

workers power

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

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Peoples March must unite workers' struggles for jobs

THE WELL LAID plans of the Communist Party to keep the People's March tightly-policed passive protest can be defeated. That is the clear message from the majority of the marchers. The young marchers in particular have not joined the CP to hear the consoling prayers of the Archbishops, but to bring home the message of the unemployed to the whole working class.

Already the CP, eager to stay in receipt of the TUC's good graces, has attempted to divert the efforts by the marchers to have a demagogically run march. At the eve of march speaking in Liverpool, fellow-traveller of Stalinists Jack Dromey declared "Don't be with stewards publicly... the main purpose of stewards is not to act as policemen, to help you". This would have rung more if the stewards had been elected. When it was proposed from the floor, however, Stalinists were quick to argue that this would destroy the unity of the march.

The unity the CP wanted was unity behind its policy of showing respect for the benevolent bosses and caring clergy who were prepared to join its chorus of pleading to the TUC. Midlands march organiser, Pete Carter, said this out at the briefing meeting when he said "You have got to unite the nation. It's your big job on your hands... We ask you to be respectful of people working towards your goal. Respect the point of view of the church."

This sort of unity is useless in the fight for jobs. Prayers and meetings count for nothing unless the bosses add up their books. That is the only way to wage an effective fight against unemployment is to look to the class struggle. Capitalism is attacking - the working class.

The Peoples March must be turned into a focus for working class action. The struggles of the unemployed can be linked to those of the employed, establishing real working class unity. To do this the Peoples March must become a militant Unemployed Workers march.

The visits to churches must be replaced by visits to factories. That this can be done on the March was demonstrated by an initiative taken by WORKERS POWER supporters on the March. As it passed through Widnes, WP supporters contacted workers at the nearby United Glass factory in St. Helens. Here 600 workers had occupied the factory when the management threatened 81 redundancies. Faced with an eviction order they came out of the plant, but are maintaining a strike and picket line. When approached they were eager to talk to the Peoples March. The CP marshalls tried to prevent a steward addressing the marchers, claiming that "official channels" had not been gone through. The marchers were having no truck with this petty bureaucracy. They gave the United Glass G&MWU steward a warm welcome.

The vital lessons must be learnt: the real allies of the Peoples March are workers actually fighting to defend jobs - in United Glass, in Holman Mitchells (in St Helens), at Lee Jeans, Ansell's and Plansee. By visiting the factories, supporting the picket lines, addressing workers meetings, the march can lay the basis for a united working class offensive against the bosses' job-slashing plans.

To do this it is necessary to take the march completely out of the hands of the TUC's stalinist hirelings. All march Stewards must be elected and accountable to regularly meeting, sovereign democratic assembly of the marchers. This assembly should decide on where the march should visit and who it should address.

In every town the march passes through, organising committees to support the march must be based on Stewards Committees, Union branches, Labour Party wards, etc. They must mobilise for strike action against unemployment when the Peoples' March passes through. In every town ALL OUT STRIKE ACTION should greet the marchers. These committees should not dissolve the minute the march passes through. They must lay the basis for Councils of Action to fight all attacks from the Tories and the employers.

On May 29th the march arrives in London. In line with their whole scheme for the march, the organisers are hoping to make this a passive affair. Their plans must be thwarted! The majority of the marchers - and by this time the Eastern Leg will have teamed up with the main march - are not marching to London for the joy of hearing St Paul's bells ringing in their ears. They are marching for jobs. They are marching against the Thatcher gang - against the Tory policies of mass unemployment. They must be greeted by a general strike of the whole working class on May 29th. The TUC must be forced to cut the chat and start the action. They must call out the whole trade union movement to register the massive opposition to unemployment that exists inside the working class. And if the TUC refuse to do this, then strike action on the 29th must be called by every stewards committee, union branch and trades council regardless. A show of strength like this can show every Peoples marcher, every unemployed worker, every worker fighting to defend his or her job, that unemployment can be fought. It can begin the fight to take on Thatcher and destroy her government, her policies, and the profit-hungry boss class she represents. ■

BOBBY SANDS: IRISH BLOOD ON LABOUR'S HANDS

BOBBY SANDS - IRISH political prisoner, blanketman and Republican - a member of the British House of Commons - has been left to die in the H-Blocks. His murder was ordered on the authority of, or with the connivance of, his "fellow" MPs.

That the Tories with the cold and calculating malice special to their breed were prepared to let him die should surprise no-one in Ireland and few class-conscious workers in Britain. Bobby Sands' blood will add but one more stain to the "butchers' apron" Union Jack that has flown over the stolen six counties of Ireland since 1921.

But it is not only the Tory members of the Westminster thieves kitchen who have blood on their hands. The leaders of the British working class who adorn its benches bear a double mark of infamy for their complicity in Sands' murder. Thatcher killed in the interests of her class. Foot, and the despicable Labour Party spokesman on Northern Ireland, Don Concannon, were complicit in an act that flies in the face of the most sacred interests of the working class - internationalism.

Concannon obscenely chose May Day itself to visit the H Block to let Sands know that he had no hope of support from the Labour Party. Concannon rushed onto the media to gush his and the shadow cabinet's 100% support for the government. Doubtless militant left-wingers in the trade unions, the Labour Party and socialist groups will be outraged at the shame brought on the British working class by its leaders. But they should not be surprised. Concannon was Roy (Butcher) Mason's second-in-command (with special responsibilities for prisoners) in Northern Ireland under the last Labour government. Merlyn Rees and Mason, with Concannon as their underling, masterminded the "criminalisation" of the Republican prisoners, recognised de facto by the previous Tory government as political prisoners, as prisoners of war.

Bobby Sands wrote movingly of the conditions these creatures devised for their captives:

"I am a political prisoner, a freedom fighter...I have been stripped of my clothes and locked in a dirty empty cell where I have been starved, beaten and tortured...but I have the spirit of freedom that cannot be quenched."

Bobby Sands' life was a concentrated example of what the nationalist people of the six counties suffer in their daily lives and of their unbelievable courage in fighting back. Brought

up in Rathcoole, a predominantly Protestant part of Belfast, his family was driven from their home by Orange thugs in 1972. An apprentice coach-builder in a province where Catholics suffer unemployment twice the British average, he was driven at gun-point from his job in the same year. He became an IRA fighter and in 1973 received his first five-year sentence. In 1976 he was sentenced to fourteen years by the no-jury, single-judge Diplock courts which accept "uncorroborated evidence" - i.e. police statements and confession extracted by torture. Sands, as IRA "Public Relations Officer" in the Maze was subject to regular beatings and solitary confinement from the authorities.

How have the official "left-wingers" within the Labour Party responded to Sands' hunger strike? "Tribune" refused point-blank to support any of his demands. "Would the decision to give Sands political status in any way have changed what has been happening in Ulster?" - asked a Tribune editorial. Their answer was "No!". Tony Benn, despite internal meetings where he has raised the question of recognising Sands' membership of the House of Commons, has made no clear unequivocal statement for the granting of the hunger strikers' demands.

The "Communist" (sic) Morning Star talked about IRA moves to "exploit Sands' death" and equated the IRA with Ian Paisley; "the prospects of major sectarian confrontation is, perhaps as useful to them as it is to Mr Ian Paisley" (Morning Star, 2/5/81).

Bobby Sands wrote of the strength which the voices of support from outside brought to the freedom fighters against the "monster" of British Imperialist repression:

"My body is broken and cold, I'm lonely and I need comfort. From somewhere afar I hear those familiar voices which keep me going. We are with you...don't let them beat you. I need to hear those voices. They anger the monster. It retreats...I know that if they shout louder, they will scare the monster away and my suffering will be ended."

Alas, he heard too few voices from this side of the Irish Sea, Too few voices from the ranks of British labour. Revolutionary socialists, all honest working class militants can pay a real tribute to his memory by raising their voices in the call.

- * Grant the Republican prisoners of war demands in full.
- * British troops out of Ireland. Now!
- * Solidarity with the Republicans and socialists fighting to drive those troops out for good and all.

General Strike May 29th!

FOR ANYONE WHO knows the situation in Brixton the causes of the "riot" of the 11th/12th April are as plain as the nose on Home Secretary Whitelaw's face. Increasing unemployment (there are 13,000 unemployed in Brixton - 1,500 - 1,800 of whom are school leavers, mostly black), rampant discrimination against young blacks applying for any of the few jobs that are going, and the massive degree of daily police harassment, all made Brixton a tinder-box waiting for a spark.

That spark was duly provided by the local cops when they detained a black youth, severely injured in a stabbing on Friday evening. He had to be rescued and ferried to hospital by other young blacks. The flooding of Brixton with police the following day was not a "heavy-handed mistake" made by some top cop, but the culmination of a decisive shift in police tactics that has developed in the last period.

Top police commanders, typified by McNee, fully backed up by Labour and Tory Home Secretaries, know that as mounting unemployment and poverty lead to sharpening social tensions, so policing becomes more and more a question of "containing" rebellious communities. The ruling class realises that as the slump gets worse they have no solutions to offer to the worst hit sections of the working class. Thus the growing emphasis in the last period has been on riot control, the creation of a force of 12,000 specially trained riot police integrated into various levels of the police, and the establishment of local SPG equivalents in every major police force.

The black and working class districts of the big cities necessarily bear the brunt of this growing harassment. In London, Brixton and Lewisham in particular have been concentrated on as potential trouble spots. If you are black, and out at night, in these areas you are likely to be stopped, questioned and searched. The SPG in Lambeth and Lewisham are notorious. In 1975, 14,000 "stop-and-searches" took place in a two month period. In 1978 and again in 1979 the SPG conducted massive stop and search operations in Lambeth, in the week before the Brixton clash, "Operation Swamp-81" stop and searched over 1000 people. In all these cases large numbers of arrests were made, often under the notorious "Sus" laws. Once in the police stations, young blacks are subject to humiliating and racist treatment.

