

workers' ACTION

No. 102

May 13-20, 1978

10p

WHO MURDERED 25 year old Altab Ali as he walked home from work last week? and who murdered 10 year old Kenneth Singh only a couple of miles away in East London two weeks before?

The Action Group Against Racist Attacks [which has just been set up in the East End] has two answers. Directly, the fascists. Both victims were Asians living in an area where the National Front has a big base and where the fascists have had some support since the 1930s

Indirectly, the government, in alliance with the police. Especially with its immigration laws, it has created an atmosphere for racism to thrive. When protesters against the East End's racist violence march after Altab Ali's funeral to Downing Street this weekend they will be leaving a coffin outside Number Ten to make their point clear.

Protesters are also posing questions to the police. Why were passers-by who saw the fatally wounded Altab Ali not questioned? Why will the police not say whether Mr Ali told them anything before he died an hour and a half later at the London Hospital?

On the weekend after this murder, a group of white youths in Wolverhampton shot at three West Indians from a car. All three were injured by pellets. Not long ago the police in Wolverhampton were sneering at those who said they feared racist attacks in the city.

OO

In the East End of London, the local community and local anti-racists have been quick to organise their protest. Asians went into cinemas where performances were stopped and impromptu mass meetings were held. And many groups in the local labour movement have been quick to give their support.

Despite the size of the Anti-Nazi League Carnival and the drop in the NF's vote, the real danger from the fascists still remains.

Immediate measures to protect the black communities and the labour movement against these bigots are the first priority, and every working class organisation has a duty to give active assistance. We cannot rely on the police and the state to defend us from the fascists. Only action by the workers' movement and the black communities can stop this menace.

The basis of such a co-ordinated campaign must be

■ Defence of the black communities against racist attack;

■ No platform for fascists. Drive them off the streets.

■ Purge all open racists from the labour movement; ■ Organise to immigrate

STOP THESE KILLERS

**33 racist attacks in a few months
'KEEP BLOOD OFF OUR STREETS'**

THE ACTION GROUP'S STATEMENT

Thursday 4th May, 7.30pm. Altab Ali, a Bengali machinist, leaves his factory in Hanbury Street, off Brick Lane [where the fascists regularly sell their papers — WA]. He is making his way home. It is broad daylight. He walks past the Post Office at the bottom of Brick Lane and turns into Adler Street.

There he is set upon by a group of unknown assailants who stab him in the neck. Somehow he staggers 200 yards across to St Mary's churchyard and collapses by a bus stop on Whitechapel Road. Within a few hours the news of his death has travelled by word of mouth throughout the Asian community.

It is also the day, the National Front have put up 41 racists to contest the local borough elections. Racial tension in the area has been running

high all day. There have been more NF candidates standing in Tower Hamlets than anywhere else in the country. Surprisingly the police are nowhere in evidence.

Reaction to the killing within the Asian community of the East End has been swift and determined. A series of spontaneous mass meetings has taken place almost on a daily basis from the day after Altab Ali's death.

Plans have been drawn up for a national demonstration to protest the continuing escalation of racial violence on the streets of East London. Representatives of the recently formed Action Committee against Racist Attacks have over this weekend been touring mosques, local cinemas, and other places where Asian people gather. Each meeting called is attended by an ever increasing number of people — both black and white.

There is a determination to face the racist challenge that Altab Ali's killing represents. We want to know 'Who Killed Altab Ali?' and we are determined to keep blood off our streets.

From past experience we know we must rely first of all on our own collective strength. Complaints to the police have proved futile. We have stood by and watched them do nothing. In addition to the hundreds of recorded assaults against Asian workers in this area, we have witnessed the stabbing of an Asian student in Brick Lane and witnessed also the police refusal to charge the assailant.

We believe the time has come for a public enquiry into the activity of the police force in this area. We demand nothing less from the Home Secretary.

How many more deaths will it take to convince him that this is necessary?



Fascists with need for city of a
attacment has to ssions and implemen
Labour
activists

TWO ATTACKS over recent weeks show how the National Front is a threat to the whole labour movement.

In Blackburn, a 60-year old woman councillor was attacked by two NF thugs the day after she had denounced the Front at a council meeting. Two men invaded the Labour Party offices where Mrs Edna Roberts works as secretary to local MP Barbara Castle, snatched off her glasses, pinned her to her chair with a broom handle, swept the papers and phones off her desk, and abused her.

In Rochdale there was an attack which could have killed three people. Two weeks ago, Virginia and John Depledge woke up smelling smoke and found the contents of their dustbin piled up against their back door and set alight, the door on fire, and smoke billowing through the house.

They woke their 18-month old baby son and escaped. A National Front slogan had been painted on the wall, and it seems the NF were attacking simply because the Depledges had a Labour poster in their window.

PROTEST DEMONSTRATION

Sunday May 14th
Assemble 11am at
St. Mary's churchyard,
WHITECHAPEL
for a march to
Hyde Park & Downing St.



'We'll get you, racist scum' was the message of vengeance after a similar murder in Southall two years ago

This interview with an East German militant is translated from a recent issue of 'Informations Ouvrières', the paper of the French 'Organisation Communiste Internationaliste'.

Unlike the OCI and the interviewee, however, WA does not see the SPD as 'the bearer of the hopes of the German working class'. On the contrary, while it retains large-scale support from workers, the SPD like the Labour Party in Britain acts against the interests of the working class.

■ ■ How has the situation evolved in the GDR since what has been known as the Biermann affair?

□ □ When Wolf Biermann was deprived of his nationality, I was in prison. But I do know that peace was not achieved as a consequence of that affair and the arrests which followed. On the contrary, the general discussion has become broader. Initiatives for an organised discussion have increased. Many meetings, involving small circles, take place. In the factories, there is a lot of discussion now among workers.

The workers today go as far as open actions against the bureaucracy. There have been strikes in Berlin and Karl Marx Stadt. And that is only the tip of the iceberg. In the Narva factory, one of the big factories in Berlin making electrical products, a strike took place for payment of part of the wages in West German marks — which can be used in the "Intershops" that the bureaucracy have set up (for their own use).

And this demand was taken up by other factories by means of meetings and delegations.

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the bureaucracy has its new norms, mach were published in June '76. er the SED (Communist Party) Congress. Even the way in which the bureaucracy tried to introduce them is significant.

At the SED Congress there were only vague references to it. Then they were gradually published. And the bureaucracy tried each time to justify them by pretending that their applic-

'The name of communism has been soiled by the bureaucracy'

ation would always coincide with a wage increase.

But the workers understood that the new norms were an attack on their wages and refused to accept them. We know of a number of cases where the bureaucracy had to withdraw the new norms.

■ ■ A discussion is taking place today in Poland, the USSR and also in Rumania on the necessity for unions independent of the bureaucracy. Is this also true of the GDR?

□ □ I know that in many places the workers try to elect their own delegates to the union apparatus to try to use it for their own interests.

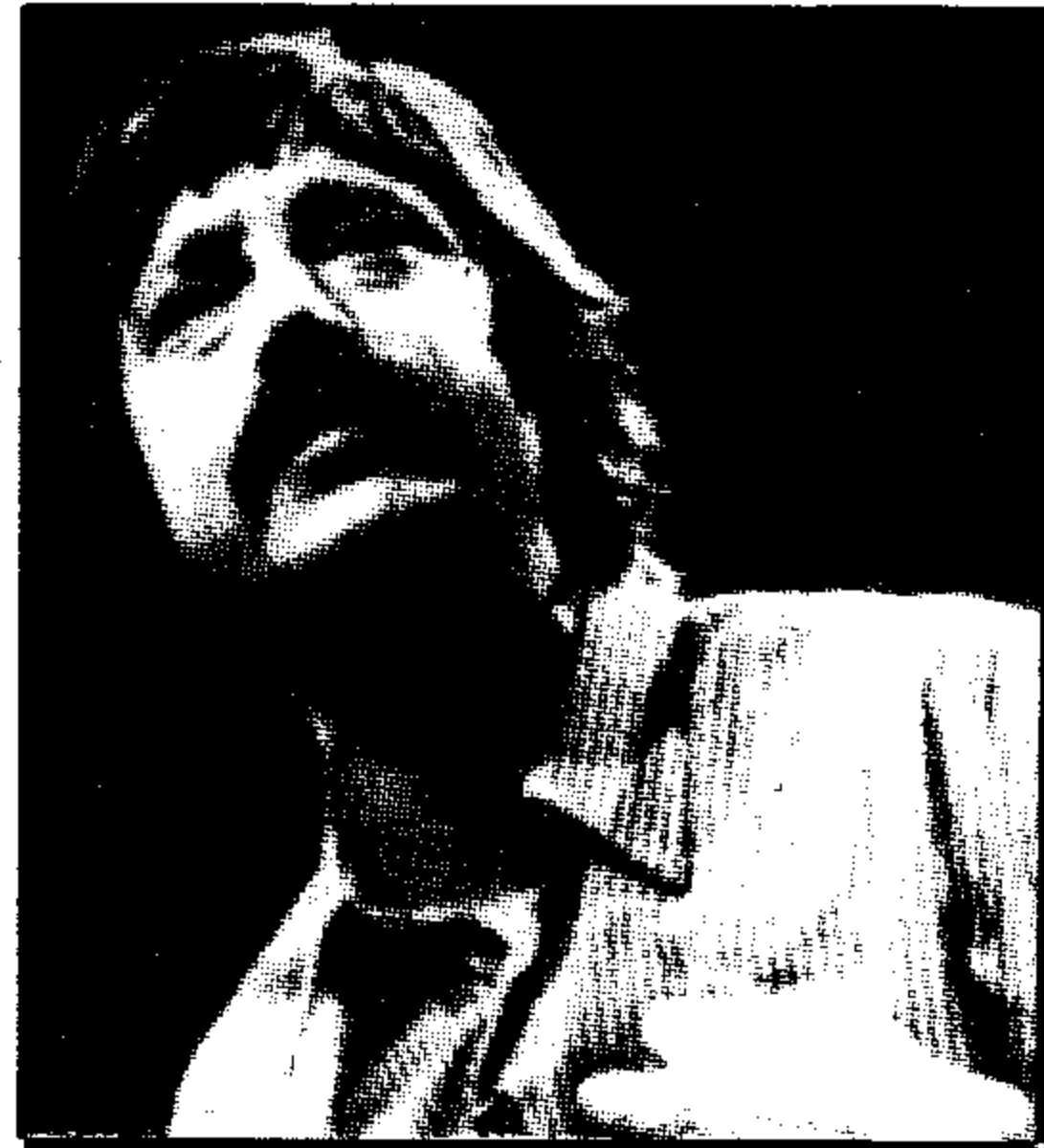
As yet, there is no information about any initiatives for independent unions in the GDR. But the creation of independent workers' organisations in the GDR is just as much on the agenda as in the USSR or Poland.

