

Libertarian Communist

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ON THE FRONT Sunny Jim and his allies in the labour movement may have done a good job in restraining the justified anger of the working class. On the other hand, one of the most significant trends in the last year or so has been the rise in the number of struggles for union recognition. Workers at Grunwicks, DeSoutters, Trust Houses Forte, Garners Steak Houses and even Claridges have all fought, or are fighting for the basic right to join a trade union. These struggles are taking place in industries, such as the hotel and catering industry, where the workers are traditionally low-paid, and where the high proportion of the workforce is female or black, or both. Many of these workers are now saying that they have had enough of being the most exploited section of the working class.

WOMEN RECLAIM THE NIGHT Several hundred women marched through Soho last November as part of a nationwide confrontation with the exploitation of women as sexual objects. Taking over the streets at night in a challenge against male dominance, they denied the fear of molestation or rape, and spat on the image of women presented in the media. Together, women can be strong!

SCAPEGOATS. The working class of Merseyside are being singled out for special treatment by the ruling class. Workers at Lucas and Speke have been told that they must swell the dole queues so that the industrial giants can set their ledgers straight. Faced with the inability of the capitalists to find a market for their products, the workers at Lucas Aerospace and Leylands Speke have organised to prevent closure and have drawn up plans for the production of goods that are more socially useful.

THE NATIONAL FRONT during the last flurry of elections took over our schools and tried to keep ordinary people out of their "public meetings" with police aid. The reaction to these circuses was often quite firm and some authorities were pressured into banning them. We must organize in our groups, communities and organizations and in our local anti-racist and fascist cttes, and in the ANL, to keep the pressure up over the coming months.

CARRY ON THE FIGHT BACK!

Public Sector

NUT MUST TRY HARDER



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

AT THE moment there is a slight pause in the ideological battle that has been waged in education in the last three years or so. This is similar to the slight but perceptible lull that has occurred in other areas such as the struggles over cuts and wages.

The Tyndale teachers have finally lost their fight to be reinstated by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). The Industrial Tribunal where they recently lost was the final body of appeal that they could turn to. Harvey Hinds, the senior ILEA official who resigned over the case, offered his support to the teachers but even that didn't help.

In the context of progressive methods, their sacking can only be described as a massive defeat for all those teachers who are concerned to stave off the right wing attempts, led by St John Stevas and Rhodes Boyson, to impose restrictions on what is taught.

That these ideological restrictions, such as more 'discipline', the elimination of mixed-ability groups, the narrowing down of choice in the curriculum and so on, go hand in hand to give an ideological veneer for education cuts is indisputable.

Obviously the Tyndale teachers are only a few of the large number of working-class orientated teachers concerned to fight for positive discrimination in favour of working-class kids. There are many lessons to be learnt from the affair, but two main ones stand out.

Vague

First, the term progressive is a catch all phrase. Because of the vagueness of the Left over where education should be going it has become a convenient term of abuse for the right-wing. It represents long-haired lazy revolutionaries, operating in scenes of rioting children, spreading red hate, whilst being out on strike! To protest that this ugly caricature is untrue is not

enough, as the Tyndale teachers found out.

What was needed was a coherent strategy for working-class education to rebuff the Black Paperites' arguments. It wasn't there. However many teachers are beginning to realise their mistakes and the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) has organised the first National Conference, of many hopefully, entitled "The Politics of Education". It will be a two-day conference on the 22nd and 23rd April, and many socialist educationalists have been invited, and workshops are being arranged. See elsewhere in the paper for full details.

The second major lesson of Tyndale is that sectarianism can damage any struggle. The teachers were suspicious of left groups at the start, and this prevented them making use of the resources that a network of socialist teachers could have given them. When, finally, the Defence Campaign was underway, the Socialist Workers Party's hostility to working with the STA undermined attempts to form a rounded socialist rebuttal of the right-wing smears.

The fightback against the Cuts and in particular the cuts in education has been muted recently. This stems partly from the National Union of Teachers' leadership's inability to organise a national fightback, and partly from its political support for the Labour Government.

Obviously, these two attitudes go hand in hand. The practical result is that in the eyes of the NUT only "bad" Local Education Authorities make education cuts, not the Government.

Cuts

When a "bad" LEA makes cuts, the executive only grudgingly grants the right to take sanctions to the local NUT. These continue until either a face saving compromise is worked out between the NUT

Executive and the ILEA, or until the LEA moderates its cuts so that it is more in line with the cuts imposed by the other LEAs.

This disastrous attitude is entirely due to the Executive's social democratic view that 'under Thatcher it would be worse'. They have no conception of working with other public sector unions in a united fight against all cuts in social services. They refuse to let any enlightened members (unless they belong to an enlightened NUT branch) officially organising such action at grass roots level. The irony is that where the NUT Executive does tardily get off its arse and call strike action (as in Oxfordshire) it wins.

The fight for Public Sector Alliances has been conducted locally by teachers i.e. in East London and Tameside. To set them up requires a great sensitivity to the situation in the local labour movement. In some areas, where there is a strong Trades Council, it is wiser to make demands on this first and if they are rejected, then use that as a spur for a separate alliance.

In places of work such as schools, different unions operate e.g. NUT, NUPE & TGWU. A working relationship between these branches is a sound prerequisite for a Public Sector Alliance.

Pay

Teachers were awarded a restructuring of their pay in 1974-75 by the Government. The Houghton Report, whilst crystallising the unfair differentials between class and head teachers, did bring teachers pay into line with that of other skilled workers. Inflation has eaten away those gains, and like other groups of workers teachers are beginning to demand that they get back what they've lost. Most active NUT members believe that the 10% guidelines should be broken. The General Secretary of the NUT, Jarvis, supported the firemen at the TUC and the NUT has put in a 13% claim. This claim is way below what teachers should be demanding and it allows the NUT to make militant noises and settle for 10% later.

The STA is fighting for a £1000

flat rate increase. The Communist Party is fighting for a 'restoration of differentials'!

This would mean that classroom teachers would get 8-9% and senior and headteachers would get 35%. The STA believes along with the rest of the left that a flat rate claim would unite all teachers. A percentage claim, apart from its divisive nature, provides an easy get out for the Executive in that they could get 10% overall and redivide it internally so that some teachers would, at the expense of others, get more than 10%.

Racialism

The National Front are organising a National Youth Section. So far, its the case that the media have given an inflated impression of its size and organisation, 'Spot a Red Teacher' leaflets have so far appeared in only a few schools.

At a national level the NUT has confined itself to "fighting" for a multiracial curriculum. Ex-Communist Party member Max Morris led the right wing's successful fight not to affiliate the union to the TUC's motion on racialism at last year's NUT Conference. However

The fight

IN COMMON with other teachers in the country, Humberside teachers have faced crippling cuts in the education budget in the last two years.

November 1976 — The Labour administration of Humberside proposed £2 million cuts for 1977-8 with a "promise" of £1½ million to follow in 1978-80.

December 1976 — We were then threatened with the loss of 287 jobs. Although there was some concern about the cuts proposed in November, teachers were not really aware of the full implications. Many had been fooled by the myth that there was plenty of "fat" which could be trimmed off the education budget, money being wasted—of course never by themselves!

Indeed there had previously been a closely fought battle within the NUT as to whether we should negotiate over the cuts, which to many seemed like discussing the relative merits of hanging or shooting with your executioner!

Hull teachers voted against negotiation, but Humberside teachers as a whole, coming from largely rural areas, voted in favour. These teachers were shocked by the sudden announcement that so many jobs were to be lost, and began to wonder just where their negotiating had got them.

Humberside NUT voted to impose the three day no cover sanction (which means that we would refuse to look after an absent teacher's classes after three days).

No cover

We were backed by the National "Action" Committee of the NUT, which had been, and still is, so often the grave of so much militancy.

We were all set to go ahead (and indeed the NAS/UWT had already started in selected schools) when (surprise, surprise!), the "inevitable" staffing cuts were suddenly discovered to be avoidable, and the £2 million cuts were reduced to £1¼ million.

However this was not the victory



Teachers Rally Against Racism

Photo: Mark Rusher (IFL)

Public Sector

BUILD A PUBLIC SECTOR ALLIANCE

Public services in this country are under vicious attack from the employing class. Resources are being turned away from the 'Social Wage' into the paying off of government debts and the provision of grants to industry.

It is working class people who feel the effects of this process, both as users of the services and as workers employed in them.

Unfortunately, public sector workers who attempt to protect either their living standards or the level of services are often subjected to the most hypocritical abuse by the ruling class. The authorities attempt to obscure their general responsibility and their intransigence in negotiations by blaming the workers for any inconvenience or suffering associated

with the need for industrial action in the public sector. In most cases, moreover, public sector workers have difficulty in winning grievances when their action does not immediately affect the employers' profits.

Only realisation of the *common* interests of the working class and of how the current crisis is an attack on the working class *as a whole* can provide a basis for the unity and solidarity necessary for successful resistance.

Such unity will not be built easily. Nor will it be the result of any single, simple process. Two elements will however, be of special importance. First, the growth of unified action amongst public sector workers themselves, and their creation of a common strategy for the public sector as a whole. Second,

the support of the wider labour movement for this process and its contribution to the achievement of a workers plan for the services involved.

Alongside the ever-present task of solidarity with workers in struggle we require understanding of the social processes at work and of the general objectives required by the workers movement—objectives for the particular services for the public sector as a whole.

In this issue our Public Sector Alliance pages concentrate on the National Health Service. In our next issue we hope to cover what's happening in education. If you have information about the struggle in this sector, or indeed about any other aspect of the public sector, please contact us so that we may consider it for inclusion in the paper.

events have moved faster than Morris, and teachers are finding that they are going to have to affiliate to local anti-racist committees to counter this threat.

In London all the left groups have got together to form the 'All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism' group. They plan to

hold a mass rally of teachers in Central Hall on the evening of March 16th. STA members are arguing that after the rally an ongoing national organisation should be set up.

This article is not complete, even as a simple introduction to the present situation. The important

issues of democracy in the union, and the struggle for women's rights in teaching have not been mentioned. However *Libertarian Communist* does hope to cover these in future education reports. Your contributions on this subject are of course, very welcome.

against cutbacks

which it might appear, since to pay for this generosity in staffing we had to accept a 25% cut in capitation, which is money used to buy virtually everything used in schools, from books to paper towels.

Unfortunately many teachers were so relieved to have saved the jobs that they did not, or would not, see the disastrous implications for an education service limping on with ever more inadequate resources.

More and more kids now have to share books, and are not allowed to take them home — original and exciting work is being stifled by lack of money.

But even then the battle was far from over. The next line of attack

was on our school meals.

Most teachers believe that the Government is aiming to destroy the school meals service, by raising the prices to a level which few can really afford, and then pretending that more people will be able to claim free meals, often a very humiliating and complex procedure.

Humberside decided to knock another nail in the coffin by demanding that only 33% of teachers in any school should receive a "free" school meal.

Now anyone who has eaten school food in a canteen of between 200 and 500 lively kids knows that it is *not* money for jam! It had always been understood that eating with the

kids, and thus taking responsibility for what went on, entitled you to a meal, although most teachers also did some other sort of dinner duty. Previously schools had made their own arrangements, depending on their particular needs, and this blanket cut infuriated most teachers.

Many Local Associations (our equivalent to branches) decided to call for a complete withdrawal from dinner duties and other out of school activities. This would have meant many schools having to close completely at lunchtimes.

However, again, just before the action was to start, Humberside NUT, along with the headteachers' union, invoked the Collective Disputes Procedure, which meant that the whole issue went to Arbitration, and meanwhile everything stayed as it was . . . except that they took another 10% of our capitation until

HULL SOCIALIST TEACHERS

THE GROUP started in 1971 as a Rank and File group, and built up a good deal of support locally.

After a growing disillusionment with the politics of Rank and File, particularly the lack of democracy, we changed our name in 1975 to Hull Socialist Teachers Group, and were active in the formation of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

About 20 people regularly attended our meetings where we plan future action and tactics, although many other people actively support us at Union meetings, and rely on us for initiatives such as proposing motions.

There is a fairly broad spectrum of political views within the group, including non-aligned socialists, Labour Left and Libertarian Communists.

We have been very successful at winning motions at Union meetings. We have, for example passed strong motions on Chile, racism, cuts, the Working Women's Charter, and salaries for National Conference and have helped to initiate most of the action which the Union has taken locally for the past few years.

We have also played a very active role in the STA, both regionally and nationally. We organised a very successful regional conference around the Tyndale issue in 1977 which attracted quite a few teachers who had not previously been involved in the STA.

Since so few new teachers are being employed expanding the group is not easy. We have decided to hold regular meetings on broader educational issues in the hope of drawing more teachers towards socialist politics and union activity so that we can continue to be an effective force locally and nationally.