Police policy is to show the unemployed youth in these areas, white as well as black, that the state forces are ready and waiting to contain any trouble. For them, brutal intimidation of the community is a "preventative measure". Little wonder then that the police responded to the Friday night incident by flooding Brixton with police and that the tinder box exploded as the local population drove the police out of their areas, giving "L-Division" and the SPG a bloody nose.

The response of the police in the form of the Police Federation, with Whitelaw's supportive sympathetic mutterings, were predictable. They have called for better riot equipment and for them to be armed for the offensive, with CS Gas and water cannons. As the battlelines are drawn, socialists and trade unionists must solidly support the right of black people in Brixton to defend themselves against police occupation and harassment in the same way we support the right of pickets to defend themselves against SPG attacks.

However what is quite clear is that spontaneous explosions of revolt cannot end this police strategy nor solve the underlying problems of poverty, unemployment, bad housing, inadequate schools, etc. Already the police, using the masses of video and photographic coverage of the riots,



Peter Murphy

Brixton, April 11th 1981

NO TRUCK WITH SCARMAN FOR A WORKERS' ENQUIRY INTO POLICE BRUTALITY

are arresting large numbers of youth on alleged offences committed on this weeked - over 280 people have already been charged. The question is how can the exploitation and brutal repression of the community be ended?

The black youth and community have seen no small number of Labour and community "leaders" appearing from nowhere with advice and solutions. Self-appointed black spokespeople like the barrister, and ex-Labour councillor, Rudy Narayan, are busily attempting to pose as defenders of the black community while offering their services as "responsible" leaders to the Whitelaws and to the police chiefs. His could be the road to "success" followed by many of the leaders of the black civil rights movement in America. That was made clear by Narayan's rapid announcement to the press that no march or rally would be held in Brixton on the Sunday following April 11th.

Ted Knight, the man who caved into the Tories rather than lead a fight against rate rises and cuts in services and jobs, calls for the replacement of "outside police" with good old community coppers. Knight and the London Labour Party, ably assisted by the Communist Party, are trying to tell us that the real reason for the actions of the police is that they are controlled by the Home Secretary and therefore unaccountable to the

community. Far from it! The police uphold the law, the law is made in the interests of the bankers and the bosses, this is what makes them "unac-

countable" to the working class.

The only community "police" who would be accountable would be the community itself - the trade unions, the tenants associations, black organisations, - organising their own members to defend the community against police attack, to police and defend itself. The Trade Union movement must give the lead in the formation of organised workers defence, and in supporting black self de-

fence, as the only means of replacing the police of the bourgeois state. Our call should not be for community police, but for "Police out of Brixton - Drop all the charges".

The TUC is now equally concerned about the dangers of areas like Brixton getting out of hand. Jack Dromey, at a special meeting of Lambeth Trades Council, was pushing the TUC "suggestion" that the trade unions in the area should collect evidence from organisations in the area and submit it to the Scarman enquiry! So discredited is this Tory tribunal, staffed by a white Tory judge, that this is probably the only hope that Scarman has of getting evidence from black organisations and individuals.

Scarman has served this purpose for the ruling class before when he white-washed the SPG after the police killing of Kevin Gately during an anti-fascist demonstration in Red Lion Square. The official purpose of this enquiry is to find out the causes of this battle with the police and make recommendations to aid Whitelaw and McNee.

But vitally, the Tories and police want this judge to help them develop means for establishing closer working relations between the police and "responsible" community leaders who can help defuse the explosions of rage of Brixton's oppressed youth. The TUC and the local trade unions should give no credibility to this Tory farce boycott the enquiry! The TUC must set up its own enquiry involving black organisations and local tenants and trade unionists, with the aim of publicising as widely as possible in the labour movement the real role of the police and SPG in Brixton. **FOR A WORKERS' ENQUIRY INTO POLICE VIOLENCE IN BRIXTON!**

The crucial need is for fighting unity between black organisations and the trade unions. It is for black and white trade unionists to fight in their organisations to support black self-defence and to mobilise their members to fight police harassment and frame-ups. The problems of black and white unemployed will not be solved by TUC-backed "unemployment centres" aimed solely at keeping people off the streets and occupying their time, but only through the formation of a fighting unemployed workers union which, as part of the organised working class, would fight for an end to the very conditions which breed unemployment and poverty. ■

MARK HOSKISSON

Police bans hit the Left: fascists march unscathed

HOME Secretary Whitelaw and the chiefs of police have implemented a 28-day ban on marches and demonstrations that has covered the length and breadth of the country. In the main the pretext of the bans has been to stop the National Front demonstrations taking place, but in each case the police have made a deal with the fascists to let them march unmolested. This is not new. The NF were banned from marching in Hyde, near Manchester, in 1977. But they were allowed to march in nearby Levenshulme while anti-fascist demonstrators in Hyde were penned in by police.

The Government has presented its bans as impartial interventions to maintain law and order in reality they are aimed at preventing the Left and the black community organising against the fascists, and at accustoming the workers movement to state and police restrictions on its rights to rally and demonstrate. That explains why the fascists were allowed to march in Watford under huge police escort on April 26th at the same time as police were laying in to a march in solidarity with Bobby Sands in London.

All this becomes even clearer if we look at precisely who it is who have been stopped from marching by the bans. The prevention of a pro-republican march was given as the

reason for a three month blanket ban in Strathclyde, Scotland. To date an El Salvador demonstration, a march against the suppression of democratic rights in Turkey, a Civil Service union march and CND marches have all been stopped by Whitelaw.

This use of the Public Order Act has provoked anguished shrieks from the Labour Left and the CP. But their protests have not been aimed at the Public Order Act itself - only at its non-selective use. The CP has called for the Act to be used "properly", or to be amended so as to deal only with racists. The NEC of the Labour Party has called for the Act to "only be used to ban specific marches and not used for blanket bans."

To fall in behind the CP and the Labour NEC would be disastrous for the workers movement. The Public Order Act is a weapon in the hands of the state to be used against the Left and the workers movement. Its use may occasionally inconvenience the NF, or the British Movement, but it will not challenge them. If class conflict becomes too great for the police and army to deal with, then the capitalists will always be prepared to call in the fascist gangs to lend them a hand attacking picket lines, occupations and the black community. For that reason the state will never smash fascist organisations or impede their growth.

What the bans have done is to paralyse

the working classes ability to mobilise its own ranks to actively prevent the fascists marching. The fascists can still grow behind the shelter of police lines while the only organised force that could destroy them is crippled by state bans!

We have never been in favour of calling on the state to ban fascist marches - not because we believe the fascists should be granted the right to free speech but because all such calls directly encourage passivity in the face of the fascist menace. They lead inevitably to strengthening illusions - deeply ingrained in the British working class - in the neutrality of the state and its uniformed forces. Workers will pay dearly for such illusions as the police step up their attacks on the picket lines.

Against the calls for bans we counterpose the call for mass workers action - to prevent the fascists mobilising and to assert the working class' right to march against Whitelaw's bans!

In the heyday of the ANL, the two largest groups to the left of the CP - the Socialist Workers Party and the International Marxist Group - both actively hailed state bans as victories. Of the 1977 Thameside blanket ban Socialist Worker proudly proclaimed:

"As Socialist Worker said last week, there can be no doubt that this was a victory for the opponents of the Nazis." (SW, 1/10/77)

This logic saw the SWP-led ANL calling for bans on fascist marches in 1978 and 1979.

The SWP's tune has changed during the last round of bans. It can't ignore the effects of Whitelaw's actions. But even so a SWP spokesman in Socialist Review (April/May, 1981) could still say:

"So, while bans are a backhanded compliment to our ability to mobilise against the fascists to the extent that the police fear disorder, we should not be lulled into the belief that they are working on our behalf."

While no longer calling for bans the SWP still wish to construe Whitelaw's bans as a sign of the strength of the SWP/ANL.

We have no such illusions. Whitelaw is declaring war on the left, not begrudgingly recognising its strength. By openly encouraging bans, the SWP/ANL has paved the way for this attack. In the face of this latest onslaught by the Tories on the right to march we need to commit the unions and the Labour Party, at every level, to opposition to and defiance of the Public Order Act and all bans on our marches. This will mean more than the genteel stroll organised in Whitehall recently by 100 Labour MPs. It will mean building support for massive mobilisations that can, in a disciplined and organised manner, defy the bans, resist all attacks on pickets and marches and whenever necessary destroy the fascist attempts to march and organise. ■

OLD WINE in a NEW BOTTLE

THE CONFERENCE CONVENED by the "Parity Committee", held between December 19th-27th 1980, which announced the formation of the Fourth International (International Committee) represents a major regrouping of the forces claiming to stand in the tradition of Trotsky's Fourth International.

The F.I. (IC), whose major component groups came from the Organising Committee for the Fourth International led by Pierre Lambert's O.C.I., Nahuel Moreno's "Bolshevik Faction" and the Lenin-Trotsky Tendency, now probably represents the largest world grouping of "Trotskyists" being considerably larger than the United Secretariat (USEC).

Workers Power and the IWG (our fraternal organisation in Ireland) pointed out at the time of the split in the USEC, which led to the B.F. and LTT teaming up with the OCRFI, that such were the differences between these groupings that the political amalgam that would result from such a fusion would be incapable of "developing a programme which could be tactically applied in a revolutionary situation." (see W.P. May 1980 'Parity Committee Following Well Worn Path' and WP 11)

A DEEPLY PABLOITE POLICY

We argued that it would replace the fight for a principled fusion based on programmatic clarity by "the cobbling together of a rotten centrist combination" (WP 14). The availability of the "40 Theses" which represent the founding principles and programme of the FI (IC) readily confirm our prognosis of this grouping.

Not the least of the differences between the Lambertists and Morenoites which had to be accommodated within a joint organisation and programme was the history of Moreno's organisation's political opportunism towards petit bourgeois nationalism, most glaringly the Argentinian PST's accommodation to Peronism, but also to Castroism and briefly to Maoism. At the end of 1976 the French OCI's theoretical organ "La Verite" described Moreno's role in the struggle against Peronism in the following way: "We have to speak also about the policy of adaptation to Peronism, a deeply Pabloite policy in inspiration, which was worked out and followed from 1955-58 in particular by the "Palabra Obrera" group, led by Nahuel Moreno and Ernest Gonzales."

