

COMMUNIST COMMENT

6^d

NO.17 AUG.15th. 1970

RECENT RIOTS IN THE NORTH

The recent period of riots in Belfast, beginning with the New Lodge Road, and culminating in apparently co-ordinated rioting in all the main Catholic areas except the Short Strand, has had the effect of focussing attention very sharply on essentials. If these riots were in fact anti-imperialist struggles, then it was clearly the obligation of every anti-imperialist to support them, encourage them, and do everything possible to extend them and make them more effective. (By "support" we do not mean phrasemongering declarations in support of them which cost nothing to the supporter and contribute nothing to the cause of the supported). The ICO did not support these riots, in the sense that it did not involve itself physically in furthering them (and no other sense is worth considering). In failing to support these struggles the ICO is not distinguished from many other organisations claiming to be socialist. In stating clearly that it did not support such struggles the ICO is distinguished from all other socialist bodies.

In the current (August 8th) issue of the trotskyist 'Workers Republic', for example, the ICO is described as pro-imperialist mainly because it does not give phrasemongering "support" to these struggles, as the 'Workers Republic' and other trotskyist bodies do. But neither the W.R., nor any other trotskyist body, has participated physically in these riots. They are prepared to phrasemonger, but they are not prepared to put their precious persons where their mouths are. Criticism of our position as pro-imperialist from such quarters we will treat with the contempt which it deserves.

If "socialist revolutionaries" declare that the British Army in the North has no democratic function, if they declare that military conflict with the army of the kind which is going on is progressive, and if after all this they do not take part in the conflicts, what can their failure to participate in these conflicts be due to but

cowardice?

However, we do not think that the conflict between their theory and practice is in most cases due to cowardice. It is because they have some sense of the political realities of the situation that they keep away from physical involvement in these conflicts. They merely "support" them in words to keep up their 'revolutionary' image. In short, they are the victims of opportunism. But what opportunism involves here is inciting working class Catholics to take on the Army, and then giving them no leadership, and no support beyond phrases. A very "revolutionary" carry-on indeed!

When the ICO was of the opinion that there was a progressive element in the military conflict in Belfast - in the defence of the Falls in August 1969 - it did not issue incitements to resistance from afar. It participated physically in the struggle in a very definite manner, and in the critical days made a very substantial contribution to this defence. The trotskyists moralised from a distance.

When the question of taking down the barricades arose, the ICO opposed taking them down in the circumstances, holding that sufficient democratic guarantees had not been given. But the trotskyists in the area, who were in alliance with the Republicans, supported the move to take them down.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

Why would Stormont go

The possibility of Westminster abolishing Stormont has arisen in recent days if it cannot carry out the reforms there.

One would think that this should make it crystal clear that the British imperialists are determined to carry out the reforms and that it is in their interests to do so.

Yet every left-wing organisation; trotskyist, Revisionist, "Maoist"; except the ICO, still maintain that the very opposite is the case. They maintain that British policy in the north at the moment is promoting sectarianism.

Recently two authoritative organs of British imperialism, 'The London Times' and the 'Economist' have spelt out the policies of the British government in relation to the possibility of abolishing Stormont.

"...(as soon as) there was evidence that the Northern Ireland government - under whatever leadership - either could not or would not get the reform programme through in full, the British cabinet would have no alternative but reluctantly to suspend the N.I. parliament and run the province directly from Westminster... Reforms already complete, like the disarming of the RUC would be in danger of reversal: reforms not yet carried out, like the setting up of a central housing authority to stop pro-protestant chicanery by local councils, would be in danger of

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THE BOMBAY ST. SCHEME T

A lot of publicity has been given in the past few weeks to the rebuilding of Bombay Street, in Belfast, destroyed last August, and now partly completed. There are a lot of misconceptions as to the origin and leadership of the scheme. The following article gives a full account of how the scheme came into being and of the nature of its leadership.

The Scheme was instigated and is being carried out by the "Gaelgeoiri Beal Feirste" (the Belfast Irish Speakers), some members of the Cluain Ard being prominent in this group, which is mainly middle-class, in fact overwhelmingly so. Their first scheme was the Shaws Road Scheme, where five Irish-speaking families in the beginning obtained mortgages, and in some cases, bridging loans. They formed a company called De Brún and Mac Seáin, hired the workers, drew the plans and made the necessary arrangements with local authorities. They also did a lot of work themselves and completed these five houses very successfully. At present they are building another 3 houses and will eventually have about 20 houses here, and they hope this idea will grow.