JOINT ACTION

A HULL Public Sector Action Committee was set up in 1977 on the initiative of members of the Socialist Teachers Group, and with the support of Hull NUT.

We started by approaching representatives of NALGO and NUPE with a view to holding a preliminary meeting to gauge support. After this first meeting we decided to broaden the Joint Union Liaison Committee, as it is called, to include all the public sector unions, and invitations were sent out for an inaugural meeting.

We were very disappointed at the lack of response from other unions. Representatives from NALGO and COHSE have turned up occasionally, but the committee has really been held together by NUPE and NUT. So although meetings have been useful in comparing experiences and monitoring the cuts we have not had the resources to organise a full scale campaign against the cuts.



Manchester NUT protest against cuts. Photo: John Smith (IFL)



it was settled!

Progress

That was the situation when the Tories swept to power in April 1977, although Hull remained solidly Labour. When announcing their estimates for 1978-9 they very smugly said that everyone should be pleased as they were going along with Labour Government guidelines on cuts!

But of course the Labour councillors suddenly realised how disastrous cuts really were, and spoke with fiery eloquence against them. We would, however, have been more impressed if they'd said the same when in power!

So the figure of £2½ million is being bandied about, staffing cuts are in store, the Arbitration Tribunal on dinners has proposed that each school be asked to make cuts (and we still lose the 10% capitation!)

Humberside NUT has asked the Action Committee for permission to implement the Union's class size policy (which means that in some schools teachers will refuse to take over-sized classes) and to hold half day strikes in areas which want them.

But somehow it all seems frighteningly familiar . . . Didn't we fight this battle last year too? . . . How soon will it be before we're back to teaching classes of 60 with slates in their hands? Did we once hear something about progress?

Editorial

Workers' democracy - no substitutes!

A class in the widest sense is a group defined by the fact that its members share specific selected characteristics. The importance of any particular classification depends upon the extent to which the selected or observed common characteristics determine the experience of life, or the way of living, of the individuals concerned.

You could, for instance, talk about a class of red-haired people. This classification would not be very important, however, because having red hair would affect the development of the individuals concerned very little compared with other factors. If, on the other hand, the characteristics chosen for purposes of classification should be "one-leggedness", then each of the individuals concerned would be more surely influenced in their living, and in a common way, by this common feature.

The more a class of people share a characteristic which fundamentally determines their experience of life or their way of living, the more do needs of the class become apparent—needs which can be defined in common. It is impossible to sensibly complete the sentence "Red haired people need . . ." in a manner distinguishing the red heads from people with any other colour of hair. But we rapidly conclude that "One-legged people need . . ." assistance in getting about, false legs, wheel chairs, and so forth.

Politics is concerned with the characteristics and needs of individuals as members of society. In this area, the important characteristics are those relating to different roles in the social

organisation of labour, to different shares in the social product and to differences in ability to influence the relevant authorities and establishment of social priorities. For us, the two latter areas flow out of the first, which makes this the key area of classification.

Property

In capitalism as a type of social organisation of labour, the working class is characterised by the broad dependence of the individuals in it upon the unequal exchange of the creative power of their humanity for wages. We are propertyless, whilst property stands in relation to us and increases itself through its purchase of us. This basis is like the metal core a sculptor uses to build a model of plaster or clay. It is only by referring to it and by probing into its operation and consequences that we can hope to construct an understanding of the entire position of the working class in capitalism: our social and political subordination to the capitalist class, our vulnerability, underdevelopment, consumerism and powerlessness.

Although it is true that we have much to learn about the precise operation of capitalism and about the life of its social differentials, it is clear to libertarian communists, at least, that enough is known for us to say that *there are* common needs for the working class which can be drawn out of our understanding of its role in the social organisation of labour. These needs we seek to interpret in our political programme, which is a revolutionary programme. They determine our attitude towards the



Unionization in the catering industry has been a major feature of past years. Official union backing has gained many a recruit to the TGWU or GMWU during disputes such as those as Trust House Forte and Garners. Yet, the union establishment always seeks to strictly contain the actions of its new members, and in the recent Claridges conflict ensured that the sacked chef Richard Elvidge was 'bought off' before evidence exposing the conditions in Claridges could be brought before the tribunal.

movements and situations of the working class as they immediately present themselves.

Reformists

The political responses we represent is not however adhered to by the majority of workers. In contradiction to the definition of needs arising from the revolutionary assessment of the situation of the working class there exists an alternative—that of the people we call class-collaborationists and reformists.

In Britain, this class collaborationism is an important aspect of working-class opinion at every level. A critical point of expression occurs, however, in the behaviour and policies of its foremost propagandists—the leadership of the Labour Party and of the trade unions.

Let us turn principally towards the latter.

At a time when capitalism is manifesting itself in the form of declining real incomes, cuts in social services, unemployment, productivity schemes, speed ups, encroachments on shop agreements, and so forth (on top of its general character as an increasingly unsatisfactory productive arrangement), there is inevitable piecemeal working-class resistance. Throughout the field of industrial relations there are signs of conflict. In every case, however, where workers have encountered an intransigent employer, the union leaders and officials have been instrumental in a failure to secure victory. This has happened even where—as at Grunwicks—the stakes have been paltry compared with the grievances the working class as a whole could raise.

Some disputes have been lost because the union leadership refused to throw the full weight of the union into the fray. The Desoutters fight for union recognition, for instance, ended upon a basis of "individual recognition" (along with the victimisation of the convenor and a lack of arrangements for stewards), because the Executive Council of the AUEW refused to call upon the unions own members to black Desoutters parts. Again, in September last year, engineering workers in the London press of the Beaverbrook group of papers had their shop agreements smashed, after the AUEW executive had refused to call out engineers in the group's Manchester concern, preferring instead to allow them to assist management in a strike-breaking increase of the print run!

Gutless

On other occasions, the crucial factor has been the question of the mobilisation of the wider labour movement in support of a particular group. This, alongside APEX officials' concern to tamp down militancy on the picket line, has been a major factor in the Grunwicks dispute. In December the UPW actually went as far as to fine postal workers a total of £1,400 for their action in boycotting Grunwicks' mail. FBU members were also to find the tradition of "Unity Is Strength" all gas and no clout. Despite other unions having 10% breaking claims lined up and the TUC being opposed to the pay "guidelines", the FBU found no other union willing to take combined action on the issue. Mind you, its own leaders didn't exactly wear themselves out

looking for it.

This lack of combativity of the union leaderships amounts to more than a coincidence of personal inadequacies. The class collaborationists have a conscious political desire to stand for "moderation"—that it the restraining of mass struggles, the allowing, in the final analysis, of capital to carve its necessary pound of flesh off the working class. They appear like broken fighters because they are frightened of the steps necessary to secure victory, frightened of the possibility that a victory won by thorough mobilization of a union or of the wider labour movement will encourage others to struggle and establish clear precedents for the organisation of struggle. They are frightened of unleashing the power of the organised working class because they know in their hearts it will go on a collision course with capital, and they believe it *irresponsible* and *destructive* for doing so. They believe that in the long run capitalism can run for the workers benefit: even change itself into socialism.

This political understanding has been covertly behind the labour movement's leadership's relationship to workers in struggle, and is overtly behind the policies which sections of the leadership have openly fought for, such as wage control in the past, which has now been secured as a matter of course rather than policy, and the 12 month rule.

History

Our criticism of such politics is that they do not draw inspiration from the fundamental social condition of the workers, that this is why their advocates consequently oppose workers in struggle and accept attacks on the working class. Class collaboration has found its foundation in, and gained its credibility from, *aspects* of capitalism rather than from a convincing view of it as a whole. It relates partly to the fact that British capitalism has hitherto been indeed in certain respects a force for the advancement of its workers' living standards, and also partly to its early integration with the leaderships of stable working class organisations.

It is significant, in fact, that the genesis of class collaborationist ideas in the British working class coincided with the first period of stabilisation of workers organisations in the 1850s. This decade was one in

Libertarian Communist

Libertarian Communist is the paper of the Libertarian Communist Group. Because of our shortage of both human and financial resources it is necessary to restrict the paper to a bimonthly appearance.

We want Libertarian Communist to provide information and analysis to militants. We hope to provoke political debate amongst those sympathetic to libertarian ideas within the revolutionary movement in this country, and we hope from this to evolve a more precise libertarian communist strategy and advocate that within the working class.

This project needs ideas and information. It requires a much wider involvement of libertarian militants, both at the level of news of struggles and that of discussion and analytical pieces. We believe that an emphasis on theory is necessary in order to combat the failings of the libertarian movement in this country, but in addition theoretical development cannot take place in the absence of concrete struggles. Please contact the address below if you wish to be involved.

OUR AIMS

1) We advocate the replacement of the capitalist market economy by a planned socialist economy directed by the workers according to their own needs through united and democratic organs or workers self-management.

2) We affirm that in fighting for such a solution no revolutionary organisation should seek to carry out a seizure of power independent of the united and democratic organs of the working class.

3) We affirm that we shall never

as an organisation seek a mandate to form a government, but will fight for the constant involvement in the act of social self-management of the united and democratic organs of the working class.

4) We place full confidence in and encourage the development of authentic organs of workers democracy as the organisations of working-class unity and of mass self-determination of labour.

5) As part of the process, however, we believe in being

What about our activity as a group? An organisation does not stand or fall only on the basis of its ideas. It would be easy for us, as a small group, to devote our energies to keeping alive a small body of 'correct' ideas. It is necessary to continually question our ideas, test them in action, in order to avoid degenerating into a sectarian current like the Workers' Revolutionary Party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, or the Anarchy collective, all isolated from the struggles of the working class.

Action, then is as vital as theory. No revolutionary organisation should be involved in one without the other. Our members are active in a number of united front campaigns in, for example, education, in anti-racist activities, in work in trade unions, women's groups, cuts campaigns, and in Socialist Unity.

Contact us if you want to give us your support, your views, comments, and criticisms.

LCG, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

consistently political and democratic. This means communicating with the workers movement in the context of first, that generalisations can be made concerning the social events involving us, and secondly, that we can do something about them. We seek to contribute to the working class's understanding of itself as a class, that is, precisely in terms of accurate generalisations and specific social objectives.

6) We seek to contribute to the development of a tradition in the working-class movement of its understanding itself and its history firmly in terms of the growth of the potential for the mass self-determination of labour.

Editorial

which new beginnings arose out of the shadow of defeat. On the one hand, the degeneration and failure of the Chartists and of the co-operative workshop movement, together with the dying down of the reverberations of the 1848 revolutions seemed to indicate a grim fate for the more grandiose working class aspirations. On the other, despite its share of hard fought trade disputes and despite the hard nature of working class life, the decade was one in which the general conditions of workers was beginning to show some signs of increased prosperity.

This was particularly the case for the new cohorts of engineers and skilled workers, who, together with the workers in the construction trades, formed the basis for a new working class leadership. It was this leadership which both found the confidence of the workers as trade union and political leaders and absorbed to a certain degree the ideas of the bourgeois economists to produce the beginnings of a stable class-collaborationist current in the workers movement. The social revolutionary predilections of previous working class political movements tended to become eclipsed by a less ambitious species of reform politics and by the development of trade, welfare, and educational organisations.

The decisive shift towards class collaboration in this period was the beginning of a dominance—or, at least, decisive influence—which has lasted to the present day. In some periods, such as during the pre-World War I syndicalist movement, class collaboration was severely threatened. The point is, however, that it has held out.

Developments

British workers, living in a metropolitan country, have repeatedly known material improvements in their lifetimes, even if they have also repeatedly known squalor, hardship and war. The first birthpangs of the world revolution in underdeveloped countries, and to a certain extent the response of its leadership, has meant that in terms of political and material achievement it has been judged by many not to match up to the standards of the capitalist heartlands.

Finally, the emergence of a working class leadership of a class collaborationist nature has itself had a retrograde influence on the development of struggle and hence of class consciousness, a circumstance reinforced by the bureaucratisation of the labour movement—itself partly a response to the view of workers’ leaders as being “responsible” representatives of labour in the councils of the nation. (It is *from* this comes the material perks.)

The obvious difference between the politics of class collaboration and those of socialists is that we understand capitalist production as being incapable of gradually escaping its subjection to those market forces and imperatives of capital accumulation which determine its essential contours. Our condition even in times of boom thus remains such that inequality, insecurity, exploitation, alienation and oppression are parts of social organisation which can only be removed by the abolition of capitalist productive relations. Of course, metropolitan capitalism has brought material benefits. But for how long will it be able to do this in the face of the revolt of those it milks dry in the underdeveloped countries? And how will it protect itself, or recover it from, its recurrent crises except off the backs of workers everywhere?

