers would not naturally engage in revolutionary acts meant they had to be led into so doing, though whether his epigoni are right to interpret that as manipulated or tricked as some do is another matter. This has been interpreted to suggest that the state should be provoked into becoming more authoritarian so as to enlighten its subjects and make workers grow more militant. Trotsky had in fact denounced such tactics when used by the Stalinists in Germany during the 1930s. Though the NMG's orientation was not to the working class, its tactics echoed the third period Stalinists and VSC was used as a vehicle to trick liberals into militant action.

NB For the Record

There is certainly a distinction between Stalinist and Trotskyist actions, though at times it may appear to be hard to discern. The Stalinist operates as the agency of a new ruling elite. A conscious agent insofar as the wishes of the governments of Russia, China, Cuba or wherever, are equated with the best interests of the working class.

The Stalinist elite is prepared to use the discontents of exploited people in the dominions of their rivals, in the same way that at the beginning of the century the Kaiser's agents stirred up discontent in Kenya and British ones in Tanganyika, or earlier Tsarist agents in Baluchistan and British ones in the Emirate of Bokkhara, and now as American ones would do – if they could – in Soviet satellites, but the interests of the exploited are not the prime concern.

Trotsky's heirs betray but for different reasons. They stem from a self-induced blindness. Faced with the conflict between the fact that Trotsky said, on the one hand, that Stalinism could never again promote socialism outside the Soviet Union and, on the other, that he insisted that the Soviet Union was not a class society, they were forced at the end of the war to choose to abandon one or other of their founder's dicta. However, both *Revolution Betrayed* and his *Testament* contain the qualification that this is a working theory and lay down a test to check it, which has not been satisfied.

The choice was in the light of the emergence of new Stalinist states in Eastern Europe. They chose to jettison the cutting edge of Trotsky's critique of Stalin. Since when they have been so anxious to grow and to be seen to take part in the successful 'revolutionary struggles' of the day, that they have forgotten their movement's traditions and past corpus of theory and criticism.

This has, in particular, led the international grouping of which *Socialist Challenge* is a member, to sacrifice its own members in Nicaragua when the new Sandinista government, formed in alliance with the bourgeoisie, so desired. There had been protests – not only from Trotskyists, but from the left of the Stalinist movement itself – against the alliance with the bourgeois parties. These led to fierce suppression, socialists were tortured, imprisoned and killed. Rather than object the international, the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International, expelled its members, the victims of such treatment. And it calls others neutered!

The Lessons



1960

Ramano Cagnoni (Report)

Recap and Consider

There are indeed lessons to be learnt from the first wave, but *Socialist Challenge* is hardly a suitable teacher.

Any state which makes nuclear weapons needs to have at the disposal of the government enormous capital reserves. However, since no state which has ever built such arms has ever bothered to consult the people, or even the supposedly sovereign legislatures first, it also needs to have the power to dispose of such capital reserves without consultation, secretly, in disregard of law.

Coupled with this is the secrecy in guarding the productive plant, the factories, the whole settlements of highly skilled scientists round the factories who have to be isolated and kept apart. Creamed off from other industries, they are under the authority of the Official Secrets Act and its equivalents and must not communicate with their former colleagues. This alone tells us much about the nuclear-armed state.

The bureaucracy necessary for such secrecy, which in turn generates and necessitates even greater secrecy, has to be capable – not only in terms of power but also in lack of ethical objections – of controlling a machinery designed to be able to destroy the world. That also tells us much about a nuclear-state.

The Bomb is symbolic of grandiose size, of callous impersonality, of lack of democratic participation in the most important decisions

made by government. For how has Britain made such a bomb? How, in particular was the decision to make it taken by Attlee without the prior knowledge of parliament, or even the Cabinet? Shinwell, War Minister at the time, has frequently testified that he never knew.

It is not sufficient to say that Britain made the Bomb because it was capitalist, apart from the fact that many who say that are under the delusion that Russia and China are not capitalist. It is clear that without a level of secrecy and bureaucracy which was not found in nineteenth century capitalism the Bomb could not have been made.

It is no accident that the bulk of the social welfare legislation of the Attlee government was in fact merely a perpetuation of the emergency measures decreed by the wartime coalition, initially designed not with the welfare of the deprived in mind, but to make Britain a more efficient military machine. That aim – a sort of militarisation of society – can be seen in other Labour legislation.

