

***THE VINDICATION OF  
BRIGADISTA AND UNION MAN  
JACK JAMES LARKIN JONES:  
IN REFUTATION OF THE  
BRITISH INTELLIGENCE CAMPAIGN  
OF CHARACTER ASSASSINATION***

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## *Introduction*

*Jack Jones died on 21 April 2009, and straightaway the smear which is detailed and refuted in the series of articles reprinted here was cast. The very next morning the smear was headlined in the Daily Telegraph.*

*None of us who knew and worked with Jack Jones or, like myself, just followed his lead in the Workers' Control agitation of the 1970s, was at all surprised by any of it.*

*In the days when the political and economic interests of the British working class were really represented by an actual Labour and Trade Union Movement at the height of its power and confidence, Harold Wilson for the Labour Party and Jack Jones for the Unions moved to establish the organised working class as the determining force in British industry.*

*Together they set up the Bullock Committee of Inquiry into Industrial Democracy which after several tumultuous years produced a report*

*which if it had been implemented would have given working class representatives control of the boardrooms of private industry.*

*Implementation of those measures of Workers' Control was sabotaged by the Communist Party of Great Britain and its allies and stooges in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.*

*The failure to implement those measures and take legislative account of working class power, to realise that power in the daily routines of the machinery of the British state, was followed by the erosion, the rolling back and the eventual destruction of that power.*

*The working class power which was the dominant factor in British politics in the 1960s and 1970s is gone now and utterly forgotten.*

*And the memory of the men who were prepared then, at its height, to take that power into the board rooms, to the brink of industrial sovereignty, has been smeared and defamed.*

*The Left, which was led at the time of Bullock by the Communist Party (but that has since over-reached and destroyed itself, so The Left is now led by others), is in respect of all its essential operations a function of the Liberalism of the British state.*

*As a function of the Liberalism of the British state it sabotaged the Bullock proposals.*

*As a function of the Liberalism of the British state it drew the organised working class into doomed utopian adventures that rendered it disorganised and powerless, incapable of challenging for control of industry.*

*As a function of the Liberalism of the British state it successfully blackguarded the memory of Harold Wilson and Jack Jones in all the spheres of its influence.*

*The smears of the defamation campaigns have been carried into those areas where the British state's Left-Wing could not reach by its security apparatus. Both Wilson and Jones were claimed by Russian defectors owned by the state's security apparatus to have been KGB informers.*

*The campaign against Wilson has subsided. The campaign against Jack Jones can be expected to continue for as long as his name is remembered in connection with the greatest single threat ever mounted against capitalist control of the British economy. Just so long will their agents try to see to it*

*that his name is associated with the lie of treachery.*

*Jack Jones inherited the living legacy of Ernie Bevin's period as leader of the British Labour and Trade Union Movement.*

*His experience as a soldier with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War gave him a sufficient breadth of understanding to ignore The Left's lying portrayal of Bevin as a "class traitor" and build on the institutions that Bevin had created.*

*By the 1960s Jones' handling of Bevin's legacy had resulted in a balance of power situation in industry. Managements then could only manage with the goodwill, on the suffrance of, the workforce.*

*In the Seventies Jones took advantage of the economic crisis that followed from the impact of that balance of power on industrial productivity to bring workers' control to the bargaining table.*

*That is the deep and ineradicable sin which has earned him the undying hatred of the British state's security apparatus, while the Left has reduced to mere sentiment the memory of a giant of Labour, the substance of whose work as a "revolutionary by consent" – to quote Jack's own description of Bevin – the Left itself so destructively sabotaged.*

*This book is part of an attempt to recover the valuable legacy of Jack Jones from their lying propaganda.*

**Joe Keenan**

*Irish Political Review, July 2010***JACK JONES VINDICATED—PART ONE**

Jack Jones, founding President of the International Brigade Memorial Trust and General Secretary of Britain's largest union—the Transport and General Workers' Union—from 1969 to 1978, died last year, on 21 April 2009. The very next morning, the *Daily Telegraph* report of his death carried the headline "*Former KGB colonel says he paid late union leader Jack Jones £200 for information*". That this was no isolated slander was to be made painfully clear when Jack's union, now called UNITE, held a Jack Jones Memorial Celebration in London's

Royal Festival Hall on 5 October.

This was the very day that the British intelligence agency M15 also chose to launch its own official "*history*", authored by Cambridge Professor Christopher Andrew and entitled *The Defence of the Realm—The Authorised History of M15*. While the UNITE celebration of his life was still under way, media "*Breaking News*" headlined M15's "*exposure*" of Jack. That week's onslaught of character assassination reached a crescendo on 8 October with the *Daily Mail* lurid headline: "*JACK THE TRAITOR: Special investigation reveals how Union boss sold secrets to the KGB for 45 years*". See the dossier reproduced in the free downloads area [see note one] of the Athol Books website for a catalogue of such "*press reports*".

In 1976 I edited a publication for Athol Books entitled *The American Trial of Big Jim Larkin, April 1920*. It was patently obvious to me that what was now being staged was a British intelligence Show Trial of Jack James Larkin Jones, 2009. A saying used by Marx sprang to mind: "*History repeats itself; the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.*" Because of the hurt and distress caused to both family and friends of Jack by this

M15 smear campaign, it was tempting, at first, to place this Show Trial in the category of tragedy. I have, however, one or two other Larkin-related '*trials*' that are more appropriate for such a classification. Furthermore, because both the character and politics of Jack Jones stand out in such total refutation of M15's lies about him—and, in particular, those of the prosecution's "*star witness*"—Jack's posthumous Show Trial can be shown to fall more appropriately into the category of farce.

The purpose of this series of articles is to move beyond the press reports to what is actually said by Andrew in the book itself. I have indeed read that 1,000-page tome from cover-to-cover, while also noting the fact that, in order to receive the "*Queen's shilling*", Professor Andrew had been required to become a member of—and swear an oath of loyalty to—M15 itself. And it is quite obvious that M15's agenda is as much about the establishment and consolidation of a particular viewpoint in respect of both British domestic politics and British history, as it is about thwarting the operations of any foreign power. The purpose of M15's campaign of character assassination against



Jack Jones is an attempt to destroy the reputation of post-war Britain's most outstanding trade union leader—and the one who had come closest to putting the working class at the helm of British society, until his work was sabotaged by a mindless British left. Such a “*British Road to Socialism*” achievement would, of course, have been anathema to M15. Hence the attempt to rubbish Jack's place in British history, and to try and ensure that his near-success is never repeated.

How does one become a Cambridge Professor of History? The failure or inability to cross-check “*intelligence reports*” with actual historical facts does not, obviously, serve as a disqualification. I am in no position to make a definitive judgement on whether Professor Andrew is a fool or a knave. All I know is that all too much of his “*history*” is at variance with historical fact. And not just in respect of Jack Jones. M15 has a particular need to present the history of Irish Republicanism as being in cahoots with the Soviet KGB. Such is Andrew's narrative of the escape of George Blake who, in 1961, had been convicted of being a KGB agent within M15's sister intelligence agency, M16:

*“The greatest espionage-related embarrassment of this period was Blake's escape from Wormwood Scrubs after serving only 5 years of his 42 year sentence. The escape had been made possible by three former prisoners who had befriended him in jail: the Irish republican Seán Bourke and the peace protesters Michael Randle and Pat Pottle. On 22 October 1966 Blake knocked a loosened iron bar*

*out of his cell window, slid down the roof outside and dropped to the ground, then climbed over the outer wall with a nylon rope-ladder thrown to him by Bourke. Blake was later driven to East Berlin, where he was joined by Bourke before continuing to Moscow. Once in Moscow, Blake and Bourke rapidly fell out. Blake writes in his memoirs that ‘arrangements were made for Bourke to return to Ireland’. He does not mention, and may not have known, that on the instructions of the head of KGB foreign intelligence Bourke was given before his departure a drug designed to cause brain damage and thus limit his potential usefulness if he fell into the hands of British intelligence. Bourke's premature death in his early 40s probably owed as much to KGB drugs as to his own heavy drinking.” (pp. 537-8 and 950)*

I know for a fact that both Andrew's opening and closing remarks about Bourke are patently untrue. Seán Bourke was never an Irish Republican prisoner; he had been a petty criminal. His role in Blake's escape was a human response to a fellow-prisoner's predicament at the prospect of spending the rest of his life in jail. Soviet Communism never held any attractions for Bourke, and still less so after his brief experience of it. He did, however, become politicised as a democratic socialist a good decade after Andrew had declared him to be terminally brain damaged by the KGB. Off the drink for at least the duration of the 1977 General Election, the Seán Bourke I encountered on the campaign trail in Limerick was one possessed of a sharp intellect, as he functioned as a press

officer for the Independent Socialist candidate Jim Kemmy. I observed how Bourke alternated between belting away on the typewriter and operating the lead car in a band-led cavalcade of canvassers through St. Mary's Park (the most deprived urban housing estate I'd ever entered, and suffering today from horrific criminal gang warfare). Through the car megaphone came the resounding voice of Bourke intoning, with impeccable diction: "Vote No. 1 Jim Kemmy, and help put Limerick on the map!" But this was no quasi-IRA jamboree. Kemmy's political programme not only opposed the wars waged by both the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA; it also even more pointedly opposed the territorial claim on Northern Ireland that had been restated in the Supreme Court by the Cosgrave Republic's so-called "Government of the talents"—Conor Cruise O'Brien and Garret FitzGerald. Kemmy's Limerick Socialist Organisation had in fact joined with the *British & Irish Communist Organisation* in order to establish the *Workers' Association for the Democratic Settlement of the National Conflict in Ireland*. So much for Professor Andrew's caricature of Seán Bourke as a brain-dead IRA ex-prisoner! Bourke did indeed die under circumstances of drink-related self-neglect. But that was 5 years later, and 16 years after Professor Andrew maintains that his brain had been knocked out of action by the KGB. Indeed, right up to the year of his death, Bourke contributed powerfully written childhood memoirs for the *Old Limerick Journal*, edited by Kemmy on behalf of the *Limerick Historical Society*. Jim Kemmy finally won a seat in the Dáil in the June 1981 General Election. Sadly, however, Seán Bourke died on 26 January 1982—the very same day

that Kemmy made history when his one vote against a Budget to tax children's shoes brought about the fall of Garret FitzGerald's first Government.

As for Jack Jones, the first MI5 smear by Andrew claims to expose...

*"the existence of a wartime (Soviet) agent network in Britain codenamed the "X Group", which was active by, if not before, 1940... There was speculation that BOB, another member of the X Group, was the future trade union leader Jack Jones, though a report of 1969 concluded that there were 'few pointers to the identity of Bob and the most that can be said is that Jones cannot be eliminated as a candidate'..." (pp. 380-1)*

Professor Andrew later relates:

*"On 19 November 1969 Furnival Jones (DG of MI5) discussed with (Labour Government Home Secretary) Jim Callaghan proposals for telephone checks on a number of trade unionists, chief among them Jack Jones of the TGWU ... Jones had been an open CPGB member from 1932 to 1941 and, the Service believed, did not leave the party until 1949. FJ reported chiefly on the basis of eavesdropping at King St. (CPGB HQ) that there was 'no doubt that Jones, after 15 years' disassociation from the Party, has resumed active and regular contact with it ... Bert Ramelson, the Party's chief industrial organiser, claimed in August 1969 that Jones had said that although there would be tactical differences between himself*

*and the Party, they were going in the same direction and wanted the same things ... It has become clear that (Jones) is prepared to pass, to the Party, Government and other information which has been passed to him in his trade union capacity.' ... On 28 November FJ was informed that, after long discussion, (Prime Minister) Wilson and Callaghan had decided not after all to authorise a telecheck on Jack Jones. 'They felt that the case just fell short of what was required to justify such a delicate operation'. Had the case involved a civil servant rather than a trade union leader, it is unlikely that they would have hesitated. Oleg Gordievsky (the British intelligence recruit from within the KGB) later reported that Jones had been regarded by the KGB as an agent from 1964 to 1968, providing confidential Labour Party documents which he obtained as a member of the NEC and the Party's international committee as well as information on his colleagues and contacts. Though the KGB believed that Jones's motives were ideological, his case officer noted that he accepted, without visible enthusiasm, modest contributions towards holiday expenses. Jones broke contact with KGB after the crushing of the Prague Spring by Soviet tanks in August 1968." (pp 535-6)*

Writing of the subsequent Conservative Government, Andrew narrates:

*"At a meeting with the Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, on*

*26 October 1970 FJ renewed the application for a HOW (Home Office Warrant) on Jack Jones which had been turned down by Wilson a year earlier. FJ noted afterwards: 'I said that I did not think it at all likely that an investigation of Jones would result in his being charged with espionage under the Official Secrets Act and this was not the purpose of the proposed exercise. We did, however, think it possible that he was being manipulated by the Russians or was at least under their strong influence ... At the very least an operation against Jones and his wife would produce intelligence which could be of great value in particular to the Department of Employment and to the Government generally in the field of industrial disputes'. Maudling was hesitant about agreeing to an HOW, chiefly because of the risks involved. 'If the operation went astray it would create an intolerable situation between the Government and the Trade Unions.' However, he agreed to consult (Prime Minister) Heath, who approved the application. Though Jones was not, in fact 'being manipulated by the Russians', the Security Service was right to consider the possibility that he was. Intelligence six years later from the most important British agent of the later Cold War, Oleg Gordievsky, revealed that from 1964 to 1968 the Centre had regarded Jones as an agent. The product of the HOW on Jones, discontinued after just a year, proved to be reassuring, revealing not merely no sign of a continuing Soviet connection but also positive evidence of growing*



*distance between him and the CPGB. The Security Service came to the conclusion that, 'In present circumstances the realities of Jones' position as General Secretary of the largest trade union in the country press more heavily on him than any influence the CBGB could bring to bear upon him.' .." (pp. 588-9)*

As for the period of Jim Callaghan's Labour Government:

*"In December 1976 new intelligence arrived on links between the KGB and Britain's best-known trade unionist, Jack Jones... Oleg Gordievsky reported that after being targeted for recruitment by the London residency, Jones had been regarded by the KGB as an agent for a number of years in the 'latter part of the 60s'. All contact with him had been dormant for some time. It was not, however, until Gordievsky was stationed in London in 1982 after several years working on the British desk in the KGB Centre that he was able to provide more detail on Jones's contact with the KGB... Eavesdropping at King St. no longer provided evidence of significant contact between Jones and the CPGB. In 1969 Ramelson had been overheard praising Jones as 'sound politically' with 'courage and guts'. 'The only dishonest thing about Jack', said Ramelson, 'was that he gave the impression that he was never in the (Communist) Party.' By 1976 Ramelson had changed his mind. Far from being a member of the left-wing caucus in the TUC, Jones was now regarded by the Callaghan government as, on balance, a force for moderation." (p. 667)*

M15 Professor Andrew's final reference to Jack Jones reads:

*"Gordievsky reported that Jones had been regarded by the KGB as an agent only from 1964 to 1968. Though contact was later re-established, Jones no longer held clandestine meetings with his case officer or passed on confidential material. He ceased to be general secretary of the TGWU in 1978 and left the TUC General Council in the same year. As his case officer five years later, Gordievsky found that, unsurprisingly, Jones no longer had access to inside information of such significance. On one occasion, however, Gordievsky's report on a meeting with Jones made a considerable impression in the Centre: 'One day I took with me a brochure from the TUC which gave a long list of union leaders, and asked (Jones) to comment on them. This he did to such effect that I was later able to write a three page summary, which I added to my report of our meeting: 'Our agent's information on trade union personalities was so extensive, I wrote, 'that I am attaching it as an appendix.' The combined document made it appear that he had been outstandingly helpful and volunteered many facts of the greatest value. You can see from this what the facts really were and how, by careful reporting, success can be created out of very little.' (my emphasis—MO'R) Though the KGB was believed to have assessed Jones's motives as ideological during the period when it regarded him as an agent, Gordievsky found him willing to accept gifts, some of*



*them in cash. The DG reported to the cabinet secretary in October 1985 that Jones 'last received money (£250) from his case officer (Gordievsky) on the instructions of the KGB Centre in May 1984'. Thereafter the Centre issued instructions that, given Jones's lack of access to confidential information, he was to be contacted only at six monthly intervals." (p. 711)*

M15 Professor Andrew's smearing of Jones occurs at intervals that variously stretch from 40 to 50 to 60 and to 150 pages. Bringing them all together enables us in the first place to see their internal inconsistencies. Speculation about Jones's cooperation with the CPGB, some of it informed (which will be examined later) but mostly ill-informed, is treated as being synonymous with being a Soviet agent. Yet the only direct evidence of how he might himself have regarded—and been in turn regarded by—the CPGB, based on wire-tap transcripts of Bert Ramelson statements, is from a period when even self-serving KGB reports regarded Jones as now being anti-Soviet. But what of the character of those self-serving KGB reports that purport to record supposedly friendly conversations with Jones?

In 1972 Jack Jones was elected Chairman of the International Committee of the British TUC and through the course of the following year he played a key role in the creation of the European TUC, being elected to its first Executive Board. Along with TUC General Secretary Vic Feather, he headed up an ETUC delegation to

meet the Executive Board of the US trade union movement, the AFL-CIO, in Miami. Jack recalled:

*"I had had a friendly argument with Jay Lovestone, the former communist leader in the US who was in charge of the international department of the AFL/CIO and had become a strong, almost fanatical, opponent of the communists, but otherwise we had been treated like long-lost brothers." (Union Man, 2008 edition, p. 268).*

He also recalled a previous 1969 encounter:

*"Life at the time was full of new experiences. One such was meeting Richard Nixon, the President of the USA. Vic Feather rang me up one day and said: 'I want you to come with me to meet Nixon, he's anxious to talk with one or two trade union leaders' ... In a private room at Claridges ... we had coffee and an intense couple of hours' discussion. Dr. Henry Kissinger accompanied Nixon and was equally involved. I tried to put the President right on our industrial situation, explaining that it was infinitely more peaceful than the USA's. I also said that in my opinion British people wanted to see him improve America's relationship with the USSR and China (China was the No.1 'hate' of the Americans then). I suggested he should visit countries like Romania. It was wrong to think that our countries lived in separate worlds. I was impressed by Nixon's keenness and clarity of mind." (pp. 211-2).*

Nixon went on to take Jones's

advice, at least in respect of Romania and China. And given that Lovestone, having been ousted in 1929 by the Comintern from his leadership of the CPUSA, swung so far to the right that he did indeed operate unashamedly on behalf of the CIA in the post-war world of international trade unionism, there can be no doubt that, if Stalinist show trials were still in operation, Jack would have been vilified as a CIA agent.

I myself remember how, in 1974, invoking as “*evidence*” the unquestionable fact that I had been a student in the USA from 1969 to 1971 (see the free downloads area of the Athol Books Website for the introduction to my thesis *Connolly in America—Note Two*), the *Irish Times* facilitated the Head of the Workers’ Party’s Industrial Department—Official IRA godfather and guru Éamon Smullen—in accusing me of being a CIA agent—which, in the circumstances of those violent years, and given Smullen’s own track record, constituted active incitement for some gunman to contemplate my murder.

Ironically enough, the only attempt made to enlist me for intelligence gathering purposes actually came in the late 1980s from a KGB operative based in the USSR’s Dublin Embassy as its First Secretary, Vladimir Minderov, who asked if I could get him invited to social gatherings where he might be able to engage with people of political importance. I politely declined, but I do not judge him harshly for having made the attempt. He sought to serve the interests of his own country. And in his case I feel I ought to put a human face on a real KGB operative. In a previous conversation he told me that he had

been based in Indonesia in the mid 60s. And when I asked what had he seen of the 1965 army coup in which Sir Andrew Gilchrist, the then British Ambassador to Indonesia (and later UK Ambassador to Ireland), had been complicit, he shuddered. Yes, he had seen the river choked with the bloated bodies of some of the half a million Indonesian Communists who had been massacred. And I also remember, at a 1985 USSR Embassy reception to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, that somebody had been crass enough to ask him, in a most indelicate manner, if he himself had personally known any people killed in that War. Yes, he replied. His father had been killed while fighting in the Red Army in the first month of Hitler’s invasion, while his elder brother and only sibling had also fought in the Red Army and had been killed at the very end of the War.

I have always had a personal policy of being willing to express verbally to all and sundry the very same views which I have been willing to place in writing in the public domain. I have no doubt that this was also Jack’s approach, whether speaking to Nixon, Kissinger and Lovestone, or to Soviet officials. So I have had exchanges of views with Embassy officials of the USSR, the UK, Cuba, Israel etc.—though not the USA. (This has not, however, been a matter of policy on my part, no more than it was of my father, who did accept an invitation from a third party to have lunch with George Dempsey, one of the most politically active officials who ever served in the US Embassy in Dublin). I have little doubt that some of these conversations would have been filed

as intelligence reports, even though no spying was required, since my views would have already been an open book.

Andrew, however, does not quote from any actual Soviet documentation on Jones, although I have no doubt that some of Jack's frank exchange of opinions would similarly have been presented as intelligence reports. Andrew relies on the gossip of M16's agent within the KGB, Oleg Gordievsky—and yet his own last quote from Gordievsky on Jones gives the game away, in boasting how intelligence agents regularly justify their existence by turning perfectly normal conversations into the appearance of intelligence scoops.

Jack Jones died on 21 April 2009. What Oleg Gordievsky immediately went on to allege did not, of course, constitute a libel on Jack, since, according to law, one cannot libel a dead person. But his unashamedly malicious lies most certainly SLANDERED Jack:

*"Former KGB colonel says he paid late union leader Jack Jones £200 for information".* That *Daily Telegraph* report was a lie in more in ways than one, when it stated that such an allegation had first surfaced in 1995. IT MOST CERTAINLY HAD NOT. In 1995 Gordievsky maintained that some KGB files held *"information obtained"* in conversations which Jack Jones might have held with Soviet Government or Embassy officials. Jack chose to answer that charge politically. He did not need to take it further, for it was only when he was safely dead that the cowardly Gordievsky dared to proceed with his

lying charge that Jack was a *"paid KGB agent"*. Gordievsky's moral cowardice, of course, undoubtedly made sound financial sense. He could not risk yet another libel action. Back in 1995 the *Sunday Times* had been required to pay substantial damages to Michael Foot, after publishing Gordievsky's earlier libel that this former leader of the British Labour Party was such a *"paid KGB agent"*. Once bitten, twice shy accordingly became a new maxim for Gordievsky.

Cambridge Professor Andrew behaves no better than a contemptible creep in so gleefully engaging in the character assassination of Jack Jones while, as a *"historian"*, he studiously ignores the evidence—from everyone who knew him—just how puritanically modest was Jack's whole lifestyle. In *Union Man* he recalled leading an earlier union delegation to the USA in 1968:

*"I met a district leader of the Teamsters' Union in Los Angeles. Having discussed comparative conditions in the haulage trade ... I was taken to dinner in a luxurious restaurant ... During the meal he turned to me and asked: 'What do you think of this place?' 'Splendid', I replied, 'it must be one of the best around.' 'It sure is—I own it and it makes eleven dollars to the invested dollar!' was his amazing response ... I came home from the USA more determined than ever to resist 'business unionism' in the UK and to eliminate any tendency towards corruption. Strict financial disciplines were necessary. The result was not pleasant, for more*



*than one national official left the service of the union in a hurry. One officer claimed expenses for an engagement in Dublin. Since I knew he had no business there, I challenged him, only to be told lamely that 'he'd been on a secret mission'.*" (pp. 200-1)

What of the claim that Jones was paid £200 or £250 by Gordievsky? The amount varies in Gordievsky's telling of the yarn. I do not believe for one moment that Jones ever saw a penny or was ever offered any such "giff". But I am not at all questioning that KGB records in Moscow might very well show that, in submitting his own claim for expenses, Gordievsky also claimed that he had paid Jones either £200 or £250, or that he might even have foolishly submitted claims that inconsistently cited both amounts. Nor do I believe that possible KGB investigations into a £50 discrepancy, or a request for receipts for the full £200 or £250, were what led to Gordievsky's defection. He had worked for British intelligence long before that, and undoubtedly felt that he was worth far more. One is indeed reminded of the apocryphal conversation attributed to George Bernard Shaw, with its punch line: "We've already established what you are, ma'am. Now we're just haggling over the price."

That Gordievsky is a British intelligence Prostitute with a capital P is beyond dispute. And the fact that Christopher Andrew is a Cambridge Professor with a capital P does not make him any less Gordievsky's Pimp with a capital P. Any opportunity for turning a trick for money, facilitated

by Andrew, is eagerly taken up by Gordievsky. And so, last 10 February, on Ulster TV, we saw in the self-serving "documentary" *INSIDE M15*—with its closing words "M15 is proud of its history"—a smirking Professor Andrew insist "These are KGB sources", as Gordievsky maintained that he greased Jack's palm with money (rather than pocket it himself). On the same programme, with good reason, Jack's son Mick Jones, called a spade a spade when he referred to Gordievsky as "a professional liar". Indeed, on 20 February 1995, in a report in the London *Independent* headed "Foot's friends rally to quash spy theory", it emerged that, at that early stage, M15 held the view that Gordievsky was jumping the gun far too soon in smearing people before they were actually dead:

*"M15 is growing increasingly uneasy about the allegations being made by a former M16 double-agent, Oleg Gordievsky, who was at the centre of a new story after claims were made yesterday in the Sunday Times that Michael Foot was a KGB agent. It was alleged that the Soviet spies knew Mr. Foot by the codename 'Boot'; Jack Jones, the former general secretary of the TGWU, was codenamed 'Dream' ... Sir Edward Heath, who saw M15 and M16 reports on espionage contacts during his time as prime minister, dismissed the claims about Mr. Foot. 'People used to meet ambassadors of all countries, whether in government or in Opposition. Obviously, we don't tell them things they ought not to know but I would have thought it was most unlikely', he*



said. The former Labour leader denied a charge that he accepted money from the Soviets on behalf of Tribune ... Mr. Foot, who is consulting his lawyer over the allegations, said yesterday: 'The headline—KGB: Michael Foot was our agent—that appeared in the Sunday Times is an absolute lie' ... Jack Jones, who is considering whether to consult his lawyers over the allegations, said: 'I have never knowingly known anybody from the KGB. If they were, I would have shunned them like a bargepole. I have met Russians. They could very well have been. I don't know. I mean who knows who is a CIA man and so on; it is very difficult. It is a farrago of lies designed by a man who wants to make a lot of money quickly' ... Last night, Mikhail Lyubimov, a former KGB officer, denied in Moscow that Mr. Foot had been paid or was an agent."

In the same issue, under the heading of "Former KGB agent is double-dealer in deceit", it further reported:

"Oleg Gordievsky, the former KGB double agent, is a difficult man to pin down. In the Sunday Times yesterday, he and six other former KGB officers claimed that in the 60s the KGB had regarded Michael Foot as one of its 'agents of influence'. They maintained that a number of small cash payments had been made to help to fund Tribune, the left-wing newspaper Mr. Foot then edited. Yet in 1992, Mr. Gordievsky told the Independent that in the early 80s, when Mr. Foot was party leader and a potential prime minister, that the Soviet Union

had 'no particularly helpful friends' among Labour leaders. So which Gordievsky are we to believe? After all, he was a Soviet spy for twelve years and then a double agent for M16 for eleven. His trade was treachery and dissimulation. In 1985, as acting head of the KGB's London station, he defected and was given a substantial Surrey stock broker-belt house by M16 with a pension said to be worth about £20,000 a year..."