The final decision on the viability or otherwise of class collaboration rests with the working class—if not as a conscious social generalisation,

then in terms of reactions to life under capitalism. Our objective here, meanwhile, is to make clear that the actions of the present labour movement leadership and its political support for capital raise the issue of their class collaborationist basis.

We believe that the other side of the coin is the necessity for opposition to this leadership to be based clearly on—*class struggle*.

Policies

It is from this position that we advocate our policies and our alternatives for the fighting of disputes. We stand for wage agreements with automatic clauses to beat inflation (according to working class calculation of the latter), for opposition to all redundancies and to unemployment (desiring instead worksharing on full pay in socially useful enterprises), for resistance to cuts in public expenditure and for an inflation proof programme of public services, etc. We argue for the use of the full

strength of the labour movement in support of workers in dispute, and for the development of “rank and file” organisations to press for this sort of action and to mobilise solidarity action independent of the bureaucrats when they stall and falter.

Finally, we fight for the trade unions to adopt structures which would make them truly combative organisations and rob the class collaborationists of their bureaucratic hold, stimulating the growth in struggle and through debate of the political personality of the proletariat. Thus, in May 1977, our organisation proposed the following guidelines for such a reform of the trade unions:

- 1) All union officials to be elected on a mandatable and recallable basis. All to regularly stand for re-election, with a time limit for any individual to hold office.
- 2) Full time officers and employees to be paid the average rate of their union members; full time officers to be eventually replaced by

collective leadership elected under mandate.

3) An end to all official perks—or their extension to all members!

4) No bans or proscriptions to be permitted against members of any organisation except those which are fascist or openly anti-trade union.

All trade union bodies to be free to discuss any issue whether or not it is contravention of official policy. Repeal rule 14 of the TUC rules for Trades Councils. (It states that Councils cannot adopt positions contrary to that of the TUC.)

5) Union branches to be autonomous in the allocation of funds and support of organisations and campaigns. No compulsory political levy.

6) Shop stewards to receive automatic accreditation from their union and only to be removable by the members who elected them.

7) All posts to be elected and not appointed. All decisions to be taken and elections held at workplace meetings open to all the relevant workers.

8) Assertion of the right to hold meetings in paid work time.

9) All democratically called strikes to be immediately made official and to receive national support.

10) Full union rights for the unemployed in branches engaged in their actual or potential type of employment.

There should be no fragmentation of our assault on class collaboration in the labour movement. Our organisational proposals are most important insofar as they would open up the unions to the working out of the essential political questions under scrutiny, and involve the membership fully in this process. The class collaborationists’ use of union structures to consolidate their dominance (seen not merely in the formation of policy, but also in specific bureaucratic “disciplinings” such as the present one of the Cowley T&GWU militants), would be broken—but the need for the fight for alternative policies would still be essential.

Editorial Board

Letters

Racism

Congratulations on the appearance of your new paper. There has been a need for a paper like this for a long time, a paper which brings a deeper understanding to issues facing militants in the struggle and which develops libertarian ideas. The articles on the health service were a good example of the former and the discussion on Russia 1917 a good example of the latter. I was disappointed by the poor coverage of some very important issues, such as womens and gays oppression. On the subject of racism, I would like to use

some of your space to point out a serious danger for socialists. That is the danger of making the main anti-racist campaign an anti-Nazi one.

Socialists know that racism is deeply rooted in the working class. This is expressed in the acceptance of immigration controls and the lack of support for ethnic groups fighting against racism in the state eg police harassment. The tasks of socialists in overcoming the racial divisions within the working class is to win the working class over to a position *against* racism and *for* support for autonomous ethnic groups fighting it. Clearly this means more than crying Nazi everytime Martin Webster moves. It means patient, persistent and determined work in the community and in the unions to expose racism in whatever form and to win workers round to an anti-racist programme.

The main obstacle to anti-racist

work has been the lack of national co-ordination between the local anti-racist committees. Recently, however, a national group has emerged, called the Anti-Nazi League. This falls into the danger I have mentioned. Although many people who helped with its creation would agree with what I said earlier, they cannot see this danger.

The problem is that anti-Nazi propaganda does not raise the political question of working class solidarity with ethnic minorities against capitalist interests. All it can do, and in fact does, is ally the working class elements with elements of the ruling class. Class politics is thrown out of the window.

The only thing that differentiates the socialists inside the ANL from the rest is their militancy. There is a mistaken belief amongst some socialists that you can physically destroy fascism. Some papers

(Socialist Worker, Big Flame) have published Hitler’s own observation to this effect. Apart from the obvious fact that Hitler is not renowned for being a socialist theoretician, I would say to those comrades that fascism is a *political* not merely a *military* problem. Whereas I support a no platform position and support the opposition to Front marches, I do this because it is a demand for working people to take up *no attacks on any one section of the class! support for ethnic groups!*) not because fascism can be kicked to death in the high street. The National Front and other fascist parties have grown because they provide a political alternative to the main bourgeois parties. The main fight against racism and fascism must be a fight for a socialist alternative.

yours fraternally,
John Barlowe.

Boring

In the past I have found left-wing newspapers to be rather boring. However, being an optimist I read the Libertarian Communist half expecting to be pleasantly surprised. Sad to say I was somewhat disappointed. Despite a coherent front page article and an interesting supplement on Russia I was not particularly impressed by your newspaper. In order to be as constructive as possible I have set down a few thoughts which seem relevant.

I rather suspect that all left-wing newspapers have a low working-class readership. This is hardly surprising given the political emphasis that is necessary in such newspapers and given the degree of political alienation fostered amongst the working class by a bourgeois political system.

The problem, of which I am sure you are aware, is however, not insurmountable. The working class, after all, are not apolitical and it should not prove too difficult to tap the frustration and anger which attend life and work in a capitalist society. May I make a small contribution towards this end?

I would like to suggest that your newspaper contain more news, that it be less abstract and more specific. For example, every day men and women are maimed or killed in the pursuit of profit. A left-wing newspaper should, in my opinion, report such stories and make the appropriate connections with the economic system. The spirit of capitalism, of course, invades every area of life, not just work, and its effects should be commented upon

and the appropriate analyses made. This emphasis would seem to call for a greater commitment to actual reporting. (Did you realise, for example, that six out of a total of eleven photographs, supplement apart, were of demonstrations.) Reporting specific cases of injustices, etc, that is. I feel sure that because of the relevance to working-class experience such reporting will increase your readership in this area.

One last thought, in view of my comment regarding working-class readership, do you consider the name of your newspaper—Libertarian Communist—to be appropriate?
yours faithfully
M.Ward.

The comrades letter is very welcome, as it raises a number of important questions about the paper. Essentially, what kind of paper are we trying to produce and for what kind of readership? Unfortunately, the answers to these questions have to come in two parts, because there is such a difference between what we

are doing at this moment, and what we would like to be doing.

At the moment we are producing the paper only every two months. This means that we feel we cannot have too many agitational articles or too much coverage of struggles, for when we do the paper dates very quickly, and we can’t sell all the copies we print. Also we are a small organisation and we need to create a current of opinion around us. The libertarian tradition in Britain has been irrelevant recently partly at least because of its refusal to face up to the need to justify its actions at a theoretical level. At this time an emphasis on theory is valid.

Of course in the future we hope to come out more often. Then we will cover struggles and come out frequently enough never to be irrelevant.

In terms of our readership I think one can see that what we are doing at the moment is putting across quite a wide range of ideas to a fairly limited readership, mainly those already committed to revolutionary politics. It is true that

a proportion of this number are not working class in origin, having been radicalised when they were students. However that is only a problem if it obscures our commitment to a revolution by the working class for the working class.

On one point our reader is wrong. This is when he says that the working class are not apolitical. I think our reader is more correct when he says that the situation is one of political alienation.

On the other hand I think that the point about people being maimed or killed at work is a fair one. The left in general has been very bad at showing up how the employers have never provided adequately safe conditions at work, and probably never will, because of the profit motive. If readers were to send in their views and information on this subject we would certainly publish them.

As for the name, it is a bit of a mouthful but thats what we are, libertarian communists, and so the name is at least fairly informative.
C.M. for Editorial Board.

The people who produce this paper are undoubtedly one of the most super-exploited sections of the working-class. They spend long hours writing, laying-up, and selling the bloody thing, and don’t even get paid a penny for it!

We don’t mind that so much, after all we are all committed. The point is that we are still running at a loss every issue. The cost of typesetting and printing remains very high.

In the long-term we hope to get round our problems by growing as an organisation and by selling more copies of the paper more frequently.

In the short-term you can help. How? Well, by taking bundles of the paper to sell. Also, you could write for us, sending us your news, views and reviews.

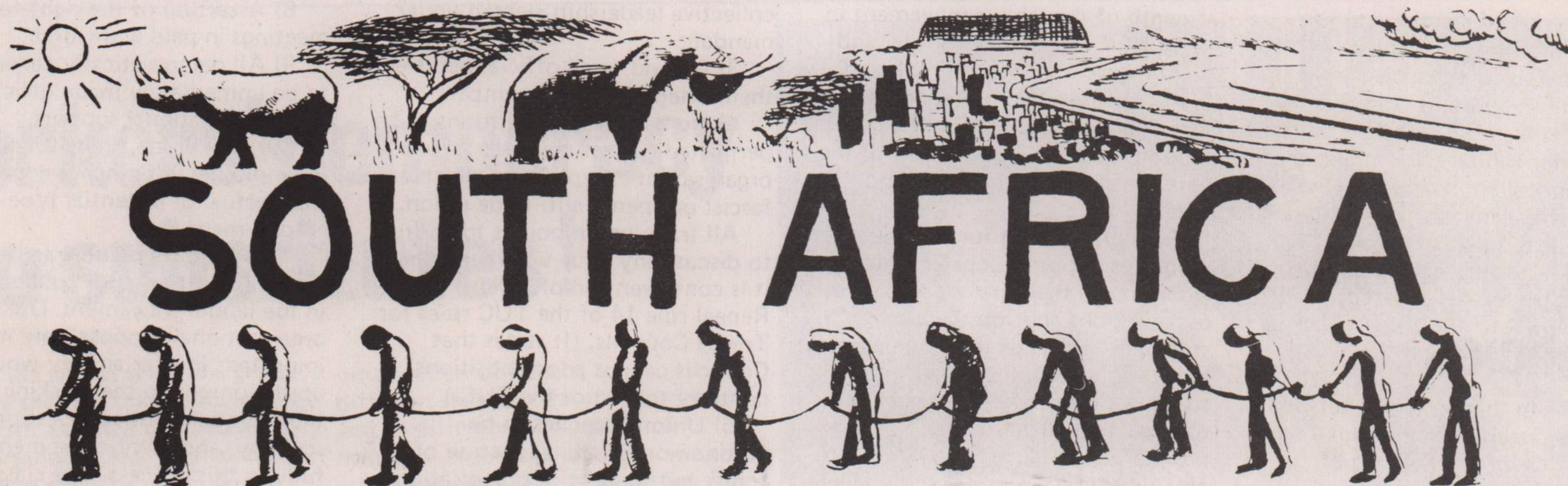
Above all, if you support the paper and what we’re trying to do, give us some money. Of course, it would be a good idea to take out a subscription (see the box on the back page) but cash would be very helpful too.

We know that these are hard times, with living standards falling and we know that our average reader doesn’t have too much to spare. However, every little helps. We expect to have a bulging post-bag over the next couple of months, send in plenty of votes!

All copy, donations etc. to L.C.G., 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Cheques should be made payable to LCG General Fund.

International



The most important political developments in 1978 are taking place in Africa. With the rapid intensification of armed struggle in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and the possibility of majority rule in Zimbabwe before the year ends, the Week of Action against apartheid and other moves to build workers action against the white dictatorships in Africa have a special significance.

LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST surveys the development of apartheid in South Africa.

PRODUCTION in South Africa today has many features which characterise it as capitalist. Companies, which are often part of giant Western capitalist enterprises, or are closely linked with them, employ waged labour and judge their success by the rate of return they make on their investments.

Work and the human soul are under thrall to capital.

Capitalist development in the area, however, has always been given a particular character by its links with colonial domination. Whilst not every white is a member of the capitalist ruling class, no blacks whatever their economic status, are the social equal of whites, or ever exercise authority over them.

In recent years there has been the development of a number of black petty capitalists and administrative staff in some sectors, but the operations of these individuals merely relates to particular black hierarchies, which do not include whites and which are subsidiary to the white-dominated commanding heights of the political economy.

The appearance of such individuals does not moreover alter the assessment that the impact of colonial capitalism in South Africa has been predominantly felt by the African population in terms of its turning them into a source of labour bound by debilitating restrictions unknown to the developed proletariat of the metropolitan countries of the West, or to the white working class of South Africa itself.