(Argentina: For a Balance Sheet of Peronism-December 1976 La Verite. Translated in "Marxist Bulletin" Discussion Pamphlet No 2 p.25). This "complete political capitulation" as La Verite described it meant that: "To criticise the policy of N. Moreno is an indispensable task. It has pushed to great lengths a series of profound deviations from Trotskyism" (p.27).

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

The Bolshevik Faction also had some "Minor" disagreements to overcome with the OCI. The Bolshevik Tendency had its political formation in a split with the majority of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction of the USEC, primarily over the SWP(US)'s policy of chronic adaptation to the Portuguese Socialist party during the period of revolutionary crisis in Portugal in 1974/5. The OCI had a position nearly identical with that of the SWP, a political convergence that led to discussions with that grouping which nearly led to fusion. Both the OCI and SWP(US) acted as cheer leaders for Soares' Socialist Party—who were praised as "defenders of democracy"—while Moreno and Mandel's wing of the USEC preferred a 'united front' with the 'left' Generals of the MFA, seeing the Socialist Party as one of the main agents of "bourgeois counter revolution" (see Workers Power 5 (journal) "The Workers Government" Autumn '77).

How does the joint programmatic document of the FI(IC) deal with this fundamental disagreement involving the tactical application of the programme in two vital periods of intense class struggle? Very simply—it doesn't. There is a coy reference to the role of the CP/MFA in attempting to introduce a bonapartist government and fighting against the constituent assembly in one sentence of a 160 page document!

(Thesis Sixteen). The "indispensable task" of dealing with the PST's adaptation to Peronism doesn't even get a look in. For the centrist silence is golden. The "Forty Theses" fundamentally enshrine the politics of the OCI while "concessions" are made on the question of the Middle East—support for the PLO's struggle against the Zionist state of Israel and on Cuba, (Lambert's dropping of his 20 year analysis of Cuba as a 'capitalist state' virtually overnight was obviously a small price to pay in return for the adherence of large Latin American sections), OCRFI'ism in the shape of "catastrophism", adaptation to Social Democracy and Stalinophobia shine through almost every thesis.

In their enthusiasm to stick to the letter of the "1938 Transitional Programme" Trotsky's perspectives and prognoses for the period ahead—one of deep capitalist crises and revolutionary upsurge—are turned into ever present epochal characteristics; the revolutionary guide to action is turned into timeless Marxist truism's, into dead dogma. Thus the theses declare: "in the decades (our emphasis—WP) which followed the war, we had a combination of three factors: an extremely sharp crisis of imperialism, an enormous revolutionary upsurge of the masses, and a deepening crisis of leadership of the world proletariat". (Thesis Nine).

They proceed through a series of contradictory formulations to show that the long capitalist boom of the 50s and 60s did not really take place or even if it did—it was "parasitic" and that anyway it was expanding the "forces of destruction" rather than the forces of production! Thus on the one hand, coming face to face with reality, the theses can refer to the world economy undergoing "a process of unprevented capitalist accumulation" (Thesis Nine) and "The boom conditions have enabled important concessions to be won from the bourgeoisie and real wages and the standard of living to be raised in some countries particularly the imperialist countries" (Thesis Eleven). In the next breath we are informed "from the emergence of monopolies, from the epoch of imperialism which is the stage of decaying capitalism, the productive forces have stopped growing within the capitalist mode of production" (Thesis Five) and even that the very idea that productive forces have expanded is "an anti-class and anti-human conception"! (Thesis Seventeen).

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Throughout the theses we are informed that the revolutionary upsurge of the masses has been virtually unstoppable since World War II. In theses nine and ten—"Thirty Years of Great Revolutionary Triumphs" and "The Period of the Imminence of the Revolution has been Opened"—we are treated to a description of world events fitted into the schema of the rising "revolutionary process" which could have been cribbed direct from Pablo's documents in the 1949-54 period. Thus:

"We could therefore describe the 43-49 period as that of the most intense imperialist crisis, the greatest revolutionary upsurge, and the biggest number of revolutionary triumphs up to now. But the period opened in May 1949 was that of the extension of the Workers revolution to the bureaucratic workers states. From 1968, the period of the imminence of the revolution has developed a new worlds unity of the class struggle... etc, etc. (Thesis Ten) and "We are now in a new period of world revolutionary upsurge. The period opened in 1968 began to develop fully from 1974 and took another step forward in 1979." (In 1979 the Parity Committee was formed—WP).

The attempt by imperialism to defeat this movement of the masses, we are smugly told, has "failed miserably", except we are informed in Indonesia, Brazil "and a few other countries" (!) Leaving aside the "few other countries" (we could mention Greece, Italy, France after the war, Bolivia, Chile etc). What the FI(IC) prefer to ignore is that the "great revolutionary triumphs" they refer to—the establishment of bureaucratic workers states in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China—were also from the point of view of the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, great revolutionary defeats. Defeats which involved a counter-revolutionary bureaucratic caste—the Stalinist parties expropriating the political power of the workers, atomising their organisations and imposing police terror over the class conscious vanguard. In the case of these states the FI(IC)'s

emphasis on the "objective processes" of the revolution leads these "anti Pabloites" in exactly the same direction as Pablo. Thus the political revolution is "an unavoidable process" in which in Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland "some sectors (which?—WP) have objectively moved close to Trotskyism". (Thesis Nine).

Trotsky once made the remark referring to the centrists of the S.A.P. "The whole history of the struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks is dotted with this little word 'process'. Lenin always formulated tasks and proposed corresponding methods. The Mensheviks agreed with the same 'aims' by and large, but left their realisation to the historic process. There is nothing new under the sun." (Writings 33-35 p.189).

This method means that not only does the FI(IC)'s programme contain no realistic assessment of the defeats and victories of the international class struggle, but also simultaneously absolves "the International" from developing specific national tactics in a democratic centralist manner. If the "revolutionary process" resolves all these difficulties then tactics become a relatively unimportant matter, except when factional manoeuvres are at stake. Thus while the OCI's characterisation of the Argentinian trade unions as 'fascist' was important enough to use as a pretext to expel 'Politica Obrera' from the OCRFI in 1978, the accommodation to the Morenoite PST's activity in these same unions is swallowed with consummate ease. "But the discussion whether we can transform these organisations into revolutionary organisations or have to create others is a wasted discussion which will be solved by History." (Thesis Thirty One).

STALINOPHOBIA

On the question of Stalinism and Social Democracy the Forty Theses give an invaluable insight into the developing political method of the FI(IC). The OCI's long history of Stalinophobia—the failure or refusal to see the contradictions within Stalinism, which revolutionaries must use to win its mass base to Trotskyism—is reflected in the use they make of the characterisation of it as counter-revolutionary. The OCI correctly rejects the view that Stalinism has a "dual nature" only to pass to the opposite error that fails to see that its bureaucracy is forced (by the attacks of the class enemy) to either defend the bureaucratized workers organ-

isations (trade unions and parties) or workers states that it is parasitical upon, or to stand exposed before the working class. There is thus no qualitatively greater degree of counter-revolutionism embodied in the Stalinist parties than in the parties of the Second International. True the subordination of these parties to the foreign policy interests of the Kremlin bureaucrats gives them at times a relative independence from the "democracy" of their own bourgeoisie but this tends to draw into their ranks the more intransigent and class conscious workers. The explosiveness of this contradiction is testified to in the dictatorial regimes of these parties.

The corollary of the FI(IC)'s Stalinophobia is its adaptation to social and social democratic parties. The Theses declare "The Social Democratic apparatuses are dependent on bourgeois democracy, or what remains of it. The Stalinist apparatuses are relatively indifferent to the form of the bourgeois political regime. The essential thing is that they are subordinate to the bureaucracy in Moscow. This explains why... the Spanish Communist Party supports the monarchy, the French CP buttresses the bonapartist Government of Giscard..." (Thesis Sixteen).

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Not only is this a one sided, undialectical approach to Stalinist parties—Marchais' debacle shows again the contradictions of a bourgeois workers party, even of a Stalinist type, precisely because of its working class base—but it also points up the social democracy in rosy colours. Does the PSE not support the Spanish monarchy? Will Mitterand not use the bonapartist state apparatus to attack the working class? Of course they will—but it is precisely this supposed difference which has led the Lambert grouping to accommodate to the socialists—who will in the end be better "defenders of democracy". Thus the covering for Soares in Portugal when he was aiding and abetting physical attacks on the CP and trade unions and the uncritical support for Mitterand in the French elections.

In its "defence of democracy" the FI(IC) manages to equate the fight for democratic demands with the fight for socialist revolution. For the FI(IC), because the "realisation of the democratic and national tasks of the revolution are, during the epoch of imperialist decay unrealisable without kicking the bourgeoisie out of political power and expropriating it." (Thesis Twelve). Such tasks become identical with and even a surrogate for the socialist revolution. This necessitates a breath taking piece of revisionism to bring the Russian Revolution in line with this schema. So Thesis Twelve tells us: "February (the February 1917 Revolution—WP) was a proletarian revolution which confronted the exploiters, imperialists, bourgeois and Landlords linked to the bourgeoisie." Whilst Lenin (and Trotsky) held that the February Revolution was in essence a proletarian uprising they stressed that the government which emerged from it was bourgeois. "The provisional government by its class character is the organ of the landowner and bourgeois domination". April Theses. The FI(IC) take Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which points out that in the epoch of imperialism only the proletariat will be able to fully carry out the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in the process of the socialist revolution, and turn it upside down to prove that bourgeois tasks are in fact socialist ones!