The fact that powerful unions already exist on German soil has a special significance. Up until now, their struggle in West Germany has always had direct consequences for the workers in East Germany. It is important today that these unions take up their responsibility to take a stand for the independent organisation of the East German workers.

■ ■ At present, there are big strikes going on in the Federal Republic. What impact could they have in the GDR?

□ □ I know from experience that in the East the workers follow with special attention what goes on in the West. In the shipyards, when there have been strikes or elections in the Federal Republic, the radio stayed on all day and everyone listened for the news.

When Schütz, the Social Democratic mayor of West Berlin, once criticised the level of salaries in the GDR, the bureaucracy reacted in a very clear way. Three days later, they



Wolf Biermann



Honecker

increased basic wages and, on the GDR radio, the head commentator, Schnitzler, denounced Schütz's intervention as an insupportable interference in the internal affairs of the GDR, adding at the end ... that more-over wages had just been increased!

■ ■ How do workers in the GDR see the [West German] Social Democratic Party?

□ □ When the SPD came to power, they had many hopes for this government, particularly for new policies towards the

East. They expected, and it was an illusion, that the question of the division of Germany would be resolved by it.

But in the meanwhile Willy Brandt, who represented this current, was defeated by the joint action of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy. The "Ostpolitik" did not bring the hoped-for results. The reforms the SPD promised have not happened. On the contrary, the SPD has been forced by the bourgeoisie to adopt a policy of social spending cuts and austerity.

Reject

This situation created vast confusion among workers in the East as well as in the West. But despite that, I believe that the SPD remains the bearer of the hopes of the German working class.

■ ■ You now live in the German Federal Republic. Some time ago Honecker, the chief of the East German bureaucracy, denounced what he called the "fundamentally anti-communist attitude of citizens of West Germany. What do you think of this declaration?

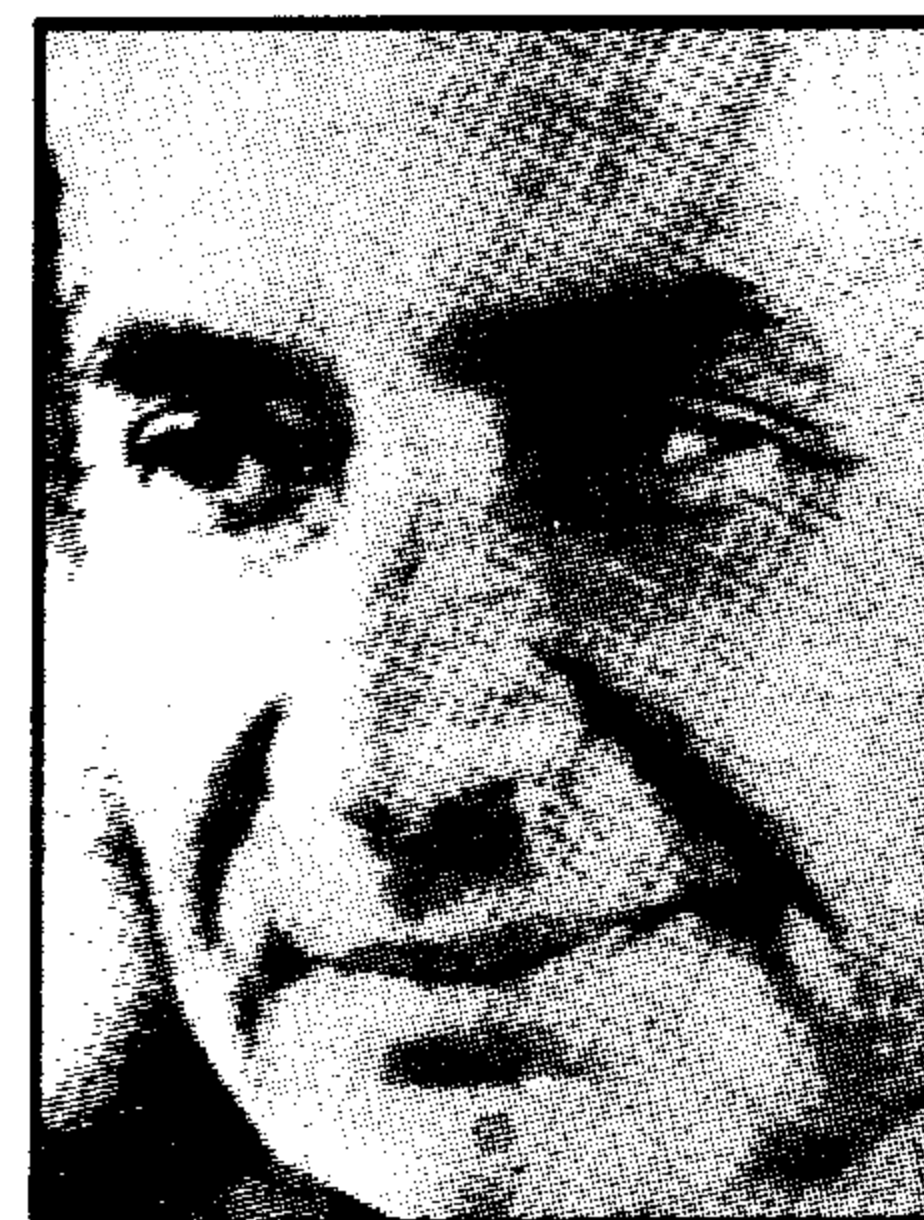
□ □ Such words are not new. When the Stalinists stand before the ruins of their own politics, they always say the masses are responsible. It's a slander on the working class.

One could say Honecker was right if one replaces the word "anti-Stalinist" for "anti-communist".

But it's not only in the West that the German working class is anti-Stalinist. It is also so in East. And in that, it is united.

One must understand that the workers are rejecting politics that only the bureaucracy can call "communist". This doesn't mean they reject communism, the name of which has been soiled by the bureaucracy. This confusion of terms represents the bureaucracy's only success!

Who mourns for Moro?



ALDO MORO, five times premier of Italy, is dead. After being held for 55 days by the Red Brigades, his body was found in a car in Rome parked — perhaps symbolically — halfway between the headquarters of the Christian Democrat Party, Moro's own, and the headquarters of the Communist Party, which is in de facto coalition with the Christian Democrats.

Those who pray at the bloody shrine of capitalist law and order will vie with each other in praise and prayer for the dead Moro, the one-time chief strategist of our class enemy in Italy. They will scramble to be first in line to propose that this street or that square be named after him. The working class will be exhorted to weep for 'a great Italian' and forget the class war.

The trade unions responded by calling a two-hour gen-

eral strike — which will be used to isolate the left.

His death followed sentence by a "people's trial" instituted by the Red Brigades. The title of the trial — though not the reality of it — indicated rightly that it is the prerogative of the oppressed Italian masses to pass judgment on Moro. And their prerogative, if they saw fit, to take his life ... soaked as it was with cruelty and corruption.

The fact that it was not the Italian masses who tried Moro, not they who took his life and who broke the capitalist class's most jealously guarded monopoly, the monopoly of violence — that is a cause for mourning. That and only that.

Aldo Moro was 61. He died leaving a wife and family he loved dearly and some forty million Italians he hated so much he made that hatred his life's work.

Learning a lesson from the Belgian workers

WITH experts insisting that unemployment will continue very high for the foreseeable future, more and more union leaders are talking about cutting the working week.

But that's all they're doing — talking. In the major industries, the 35-hour week demand is in the claim each year — and each year it is the first thing to be dropped in the negotiations.

Last week, two groups of workers were showing how a shorter working week could actually be won.

55 lagers employed by subcontractors on the Isle of Grain power station site simply did it themselves. After getting nowhere in talks with the management, they took their own decision to cut the working week to 35 hours, and implemented it by extending dinner breaks and finishing early on Friday.

The employers have warned them that if they carry on they will be sacked; but the workers have the support of their union, the GMWU, and are ready to fight.

In Belgium, 700,000 public sector workers have won a reduction of the work week to 38 hours after a campaign of strike action.

Militant action can achieve in weeks what speeches and resolutions won't achieve in years. The bosses' organisation, the Confederation of

THE Scanlon era in the engineering union is over. That era started when Hugh Scanlon was elected in 1967 to succeed Lord Carron, the despot who had been president of the AEU since 1956.

Last week a series of right wing victories in the AEU elections slammed the door on ten years when the Left either dominated or at least held its own in the union. Soon Terry Duffy, the right winger whom one employer affectionately called "a prat; an amiable prat, but a prat all the same", will take over as union president.

General Secretary John Boyd is equally right wing. On the Executive only Reg Birch represents a voice that might remotely be called "left".

When Scanlon took over it was easy to feel that a new era has opened up. And those disappointed that there was no fight for the engineers' claim in September 1968 were told to "wait till Hughie's settled in".

From the start, the Communist Party and the Labour Left lionised Scanlon. He could do no wrong.

Together with Jack Jones, Scanlon's "terrible twin" in the eyes of the press, he presided over a mighty surge of militant action by dockers, carworkers and engineering workers. He went along with this militancy and appeared to reflect it.

With the AUEW and TGWU block votes shifted to the left, there was a more militant mood at Labour Party conferences and a more left wing National Executive Committee. Previously on the right of the Labour Constituencies, the unions now led the resistance to Barbara Castle's "In Place of Strife".

THIS IS HOW SOUTHERN LEBANON WAS OCCUPIED:

- * 250,000 new refugees
- * 2000 civilian dead
- * Whole towns and villages wiped out
- * Beirut, Sidon, Nabatiyah, Hasbaya and others... bombed from air, sea and land.