Old fashioned capitalism, based on laissez-faire principles, was by the time of the war in collapse, brought to destruction by the foolishness of its own workings. This notwithstanding the Reagan-Thatcher current attempt to resurrect it in an asset-stripping form. The very asset stripping boom that gave rise to the rightist resurgence was first financed by the compensation on nationalised industries.

Since capitalists would only invest where they could make a quick profit, since the rate of profit on old established industries falls rapidly and since many such older industries are essential to the profitability of newer capitalist enterprises, laissez-faire capitalism could only be made to pay by a partial curtailment of 'laissez-faire'.

There had been a rise of planned capitalist countries before the war in the form of the New Deal, in the form of Liberal-cum-Social Democrat reforms by popular front governments, in the form of fascist militarisation of the economy, and in the Soviet Union the bureaucracy had first usurped power and then created a collectivist capitalism. The wartime coalition brought Britain into line.

During Attlee's rule, the Morrisonian right of the Labour Party spurned all ideas for making nationalised industries answerable to parliament. Even more they rejected all suggestions of workers control, all ideas that there were other possible models for common ownership, for instance cooperatives. Everything had to be centralised in industries not answerable to any popular scrutiny. Enormous sums in compensation were paid out on industries that had been all but bankrupt and had not paid dividends in years. The Boards of nationalised industries consisted mainly of directors of the former capitalist enterprises, padded out with superannuated generals and trade union bureaucrats.

The Labour left at that time resisted this bitterly. However after a couple of years there was a general shift. The Labour right, now led by Gaitskell, moved away from centralisation not, be it sure, to real ideas of common ownership but to make compromises with the proponents of laissez-faire who had been rejuvenated by the compensation bonanza. Ironically the Labour left now rush to defend what it sees as the victories of 1945, the very bureaucratic centralisation it had earlier opposed and advocates an extension of nationalisation.

The Schizoid Left

Throughout the period of the first wave, the Labour Party and particularly its left wing, was at one and the same time the political vehicle of the planned economy wing of capitalism and the party to which the mass of the victims of that efficient capitalism adhered. Not merely was that contradiction to be seen between leaders and led, but it cut across both categories, making individuals politically schizoid.

Whereas the left was in economic terms that part of the party most dedicated to reforms that would give capitalism a yet longer life – indeed arguably the only part that was at all so dedicated – it was also the party-wing whose members displayed more humanitarian concern with civil liberties at home and abroad, working conditions, housing conditions, and so on. Its members were active in resisting the results of policies that they themselves had promoted.

Part of this schizophrenia stemmed from the fact that the bulk of the capitalist class was as usual foolish enough to believe its own

propaganda. It was ungrateful to Labour for saving it from the consequences of its own folly and it convinced itself that Labour was socialist and wished to abolish 'rewards for industry'. Gaitskell's accommodation to laissez-faire was an adaptation to this.

It was this politically schizoid left that had attempted to harness the radicalism of youth with the 'impossible demand' of unilateralism, and it affected the whole persona of the CND leadership.

Having seen the nature of the evil and what has to be avoided, we can set against it what we must avoid. Not only does parliamentarianism substitute an elite for the actions of the masses and must therefore lead to policies which produce an economy suitable for making the Bomb, but the same is found when the similar substitution, an elite party in place of workers self-liberation, is performed.

Only a highly centralised and planned capitalist society can make nuclear weapons – albeit one that may call itself socialist. The demand for unilateral disarmament, which involves making such changes as will prevent the state remaking the Bomb, even when first posed and without full consideration of the implications, carries with it a latent distrust of politicians and of the secrecy of government. That is, a disbelief in the sincerity, ability or understanding of those who claim to be ready to get rid of the Bomb by the normal channels or multilateral negotiation.

That instinctive distrust of international council chambers is also an instinctive distrust of the equivalent norms of conventional domestic politics.

That instinct is sound. The movement which will abolish the Bomb will be one that shuns elitism, whether reformist or Leninist, and insists on rank and file decisions, keeping power in the hands of the rank and file and relying on mass activity, placing emphasis on direct action rather than on any other field of activity – whether the direct action of civil disobedience or the mass action of industrial workers.

CND was, and indeed regrettably still is, in the first wave, too small to have done or immediately do all this. But its development, whether conscious or merely instinctive, shows that constantly its more radical members were pursuing this strategy and saw the essential truth of the need for mass activity and rank file decision making.