Their aim is to build up an Irish speaking community in Belfast. They believe it is necessary to live in a community in order to have a balanced social life. Up to this point one of their weaknesses was their scattered existence meaning that their social life was more contrived than natural.

With the destruction of so many houses in August 1969, the nucleus of the Shaws Road scheme decided to do something practical to help. They saw the need to rehouse the people and determined to do so with or without state help. They were also motivated by their belief of not bowing down to the state in such matters as language, housing, education etc.

They organised the ex-residents of Bombay St., which had been completely destroyed. These agreed to move back into the street and to help in the building of the houses. The Bombay St. Housing Association was formed, with two members of the Gaelgeoiri Beal Feirste co-opted onto the committee at the request of the residents to give professional advice. They will eventually build 31 houses and hope to encourage others to do the same, including Protestants. The basic concept was to encourage people to help themselves and not to rely on the powers that be; it was first voiced by the Irish speakers who are in effect the driving force behind this scheme.

became clear that to wait on the Corporation Scheme of two-bedroom Houses would be folly. They started by taking the land and building on it without legal permission. The Irish speakers provided the technical and factual expertise and managed the finances. The money came from donations and public collections with CUNAIMH, (Cumann Luith-Cleas Gael, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Na hEireann and Connradh Na Gaelige), donating £15,000 and Bernadette Devlin's American Fund giving £4,000. Other private individuals gave generously.

The fact that they had built without legal permission produced some rumbling from the more backward members of the Corporation (for example "Bulldozer" Lewis and Mrs Paisley). The Corporation brought the company De Brún and Mac Seáin, (which supervised purchasing materials, finance etc.), to court on a charge of building without permission, but in the meantime the Association submitted their plans, which were much superior to the Corporation's, and cheaper. De Brún and Mac Seáin were fined £3 and the building continued. Eventually the Corporation accepted the Association's plans, with people like "Bulldozer" Lewis doing a neat about-face, saying that it was saving the Corporation money.

At present the association is trying to get aid from the government re-development fund and hope to continue their work into other areas including Protestant areas. One spokesman stated their aim was to teach people to rely on themselves, to improve their housing conditions.

The Republicans claim that they are the inspiration and driving force behind this scheme. This is not true. Individuals from all sorts of organisations gave help, including Republican workers who helped collect money and worked a day or two on the foundations (there was only a very small amount of voluntary labour - it was more practical to hire the workers in view of the urgency of the situation). But the fact remains that the Gaelgeoiri have been, and are, in complete control of the house building. Their 'inspiration' dates back many years to the "Irish" community at Shaws Road.

NOTE: The ICO view of this Scheme for a revivalist Irish speaking housing estate, which it regards as a petty-bourgeois Utopian scheme, has been explained previously in ICO publications. A full account of the Shaws Road scheme and an analysis of the politics of Gaelgeoiri Beal Feirste can be found in the Irish language pamphlet TUAISCEART NA HEAIRANN AGUS AN GHEADHILG, published by the ICO, price 1/6d.

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TOO MANY UNIONS ? ^{3.}

All the big employers in the 26 Cos. have a common plan for the trade unions. They want to "re-shape", "re-structure", "amalgamate" and "rationalise" them. To us workers, the bosses' words are not important but their strategy is. In short the bosses want to do away with the smaller unions, particularly craft unions; they want to impose a bigger, more bureaucratic Trade Union structure on us.

The bosses can foresee the benefits. And so can the government, which after all is nothing more than the mouthpiece of the capitalist class. The government has already introduced the Industrial Relations Act and soon we will have the Trade Union Act, probably in a modified form. These legal measures are designed to speed up the bosses' "rationalisation" programme.