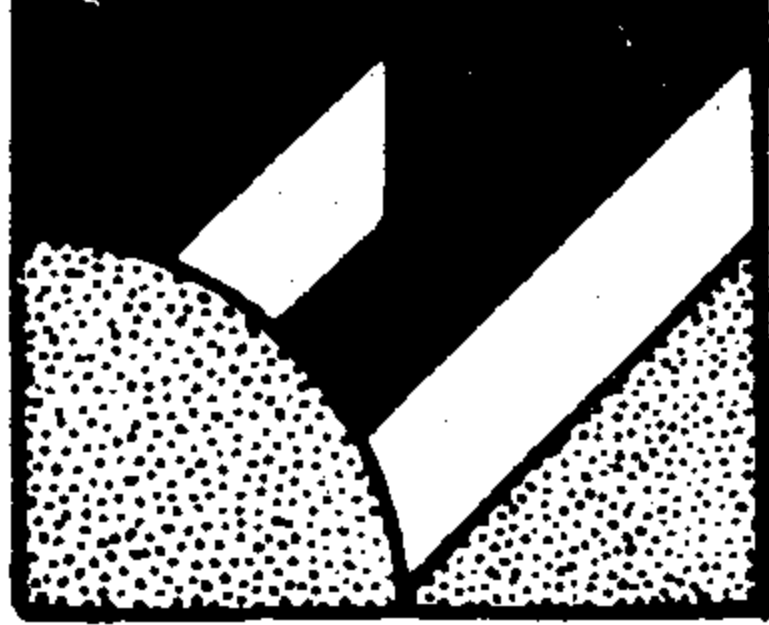


JOIN US ON SATURDAY MAY 13 IN DEMANDING

- * Immediate And Unconditional Withdrawal of Israel's Army From Lebanon.
- * Compensation For All Victims Of The Aggression
- * No UN 'Buffer Zone' To Legitimize And Stabilize The Occupation Of Lebanon.
- * Support And Defend The Rights Of The Palestinians To Struggle For Their National Liberation.
- * The Labour Government Break Military Links With Israel.

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

12.30PM FROM SPEAKERS' CORNER



British Industry, have said that they firmly oppose a shorter working week because it will cut profits and harm their competitive position. Soft words won't convince them otherwise.

Other groups of workers can and should follow the example of the Isle of Grain. But we also need to generalise the struggle — both to increase the chances of victory and to deal adequately with unemployment.

The struggle for a shorter working week is one which can benefit every worker — employed and unemployed — and every worker should be mobilised for it.

It need not stop at the objective of 35 hours, either. A 35-hour week would certainly cut unemployment dramatically; but a 30-hour week is possible and would deal with the problem thoroughly and completely. Moreover, it would mean a really substantial cut in hours for all workers — which 35 hours would not.

As long ago as the 1940s the 30-hour week with no loss of pay was a major demand of US carworkers.

Demands like:

- ★ a 30-hour week;
- ★ No loss of pay;
- ★ A general ban on overtime;
- ★ an adequate national minimum wage to make sure no-one needs to work overtime —

are entirely realistic. The CBI is quite right when it points out the main obstacle to these aims: the needs of profit.

That obstacle can be broken. The Belgian workers have shown we have the power — if only we resolve to use it.

"We've been sold out all along the line" a militant remarked as he left the mass meeting of Leyland workers from Speke No.2 plant in Liverpool last Saturday. The meeting had just voted by two to one to accept British Leyland's "improved" redundancy terms, thus abandoning the fight against redundancies and unemployment.

So Michael Edwardes has got his way, and another 3000 people will join the dole queue when the plant closes on May 26th. Unemployment on Merseyside, already twice the national average, will take off for newer heights.

Why did the workers at Speke reject the shop stewards' recommendations to fight the closure, and opt instead for redundancy payments of £1000-£2000?

Few workers took lightly the decision to vote away their jobs last Saturday. They know they haven't a cat in hell's chance of finding another job. And the redundancy money will be a very thin, and very temporary, cushion to life on the dole for the foreseeable future.

SOFTEN

The closure announcement made in January had come immediately after a 17-week strike deliberately engineered by the company — both as an excuse to close the plant, and more importantly as a device to soften up the workforce and reduce its financial capacity to resist the closure.

The strike itself came just after a series of layoffs caused by disputes elsewhere. So Speke workers have been paid no wages since August 1977. For many, the redundancy payment will be swallowed up straight away by debts from the past year.

But the decisive factor was not that, nor the hopeless prospects of continuing production of the TR7. The main credit for the defeat must go not to the corrupt and conniving BL management but to the treacherous labour leaders at



SPEKE: Sold down the line

the national and local level.

Newspaper readers will remember an advertisement featuring Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and Michael Edwardes, with a big caption under the smiling trio: "We may have had our differences in the past but this is one thing we all agree on — the future viability of British Leyland". Unfortunately, workers being sacrificed on the altar of "viability" (profitability) have nothing to smile about.

Union complicity with the government and the Leyland bosses meant failure to back the 17-week strike until the very last moment. The strike only got official recognition when a similar strike at Ford Halewood won recognition in a matter of days.

After the strike the union leadership pledged to stand by their official policy of opposing redundancy. When the Speke workers rejected a derisory offer over redundancy payments put forward by the company on 13th April (about half the present offer) the T&GWU and AUEW accepted

the workers' decision; but once the new terms came out, the AUEW leadership pulled out the rug from under the Speke stewards by agreeing to negotiate the offer.

A further blow to the fight-back came from the local labour movement.

The Communist Party-dominated Liverpool Trades Council has emasculated the decisions taken by the April 9th conference against unemployment, which had been called in the aftermath of a whole spate of redundancies (Lucas, GEC, Plessey, Western Ship Repairers, Courtaulds and others), especially Leyland Speke. The Trades Council has now effectively refused to implement two of the three decisions taken by the conference (support for the May 9th day of action, the London Right to Work march, and the building of a Council of Action) and focussed the May 9th day of action almost exclusively on a lobby of parliament.

All these things have com-

bined to isolate and demoralise the Leyland workers, so that many have simply given up hope of mounting a successful occupation — the only chance they really had of winning. And the threat by management to refuse payment of any redundancy money stamped the majority into accepting the closure.

Although a struggle at Leyland's Speke No.2 appears to be over, the lessons are important for the labour movement.

Workers should note the tactics of the management: provocation of strikes, false information fed to the press, the use of redundancy payments — and the threat not to pay them — to split the workforce.

No reliance should be placed in trade union leaders who have refused to mount any opposition to redundancies, especially in a government-controlled company under a Labour government.

AFFAIR

The Leyland Combine Committee has also shown its ineffectiveness. Although its convenor Derek Robinson attacked Hugh Scanlon for accepting the redundancy deal and ticked off the Labour government for its handling of the affair, he gave only promises to the Speke workers — never leadership. His policy combined British national chauvinism (as in his call for the closure of the Senef plant in Belgium, owned by BL, and the transfer of work from there to Speke) with acceptance of the need for the economic viability of a capitalist corporation.

The labour movement has to assimilate these lessons and renew its efforts to implement the decisions of April 9th, especially the setting up of a Council of Action to fight unemployment.

Otherwise more workers like those at Speke will be sold out "all down the line" to the dole queues.

BAS HARDY

Scanlon - the slow death of a 'left' leader

When the Tories came to power in 1970, Heath moved swiftly towards a confrontation with the unions. The main line of attack was the Industrial Relations Act.

Again it was Scanlon who appeared the most "left" in his response: on March 1st and again on March 18th 1971 the AUEW called out its members on official strike against the Industrial Relations Bill.

This was the highwater mark. At this point the Communist Party knew no praises too extravagant for Scanlon. But he was still to deal with a big rank and file struggle against the engineering employers. That came in the Spring of 1972, just after the miners had shattered the Tories' hope of a wages ceiling.

After a series of long drawn out and obviously barren negotiations the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions under the leadership of the AEF (as it was then, before the merger with the construction workers and draughtsmen to form the AUEW) decided on industrial action. There was a widespread feeling that a well organised strike at that point — even with order books down — would finish off the Tories.

As it turned out, the other 31 unions that were a part of the

Confed left it to the AEF. The AEF leaders, instead of organising for an all-out strike, called for area action. Those with big hopes in Scanlon thought they had only to strike and he would back them up with the whole union's strength.

The Manchester area was first out. This was Scanlon country: he had worked for years at the old Metro-Vickers works at Trafford Park and the local officials, Tocher, Panter, Regan and Williams, were all Communist Party members who had fought hard to get Scanlon into office.

The strikes — most of them factory occupations — were all made official ... but what was wanted was national action, not officially backed isolation. In Sheffield, the hoped-for action didn't materialise.

It looked as if London would be the key. One factory was already occupying when Scanlon addressed a mass meeting of stewards there. But instead of rallying the London stewards for a fight Scanlon claimed that, as he was a democrat, it was up to the rank and file to do the leading!

The 1972 strikes ended with relatively little gained. A big chance had been missed and most militants knew it. The Manchester area — long a left



Workers occupying a Stockport factory in 1972.

base in the union — was soon to move to the right as its engineering industry was wracked by closures.

In the following year, however, Scanlon restored his left credentials in the eyes of many, though in fact he missed a big chance to defeat the Tories and

their Industrial Relations Act. In October 1973 the National Industrial Relations Court imposed a £100,000 fine on the union for leading a strike for union recognition.

The AUEW didn't back down from the strike action, but instead of mobilising its members

to stop the plunder of its funds, it let the Court take the money in the knowledge that a Labour government, when it came in, would restore the money.

It was with the Labour Government that Scanlon moved to the right — or rather, that the limits of his 'left wing' stance became clear.

Despite the initial opposition from the AUEW to the Social Contract, Scanlon backed the government's Phase 2 and 3 wage curbs.

Indeed, at the last TUC Conference, Scanlon the "leftwinger" and "democrat" used the union's huge block vote to support the 12-month rule despite the fact that the union's policy was against it and the delegation majority was opposed to it.

With that, all pretence of being left wing was over ... except for that little hopeful glimmer in the eyes of the Morning Star writers. At the AUEW conference this week Scanlon spoke in support of the Leyland decision to close Speke No.2 plant — a closure he is partly responsible for as a member of the National Enterprise Board which owns Leyland — and was repudiated even by the present right-wing AUEW!

Nevertheless, the defeat of Scanlon's chosen successor, Bob Wright, is a big set-back for the left.

The need now is to build a real rank and file movement in the engineering industry. That won't be done with the pussy-footing diplomacy and contempt for basic democracy exhibited by the Broad Left. It needs a firm militant policy, an openly organised presence and a vigorous campaigning attitude.

Ten Ye



"LOOK at the Paris Commune" said Engels for the sceptics of his day. "That was the dictatorship of the proletariat".

In the same way, we can tell today's sceptics: look at the May Events in France. That was the socialist revolution.

The press, even some of the left press, is full of bleating about the fact that ten years after the May Events the capitalist world order is still intact and unshaken. Revolutionaries are still a small minority. But if it is true that there have been more setbacks and detours than many revolutionaries hoped in 1968, yet the balance sheet since May '68, soberly considered, does in fact give more support to the revolutionary optimists than to those who believe in capitalism's unlimited durability.

In 1969 there was the biggest strike movement ever in Italy, and radical rank and file workers' organisation developed, cracking the hold of the union bureaucracies and linking up with students, tenants and peasants.

The same year, in Argentina, the struggle reached the point of dual power in certain cities, with heavy street-fighting.