The beginnings of this latter development lie firmly in the act of European settlement itself and its devastation of the existing African social formations through the means of expansion and military conflict.

Although the initial colonial authorities, the Dutch East India Company, and later the British government which took it over in 1795, showed signs of attempting to restrain the expansion which they thought would cost more administrative trouble than it was worth, the colonial farmers gave the colony a forward momentum.

The very existence of many of these farmers was based on expropriating the native population's land. The Xhosa replied with resistance. A series of wars between the colonists and the Africans resulted, in which the military technology and organisation of the Europeans generally proved superior.

After the war of 1834-5 the British administration refused to make a formal expropriation of territory and a number of farmers of Dutch descent struck out on their own to the North West to set themselves up independently of the authorities. This was the beginning of the large-scale takeovers of land in what were to become the Boer republics, and in Natal, which the British occupied in 1871 as a consequence of the discovery of diamonds there!

Enthusiasts of the supposed tradition of British liberalism in South Africa point out that in this period of invasion there were

differences between the approaches of the British administration and the Boers. The Boers from the start did not allow any African claims to land to be valued above their own. The British on the other hand did legislate for African titles. In reality, however, this difference was mainly formal. Few Africans were in a position to take up a British title, let alone understand the need for it or secure it from a partisan British officialdom.

All over South Africa the result of European settlement was to push the Africans off the land they needed to sustain their established patterns of production. Before the invasion they had made leisurely and sweeping use of the land, employing techniques of wide grazing and shifting cultivation. Now they were hemmed in on poor ground which they didn't have the techniques to use to its full purpose, scant as it was. Military loss of land and cattle established a continuing cycle of impoverishment of the African population.

The colonists did not immediately connect the impoverishment of the Africans with a strategy for forcing them into waged employment. Until 1807 and the beginnings of restrictions on the slave trade, those colonists who wanted to use non-European labour bought slaves, the majority of whom seem to have come from outside South Africa. After emancipation the descendants of the slaves formed the basis of a labour pool.

It was mainly the development of export orientated wool farming in the first half of the nineteenth century which opened the eyes of the colonists to the possibility of the regular employment of African labour. By the 1870s this was being reflected in official policy. In the build up to the war with the Zulu kingdom in 1879, for instance, the prospect was expressed by Governor Chepstone that Zulu warriors would "be changed to labourers working

for wages".

It was in this period that taxes were introduced to force Africans to work for money. Cecil Rhodes delivered a 'classic' to the Cape Legislative Assembly on the employment of Africans. "You will", he enthused, "remove them from that life of sloth and laziness, you will teach them the dignity of labour and make them contribute to the prosperity of the state and make them give some return to us for our wise and good government."

The turn to the use of Africans as labourers was given a particularly important impulse and direction by the development of the South African mining industry. It was this which first led to the introduction of metropolitan capital into the country in a big way.

Diamonds

Diamonds were the first mineral resource to be exploited, in the 1860s. Diamond mining methods did not require large capital injections from the metropolitan stock exchanges. Although Rhodes did resort to a London syndicate for funds in his takeover of the Kimberley mines, the diamond magnates who emerged in general owed their prominence to enterprise in the field and the exploitation of market outlets rather than to "foreign" backing.

Diamond mining contribution to the sucking in of metropolitan capital was that it created an on the spot entrepreneurial structure and links with the European markets which gave the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold reefs in the 1880s immediate commercial viability. It was from the offices of the diamond merchants in Hatton Garden and Holborn Viaduct that the first gold shares were sold to raise the money needed by the more capital intensive gold industry. A.K. Cairncross in his "Home and Foreign Investment" (1953) cites figures showing that Britain had £34 million invested in South Africa in 1884 and that this had jumped to £351m by 1911. Much of this increase went to the gold fields.

The mining brought new sophistications to the colonialists employment of Africans. In 1889 the mine owners combined in a "Chamber of Mines", which despite internal difficulties made moves to establish a common maximum wage for Africans. In 1896 this body established a "Native Labour Supply Association" in order to co-ordinate recruitment. At the same time the mines saw the development for the first time of a significant white waged labour force, generally classed as skilled, and on much higher wages.

Exploitation of gold brought with it further upheaval in the political map of South Africa. Conflict between the Boer farmers and the gold interest broke out into the "Boer War" and its attempted resolution in the 1910 Act of Union.

The saving common interest of the camps represented in these struggles, and of the white working class, was the realisation of their common and increasing benefit from subjugation of the Africans. From the unification till after the great white miners strike of 1922 (in which the red flag was raised and workers militias were formed in defence of white differentials) we can see the consolidation of this white supremacism and its progressive legal codification by a legal apparatus which remained, of course, exclusively white.

The "Mines and Works Act" of 1911 denied skilled jobs in the mines to Africans. The "Native Labour Regulations Act" of the same year imposed stringent legal controls which made breaches of work discipline criminal. The 1913 "Land Act" froze the proportion of land available for use by Africans and made it illegal for an African to buy or rent land from a white. 1924 saw the first "Industrial Conciliation Act" which gave whites full labour rights, but not Africans.

Development up to this point had, as it were, laid the basis for contemporary apartheid. The rural self-sufficiency and organisation of the Africans had been destroyed and they had been made into a large low-paid waged labour force. Contemporary apartheid, however, is more than just a forward projection from the situation as it was 50 years ago. It

World support

THE International Confederation of Free Trade Unions called for a week of action from March 13-21 against apartheid in South Africa. British opponents of apartheid have attempted to make our contribution to this a week of blacking of all trade and communications with South Africa.

An emergency action Anti-Apartheid Movement conference on 14th Feb showed that the strength of this contribution was still very much in doubt. Delegates to the conference heard Laurence Daly pledge the full support of the NUM. There was also a letter from that influential man, Jack Jones, Companion of Honour, wishing the campaign success. Jack Dromey revealed that the South East region of the TUC was urging all its Trades Council to take up the issue and Peter Nicholas threw the weight of the Leyland Trades Union Committee into the fray.

What such pronouncements will lead to in practice remains to be seen—there is a world of difference between supporting a policy and fighting for it. Workers who have seen what TUC support has meant at Grunwicks, or what TUC opposition to the 10% rule meant for the Fire Brigades Union, will need more than a few positive statements from a handful of union leaders at a small gathering in London before they take action.

Indeed, as a delegate from Preston Trades Council pointed out, blacking is a big thing to ask for, especially if you are asking for support from someone

whose job is based on trade with South Africa.

Those Trade Union bodies and leaders who have supported the week of action are faced with the responsibility of becoming active campaigners against apartheid, seeking to argue the case throughout the whole working class. They should try to unify the trade union movement on the issue, and guarantee solidarity action with any workers who are victimised for blacking South African trade.

The highlight of the campaign so far has been the support of the Rover Solihull Shop Stewards Committee. They have produced an excellent broadsheet on Leylands, Rovers and apartheid for their membership and for other trades unionists as part of a real attempt to produce actual blacking action.

Such developments are to be welcomed, as they assist the development in the trade union movement of active solidarity with the African struggle.

Our ultimate objective here is the permanent national blacking of all trade with South Africa until the African people have won the right to self-determination, though this strategy does not cover the problem of firms investing in South Africa but having no productive links with the country.

Where workers are not in a position to implement blacking a secondary line of action is solidarity action to secure the recognition of independent trade unions in British related firms.

International

represents a response to two developments the breakdown of internal migrant labour and the growth of capitalist industry outside the mining sector.

Complementary to the development of the mining industry in particular was the causal and migratory nature of much of the African workforce. The idea that the Africans should be allowed to enter "white" territory only if they were working there was an old one, stretching back to the issuing of frontier passes in the early nineteenth century cape colony. The "model" African worker got a permit and

like the proletariat elsewhere, has a tremendous capacity to challenge its exploitation. The proletariat possesses common needs, a common settlement, the ability to communicate now that the old tribal barriers have been broken down, and above all a new capacity for organisation. It is in order to meet this challenge that modern apartheid has developed in the way it has.

The three main aspects of apartheid's response to this challenge are its labour legislation, its "Bantustan" policy, and the preservation of its colonialist political

to Africans and whites. Section 17 of the Industrial Conciliation Act allows for the banning of racial groups from jobs. Government Notice no. 1656 of Oct 25th 1957, for instance, reserved for whites the work of machinists, supervisors, cutters and table hands in the clothing industry.

It must be admitted, though, that much of job reservation in South African industry has come about as a result of agreements between employers and the white trades unions. Associated with this is the practice of re-grading jobs so that Africans doing them get less than whites.

'Workers Unity' again draws out the implications: "Workers will be forcibly separated on a 'tribal' basis, not only in the Bantustans, but also in the industrial areas themselves. Segregation of living quarters already applies to the barracks and compounds for migrant workers . . . We will probably also find in times to come that the jobs in each factory will be allocated to workers from one particular Bantustan only. When workers in a factory prove "troublesome", the government will threaten to allocate jobs in the factory to another Bantustan. Rivalry between different groups of African workers will thus be encouraged."

As the Africans are forced to become citizens of Bantustans, the present meagre rights of settlement will be abolished. The pass laws will be abolished and laws governing "aliens" introduced. Already African political and industrial militants have been deported to the Bantustans.

The executive machinery of apartheid is, of course, white political monopoly and brutal police repression. Colonial capitalism has throughout its history relied upon armed force as the ultimate agency of its development. The response of the authorities to the protests initiated by the students of Soweto 2 years ago and the vast number of black political prisoners are the most prominent modern examples of this.

In the last three years trade unionists have died in detention. November 1976 saw the banning of 24 leading trade unionists and members of advisory organisations, black and white. The terms of such banning orders, which last in most cases for 5 years, prohibit publication of the banned person's views, visits by more than one person, freedom of movement, etc. In short a cheap alternative to imprisonment.

In conclusion it is worth dwelling a moment on the conditions of the Africans, created by all the above. Last ditch apologists for apartheid claim that if nothing else the Africans in South Africa are better off than the Africans in the rest of Africa. Of course, even if this were the case it would hardly be relevant to the essential question of the *division* of social resources and authority.

Much of the evidence in fact contradicts even such a ridiculous justification for the near slavery of the African population amongst vast riches. In terms of per capita incomes by dollar comparison, First, Steele and Gurney, in "The South African Connection" (p53), provide figures indicating higher incomes, in 1968, in several other African states. According to Rogers in his book "Divide and Rule" the average income in the four largest Bantustans in 1974 was lower than in most places in the continent except for those, like the drought-stricken Sahel region, reduced to universally recognised distress.

It is true that per capita incomes figures are a poor way of gauging living standards, but consideration of the things they leave out reflects even more badly on South Africa. You can't compare the incomes of wholly urbanised with those who still have the use of some agricultural land, let alone the per capita incomes of those in a highly industrialised state like South Africa and those in other countries who are, perhaps, almost entirely agriculturally self-sufficient. The low incomes in the Bantustans might not indicate poverty if, for instance, they were agriculturally flourishing, but it is their noted bareness which makes it so appalling a figure, and also explains the high incidence of under-nourishment diseases in such places.

The standard of life is also determined by many aspects of public expenditure and development. The conditions of housing, roads, hospitals and education are all vitally important in people's lives, and are all very poor in South Africa, if you're black. Africans in South Africa have little leisure time, little entertainment and so on. They have many, great grievances.

No one, I should hope, could read about the conditions of African life in South Africa and wonder why the African people are in struggle.

I.G.



Soweto schoolkids, August 1976. The riots were followed by a harsh repression. Photo Magubane/Sanapic/Camera Press.

then worked for a given period and then cleared off again.

As with the actual expropriation of land, it would require monumental scholarship to uncover precisely the breakdown of this "reserve" based migrancy into settlement either on "white" rural territory or into urban areas. Increasing urbanisation of Africans is, however, one fact clearly reflected by government census statistics. Whereas in 1911 572,000 Africans (12.7% of the African population) were recorded as town dwellers, by 1936 the number had risen to 1,246,000 (18.9%) and by 1951 to 2,290,000 (26.8%).

The growth of capitalist industry outside of the mining sector was the single most important factor behind this progressive urbanisation. South African industry diversified not because of the intervention of metropolitan capital or the mining interests linked with it, though these did come in with a bang later. Apart from a few metropolitan interests such as ICI, Dunlop, Siemens, Ford, General Motors and Levers, the first new industrialists came from within South Africa itself but not from the mining magnates. Afrikaaner Nationalists began to organise the use of savings for commerce and industry. When in power the Nationalist Party pioneered the use of state money to set up new industry, like the Iron and Steel Corporation in 1928, and to assist new native entrepreneurs.