"UNCONSCIOUS SOCIALISTS"

"In short the February Revolution is unconsciously socialist while that of October is consciously so" (Theses Twelve). So the fight for democratic rights, the constituent assembly, national self determination etc is, for the OCI and the FI(IC), the "unconscious" fight for socialist revolution. This explains why in Portugal, Ireland, Peru etc., for the OCRFI the fight for a constituent assembly became at various times synonymous with the fight for a workers government and the socialist revolution. The role of the revolutionary party in all this becomes apart from being the best fighters for "democratic rights" largely one of kicking out the counter revolutionary petty bourgeois social democratic and Stalinist "apparatuses" in the workers movement who obstruct this "process". The regrouping of the FI(IC) has more in common with the cynical "political musical chairs" of post-war degenerate "Trotskyism" than with the principled relaying of the foundations of a revolutionary international. The "Forty Theses" offer only the old menshevik centrism of the OCRFI, combined with the diplomatic cover ups of an unprincipled bloc. The formation of the FI(IC) merely lays the basis for new splits in the future. Pierre Lambert said at the end of the FI(IC) conference "If comrade Trotsky was here today, he would say "Well done" ". We wager that if comrade Trotsky had made it past the OCI stewards into the FI(IC)'s conference he would have delivered a longer and less polite message. ■



Discussing the 40 theses

This article, from R. Ascal in Paris, was written after the first but before the second round of the French Presidential elections so that the final result was not known at the time of going to press.

THE FRENCH RULING class has been a pioneer in the use of monetarist policies against its workers. Giscard and his Prime Minister, Raymond Barre, took advantage of their victory over the divided French Left in the March 1978 Legislative Assembly elections to step up their attacks (the so-called Barre Plans). The economic results of Friedmanite policies have been as meagre for the French bourgeoisie as they are proving for Thatcher and Joseph. France recently declared a record foreign trade deficit of 8.4 thousand million francs.

The policy has proved more successful in disciplining the working class. Of course the divisions sown in its ranks by the leaders of the Socialist and Communist Parties and the major union federations (CGT and CFDT) have greatly aided Giscard and Barre. Their recipe for the future is more of the same policies. Faced with French capitalism's sagging competitiveness, their answer has been, and remains, more of the same medicine.

They aim to increase French capitalism's competitiveness in the face of sharpening international imperialist rivalry. They aim to run down or completely close whole sections of industry which are unprofitable, (eg iron and steel, ship building, textiles); * to encourage increased capital concentration in other sections; * to cut public services and re-divert this capital to the private sector; * to re-organise the public sector and gear it to the needs of the private sector; * to re-allocate resources away from consumption and towards the export industries.

The direct result of these policies has been to create 1,800,000 unemployed, (the Government says only 1,520,000 but these figures exclude school-leavers, part-time workers and women). Young people and women are particularly badly hit. More than 60% of unemployed are women, two-thirds of those living on the minimum wage (SMIC, in French government jargon) are women, and the average take-home pay for women is around 33% that of men. With regard to young people, 700,000 of those unemployed in January 1981 were under 25.

In spite of the Government's claims that it is going to "save 200,000 jobs in 1981", Giscard's first act after an electoral victory in May would be to work out the 8th plan for the economy. Officially there are 2.5 million unemployed expected for 1984, but these figures are rigged too. 3,200,000 would be a more realistic figure.

BOSSSES' PLAN OF ATTACK

The 50,000 redundancies already declared in the iron and steel industry are likely soon to be followed by massive sackings in the car industry. 2 million workers are currently on part-time working and, at the Talbot plant in Poissy, workers are paid 50% of their normal monthly salary for 15 days work. The total number of workers on part-time working is soon to go up to 2.5 million as Barre has already said that he is going to create 50,000 part-time jobs in the public sector, and 100,000 in the private sector. These figures will therefore not appear in official unemployment statistics.

Temporary work is also on the increase. There are now 230,000 temporary workers, 80% of whom are under 25; (this is 1% of France's 23 million-strong working class). A bill in the National Assembly intends to change the law on temporary working to generalise it even further and attack the already weak trade unions by hiring workers for short periods of time with no job security. The French bourgeoisie is obviously dreaming of Japan, where 15% of the workforce is hired on a temporary basis.

The 40-hour week, a historic gain of the June, 1936 strike wave, is coming more and more under attack. While marginalising the trade unions, the aim of the government is to have a more "flexible" labour force which is there when there is work to be done and which can be easily dismissed when it is not needed, or creates too much trouble. This "flexible working" is hypocritically presented by the bosses as an advance for women as they can spend time with their children when they want!

New anti-strike laws are being prepared, especially for civil servants. New attacks on the SMIC (minimum wage) and the social security system are also in the offing if Giscard is elected. He wants to see the SMIC negotiated by branch of industry and by region, and is planning to yet again increase workers' social security contributions.

Recent laws, the ironically named "Security and Liberty" law in particular, have given police even further-reaching powers, and the use of the paramilitary CRS to smash workers occupations, illegal TU radio stations and demonstrations, is becoming more and more common. Stop-and-search activities and the need to be able to prove your identity at all times have now been legalised. These are particularly used against young people and foreign workers.

There are 4,124,317 immigrants in France, a country which has a population of 53 million. The French bourgeoisie is playing the racist card, aided and abetted by the French Communist Party (PCF) for electoral reasons (see WORKERS POWER No 20, February 1981). Giscard has just announced new measures designed to "encourage" immigrants to return "home". These workers are not and cannot become French citizens, do not have the right to vote, and are therefore never talked about in the context of the election campaign, except to say that there are too many of them.

Faced with these attacks the working class is very poorly armed. The trade union movement organises at most 4 million workers. It is divided between the social-democratic CFDT and FO federations, and the Stalinist-led CGT. Membership of the fed-



erations is difficult to assess. The CGT bureaucrats claim 2.5 million members but leading CGT militants claim the real figure is nearer 1.2 million, a drop of over a half in the last two years! This demoralisation is due to the lack of effective resistance to Giscard-Barre policies. Strikes have been lost, united struggles prevented, futile "days of action" (usually separate days for the two major unions) have demobilised a workforce willing to struggle but given no perspective by their leaders.

Even at a local level, where both CGT and CFDT are present, PS/PCF division has made it near impossible for these two unions to work together. Where "inter-syndicales" (inter-union factory delegate committees) still exist, they are generally too paralysed by CFDT/CGT warfare to act. French industry is very much carved up, however, between the CGT, (traditionally strong in the mines, shipbuilding, docks, steel, construction, the car industry, the print industry, and other traditional industries) and the CFDT (mainly white-collar workers, although its blue-collar membership is improving), and FO, (principally strong among civil servants). So very often the question of TU division really only becomes vitally important when, in the course of a strike, the question of extending or giving the strike a national focus is raised. These are the two things that a bureaucrat is not prepared to do. The main characteristic of all strikes since 1978, whether in the Paris underground, the mines in Alsace/Lorraine, or the steel industry in Longwy, has been the isolated, fragmented and localised nature of the struggle.

Such a reaction to Giscard's attacks is, of course, totally insufficient, but it is also the policy followed by all of the TU leaders. One-day, rolling strikes are the norm, with all the demobilising effects that these necessarily entail. Both of the two main union confederations (CGT and CFDT) used these tactics in the 4-year build-up to the March 1978 elections. Working class demoralisation is as much due to such tactics (electoralist in origin, aimed at not scaring the middle classes) as to PCF/PS division and the 1978 electoral defeat itself.

THE WORKERS PARTIES

1) The *Parti Socialiste* is mainly based among white-collar workers and middle class professionals. Its only real traditional working class base is in the mines, docks and textile industries in the North of France. Its supporters are often found in FO or the CFDT - membership of the CGT being, for obvious reasons in the CP-led union, the exception to the rule. It is an almost exclusively electorally-oriented party and it is primarily on this basis that it can be characterised as a workers' party at all. Most workers will vote for it against the openly bourgeois parties.

Its leader, Francois Mitterand only joined the SP in 1970. In the 1950s he was a classic Fourth Republic bourgeois politician. He was a minister 11 times, and whilst holding the Ministry of the Interior, was responsible for the execution of the Algerians fighting to end French rule of their country. This is the third time that he has stood as candidate for the Presidency. Today he has the aura of a respectable bourgeois politician and is trying to use this to win votes from the Gaullist electorate. On the other hand, he knows he can never win without the support of some five or six million Communist voters in the second round.

This "contradiction" is far from insurmountable for a man of such experience, however. He resolves



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Glossary of names of organisations used:

CFDT (Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail) - second largest union Confederation. A Christian Union up to 1978.
CGT (Confederation Generale du Travail) - General Confederation of Labour.
FEN (Federation de l'Enseignement Nationale) - National Federation of Teachers.
FO (Force Ouvriere) - Workers' Force, the formerly CIA wing of the four main unions.
LCR (Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire) - Revolutionary Communist League, whose British section is the International Marxist Group.
LO (Lutte Ouvriere) - Workers' Struggle, a peculiarly French party.
OCI (Organisation Communiste Internationaliste) - International Communist Organisation. Firmly with the WRP style "anti-Stalinist".
PCE (Partido Comunista Espanol) - Spanish Communist Party.
PCF (Parti Communiste Francais) - French Communist Party.
PS (Parti Socialiste) - Socialist Party, led by Francois Mitterand.
RPR (Rassemblement Pour la Republique) - Main Gaullist party for two years before breaking with him to go into opposition.

it be refusing to come out with any hard proposals which might either lose him the support of the right or encourage workers to take action themselves to achieve them. He has already stated that his election campaign will be only "slightly programmatical" (Le Monde - 28/1/81). The PS has adopted a manifesto which contains 110 proposals. Certain nationalisations, raising the SMIC (minimum wage), etc... figure alongside other social reforms. No hard figures are given and Mitterand is not even tied to these weak proposals...He has invented his own, which he presented to the Creteil Congress of the PS on January 24th as his election manifesto. It is entitled the "Ten Commandments". These commandments are of as much use to French workers as the Moses original.