The 1972 Quebec general strike also saw the beginnings of dual power. British workers' struggles in 1972-74 did not reach that peak, but they did include the most important class-wide strike movement since 1926 (July's Pentonville Week) and the miners' strikes marked by the Saltley Gates episode ('72) and the fall of the Heath government ('74).

Between March and November of 1975, workers' control spread through the most important factories of Portugal,

while peasants seized the land, rank and file soldiers rejected the authority of their officers, and there was the beginnings of dual power in the neighbourhood commissions, the popular assemblies, and the links between the workers' commissions.

The Durban strikes of 1973, and the Soweto uprising of June 1976, have shaken South Africa's apartheid regime.

The two most powerful — yet in recent decades least politically militant — working classes in the western world, the West German and the American, have begun to re-awaken: the West Germans through the strike movements of 1969, 1973 and 1978, the Americans through the miners' strike of 1977-78.

Wounds

In the last ten years, too, American imperialism has been ousted from Indochina, Portuguese colonialism has been thrown out of Africa, and dissent has multiplied in the Stalinist states.

At first sight French capitalism seems to have survived the May events with a few minor adjustments. But the wounds are internal. The next upsurge will start from a different level. Millions of workers will remember the factory occupations, and move at once to hoist the Red Flag over the means of production.

Hundreds of thousands will have memories or ideas of workers' control, and will set about putting them into practice. In their ranks there will be thousands or tens of thousands of organised revolutionaries,

where in 1968 there were tens or hundreds. And there will be many other workers who have become familiar with revolutionary ideas in 1968 and since then, who now 'sympathise' but are not committed, but who in the revolutionary crisis will come to the fore.

The continuing strength of the reformist French Communist Party is not as unbreakable as it seems. Since 1968 the CP has had to recognise the revolutionaries as a current in the working class. Its bureaucratic organisation has become looser. And there must be many CP members who were revolutionaries in 1968, who have concluded that in 'reformist' times it is better to opt for reformism, but who will become revolutionary again in a new class confrontation.

The May events did not fall from a clear sky. Since the 1940s, exploitation and social inequality had been increasing in France. The unions had been weak in struggle — they organised only 20% of the workers — but strong on protest actions and socialist proclamations.

A rising wave of strikes in 1966 and 1967 showed the increasing frustration. In Le Mans in October 1967, and in Cannes in January 1968, there was street-fighting between strikers and police. At the Rhodiacta and Berliet factories there had been occupations in 1967.

De Gaulle's authoritarian regime had been in power ten years, and people were increasingly fed up with it.

The student discontent — part of a world-wide trend in the 1960s — was given a sharper edge by a chaotic, overcrowded, and outdated university system, and by the

Vietnam war.

Many people argue that revolutionary crises happen only after wars, during slumps, or under dictatorships. May 1968 disproved that. Properly understood, it also showed what was wrong with what Tony Cliff of the SWP wrote as a "conclusion" from it: "For a long time what was lacking in the West was mainly a spontaneous and massive opposition of the working class. This is being changed..."

"Spontaneous and massive opposition" is always episodic and exceptional. It has not been permanent since 1968 (though it has been more frequent); nor was it absent before 1968 (there was a general strike in Belgium in 1960-61). In reality the May "explosion" confirmed the need for revolutionaries always to agitate for demands and objectives which can lead the struggle towards a revolutionary level.

The sort of political 'chain reaction' seen in the May events doesn't "mature"; it ignites at a point which is never predictable.

When the student vanguard threw themselves into the street-fighting and occupations, before 13th May, they consciously saw themselves as taking up a struggle which had been pioneered by the most militant workers. From the start they declared that they were not fighting for special privileges, but for the common cause of students and workers.

Links

The spark spread rapidly among the students — untrammelled by bureaucratic traditions, quick to generalise and quick to mobilise.

In a debate among the revolutionary students on 9th May — just before the Night of the Barricades — the Maoists argued for the students to disperse to the working class areas and spread their message. Cohn-Bendit (the best known student leader) and the Trotskyist JCR argued otherwise: it was by carrying forward their fight, and not just by leaflets, that the students would create a militant alliance with the workers. They were right, even if the JCR did sometimes over-generalise and argue that student confrontations were henceforth the way to arouse the workers.

The spark of revolution, roused to a flame by the students, then passed back to the working class. The Maoists' tactic would simply have dissipated the struggle; and in fact direct student-worker links were a relatively minor feature of the May events.

The strike movement was largely spontaneous, taking place in spite of or even against the union bureaucrats. The official one-day strike call on Monday 13th — prompted by sympathy for the students as victims of police repression, and admiration for their courage in fighting the police — gave the signal; but the turn-out that day (for a strike called only for the one day) was small compared to the later general strike.

At Renault-Cléon, the second factory to occupy, only 30 to 40% of the workforce had come out on the 13th. The occupation (on Wednesday 15th) was started by about 200 young workers, against the wishes of the union leadership in the factory.

Students were allowed freely into the factories in a few places — Nantes, Besançon — but generally the Communist Party-

dominated union apparatus kept the factory occupations as strictly controlled as possible, limiting them to their initial economic demands as much as they could. Many young workers left the factories to join the students rather than grapple with the bureaucratic stifling.

Yet such was the revolutionary power of the general strike that the challenge to the system expressed itself clearly nonetheless. The lie in the CP's story that the strike was just for economic demands is shown by their own practice: why did they call for 'Action Committees for a Popular Government', and why did they organise the CGT's 29th May demonstration around the call for a 'popular government', if not because they knew the workers wanted a political change?

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the workers, having little access to revolutionary socialist ideas except in the CP's distorted version of them, were more hesitant in formulating their political aims than the students, who boldly cried "All power to the Workers' Councils"

The workers' consciousness that their aims went beyond what their leaders proposed was shown most clearly at the Atlantic Shipyards in St.



FRIDAY 3rd May: About 500 students, gathered for a meeting at the Sorbonne (Paris University), are arrested by CRS (riot police) called in by the university authorities. The 500 go quietly, but other students on the scene attack the police vans and street fighting breaks out.

MONDAY 6th, Tuesday 7th, Wednesday 8th: Student demonstrations demanding the release of those arrested and the removal of the police from the university premises. 50,000 are on Tuesday's demonstration.

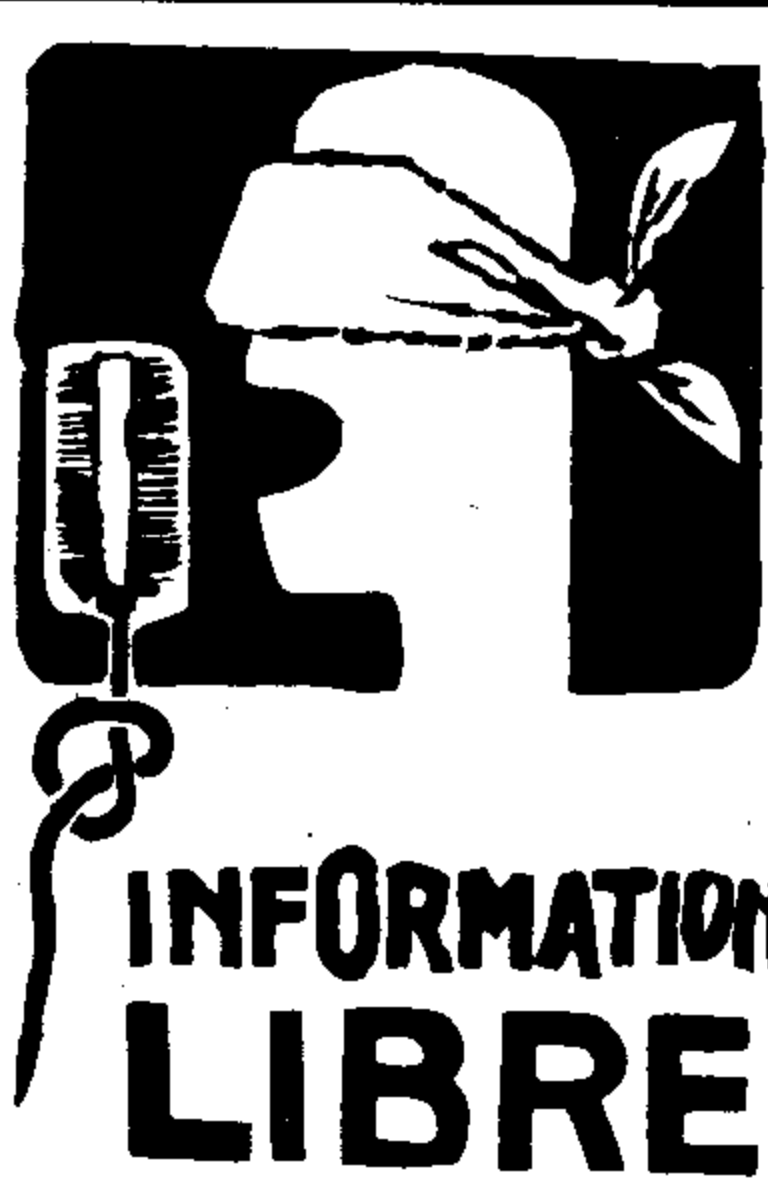
FRIDAY-Saturday 10th-11th: The Night of the Barricades. Students erect barricades in the Latin Quarter (the university district) and fight the CRS until early morning. The Action Committees begin to spread across Paris and beyond.

MONDAY 13th: The unions call a 24-hour general strike, in protest against the police repression. The government tries to placate the movement: the police leave the Sorbonne and the students occupy it. One million take to the streets of Paris in a joint unions-students demonstration. There are also demonstrations in the other major cities of France.

TUESDAY 14th: The workers of Sud-Aviation, Nantes, occupy their factory.

WEDNESDAY 15th: Renault-Cléon is occupied.

THURSDAY 16th: The biggest Renault factory, at Billancourt, is occupied. The occupations spread. On the 16th, and again on the 17th, the students organise marches to Billancourt to show their solidarity with the workers.



Years After

zaire: there, the workers occupied and refused for ten days to submit a list of demands! At the Berliet factory, the workers rearranged the lettering to read "Liberté".

The nearest approach, on a local level, to the power of workers' councils, was in Nantes. From 26th to 31st May the town was controlled by a Central Strike Committee. It monitored traffic in and out of the town, controlled petrol supplies, and, together with neighbourhood committees, organised food distribution.

The 10,000 workers at the Nuclear Research Centre at Saclay set up a workers' council which requisitioned medical supplies from the Centre's stocks for the casualties on the barricades and organised distribution of food to hungry migrant workers in a nearby satellite town.

At the CSF factory in Brest, the workers continued production — making walkie-talkies for the use of strikers and demonstrators.

Printworkers on several papers vetoed articles slandering the strike movement.