The Boom

These efforts prepared the ground for a post-war boom at the instigation of the metropolitan capitalist corporations. It has been estimated that between 1946 and 1955 £700 million was invested in South Africa from abroad. £500 million of this coming from Britain. Between 1956, when official figures first became available, and 1969, a further £1,000 million was invested. The pattern continues today, with Britain still leading the field.

The African proletariat created by this second great colonial capitalist expansion,

monopoly.

Apartheid's labour legislation is based upon distinctions between white (and coloured) workers and blacks, and has been elaborated by successive Industrial Conciliation Acts. These have established norms of labour organisation and representation for all employees.

The catch is that each act attempted to find a progressively more exact formula for excluding Africans from the category of "employees". In the 1956 version the legislators described an employee as any person other than a "Native", and a "Native" as any person belonging to, or generally accepted as, a member of any original race or tribe of Africa.

African workers are still subject to the work discipline enforced by criminal penalties of the 1856 Cape "Masters and Servants" Act and the 1911 "Native Labour Regulation" Act. According to the 1953 "Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes)" Act the interests of African workers are supposed to be represented to their employers by white government officials. Only since 1971 has it been technically possible for them to hold a legal strike, but this right is so heavily circumscribed that it is practically meaningless. The only legal African workers strike to have taken place to date was smashed by the police and employers.

In response to the increasing militancy of African workers, the regime has now attempted to force on them a system of statutory committees intended to give them a semblance of representation in their relations with their employers. These are the Liaison Committees, 50-50 worker/employer bodies with a company chair, and the Works Committee composed entirely of workers representatives. The point is that these committees don't give the workers any rights to take industrial action to back up their negotiations and they don't allow for any genuine trade union organisation.

Some South African labour law actively applies the principle of discrimination in terms of the respective availability of jobs

Despite the above legislation and practices, African workers have continued to organise in independent unions and engaged in industrial action. They have also continued to struggle for political and social rights generally.

Bantustans

The South African government and ruling class have attempted to smash these developments at a deeper level than that by the labour legislation by introducing its "Bantustan" policy.

The aim of this is to make every African a citizen not of South Africa but of one of several tribal "homelands". These places in no way have any historical link with the populations ascribed to them, they lack the minerals and the good agricultural factors of the land retained in white hands and make up about 1/8 of the surface area of the country (for 3/4 of the population).

The January issue of 'Workers Unity', paper of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, describes these lands very well: "A Bantustan is like a paddock where the farmer keeps his oxen until he needs them for ploughing. The African workers are forced to wait in the Bantustans, like the oxen of the bosses, until they are chosen for work in the cities." The difference is that the farmers generally look after their cattle well.

The Bantustans are intended to physically divide up the African workers, to facilitate greater control over them in the existing industrial areas, and to create new low-wage industrial sites.

A government Department of Information pamphlet of 1968, "Taking Factories to the People", if read the right way, indicates ruling class thinking with some clarity. Talking about the process of modern industrialisation, the author comments "It divorced the Bantu worker from his own country and his own society . . . and tended to turn him from a proud member of a Bantu nation into a cypher in an urban proletariat."

Libertarian Communist

Anti-racist fight must be won!

Since last summer race has never been far from the news. Recently the Tory and Labour parties have been hitting the headlines on the issue.

The Tories have done their best to pander to the gut prejudices that do undoubtedly exist in this country. They hint at pass laws, they hint at an end to all immigration on the scale that it has been known in the past.

For the time being they can't come out too strongly because there is still a 'liberal' wing to the Tory party that finds such overt racism sticks in its throat. Certainly, though, Maggie Thatcher has done enough to gain quite a few votes from the National Front at the next election.

That's what it's all about really, the next election. It looks from here that an election in the Autumn is now a very strong possibility.

Labour's response to this has been really feeble. They want to keep the traditional support of the immigrant communities but they know that there are a lot of cheap votes to be won by playing the racist card. They've allowed the Tories to draw them into playing the numbers game.

What this involves is accepting the racist assumption that immigrants, and by that they mean black

immigrants, are in themselves a bad thing.

Maggie says that there are 'far too many coming in' and that we are being 'swamped'. Merlyn Rees and the other Labour ministers say that there are fewer and fewer coloured immigrants coming in (since our racist immigration controls work so well anyway) and that there are more people leaving the country every year than are coming in.

The trouble with these ideas is that the Labour party is in fact conceding that there is something wrong with blacks, their culture and their needs. They are conceding that blacks are a 'problem'.

Fortunately, the struggle on the ground, at the grass roots, must be said to be going in favour of the anti-racists. There are now thriving anti-racist and anti-fascist committees all over the country. In London, the area I know best, there have been some considerable gains.

Amongst other things there has been the successful anti-racist demonstration through the British Movement's stamping ground of Hoxton, last Autumn. By the time you read this the East End anti-racist Carnival will have taken place, and looks set to be a great success.

The National Front have been prevented from establishing a presence on the streets in Croydon,



A PETULANT MARTIN WEBSTER, decidedly put out by the jeers of local kids, arrives at Longbridge School, Brixton, for a National Front election meeting. Many people had spent the morning leafletting houses in the constituency, warning residents of the potential threat from the Front, and attempting to give support and encouragement to black people in the area. Photo Andrew Wiard (Report).

and they don't seem to have had much success elsewhere in establishing a regular paper-sale recently.

Nationally, the rise of the Anti-Nazi League has been important. This initiative, backed by the Socialist Workers Party, and with the endorsement of several MPs and many prominent sports and media personalities, has undoubtedly reached and organised wide layers of people on the basis of their opposition to the National Front and other Nazi organisations.

Unfortunately, the Anti-Nazi League has no clear political alternative to put forward. There's nothing particularly wrong with its approach, it just doesn't go far enough. However, many socialists will be getting involved in the Anti-Nazi League, and are sure to raise more 'political' demands, against immigration controls, for a socialist alternative to the ideas put forward by the racists.

Indeed, the elections that are on the horizon may have caused the capitalist press and the bourgeois parties to reveal their racist opinions, but they may turn out to be occasions on which the anti-racists make their views known as well.

The Socialist Unity campaign,

which the Libertarian Communist Group supports critically and is involved in, and also the separate campaign which it seems will be run by the Socialist Workers Party, will both produce vigorous, socialist, anti-racist propaganda.

If we avoid seeing elections as important only in terms of the votes we can gain for revolutionary candidates, or, Durruti preserve us, for the possibility of gaining representatives in Parliament, and instead as occasions where we can put forward socialist propaganda and win socialists to active open campaigns, then we can use them to our advantage.

In the coming period, in council elections, in parliamentary by-elections and in the general election itself, race will be an issue.

Revolutionaries should take up that issue.

We should fight racism and fascism in the streets and in our propaganda.

We should fight for socialist solutions to the problems on which racism divides the working class, in housing, education, employment.

The fight against racism and fascism is a fight that revolutionaries can and must win.

C.M.

Also, there is a valuable outline of planning procedures and how to use them to get information and a

Reviews

list of useful addresses.

This is a very well produced pamphlet and I found it really easy to follow. But what really gives it its

strength is that it's told by people who took part in the work-ins themselves. The pamphlet points out that a work-in is only a defensive tactic in the long term struggle inside the health service.

This tactic should be borne in mind by all public sector workers. Make sure YOUR union branch or workplace is prepared for it. You could not do better than get hold of this pamphlet. At 10p (cost price) its worth putting in a bulk order.

BATTERING BACK

How to Get an Injunction
National Women's Aid Federation (NWAf)

NWAF believes that until women are no longer exploited, no longer treated as inferiors and as possessions of men—until society is changed—women will always be battered. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA), introduced last year, was fought for by NWAF and intended to limit the extent of this violence. But needless to say, the belief that men have the right to beat their partners is so strong (not to mention the usual sexist prejudices women suffer from under the law) that the Act isn't used to provide the protection it should (never mind the Davies case!) The function of this small booklet is explained in the title: it shows women how to get an injunction with or without a solicitor. It is invaluable in explaining what goes on in the legal world and exactly what a woman's rights are. Essential when there are lawyers around who would give her false information rather than take her case as she wishes (money being the main, though not the only reason).

So it's hoped that the booklet will encourage women to use the DVA as much as possible. That way pure

evidence might help to explode a few myths—and show that battering is both a common and acceptable form of violence in our society (and from this, that it's inextricably linked with the structure of our society), that all women have the right *not* to be subjected to this violence, and are in fact claiming that right. And the more women become acquainted with how the law works, the greater will be the recognition of how it works *against* us . . .

The booklet is short, clear, totally free from jargon, and simple. It goes step by step through what to do in whatever situation might arise, emergencies as well as 'normal' procedure. Its clarity is helped by the format: short paragraphs linked by a colour-code to tie up the various stages and sequences.

The whole thing is illustrated and contains some useful appendices, such as how to write an affidavit, how a court order is written, and even a legal dictionary.

Hopefully the booklet will become standard equipment for law centres, women's centres, citizens' advice bureaux etc., in the near future.

Price 30p, available from Left and women's bookshops, or from NWAF, 51 Chalcot Rd., London NW1. Tel: 01-586 0104.

Left-overs

ALL THE NEWS THAT DIDN'T FIT!

DUCK BANNED

Libertarian Communist is glad to announce that this years award for absurd morality goes to the Helsinki municipal authorities. They recently stopped funds for the City Youth Club, which were meant for Donald Duck cartoons. The reason given is that Donald Duck is immoral — he doesn't wear trousers and has not married Daisy despite many years of courting.

EXECUTION DUTIES

South African police get their practice for crowd control in the normal course of duties. Police Minister Kruger told the South African parliament that apart from those shot in "black township unrest", police shot dead 149 people "in the execution of their duties". In addition, over 400 were wounded (apart from black unrest, of course). The minister did not say how many prisoners hurled themselves around their cells in order to die of brain injuries, but he has in the past reported one such event.

BODY POLITIC

'OBSCENE'

The publishers and staff of The Body Politic (a North American gay liberation news magazine) have been charged by the public prosecutor for obscenity. The charges relate to an article describing the personal relationships between men and youth under Canada's legal age of consent, published last December.

Despite the fact that the evidence was easily obtainable from the Post Office, police raided the papers Toronto office. They took away crates full of documents, including subscribers names and addresses. By this act the police have shown that their aim is to close the paper down and victimise the subscribers.

By "coincidence", the trial comes at a time when legislation against anti-gay discrimination is being considered by the province of Ontario.

By "another coincidence", Anita Bryant (North America's Mary Whitehouse) recently visited Toronto to help out local moral crusades.

The parallels with the prosecution of Gay News comes as no surprise to gays in this country. Gay oppression, like its counterpart capitalism, exists worldwide.

And that includes the state-capitalist countries like Cuba, where Castro has said that no man can be a revolutionary and a homosexual.

NUCLEAR CLASH

The large demonstration against nuclear power in London on April 29th, and the successful occupation of the proposed nuclear reactor site at Torness in Scotland on May 7th, are the first signs of the growth of a strong anti-nuclear movement in this country.

The LCGs London group distributed a leaflet on the demonstration. This explained that the traditional socialist idea that technology itself is neutral is not really sufficient when applied to nuclear power. This technology may well be too dangerous ever to be acceptable to socialists. We also pointed to the very real dangers that nuclear power represents to our civil liberties. It means that all those who work in industry will have very limited trades union rights—a special armed police force with very wide powers has already been established to protect the industry. We stressed that in the long run it is only by building a free socialist society based on production for need not profit that we can control our own lives.

None of this was particularly deep or original. What was surprising though was that there was only a very small socialist presence on the demonstration, and few organisations had produced anything specifically for the event.

Nuclear power is not an issue that can be ignored. It is the duty of militants to participate in the struggle against it. We need only look to West Germany and France to see what kind of resistance movement can and should be built.

WORKERS WANTED

BLACKROSE PRESS is a libertarian communist/feminist collective that prints for people in struggle: anti-racists, workers, tenants, women and the left. We are looking for a fourth worker, preferably with some experience of printing.

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rationality of the festival: living without boredom and enjoying without limitation are the only rules that will be recognised" (*10 Days That Shook The University*, Situationist International, Black & Red). Reduced to essentials this meant that revolution was total and personal, and not a question of self-sacrifice. As Cohn-Bendit said, "It's for yourself that you make revolution".

Unity

By June 30th just about everyone was back at work, and Gaullism seemed stronger than ever. Was May a defeat? For the vast numbers who wanted more than transitory pay rises, yes. For the revolutionaries who failed to co-ordinate a national strikers' organisation, deciding what the workers should produce for themselves, under their own conditions, in factories that were social property—yes, too. They had not managed to win over the mass of workers so that workers power was built by the free co-ordination of elected strike committees.