"Save the Republic"... (this means to save it from Giscard, who he accuses of behaving like a monarch. Mitterand does not challenge the undemocratic institutions of the 5th Republic - he prefers to present himself as the defender of parliament faced with overstrong Presidential powers). "Stop France slipping backwards"... (this is an attack on Giscard's "soft" stand on the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and on the Iranian "hostages". And all this is in the name of "liberty" and "independence".) "Jobs first"... (This is presented as "giving the family its true meaning, to escape misery and anguish". A truly reactionary statement.) "Justice for women"... ("What will France's future be if women forget they carry our hopes?"). "Nature ? That's us!"... (an attempt to win the sizeable ecology vote. "How many ecologists are socialists without knowing it?") ...etc...ad nauseam.

As numerous bourgeois commentators have pointed out, many of these commandments bear a strong resemblance to certain Gaullist themes...the nationalism in particular. And this nationalism is backed up by calls for nationalisations which are presented as being in line with de Gaulle's post-War nationalisations. But the most important aspect is that they neither challenge French capitalism and its undemocratic 5th Republic, nor do they give any tangible promises to workers. Mitterand wants to have free rein as President to negotiate with the right-wing parties and avoid giving the CP ministries in a future government.

In so doing he wishes to give greater powers to the National Assembly. He will, he has said, dissolve the Assembly if elected in the hope of being able to capitalise on a Presidential victory to win a PS majority in the house. He wishes to escape all reliance on the PCF. Failing a PS landslide, (highly improbable), he will be more than ready to reach working agreements with, (and perhaps give ministerial posts to), Jaques Chirac's Gaullist RPR.

2) The *Parti Communiste Francais* is probably the most Stalinist CP in Europe. As Spanish CP leader Santiago Carrillo said, "more lies between the PCE and the PCF than the Pyrenees..." What are the PCF's electoral aims? Pravda's unambiguous statement in favour of Giscard (14/3/81) provides the main answer; namely to stop Mitterand, the pro-American. The other principle aim, linked to this, was to consolidate its working class base and retain its traditional 20% of the vote by a combination of policies.

Firstly it has taken up a demagogic 'left' stance in industrial disputes whilst keeping them sectionalised, localised and split from the CFDT/PS workers. Secondly it has taken a stridently pro-Soviet

line on Afghanistan and an equally stridently anti-PS position. All this is put over with a demagogically workerist language which is designed to recoup the CP's worker base, which has been steadily diminishing throughout the 1970's.

The policy of the Union of the Left and Eurocommunism benefitted Mitterand and the PS. Workers doubtlessly preferred a real social-democrat to a Stalinist imitation. From 1977 onwards, Marchais made a sharp turn back to the "ghetto" that the CP has inhabited since the late 1940's. Whilst this tack has won the CP members in the working class, (90,000 increase in 1980), and driven waves of intellectuals out of the party, it has also, as the first round of the Presidentials proved, lost votes. Marchais obtained only 15.37% of the vote, whereas he hoped to get 20%. This is the lowest CP percentage since the mind 1930s. Marchais' humiliating defeat has led to the PCF's Central Committee giving unconditional support to Mitterand in the second round - a bitter pill to swallow given Marchais' earlier ultimatums and threats.

The PCF has fought this election on a programme entitled "Plan of struggle against the crisis and for change". This programme is reformist, nationalist and has strong racist overtones. Its reforms only differ by a few per cent from Mitterand's, and represent no radical alternative to him. The calls for greater "law and order" measures arm the bourgeois state against the working class, as does its harping on aspects of (bourgeois) morality, its anti-drugs campaigns etc. Added to its racist line on immigration, this programme adds up to one of the most far-reaching attempts by a Stalinist party to poison the working class with chauvinist ideology.

The first round saw left voters deserting the PCF to vote 'useful' and vote Mitterand from round one to ensure Giscard's defeat. The PCF's loss of support must also be explained by growing opposition to the present sectarian position of that party and a rejection of its anti-working class attitudes over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and racism. That there is opposition to the PCF's racism among conscious workers is best shown in Montigny where the PCF mayor led a demonstration outside the house of a working class Moroccan family accused by them of being hashish peddlers. Its vote there has fallen from 34% in March 1978 to 22.4% in these elections. The P.S. which increased its vote from 18.3% to 24.6% is responsible for only part of this loss. Rejection of the party's racism explains the rest.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

How has the French "Far Left" measured up to the tasks of opposing the two large reformist parties?

Of the three largest organisations claiming to be Trotskyist in France, none of them are providing a way forward for workers in the fight against the bosses and the reformist working class leaders. Both the LCR and LO intended to stand candidates in this election. Only LO has been able to, due to a new anti-democratic law which requires "sponsorship" by 500 Mayors in order to stand. This law was passed in spite of formal opposition by the PS and the PCF, but neither have opposed it in practice. They have refused to support other left candidates and have threatened disciplinary action against their Mayors who sign for other organisations. This has not stopped the PS for signing for Marie-France Giscard - Pompidou's former secretary - in the hope of splitting the right-wing vote. They refuse to sign for the extreme left on the grounds that these candidates will weaken the PCF/PS in round one.

OCI This organisation is as sectarian as its for-

Left armed Mitterand

democratic French Confederation of Labour, the second largest union. The largest union, controlled by the Communist Party, is the CGT. The most right wing union is the FO. The Communist League, the French section of the USFI, is a small organisation, which claims links with a group which was active in the 1930s. The Communist Organisation, formerly with Healy's 'Socialist' tradition, is a small group. The leader is Santiago Carrillo. The leader is George Marchais. The leader is a member of the Second International. The leader is led by Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister for Giscard.

partner in the International Committee of the Fourth International in Britain - Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party. Beginning last September, it ran a campaign "for a joint PCF/PS candidate from the first round of the Presidential election". This then became "Mitterand and Marchais are candidates. They must meet immediately! For a joint candidate who will best be able to beat Giscard." Obviously that candidate could only be Mitterand, as shown two weeks before round one when posters appeared on the walls with the slogan "Kick out Giscard. Vote Mitterand from round one". This explains why the OCI refused to present its own candidate. That would divide the working class in more, they said. Unity is the most important thing, in order to kick out Giscard. But what kind of unity, and for what aims? The OCI does not answer. Neither does it argue that workers should place any demands on the reformist parties. It says that would be to sow division too? Trotsky led against such tailing behind the reformists in the British Independent Labour Party presented candidates in 1935 and risked splitting the workers vote. It is worth quoting:

Was the ILP correct in running as many candidates as possible in the recent general elections, at the risk of splitting the vote? Yes. It would have been foolish for the ILP to have sacrificed its political programme in the interest of so-called unity, to allow the Labour Party to monopolise the platform as the Communist Party. We do not know our strength unless we test it. There is always the risk of splitting, and of losing votes, but such risks must be taken. Otherwise we are just a bunch of hypocrites. (Writings 1935-6 p198)

The OCI did not, then, present a candidate of its own because it knew it had no programme to put forward except their pro-Mitterand slogans. By joining the PCF for the break-up of the Union of the Left, the OCI acts as 'left' witnesses for the PS's sectarianism. No criticism is made of the PS's equally sectarian motives, or of its backroom deals with the bourgeoisie. The OCI is more and more behaving as the left wing of social democracy. Its links with the FO, rightwing bureaucrats in the FO trade union, where Pierre Lambert (OCI leader) is on the National Committee of the social security section, prevent it from behaving otherwise. Every year it is for the FO President's Annual Report. Neither does the OCI have a clear conception of the united front tactic. They turn it into a caricature. "March separately, strike together!" becomes "March together with Mitterand to strike the bourgeoisie". Thus the OCI's blind Stalinophobia leads it to an uncritical bloc with social democracy. As Trotsky once said of other claimants to Trotskyism: "This is Trotskyism, then I for one am not a Trotskyist".

Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) - French Section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), and sister organisation to the British International Marxist Group. The LCR has for some time concentrated its activities on the campaign "Union dans les Luttes" (Union in Struggle) Set up by Guy Bois (PCF but allied for doing so) and Stelio Farandjis (PS) concentrates its activities on campaigning for 'unity' against the splitting activities of the CP/PS and trade union bureaucrats. As a gauge of protest against the sectarian antics of these reformists it has played a positive role in mobilising

rank and file opposition. But the key questions remain - unity for what? The answer, revealed by Guy Bois writing in Politique-Hebdo (No.1 30th March/5th April, '81), puts forward the basis for a possible agreement between the two parties in the form of three principles which "do not imply the capitulation of either of them". They show the fundamentally electoral conception of struggle held by the leaders of Union dans les Luttes. 1) There is no other reasonable perspective other than that of a union of the left government, composed of ministers from each of its constituent parts, and consequently, including communist ministers. 2) Such a government may only be constituted on the basis of a political agreement, whose content would take account of the social demands which have priority: a plan against unemployment, increase low wages, the 35-hour week, tax reforms and nationalisations. 3) The two main left parties should, at all levels, stop the polemic which is tearing them up and forge a union at rank and file level through developing debate and common action at cell and section level so that the implementation of the new line will be placed under the control of the rank and file. This position is in fact one of crass electoral cretinism. The key, indeed the only 'struggle' it focusses on is the struggle to get Mitterand elected. It thereby suggests that Mitterand is the answer to workers' needs. It pushes into complete obscurity workers' needs. It pushes into complete obscurity the unity in struggle necessary to defeat either Giscard or Mitterand.

The LCR's position on the election is opportunist, and puts forward perspectives which can at best be described as "wishful thinking". It is as follows: we have to beat Giscard; "Giscard's defeat is the key to all change", (p23, supplement to Rouge, No945); to defeat Giscard we need PCF/PS unity; massive working class action can force the PS/PCF to immediately declare in favour of standing down and voting for the best placed workers' candidate at the end of round one; we demand that the PCF/PS unite and form a government; Giscard's defeat will give confidence to workers and "encourage them to struggle for the defence of their demands" and "encourage them to reject PCF/PS attempts to tell them to pull in their belts or roll up their sleeves" - remember June '36! (pages 20/21, opcit) This is the essence of the LCR's line. What is wrong with it?