The other embryo of workers' power was the Action Committees, of which there were some 100 in the Paris area by the end of May. Based on neighbour-

hoods, their functions were diverse: some concentrated on revolutionary propaganda, some on organising refuse collection and food distribution. Because of the way in which the spontaneous militancy of the movement far outran any available leadership, they were a mixture of substitute revolutionary party and fledgling soviets.

A general strike paralyzes capitalist society; factory occupations put capitalist property rights into question, and put massive resources into workers' hands. Even starting from limited objectives, they have a strong revolutionary dynamic.

In May 1968, the victory of workers' power in France was only a few steps away. Those steps were:

- The election of democratic strike committees to take control of each factory;

- The linking up of the strike committees in each area with neighbourhood committees into a workers' council which would take power in that area;

- The bringing together of representatives from all the area workers' councils into a national congress of workers' councils: the new workers' government.

- The organisation of a workers' militia to fight off the

counter-revolutionaries.

All that would certainly have been within the power of the Communist Party — if it had actually wanted victory. But the same reformists who preach a peaceful transition to socialism through parliament say that victory would not have been possible in May because of the strength of the army and the police.

In fact the federation of police unions had put out a statement, on 22nd May, saying they would refuse to be used against the strikers. Even the CRS was complaining about the government's attitude. One army regiment — the 153rd RIMCA — issued a declaration that the conscript troops "will never shoot on workers... we shall fraternise... Long live solidarity of workers, soldiers, students, and high school pupils. Long live workers' democracy. Long live joy, love, and creative work!"

The professional soldiers would have been a stronger support for the regime: but a few thousand troops would have been no match for ten million workers who, once "armed with the will to arm themselves", would have known where to get guns.

NATO could have intervened — but just as the bosses have their international solidarity, so also have the workers. Internationalism was indeed part of the spirit of May 1968, best shown by the students' famous reply to the chauvinist baiting against Cohn-Bendit: "We are all German Jews".

Those who say that the French ruling class could not have been overthrown in May 1968 because of its armed might say, in effect, that no ruling class can ever be overthrown unless it first disarms itself!



playing the game of the government or even in alliance with it. They poured vile abuse on the "German anarchist" Cohn-Bendit. When they supported the movement, it was only the better to stifle it.

The CP's attitude was to be expected: it was over 30 years since it had been any sort of revolutionary party. But why was the CP able to get away with it?

Because no new revolutionary party had been built.

It is newly fashionable today, especially among the "Euro-communists", to deride the Trotskyists who blame everything on the bad leadership. This cheap sneer boils down to the complacent thought that every working class gets the leadership it deserves. Yet the French workers had not chosen the CP's reformism, Stalinism, and bureaucratism. Most of them had never come across genuine revolutionary ideas, except sometimes in the form of leaflets distributed at factory gates by militants bravely trying to defend themselves against CP violence and slander. For all but a tiny thoughtful and courageous handful, revolutionary socialism was not a visible option.

Moreover, the 'other side' of the tremendous collective power of the working class is a certain organisational inertia. During the May events the CP told the workers again and again that they needed strong organisation, and therefore they must stick to the CGT line. Even for workers who were discontented with CP policy, this argument carried weight.

The May events did give the lie to the propagandising sectarian notion of building a new leadership by literary 'exposure' (that is, by passively demanding that the existing leadership do this or that, and 'exposing' them for not doing so) and the grotesquely one-sided idea of developing revolutionary consciousness by 'a fight

against spontaneity'.

Showing that the substance of large scale development of revolutionary consciousness is in the dynamic of the class struggle, the May events opened the way for the revolutionary movement to free itself of encrustations of formalism and rote politics-by-formulas.

Yet spontaneity can only go so far. For the struggle to go beyond a certain point, there must be an organised anti-bureaucratic leadership to challenge and defeat the established bureaucracies. Even a small handful of revolutionary militants in each major factory in France, fighting for the creation, linking-up and extension of strike committees, could have changed the outcome of the May events.

Where there were revolutionaries, they played an important role: the OCI at Sud-Aviation, Nantes; the JCR at Saclay, in the 153rd RIMCA and within the student movement. Yet they were simply too few to affect the outcome decisively, even leaving aside the partial errors they made in the course of the movement.

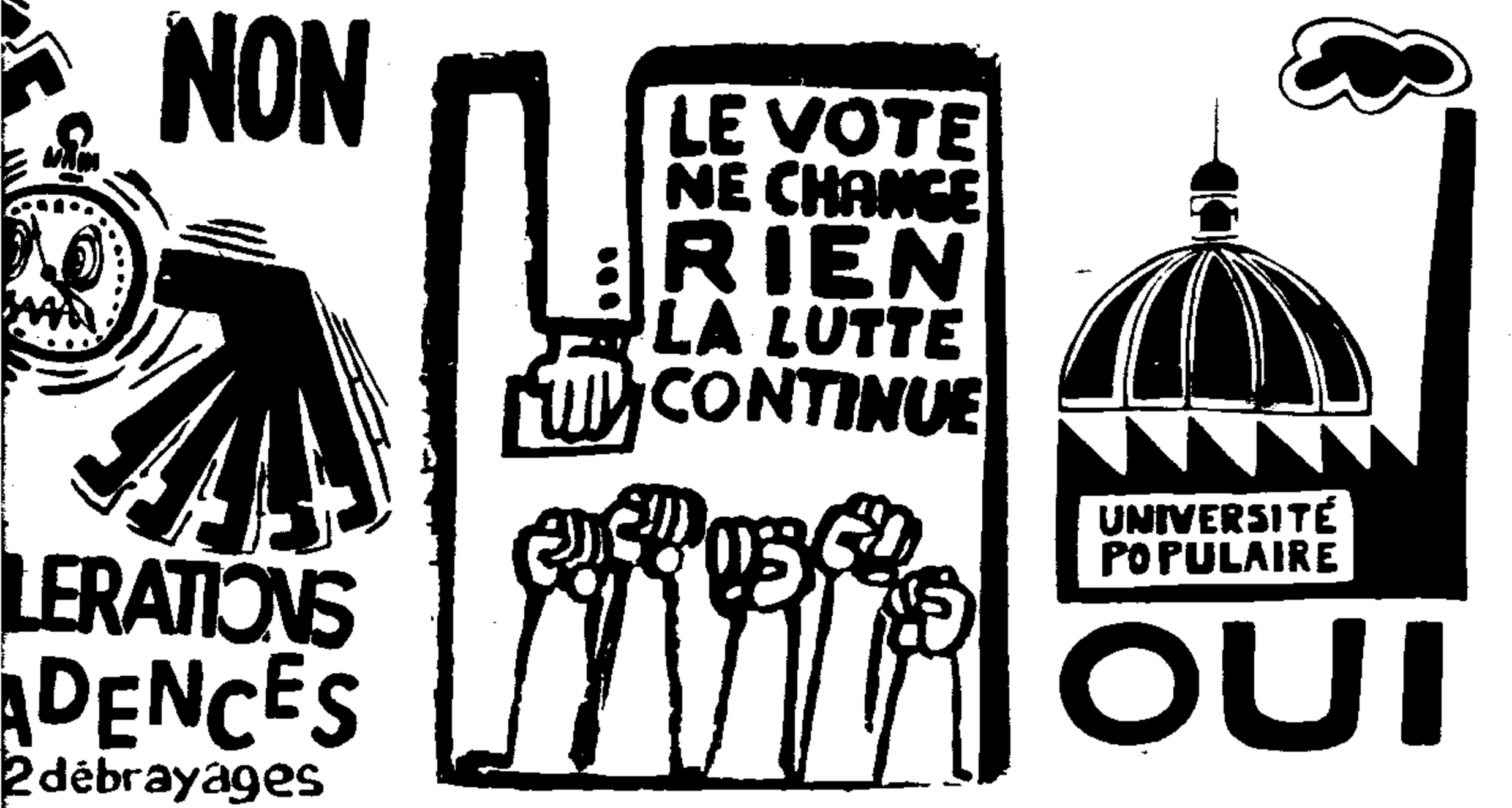
Clarity

If we imagine the problems facing a revolutionary organisation even a few thousand strong in 1968 we can, however, see why political clarity and sharpness are paramount in building and preparing for future revolutionary opportunities.

How to make the link between the students and the workers? What balance to maintain between demands on the established workers' leaders and initiative from below? How to judge when to defy the police and the army, and when to retreat? An excess of hesitation, or an excess of rashness, might decide the fate of the revolution.

No revolutionary organisation could ever guarantee itself against making mistakes (the Bolsheviks made many mistakes in 1917). But only a coherent, closely-knit revolutionary tendency, with a sound foundation of Marxist education, could be confident of avoiding fatal mistakes.

That is why socialists should commemorate May 1968, not with wistful looking back to the glamour and the excitement, but by re-doubling our work to assemble a revolutionary Marxist tendency in the struggles of today. Only that way can we act on May 1968's slogan: "It's only a beginning, let us continue the struggle".



Power

The revolution failed because of the leadership. A general strike movement cannot mark time. At a certain point, if it does not go forward, it must retreat. By the end of May the movement had come right up against the question of power. But the workers' organisations — in the first place, the CP — did not even dare to oust the de Gaulle government, let alone the whole capitalist state.

They accepted the elections de Gaulle declared. On that terrain, inevitably, they lost. With the CP straining to present itself as a Party of Order, no wonder voters turned away from it to support the real Party of Order, the Gaullists. The left-socialist PSU, the only parliamentary party to support the May movement, was the only group on the left to gain votes.

The CP got what they deserved. Up until mid-May — and from time to time even after that — they slandered the militant students as provocateurs,

in Paris.

THURSDAY 30th: A new statement from de Gaulle. He will not resign. The referendum is called off and elections are announced. He calls for "civic action" against the revolutionaries. Over half a million join a pro-Gaullist demonstration in Paris with slogans like "Cohn-Bendit to Dachau".

FRIDAY 31st: Armed police occupy the post office at Rouen. Under the pressure of the police and the union leaders, a return to work begins, particularly after the holiday weekend of 1st-2nd June.

FRIDAY 7th JUNE: The police try to break the occupation at Renault-Flins. There are several days of fighting between the police and workers and students until the CRS leaves and the workers re-occupy on 11th June. A student is killed in the course of the fighting, on 10th June.

TUESDAY 11th: Police break the occupation at Peugeot-Sochaux, killing two workers.

WEDNESDAY 12th: All the revolutionary left groups are banned — under a 1936 law outlawing fascist organisations...

SATURDAY 15th: Salan and other extreme right-wing officers imprisoned since Algeria mutiny are released; it is generally thought this is the result of a deal that de Gaulle has made with the extreme right.