As we said, "rationalisation" of the trade unions means simply re-shaping them to better serve the interests of the employers; and not alone with the idea of successfully applying an Incomes Policy. Equally important is the plan to involve the unions in effecting manpower policy changes which would serve the needs of employers now operating in monopoly-capitalist conditions. These employers now need workers who are "both occupationally and geographically mobile". That's the language they use and in order to implement this new manpower policy they are not going to "supplant the market mechanism but to help it to work more efficiently", as the NIEC put it. That's also the language of trade unionists like Ruaidhri Roberts and Donald Nevin who sit on the NIEC. They express themselves in sophisticated language to conceal their treachery from the workers. This bosses' manpower policy is doomed, however, if many small craft unions, complete with rigid demarcation lines etc., remain. If these unions can be got to amalgamate with larger general unions, demarcation lines and manning rules can easily be blurred and finally obliterated. And this will enable the employers to exploit more efficiently a largely semi-skilled labour force. Cheaper labour, in other words.

INCOMES POLICY

The employers, and particularly their mouthpiece, the State, are continually scheming to keep the price of labour down. Everything has been tried, from outlawing unions to promoting division and petty jealousies amongst unionised sections of workers. When all these failed, there was always the old reliable - the pool of unemployed. But the threat of unemployment no longer strikes the fear of God into the hearts of Irish workers. They have learned to live with it. And so the bosses have to figure

out another scheme to obstruct and prevent any action workers might take in pursuance of higher wages. Their latest scheme is the Incomes Policy. But to apply it really successfully, they must stifle the democratic wishes and decisions of thousands of rank-and-file trade unionists. Hence the bosses dislike of small unions and their preference for bigger, more bureaucratic trade union structures.

TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP

How do the trade Union "leaders" react to the bosses schemes for the unions? They not alone accept them but they actually promote them. They sit on the NIEC for example. Last year they went with a bosses' delegation to Sweden and in their joint report they were delighted with the way Swedish industrial unionism was benefitting Swedish capitalism. A recent report in the Irish Press says: "The ITGWU would seem to be fulfilling some of the functions of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions by making important progress towards unifying and rationalising the trade union movement...it is thought that mergers are on the way."

These union leaders say that too many small unions are causing too many strikes which in turn damage the trade union and working class movement. This is a deliberate lie. Too many unions do not cause strikes. The following comparison between Britain and the 26 Cos. proves this.

COUNTRY	No. of Unions
Britain.....	580 (1965 figure).
26 Cos.....	97 (1966 figure).

COUNTRY	No. of Unions with below 100 members
Britain.....	113
26 Cos.....	15

COUNTRY	Strike days lost per 1,000 employees, in the years 1959 - 1968
Britain.....	262 days
26 Cos.....	828 days

It can be seen that although Britain has more unions, big and small, than

the 26 Cos., the number of strike days for the period 1959 - 1968 has been three times less than for the 26 Cos.

What conclusions should we workers draw from this issue of "too many unions"? First of all we should expose the lie that too many unions cause too many strikes, or "bad industrial relations" as the Union bosses sometimes put it. The existence of a lot of unions, particularly small craft unions, serves the workers' interests at present because they make it very difficult for the employers to push through their Manpower and Incomes policies. In fact we should be saying that there aren't half enough unions. Unfortunately these bosses' schemes are going to be pushed through sooner or later. The most we can hope for is a delaying action, until the bosses and their union friends succeed in rationalising the Trade Union movement. And succeed they will, for there is as yet no strong communist movement in the Irish trade unions. Isn't it about time we workers started building such a movement?

DENIS DENNEHY

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THE 12th. ROUND AND THE GAEDHEALTACHT

Prior to the settlement of 12th round wage claims throughout the country the average wage for unskilled male factory workers was £13.5s. throughout the country - £13.15s. in Dublin - for a 40 hour week. In the north-west Gaedhealtacht however, this is not the case. Average wages for male workers, both skilled and semi-skilled, is £12.0.0 to £12.10.0 for a 42½ hour week; if the difference in hours and money is added together, and compared with the rates quoted above, it will be seen that it amounts to at least £1.10.0. Workers in the north-west were therefore being paid a depressed wage, even before the 12th round. Employers and their spokesmen justify this with the claim that most workers in the area have other means of subsistence, ie land, cattle, turf etc., or that the presence of industry in the area is saving the language. A minority, it is true, are small property owners, but the vast majority are proletarians who have spent their lives in heavy industry in Scotland and England because of lack of work at home. The claim that newly established industry is helping to save the language is a doubtful one, but even if it were shown to have substance, it is no justification for starvation wages.

