

# TRADE UNIONS ON THE MOVE

HENRY PURCELL

VIRTUALLY blanketed by all the newspapers except the *Daily Worker*, a profound change took place this summer in the Trade Union movement. For the first time since 1945 the mass of the industrial workers are refusing slavishly to follow the foreign policy of the Government. Conference after conference has gone on record with resolutions condemning the rearmament of Germany and Japan, demanding trade and friendship with the Soviet Union, China and the New Democracies, calling for the great powers to find a way of settlement through negotiations rather than war.

The grip of the machine on both the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress is still so strong that for the time being at least, the leaders are able to ignore this growing revolt. But leaders cannot go on indefinitely refusing to hear the voice of the rank and file. They tried to do so last year when the battle-line was drawn over the wage freeze. They relied then on the right wing majority of the Mineworkers' Executive to hold the growing revolt in the coalfields. But the miners forced their leaders to take a ballot and the miners' block vote was swung over against the freeze. In the following months, the various Union conferences piled up the anti-wage freeze votes until by the Trades Union Congress in September the General Council faced certain defeat. At the Labour Party Conference in October, the leaders did not even try to fight. They contented themselves with behind-the-scenes manœuvres to secure a suitably watered down resolution.

This year as the battle develops over foreign policy, the struggle becomes more bitter and less clear-cut, but the results are no less striking. At the Scottish Trades Union Congress where the General Council has a safe right-wing majority, everything was scheduled for a rubber-stamp vote backing Chancellor Gaitskell and endorsing rearmament and the cold war. But the delegates, who unlike those at the British T.U.C. vote individually and not with block votes, soundly defeated the leaders on all issues. They condemned United States interference in British affairs and called for trade and friendship with the countries of the East.

The Electrical Trades Union and the Foundry Workers who for years have been in the forefront of the fight for a progressive policy, came out firmly for a new deal in foreign affairs. The equally em-

phatic opposition to present policy by the National Union of Railwaymen and the Amalgamated Engineering Union must have produced headaches in both Downing Street and Washington.

The Electrical Trades Union condemned the rearming of Germany and Japan, called for the withdrawal of American troops from Britain, for laws to ban war propaganda and for a united trade union international and supported a Five Power Peace Pact.

The National Union of Foundry Workers voted against re-militarisation of Germany and Japan, against the rearmament, against diplomatic relations with Franco Spain; and for China to be in the United Nations, British troops to be withdrawn from Korea (and also foreign troops from all countries), Atlantic Pact to be included in agenda for four-Power talks, peace and trade with U.S.S.R. and People's Democracies.

The A.E.U. condemned German rearmament, called for a six power peace pact (to include India as well as the five other great powers) and unanimously backed the demand of the Executive for British Government action to send the American troops back home. The N.U.R. condemned German and Japanese rearmament and called on the British Government to convene a conference including People's China in order to call a halt to the arms race and wanted 'an early withdrawal of all foreign forces from the soil of Korea'. At the Mineworkers' conference there was a 'gentlemen's agreement' to avoid open controversy on foreign affairs—a far cry from the previous attitude of uncritical support for the Government. Sir Luke Fawcett (of the T.U.C. General Council) spoke at the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives' Conference of 'labour and resources flung into the bottomless pit of military expenditure'. Even at the General and Municipal Workers' Conference, where an anti-Communist ban operates and the rule book fetters expression of rank and file opinion, there was considerable minority support for a resolution calling on the British Government to adopt 'a more independent approach to foreign affairs'. The Transport and General Workers (also subject to an anti-Communist ban) repudiated Mr. Arthur Deakin's attempt to dismiss foreign policy resolutions under an executive declaration of loyalty to the Government. The subsequent discussions failed to register any forward decisions but the rumblings of revolt were evidence to all. Draughtsmen, firemen, and many other sections have added their voices to the growing opposition.

When the T.U.C. meets in September and subsequently the Labour Party Conference assembles, the Union delegates will have the

duty of assessing their attitude on the various foreign policy questions in the light of their conference decisions. There will be endless wire-pulling both in the delegations and at the standing orders committees to prevent clear cut resolutions being put to the Conferences. Both the Labour Party Executive and the T.U.C. General Council are past masters in the art of producing 'facing both ways' resolutions which serve to conceal the real feelings of the rank and file. But nothing can hide the uneasiness in the minds of millions of loyal Labour Party members and trade unionists, nor can the truth be concealed that the right wing now depends for its support on the votes of unions which have themselves twisted democracy by purges.

It is in this growing movement among the trade unionists of Britain that the Bevan-Wilson resignations and their subsequent pamphlet *One Way Only*\* have their main significance. Indeed *One Way Only* cannot be understood except when viewed against this background of insistent pressure from below. That pressure is mounting higher. The fight to wrest the control of the machine from reactionary leaders, tied up with a Labour government (which itself is tied up with the reactionaries of the U.S.A.), must go forward. The widespread willingness to sign the Five Power Petition is another index of how the workers feel. The fight to defeat the warmongers and to win peace goes forward—and must go forward, for the whole future depends upon it.

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\* One passage blows sky high the whole propaganda facade with which the Government conceals its subservience to America. '*One Way Only*' says in effect that on the issue of German rearmament the die-hard U.S. Republicans forced Truman to toe the line and then the British Government, which was violently opposed to the policy, was forced to acquiesce for fear of embarrassing Truman.

The Transport House legend that Truman's America is a 'progressive social democracy' disappears into thin air. Now we know with the authority of men who saw events from the inside that the American reactionaries dictate the policies of a British Labour Government. If it is true about German Rearmament, it must be true about the Foster Dulles Japanese Treaty, about the manoeuvres to build a Turkish-Greek-Yugoslav war pact against the New Democracies, about the crippling expenditure on arms.

# NEW CHINA AS I SAW IT

ARTHUR CLEGG

How strong is People's China?

War-crazed Republicans and war-crazed Democrats in the United States and their spokesmen in other countries present her as weak and divided, exhausted by the effort of sending volunteers to Korea, threatened with collapse by the American embargo. The *New York Times* on June 27 editorially found People's China 'pinched by the United States embargo' and on July 1 wrote:

Consumer's goods—never plentiful—are disappearing. Taxes on farmers have sharply increased. The programme of rural rehabilitation and industrialisation has had to be postponed. The longer the war (in Korea) continues, the worse the internal situation will become.

Robert Guillain, special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* and *Le Monde*, who echoes only the opinions of American militarists, two days later from Tokyo claimed to have discovered that the Korean war:

. . . is certainly very costly for China. It is creating for the new régime growing resistance and increasing discontent at home.

In various forms the theme of China's weakness has been peddled ever since the People's Republic was founded. It was an essential part of the MacArthur propaganda for a great war against China. It is one of the propaganda weapons of those who would tear up the truce in Korea to seek once more for the 'easy victory' which has hitherto eluded them. Its falsity can be measured by the heavy American losses in Korea. And, using that yardstick, some more responsible journals and political figures are now beginning to discard the picture of China on the point of collapse. But it took over half a million Syngman Rhee, American and British casualties before *The Times* for example discovered as one of the powerful arguments for a truce in Korea that 'the Chinese have shown their power to guard their frontiers'.

I was in China for seven weeks, from the end of April to the middle of June. The American war in Korea was then ten months old or more. The Chinese people's volunteers had been in Korea for about six months. The American boycott on trade with China was five months old when we arrived and the British Government had been intensifying its policy of partial embargo for at