SUNDAY 16th: The Sorbonne 'falls' to the police.

TUESDAY 18th: Renault-Billancourt returns to work.

SUNDAY 23rd and Sunday 30th: The Gaullists win a big majority in the elections. The return to work is now almost complete.

The union leadership refuses to go into the works, but many younger workers greet the students favourably.

SUNDAY 19th: Pierre Mendès-France, an old Radical politician, now a member of the left-socialist PSU, calls for a new government.

MONDAY 20th: The strike movement becomes general. Six million have stopped work.

TUESDAY 21st: The Communist Party appeals for the setting up of Action Committees for a Popular Government.

FRIDAY 24th: Over nine million workers on strike. De Gaulle announces he will hold a referendum. In the course of a student demonstration, the Stock Exchange is set on fire. The night of Friday-Saturday 24th-25th sees the fiercest street-fighting yet.

MONDAY 27th: The government and unions announce the 'Grenelle Agreement'; a 35% increase in the national minimum wage, plus concessions on union rights, holidays, social welfare, etc. But CGT leader Georges Séguy is booed by 15,000 workers at Renault Billancourt when he tries to get them to accept it. The general strike continues solid, involving about ten million workers. Meanwhile the students hold a 50,000-strong rally at Charléty. Mendès-France is there, boosting his credibility as a left-wing replacement for de Gaulle.

TUESDAY 28th: Mitterand holds a press conference and stakes his claim to replace de Gaulle.

WEDNESDAY 29th: De Gaulle visits Germany to talk to French military commanders there. 30,000 on a CGT demonstration



ONE UNION FOR THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

Dear Comrades,
James Ryan's otherwise fair and succinct summary of the NUJ annual conference contains one misleading statement. Cde. Ryan claims that 'a call to open discussions with print and broadcasting unions with a view to merger was defeated, a step back from the decisions of previous years'. In fact, the resolution carried at the conference reads as follows: 'This Annual Delegate Meeting instructs the National Executive Council to initiate discussions, separately or collectively, with appropriate other unions with the aim of trying to form a single union for workers in the media industries and to report progress by October 31st, 1978.'

A Book Branch amendment naming the 'appropriate other unions', which the National Executive wished to have remitted, was unfortunately defeated. But, on the other hand, an amendment from Teesside Branch seeking to remove the adjective "creative" (placed before 'workers' in the original resolution) was carried. This was not just a piece of semantic juggling, as both the supporters and opponents of the motion in its original form made clear. The person proposing the motion on behalf of the Press and Public Relations Branch stated that he wanted no truck with the print unions and — though he did not explicitly say so — presumably none either with the cinematograph and television technicians of the ACTT. The opponents of the word "creative" — including myself,

speaking on behalf of the Executive — explicitly rejected such craft snobbism and elitism.

Cde. Ryan's sense of recent NUJ history on the subject is also rather too rosy. The only previous NUJ resolution in the form of "one union for the printing and publishing industry" (no mention of broadcasting) was carried at the annual conference in 1974. It was no more than a pious affirmation and absolutely nothing was done about it, by the National Executive or anyone else. This policy was, in any case, reversed at the 1976 annual conference.

Under the terms of the present resolution, at the very least by October 31st this year the National Executive will have had to choose which union or unions it wishes to approach in the first instance for merger talks, and to have put out preliminary feelers to them to find out whether they are willing to enter into full-scale amalgamation discussions. The only unions it could possibly approach in this context are the ones spelt out in the defeated Book Branch amendment, plus the Writers' Guild, British Actors Equity, the AUEW and ASTMS (which is only marginally involved in the media industry. Which union or unions will be approached depends a great deal on the views and prejudices of present members of the National Executive and, more importantly, the kind of pressures put on the Executive by branches, industrial councils and chapels with views on the subject.

Fraternally,
Jonathan Hammond

Not dead, but more than a little scratched

Dear Comrades,

I was pleased to see the report of the IMG conference in the 22nd April issue of **Workers Action** — although naturally I did not agree with its political conclusions. However, this article raises a very important question when it states: 'Unusually for a revolutionary organisation it (the IMG) invited press reporters from other revolutionary-left papers to part of the conference'; and when it says 'we can hope that the IMG's drive against sectarianism will be reflected in a willingness to debate these issues (of difference) with the rest of the revolutionary left, including **Workers' Action**'.

These statements both clearly characterise the IMG as a revolutionary organisation.

It would seem to be very important to clarify whether these statements represented the considered views of the editors of **Workers' Action**. While we have important differences with the policies of **Workers' Action** the IMG considers these to be differences within the framework of revolutionary Marxism. While we consider that your paper makes mistakes on particular questions, on the most fundamental issues it defends the interests

of the working class, i.e. it is a proletarian revolutionary, and not a petty-bourgeois centrist, paper.

It would be very important, evidently, for relations between the IMG and **Workers' Action** if you held the same view of our organisation. We would therefore like to inquire as to whether these statements concerning the revolutionary class character of the IMG, as opposed to for example petty-bourgeois

No editorial error. Our view has always been that the membership and the leadership of the IMG are comrades with whom we have differences, and not some sort of cynical petty-bourgeois fakers using revolutionary phrases merely for show.

But really Comrade Ross is being evasive. According to his scheme of things, if we don't consider the IMG leadership to have definitely deserted the revolutionary cause (and he knows very well that we don't), then we are obliged to say that there is only this or that difference "within the framework of revolutionary Marxism".

The reality which he tries to define out of existence is that the IMG makes repeated and systematic

centrism, represent the views of **Workers' Action** or were merely an editorial error. As your paper has always prided itself on 'saying what is' we would be most happy to learn that the statements in your 22nd April issue represented your considered opinion.

Comradely,

JOHN ROSS,
Member of the PC of the IMG.

errors — most noticeably, at present, in its persistent 'softness' towards the Labour Left and its blunderbuss denunciations of what it calls 'economism and syndicalism' — which are certainly not Marxist, and which in the last analysis contradict its revolutionary intentions.

That contradiction must eventually be resolved one way or another; but in the meantime there is a long way 'from a scratch to a danger of gangrene' and from the danger of gangrene to death. That is why we want to discuss with the comrades of the IMG. But Comrade Ross seems to see only two possible diagnoses: either the patient is dead, or there is nothing but a few scratches!

AFTER THE CARNIVAL

As they put it in **Labour Weekly**, there was 'a wave of euphoria over London' the day of the Anti Nazi League Carnival. Like a pink cloud, it has hovered over the editorial offices of the left press ever since. The sheer size of the event seems to have robbed several organisations of all sense of political proportion.

Naturally there are the exceptions. For the **Militant** and **Socialist Press**, recognition that the Carnival was an important event could hardly conceal the sectarian's bad temper that the historical process has taken a course not mapped out by themselves.

Socialist Press rightly emphasised the police attack on the Leeds May Day march, though this article as well as their coverage of the Carnival finds the root of all evil in the Lib-Lab pact — as if that has made the slightest difference to the Labour Government's enthusiasm for attacking workers' rights. There was no mention of the National Front's May Day march. Overall, the message for readers of **Socialist Press** was: the Carnival and the ANL are a waste of time, and the WSL will carry on the true fight themselves.

Militant play down the NF march and don't mention Leeds at all. For them, too, the ANL offers nothing, mainly because it isn't likely to campaign for the nationalisation of the 200 monopolies. So the 'Labour Movement' must organise its own carnivals and make room for **Militant** speakers on the platform.

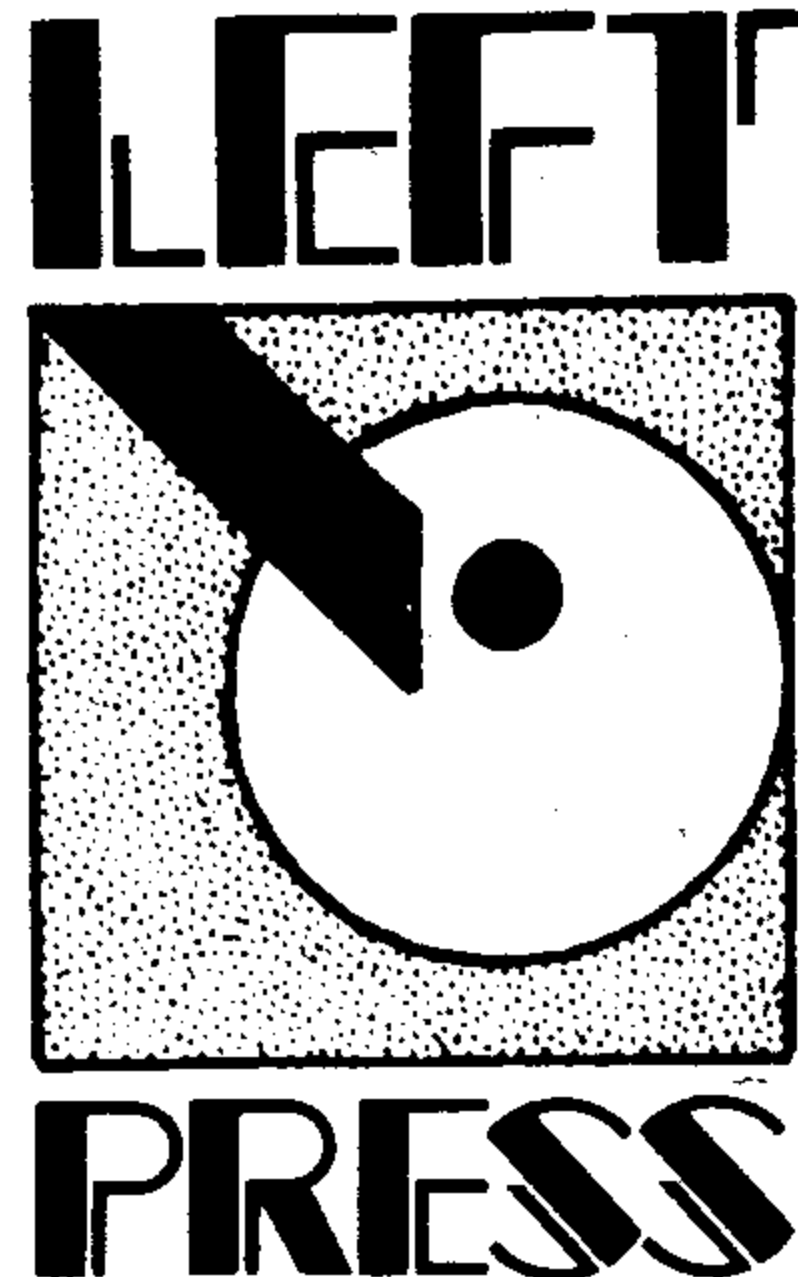
Between the **Morning Star**, **Tribune** and **Socialist Worker** there is little to choose. To the **Star** goes credit for detailed coverage of Leeds (neither of the others mention this at all), though quite what should be done is left to the imagination. **Socialist Worker**

naturally gives the Carnival the most sensational treatment. Considering the Socialist Workers Party's role in preventing a response to the NF march, it's natural too that they write it off as insignificant, gloating about the rain that day. Grotesquely, they proclaim 'even God joined the Anti Nazi League'. But on the central question all three papers are agreed. Peter Hain puts it best, for **Tribune**: 'In the longer term, of course, socialist solutions will need to be pressed and fought for. But, in the short term, we desperately need to undercut the appeal of the new Nazis.' For the SWP, you can't start talking politics until the ANL is big (how big?). At present the need is for a conference of ANL activists; but the SWP give fair warning that 'those who want to split hairs' will not be welcome.