Settlements in the 12th round averaged £4.0.0. in the rest of the country for male workers. In many instances, settlements have yet to be made in the north-west, but the amount to be awarded in a cause of worry to many thoughtful workers. The following table illustrates the trend of increases in some fields and shows that wages for unskilled workers is now £18.0.0 to £20.0.0d.

Pre-12th Round.	12th Round Settlement.	TOTAL	FIRM
£14.14.0.....	£4.0.0.....	£18.14.0....	British United Shoe Machine Company Ltd.
£16. 8.0.....	£3.12.0.....	£20.0.0.....	Metal Requisites Ltd.
£14. 0.0.....	£4.0.0.....	£18.0.0.....	Charles Chambers Ltd.
£14. 2.11.....	£3.15.0.....	£17.17.11....	Charles Bell (I) Ltd.

NOTE: All firms mentioned already work a 40 hour week and have settled the 12th round some months ago.

A worker in the Gaedhealtacht, could find himself with a maximum of £16 or less if the agreement was concluded for £3.10s. or less and this would mean that instead of catching up on the rest of the country he would be falling behind. If a 40 hour week is not introduced immediately the differential would be greater still, and the workers in this area would be in an intolerable position. In a period of a rapidly rising cost of living, many people would be once again faced with the old alternative of emigration.

Unions should be firm when negotiating these wage agreements. Gaedhealtacht workers must not be allowed to fall behind the rest of the country and any suggestion of cheap labour should be squashed. Capitalists who own factories in the Gaedhealtacht area are forced to pay competitive rates in their enterprises in other places and no distinction should be tolerated here. They should in fact be obliged to pay higher rates than normal, when we consider the large grants they have been awarded, and the years of tax-free profit ahead of them, to name but two benefits.

SEÁN Ó CEARNAIGH

THE IRISH COMMUNIST ORGANISATION HAS JUST PUBLISHED IT'S FIRST POLICY STATEMENT ON:

CONNOLLY AND PARTITION

IT IS AVAILABLE FROM ICO SELLERS, PRICE SIXPENCE OR BY POST FROM:

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ANTI-PARTITIONISM

The "Republican" demand for the withdrawal of the British Army so that the Irish can sort out their own affairs is taken by the Protestant community in the North to be merely a tactic in the Catholic nationalist attempt to get control over them. And that is essentially what it is. This demand has been resisted by the Protestant nationality for a century. The prospect of coming under a Catholic bourgeois government has no more appeal to them today than it had in 1886. So long as the conflict of Catholics with the British army results from the "anti-Partitionist" movement of the Catholic bourgeoisie (ie, their attempt to gain control of the Protestant community,) it can only have the effect of aggravating the national conflict of Protestant and Catholic.

The Protestant community prefers to remain within the U.K. than to come under a southern Catholic government. They are perfectly entitled to that preference. To deny them that right in the name of anti-imperialism, as has been done by all Catholic bodies from Fianna Fail, through the Republicans, to the "revolutionary socialists", is sheer political trickery.

The Catholic community in the North is in a state of total political chaos at present. This community has always functioned as part of the total Catholic nationality. It never developed a political leadership of its own. Its politicians have always been attached to Southern political movements: mainly Fianna Fail and the Republicans. The Southern bourgeoisie have always used the northern Catholics as a weapon against the northern State. They have used them to disrupt unionist politics, as part of their attempt to gain control over the Protestants.

The Northern Catholics were made reckless use of as front line forces against Unionism. But they were never backed up by those who were using them as a front line.

The Catholic bourgeoisie were not prepared to fight a national war against the Protestants. But they were prepared to use the Northern Catholics to harrass the Protestants. The Northern Catholics therefore bore the whole brunt of the Protestant response to the Catholic bourgeois attempt to gain control of them. The ICO will take part in continuing this cynical political exploitation of Catholic workers in the North by the forces of the southern bourgeoisie, whether F.F., Republican or "revolutionary socialist".