The beginnings of this movement in the organisation of food and the regulation of electricity and transport can be seen. There was a need for more revolutionaries to win over more workers to such a plan, against the reformism and parliamentarianism of the PCF and the Gaullists. It was the absence of this practical political work that was the cause of defeat. When trotskysts wasted time and energy trying to convince everyone of the need for a leninist party they were wrong on two counts. Firstly their call 'Build the Party' was at leadership level, at best it meant that all the militants involved in M22M, JCR, UJCTLL etc. should join an organisation, but in no sense did it mean the co-ordination of struggles. Secondly, it was a 'magical' solution. It said a party on the basis of the programme will respond to the needs of



the masses.

The masses, however, did not appear to want either party or programme. Their needs were more practical: to gain confidence that they could work industry in practice and from there make decisions for themselves about what to produce and for whom. What was needed was an organisation that could ask for instance, "Is it useful to manage for yourselves a government weapons programme?"

After 10 millions had been on strike the Mandelist Fourth International could conclude merely that it had elaborated a programme, that there needed to be principled co-operation between revolutionaries, and above all to build the party.

Mandel was to dismiss ideas of self-management as confused. Indeed they were—but the task of revolutionaries in May was to build the movement on a

principled basis *out of* the movement, not to dismiss it. (See *New Left Review* No. 52).

Paradoxically one might ask Mandel to take a lesson from Lenin in 1917. Among his mottoes were 'Audacity, audacity and more audacity!' and 'One gets involved and then one begins to see'.

Workers Power will be expressed (if May '68 is relevant) in factory committees (union or otherwise) which will link up and fight together. The place of revolutionaries will be fighting for class unity in these organisations.

It will have to be remembered that May did not involve women, an aspect not to be repeated. If the Leninist party is built as it was in May, then it may be built over the corpse of the movement. Diversions into electoralism and simple wage struggles in a situation that is potentially revolutionary will destroy that potential.

There are more general lessons too. The state will use violence but while it is not controlled by fascists it will use violence like a terrorist. It will repress small sections of workers one by one, in order to intimidate the rest.

May shows that it is possible with determination, organisation and preparation to defeat government repression—that it is even possible to make a revolution. Sociologists may pretend that problems don't exist, but as soon as authority is effectively challenged, as soon as liberation is in the air—problems, anger, and self-organisation can appear. Neither Britain nor France is in a pre-revolutionary state today. As in the days before May there is a need for patient organisation against conservative solutions to the contradictions and instability of capitalism. For us today the ideas of May are important. We fight for total revolution,

we don't compromise tomorrow for today. We may not be able to implement all our ideas, all our programme; we relate our politics to the struggles that exist now, but we remain revolutionaries.

Libertarian Communist

Special Supplement

10p



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Both supplements are available
—Hungary supplement: 5p
—Russia supplement: 10p
+ postage
from: LCG, 27 Clerkenwell Close,
London EC1.

FRANCE 1968

Workers

In the midst of a military coup in Algeria, Charles De Gaulle foisted himself on the French people, pretending to be all things to all people. He had himself elected president on promises of reforming and reordering France. Despite huge economic advances, workers' standards of living remained intolerable.

The government preferred to avoid reflating and the economy went into recession in 1967. They wanted to maintain high gold reserves to be able to guarantee French finances and threaten their chauvinist enemies: the Americans. Previously, France had been short of labour. (8% of the workforce were immigrants). Now, because of the government's acceptance of recession there were 450,000 unemployed (today, the figure is one million plus): 2.6% of the workforce, according to official figures. Unemployment was uneven: 40% of the unemployed were under 25. It was also concentrated in the provinces; Brittany and Burgundy . . . Wages were under £60 a month for one person in three. One house in two had neither a toilet nor a bath or inside shower. Wages were vastly unequal for men and women. There was a ratio of 650 to 450 francs per month at Saviem, Caen for apprentices and trained workers. 2/3 of all women were unwaged.

Students

The number of students increased by 111% between 1961 and 1967, rising to 0.6 million by 1968. The facilities were inadequate for these numbers; students were packed into lecture halls; they had no social and few residential facilities.

They had inadequate grants or none at all. Thirty per cent had to work while studying. In short, for students and workers, material conditions were a major problem.

This does not explain why the discontent was *only* expressed in May. This sudden increase of struggle has to be explained politically. Workers and students revolted in May because, at that time, they had become too angry to continue to accept these conditions.

Their *inactivity* before May also needs explanation.

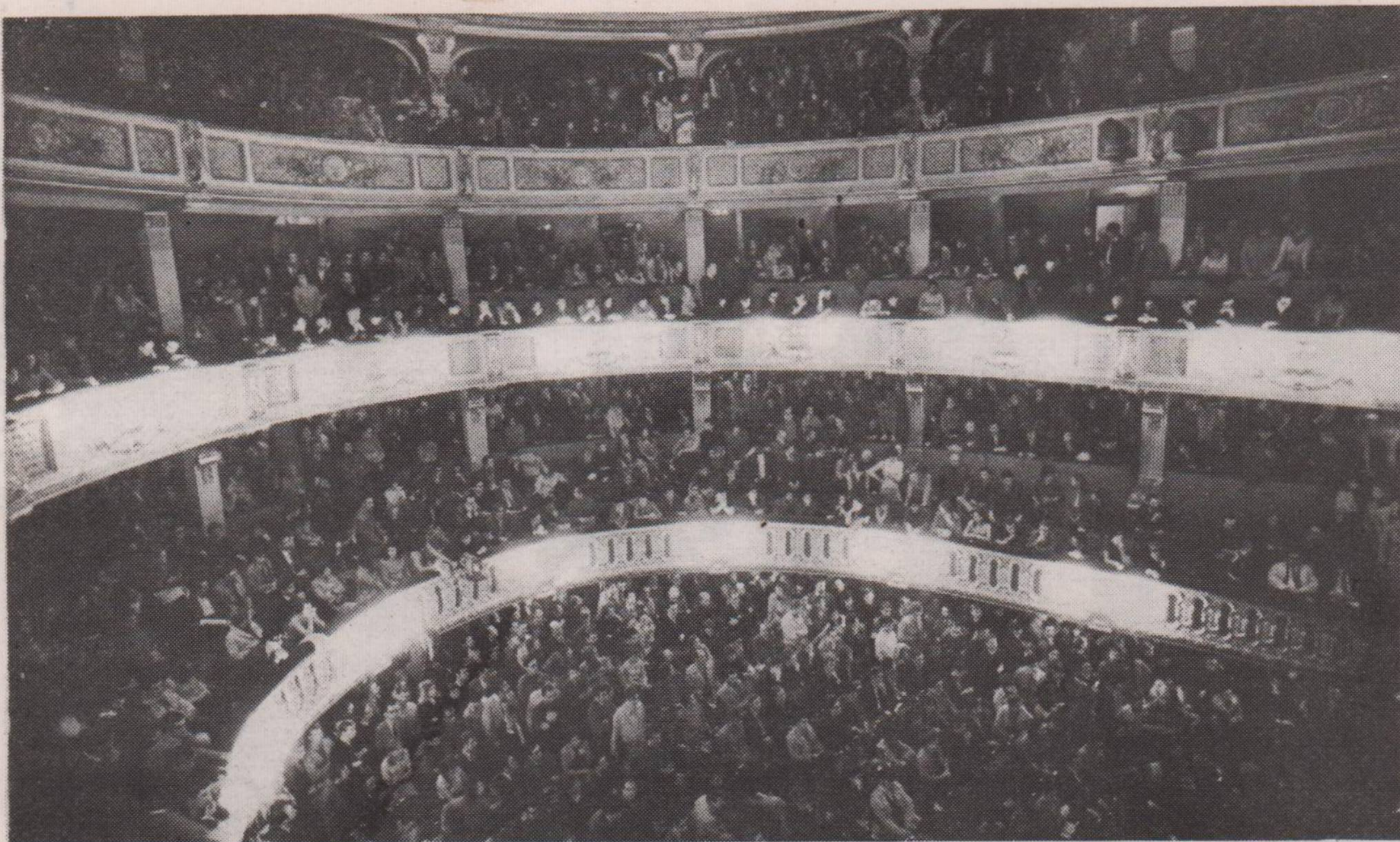
Unions

Trade Unions in France do not act in a way that could possibly develop militant rank-and-file organization on a national scale. The unions:—the communist-led CGT, the ex-Christian CFDT and the social democratic CIA-financed FO involve few workers. Together, they represented only 25% of workers, concentrated in a few areas: (car workers for instance) less strong in other areas, such as the health services. Each union represents first and foremost its union representatives, who are unused to mass activity (or fight against it). Whilst the unions do organize many militant members, their leaderships are composed of bureaucrats who, as in Britain, are used to compromise, subordinating workers' interests to the interest of getting support for the Communist Party (PCF) and Socialist Party (PS) in parliamentary elections. The *structure* of the unions is dominated by class-collaborationist reformists.

Fighting against this policy were revolutionaries of various tendencies: maoists (PCTILF and UJCML) trotskyists, principally the tendency known as Lutte Ouvriere, Workers Struggle (which won 1.7% of the vote in the recent elections), anarchists (particularly around Nantes), and various tendencies which emerged from Socialisme ou Barbarie (linked to the Solidarity group in Britain).

Communists

In 1968 the PCF had 200,000 or more members and regularly won about 20% of votes in elections but the PCF was not a revolutionary party. In 1936 it scuttled a wave of strikes which won paid holidays and the 40 hour week. The PCF meekly supported the "socialist" led popular front. In 1944, it accepted De Gaulle because he was an anti-american nationalist. Thorez, the PCF leader, helped reconstruct the state, rebuilding an upper-class officered army and destroying the resistance militias. Strikes were opposed as the PCF supported socialists and middle-class Christians in rebuilding "France". "One state, one army, one police, became Thorez's slogan. In the summer of 1945, 40,000 Algerians were killed by the Air Force under orders from the "communist" Charles Tillon, the Air



FRANCE 1968

The events of May 1968 revitalised the revolutionary movement in Western Europe. They showed that the revolutionary socialist transformation of society was possible, not only in France, but also in the so-called socialist countries of Eastern Europe.

The events included world-wide protests against American imperialism and the Vietnam war. They also radicalised generations of students and revived the revolutionary tradition in the workers movement.

The struggle in France, which we deal with here, is particularly important for us because it re-affirmed the importance of the idea of self-management. The students and workers involved were not won to a single party or dogma, but to a dynamic, independent revolutionary tradition.

This article is not a final, finished analysis of the events. Rather, it is part of our continuing project of re-examining the history of the socialist movement, from a Libertarian Communist viewpoint, in order to produce a more relevant strategy and analysis for the struggles to-day and that lie ahead.

minister. Earlier, on 12th May, the PCF paper 'Humanite' said "Those troublemakers ought to be taught a lesson they will not forget."

In 1946, Comrade Duget declared to the CGT conference, that strikes only benefitted monopolies. The PCF line did not change when the central Paril Renault factory at Billancourt struck in April 1947. Only under pressure from Russia as the cold war erupted did the PCF begin to think of leading the strike. The PCF explained the strike as an example of "how the workers strike when we are not in Government to satisfy their demands." They built no solidarity action, nor did they unify this struggle with that of the miners. Their protests were directed by the Kremlin against American aid: and were seen as pressure rather than as part of the workers struggle. During the struggles for Algerian Independence, the PCF refused to back the national liberation movement.

As opposition to this colonialist war mounted, sections of the PCF, particularly the student section, UEC, were won over to anti-imperialist positions and support of various Trotskyite, or Maoist tendencies. The struggle in Algeria lasting from 1956 to 1963 involved the opposition to imperialism of a whole generation of students who broke from the chauvinist PCF. Adult revolutionaries (the standard PCF slogan was "Anarcho-Hitlerite-Trotskyists") were expelled in this period up to 1968 from the PCF's front organisations, notably the CGT and joined the "Socialist" union FO to defend their ideas there.

Solidarity

The size of the revolt in May was something extraordinary. In Paris the demo of May 13 gathered about one million people. Demos in provincial towns involved tens of thousands. Ten million workers were on strike for various lengths of time. May was a mass movement; this aspect was unprecedented. Nevertheless, the demos and strikes did not occur at random. May was not a jackpot won by some group of revolutionaries on a historical fruit machine. Most of its aspects, most of the political tendencies and reactions were continuations of *previous struggles*.

A good example of the process of building solidarity against government

repression occurred at the SAVIEM lorry factory in Normandy. An unlimited strike by 4800 people against a cut in hours and wages was deliberately repressed. Hundreds of CRS were brought in from outside to stop protest marches. In a battle between 8000 demonstrators and CRS, there were 100 arrests, 100 wounded in scenes of violence in peaceful Caen. The strikers were joined by unemployed, (4000 under 20 in that region), and students. Because this happened in a small provincial town it did not generate the same size of violence as in Paris but this strike, and others at Besancon in February 1967, (Rhodiaceu), or the violence as Le Mans in October 1967 between Renault workers and CRS had a great radicalising effect. Similar scenes of violence occurred when the CRS attacked students protesting against repression of students involved in campaigns against restrictions which prevented women from having male visitors in their rooms. In January, women students invaded the male residences. Students were also involved on demonstrations and pickets in the towns, for example over the new law on social insurance which made workers pay more for their medical needs. These struggles culminated in the violent repression of a demonstration in February in the course of which, barricades were built.