● But hats must come off to **Socialist Challenge** for the most grovelling coverage of the lot.

More strongly than the SWP they denounce the sectarians and the doubters. An ANL conference must discuss a focus just as the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign had a focus: the US Embassy! (Perhaps NF HQ would serve for the ANL?) The IMG have now discovered that the ANL is a 'single-issue campaign'; therefore, it seems, demanding that it take a position on immigration controls or state bans is no longer to the point.

They do note cautiously the fact of the NF march; they do warn against thinking that 'the Front and racialism lost the war on Sunday'. But it's still amazing what you can do in a weekend: 'Most of all, racism which for months has become "respectable" through the mouthings of the establishment politicians, was driven back



into the gutter by 80,000 people.' So we don't need to worry about the Select Committee Report or the Immigration Acts any more, do we?

As we pointed out in **Workers' Action** last week, the very success of the ANL and the Carnival bring closer the day when the campaign will shatter on the rocks of reality — unless democratic discussion and debate see the victory of honesty and adequate solutions to the 'difficult' problems anti-fascists face.

Without comment



From **Socialist Worker**, May 6

THE FASCISTS' MAY DAY MARCH

On May Day, International Workers Day, there was a major setback in the building of the anti fascist, anti racist struggle. One thousand fascists under the banner of the National Front marched from Portland Place in London's West End to Cornet Square, Hoxton in the East End with not a glimmer of opposition to them. While bewildered ANL supporters who happened to be in the West End asked, 'Whats happening, where is the opposition?', the National Front marched by with flags waving shouting 'the National Front is a Fascist Front, Join the National Front, Reds Out.'

How did this take place given the recent increase in the growth of the anti-fascist, anti-racist struggle? In what direction is our movement being led?

The fascists have never marched through the East End since the war without a major opposition mobilising against them and yet 24 hours after the biggest anti fascist event seen in London since before the war anti-fascist forces were unable to mobilise to oppose this march.

We first heard on Wednesday that the IMG had received an anonymous telephone call saying that the National Front were trying to get a police permit for a London march. The London Co-ordinating Committee informed the SWP, ANL, and Searchlight of the rumours and endeavoured to cross check information. On Friday we became aware of rumours from other sources that the National Front were definitely planning a march on Hoxton. On Saturday night Searchlight informed one of us, the Communist Party, the Anti Nazi League, the SWP and the London May Day Committee that the National Front were mobilising their members from all over the country for a march starting in London's West End.

Members of Hackney Committee Against Racism then tried to get

the organisations participating in the Carnival to produce a leaflet calling for a mass mobilisation on May Day, and to use the Carnival to organise mass opposition to the NF march. We met with virtually a blank wall. When we made approaches to get an announcement made from the platform at the Carnival the organisers refused to do so on the grounds that there wasn't time to organise a counter demonstration that they could effectively control.

Since the growth of the ANL there have been a number of mobilisations against fascist meetings particularly in London where the opposition has been passive and rapidly shrinking. At the Ilford by election the picket was about 2,500, at Brixton the opposition was less than 1,000 on May Day the opposition was nil. Does this mean that we can no longer count on the mobilising ability of the SWP and other militants within the ANL to go along with a militant opposition to openly fascist and racist organisations in this country..

We do not decry the idea of holding such events as the Carnival but the organisational energy needed must not drain our resources so that it becomes impossible to mount large scale immediate mobilisations against the National Front when it takes to the streets. 'Lewisham' may not get the positive publicity that the Carnival has received but that in itself is a good reason for asking who benefits from diverting protest off the streets into the parks and away from direct confrontation with racists and fascists. We must not neglect the political tasks needed if events such as Carnivals are to be used to increase people's awareness and generate specific local responses to anti-fascist, anti-racist campaigns...

BRIAN SMITH
Hackney Cttee. Ag. Racism
(in personal capacity)
and others

Last November four Grunwick strikers organised a hunger strike outside TUC headquarters — and their union, APEX, suspended them! The TUC and APEX had made dozens of promises of 'all out' support. But as soon as the mass pickets became really powerful, last summer, they pulled back and sabotaged the struggle.



Point the finger at the traitors

AFTER nearly two years, the Grunwick strike faces the end. At its recent conference, APEX, the major union involved in the dispute, voted down a call for further picketing and blacking of services. The Executive stated that unless the government arbitration service ACAS recommends union

recognition at Grunwicks within five weeks — and there is no sign of it doing that — the union will call off the strike. It will offer the strikers help in getting new jobs.

The strikers have little leverage to force APEX to do otherwise. For the last six months they and their rank and file support-

ers, like the Cricklewood postmen, have been effectively isolated by the union bureaucracies. The solidarity conference called for Sunday has had only 200 requests for credentials, as against 600 the strike committee expected.

In their statement on the APEX decision, the strikers said they were convinced that ACAS is a dead end, and they wanted to see some action on the promises given by the TUC last year.

The best way the strikers can use the conference, and the hearing they still have in the labour movement, is to expose the bureaucrats' responsibility for the defeat and drive home the lessons of the struggle.

PETE FIRMIN

★ Grunwick solidarity conference: 11am to 5pm at Wembley Conference Centre, Empire Way, Wembley. Open to trade union and Labour Party delegates.

George Ward's 'crucial' debate

ON MAY 2nd over 300 students and trade unionists picketed the Cambridge Union Society buildings, in solidarity with the Grunwick strikers and in response to the Union Society's invitation to George Ward to speak at a debate on the closed shop.

The demonstration was called by the local Labour students' organisation (COLS), and supported by the Cambridge Trades Council. An open air meeting afterwards was addressed by Jack Dromey and Mahmoud Ahmed, and some £40 was collected for the strike fund.

The two Labour speakers invited to the Union Society debate, Tom Litterick MP and NATSOPA general secretary Owen O'Brien, were asked to boycott it. They refused.

It turns out that they consulted with the secretary of the Trades Council, who, basing himself on the fact that plans were not finalised, told them that there was no official Trades Council support for the alternative meeting, and urged them to attend the debate! Yet the Trades Council had already decided that the secretary should write to them to ask them to withdraw.

Cambridge's Labour prospective parliamentary candidate also recommended attending, and APEX general secretary Roy Grantham urged Litterick and O'Brien not to 'disrupt' such a crucial debate for the labour movement.

So the demonstration organisers were informed by Litterick and O'Brien that although they were sympathetic, 'the debate needs to be won, even in the artificial (!) atmosphere of the Cambridge Union Society'.

As might be expected, Litterick and O'Brien got their just deserts. It was a one-sided debate, with the overwhelmingly reactionary bias of the Union Society backing the triumphant Ward.

It shows how the mildest solidarity actions will be sabotaged by the bureaucrats in APEX and the Labour Party. And it also shows the 'parliamentary cretinism' of the so-called 'left' Labour MPs who would rather indulge in irrelevant and unreal debate than match their words with action.

ED JANKOWSKI



Lord Allen's message to USDAW

'TAKE WHAT YOU CAN GET, THEN NURSE YOUR WOUNDS'

THERE WAS little joy for USDAW members from the union's 1978 conference.

Union leader Lord Allen continues to tell the membership: 'We must continue to talk to the Labour Government'. What he means is: 'take what you get, and go and nurse your wounds!'

A motion from CWS Crewe, seconded by a Workers' Action supporter from CWS Packing, Manchester, called for:

- election every two years of the General Secretary;
- election every two years of full time representatives;
- average wage of the membership for full time officials.

Lord Allen said that this policy would 'tear the guts out of the union'.

The motion was lost, as was one from Nottingham Handicraft branch calling for fascists and racists to be barred from any union positions. With an

appeal to 'Land of Hope and Glory' patriotism and defence of our 'ancient' civil liberties, Allen called on delegates to oppose it. It was pointless since British public sensibilities would never kow-tow to the parties of the extreme right or left!

In the debate on wages there was a lot of opposition to the EC's policy document. The Broad Left energetically spoke against it and indeed a separate motion on wages based on Broad Left proposals was carried. This called for an immediate campaign for a 35 hour week and £55 per week.

But the motion neither instructed the union tops to fight nor instructed negotiators to go for a minimum of £55. Since the Wages and Economic Policy document was also passed, the bureaucrats will have plenty of margin to dodge a

fight.

The motions carried on unemployment were weak. They called for replacement of staff when they leave — or increased productivity payments for extra workload; and recommended work-sharing as an alternative to loss of jobs.

An amendment from CWS Packing to this last motion, calling for work sharing 'without loss of pay' was opposed because employers might then just declare redundancies anyway. So USDAW policy on work-sharing is: 'We recommend short time and part wages'.

Support for Anti-Apartheid boycotts on handling goods from South Africa and general agreement to campaign against racialism and fascism were the only positive commitments for the struggles ahead.

JOHN DOUGLAS



THE UNIONS



MORE UNIONS TO RULE AGAINST FASCISTS

THE YORKSHIRE area of the National Union of Mineworkers has voted to support any branch which decides not to work with or speak to National Front members in the mining industry. Area president Arthur Scargill said, 'We will not tolerate racialism in any form within this union'.

In two other unions, resolutions against fascists have gone forward. CPSA conference ruled a motion from the British Library branch out of order on a technicality:

'In the light of the recent bombings of trade union offices by self-declared fascists of Column 88, as well as the decision of the NUR EC to take action against known and active members of fascist organisations, this conference agrees to instruct the incoming NEC to prepare a rule for 1979 conference to provide for the expulsion of known active members of fascist organisations from CPSA'.

In the print union NATSOPA, the Governing Council (conference) later this year will consider this motion, put through the London Clerical branch by the Financial Times chapel.