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WHY THE COLD WAR IS OVER

August 6th was the 25th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. A few years ago this was an occasion for a lot of ban-the-bomb, anti-nuclear war, and peace demonstrations. This year, however, they were noticeable by their absence. If it was the mere existence of nuclear weapons that was the cause of nuclear war then such demonstrations should be increasing, and not diminishing.

An article in the supplement to the Sunday Observer, August 2nd 1970, gave details of the increase of nuclear and other weapons by the imperialist countries. In 1960 there were 86 H-bomb missiles between Russia and the U.S. Today the Russians have at least 1,430 and the U.S. 2,382. By 1975 the U.S. will have 11,000 and the Russians roughly the same. "In sheer explosive power, these armaments could amount to something like the equivalent of 15 tons of TNT for every inhabitant of the globe."

"Twenty tons of a nerve gas called Tabun would be sufficient to kill the world population. (the Russians are said to have 50,000 tons of it)." Biological agents would be even more economical. Just half a kilogram, suitably distributed, of an agent called botulinum Toxin (Type A) would suffice to kill everyone."

The author makes it clear however that the cold war is over and therefore the prospect of a nuclear war is receding at the present time. "Today" he says "the nuclear anxieties of the 1950s seem like part of a bad dream. They belong to the time of Stalin's last madness, the war in Korea, and the Western fears of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe."

The author therefore does not consider the bomb or nuclear war as things in themselves, but as part of the struggle between imperialism and communism (Stalin's madness).

ORIGIN OF COLD WAR

The Cold War was launched by the US to halt the rapid growth of influence of the international communist movement after the second world war. The Hiroshima bombing was the beginning of the cold war and had nothing to do with the second world war as such.

The communist movement was growing at this time because of the victory over Fascism achieved by the Soviet Union, led by Stalin, (his second last madness, perhaps)

and also the leading role played by the communist parties in the anti-Fascist struggles throughout the world.

The Cold War continued until the early 'sixties, and was no longer necessary once revisionism had established itself firmly in the Soviet Union.

REVISIONISM AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The modern revisionists' attitude to nuclear weapons and nuclear war is described in the pamphlet "In Defence of Stalin", reprinted by the ICO. (Page 12-13). "The revisionists led by Khrushchev, have used the existence of nuclear weapons in order to contract out of Marxism. In addition, in a basic retreat from Lenin's analysis of imperialism, the revisionists depart from the position that imperialism is the source of war in the modern world. Instead they assert the fundamental revisionist view that the source of war is the conflict between imperialism and socialism. This is reduced by the Soviet revisionists to the direct conflict between the Soviet Union and British and American imperialism. Here the basic Soviet revisionist strategy reveals itself. If imperialism is not the source of war in the modern world, if war is not inherent in the very nature of imperialism, if from their viewpoint the question is reduced to the relations between the Soviet Union and one or other of the leading imperialisms, then the 'answer' to this question and to the problem of imperialist pressure is relatively simple from the revisionist standpoint. It is a deal between the Soviet revisionist leadership and the imperialists...."

This contribution from the Soviet revisionist side towards agreement with the imperialists, a pre-condition to any deal, is presented in deceptive form as a contribution to peace. Such a policy is clearly in fundamental opposition to that of Lenin and Stalin, whose perspective was the very different one of assisting resistance to imperialism with the revolutionary aim of its ultimate overthrow, by using the contradictions of imperialism to organise all the class forces hostile to it."

The victory of revisionism gave a new lease of life to imperialism. It left the international working class leaderless and it opened up new markets for imperialism. There will be "peace" while imperialism takes advantage of these gains.

JACK LANE

RECENT RIOTS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

But no sooner were they down than agitation against the army began. Propaganda was put out, the logical implication of which was conflict with the Army. Why then were the barricades taken down? No reasonable account of the strategy of removing the barricades as a method of developing the military struggle against the army has ever been given. How could there be a reasonable account of their "strategies" by political bankrupts.

The reason why the ICO has not supported (either in the sense of participating in or of phrasemongering about without participating in) conflicts with the Army, is because of the central position of the Catholic/Protestant contradiction in these conflicts. We have explained our view of this contradiction in detail over the past year. It has been disagreed with, but it has never been refuted.