The LCR peddle the electoral cretinist idea that PCF/PS government is a pre-condition for a working class fightback against the crisis, and by posing united action exclusively in electoral terms, they disarm themselves against the reformist leaders do-nothing policy if Mitterand were to lose. Krivine was put forward as the "workers' unity candidate" and only in small print as the candidate of the LCR. This is a similar self-effacing opportunism of the IMG variety. Like the ill-fated "Socialist Unity" it will not help build the LCR. The OCI at least was logical and took the step of removing themselves as an obstacle to unity.

Like the OCI, the LCR presents no programme and does not attempt to mobilise any demands on the reformists. In ROUGE (No959, 6th-12th March, '81) we find an account of an LCR meeting in Lorraine. A PCF member questions Krivine: "I want to know something, Krivine, if I vote for you in these elections, will I be voting for the permanent revolution and the Fourth International etc, or will I just be voting for what you have just said in your speech? Krivine replied that "this campaign is not the place to expound all the LCR's programme." The problem is that no demands are posed on the reformists. The LCR's programme is, in fact, "unity without a programme".

To call, as the LCR does, on the PS/PCF to form a government, instead of demanding that they call new elections, also lets these parties off the hook with regard to their defence of the Fifth Republic. To say, "form a government" without saying "dissolve the assemblies and call for a constituent assembly" is to respect the crooked, anti-working class constitution introduced by the senile bonaparte de Gaulle. Along with

the rest of its demands, this is forgotten by the LCR. There is only very limited criticism by the LCR of the PCF and the PS. They do not clearly state that these parties will betray workers. They avoid the clarity of the formulation "bourgeois workers' parties" like the plague. No where is their record presented. Nowhere is the PCF's anti-immigrant stand called what it is, namely racist! The idea that workers can resist an austerity programme simply because there is a PS/PCF Government and/or a PS President shows pitiful illusion in reformist parties. In Britain the great strike wave of 1971-74 led to a Labour Government which introduced austerity on a previously unprecedented scale. The key question is the scale of direct action mobilised by the workers themselves. The predilections of the French union bureaucrats are identical with those of the British TUC. Thus, Edmond Maire, CFDT leader, recently chose to tell us what we have in store if a "Left" government is in power. "We will not have the same attitude towards a socialist President, because if a President opens the door, gives a dynamic to negotiations and discussions, it is obvious that the trade union movement will see its action converge, at least partly, with this President of the Republic, which is not at all the case today." (Le Matin, 27.3.81)

So why does the LCR use this argument? Because it has no other argument to justify voting for PCF/PS apart from "kick out Giscard!" and "it happened in 1936, it will happen again!". This stems directly from its method, which neglects tactics and slogans for struggle in favour of a passive waiting for the historical process to take its course. There is, of course, another - to put the PCF/PS in power, so that they will have less room for excuses and so that workers can really put them to the test. Krivine, however, is not too keen on placing demands on these parties, as we have seen.

This barren political line can offer no alternative to workers - the bourgeois reformist parties and the TU bureaucrats. It is a line which firmly places the LCR on the left flank of social democracy (along with the OCI) and which can only disarm working class militants attracted to Union dans les Luttes.

LO was able to present a candidate in round one - Arlette Laguiller - who received 2.4% of the vote (670,000 votes). True to its economism and workerism, LO has used these elections to try to build its own organisation and denounce the PCF and PS as traitors saying that "it is no use kicking out Giscard", even if it were possible. It is no use placing our hopes in the traditional left parties." Throughout her campaign Arlette Laguiller presented such arguments so that, logically, she should have refused to choose between Mitterand and Giscard in the second round. But no! On television after round one she said that workers must "vote Mitterand, without any illusions, because we are in solidarity with all left-wing voters". "In round two we must choose between the one that is the most and the one that is the least repugnant". (Le Matin, 27.4.81) She "solidarises with millions of workers who want to see Mitterand win, and millions of others who have no illusions in Mitterand but wish to see him elected all the same, saying to themselves that if he is no better than Giscard and wife: the brute force behind the elegance."



John Sturrock (Report)



French workers could not endorse the programmes of any of these parties. In round one, they could only refuse to choose and register their protest with a spoilt ballot.

card, he can't be worse". This appears hard and cynical towards reformism on the surface, underneath it is as soft as wax. Its verbal intransigence does not go beyond a purely literary exposure and fails to tackle the real question - how can French workers themselves challenge and overcome reformism by their own practice? No programme is presented by LO to enable them to do so. No demands are placed on the reformists to put them to the test. For LO, a programme is only of immediate and transitional use in a revolutionary situation! In the meantime, LO contents itself with talk of the "need to struggle" and abstract talk of socialism. Heard this before? Yes! The British Socialist Workers Party, which LO had fraternal links at one time....

When asked on television, "where is the money to come from to pay for the jobs and social services you want to keep?", Laguiller, lacking a revolutionary programme, could only reply with the reformist slogan, "Cut defence!" Workers' Power has no objection at all to the good old slogan "not a man not a penny for this system" but to present it as a financial answer to pay for social reform is not only ridiculous but can easily be seen as such by reformist workers.

More scandalous than this is Laguiller's refusal to condemn the PCF's racism, concentrating only on its "bulldozer" methods, (see WORKERS POWER 20), while agreeing with what the PCF is criticising, e.g. too many immigrants in working class areas, etc. LO has now gone one step further and has taken up the position of the PCF in calling for more "police protection" and more "policemen on the beat". LO is now but a short step away from demanding more police stations in working class areas, as the PCF does. LO's tailing behind the PCF has now led it to confusion even over the role of the capitalist state and its "forces of protection".

THE REAL TASKS

A revolutionary party in France, unable to present its own candidate, would not call for a vote for LO. This would only encourage confusion over questions of vital importance to the future of workers - the need for a principled united front tactic, the need for a fighting working class programme and party, racism and the role of the bosses' police.

In the absence of any revolutionary candidate, due to undemocratic electoral laws and the connivance in their operation by the CP and PS, a revolutionary party would have argued for abstention in round one; -in order to ensure as large an expression of no confidence as possible in the racist and class collaborationist policies of the PCF and PS; -in order to protest against the undemocratic Fifth Republic and its anti-democratic electoral laws.

Such a campaign for active abstention would have allowed revolutionaries to fight for their programme and test support for it among workers in the first round. Needless to say, such a revolutionary party would support the candidate of the best placed workers' party against Giscard in round two. This would mean clearly calling for a vote for Mitterand after round one.

But what if such an abstention had meant that no workers' candidate makes it through to the second round? This would clearly be the lesser evil, showing, as it would, that workers were not prepared to support the bankrupt policies of the reformists and were moving towards militant struggle and revolutionary organisation. Full responsibility for a Giscard victory in such an even would be born by the reformist parties.

A revolutionary party would - before, during, and after the elections - present its programme of action against the capitalist crisis. It would place key demands from such a programme on the reformist parties to implement them.

PC/PS unity and PCF/PS government is in no way a pre-condition for working class action! The central theme of such a programme would be that workers are in no way responsible for the bosses' crisis and must not pay for it. It would put forward the need for unity between PCF and PS workers in the context of a struggle - based on direct action - around demands which answer the attacks being unleashed on the French working class and pave the way for an offensive against capitalism. Such demands would include: * the nationalisation, without compensation and under workers' control, of the banks, key industries, insurance companies and transport;

Voting for the SPD: stumbling block for the German Left

THE RULING CLASS in West Germany - the land of 'Social Peace' and the 'Economic Miracle' - is currently having to reassess its economic and political strategy to take account of the impact of the world recession on their economy. The great strength of the economy since the Fifties has been its ability to export. The profits made abroad paid for relatively high wages and high investment at home and sustained a buoyant domestic market.

Now, however, things are changing. West Germany's foreign exchange deficit, now DM 28 billion (approximately £5 billion) is the biggest in the world. Energy costs are the biggest single factor in this deficit. At DM 63 billion (£12 billion) they have become a central problem in the political strategy of the Bonn government. 95% of all oil is imported, as is 66% of all the energy consumed.

At the same time, economic patterns in the domestic market are also changing. Japanese car imports have doubled to ten percent in the last twelve months, German steel is reckoned to be DM 100 per tonne more expensive than the subsidised steel from other EEC countries.

Not only has the high cost of oil dragged down the West German economy. In addition the recession in other advanced industrial countries has reduced demand and forced cuts in prices for West German industrial exports. Industrial orders have fallen 5% so far on the 1980 levels. Even where output has been steady, or even rising, it has been as a result of dangerously low prices. Thus Bayer, the giant chemical concern, 70% of whose turnover is to meet export orders, has seen an increase of 14% in output but expects smaller profits than last year.

The general decline in economic activity has led to an increase in unemployment from 993,000 to 1.3 million in the twelve months to March 1981. It has also forced the central bank, the Bundesbank, to raise interest rates to 14% to defend the Mark - a remarkable reversal of the position up to 1979. This will, of course, make it more expensive for German capitalists to raise funds for investment and will inevitably serve to push up the rate of inflation at home.

SLIPPING BEHIND JAPAN

West German research, the necessary prerequisite for greater competitiveness on the world market, is already slipping behind Japan - particularly in the vital sectors of automation and micro-electronics. In the last year 22% of all patent applications filed in West Germany were Japanese.

At the level of international politics these pressures have placed a question mark over Bonn's "Ostpolitik", the policy of extensive trade with the Eastern Bloc upon which the SPD (German Social Democratic Party) based the recovery of the German economy after the 1966-68 slump.

As the temperature of world politics goes down as a result of the "new cold war", West Germany is being pressured by the still dominant American imperialism to take a more pro-US line.