'This London Clerical branch requests the Governing Council to recognise the growth of fascist organisations and racist ideas within the labour movement. It therefore resolves to instruct the EC to mount an

active campaign against all forms of racist and fascist activity, to support initiatives made by other unions, to affiliate to the Anti-Nazi League, and to reiterate that active membership of a fascist organisation is contrary to the interests of the Society [i.e. the union]'

TRUMID exposure helps oust CPSA right-wing

DETAILED exposure of the heavy financial backing from the extreme-right group TRUMID for the right wing in the civil service union CPSA helped destroy this year's bid by right-wing leader Kate Losinska for the union presidency.

Len Lever, a time-serving opportunist with the 'uncritical support of the 'Militant' group, stormed in 37,000 votes ahead of Losinska. The Broad Left candidate, Peter Colman of the Communist Party, got a significant 37,059 votes as against Losinska's 66,420 and Lever's 103,622.

This move to the left continued in the vice-presidential election. Both Broad Left nominees got in. This time Colman pushed Losinska into a close but humiliating defeat.

Losinska has been vice-president over the past year and was formerly president.

One side effect has already been seen: the beginnings of the disintegration of the right wing's electoral machine. There will probably be an attempt by some of the right wing to cut the links with TRUMID and Losinska and move nearer to the centre of the CPSA's

political spectrum.

TRUMID's backers include David Stirling, organiser of the GB75 strike-breaking outfit. Terry Duffy felt obliged to repudiate its support publicly when it backed him for AUEW president.

TRUMID's intervention into CPSA can now be proved from records and documents which have fallen into CPSA militants' hands. £10,000 was paid for Losinska's 1977 campaign, and TRUMID money covered right wing leaflets, postage, phones, and even buses to take right wingers to branch AGMs.

Alongside the defeat for the Right in the elections there was a setback for the left on pay, when an attempt to rid CPSA of the Pay Research Unity (PRU) based system of pay negotiations failed.

According to PRU civil service workers' pay is determined by comparisons with pay elsewhere. Thus it makes civil service workers parasitic on other workers' struggles, and hits at the possibility of them playing a leading role in the fight against wage controls.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

LABOUR RESELECTION

IF YOU want to see your struggle sold out, there's a certain recipe remit the issue to the Labour Party National Executive Committee [NEC].

At last year's party conference there were more resolutions on making MPs subject to re-selection than on any issue since nuclear disarmament. Still, the platform managed to push through a ruling that the matter must be remitted to the NEC. Of course, the conference was assured that the NEC would be guided by its wishes.

Now the organisation sub-committee has voted out [by 10 to 3] the scheme favoured by most constituency parties, under which the full selection procedure would be

activated before every election, with the sitting MP having no privilege over other candidates. Pressure from union leaders worried about their sponsored MPs seems to have been decisive.

Instead, a watered-down scheme has been agreed by the organisation sub-committee, and is likely to be endorsed by the NEC. Constituencies MAY hold special meetings at which the sitting MP MAY be rejected as the candidate for the next election. In other words, the onus is on party activists to show the sitting MP should be replaced, rather than being on the MP to show why he or she is the best candidate for the next election.

WORKERS IN ACTION

LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS

FASCISTS TAKE A HAMMERING

THERE WILL almost certainly be a general election this October.

Labour did relatively well in the local elections last week; and a few days later a parliamentary defeat over income tax reminded Jim Callaghan that this is a lame-duck government, unable to do anything in Parliament other than keep things ticking over.

The Liberals' growing reluctance about the Lib-Lab

pact is another factor; in any case for Callaghan there is little to be gained by trying to struggle on through 1979, with probable difficulties over Phase Four and the world economy.

Among the good results from the local elections was the defeat of Donald Thorpe, Tory campaigner against comprehensive education in Tameside.

The National Front vote dropped substantially, to an average of 2%. And some

poll analysts reckoned that the Tories' anti-immigrant hate campaign had overshot, too. Donald Thorpe attributed his defeat to Margaret Thatcher's racist speeches.

Socialist Unity candidates got a good score of about 8%, beating Communist Party candidates everywhere they competed except in two cases.

But below the surface there is little for socialists to be complacent about in the political

situation revealed by the elections. Even if the Tories have overshot themselves, the 'centre' of parliamentary debate on immigration control has been shifted a long way to the right. The National Front is far from buried: they got 35% in one ward in Hackney.

Meanwhile Phase 4 is being put together and unemployment continues at one and a half million.

It would be criminal for socialists to reflect complacently that the tide is turning against the Tories and the NF. The present Labour Government's record is not socialist; nor is it any better than the Tories. Socialists have to use the months between now and the general election to call the Labour leadership to account and agitate for genuine socialist policies.

That is why Workers' Action has launched the 'Labour Campaign for Socialism' which will be active in taking up the struggle against racism, against unemployment, and for socialist policies, in the run up to the general election.

Back to the old schedules

LONDON busworkers have scored a victory in the hour-lighting strikers that have disrupted bus services in London over the past week. The strike, over the implementation of "Bus Plan '78", which means re-scheduling, more mileage per shift, and speed-ups, has been called off, and the London Transport Executive has begun negotiations with the T&GWU over the plan. Meanwhile we continue to work the old schedules.

STEVE GOLDSTONE

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to *Events*, Box 1960, 182 Upper Street, London N1, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

SATURDAY 13 MAY Palestine Solidarity Campaign demonstration against the Israeli occupation of the Lebanon, 12.30pm from Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park.

SATURDAY 20 MAY All-London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism: conference on racism and education, 9.30 to 4.30 at Robert Montefiore School, Vallance Rd, London E1.

THURSDAY 25 MAY Newham Teachers' Group meeting: Leila Berg on 'Literature of Working Class Children', 7pm at Forest Gate School, Forest Lane, E15.

THURSDAY 25 MAY 'Immigration Controls: Should they all be ended?' Public meeting organised by All-Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement; 7.30pm at Lambeth Town Hall, corner of Acre Lane and Brixton Hill.

FRIDAY 26 MAY Revolutionary Communist Tendency public meeting: 'Ireland: its revolutionary significance'. Speaker: Phil Murphy. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Holborn Tube. Admission 20p.

FRIDAY 16 JUNE Anti-Apartheid rally on the 2nd anniversary of the Soweto events. 7.30pm at Westminster Central Hall: adm. 20p.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 17-18 JUNE National conference of the Working Women's Charter campaign, at Manchester Poly, All Saints, Cavendish House. Further information: Pat Cross, Flat 2, 49 Spring Bank, Hull. (Telephone Hull 443 243).

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FUND DRIVE

workers' ACTION

£20 came in for our fund last week, raising the total so far to £1077. Please send contributions to 'Fund', Workers' Action, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.

Merseyside

Women in fifth week of occupation

160 workers, most of them women, have been occupying the FASHION DESIGN plant in Knowsley, Merseyside, for more than a month now. Their struggle to keep their jobs could be a long one.

They took over the factory two days after being made redundant. Inspired by earlier occupations in the area, such as the one at Plesseys in Kirkby, just a mile down the road.

□□

The Swiss owned company had closed its operations at the Knowsley plant six months before they were legally allowed to under regulations governing development areas. They gave no 90-day notice under the Employment Protection Act. They are not paying any redundancy money. And they even owe the workers money for their overalls!

Although most FDC machinists were getting a basic wage of just £34 for a 40-hour week, even that is better than the £13 which the single women in the occupation are getting from the DHSS. Financial support has come in from Fords, Massey Ferguson and Cammel Lairds workers.

Unless the Labour Government takes over the plant (which it virtually owns, since it is FDC's main creditor) there are three things that could happen:

1) The machinery is sold off to pay the creditors and the workers can go to hell.

2) A workers' cooperative is organised — a dubious proposition; given the state of the textile industry, they could end up cutting their own wages.

3) Another buyer is found.

The GMWU, which is officially backing the occupation, naturally favours the third option. One GMWU official told Workers' Action's reporter 'we don't like you people coming here publicising this because it jeopardises our chances of finding another buyer.'

Unfortunately under capitalism there are no guarantees that potential buyers won't jeopardise the jobs of FDC workers again. The best way to guard against that is to give full support to this occupation.

Send donations and messages to the occupation at FD Centre, Randells Road, Knowsley Industrial Estate, Knowsley, Merseyside.



What happened to the firemen's 42 hour week?

"FIREMEN should not be misled into thinking that they won a 42-hour week as a result of their strike", according to Birmingham's Councillor Wootton.

Rank and file firemen are indeed realising that the promise of a 42-hour week from November was little more than a cynical manoeuvre to get them back to work last January.

According to the small print of the January agreement, there would be a 42-hour week "subject to satisfactory negotiations". And the conditions that the employers are now demanding for the implementation of that settlement would take away nearly all the advances in working conditions won by firemen over 30 years.

The employers are demanding a 3 x eight-hour shift pattern and the sacking of the station cleaners and cooks — their jobs to be done by firemen. They are also insisting on a complete review of manning levels and of standards of fire cover.

Home Secretary Merlyn Rees and the rest of the Labour Government, who were instrumental in forcing the settlement on the firemen, are smiling benignly on the efforts of the Local Authority employers to impose these conditions or avoid honouring the 42-hour week.

Break

The employers have not even started recruiting to man up for the reduced working week, which is due to start in only 6 months. And it takes three months for a recruit to complete training and get onto a station.

Despite the long strike they have just been through, the FBU rank and file are willing to put up a fight. But the Union leadership is, predictably, dragging its feet. It has raised a demand for the nationalisation of the fire service in order to wrest control away from the Tory-dominated local authorities. It quite omits to mention

that it was primarily the Labour government that opposed the firemen's demands and brought in troops to break the strike.

The raising of this demand now serves mainly to divert attention from a fight on wages and conditions in the here and now.

If the employers have their way it will be a serious setback. Three 8-hour shifts would mean a doubling of the hours that firemen spend on routine administrative and fire prevention work, and would provide the employers with a further excuse to cut manning levels and chop fire stations.

Pathetic

We must:
■ Demand the 42-hour week as agreed, and mount a fight around the demand for a 35-hour week to cut the dole queues.

■ Link up with NUPE members to fight the threat to the jobs of the cleaners and cooks.

■ Demand a shift pattern of our choice to provide 24-hour fire cover. No to the "three eights"!

■ Work for support in the local labour movements for our demands on manning levels. It isn't only a matter of jobs, but also affects fire cover for workers in their homes and at work.

■ Fight any station closures. Demand immediate manning up for the 42-hour week.

People like Cllr. Wootton, and employers' chairman Cllr. Brannan, must be firmly put in their place so that the limited gains made in the strike are not taken away now.

The FBU leadership should stop making pathetic appeals for help to Merlyn Rees and Co, and instead start mobilising the strength of the rank and file for the fight that is going to be necessary if we are to win.

DOUG MACKAY
Acocks Green FBU

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