There was even an editorial, entitled "Michael Foot's tainted accuser", in the same issue:

"Yesterday provided the latest example of Mr. Gordievsky's lucrative scheme for making money ... In February 1992 he said there were no more revelations to come about the Labour Party. He told this newspaper: 'In the Labour Party some people showed a lot more warmth and kindness to the Russians, but none was indiscreet or too helpful. Politically or diplomatically, none of them committed any blunder or mistake. I think they were impeccable. There are no revelations to come.' It seems extraordinary that such an unreliable figure should now be allowed, given the lack of supporting evidence, to damage the reputation of figures such as Mr. Foot. His claim that money changed hands should have been substantiated before publication. Instead, the Sunday Times seems to have been happy to accept Mr. Gordievsky at his word and so cast a shadow over Mr. Foot ... But the campaign of innuendo being waged against

*Labour politicians seems likely to achieve little more than make Mr. Gordievsky an even wealthier man than he already is.”*

But it actually achieved more than that. It also made Rupert Murdoch ever so slightly poorer. Little more than four months later, on 8 July 1995, under the heading of “*Sunday Times pays Foot damages over KGB claim*”, the *London Independent* was now happy to report:

*“The Sunday Times was forced into a humiliating climb-down at the High Court yesterday over its allegations that Michael Foot was considered ‘an agent of influence’ by the KGB ... Foot had sued the paper and its proprietor Rupert Murdoch ... The story alleged Mr. Foot had operated under the codename ‘Boot’ and that the Soviet intelligence agency made cash payments ... Under a settlement read out in open court, the paper offered Mr. Foot ‘substantial’ damages—which with legal costs are believed to run to at least £100,000—and an assurance that it had never intended to suggest that he had been a spy ... In need of corroboration, John Witherow, the newspaper’s editor, dispatched a reporter to Moscow, where interviews were conducted with several former KGB officers, including Mikhail Lyubimov and Viktor Kubeykin. However, Mr. Lynbimov later told the *Independent* that to suggest Mr. Foot had been an agent was ‘a ridiculous smear’, while Mr. Kubeykin called the article ‘a 100% distortion’ of what he had told the reporter. On the day the story appeared, Mr. Witherow*

*admitted on BBC Radio that the allegation that Mr. Foot was an agent might be ‘utter rubbish’, adding that the Sunday Times was merely suggesting that the KGB believed he was an agent. Mr. Foot immediately fired off writs to the Sunday Times and News of the World; which printed a follow-up story, branding the allegations ‘a McCarthyite smear’. The News of the World settled within hours of the writ arriving, paying Mr. Foot £35,000...”*

Never interested in money, however, Jack Jones did not sue, being content with making a political response. But then it was not until the very night he died that Jack was ever smeared with the Gordievsky slander that he had taken KGB money. And, of course, a dead man, even if not yet cold, can never bring a libel action. There is only one thing that Jones and Gordievsky have in common, but for different reasons. Even though the *Independent* had mercilessly exposed and called him a consummate liar, Gordievsky did not sue either. But how could he? Yet this is the very espionage courtesan that Cambridge academia, operating on behalf of British intelligence, now presents as a “*historical witness*”. Having been politically associated, in one way or another, with Jack over a 35 year period, and having been a close personal friend of his for 25 of those years, I can testify that the greatest refutation of M15 smears is to be found in both the character and politics of Jack Jones. And it is to such politics that I will now turn.

*Irish Political Review, August 2010*

## JACK JONES VINDICATED - PART TWO

Cambridge University's M15 Professor Christopher Andrew writes of that British intelligence service's telephone tapping:

*"The telecheck on the Communist leader of the Scottish miners, Mick McGahey, revealed that he spoke freely, if not always comprehensibly over the phone about the strike plans and tactics of the Scottish area NUM ... The bugging of the CPGB's King Street HQ revealed that McGahey was in close*

*touch with the Party's industrial organiser Bert Ramelson. As well as having a 1<sup>st</sup> class degree in law, the Ukrainian-born and Canadian-educated Ramelson had an engaging manner. Even the Sunday Times called him 'a charming and erudite man with a keen sense of humanity'. The sympathetic history of the CPGB by Francis Beckett, published in 1995, concludes, like Secret Service reports in the 1970s, that Ramelson, rather than any of the Party's general secretaries, was its most influential post-war member, becoming 'the face of British Communism in the only place after 1956 where it really mattered, the trade unions'..." (The Defence of the Realm, 2009, p. 592)*

Bert Ramelson was the CPGB's National Industry Organiser from 1965 to 1977, coinciding with the period that Jack Jones served as TGWU General Secretary from 1969 to 1978. They had one very definite thing in common; they had both been International Brigader volunteers who fought in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War's battle of the Ebro in 1938, although Ramelson was in the Canadian Battalion while Jones

was in the British Battalion. As we will see, the period of any shared purpose in trade union politics was quite brief, and Ramelson remained vehemently opposed to the efforts of Jones to move the movement forward. But while Ramelson was undoubtedly a CPGB schemer, I do not for a moment accept the M15 Andrew charge that he was also a KGB agent. Still less, of course, was this in any way true of Jack Jones, as Part One of this exposure of Andrew's book set out to demonstrate.

One of Andrew's "tricks of the trade" entails blurring the distinction between Communist Party activism and being a Soviet intelligence agent. A review of Andrew's book in the London *Observer* last 11 October similarly had a blurred-meaning reference to Jones as a "communist agent". On 18 October it evoked the following response from Jack's son Mick Jones, under the heading of "These lies about my father must cease":

*"In his review of Defence of the Realm by Christopher Andrew, Robert McCrum repeats a notion from that book that my father, Jack Jones, the former Transport and*



*General Workers' Union leader, was a 'communist agent'. There is, however no substantiated proof offered for this totally fictitious allegation other than the highly dubious reports of that notorious double agent, Oleg Gordievsky. The book also states, as if it were somehow accepted fact, that Jones was an 'open' member of the Communist party between the years 1932 to 1941. During that period, my father was a Labour City Councillor in Liverpool and it was against all Labour Party rules, with the threat of instant dismissal, for any Labour councillor also to be a member of the Communist Party. My father was never a member of the Communist Party at any time, nor, as is most shamefully and ludicrously implied, a 'communist agent'. I challenge anyone to provide unassailable proof otherwise."*

Andrew's M15 "thesis" is that Jack Jones was a "paid agent" of the KGB from 1964 to 1968, and again from 1983 to 1985. This slander has been refuted in Part One. But the M15 Professor also has a parallel "thesis", designed to bolster his KGB one, but which nonetheless needs to be scrutinised in its own right. The M15 allegations are that Jack Jones was:—

- An open member of the CPGB 1932-1941;
- A secret member of the CPGB 1941-49;
- Drifting from the CPGB 1949-54;
- Disassociated from the CPGB 1954-69;
- A fellow-traveller of the CPGB 1969-76.

There have been three great James Larkins in the trade union struggles of these islands, and all three of them born in the city of Liverpool: (1) Big Jim Larkin, born in 1874; (2) His son, James Larkin Junior, born in 1904; (3) Jack James Larkin Jones, born in 1913 and named after Big Jim. There is no denying the fact that the first two had been Communists before they embraced Social Democracy. As Seán Nolan wrote in *Communist Party of Ireland—Outline History*: (1975):

*"In the years from 1938 the Dublin Branch of the CPI had to contend with serious difficulties and set backs ... (Some leading members) retired from active involvement in the Party without indicating any political disagreement. This was the case of Jim Larkin Junior. He never expressed disagreement with the Party, but ceased to play his part as a member at any level; he became involved in the affairs of the Workers' Union of Ireland and played the principal part of the next few years in transforming the organisational structure and democratic functioning of the union. The loss of Larkin Junior to the Communist Party was a grievous blow, as was the departure of Larkin Senior ten years earlier." (p. 29)*

Larkin Junior had already been twice elected to the Dail when, in the course of the 1948 General Election, Fianna Fail Minister Sean MacEntee launched a vitriolic "red-baiting" attack, published by the *Catholic Standard* that 30 January and supplemented by that newspaper's own set of questions to Larkin:



*“(1) Were you at any time prior to its dispersal a member of the Communist Party of Ireland? (2) Did you at any time hold office in the CPI? (The honest answer to either of these questions is a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’). (3) If the answer to either of these questions (1 or 2) is in the affirmative will you here and now issue a statement repudiating Communism?”*

Larkin replied:

*“The moral courage of the writers of anonymous letters and articles is proverbial, the journalistic standards of a journal which resorts to them also hardly merit comment, and the coincidence of putting forward questions such as those of your anonymous querist three days before polling day clearly reveals that concealed motive. To the queries I reply: I was a member of the CP, a fact publicly known, and which I never attempted to cloak or evade; I was not an official of the Communist Party.”*

Since Larkin no longer subscribed to Communism—either organisationally or ideologically—he might have been tempted to consider it reasonable to now repudiate such beliefs in replying to question (3) and gain some electoral advantage as a result of such a repudiation. But Larkin’s integrity was of too high a calibre for him to ever become an ex-Communist of the ‘*God that failed*’ breast-beating variety. He effectively told the *Catholic Standard* to get lost:

*“As to the remaining query, from past experience I reject the*

*alleged disinterested concern of your journal and its anonymous writer in the welfare of the Labour Movement, and am fully aware that a repudiation of ‘Communism’ as defined by your journal and its writer would exclude any and every form of belief or activity which would be of any real or lasting benefit to the working class.”*

Larkin’s reputation for integrity was more than enhanced and his vote rose from 3,600 in June 1944 to 4,500 that February 1948, as it would rise still further to 5,700 and then 5,900 in the May 1951 and May 1954 General Elections respectively.

But what of Jack James Larkin Jones? I served as Head of Research at Liberty Hall from March 1971 until my retirement this past May, and from 1972 onwards it became clear to me that the trade union perspective I shared with Jones was opposed by both the CPGB and the CPI. But I also knew that, while not a Communist himself, Jack had forged unbreakable bonds with fellow International Brigaders who remained life-long Communists.

See, for example, the *Ireland & The Spanish Civil War* Website, when Jack sprang to the defence of my own father in response to a vicious “*red-baiting*” attack which the *Irish Times* published in October 2005. What, then, to make of the wire-tap that recorded Bert Ramelson saying in 1969 that “*the only dishonest thing about Jack was that he gave the impression that he was never in the (Communist) Party*”. Perhaps the problem was that Jack was never directly asked the obvious question!

I myself missed a golden opportunity to ask such a question in 2003. As that year was the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both the epic 1913 struggle led by Big Jim Larkin and Jack Jones's own birth and naming after Larkin, I was successful in my request that Jack be invited to address the SIPTU Delegate Conference in Galway. I first brought Jack and his son Mick to visit Dublin's Kilmainham Jail, where they were both profoundly moved in the prison yard where the 1916 leaders had been executed, especially at the spot just inside the gate where Connolly had been shot while propped up in a chair.

The next day, having driven to Galway, I also brought them to visit Pearse's Gaeltacht cottage in Rosmuc, Conamara. Long aware of Jack's Irish enthusiasms, and not least his singing of "Kevin Barry", I asked when had he first met Frank Ryan, of whom he spoke with such personal affection. I had assumed it was probably 1937, before Jack himself went to Spain, but when Ryan, having been wounded, was on recuperative leave in both Britain and Ireland before returning to Spain again. "1931" was Jack's reply.

This flummoxed me. Jack, I knew, had been a Labour Party member of Liverpool City Council since 1937. Frank Ryan did not split from the IRA to set up the left-wing Republican Congress until 1934. In 1931 Ryan was still an IRA leader, and editor of its newspaper *An Phoblacht*. "How come?" I asked. "Leo McGee sent me over to Dublin to meet Ryan." "Who?" But Jack only smiled enigmatically. I concluded therefore that Jack was no mere Labourite. He must have had some involvement with the Liverpool IRA, notwithstanding the fact

that he himself was not ethnically Irish.

This was not too unreasonable a conclusion, even though it took me by surprise. Jack's own account of the first time he stood as a Labour candidate in 1936 portrayed a Liverpool of that period that was more akin to an Ulster rather than an English city:

*"Labour politics in Liverpool were different to those in the rest of the country in the 1930s. What was called 'religion' had a big influence because of the mixed nature of the population. There was a separate Protestant party represented in the City Council, known as the 'Protestant Reform Party', and a Catholic party to balance it called the 'Centre Party'. If that wasn't enough, the Labour Party itself was pretty well divided. Sections of the party were strongly influenced by the Catholic hierarchy, especially on issues affecting Catholic schools. For years the Scotland Road area of Liverpool was represented in Parliament by an Irish Nationalist MP, T.P. O'Connor, and when he died and was replaced in 1932 by a Labour MP, David Logan, there didn't seem much difference in outlook. In my early twenties I was selected to stand for the Labour Party as the candidate for Breckfield Ward in the elections for the City Council. Part of the ward was in the centre of a militant Protestant area, where the King was 'King Billy' and the man to follow was 'Pastor' Longbottom, the Liverpool equivalent in his time of the present day Reverend Ian Paisley. Since the area was one of serious poverty (like most of Liverpool) I launched*

*my campaign with an attempt at an open-air meeting. After I had been speaking for about five minutes, a number of the women present in the traditional black shawls of my home town, were screaming out, 'Go home, you Fenian bastard' and other less polite messages. Then stones and bottles began to fly and we retreated fast." (Union Man, 2008 edition, pp. 55-6)*

The Redmondite legacy of O'Connor was not, however, the only variety of Irish politics that overlapped with Liverpool Labour. The complexity of political traditions in Liverpool has been further highlighted by Barry McLoughlin in respect of a leading Labour Party politician, Jack Braddock, who had been a member of the Liverpool IRA. Braddock had been put on trial in 1923 on explosives charges connected with a murder committed during the course of an IRA "fund-raising" robbery, and only walked free when the "King's Evidence" against him was withdrawn.

McLoughlin further relates:

*"Until they left the CPGB in 1924, Bessie and Jack Braddock were the leaders of Scouse Bolshevism ... In the Braddocks' joint biography, published in 1963, Jack omits to mention his involvement with the IRA ... The Braddock's break with Communism is described in some detail, a plausible retelling of trust betrayed and inner-party machinations which persuaded them that their home was in the Labour Party, for which Bessie was a forthright and popular MP from 1945. The first biography of Bessie, a hagiographic portrait of a hard-*

*nosed proletarian mother-figure with a heart of gold, published in 1957 does mention husband Jack's involvement with the IRA, and the trouble he bought upon himself ..."* (*Left to the Wolves: Irish Victims of Stalinist Terror, 2007, p. 239*)

Since I had never once had any indication of CP-type politics from Jack, I concluded that he must have had some clandestine Irish Republican background. Jack's wife Evelyn, of course, was rightly honoured in her own right for her 1930s heroism in operating as a Comintern courier to the underground CPs of Fascist Europe. And her first husband George Brown, killed in Spain's battle of Brunete in 1937, had been CPGB Manchester organiser. But even his own children assumed that Jack himself had never been in the CP. And when I spoke in Jack's memory at the second George Brown commemoration in the latter's birthplace of Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny in June 2009, I only half-jokingly speculated that, while it might have been dead everywhere else, the Irish Republican Brotherhood had survived in Liverpool, and that Jack Jones himself had been an IRB member! (Search the SIPTU website for my George Brown commemoration address in 2008.)