The Bomb was made in secrecy, the production of decisions made behind closed doors and the campaign radicals shows a healthy distrust of leaders who wished to conduct affairs in the same way – whether the self-appointed leaders of the campaign or the no less self-appointed 'revolutionary' leaderships that were on offer.

The adoption of civil disobedience was the first step to saying 'We want to bypass government, we, ordinary people, intend to start the job ourselves, in a way that will persuade other people to join us – not follow us'.

That is the first necessity for a revolutionary policy and *Socialist Challenge's* inability to appreciate it tells us more about the faults of the IMG than it does about the faults of the first wave of CND.

Anarchism

Basic Analysis

The 'free' world is not free; the 'communist' world is not communist. We reject both. One is inequitable and becoming totalitarian. The other is already totalitarian and growing more inequitable.

Their lust for ever greater growth and profits and their current power struggle imperil the survival of the world.

They ravage the land and recklessly pour out harmful waste products, poisoning land, water and air and they destroy whole species of wildlife.

They keep the world divided and constantly on the brink of atomic war in order to divert the attention of their subjects from

their own condition, this though they know that it only needs one failure of machines or men to make the destruction of the human race inevitable.

Both systems rest on, and encourage for their own purposes, such evil divisions within humanity as nationalism, racism and sexism.

We charge that both systems engender servitude. 'Freedom' based on economic slavery can never be truly free as force, or deception, is necessary to maintain the power of the rich. 'Communism' which has room for political slavery cannot be a society of equals and cooperation.

A glance at the power blocs in which the two systems are embodied will confirm that those limits on freedom, as on communism, are no mere theoretical abstractions but living realities.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be eliminated. Government itself, as well as its underlying institutions, perpetuates war, oppression, corruption and misery.

Aim

While all genuine resistance to the power blocs is welcome and praiseworthy, ultimately the evils of the twin existing systems will only be overcome by mass action against both. By resistance, we mean that which is not merely designed to substitute one system of exploitation for the other and which does not rest on the assumption that 'if only the people who exploit our part of the world would go and negotiate with those exploit the other part, all would be well'.

Anarchists advocate a worldwide society of equals organising themselves through communities and councils based on cooperation and free agreement from the bottom – federalism – instead of domination and coercion from the top – centralism. Regimentation of people must be replaced by regulation of things. Anarchism is free communism.

Methods

An anarchist system can only be attained when the vast majority of the population consciously reject both the existing systems and the various mixture of the two that characterise third world states, and actively set about changing society.

The anarchist movement has, it is true, always owed much to committed and heroic individualistic comrades who, by their search for a cooperative lifestyle, have done much to promote our cause. But the movement as a whole has always held that such lifestyle politics, however ascetic the style embraced, is nevertheless a luxury for the few, unattainable for the many.

Anarchism, as a movement, does not therefore see in such individualist heroism the sole – or even the main – road to freedom.

It is impossible to provide a precise blueprint of how the majority, when it decides to build a free communistic society, will act. Obviously if the mass of the people are going to decide to change society and do it freely, the methods they use cannot be laid down in advance by a small minority.

However history provides examples of three forms of mass struggle used by people attempting their own liberation. Each were used in different parts of the world in different conditions which, at their best, were based on true rank and file democracy and achieved significant results, making no compromises with the state or old forms of privilege. Thus they were not merely the road to power for new ruling elites, unlike most other forms of action: syndicalism, council communism and mass civil disobedience.

Anarchist Arguments

As the name implies, this set of pamphlets is intended to argue:

- * the case for anarchism for the wider radical movement – holding, for instance, that aims such as unilateralism cannot be attained in isolation.
- * the case for anarchist methods of struggle for the wider movement, as the only methods likely to attain desirable ends.
- * and, within the limits of wishing to confine discussion to fruitful divisions on the strategy of revolution, to give a new space for debate amongst anarchists.

Though *Anarchist Arguments* is biased towards the pacifist wing of anarchism, this would not exclude publishing a case written by an anti-pacifist who had really considered the implications of revolutionary violence in a nuclear age.