Two national campaigns were important in this period, one organised by UNEF the left-wing student union against restrictions on visiting female residences, the other organised by the Trotskyists and Maoists over Vietnam's invasion by the USA. It was out of these struggles that the May revolt developed.

Revolt

Anger caused by the violent repression of students was the most immediate element in the feelings of people who protested in May. This anger was allied to feeling of self-liberation: the choice was either to accept repressions or to protest like the students. The students' *determination* to secure their immediate objectives, their organisation for themselves in the revolt, their determination not to go through "proper channels", but to demonstrate their independence, their combativity thus inspired the strike that followed. (For the sequence of events read developments from March to May in that

chronology). The symbols of their strategy were the barricades of May 10th: they were there to protect them from their enemies, to refuse to submit, to express their demands for themselves. The Government's attempt to smash the new revolutionaries, to victimise some, to intimidate others was defeated for a time. . . . Anger, however, was not the only motivation. The debates and demands of sections of the students and workers went beyond defence (beyond free the prisoners and withdraw the CRS), they demanded revolution.

Break

The theory of the "Student Revolution" is relatively simple. They broke with the PCF bureaucracy. Some developed clear perspectives— the need to destroy the French academic teaching system as it was and the need to substitute a critical open university which contributed to and was defined by a social revolution.

The PCF's ideas in May were bourgeois, conservative ideas. They argued that the disruption was bad because it prevented their working class students from taking exams and getting on in society. The main change they wanted was that more students should come from the working class backgrounds. They objected to anyone being more critical than themselves of bourgeois society. The PCF philosophy was that one could not be more socialist than the PCF—so-called leftists were not members of the PCF or the working class. This label did not fit Cohn-Bendit who was called "a German Jew", by the present PCF General Secretary Marchais in the PCF paper "Humanite". The response of the student demo is characteristic: thousands shouted "We are all German Jews", in solidarity with Cohn-Bendit, who was banned from France by the Government.

Another episode is also characteristic. In a debate in the Sorbonne, David Cohn-Bendit was arguing with Catala, the leader of the student Communist UEC, and asked him why it prevented a mass discussion of the million people who demonstrated on May 13th.

Catala's reply was characteristic of the bureaucratic PCF: "Simple really," sneered Catala, "the agreement concluded between the CGT, CFDT and UNEF and the other sponsoring organizations stipulated that dispersal should take place at a pre-determined place. The Joint Sponsoring Committee had not sanctioned any further developments".

"A revealing answer" replied Cohn-Bendit, "the organizations hadn't foreseen that we would be a million in the streets. With a million in the streets almost anything is possible. You say the Committee hadn't sanctioned anything further. On the day of the Revolution, comrade, you will doubtless tell us to forego it because it hasn't been sanctioned by the appropriate sponsoring committee. . . ."

That brought the house down. Everyone except a few Stalinists and Trotskyists cheered.

The PCF was thoroughly exposed to all the students involved in demonstrations, occupations as a bureaucratic force which accepted the boundaries in which it operated. Capitalism.

Rejected

A basic idea of the revolutionary students was a rejection of their academic studies. For them, Sociology was: "tied to the social demands for rationalised practice in the service of bourgeois ends: money, profit, maintenance of order." For instance: "Industrial Sociology seeks above all else, the adaptation of the worker to his work; the inverse perspective is very rare because the sociologist, paid by the management, must respect the goals of the economic system." Similarly, the American Government used their paid sociologists, who defined Third World Peoples as undemocratic primitives to justify their repression in Vietnam. (cf. "Why Sociologists" in Cockburn and Blackburn, *Student Power*, Penguin).

The students, not only rejected their work and argued against it, on a theoretical level, but worked first to enlighten other students, and secondly, to unmask the university as such. They succeeded to the extent of winning over one third or more of the students. (Many more remained apathetic to both the revolutionaries and to the conservatives).

Another group concluded on the following principles: "To take collective responsibility for one's own affairs, ie. self-government, to destroy all hierarchies which merely serve to paralyse the initiative of groups and individuals. To make all those in authority permanently responsible to the people. To spread information and ideas through the



movement. To put an end to the division of labour and of knowledge."

Problems

The problems faced by the revolutionary students after they reoccupied their universities when the government withdrew the CRS were threefold. First, they had to win over a majority of the active students. (Students who were content to do revision and exams didn't matter if they didn't do anything else.) Secondly they had to unite with and support the strikers against the PCF. Thirdly they had to maintain the momentum of the movement: the particularity of the revolution was that it won over thousands of people, but that these people were not won to organisations or theories but to an active movement. If the movement's actions became repetitive, if its debates became academic, if there was no progress, then its opponents would have time to think and to act.

The PCF and the right were discredited for a time, their bureaucracy and repression were hated, but they lived on waiting for the movement to lose momentum.

May was firstly an ideological crisis. the Gaullists and PCF were seen by a large number of students and a smaller proportion of workers as contradictory elements within a capitalist system, but the apparatus of the state, its army, police, union bureaucracy, were intact. The problem for the movement was that it had to build its own organisations and its own power. The problem for the opponents was that they could no longer use their army or police to attack students directly; opposition to the movement by force would mean civil war. De Gaulle hesitated over this, he went to Baden-Baden to get army support. But he did not need to use it. (Whether it was possible to launch a civil war is debatable, see below.)

Failure

The PCF was faced by a contradiction, a dilemma. It had had to support a campaign against the government's repression: the million demonstrators on May 13th would not have tolerated it if the PCF had accepted repression. But at the same time it had to prevent a revolution: a revolution would have destroyed their bureaucratic power, power which depended on their organisation being the only one which workers had to defend themselves with under capitalism, power which depended on the impossibility of making a revolution independently and against the PCF.

On this basis we can see why the PCF prevented the discussions on May 13th. It used hundreds of employees from the suburbs it controlled around Paris to steward this demonstration peacefully. When the strikes began, provoked independently of the CGT by young workers who sympathised with the students, and by revolutionaries, the PCF had to ensure that the strikers remained isolated from each other, isolated from the students, and passive, under PCF control.

The students were not a revolutionary force in the factories. They couldn't just walk in and point out what the problems of the workers were. They could say that they wouldn't be conservative students in society, but they could not go into factories and know what the problems were.

Sometimes of course the CGT would actively prevent contact between students and workers. At Renault-Billancourt in Paris they locked the gates and told the students to go away from the works. When there were students present as Workers Assemblies they were sometimes prevented from speaking by the CGT. However, when the CGT tried this

at the Hispano-Suiza plant young workers replied "We speak the same language as the students, but as for you. . ."

Sometimes the revolutionary students would end up doing work for the unions, because not knowing what was wanted by the workers they were afraid to impose their views. At other times they would gain the confidence of workers at a factory and set up effective Worker-Student Action Committees. A host of these developed at Censier University annexe in Paris, where the militants of the March 22nd Movement (M22M) were active. (Meanwhile the JCR, Trotskyists of the same faction as the IMG in

Britain, dominated the Sorbonne, hiding debates.)

The students actions weren't just limited to the factories and the universities. Struggles continued on the streets. On the 24th, after De Gaulle had proposed a referendum, (a proposal which fell flat, whilst the Communist Party proposed elections), the M22M distributed this leaflet for a demo at 5pm.

"Toilers it is time we looked after ourselves. To 10 million strikers! To all workers!

No to Parliamentary solutions, De Gaulle may go but the bosses will stay!

No to negotiations which only prop up capitalism!

Enough referendums, no more circuses! No one speaks for us. We ourselves must remain masters of our factories! The struggle must go on! The factories must support all those who now engage in battle. This is the time to plan our rule of tomorrow.

Direct supplies of food, organisation of public services, transport, information, housing etc. In all the streets, in the committees, wherever you may be!

Workers! peasants! Soldiers! Teachers! Schoolboys!

Let us organise and co-ordinate our struggle!

For the abolition of bosses!

All power to the workers!"

The CGT held a demonstration of 200,000. Many refused to disperse and joined the demo sponsored by the M22M, UNEF and the PSU (a left Socialist Party.) They burnt down the stock exchange, and could have destroyed the ministries of Finance and Justice. But instead of destroying more of the state buildings (the CRS had to guard the radio (ORTF), the hall, the president's palace) they were turned back to the students' quarter, the ghetto, on the proposal of the JCR supported by UNEF and PSU. These same groups on the 27th participated in a monster rally at Charlety which proposed Mitterrand and Meades-France, both Socialists, as head of state and prime minister. By these actions the movement was diverted. It did not build an alternative apparatus, or smash the existing one. Instead it prepared for elections and coalitions to do battle with the system. In this constitutional battle the

A YEAR OF STRUGGLE

February: Fighting in Caen (Normandy) between strikers from the SAVIEM works and students against CRS riot police. National Student Campaign against restriction which bars the presence of men in women's accommodation.

March: Windows of American Express office in Paris smashed as part of campaign against the Vietnam War. Six students arrested.

At Nanterre—a university campus on the outskirts of Paris—142 students occupy the administration block in protest. The students in the occupation (half have never been part of any left group, others are anarchists and trotskysts) begin to organize a wide political movement opposed to imperialism, the university, and police repression of workers and students.

April: 2000 demonstrate against assassination attempt on Rudi Dutschke, of the German socialist student organization SDS. Jacques Sauvageot of the Unified Socialist Party, PSU, (a leftist split from French Social Democracy) becomes acting president of the left-wing national students union UNEF.

May 1st: 50,000 people demonstrate in the biggest Mayday rally since 1960.

May 2nd: Nanterre closed after threats that the fascist group Occident would attack a planned anti-imperialist rally.

May 3rd: 527 students arrested at the Sorbonne, the central Paris university campus, including some from Nanterre. 100 wounded in clashes following the arrests. The university occupied by CRS. 2000 students involved.

May 6th (Monday): 15,000 students demonstrate. CRS charge the demonstrators. The students shout "Free our comrades!", "Sorbonne to the students!". De Gaulle, the French President, says we

can't tolerate violence. The Trade Unions all disapprove of this 'pseudo-revolutionary' student violence.

May 7th (Tuesday): 25,000 students demonstrate.

May 8th (Wednesday): 20,000 demonstrate. Rumours of the torture of arrested students in the police stations spread. Scenes of police brutality seen on television.

May 9th (Thursday): Debate. Demands are agreed: Freedom for all those charged. Withdrawal of police from the universities and Latin Quarter. Tactics: Determination that disruption will continue until these demands are met. Opposition to the Communist Party students UEC and to the trotskysts of the FER (they were allied to OCI, the International Communist Organization which at that time was a sister of the Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party (then Socialist Labour League) a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International) who opposed the students' belligerent attitude.

May 10th (Friday): 30,000 demonstrators in a march called by UNEF, the Lecturers union SNE Sup, and the other left groups. The Government refuses to accept the student demands. The demonstrators refuse to peacefully disperse, having achieved nothing. They occupy streets near the University and build barricades in self-defence. At 2.15am. the police attack. A battle involving tear/poison/paralysing gases, incendiary bombs and baton charges versus cobbles and Molotov cocktails continues until 6am. 367 people (251 of them police) hospitalized. 468 arrests. Scenes of brutality, torture and fighting in Paris, for French people the centre of world civilisation, arouse violent anti-government protests.

Monday 13th: One million demonstrators called by the unions,

the left, the extreme left and the students. Thousands of Communist Party stewards ensure that everyone disperses to the suburbs peacefully. The March 22 Movement (M22M) fails to organize a mass discussion on a march to the presidential palace. One Day Strike and demonstrations in the provinces.

Tuesday 14th: Sud-Aviation workers near Nantes strike.

Wednesday 15th and 16th: The strike spreads to Renault factories at Billancourt (Paris), Cleon, Le Mans and Flins. The Communist union is caught unprepared and opposes the young workers who lead this action.

Thursday 16th: Post and Rail workers strike, joined by many others. The Communist union CGT declares that Cohn-Bendit (a spokesman of M22M) "is playing Pompidou's game".

Monday 20th: More strikes including secondary schools.

Thursday 23rd: 200 arrests after clashes in Paris.

Wednesday 22nd: Govt. votes amnesty in attempt at pacification.