Despite their undoubted desire to toe the US line, the Bonn government cannot simply abandon the Ostpolitik. Indeed, the energy crisis has to some extent highlighted its importance for the German bourgeoisie. For example, plans are now very far advanced for the construction of a 5,500 kilometre natural gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe. It will cost DM 20 billion and 25% of the gas will be for West German consumption. In addition, West Germany is the Soviet Union's biggest Western trading partner, last year's turnover of trade was DM 15.35 billion. It is these very material considerations which explain Bonn's reluctance to go all the way with American policy, for example over the Afghanistan invasion.

The indecision shown at the international level also exists internally. If the Ostpolitik is the hallmark of the SPD's foreign policy then peaceful negotiation and 'codetermination' in industry have been the key planks of its domestic policy. However, this cosy world of trade union policing of the working class in exchange for seats on the boards of management cannot last long in the economic reality of the Eighties. The employers are now on the offensive to cut back trade union rights and have even called for the end of 'codetermination' in the steel and mining industries, the original birthplace of the system and the "Flagship of the West German economy". At the same time steadily rising inflation (now 6%) has led, for the first time in many years, to an actual decline of 0.6% in real wages. In response the trade union bureaucrats are having to at least appear to be leading a fight to defend living standards. Thus, Eugen Loderer, chairman of the IG Metall, the engineers union, and the biggest union in the world, is forced to say, "There will be no more social peace if it leads to 'moonshine' wages" (Der Spiegel 9/3/81).

The harsher realities of the present period have led to a sharpening of political tension between, and within, the major parties. The desire of the SPD leaders to change course in both foreign and domestic policy is effectively highlighted by their commitment to rearmament, the signing of a new generation of NATO nuclear missiles in Europe and the introduction of large scale nuclear power generation. This has increased political conflict within the party itself. Party chairman Brandt has tried to maintain the unity of the Party Executive behind an oath of loyalty to Schmidt. But 5 of the 38-strong executive abstained in that vote. Klaus Matheisen - SPD leader in Schleswig-Holstein - has declared his willingness to fight the Government's plans to operate a nuclear power station in Brokdorf

in Schleswig-Holstein. Similarly in Frankfurt local SPD activists have campaigned against the extension of the international airport's runways that was forced through by the SPD in central government. Most significantly this will make the airport capable of accommodating the largest US military transports. Rifts are also opening up between sections of the trade union bureaucracy and the SPD leaders. Local bureaucrats such as Franz Steinkuhler of the IG Metall in Baden-Wurtemberg, under greater pressure from their members than the central leadership, have publicly opposed the conciliatory policy of the past.

It is in this context that the campaign by the CDU for the May election to the Berlin local Government has to be viewed. The immediate pretext for this campaign was the revelation that a senior member of the FDP (Free Democratic Party, the SPD's coalition partner in Berlin as in Bonn) was involved in a financial scandal concerning state building contracts. The CDU was able to make considerable mileage out of this campaign and present themselves as a means for cleaning up local government. The decision of the SPD to depose their erstwhile chairman in Berlin and replace him with a former Justice Minister in the Federal Government, Jochen Vogel, only added to the image of the SPD as centrally involved in the shady dealings of the speculators and swindlers. It was, indeed, a perfect chance for the Right wing to strengthen their claim to be the new broom to clean up West Germany politics and revitalise the economy. The escalating demonstrations and confrontations with the police of the 'Youth Movement', most particularly the squatters in Berlin, has served to underline the inability of the SPD, who have ruled Berlin for some 25 years, to deal with the problems of the isolated and divided city.

Given this background and also the recent local election losses of the SPD to the CDU and the 'Alternatives' (a series of local groupings that combine, broadly speaking, 'community politics' with ecological campaigns) it is possible that the SPD could lose its dominant position in Berlin.

SAVAGE ATTACK ON LEFT

What, then, should the position of revolutionaries be in the forthcoming election? How should revolutionaries relate to the SPD with tactics that can intervene in the sharpening conflict between the SPD leadership and the workers who have voted them into office?

Considerable confusion exists on the German left as to the nature of the SPD and of the tactics revolutionaries employ to break its hold over millions of workers. The radicalisation of the late 60's took place against the background of the 'Grand Coalition' formed between the Christian Democrats and the SPD in the recession of 1967. The active complicity of the SPD with the Christian Democrats boosted the credibility among the highly petit bourgeois German 'New Left' of the Maoist 'infantile/child period' talk of the SPD as 'social fascist' and a purely bourgeois party. It blinded large sections of the left to an essential difference between the SPD and other bourgeois parties namely the fact that this party, while bourgeois in programme, was based on the working class and remained what the Communist International and Trotsky after it called a bourgeois workers party. This explains the strong tradition on the German left since the late 1960's of refusing to give a critical vote to the SPD in elections.

The SPD is doubtless the most right wing of the major European Social Democratic and Labour Parties. It is anxious, for example, to continue to maintain links with the British Social Democrats. Since 1959 it has dropped even a formal commitment to the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In its 'little coalition' with the FDP (liberals) after 1969 it carried through a savage attack on the left culminating in the hated repressive Berufsverbote in 1972. The party that murdered Luxemburg and Liebknecht in 1919 has not changed its spots.

But this same party continues to command the loyalty of the largest section of the German working class. Although working class electoral support for the SPD has fallen since 1974 in the 1980 General Election, for example, it was able to command 80% of the votes of manual workers.

That support has even taken the form of industrial action in support of the SPD in the last decade. In 1972 when the Christian Democrats attempted a Parliamentary putsch to oust the SPD ten of thousands of workers struck in support of the Social Democrats. Both from its history and its present position the SPD can be identified as the party which the majority of the working class regard as 'their' party as against the open party of the bosses, the CDU/CSU. This of course does not mean that they expect it to introduce socialism but that, within the framework of contemporary (i.e. capitalist) society, they expect a better deal, perhaps only a 'fairer' sharing of economic difficulties, from the SPD than from the other parties.



Engineers from Stuttgart on an afternoon "warning strike" last February. The slogans on the placards read: "No drop in wages!" and "The prices rise and the wages sink!"

The problem therefore is how do revolutionaries relate to this existing level of consciousness of the working class and popularise their programme for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism as the only way of solving the problems of the working class.

In situations where the revolutionary forces are a minority, and this is certainly the case in West Germany, the tried and tested tactic of the Communist movement is that of the united front. This means both explaining the revolutionary answer to the given problems and, at the same time, accepting the need for joint action with non-revolutionaries in defence of past gains and for demands that, at least, do not conflict with the interests of the class as understood by the revolutionaries. It means revolutionaries actively seeking the means to struggle alongside reformist workers and proving the superiority of their programme in practice.

The very existence of a party built and supported by the working class as their party is itself a historic gain. Despite the use to which such a party can put this support in order to limit working class struggles - as the SPD certainly has - it nonetheless represents an element of a political class consciousness, a recognition of the division of society into hostile classes within which it is necessary for the working class to have its own representative. While the inability, indeed the unwillingness, of reformist workers' parties to lead the class in the attack on capitalism tends always to disarm the class and, thus, to strengthen its enemies, the destruction, or defeat, of such reformist parties by the forces of the class enemy is no gain for the working class. The task of destroying the class traitors of social democracy is clearly a task that communists reserve for the working class itself.

For this reason we are in favour of calling of a vote for the SPD against the Christian Democrats in Berlin. In that action and with their own propaganda revolutionaries can take a united stand with the ranks of the working class who still have illusion in the SPD. The motley collection of petit-bourgeois who comprise the 'Green' alternative on a reactionary deindustrialising programme offer no alternative and no means for mobilising the working class in defence of its own interests. To abstain is to adopt a stance that cuts revolutionaries off from fighting alongside, and hence potentially dispelling the illusions of workers who are yet to be convinced that the SPD does not represent their interests.

At the same time, to call on the workers to vote SPD at the coming elections simply to keep the CDU out - as does the West German Section of the USFI, the GIM - is no revolutionary position. It lays no basis for going forward either against the effects of the developing capitalist crisis or of putting the reformist leaders to the test of struggle. While we accept a tactical compromise with the majority of workers who intend to vote for 'their' party and, in the absence of a communist candidate, agree, therefore, to also vote SPD, the emphasis of revolutionary propaganda must be on the steps the working class itself must actively undertake in order to develop class consciousness, independent organisation and fighting ability in the present situation. This means arguing for a revolutionary action programme both as the genuine expression of the needs of the class and also, therefore, as the standard against which the established leaders of the class should be judged.

In Berlin, as well as nationally since 1969, the SPD have been locked in coalition with the liberal FDP. Effectively this means that the German bourgeoisie has had a communication cord they could pull should the SPD ever come into conflict with their interests. In the 1980 elections the German bourgeoisie made no secret of their desire to prevent the SPD ruling alone and therefore, potentially, being under sharper pressure from its members. Schmidt, and Brandt before him, have used the pretext of the coalition to trample on the interests of the working class. Schmidt will doubtless do it again as the recession bites deeper into the room to manoeuvre of his capitalist government. To those workers with whom we will vote SPD particularly to those sections of the SPD in

conflict with the Schmidt leadership revolutionaries must propose a struggle to force the SPD leaders to break the coalition with a direct bourgeois party.

A tenacious struggle to mobilise to force that break - which Schmidt and Brandt will mercilessly oppose - can decisively test the claims of the SPD leadership to represent the interest of the working class before important sections of militants and open the prospect of independent working class organisation against the SPD leaders.

At the present time, in Berlin, 2 major issues have dominated the election campaign - housing and corruption. Taking these 2 issues as examples, what does the formula, "critical support for the SPD" mean in practice? The widely alleged corruption has taken place under a government dominated by the 'worker's party', in both the trade unions and the party itself it is necessary to oppose any covering up of possible SPD collusion in corruption by demanding a workers' enquiry both into the handling of public finance and into the internal workings of the party machine. This demand should be backed by the use of industrial and political action to force an opening of the books in this most sensitive area of bourgeois secrecy.