It was just my luck to have misheard the name that Jack had dropped and to have it fail to ring a bell from the brief reference in Jack's memoirs. I now belatedly realise that if I had greeted Jack's enigmatic smile with something more than ignorance about Leo G, he would probably have been prepared to continue with a conversation based on an informed line of questioning. A squandered opportunity! For the name



he had mentioned was not that of some Fenian leader named McGee, but the man described as follows by Jack:

*“On odd days off work from the docks I often took part in meetings and demonstrations and I listened, with increasing sympathy, to speeches by Leo McGree [NOT McGee!], the communist leader in Liverpool and chief spokesman for the unemployed He impressed me greatly with his vigorous exposition of the facts, laced with sharp Liverpool wit. He became a thorn in the side of authority and even of my own friends in the Labour Party like Jack and Bessie Braddock. While they were experts in dealing with the bureaucrats, Leo McGree on the other hand advocated direct action against housing evictions. The massive demonstrations he organised gained the support of thousands of the unemployed. For his pains Leo landed up with twenty months in gaol. The police authorities panicked, even at one stage arresting Jack Braddock for leading an unemployed action at which he was not even present!”*  
(p.40)

There is no further mention of McGree in Jack’s memoirs and no ostensible reason for the reader to necessarily become more curious about him. Those of us—including Mick Jones and myself—who served on the Executive of the International Brigade Memorial Trust under Jack’s Presidency, welcome and have no fears of genuine historical investigation. Indeed, it is one of our fellow Executive members, Richard Baxell, author of *British Volunteers*

*in the Spanish Civil War* (2004), who has brought to light a most significant document which now fills in the missing pieces in the jig saw. At the close of International Brigade involvement in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War in 1938, as a mark of solidarity with the Spanish Communist Party which would now have to carry on the struggle unaided, there were mass membership applications for that Party. For the most part, these came from Brigaders who had already been CP members in their own countries, as was the case with my own father. But what of Jack Jones? The following are key excerpts from the Spanish CP document brought to light by Richard Baxell:

*“All comrades who are not Spanish but who wish to join the ranks of the Spanish Communist Party must write a biography following the form of this questionnaire and send it, with their application, to the central commission for admission into the Party. This disposition applies equally to all of those comrades who were, in the past, member of one of their national parties and who also wish to obtain a membership card for the current year.”*

*“PERSONAL AND TRADE UNION LIFE. Name: JAMES LARKIN JONES; Place and date of birth: LIVERPOOL 29/3/13; Name of your parents, their political opinions: GEORGE HENRY JONES - ANNE CONSTABLE – COMMUNIST; Profession: TRANSPORT WORKER; Place of work: DOCKS, GARSTON, LIVERPOOL; Member of a trade union: TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION*



*(DOCKS SECTION) LIVERPOOL; Position of Responsibility in Union: NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND AREA DELEGATE; Union representation in place of work: 4 YEARS.”*

*“POLITICAL LIFE. When did you begin to be interested in the workers’ movement? 1929. STRIKE MOVEMENT; ON WHAT DATE DID YOU JOIN THE CP? 1930; In what cell were you? LIVERPOOL DOCKS; WHICH RESPONSIBLE COMRADES PRESENTED YOUR REQUEST TO JOIN THE PARTY? LEO MCGREE; ARE YOU STILL A MEMBER OF THE PARTY? YES; Have you had any leadership role or responsible position in the Party? LIVERPOOL ORGANISER 1932-38 MEMBER LANCASHIRE DIST. CTTEE. 5 YEARS. STRIKE FUNCTION IN THIS CAPACITY; Which party work have you undertaken most? INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY ASSISTING LEADERSHIP IN DOCKS; Have you participated in a Party Congress? BATTERSEA 1932. MANCHESTER 1934; To which countries have you been? GERMANY 1931. FRANCE; ARE YOU KNOWN AS A COMMUNIST IN YOUR COUNTRY? NO; AND ABROAD? NO; Which leaders of political, trade union organisations do you have a personal relationship with? FRANK BRIGHT, WILLIAM RUST AND PETER KERRIGAN CP. G. GIBBONS (DISTRICT SEC. TGWU) ALD HOGAN, LEADER LIVERPOOL LABOUR PARTY; What political courses organised by the Party have you taken? SPECIAL PARTY SCHOOL, LONDON 1935. 2 MONTHS; Which Party newspapers and magazines do you normally read?*

*LABOUR MONTHLY, IMPRECOR, COMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, DAILY WORKER, Which books on communist doctrine and politics have you studied? WORKS OF MARX, ENGELS, LENIN, STALIN; Which are the political questions that have drawn your attention most and which do you enjoy studying most? INDUSTRIAL POLICY; Have you written articles for newspapers? YES. VARIOUS - CHIEFLY TRADE UNION. “RECORD” (TU Journal). ‘MILITANT TRADE UNION’; When did you arrive in Spain ? MAY 1938; Via what means? PARTY; With what objective? TO FIGHT FASCISM; What military and political functions have you had in Spain? COMPANY COMMISSAR; In which battles have you been? EBRO, JULY 1938, ATTACK ON HILL 481, JULY 31<sup>ST</sup> 1938. SHOULDER WOUNDS. Which comrades do you know best and which responsible person can confirm the veracity of your statement? WILLIAM RUST, H POLLITT (Daily Worker editor and CPGB General Secretary, respectively - MO’R) PLACE: BARCELONA; DATE: 5TH OF SEPTEMBER 1938; SIGNATURE: J.L. JONES.”*

*“The Party expels those who give false information or try to deceive it. Comrades must report all aspects of their current circumstances; in the event of them wanting a guarantee of maximum confidentiality, they can deliver the questionnaire directly to the central committee of the PCE”.*

Jack may not have been the “Fenian bastard!” that the Orange hecklers of Liverpool accused him of being. But he

certainly behaved like a Fenian Centre who only divulged certain categories of information on a “*need to know*” basis. If Ramelson complained that Jack never publicly “*owned up*” to having been a CPGB member in the 1930s, neither did his application to the Spanish CP once mention his membership of the Labour

Party. But with this added information we can also read Jack’s autobiography in a more informed manner, including seeing between the lines, and discover the most independent-minded of 1930s communists, who had already decided to part company with the CPGB by 1940.

*Irish Political Review, October 2010*

## JACK JONES VINDICATED - PART THREE

In a programme entitled “*The 20th Century Remembered*”, which was broadcast by the BBC on 7 January 1984, veteran Labour correspondent Geoffrey Goodman interviewed his good friend and the even more veteran and retired British union leader, Jack Jones, about his life and times—although there was still another quarter of a century of that life yet to run. Jack spoke of how he had left school in 1927, aged 14, and joined the TGWU in 1929, aged 16, and the Labour Party at the same time, becoming secretary of his local ward

organisation. We now know from his answers to a 1938 Spanish Communist Party questionnaire—brought to light by International Brigade historian Richard Baxell—that Jack was recruited into the CPGB by Liverpool communist leader Leo McGree in 1930, but kept his membership secret and became a Labour Party member of Liverpool City Council in 1937.

In his 2009 book *Defence of the Realm* M15’s Professor Christopher Andrew, speaking as His Master’s Voice, regurgitates the pronouncement that “*Jones had been an open CPGB member from 1932 to 1941 and the Service believed, did not leave the party until 1949.*” (p. 535) Yet we now know for a fact that Jones joined the CPGB in 1930, but had NEVER been an

open member. The question remains, however, how long did he remain such a secret member? Jack’s own autobiography, *Union Man* (first edition 1986, second edition 2008), reveals a personality and intellect who formed his own independent judgment throughout his dual party membership of the 1930s:

*“Within the union and the local Labour Party I was continually pressing for action against unemployment... When early in 1934 a national ‘hunger’ march was being organised I offered to join the Liverpool contingent to march to London. My union branch endorsed the idea and I had the sympathy and support of fellow Labour Party members, although the main organisers of the march were members of the Communist*

*Party. The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was also active in getting recruits for the march. In my youthful enthusiasm I could never understand why the different socialist groups could not work together, and here was evidence of that ambition being, in part at least, fulfilled... I felt that some means must be found to provide work for the unemployed of Liverpool. In this I must have been influenced by the speeches made by Ernie Bevin which put forward a strong case for work or maintenance for the unemployed.” (p. 40)*

Jones described what happened when the hunger march reached London and sought to have a deputation received at Westminster:

*“Only a few hundred of the two thousand managed to gain admission... I was amongst them, and led a group of the Liverpool men in seeking to make contact with Liverpool Members of Parliament. One of those who met us was David Logan, Labour member for the Scotland division of Liverpool. He wasn’t the brightest of men and he offered little by way of action, but he showed his sympathy by handing me a ten shilling note which he asked me to share ‘amongst the lads’. The Central Lobby was packed but in the middle of the throng I saw a distinguished looking man, who, I was told, was Dingle Foot, then a Liberal MP. I took my group over and we surrounded him, urging our point of view. He was visibly shaken by the examples we cited of hardship caused by the means*

*test and the poverty represented by the low rates of unemployment benefits... He agreed to do all he could to press our case and to urge the leader of the Liberal Party, Sir Herbert Samuel, to do the same. He created a better impression than some of the Labour MPs, but Clem Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party came up trumps. He led the fight in the House for a deputation to be received by the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, and the Cabinet. I was pleased with Attlee’s efforts and the way he had met us. I said to my mates: ‘He is a small man and he doesn’t look very strong but you must admit he’s got guts!’ He strengthened my faith in the Labour Party at a time when circumstances were inclining me to move further towards the left.” (pp. 42-3)*

*“My respect for Ernie Bevin increased each time he denounced Fascism and I began to appreciate the thinking behind the formation of the TGWU ... It was, and is, a great conception, but my experience in the docks underlined for me that any trade union had also to be a living, democratic reality at the place of work.” (p. 47) As Jones told Goodman in 1984, it could not be “just a union of Bevin—although Bevin was a great man—but a members’ union, a live union to challenge employers.”*

Jack Jones also used his own independent judgment in assessing the Liverpool Labour leadership of the Braddocks – noting that both the CP and LP were hostile and suspicious, for their own separate organisational reasons:



*“In August 1936 Ernest Bevin praised ‘the heroic struggle being carried on by the workers of Spain to save their democratic regime’... In some churches Franco was proclaimed as the defender of Christianity against atheistic materialism, church burning, outrages against nuns and other things too horrible to relate. A few Catholic Labour City Councillors swallowed the propaganda and declared their support for Franco, but they were the exceptions. The Catholic leader of the Party, Luke Hogan, supported the Loyalist Government from the start and encouraged me in my endeavours... While I was in his office he urged me to continue to try to gain a seat on the City Council. ‘We need young men from the Unions like you’, he said. ‘I’m not afraid of a left-wing view, I expect some young men to be on the left’. He was scathing in his criticism of the loyalty of Jack and Bessie Braddock. I queried this attack for I was friendly with the Braddocks and I had a youthful wish for unity in the movement, but a doubt remained with me after that interview. The Braddocks were controversial figures. Together with Bessie’s mother, Mrs. Mary Bamber, they had been founders and leaders of the Communist Party in Liverpool but had then left it. Although they continued to advocate left-wing policies, they were attacked as traitors by the communists yet were looked upon with a suspicious eye by all of the Labour Councillors.”*  
(pp. 57-8)

The constant tension between Bevin the union boss and Jack’s drive for

greater union democracy, far from leading to any victimisation of him, only served to enhance Bevin’s appreciation of Jack’s own leadership qualities. In August 1939 he appointed Jones to the position of Coventry District Organiser, on the eve of World War Two. And Jack’s response to that War was Bevinite rather than CP.

The outbreak of War evoked a variety of responses from left-wing anti-Fascists. I remember in 1970 asking Sam Rosen, my Professor of Economics in the US University of New Hampshire, whether or not he and his wife, Mary Berman, had any qualms of conscience, as Jewish Communists, in championing the CPUSA’s anti-war stance during the 1939-41 period of Hitler-Stalin Non-Aggression Pact. Certainly not! Their conviction in its correctness remained as firm as ever in their recall, notwithstanding the fact that Sam later served in Europe with the US Army during the period when it had become an actual anti-Fascist War, while in 1978 Mary’s sister-in-law, Isabella Leitner, would author one of the most searing autobiographies penned by a survivor of the Auschwitz Holocaust, *Fragments of Isabella*. In a *Guardian* obituary for her own father Leslie, on 18 March 2008, the late Nina Fishman (1946-2009) also recalled that *“Les had joined the CPUSA on news of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”*. Similarly, other Jewish anti-Fascists in the USA, most notably those who had actually fought against Fascism in Spain, like Moe Fishman (no relation to Nina), were to the fore in the opposition of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to any US involvement in World War Two prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union.



