
STRIKE BULLETIN No 5

F A S C I S M A member of the Ulster Workers' Council said on the radio today that they were not very interested in what the Executive did: they would deal with the dictator (Rees), there was no point in dealing with his puppets in the Executive. But the "dictator" is himself a puppet, controlled by political ghosts and goblins in his own mind. He can't see what is all around him because his mind is taken up with echoes of other times and other places, with false comparisons and with fixed ideas. He imagines that he is involved in a last ditch stand against fascism: that he will do what Hindenburg failed to do in 1932. The "fascism" he is intent on smashing is the general strike of a people, provoked with his own political bungling.

How does it happen that an otherwise sane man can suffer from such delusions: and how does it happen that a man with such delusions can be given so much power in the very sphere in which he is deluded?

What we see today is the lunatic ideology of the Peoples' Democracy in control of a British Department of State. Michael Farrell used to write long moody articles to prove that the industrial working class of Ulster was inherently fascist in tendency, and would have to be smashed. Farrell is now a political nonentity: but his delusions have flourished. The entire British press now sounds

like the "Free Citizen".

*

REMEMBER EDEN Chamberlain failed to take a stand against
fascism at Munich. But how magnificently
Anthony Eden took a stand against it at Suez! And now we have
another man with a ghost fighting a people in the name of anti-
fascism.

*

THE STRIKERS Meanwhile how are the "fascists" behaving?
The wise men of the Executive and the Northern
Ireland Office reckoned that the strike would collapse when its
participants began to realise that it was depriving them of
customary comforts. (Rabbles are not capable of purposeful
endurance of hardship.) And they reckoned that the farmers would
turn against it when their profits began to suffer. They have
been wrong on both counts.

There is every indication that the workers are cheerfully
prepared to tolerate a much reduced standard of living in order to
maintain the strike. The UWC has ordered the closing of pubs to
prevent the frittering away of money, and the recurrence of
incidents in which women were pulling their men out of pubs. This
is a very sober strike indeed. Some fascists!

The farmers show increasing support for the strike as it continues,
and many seem prepared to put up with serious loss of stock if
necessary, and to hold out on a subsistence-farming basis, rather
than see the strike beaten by the colonial administrator and his
rump Parliament, (because that is what they have made themselves].

The marginal element of intimidation is a diminishing factor.

But in the monastic seclusion of Stormont our Don Quixote tilts at
his fascist windmills, and the Assembly engages in a ritual that
has no connection with the outside world. It is a situation with-
out precedent in the history of British politics.

*

A POLITICAL SCANDAL While a small element of realism has
begun to creep into the British press
during the past day or two, it is still failing miserably in its
job. The British public is being systematically misinformed about
the facts of the strike and misled about its politics. Central
political facts, which must be known to every reporter in Belfast,

are not being reported. The appointment of Stanley Orme to the Northern Ireland Office should have been made into a political scandal. He was well known to be an active anti-Partitionist over many years. (An equivalent appointment by Heath would have been Enoch Powell or John Biggs Davison.)

*

THE BIRTH OF A TRAGEDY As soon as Orme was appointed, a clique of his anti-Partitionist cronies (Betty Sinclair etc.) became his boon companions. This clique occupied eminent positions in the official trade union leadership which they had systematically used to present a completely false picture of politics here to the British trade union and socialist movement. The Communist Party of Northern Ireland (now CP of Ireland) to which they belong was Unionist in the 1940s. It changed to anti-Partitionism in the fifties, but these members of it continued to retain leading trade union positions among workers who were strongly Unionist in politics. British trade unionists and socialists took them at face value. They took it as a matter of course that the politics of these trade union leaders reflected the politics of the rank-and-file. But trade unions and politics were, in fact., rigidly separated in Belfast. Trade unionism kept together despite sharp political difference by means of this rigid separation of the two.

The Sinclair, Barr, Graham clique explained the persistent Unionist voting of their trade union rank-and-file to British sympathisers, (and finally, it would seem, to themselves), with talk of 'Tory-fascist manipulation of religious differences. This view was systematically worked into the Labour Party during the sixties. Orme became an active missionary in the cause. Rees and many others accepted it passively.

Wilson, returned unexpectedly to power, was preoccupied with balancing the factions of his party and, treating the Northern Ireland Office as being no more liable to create havoc because of Ministerial bungling than any of the other Departments of State, he sends Rees and Orme here. Neither of them had the political ability the situation required. Both had their heads full of false preconceptions, and couldn't see the wood for the few trees they could identify,

Believing Northern Ireland to be a colony to be freed, Orme began to behave like a colonial administrator, and Rees followed suit. Due to their provocative mishandling, combined with the more understandable bungling of the Executive, the strike was provoked. And that is how Rees and Orme came to be fighting their battles

against an imaginary fascism, and incidentally threatening to wreck power-sharing and force the province into civil war.

*

WHAT CONCLUSION ?

We do not think that there are any resources in the Executive or in the Assembly capable of retrieving the situation. (David Bleakley of the Northern Ireland labour Party, whose proposals would have averted the crisis, is isolated in Stormont.) Unless the British working class is able to do something to induce the Government to change its lunatic policy, a period of complete chaos cannot be avoided.

The Ulster Workers' Council increasingly stands out as the only responsible factor in the situation. The government seems to be itching for a show-down. The UWC is avoiding a show-down, and is gaining in power and credibility every day. If a show-down is forced by the Government, it will be the Government that will go down in disgrace, and not the UWC.

*

GERRY FITT

Gerry Fitt must now be viewed as a serious and thoughtful statesman. Nobody must be reminded of his statement only two years ago that the Ulster Plantation of the 17th century (Harold Wilson please take note) had resulted today in "*a million monsters*". He is now apparently to be given the use of the British Army to fight his 17th century war against the Plantation.