Friday 24th: CGT demonstrate in isolation. Students joined by thousands of workers enter central Paris, burn the Stock Exchange, but are turned back to the Latin Quarter and the Sorbonne by the PSU and the trotskysts of the JCR. (The JCR went on to fuse with the French section of the Mandelist United Secretariat of the Fourth International, IMG in GB.) 100,000 demonstrate; 1000 wounded; 1 death in Paris, 1 in Lyons; 800 arrests. The CRS run mad attacking everyone, demonstrators, passers-by, nurses and doctors. More violence and torture afterwards in the police stations.

Sunday 26th: CGT and Government reach agreement on wage rises.

Monday 27th: The second week of a strike of ten million workers. Mass

government, which controlled the media, which could ban political groups (11 were banned, including M22M and JCR, on June 12th) which controlled the army and the police, and also gerrymandered the voting. (No votes for those under 21, none for those over 21 who weren't registered in 1967—the lists were out of date, none for immigrants, no consideration for the 21.3% of those who could vote who abstained or spoiled their ballot papers. Of approximately 35 million people in France over 18, only 13 million voted for De Gaulle's party in June. This victory for Gaullism was handed out on a plate by his parliamentary opponents in the opposition parties.

Workers' power

The fight between revolutionaries and the PCF took different forms in the factories, the problem for the PCF and the revolutionaries was the victory or defeat of struggles for elected strike committees (or committees formed by nominees of the unions where these were unrepresentative) for participation in struggles and occupations (or sending all the workers home) for widening the struggle to include housewives, students and peasants (or saying piss off to anyone who wasn't under the heel of reformist politics) for co-ordinating power in localities (or keeping each factory isolated) for free, accurate information about the progress of struggles (or for libelling revolutionaries as 'adventurists', 'elements foreign to the working class', provocateurs acting (objectively) for the government', etc, saying that factory X was going back to work to factory Y and saying factory Y has gone back to work to factory X when both were still on strike). It's difficult to give a coherent account of how these struggles were waged nationally. Few towns were like Nantes, where a city-wide trade union committee organised food and transport. No organisation developed a mass factory base around revolutionary demands in May. There was little in the way of regional or city-wide co-ordination between revolutionaries. The situation can be looked at from two perspectives. The perspective of the union leaders (CFDT and CGT), who negotiated quantitative improvements for the workers, and the perspective of the small groups of revolutionaries in some factories.

CGT

Immediately after De Gaulle's speech on the 24th, the CGT and CFDT began negotiations. They reached agreement on the 27th. The two most important clauses were a 35% rise in the minimum wage, affecting two million workers, and a 10% rise in salary for the whole year. Against the wish of the CFDT this was not a flat-rate increase. There was also agreement on payment for at least half of the strike days. There was no agreement on the length of the working week, on earlier retirement (60 for men, 55 for women) or on trade union rights. The agreement was REJECTED by workers everywhere, partly because it left out so many concerns of the workers, partly because it had been made above their heads. At Renault-Billancourt the CGT leaders who arrived triumphantly were listened to, first, in angry silence, then with cries of 'don't sign!' Never before had they been so humiliated.

After the 30th the PCF and the CGT followed De Gaulle's lead and put all their energies into winning the elections. The government increased its offers in negotiations over wages. Salary increases varied between 14 and 21%. Those on higher wages got more. There were some cuts in hours, but still no agreement on a 40 hour week. No concessions were made by the government on the questions of free health insurance or retirement at 60. The CGT wanted normality for the elections and described these terms as a 'significant victory.' Many of the demands made in May involved the workers in beginning to control and manage their factories. One important issue was speed-ups. At Renault-Flins one comment was 'with the speed of production one hasn't the time to breathe.' Citroen workers condemned speed-ups as damaging to health.

Another issue was unfair dismissal. This was standard practice to eliminate militants. At Flins revolutionaries were sacked after the strike ended. Citroen workers demanded trade union and individual freedom in the factory. This demand was particularly relevant to foreign workers who had few legal rights. Portuguese workers at Flins noticed agents of PIDE, the secret police of the dictator Salazar. At the Nuclear Research

meeting of the PSU and teachers at Charlety football stadium. The meeting is for speeches, the questions debated are really about the possibility of making Pierre Mendes-France (a retired PSU leader) Prime Minister or President IN THE EXISTING CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC.

Tuesday 28th: The JCR, with elements who have left the PCF, and M22M, attempts to cobble together a party (the "precondition" for a successful revolution) instead of acting to oppose the PCF moves to scuttle the strikes.

Wednesday 29th: De Gaulle flies to Baden-Baden to get army support. A half-million demonstration of students and CGT calls for "a popular government".

Thursday 30th: De Gaulle replies, "There is the danger of communism". The electoral battle between Stalinists and Gaullism is opened. The PCF is able to cry for a popular government because the movement has been directed into debates at Charlety on the 27th, and retreat to the student Quarter on the 24th. Instead of continuing a mass movement the centrists have diverted it into reformist wage rises, elections, mere student occupations and demonstrations. The unions refuse to demonstrate in reply to De Gaulle.

Saturday 1st June: 30,000 strong demonstration called by students and Force Ouvriere, the smallest social-democratic trade union. Petrol becomes available for the holiday exodus. 68 road deaths.

Tuesday 4th June: Police occupy the French Radio, ORTF.

Wednesday 5th June: Return to work in electricity, gas, mining.

Thursday 6th June: Return to work in transport, rail . . . PCF comment "The victory of unity". Renault-Flins, which refuses to return, is occupied by CRS.

7th–8th June: Student mobilization in defence of Flins:

castigated by PCF and Government. . . Clashes at Flins, 60 wounded, 240 arrests.

10th June: 10,000 workers at Peugeot–Sochaux vote to restart the strike.

11th June, 10am: Workers enter factory. 3 people at Sochaux and Flins die from CRS attacks, another 11 wounded by firearms. In Paris UNEF and other student organisations call a demonstration against these murders. . . 75 barricades are erected. Fighting with the CRS through the night. 2000 arrests. 114 foreigners expelled. 1000 wounded.

12–13th June: Banning of M22M, JCR and other left groups. Many of their members are arrested.

16th June: Re-occupation of the Sorbonne.

18–19–20th June: Workers at Renault (Flins), Peugeot and Baliet return to work.

30th June: second round of General Election: Guess who won?

6th July: The Censier University Annexe, home of Worker-Student Action Committee occupied by CRS.

24th July: Arrest of Krivine and other JCR leaders.

14th Sept: Sauvageot, the UNEF leader, called up by the army.

18th Oct: Fighting between CRS and students in Paris, Beaux Arts university annexe.

8–9th Nov: Occupation by students of university buildings in Grenobles and Nantes.

6th Dec: Strike by Renault workers against lowering of their Xmas bonuses.

8–9th Dec: Nanterre 1st-year students strike and, on the 10th, Nantes students occupy because of insufficient hours of teaching.

19th Dec: End of Nantes strike. Nanterre invaded by police forces.

26th Dec: Two members of secondary school Students Action Committee in Bordeaux expelled for political activity.

Centre at Saclay (near Paris) the workers and technicians demanded an end to the repressive security measures designed to intimidate them. They didn't clock in or out during the strike so that there was no record of their identities. There were also demands for no dismissals in industries threatened with 'unprofitability' under capitalism. The first factory to strike, Sud Aviation near Nantes was threatened by the 5th economic plan which envisaged 1500 redundancies in the aircraft industry by 1970. Other industries under a similar threat were occupied in May. Rhodiaca (Lyons, textiles), ACB (Nantes, shipyards), and CSF (Brest, electronics). Other demands which arose were on conditions in factories or factory hostels, lack of hygiene, excessive heat in summer, lack of places to sit, insufficient time for meals, and as always, demands for less hours and earlier retirement. At Flins workers demanded flat rate increases which would have benefited the lowest-paid most.

Self-management

Three conceptions of self-management came forward in May. De Gaulle proposed self-management as co-operation between workers and government. Everyone saw through this blind offer, as there were no common interests between the two. Secondly, the ex-christian union CFDT argued for self-management to increase workers' power within capitalism. Their conception meant little more than build the CFDT. A third revolutionary idea of self-management was expressed in the strikes in May. An example is the production of walkie-talkies by CSF workers, so that demonstrators could keep in touch. Another example is the work done by the electricity plant at Chevite, near Nantes. The strike was chosen by the unions which represented 90% of the workforce. The committee cut the current so that only essential services (like hospitals) could function. The committee organised supplies of gas and organised solidarity with the surrounding population. The politics of the strike were expressed thus: 'We wished to show our capacity and thus our right, as producers, to manage the means of production we use. We proved it.' Nantes was a centre where trade unions assumed more organisation than elsewhere. Even here there were problems. There was no organised participation on equal terms with non-unionised workers and housewives, neither were there elections of union delegates onto the inter-union committee.

Nevertheless the achievements of this committee are impressive. It took over from the town council and organised:

- 1) Transport. This was organised in co-operation with FO (the 'socialist' union) lorrydrivers and the council lent its cars to the committee.
- 2) Finance. Families in need were given vouchers for food.
- 3) Roadblocks.
- 4) Food distribution. This was organised by a committee involving workers and peasants who sold food at cost price.
- 5) Prices. Each day shops were inspected to ensure against profiteering—notice to this effect were posted on their doors. However it was only owner-run shops that opened. The committee did not get the big supermarkets to open, perhaps out of fear of the big companies involved. Some food stocks were seized. In the course of its 15-day rule more neighbourhood committees evolved. Does this indicate a case of growing politicisation?
- 6) Petrol. Rationing was organised.
- 7) Defence. Vigilance committees against attacks by the CRS were formed, especially in factories.

Organisation

To generalise about the democratic and revolutionary nature of organisation in the strike is dangerous. Where there was a mass revolutionary union organisation (as in a very few plants around Nantes) these organisations could and did usefully represent the workers. In other places the same form of organisation was used to prevent workers from electing a revocable democratic strike committee. At Renault-Cleon, one of the last factories to return to work, a committee was elected in the afternoon of the 15th, but discussions on the workers aims continued throughout the night whilst everyone occupied the factory. Discussions centred around all their conditions: against the heat, against the piecemeal bonuses, temporary contracts, repression (600 CGT members were sacked in 1952, speed-ups, etc. The strike committee was supervised through a daily general assembly. A solidarity committee was organised for social security and a school canteen opened for the strikers children.

Workers defeated a proposal by a PCF member to silence students who came and allowed them to distribute pamphlets—but PCF intimidation of papersellers continued.

Despite this and despite lies that 'the government was prolonging strikes' whilst there were 'victorious returns to work' the Grenelle agreement was thrown out. The government actions had different motives when the management claimed that the workers wanted to go back, they got the support of the CRS who cleared the factory.

But only ten days later, under pressure from the CGT, did they decide to return to work. A different example of democracy was the Rhone-Poulenc factory at Vitry where shopfloor committees were formed. Whilst they had the advantage of involving more workers they had the disadvantage of dividing workers by skills.

Women

One of the major developments after May was the development of large women's groups and gay liberation groups. The Women's Liberation Movement (MLF) did not exist in 1968, but sexual repression was one of the issues widely debated. The student UNEF campaign was associated with discussions of Reich's works, particularly his manifesto which saw the family as an institution of sexual chaos. In one debate over the unprecedented presence of women in the violence people questioned whether those involved were the girlfriends of the men or not. The neighbourhood and the home least of all were not areas heavily affected by the movement which centred on universities and factories—where the ratio of men to women was (in both places) 2 to 1. On one occasion women were deliberately pushed into the arms of the police, because the men did not expect the police to arrest them. Needless to say, the leaders of the movement, Cohn-Bendit, Sauvageot, Geismar, Krivine, Kravetz, Herbert, were all men. Their intellectual ideas were derived from Althusser, Marx, Cardan, Trotsky, Sartre—but not de Beauvoir. Nevertheless, women were involved and the confidence they gained must be important.

May was not just a revolution of the superstructure. Two comments sum up this attitude:

"We'd learnt that it was possible to do things differently. People got up and criticised what they were being told."

"Oh, yes! There were lots of small problems that we didn't manage to sort out intellectually. The striking thing is that people's personal problems found their place more easily in discussions, because people were less repressed—things were cleared up straight away. The thing that had an enormous effect, I think, was the constant attempt to express things in the most individual way possible, so that everything could start again from scratch."

Nevertheless there was no understanding of sexism, nor of the specific oppression of women, in the campaigns of the May movement. Fewer attempts were made to involve women than trade unionists. There were no struggles either against the way women were oppressed or for the socialisation of women's work. One is forced to conclude that May was generally a male dominated movement which accepted rather than fought sexism.

Despite this, May involved a cultural revolution which expressed itself in a new wave of art, music, and the atmosphere of a festival of liberation. Hence ideas like "proletarian revolutions will be festivals or they will not be . . . Play is the ultimate