This was not the position of Jack Jones. But neither was his the somersault record of the CPGB. The Party General Secretary Harry Pollitt had initially supported the War in September 1939. But the Comintern forced his temporary removal and it was R. Palme Dutt and Andrew Rothstein who articulated the revised anti-War line of the CPGB until the invasion of the USSR allowed for Pollitt's return as General Secretary in order to lead the CPGB in its now-pro-war-again stance. Jack Jones participated in none of this jumping back and forth. If, following his return from Spain in 1938, he had resumed being a secret CPGB member in Liverpool, there is nothing to suggest that he remained one when he moved to Coventry in August 1939, and there is everything to suggest the contrary. From start to finish, Jack Jones functioned as a left-wing Bevinite throughout the course of the War. Jack Jones described his own position on the War in a manner that was decidedly indifferent to the CPGB's own internal difficulties:

*"I was for the war from the very beginning. For me it was a continuation of the war in Spain, the war against Fascism. Support for the war in Coventry was virtually universal and any doubts were removed by the bombing (the November 1940 blitz). The decision by the Communist Party to oppose the war in its early stages had no impact in Coventry." (p. 99)*

This is evidence of a very definite break with any constraints of CPGB discipline. Jones, nonetheless, was far from being amenable to any "There'll always be an England" all-class

patriotism. Like Bevin, Jones had come to believe in a domestically-honed British Road to Socialism. For Jones, the decisive change in the character of the War came not with the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941, but with Bevin becoming Minister for Labour in March 1940. It was no accident that Jones entitled a Bevin centenary lecture he delivered on 5 March 1981 as *Ernest Bevin—Revolutionary by Consent*. And their shared revolutionary perspective ruled out any wartime truce in the class war until the achievement by Bevin of working class executive powers for the rest of that war confirmed that change in character. As Jones argued in his lecture:

*"He always had his feet on the ground. It was this quality which carried him through the war years and made him such a great Minister of Labour... Bevin's wartime achievement were centred on two main themes, firstly the maximum mobilisation of manpower, secondly the recasting of social values and the permanent alteration of the status of working people. These two themes fitted together, as being the only way to win the war. As far as Bevin was concerned, it could not be won by totalitarian methods. Britain had to stick to government by consent in order to secure the willingness of people to make sacrifices greater than those that could be obtained from them by compulsion. And this consent was closely tied up with consultation and respect for the dignity of the worker. This philosophy did not exclude coercion, but confined its use to those occasions when the*

*time was right and it was generally acceptable to those at whom it might be directed... But this was not handed to him on a plate. During the early part of the war, the attitude of the Chamberlain Government was thoroughly reactionary towards labour and totally incapable of understanding the mood of working people and their willingness to fight fascism, and the opportunities this presented. Bevin was not willing to lead the trade unions into cooperation with such a government. In October 1939 he stated: 'It must be recognised that in their heart of hearts the powers-that-be are anti-trade union... We represent probably the most vital factor in the state: without our people the war cannot be won, nor can the life of the country be carried on. The assumption that the only brains in the country are in the heads of the Federation of British Industry and big business has yet to be corrected.'*”

*“Bevin was not willing to place the support of the unions unconditionally in the hands of the government in the cause of patriotism. Indeed in February 1940 he stated: If the Government is going to take the occasion of this war to invade the liberties of my people, I will lead the movement to resist this Government – or any other Government.’ This stand created a position of strength in that, as Churchill recognised, the strengths of the unions could only be tapped for the war effort if he was prepared to bargain with them and bring them into*

*the Government, as he did in the person of Bevin. Despite Churchill’s viciously anti-trade union past, he at least was capable of making this pragmatic adjustment. Bevin however clearly realised that office alone was no guarantee of his wider aims. After six months in office he defined the problem in the following way: ‘They (the trade unions) are tolerated so long as they keep their place and limit their activities to industrial disputes, industrial relations and similar matters, and are willing to bury all their memories and feelings and assist the nation or industry when in difficulties and go back to their place when the war is done. But there will have to be a great recasting of values. The concept that those who produce or manipulate are inferior and must accept a lower status than the speculator, must go.’ His years as Minister of Labour were to see him carry through these objectives to a remarkable extent.”*

*“No, Bevin was not perfect. He was not always right – no one is. Yet few would or could deny that he was an outstanding trade union leader and a truly great Minister of Labour. His contribution to winning the war against fascism was second only to that of Churchill if not equal to it. We should remember the considerable amount of good that he did in his life as we commemorate his birth a hundred years ago. Surveying that momentous period as a trade unionist and as Minister of Labour one can say that he served the cause of labour splendidly.”*

Jack Jones had the greatest of

respect for the CPGB shop-stewards who worked with him in wartime Coventry. But the CPGB had very definitely ceased to be the Party for him. And his memoirs make clear that he felt that Harry Pollitt's talents might have been better deployed:

*"In October 1942 the District Committee joined forces with the Coventry Trades Council in organising a mass meeting in the Opera House to discuss the need for a second front. The meeting was packed to overflowing, with Harry Pollitt, the Communist leader, as the main speaker. I spoke for the Confederation and although I got a good reception it was nothing to the enthusiasm which greeted Pollitt. He made an outstandingly brilliant speech and as I listened I thought to myself: 'If only Harry had gone into the Labour Party, what a marvellous impact he would have had on the nation.' I always found Pollitt to be a sincere and able man, a fine trade unionist, and certainly a credit to the Communist Party which he led for so many years." (p. 117)*

Arthur Deakin, the TGWU's second General Secretary, was no Ernie Bevin. Quite the contrary, Jack Jones recalled the 1949 reaction that enveloped the Union:

*"Generally what happened in London had little impact on the Coventry district. We had built a substantial membership and day-to-day activities in the plants, where trade unionism is properly judged, were going well. National events passed most people by. Nevertheless the decision of the*

*union's national conference in 1949 to ban communists holding office in the TGWU caused a commotion in the ranks of the active members. I shared their view that the decision smelled of McCarthyism. Since a number of shop stewards in my district were communists I felt that the union could only be harmed by the decision. Some members did, in fact, leave the TGWU and join the ETU. Determined to be no party to victimisation, I managed to protect the shop stewards and they continued to function in my district" (p. 134)*

Jack valued the commitment of his CPGB shop stewards and protected them from Deakin's purges. But he had no desire to share in their Party life. His own concept of a British Road to Socialism saw no advantage for that project in taking any stand, on one side or the other, in the dispute between the USSR and Yugoslavia. He had seen what had happened to Alfred Sherman, a fellow member of the International Brigade's British Battalion. In 1948 Sherman headed up the CPGB branch formed by students at the London School of Economics. He had been due to deliver a paper on politics in Yugoslavia, following his visit to that country, when Moscow announced Stalin's break with Tito. Asked to amend his paper, Sherman refused, and was expelled from the CPGB on charges of "Titoist deviationism". From 1948 to 1953, until after the death of Stalin, the CPGB maintained that not alone was Tito's Yugoslavia not a Socialist state, it was actually ruled by a Fascist clique. In 1952 Jack Jones had no intention of turning down the opportunity to see for himself:



*“There came an opportunity to visit Yugoslavia. The Coventry District Committee of the Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions had been invited to send a delegate to the Yugoslav Metal Workers Congress at Zagreb, who would then tour the engineering industry in that country. I was selected to make the trip. In 1952 Yugoslavia was still ‘a far-away country’ and I was intrigued by the chance to explore this new world... Yugoslavia was very much on its own and industrially backward. It was not unusual to come across a heap of horse manure in the centre of a machine stop or witness some other evidence of the close link between industry and agriculture. Horses and carts were used to transport materials to and from the factories. Former peasants were being trained slowly and painfully to acquire engineering skills. I was impressed by the early attempts at workers’ self-management, and from that time onwards have watched the experiments with keen interest. ” (p. 138)*

It was in 1964 that Jack visited the Soviet Union for the very first time:

*“In November 1964 I led a TGWU delegation to the USSR. I hadn’t been to Russia before and was pleased that the opportunity had fallen to me. Those accompanying me were all rank-and-file members of the Union’s Executive... We were a good team and conscientious in our efforts to find out as much as possible about that most interesting country and its people.*

*We were the guests of the Motor Transport Union, which enabled us to visit many factories in Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa and Kiev. Our practical experience meant that we could appreciate what was good and what was bad. Despite the language barrier we felt a sense of camaraderie; that sort of immediate understanding cannot be disguised. Of course we saw the sights and met many important political and trade union leaders, but our overwhelming impression was of a people struggling against a difficult past, painfully but successfully. From then on I thought it would be a good thing for working people from both countries to get to know each other by two-way exchanges. Barriers could be broken down in a way diplomats were unlikely to achieve.” (p. 172)*

It was this visit which led M15’s Professor Andrew to regurgitate double agent Gordievsky’s claim that the KGB reported on Jones as being a contact from 1964 to 1968. If such reports exist, it was obviously a case of self-promotion on the part of KGB operatives, posing under other hats and inflating the significance of normal exchanges of views. But what of the supposed KGB claim that “*Jones accepted, without visible enthusiasm, modest contributions towards holiday expenses*”? (p. 536)

The distortion of reality is also quite apparent to me in this regard. In 1965, when I was aged 16, and a year after Jack’s visit, I myself visited the Soviet Union for the only time in my life, accompanying my father. There was a great desire on the part of the Soviet



hosts that their guests would not feel the need to exchange currency and come into contact with the black market, of which they were rather ashamed. “Modest contributions towards holiday expenses” were precisely that—some pocket money in roubles that would cover the purchase of souvenirs. They would have paled into insignificance compared with expenses regimes on all fronts in the western world. Yet I can well believe that Jack accepted even these small amounts with reluctance. Having driven Jack around Dublin and Galway as SIPTU’s guest in 2003, I know how reluctant Jack was on every single occasion to accept being treated to meals as befitted our guest.

The other visit to the Soviet Union recorded in Jack’s memoirs occurred in 1973, when Jack led a TUC delegation:

*“The visit was a short one... The industrial part was covered during a visit to Minsk; we looked over a new heavy vehicles plant and had discussions with management, trade union and party representatives. I was not happy that the working conditions and lay-out of the plant were as good as they might have been, but at least I felt satisfied that a trade union system, not unlike our own, was operating at a plant level. The political influence, however, was alien to our British traditions, and we began to realise the difference between the political and industrial systems of our two countries... On our return to Moscow we resumed talks with the leaders of the all-Union Central Council of Trade Unions in their substantial headquarters. In the course of our lengthy meetings I*

*raised the question of Jews wishing to emigrate from the Soviet Union, explaining that there was much interest in the subject in Britain. Their president had obviously been fully briefed and provided a lot of information. He said that 97 percent of applications from Jewish people to emigrate had been granted, but there were reservations over people in possession of secret information or with high scientific or academic qualifications. He went to great pains to assure us that they were not anti-Semitic, and that many Jewish people occupied important positions. There was some sharp questioning... There was still a deep division, on this issue, which remained a sharp cause for concern for a long period. The British Ambassador told me that he had been delighted with our visit and felt sure that it would help to improve relations. A number of high-ranking Soviet trade unionists accepted his invitation to attend a party in the Embassy, including a member of the Politburo. The Ambassador was all smiles, because it had not previously been possible to talk informally with such influential people.” (pp. 270-1)*

In *Tribune* on 10 December 2009, Geoffrey Goodman recalled:

*“Jack Jones a traitor? Don’t make me laugh. Allegations that Jack Jones was a Soviet agent taking cash from the KGB are laughable. If the cremated remains of James Larkin Jones have not already turned to dust they may, I suspect, be jumping around with great*

*mirth in their casket. I feel quite certain it is laughter rather than anger that is their response to the extraordinary campaign which has been launched to discredit their owner. Indeed, I vividly recall when, some 35 years ago, I was reporting a TUC delegation to Moscow led by Jones as chairman of the TUC's international committee, he took the lead in attacking Soviet policies in face to face meetings with Soviet leaders. I wonder if that is recorded in the secret archives of the security systems in Moscow or, for that matter, here? Of course he was resented by those on the right who, during his lifetime, spent considerable time, money and powerful influence seeking to undermine him and his trade union activities. Some of his opponents were even from his own side of the political divide—well known members of the Labour Party at that time. None of his critics demurred at supporting dubious elements to combat Jones, especially when he was general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, then the strongest trade union in Britain and, indeed, across the non-communist world. Do I detect similar influences at play today in this campaign to discredit his reputation as one of Britain's greatest trade union leaders and a*

*fighter for social justice? Do I detect this posthumous bid to humiliate his record as the usual coward's way of speaking ill of the dead who cannot answer for themselves? Perhaps. Then let me again remind a younger generation who probably know little of Jones' record in fighting for what is finest in British democratic tradition that this was a man whose personal modesty never changed as he rose in trade union power and influence; a man for whom financial or any other form of corruption, political bribery, or even the odd expensive lunch was anathema. In short, the anti-Jones clatter is about a man of principle and sheer integrity that was unshakeable by spies or newspaper proprietors.”*

It has been shown that Jack Jones's relationship with Soviet officialdom was such as to render unbelievable any suggestion that he was a Soviet agent. And yet over the course of 1969-70 M15 sought to justify wire-tapping Jones on the basis that his contacts with CPGB Industrial Organiser Bert Ramelson rendered him a Soviet stooge, and now MI5's Cambridge Professor again seeks to justify it all retrospectively. That the actual relationship between Jones and Ramelson was, in the main, one of fundamental strategic conflict, will now be explored.

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## JACK JONES VINDICATED – PART FOUR

The M15 request to wire-tap Jack Jones, on the grounds that he was in contact with the British Communist Party's Industrial Organiser Bert Ramelson, was rejected by the Wilson/Callaghan Labour Government in November 1969 but authorised by the Heath/Maudling Tory Government in October 1970. It was, however, withdrawn in 1971. (Professor Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of M15*, pp 535- 6 and pp 588-9)

Cambridge Professor Andrew - not only M15's authorised "*historian*" but a sworn member of that British intelligence agency for such a strategic project - launched his smear narrative, alleging that Jack Jones had been a supposed "*paid agent*" of the Soviet KGB, on the very day that Jack's Union was celebrating the life of its fourth General Secretary on 5 October 2009. That smear also coasts along on the assumption that a relationship between Jones and Ramelson was itself a sufficient reason for treating Jones as a Soviet stooge. And yet Andrew, the history professor, is either unfathomably incompetent or unforgivably disingenuous as a historian (it is not for me to come to a definitive conclusion as to whether he is a fool or a knave) in failing to seriously examine what exactly were the relations between Jones and Ramelson, and what exactly was their context.

So, what was the precise product of wire-tapping Ramelson's telephone conversations that leads M15 and its mouthpiece Andrew to portray Jones in such sinister terms? It is the M15 chief's report that Ramelson "*claimed in August 1969 that Jones had said that although there would be tactical differences between himself and the*

*Party, they were going in the same direction and wanted the same things*" and that Jack was "*sound politically*" with "*courage and guts*". (pp 535-6 and 667) And yet even that M15 chief had to admit in 1971 that "*in present circumstances the realities of Jones' position as General Secretary of the largest trade union in the country press more heavily on him than any influence the CPGB could bring to bear upon him*". (p. 589) None of the context for a close working relationship between Jones and Ramelson between 1969 and 1971 is presented by Andrew. And yet it is such a context that establishes this two year period as the exception that proved the rule. Jones always valued the hard work, discipline and commitment of CP shop stewards, and if there was a common viewpoint about a particular phase of the trade union movement's struggle, it was in the TGWU's interest to maximise the combined effectiveness of all the forces that required to be marshalled.