Both Catholics and Protestants have been in conflict with the Army during the past year. But they have never been united against the Army. When Catholics attacked the Army they claimed it represented the Protestants, and vice versa. The struggle has never gone beyond the Catholic/Protestant contradiction. The ICO will not take part in this barren Protestant/Catholic national conflict. It has been trying to build a united communist movement of Protestant and Catholic workers. To this end it publishes strictly objective analyses of the situation from the working class viewpoint. Naturally, this offends nationalists on both sides. And it has brought out the Catholic nationalist essence of many "revolutionary socialist" positions, especially of the trotskysts.

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SOCIALISM "COMES IN FROM THE COLD"

In the Irish Press, August 10th, T.P. O'Mahony wrote: It would be no exaggeration to say that the discussions of the Summer School of the Social Study Conference at Droichead Nua last week gave further evidence that socialism in Ireland is slowly 'coming in from the cold' and is beginning to be regarded as a respectable pursuit."

Admittedly the speakers arguing in favour of socialism at the school were in the main the professional socialists and radicals of the Mike Farrell and John Feeney variety, and no clear idea of socialism emerged. Nevertheless the significance of the event cannot be denied.

Who could disagree with the Irish Press editorial of August 8th last: "It is not an insignificant happening in an Irish context when a Jesuit, speaking at an event which is under patronage of the Bishop, can say that between Christianity and Marxism dialogue is possible" ?

*

A change in official Church and State attitudes towards socialism, as well as other viewpoints not necessarily political but heretofore equally outlawed, has been apparent for some time.

A feature of 26 Co. society, since the 1930's in particular, has been the predominance of narrow-minded nationalism and conservative thinking of a rabid anti-communist and anti-progressive kind. This has been mainly religious in form, specifically Catholic. As was stated in the article on the proposed Constitutional changes in our last issue: "Fianna Fail, the party that championed the protectionist

cause of the rural and urban small property owners, cynically used religion to control the thinking of the mass of the people; to ensure an unchallenged dominance to the nationalist capitalist outlook and facilitate the conservative social and political rule necessary if a weak capitalist system was to have any chance of developing."

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The change of attitude towards socialism, and liberal thinking generally, came after the abandonment of Fianna Fail's policy of protectionism and militant nationalism. The attempt to establish an independent capitalist economy in the 26 Cos. failed miserably. The pursuit of the economic policies of Sinn Feinism gave way to an almost total dependence on foreign investments as a means of developing the economy. Closer economic, and political, unity with Britain and the rest of the capitalist world was henceforth sought.

In this situation the decline of narrow nationalism and ultra-conservatism is inevitable, as is the corresponding growth of all the many attitudes, political, social and philosophical, common to most other capitalist countries in Europe.

Not only is this development being tolerated by the ruling class here; it is being welcomed, though there are of course dissenting voices. The Irish Press was the vehicle of much of the conservative thinking promoted by the ruling class in the past. But the line has been changing steadily in recent years. Now it declares: "Anything that broadens the spectrum of political ideas and thinking in this country is to be welcomed." (August 8th Editorial)

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One can only marvel at the ruling class's ability to turn what is for it a necessity into a virtue. North and south of the border the changes from the old methods of rule to the new continue. The politicians and journalists whose job it is to prepare the public mind for these changes, as well as to bring them in, never have explained why the old methods and attitudes were necessary in the first place. And outside "Irish Communist Organisation" literature no satisfactory explanation exists.

M. J. MURRAY

STORMONT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE).

in danger of burial. No British government could stand by and watch this happen... The shellbacks of the Unionist Party persist in believing that they have a choice between a modestly reforming Chichester-Clarke government and a stand-still administration under Mr. Craig or Mr. West. They have not.

The choice is between a reforming Chichester-Clarke government and no government of their own at all." (From the Editorial of the London Sunday Times, 9th August, 1970.)

Would the British government go to all this trouble if it was not interested in reforms, or only in "paper" reforms, as the Young socialists have described them ?

No imperialist government brings its army into the streets, disarms a police force, or threatens to abolish a parliament unless it serves their interests in a very definite way.

Anybody can see that real reforms have been carried out and are being carried out, but of course there are none so blind as those who will not see.

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