Syndicalism, Council Communism and Civil Disobedience: three methods of mass action

Of these three methods the last – civil disobedience – is at the moment fairly widely known, though only in a propagandist and not in a mass action form. The Greenham Common and other peace camps have once again made civil disobedience part of the normal currency of political life, building on the methods used by the followers of Ghandi and Bhave in India, Luther King and Chavez in the USA, Ghandi and Luthuli in South Africa and Dolci in Sicily, and at best developed by those followers beyond the limit which the leaders had fixed.

The first means – syndicalism, or revolutionary industrial unionism – is less well known, though at times it has been a comparable mass movement. Indeed in the west it has been a far larger movement than any civil disobedient one. Syndicalism starts from the belief that the power of the exploiters starts in industry and that no social change is possible that does not in the last instance challenge that power there.

For the syndicalist the fundamentals of revolution lie in the social general strike – a stay-in strike or factory occupation not just in one factory nor just because an industry is closing down and laying off workers, but in all factories, particularly the successful ones.

In order to achieve this, syndicalists put their emphasis on creating councils of all workers in a particular industry, business or office irrespective of trade or other divisions which are united in industrial federations, although in the interest of real face-to-face democracy, broken down into manageable units. All committees representing more workers than can actually meet, being federations, are made up of mandated delegates from the constituent sections. All such delegates are subject to instant recall by their electors.

Whether through formal industrial unions like the American Industrial Workers of the World, the pre-1914 French Confédération Générale du Travail, the Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo or through informal committees, such as the shop steward movement when it first arose in Britain, syndicalists have built the most militant industrial movements that have been seen. Instead of paying vast sums to bureaucrats, these movements have made it a rule that no-one shall earn from the union more than the average of the workers (s)he represents.

Council communism shares syndicalist emphasis on workers' councils as the fundamentals both of the socialist struggle against class society and of the post-revolutionary reorganisation of society. But whereas syndicalism puts emphasis on industry-by-industry federal organisation, council communists have greater faith in geographical links.

Council communists also put greater trust in spontaneity. Syndicalists believe in building revolutionary industrial unions as the workers' republic in embryo, whilst council communists – who share syndicalist distrust of political parties and agree that these will always degenerate either into reformism or into vanguardist elitism – make the same critique of industrial unionism.

Having defined three major traditions, one should emphasise that within each there are differences and many groups would hold a borderline between syndicalism and council communism, syndicalism and civil disobedience, civil disobedience and council communism. Others feel that they are being artificially typecast to be so labelled, having perhaps historical origins that brought them to views resembling council communism more recently than the great flowering of the latter in Germany in the early 1920s.

Historically there is no clear division. The early Ghandian civil disobedience movement adopted the general strike aim from syndicalism and many syndicalist methods for smaller strikes. For instance the syndicalist method whereby for instance busmen in dispute, instead of refusing to run the buses, would take them out but refuse to take the fares and so win the support of the public, or the alternative method of taking them out and then without warning a the height of the rush hour, stop in the middle of the traffic, leave the buses and use whatever other transport was going to get home, was adopted as an integral part of civil disobedience tactics.

Similarly in the 1920s there was no clear distinction between syndicalist-influenced and council communist-influenced workers councils. And again in Spain – in the midst of the fight against Franco – in rural areas libertarian communes were set up by syndicalists not so much as the result of national industrial struggle but from purely local actions.

Solidarnosc in Poland managed to combine all three methods though undoubtedly some rightists tried to use it as a purely nationalist, or pro-western, movement.

All anarchists assume that that the state will use violence to maintain the power of the privileged classes, consequently historically the majority of anarchists have been non-pacifist and insistent on insurrection.

There has been however since the middle of the last century a tradition associated with Thoreau and Tolstoi of radical pacifists who saw anarchism, admittedly in the lifestyle form, as the logical extension of pacifism.

They argue that violence underlies all power and that therefore insurrection and all other violent anti-state acts merely strengthens the evils it is ostensibly designed to counter.

Distinct from this anarcho-pacifist tradition, there has grown up within this century a tradition associated with the French syndicalist Monatte, and which has grown considerably since Hiroshima, a class revolutionary anarchism that is pacifist on purely pragmatic grounds that a modern state cannot be overthrown by violence used by a rank and file controlled libertarian movement.

It opposes violence without any illusions that the state will not use violence, but because violence on the part of the revolution makes it more difficult to subvert the agents of the state and because popular violence is likely to be ineffective against a state armed with nuclear weapons.