In *Part Three* of this series of articles I established that Jack Jones had been a dual member of both the British Labour Party and the CPGB from 1930, but concluded that when he transferred from Liverpool to



Coventry in 1939 he had ceased to be a member of the CP and was in disagreement with the line it held on World War Two before Hitler's invasion of the USSR in June 1941. Jones supported the pro-War stance of the TGWU's founding General Secretary, Ernie Bevin, particularly after the latter joined the Government as Minister for Labour in May 1940. In politics Jack Jones could most accurately be described as a left-wing Bevinite. The fullness of that description, of course, presumes ongoing tensions. In his 1986 autobiography, *Union Man*, Jack recalled the beginnings of such a "dialectical" relationship:

*"I had been already elected as a shop steward, and to the branch and area committees of the TGWU, as well as on the National Docks Group Committee of the union. This meant that I came into contact with Ernie Bevin General Secretary of the union, who took a keen interest in the Docks Group and was present at all the national meetings. He had been the driving force in building the union and he let everybody know it. On occasions we had to listen to Ernie orating about the financial problems of the world... He may not have been the clearest exponent of complicated issues but he achieved remarkable results by his driving power... Earlier I had been active in a campaign to make good the wage reductions in the docks industry that had been applied in 1931. At a meeting attended by Bevin I had the audacity of youth and asked why he had ever agreed to a pay reduction. His argument was that other industries had fared worse and he had done a good job by escaping*

*with a smaller reduction. I urged early restoration of the cuts, which he resented."* (p. 55, 2nd edition)

And yet, five years later, Jack Jones was prepared to revisit that conflict, with a somewhat different narrative, suggesting that the reader should not take for granted that he himself was still of the view that his 18 year-old's "audacity of youth" had necessarily been vindicated against Bevin's own strategy at the time. In a lecture which he delivered on 30 September 1991 to the *Ernest Bevin Society* — associates of the *Irish Political Review* in Britain — Jack now related:

*"Employers, of course, followed the pattern set out by the government, and sought to reduce wages. They succeeded in many cases. There were in fact ten per cent wage cuts in a whole range of industries. In the Docks Bevin negotiated a seven per cent reduction on basic pay, and five per cent on piece work. It took quite a few years to start to go back on that and get a restoration of the 1931 cuts. Indeed, the trade union movement conducted campaigns to restore these cuts. I remember having a big argument with Bevin; I was a very young man then, and I had come on to the docks from engineering, and was questioning him about how the trade union leadership could negotiate reductions in pay, which I did not think was a good idea. He replied that he had done better than other industries, and indeed he was able to persuade my fellow-workers that he had done a satisfactory job in that sense. He managed to hold*



*the situation, and eventually we got a restoration. That was Bevin. He wanted to maintain organisation, despite adversity, rather than disorganisation and anarchy. He succeeded in doing so in a very difficult industry, the docks industry.”*

Jack always remained loyal to Bevin’s achievements. While he also admired the achievements of the latter’s near-namesake Nye Bevan as architect of the National Health Service that had been established by Britain’s Post-war Labour Government led by Clem Attlee, in no way could Jack ever be described as a Bevanite, for he had little time for the Labour Left iconography that simplistically designated Bevin as “Right/bad” and Bevan as “Left/good”. Of Bevan he wrote:

*“(From 1956) the outlook of the Labour Party establishment towards Nye began to change and it was not long before he was chosen as shadow Foreign Secretary. In retrospect it is difficult to understand why Bevan moved away from unilateral nuclear disarmament when trade union support for it was growing. Probably he thought the only opportunity he would have to secure the leadership of the Party was to win the centre and this was one way of doing it. Unfortunately when his prospects were at their highest he fell ill and later died. It could be that his critics from the left, whom he himself had nurtured, accelerated the disease that killed him. I did not worship at his feet, so I write without adulation, but I think his leadership would have united the Party in a way Hugh Gaitskell never could have done.*

*Nye Bevan’s problem in the past had been his lack of trade union support, although his public meetings were always packed and enthusiastic. Nye didn’t always help himself. He was a distant man who developed an element of grandeur in his style. I stopped him once in Parliament to introduce him to a Yugoslav trade unionist, whom I had taken up to see Parliament from Coventry where he had been on a delegation. Nye could scarcely conceal his impatience. Perhaps it was because I was a TGWU man – it was Deakin’s time. This was not the only occasion I felt he was losing the common touch, but I consoled myself with the thought: Politicians are like that!” (p. 151)*

The Labour Party under Harold Wilson won the British General Elections of 1964 and 1966. The TGWU’s Jack Jones served on the Labour Party’s NEC from 1964 to 1967. This is the period when it appears that Soviet officials might well have sought to nurture their own sense of importance in Moscow by reporting normal conversations with Jack as “intelligence reports”. It was, however, clear that Jack’s own interests in the NEC – from which he was very happy to retire in 1967 (although elected to serve until 1968) – had nothing to do with wanting access to any Government “secrets”, but everything to do with advancing the economic interests of his Union’s members. He secured the Labour Party NEC nomination to serve on the Economic Committee of the TUC. But by 1965 he was already at odds with both Labour’s Deputy Prime Minister George Brown and the TUC

General Secretary George Woodcock:

*“For some reason George Woodcock joined forces with George Brown, First Secretary of the new Department of Economic Affairs, in promoting a joint Statement of Intent on ‘productivity, prices and incomes’, shortly after the formation of the new Labour Government. The TUC signed the statement, together with the CBI and the Government. It was hurriedly constructed and highly generalised and I saw it as a gimmick designed to conceal the introduction of a statutory incomes policy. It was launched in theatrical fashion at a ceremony in Lancaster House with George Brown performing an evangelical role, over-selling the benefits of an incomes policy. What a smooth-tongued operator he was ... Perhaps the hurry in issuing the Joint Statement was due to the pressure on the pound, but the iron fist soon replaced the velvet glove with the setting-up of a Prices and Incomes Board. George Woodcock and George Brown had been at great pains to stress the voluntary nature of the policy, but the wage restraint aspect could not be disguised and the TGWU voted against it at the Special Conference of the TUC. George Brown seemed to be obsessed with incomes policy. Running into him in the House of Commons I told him: ‘The trouble with you, George, is that you’re miles away from the shop floor. The norms you are talking about will mean a bad deal for the low-paid workers and you know it. You are*

*doing the employers’ job for them.’ He did not like sharp criticism of this kind and his response was to bluster and bully. I strongly resented the fact that economic controls and planning were missing in the Government’s policies. Brown, who had manipulated himself into the role of guru of the Government’s economic affairs, was, I thought, making a half-baked approach to the crisis. I could not stomach the idea of pushing wages down while Brown and others were attempting to justify big increases in the salaries of MPs... His response was that I was a carping critic.” (pp 167-8)*

But Jack also saw the need to have an alternative strategy:

*“I had thought for some time that opposition to wage restraint on the part of the union was in itself not enough. We needed to develop a policy which would unite the union, develop constructive discussion and help to raise the standard of living of the low-paid workers. We should come forward with a positive, alternative policy. In opposing the Government’s prices and incomes policy the TGWU had been in a minority at both the 1966 Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party Conference ... I prepared a paper setting out a detailed case for £15 as a minimum wage and proposing that an attempt should be made to set up negotiations between the TUC and the newly constituted Confederation of British Industry (CBI). This, I argued, would put the spotlight on low wages. Other issues could be the*

forty-hour week, leading to a thirty-five hour week, and a minimum of three weeks' holiday with pay. Of course I know that these targets looked unrealistic at first sight but my idea was to arouse the movement to a united campaign... True, our ideas were accepted in a routine kind of way by the TUC General Council, and adopted at the following Congress, and were seen as good points for discussion, but there was no effort by the TUC to win public support. The Communist Party and the Left in general were not happy about the policy, but the real reason for lack of action was the overwhelming inertia of most union leaders. They tended to oppose change and in any case were afraid to upsetting the Government.”

“One aspect of our policy was the emphasis on productivity agreements. I addressed dozens of conferences and wrote articles on the theme for a variety of publications from the News of the World to Tribune. In my article in the News of the World I said: ‘Too many disputes in industry...seem to arise from inadequate communication, lack of understanding of agreements and lack of consultation. To deal with this situation, trade union officials and shop stewards should surely have the right to hold meetings of their members on works premises, and when necessary during working hour. Given this approach, productivity agreements represent not only the chance to secure bigger pay packets and shorter hours combined with employment security

but also the opportunity for workers to have a larger ‘say’ in industrial decisions which affect their working lives’.” (pp 182-3)

Since Bert Ramelson was by this stage the CPGB’s Industrial Organiser, Jack’s reference to that Party being “unhappy” about his strategy is an allusion to Ramelson and himself being very much at odds with each other during that period. Ramelson was also “unhappy” with Jack’s industrial democracy strategy and—no less than did Labour’s Minister for Transport Barbara Castle—he was to regard Jack as a “syndicalist” deviationist on such issues. Jack described his interaction with Castle as follows:

“After spending some time discussing transport integration and the plans for regional transport authorities, we turned to my views on industrial democracy and how they might fit into the machinery Barbara and her friends had in mind. The discussion was inconclusive, for Barbara thought my ideas ‘way out’, ‘syndicalist’, even ‘anarchist’. I found her reaction incomprehensible, for I was simply urging that when she came to set up regional transport authorities, working people in the employment of the authority, such as busmen, should be appointed to serve on the board. She conceded that it would be useful to have people on the authorities with practical experience, but did not agree that they should represent the workers. Neither did she agree that employees should serve on the authority in which they worked. Her ideas prevailed in subsequent



*legislation. In my many dealings with Barbara Castle I found her anxious to do things for the workers but not with them. Her outlook was not all that unusual in politicians of the Left.” (p. 193)*

Harold Wilson’s promotion of Barbara Castle to the position of Secretary State for Employment and her White Paper on Trade Union legislation coincided with Jack Jones’s election as General Secretary of the TGWU. He recalled:

*“The White Paper In Place of Strife caused much division and bitterness. It shook the Labour movement. Yet through it all, there was no desertion from the ranks. I was the Executive Officer of the union (or to give the job its full title – Assistant Executive Secretary) but my standing had been enhanced by the overwhelming majority I had received in the ballot for election as General Secretary. The vote had been concluded in December 1968 but Frank Cousins was not due to retire until September 1969, so I was still in the designate stage. I had, however, been elected to the General Council of the TUC in September 1968 and this enabled me to play a leading role in the debate on the White Paper. The twofold nature of the Government’s proposals put the General Council in a dilemma. Some proposals were favourable, but they appeared to me a sugar coating on a very bitter pill. The government was determined to apply legal sanctions. It had tried it with the prices and incomes legislation and had failed, now it sought to control the trade unions by other means. This approach, the TUC declared, would ‘worsen rather*

*than improve industrial relations’. A great deal of press speculation occurred and leaks suggesting early legislation began to appear. The General Council responded to pressure from Frank Cousins, myself and others to seek a meeting with the Prime Minister. Meantime shop stewards were upset at what appeared to be a direct attack on them. Those of us on the General Council who had lived through the rough and tumble of life on the shop floor know there would be real trouble if coercive measures were applied. The meeting with the Prime Minister took place on 11 April 1969. He was accompanied by Barbara Castle. We told them that (except in wartime) there had been no criminal law in industrial relations for over a hundred years, and that we would not co-operate with the operation of legal sanctions...” (pp. 203-4)*

The British General Election of 1970 saw Labour’s defeat and Ted Heath’s Tory Government take its place. Jones’s spearheading of the struggle against the penal clauses of Labour’s proposed Industrial Relations Bill was now succeeded by the need to struggle against an even more penal Bill enacted by the new Tory Government. This, then, was the context for the Jones/Ramelson cooperation in the years 1969-71 — which had nothing to do with any “KGB agent” activity on the part of either party, despite the smears inherent in M15 Professor Andrew’s “exposure” of such contacts. To Labour Prime Minister Wilson’s credit, knowing this to be the case, he refused outright M15’s request for permission to tap Jack’s phone; and to Tory Prime Minister Heath’s credit, as soon as the wire-



taps that he had initially authorised also proved this to be the case, he insisted that they should cease in 1971. Moreover, it was the character of the trade union strategy developed by Jones in the subsequent years of his leadership (until his retirement in 1978) that led to his decisive break with Ramelson. Jack wrote of new developments, commencing with a meeting between himself and Prime Minister Heath in 1972:

*“Although I had known that Heath was not unsympathetic to labour, from the days when I had met him as Minister of Labour (in 1963), the exchange strengthened my conviction that he genuinely wanted to get on with working people. There was a marked change in his attitude towards the unions following the early abrasive months of his Government. He was always ready to meet TUC representatives... In April 1972 the TUC was invited to meet the Prime Minister to discuss the economic situation... At the April meeting and subsequently Heath and his ministers wanted to concentrate on economic cooperation, with an eye to wages restraint, despite the Government’s earlier protestations of opposition to the idea. We for our part were determined to make the Industrial Relations Act the major issue. Our approach was constructive, trying to gain acceptance of improved conciliation and arbitration procedures as an alternative to the Act. I made much play with Ted Heath’s own statement on TV: ‘We have to find a more sensible way of settling our differences.’ It was perhaps too much to expect*

*for him to do an about turn on his legislation, yet had he been able to it would have transformed his relationship with the trade unions and his future in the Tory Party. Should we talk to the Government, if they want to talk to us? That question became an issue the General Council debated over many months. I became convinced that it was in our members’ interests not to miss an opportunity of changing the Government’s mind. Unemployment was growing rapidly, and inflation was rising, our attitude on these developments needed to be put strongly, as did our concern over low-paid workers and pensioners...”*

*“In the event, the industrial membership of the National Economic Council (the TUC and the CBI had six members each) was called in for the joint discussions Ted Heath seemingly wanted. Examination in detail of the problems of low-paid workers and of prices was on the agenda. We could not say ‘no’ to that, and we were soon into a series of meetings at Downing Street or Chequers. The talks were a little abrasive at times, but always Heath was at his most courteous with the TUC representatives ... I for one was not willing to be swallowed up, and that went for Hugh Scanlon too. We continued to press the trade union case doggedly... Of all the people around the table, Hughie and I were in the most difficult position, because in both our unions there was strong opposition to our participation. In Scanlon’s case his union decided he must withdraw from the second round*

*of talks... Proposals and counter-proposals were argued over the table. The TUC and the Government spokesmen did most of the talking, the CBI contribution was very limited. Then, after countless hours of meetings, there was an abrupt ending. To the surprise of the trade union side, Ted Heath declared that certain important items we had been emphasising—pensions, rents, the impact of EEC membership, the Industrial Relations Act – were outside the scope of negotiation. Such matters, we were told, were for the House of Commons to determine. A rigid posture was suddenly adopted by the Government; even to this day I am unable to understand why. No one could have been more disappointed than TUC General Secretary Vic Feather. He had been a firm supporter of the talks throughout and had taken at face value the Government's claim that it was prepared to enter into a real partnership with both sides of industry in the management of economy. He felt that Ted Heath had thrown away a golden opportunity. And yet he himself may have been responsible for the disappointment, by misleading Heath into thinking the Government could get agreement on wages and prices without commitment on the wider issues we had raised, while at the same time encouraging me and others to feel that agreement was possible on those very issues..."*

*"In 1973 there were almost as many meetings between the TUC and the Government as in the previous year, but without*

*the presence of the CBI and Hugh Scanlon. The TUC team consisted of five, including myself. Presumably Heath talked to the CBI separately, but the media no longer wrote of 'tripartism' or 'corporate states'. A battle for public support was in progress. Although I became increasingly despondent about the possibility of changing the Government's policies, I was convinced that we had to put our point of view at every opportunity. If the spotlight shone on Downing Street then we should be there, otherwise our members would feel we were not doing our job. At the TGWU Biennial Delegates conference in July 1973 I was under strong pressure to oppose talks with the Government. In reply I told the Conference: 'The Union should not place itself in the position of being blamed for not talking when our people expect it of us ... You do not pay me to sit dumb. You pay me to speak, to act, to help, to advise, and part of the process is publicly to present our case...' Our difficulties in establishing our case with Ted Heath and his ministers served to strengthen my efforts in the TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee. The programme we had been urging on the Prime Minister, I believed, should become Labour's policy. Getting this accepted did not prove easy; I found myself having to argue as strongly with the Labour leaders as I had done with Heath and his colleagues over the control of retail prices, for example. No Prime Minister, either before or since, could compare with Ted Heath in the efforts he made to establish a spirit of camaraderie*

with trade union leaders and to offer an attractive package which might satisfy large numbers of work-people. That was the case with his 'stage three'. He and his advisers offered a deal permitting limited free collective bargaining on top of thresholds agreements to help the low paid and compensate for increases in the cost of living. Attractive as this was, it meant the continuation of the Industrial Relations Act and a failure to meet our social programme. Statutory control over wage increases hit

workers in the public sector most of all. This was especially the case with the miners who had a strong case for much more than the Government schemes would allow." (pp 256-9)

1971 was the year in which I myself commenced work in the Irish trade union movement. Two years later— influenced by Jones's strategic "New Departure" for the 1970s—I set out to counteract the influence of an Irish would-be Ramelson.

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*Irish Political Review, January 2011***JACK JONES VINDICATED – PART FIVE**

The only left-wing organisation to support the British trade union strategy being pursued from 1972 onwards by the then TGWU General Secretary Jack Jones (1913-2009) was the British & Irish Communist Organisation, through the theoretical journal of its London branch, *The Communist*. In Ireland the argument for a similar left-wing stand—embracing Jones’s advocacy of industrial democracy as an essential component—was articulated by an ITGWU shop steward Pat Murphy (1937-2009), of the B&ICO’s Dublin branch, and one of its founding members. I joined that branch in 1971, at the same time as I took up

employment in Liberty Hall in March 1971 as Head of Research with the ITGWU (retiring as SIPTU Head of Research in May 2010). A would-be Irish version of Bert Ramelson, British Communist Party Industrial Organiser and outright opponent of the Jones strategy, emerged in the shape of the Communist Party of Ireland’s Noel Harris, Southern Irish Divisional Officer of ASTMS (which later became TASS, then AMICUS, and finally merging with the TGWU in 2009 to form UNITE). I was to be very much influenced by both Jack Jones and Pat Murphy in the strategic arguments that I tried to develop in both the ITGWU journal *Liberty* and the B&ICO theoretical journal *The Irish Communist* in addressing such key questions of union strategy.

In August 1973 the Communist Party of Ireland—of which my father was the then General Secretary—published a pamphlet authored by Noel Harris and entitled *Challenge to Irish Trade Unionism—National Wage Agreements*. In an article entitled *Workers’ Control—The Need for Communist Clarification*, which was published in the December 1973 issue of *The Irish Communist*, I

argued:

*“In this pamphlet we find the traditional economic half-truths of the ‘Left’, only on a more intensified scale in certain directions, since ASTMS is a trade union catering very much for the higher-paid. Whatever the economic arguments concerning National Agreements, and despite the fact that the acceleration in food price inflation reduced the real value of money wage increases secured under them, it must still be recognised that in relative terms, the position of the lower paid workers has improved compared with that of the higher-paid. The worker on £15 in December 1970 has received money wage increases totalling 54 percent over the 3 years of the Agreements compared with percentage money wage increases of 42 percent for the worker on £20 and 33 percent for the worker on £30. Noel Harris, however, dismisses arguments in this area by claiming that: “It is false to suggest that the gains of the 14th Round for the lower paid have been brought by the sacrifices of the better-*

*paid...’ Noel Harris argues that the better-paid worker should have done relatively better than he did under the National Agreements and that the total wages-bill should have been increased on this basis. Noel Harris shirks the fact that this would be at the expense of the lower-paid, because a further expansion of the wage-bill at a faster rate than the growth in productivity would necessarily further undermine the real wage gains of the lower paid by an acceleration in the rate of inflation, if increased unemployment were not to result...”*

*“In the August 1973 issue of Liberty I argued the following economic realities which Noel Harris chooses to ignore:*

*‘During the course of the National Wages Agreement there has not been any significant alteration in the income shares held by wages and profits ... Consequently an attempt to redress the inflationary losses suffered by workers on the basis of a wages policy alone would be inadequate and ultimately have results other than desired. In previous ‘Liberty’ articles we have referred to the fact that if wage increases begin to continuously exceed the growth in productivity, they must either lead to a drop in investment, with its consequent unemployment, or, alternatively, an increased inflationary situation must be accepted to allow profit levels to be restored in order to generate the necessary investment funds. For this reason, it has been argued, the wage bargain struck by trade unions should have as a necessary*

*component a growing element of control by workers over investment, with industrial democracy beginning to extend at the levels of both the individual firm and the economy as a whole.’*

*“Noel Harris makes it perfectly obvious elsewhere in his pamphlet that there is no more determined a person than himself in resisting the whole perspective of such a resolution. He argues: ‘Whether one likes it or not, employees are concerned primarily about their wages. They have no direct interest in capital, its growth, the use of profits or decisions on investment, which in our society are taken by other people. Whether one likes it or not the mass of wage and salary earners feel that capital is alien to them, belonging to others, and that investment requirements are no reason to restrain wage demands.’ Such is the ‘Communist’ leadership given to the trade union movement by Noel Harris. At a time when the objective pre-requisites are coming more and more to the fore for a qualitative development in the consciousness of trade unionists with regard to the hitherto unchallenged control of production by the bourgeoisie, Noel Harris does his utmost to prevent such a consciousness emerging by encouraging a fatalistic view that there is nothing that the trade unions with proper leadership could accomplish in terms of workers’ control. Consequently Noel Harris advocates an acceptance of the system as it is in order to pursue an intensified policy of economism. On no account, it would seem,*

*should workers be encouraged to transcend their traditional trade union consciousness.”*

*“The economism of Noel Harris consists in pouring cold water on any attempt to take the first necessary steps towards developing a socialist consciousness among workers, namely, activating a concrete struggle in the direction of workers’ control . Instead he upholds, as the be-all and end-all of trade union action, the intensification of a type of economic struggle which has begun to prove itself more and more self-defeating, particularly for the lower paid workers (although maybe not so much for the managerial staffs that Noel Harris’s union caters for).”*

I proceeded to highlight how Harris was essentially regurgitating Ramelson:

*“In the October 1968 issue of Marxism Today, the CPGB Industrial Organiser: Bert Ramelson, wrote: ‘In private industry worker directors would, in my view, be a red herring.’ This is a position that Bert Ramelson has reiterated five years later, on 30 June 1973, in the CPGB’s Comment: ‘We have had something of this sort (of class collaboration) in Western Germany, where in coal and steel 50 percent of the board are elected by the workers; I don’t think it is accidental that it is Western Germany that we have seen less struggle during the past period than any other part of Europe... In the period we are moving into, this (question of workers’ directors) is going to*

*become a major issue of struggle inside the labour movement. As I understand it, the T.U.C. might even come forward with the idea of supervisory boards and election of directors. I am not concerned at the moment with the method of election. I am against workers’ directors, no matter how they are elected, or to whom they are responsible, being part of management of a private firm.’ It was along these lines that Bert Ramelson also attacked the document entitled ‘Labour’s Programme for Britain’ where it stated: ‘And since collective bargaining does not seem to be adequate enough on its own we are considering the provision of some kind of direct representation for workers.’ In the Morning Star of 21 June 1973 Bert Ramelson’s indignant response this is to exclaim: ‘Who says collective bargaining does not seem to be adequate enough?’ And that just about sums up Bert Ramelson’s position...”*

*“The British Trade Union Congress’s Interim Report on Industrial Democracy, while emphasising the extension of the scope of collective bargaining as an essential element in extending industrial democracy, also pointed to the limitations of confining the struggle for industrial democracy within such a rigid framework: ‘Major decisions on investment, location, closures, takeovers and mergers ... are generally taken at levels where collective bargaining does not take place, and indeed are subject matter not readily covered*



*by collective bargaining. New forms of control are needed. This problem is particularly acute in the private sector ... A large number of decisions of vital importance to workpeople are made at national managerial levels, but are not susceptible to collective bargaining. Institutional involvement in these decisions fills a gap between worker participation and control at local level and the influence of the trade union movement as a whole which exists in the national level.' ... But Bert Ramelson would prefer the T.U.C. to adopt his philosophy of economism: 'The right to strike is the be all and end all of industrial trade union struggle'...*"

This sustained CPGB attack, on both the industrial democracy and social contract campaigns of 1974-75 in Britain, was a campaign orchestrated by Bert Ramelson against the whole strategy being developed by Jack Jones. And the CPGB line also gathered support from much of the Tribunate Left.

Jones related some of these episodes as follows:

*"And what about the trade union side of the Social Contract? I had said publicly that the Government was entitled to look for a response... I had been an advocate of productivity agreements from the beginning and saw in them opportunities for widening the area of collective bargaining as well as bringing about increased earnings. My advocacy of the idea over the years had led to differences with some union leaders, both*

*on the right and on the left, who were inclined to dismiss such deals as 'phoney'. Wage restraint was the big issue of the Trades Union Congress, according to the newspapers. They made the most of any sign of division, and when the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers at a meeting on the Saturday before the Congress decided to vote against the Social Contract it became big headlines. As always the reports were highly personalised: 'Jack Jones appealed to Scanlon to be more realistic, to think again', or 'On Wednesday, Scanlon dramatically capitulated, and the Social Contract was voted through Congress with virtual unanimity.' In fact it wasn't quite like that... The opponents of the Social Contract were led by Ken Gill of TASS (also of the CPGB, and Noel Harris's boss – MO'R) ... The danger of losing the advantages we had already received, let alone prospects for further advance, if Labour lost the Election, concentrated the minds of a lot of people including Hugh Scanlon. He asked Ken Gill to withdraw his resolution. So strong was the desire for unity in the Congress that Gill agreed, against what he said was his better judgment. Next day he was condemned by the Morning Star (in other words, by Ramelson – MO'R) ..."* (pp 284-5)

*"At the September 1975 Trades Union Congress I moved the motion supporting the £6 policy and outlining the many measures the TUC hoped to achieve through cooperation with the Government.*

When we got to the Labour Party Conference a month afterwards there appeared to be more acrimony than unity. Whatever my misgivings I was determined to back the Government, 'warts and all'. Not least because Harold Wilson, Barbara Castle and others had told me that there were members of the Government who were looking for a break-up, and were ready to move towards a coalition. The threats from the Right worried me, but I wasn't surprised. On the other hand I was shocked to learn from Barbara Castle that Ian Mikardo MP was going to make a savage attack on me and the General Council at the Tribune Rally in the middle of the Conference. I felt indignant that a man I regarded as a friend and colleague could plan so meticulously to attack the Government and the General Council, suggesting in effect that the latter had sold the workers down the river. This was no spontaneous attack; it was designed to get the maximum publicity. Mik was a member of the NEC of the Labour Party and represented them on the Economic Committee of the TUC. Why had he not made his attacks there? What troubled me most was the prospect of Mik's references to the TUC going through without challenge and the media getting the impression that the Tribune rally unanimously backed his statement... and I decided to protest at the point where Mik referred to the General Council. I stood at the back of the meeting, then moved forward swiftly to the platform when the moment came. All eyes were on me. When I reached the platform I

shouted to the chairman: 'I object to these attacks on the trade unions and the TUC. We want unity, not splitting attacks like this!' (See Note Three – MO'R) ... There were many less spectacular incidents in the campaign for the £6 policy, but to the consternation of some people both on the Right and on the Left, it succeeded. We proved that the trade union movement could deliver, and not one instance of a breach of the policy from the trade union side was reported. Within the twelve months of operation which had been stipulated, inflation fell by more than half, from 25 percent to 12 percent. An egalitarian approach to the solution of economic problems had been attempted, but before the effects of the £6 policy could be assessed demands went up to maintain the sacred principle of 'differentials'. In the main the cry came from academics, politicians, and some white-collar unions. The overwhelming majority of people in industry had accepted the £6 solution, but forces, in the main not directly connected with industry, were determined that favourable lessons should not be drawn from that." (pp 298-300)

"Part of the Social Contract which was repeated in the Labour Party's manifesto of 1974 was a commitment to an Industrial Democracy Act 'to increase the control of industry by the people'. Closer contact with Europe through the EEC and the European trade union movement increased our interest in the subject. It meant a lot to me personally. From my youthful days I had been associated

*with the extension of collective bargaining. Now I saw the possibility of elected shop stewards taking their place in the boardrooms of private companies and publicly-owned industries... I wanted to avoid at all costs the sort of fiasco which occurred when Harold Wilson's Government of 1966-70 experimented with industrial democracy in the steel industry. When the idea was first considered I personally urged on Barbara Castle the need to ensure that worker directors should be elected and accountable to the shop stewards, and through them to the workforce. Their reaction was that my idea was 'syndicalist', if not 'anarchist', and could not be entertained. In fact, as it worked out, the procedure became meaningless and patronising. The men who were appointed had to give up any active connection with their union."* (p. 310)

In 1976 I sought to draw some lessons for the Irish trade union movement by covering Jack Jones's struggle for industrial democracy in Britain in considerable detail in a series of articles I had published in *Liberty*, journal of the ITGWU, of which the following are some excerpts:

*"One of the most heartening aspects of our Union's Annual Conference this year was the manner in which delegates were no longer content to formally adopt motions supporting industrial democracy, before moving hurriedly on to the next business, but felt the need to make contributions*

*concerning the practical problems of any meaningful developments in this field. Much of this interest has, of course, been heightened by the proximity of legislation providing for worker directors in semi-state enterprises. It is not, however, sufficient to have a merely responsive approach to such developments. Trade unionists must articulate their own demands if in fact industrial democracy is to have any vitality... This has proved to be an issue which has not so far resulted in any unanimity in the British trade union movement. The interesting point to note is that the division of opinion has not been along traditional left-right lines in that movement. The major advocate of the worker director policy of the TUC has been Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and he has been opposed as much by Frank Chapple of the Electrical Trade Union on the right as by Hugh Scanlon of the Amalgamated Engineering Union on the left. The division has rather been between those who feel that current economic problems demand a new dimension to trade unionism and those who, for whatever reason, regard traditional trade unionism as sacrosanct. Since it is highly unlikely that any meaningful developments in industrial democracy can take place without first coming to grips with debating these controversial issues in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, it might be of interest to readers to take a look at how the argument has progressed to date in Britain. We might also learn something from the fact that the limited extent*



*and inconclusive outcome of this British debate has now resulted in the TUC itself and some of its important affiliated unions currently pursuing policies on the question of worker directors which are in direct contradiction with one another... The TUC General Council's call for parity of representation for worker directors elected by trade union members, was to be supported by the TGWU and NUPE but opposed from the right by the EETPU and from the left by the AUEW. How the 1974 Congress debate further progressed will be examined next month." (Liberty, July 1976)*

*"The issue was not fought out decisively and the verbal reconciliation which was attempted only resulted in a confused outcome. The TUC General Council interpreted the Congress vote as giving it the go-ahead to demand the enactment of enabling legislation for 50 per cent worker representation on company boards. The TUC submission to the Bullock Committee on Industrial Democracy, however, came under fire from the EETPU on the right, the GMWU on the centre, and the AUEW on the left—since these unions also felt that the indecisiveness represented by the all-things-to-all-men Congress vote justified their continued opposition to any system of worker directors. Hopefully the Irish trade union movement will be in a position to avoid the pitfalls which inevitably result from such indecisiveness, and such papering-over of important differences, whenever it decides*

*to get to grips with clarifying its demands on industrial democracy. In the meantime, developments in this area subsequent to that 1974 Congress of the TUC, and particularly the diverse evidence submitted to the Bullock Committee on Industrial Democracy will be looked at in greater detail in a future issue." (Liberty, August 1976).*

*"The oppositionist approach stood in sharp contrast with the stand adopted by the Transport and General Workers' Union, whose General Secretary, Jack Jones, has been one of the chief architects of the TUC policy... The TGWU championed parity board representation in the private as well as the public sector and its General Secretary, Jack Jones, is at present a member of the Bullock Committee of Inquiry into Industrial Democracy... The major handicap facing the TUC in the pursuit of its policy aims nevertheless lay in the ambiguity of its 1974 Conference decisions. If further progress was to be made, the issue needed to be resolved when industrial democracy was again debated at this year's TUC Conference on September 8. On the previous day the TUC General Secretary, Len Murray, had taken the argument into the camp of those opposing the Congress Report when he wrote in the Morning Star:*

*'We say 'yes' to the extension of collective bargaining and 'yes' to parity representation on policy boards. Neither one is substitute for the other... In accepting their*

*share of responsibility for jointly-made board decisions trade union representatives will not be accepting some new and alien form of responsibility as is sometimes implied. Every time a union representative signs a collective agreement he is assuming responsibility for a decision. That decision, while possibly not ideal, represents the best bargain that can be achieved at that particular point of time. These are hard facts of industrial life which are all too often buried under abstract rhetoric about unions as independent oppositional bodies, totally uncontaminated by any shared responsibility for company policy. All that can be achieved through a totally 'oppositional' role is a de facto right of veto over management decisions, which unions are increasingly realizing isn't always the best way to further membership interests. Trade unions want to be in a position to have a decisive say not just over what they don't want but on what they do want.'.."*

*"The line of reasoning pursued in that article set the framework for the TUC debate on the following day. Len Murray and Jack Jones would argue that their policy for board representation fully complied with such terms by virtue of being a further advancement of the power of the trade union movement... The 1976 TUC Conference at long last grasped this contentious nettle by heavily defeating the AUEW amendment and overwhelming carrying the NUR pro-General Council resolution against the*

*combined opposition of the AUEW, the EETPU and the GMWU. It now remains for the Bullock Committee to make up its mind." (Liberty, October 1976)*

*"In a series of articles last year we detailed the debate within the British trade union movement as to whether or not it should pursue a policy of demanding equality of representation on company boards in both the public and private sectors. The Trade Union Congress decided that it should press for these demands. The British Government accordingly appointed a Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy, chaired by Lord Bullock, whose purpose was to investigate the reform of the company law to take account of the TUC proposals. The Bullock Committee subsequently issued its Report earlier this year and called for legislation in the private sector which would permit workers to have an equal number of representatives with shareholders on a single-tier board in companies employing over 2,000, while a third outside element would be jointly co-opted on to the board by both sets of representatives. Such a system of worker directors would, moreover, be firmly based on trade union machinery... Whether or not legislation is introduced into the UK Parliament along the lines of the Bullock Report's recommendations depends very much on the willingness of the British trade union movement to strongly campaign for such legislation. Either way, a debate has been opened up that will*

*not easily go away.” (Liberty, June 1977)*

All four articles have since been reproduced by the *Ernest Bevin Society* in the April-May, June-July, August-September and October-November 2008 issues of the journal *Problems of Capitalism and Socialism: The Workers’ Control Debate from 1975 to now*. See the Athol Books website for free download of these magazines in pdf format [see note four].

In its predecessor journal, *Problems of Communism*, the B&ICO had been the only leftwing organisation to mark the centenary in 1981 of the birth of Ernest Bevin in 1881, and an article by myself appeared in the Summer 1981 issue, entitled “*Bevin and the British Road—a Problem for Leninism*”.

Ramelson’s successor as CPGB Industrial Organiser, Mick Costello, presided over that Party’s hostility towards any centenary commemoration of Bevin.

“*Transport Union members are somewhat bemused by the fuss being made by the union’s leadership over the publication of a book on right-winger Ernest Bevin*”, was the *Morning Star*’s contemptuous comment on 12 March 1981. A week earlier, on 5 March, the TGWU’s retired General Secretary, Jack Jones, had been determined to have his own personal commemoration, in a centenary lecture which be delivered in the London School of Economics. Entitled “*Ernest Bevin—Revolutionary by Consent*”, Jack’s lecture was also published by the UK Department of Labour in the March 1981 issue of

*Employment Gazette*.

It was this lecture that led to my first direct collaboration with Jack, when he agreed to Dublin’s *Labour History Workshop* jointly re-publishing both of our Bevin tributes in 1983. And a year before he died came our final collaboration when, in January 2008, Jack agreed to my request to him to provide an Introduction to the launch of that new series of *Problems of Capitalism and Socialism*. Jack Jones proceeded to provide the following parting thoughts on the labour struggles that he had led:

*“The great power of the trade unions and sympathetic Governments in the late 1960s and the 1970s provided an opportunity for the working class in Britain to start becoming the ruling class. These conditions were the result of the social and economic and reforms introduced by Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin following the Second World War. The Government was prepared to admit the unions as equal partners in planning the economy. The Bullock Committee, on which I had the privilege to sit, was set up under terms of reference devised by the Trade Union Congress and recommended a parity of power between employers and unions on the Boards of large private companies... The opportunities offered were unfortunately not taken up in the wider union movement and Britain moved in a Thatcherite direction. This all happened over thirty years ago. A whole generation does not know about these things*



*or about the world as it was at this time. I am glad therefore that two of the workers' control activists of that time, Joe Keenan and Conor Lynch, are publishing an account of these times and these events as a series in their magazine 'Problems of Capitalism & Socialism'. I am also pleased that most of the material will be in the form of reprinting journals, pamphlets and articles from that era."*

Jack Jones had little hesitation in displaying his contempt for some of the mindless Left by naming them, for example Reg Birch, AUEW Deputy General Secretary and leader of the Maoist Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). Writing of a Ford Motors dispute, Jack recalled in *Union Man*: *"Let the grass grow over the plants!" was the view of Reg Birch, secretary of the trade union side, who favoured a prolonged strike. I did not share his idea; had I done so trade unionism at Ford's could have been weakened beyond repair.*" (p. 235)

I trust I have shown up M15 Professor Andrew's slander—that Jack Jones and Bert Ramelson were both "KGB agents" engaged in a common Soviet-inspired industrial conspiracy—for the nonsense that it is. I trust that I have further demonstrated how, from 1972 onwards, their trade union strategies were diametrically opposed to each other. And yet Ramelson never spoke of Jack with anything but the height of personal respect, while Jack refrained from criticising Ramelson by name, referring instead to depersonalised Morning Star criticisms.

There was, indeed, more than one political opponent to whom Jack gave such gentle treatment. Sir Alfred Sherman—who had been expelled from the CPGB as a "Titoist" in 1948—went on to become co-founder of the Tory Party's Centre for Policy Studies and to serve as Margaret Thatcher's key ideological mentor and speech writer. And yet, in the September 2006 *Newsletter* of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, Jack wrote: *"I am sad to report that we have lost some comrades and friends of the Trust since our last issue. We pay tribute particularly to comrades Alan Menai Williams and Sir Alfred Sherman."* Why had Jack been so kind? Because, just like Bert Ramelson, Alfred Sherman had the shared personal experience with Jack Jones of having fought bravely, and go on to suffer accordingly, as an International Brigade volunteer in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War. As I myself also wrote in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives' *ALBA Forum Digest* on 31 August 2006:

*"Alfred Sherman was indeed a veteran of the 15th International Brigade's British Battalion. He had, following his capture on the Aragon front, also been a prisoner for the best part of a year (or, perhaps, I should re-phrase it as 'the worst part') in the notoriously vicious fascist concentration camp of San Pedro de Cardeñas. During such incarceration his record continued to be an honourable one (as personally testified to me by two of his fellow-prisoners, Dubliners Maurice Levitas and Bob Doyle. See Note Five). Because of that record, notwithstanding his*

*subsequent reactionary politics that were loathed by the overwhelming majority of his fellow IB veterans, he continued to be welcomed in their ranks at Spanish Civil War commemorations. In 1996 Sherman was among those British veterans who participated in the International Brigade Association delegation to the 60th anniversary commemoration ceremonies in Spain, as well as receiving the honorary citizenship awarded to all IB vets by unanimous decision of the Spanish Parliament. Sherman remained particularly loyal to the memory of those who had been his fellow prisoners at San Pedro. In 2001, when I gave the oration at the London funeral of the Dublin IB veteran and former San Pedro prisoner Maurice Levitas, I observed that Sherman, despite the handicaps of advancing old age, had been among those IB vets who had made a special effort to be present in order to pay their respects—even though Morry’s membership of the New Communist Party placed him unequivocally at the opposite end of the political spectrum to Sherman’s Thatcherism (or was it Thatcher’s Shermanism?). On account of his courageous role in Spain, the memory of the young Alfred Sherman continues, accordingly, to be honoured by those inspired by the history of the International Brigades.”*

The *Real Band of Brothers* was therefore the most appropriate title for Max Arthur’s 2009 book on such brigadistas. And, in his *Observer* obituary for Jack Jones on 26 April 2009, Max Arthur again quoted Jack as

relating and concluding:

*“Before the battle of the Ebro, I met up with young Ted Heath (later the Tory prime minister). He came out with a small group of students, while we were in training. He was then chairman of the Federation of University Conservative Associations and was to the right of the five-man delegation. I suppose he reflected a strand of Conservative thinking which had some sympathy with the Republic... He was very sympathetic and I built up a friendship with him. It was amazing to me that a Conservative would come out there in favour of the Republic—as he was, genuinely. I established a link with him which I maintained afterwards. He was always very friendly—more so than some of the Labour Party. I say that now, but I wouldn’t have said it at the time. I found I identified more with Ted Heath than with Harold Wilson, for example.”*

Jack would also always leap forward to defend the good name of honourable men whenever they were slandered by guttersnipes. Again, see the *Ireland & The Spanish Civil War Website* [Note Six] for how unhesitatingly he defended my own father against an *Irish Times* attack by Kevin Myers in 2005. Three decades earlier, he had done the same for Ernie Bevin:

*“Towards the end of 1977 I was involved in several controversies. I took issue with the author A.L. Rowse, who had claimed in an article in the Daily Telegraph that Ernest Bevin, in his last words, had said of Britain’s ordinary*

*people, 'The buggers won't work.' I challenged him to prove this; he dithered and claimed that Bevin had said something of the sort to Lord Boothby, but there was no verification. I did not believe that Ernie Bevin had ever said that of his own people, and said so...I was indignant that what I regarded as anti-worker prejudice should gain publicity and replied in detail, using the New Statesman as my platform." (p 324)*

It is therefore no less incumbent upon those of us who knew, loved and admired Jack James Larkin Jones, and who were honoured to have been able to work alongside him in several fields, to thoroughly expose the British intelligence smear campaign against his memory for the monstrosity that it is— even if this has entailed subscribing to Jack's own maxim of providing a reply of some considerable detail!

## Notes.

*Note One (page 4): <http://free-downloads.atholbooks.org/>*

*Note Two (page 10): <http://free-downloads.atholbooks.org/>*

*Note Three (page 44): See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/3390633.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3390633.stm) for a TV clip of that confrontation*

*Note Four (page 48): [http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/problems\\_2/index.php](http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/problems_2/index.php)*

*Note Five (page 49): See <http://www.irelandscw.com/obit-MLevitas.htm> and <http://www.irelandscw.com/ibvol-BobDoyle.htm> for their obituaries.*

*Note Six (page 50): <http://www.irelandscw.com/>*