SOLIDARISE WITH THE SQUATTERS

On the question of housing it is necessary to solidarise with the squatters against the property speculators and police and demand the legalisation by any future SPD government of occupations and an amnesty for those already imprisoned or fined. Whilst not opposing in principle reforms such as rent control, revolutionaries must argue that such measures cannot possibly solve the desperate housing shortage in Berlin (and many other cities). Rather it is necessary to nationalise land and accommodation without compensation to the speculators, it is necessary to demand the nationalisation of the construction industry, without compensation and under workers' control in order to carry through a programme of public building to deal immediately with the shortage of housing. Here again it is necessary for the workers to investigate not only the deals of the capitalist property speculators but also their own organisations. One of the biggest companies involved is actually owned by the DGB, the German equivalent of the TUC. Only in this way can the working class pose itself as the ally of the homeless and in particular the immigrant workers crammed into the old tenements of Berlin.

In Berlin, perhaps more than any other city, it is clear that the problems of the working class cannot be solved in the existing political and economic system. The isolation and physical division of the city is a constant reminder of the lengths to which the imperialist powers and the bureaucrats of the degenerated and deformed workers' states will go in order to preserve their world order at the expense of the living standards of the masses. Reunification of the city and of the country is necessary certainly, but not under a movement for a regenerated German nationalism under imperialist control. In the Eastern sector of Germany the capitalists have been destroyed along with their economic system, but political power is in the hands of the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy. For the German working class to regain its position as one of the most powerful sections of the world working class it will be necessary for them to reunify their country under their own political and economic control through political revolution in the East, Social Revolution in the West. The creation of a revolutionary party, without which this cannot be done, requires the utmost sensitivity on political principle. In both sectors of Germany there exist the mutilated remnants of past gains that can only be defended and built upon by revolutionary action. The codification of the nature of these gains, of the present political and economic policies of the German bourgeoisie and Stalinist bureaucrats together with the demands, strategy and tactics to lead the working class to the revolutionary reunification of a Soviet Germany, in short a revolutionary action programme, is the immediate task of revolutionaries in Germany. ■

STEVE McSWEENEY

STOP HEALY'S WRIT; DEFEND LEFT PRESS

Vanessa Redgrave, member of the central committee of the Workers' Revolutionary Party has issued libel writs against the papers Socialist Organiser and Socialist Press. SO No 33 carried an article 'Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's rescue' which attacked the WRP's smear that those who criticise Ted Knight's imposition of rent and rate increases are 'Thatcher's people'.

Newsline, the WRP's paper makes a scandalous amalgam between the NF fascists, the Tories and SO supporters as people who want to get Knight and the Lambeth Labour Council ('the Council that cares' as the Newsline film calls it) out in favour of a Tory commissioner.

This type of disgusting smear is not new to the followers of Gerry Healy. The Newsline has accused both the present leaders of the American Socialist Workers Party and veteran leaders like the late Joseph Hansen of being direct agents of both the CIA and the Russian KGB. It has claimed Hansen's complicity in the murder of Leon Trotsky, thus offering 'evidence' for the old CP smear that the founder of the FI was killed by his own followers. It has 'warned' the Khomeini regime in Iran of the American spies in the Iranian section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (whose British Section is the IMG). It has, on similar charges, fingered the supporters of the USFI in Nicaragua to the bourgeois Government of National Reconstruction. Both actions could lead to imprisonment or even death for militants of these two organisations. It has suggested that leading BL militant in Cowley, Alan Thornett, has suspicious connections with the police, is a scab etc etc. Moreover the WRP embodied these 'allegations' in a mass leaflet handed out outside the Cowley Plant where Thornett has several times been the target of management and right-wing bureaucratic frame-ups.

The author of the article in SO, Sean Matgamna, is unwilling to retract any of the statements made in his article and therefore to resist Redgrave's libel action in the bourgeois courts. Redgrave and the WRP leaders' use of the bourgeois courts to silence their critics is a cynical breach of one of the most important principles of the working class movement - not to involve the legal hirelings of the class enemy in adjudicating disputes in the workers' movement. If the WRP had a shred of real concern about the 'security' of the movement with police agents it would not have called in the courts. On the contrary the WRP has aped the methods of the Stalinised CPs of the 1930s and 1940s which were used against Trotsky and the Trotskyists. Workers Power fully supports the call by SO and Socialist Press for a jointly agreed working class enquiry on the issue to which the WRP could submit any 'grievances' it has or a rebuttal of the charges contained in Sean Matgamna's article. WP also supports the Labour Movement Press Defence Fund launched by SO and calls on all Labour Movement bodies to declare their opposition to the Redgrave/WRP use of the bourgeois courts and to contribute financially to defending the case should they press ahead with it.

Send Donations to Jonathan Hammond, (Hon. Treasurer) c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques payable to 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.



Mike Sheridan (IFL)

Continued from page 5

- * the immediate nationalisation of all companies declaring redundancies, with no compensation and under workers control;
- * for work sharing, with no loss of pay, and a total ban on overtime, with no cut in wages. For the 35 hour week to be introduced immediately;
- * for a massive programme of public works under workers' control;
- * for a minimum wage at 3,500 French Francs per month, protected against inflation;
- * for lump sum across the board wage increases;
- * for a sliding scale of wages, tied to a workers' cost of living index to automatically compensate for inflation;
- * open the books! down with business secrets! Those who demand sacrifices must start by presenting their own accounts. For elected workers' committees to inspect the inner workings of the capitalist and enterprises, banks etc, and in that way, to reveal how it systematically exploits the workers, small farmers etc.
- * against all immigration controls. For the right of every worker to vote and participate in the political life of the country, regardless of nationality. Full political rights for all workers!
- * for full economic equality for women, foreign and young workers. Equal pay for equal work.
- For free child care facilities and the right to free abortion on demand;
- * the nationalisation of the health service and all related medical industries, under workers' control and with no compensation to the drug industries or owners of private clinics. For real social services!
- * for the election of all judges, the disbanding of the police, and political and trade union rights for soldiers.
- * for the immediate repeal of all anti-working class and repressive legislation.

FIGHTING ORGANS

A united front of all workers parties and trade unions must be organised and won to such demands. At the same time, the weaknesses and divisions of the French trade unions must be squarely faced up to. Central to the building of a fighting opposition to the bosses' attacks must be the transformation of the unions into fighting organs of class struggle. The unions must be put on a war footing. French workers must fight for 100% trade unionism, for one big union confederation, organised in industrial unions; for factory committees, and a massive campaign to pull the majority of workers into the unions. Central to this strategy of democratising the unions and kicking out the bureaucrats is the building of a rank and file movement in the trade unions around these demands:

As long as the vast majority of French workers continues to have serious illusions (that their interest can be won within the framework of bourgeois democracy, we demand of the reformist parties and workers that they live up to their "democratic" pretensions. We argue for the fullest possible extension of "republican liberty" via the establishment of a Constituent Assembly. We demand that they take up the fight for a single chamber, (abolition of the undemocratic Senate, which is elected through indirect suffrage), elected by universal suffrage, including foreign workers, and would involve the abolition of the presidency and all restrictions on candidates, and a democratic re-drawing of electoral boundaries. We are for the abolition of the reactionary Prefect system, and the election of Deputies on the basis of local assemblies, constantly revocable by their constituents, who would receive the salary of a skilled worker. For the abolition of the undemocratic Fifth Republic!

The Common Programme of the Union of the Left wanted to keep the 1958 Constitution, set up by de Gaulle after his military coup d'etat. This Constitution gives the President huge powers - he can dissolve the Assembly as he wishes and gives himself full powers in case of "serious crisis". The PS and PCF would like to change this Constitution too. But they wish to do so by reforming it "legally", which means either with the President's agreement or by a 2/3 rds vote in both the National Assembly and the Senate!

If Mitterant wins or loses, the workers will have to organise to resist the dictates of capital. Committees of action drawing in all factories and workplaces need to be formed to press by direct action the workers' demands. Obstruction from the bourgeoisie at any stage must be met by a general strike. Only on this road can the prospect of working class power, which presented itself in May 1968, again become a reality for the French working class.

Only a French Trotskyist party, armed with this perspective, can offer the leadership necessary to smash Giscard and pose a strategy for the seizure of state power by the working class. ■

Plansee

Continued from back page

it was the District Committee who effectively did the bosses work for them by finishing the occupation. They threatened that if the court order was granted and the workers refused to leave the union would withdraw support!

At this moment a real break by the rank and file at Plansee's was needed—away from the stranglehold of the officials! Workers Power argued in an occupation bulletin to defend the occupation through a struggle to commit other local factories to take immediate strike action if eviction was threatened. Instead the workers yielded to the pressure of the officials and in the face of a court order resumed the struggle from the picket line outside the plant.

CHEAP JOB LOT!

Smelling blood, Innet and Caborn have sought to finish the dispute off by making redundancy money the issue at stake. The latest offer totalled about £100,000 for the workforce. A cheap job lot! Although talk of redundancy money has produced divisions the latest attempts were firmly rejected on 28th April when a 2:1 majority snubbed Caborn's plans. Plansee workers, like those at Lee Jeans, recognise such pin money is useless with no prospect of another job and they increasingly recognise they have no right to sell jobs which belong to future generations.

The determination of the strikers is still unbroken. The employers are desperate to remove their valuable machinery and close down. The £100,000 offer is a real sign the strike is biting. But if Plansee workers are to be more than a fly in the ointment and go on to win then the bureaucracy's enforced isolation of the dispute must be broken. In recent years a number of disputes, having reached the stage that Plansee's is at now, went on for months and even years! Formally recognised by the union, the strikers exist on donations, strike pay and a daily ration of token picketing. The Sanderson Fork Lift Truck dispute, Garners Steak House and the Isle of Grain dispute are classic examples. They end only when demoralisation has really set in.

The lessons of these disputes and the knowledge of the role of the AUEW in Plansee's can be turned to good effect. In a March occupation bulletin, Workers Power argued, "The linking up of all groups of workers facing the dole in a militant campaign of occupations and strikes would point the way to a serious fightback. Steps need to be taken immediately to link up the action already being taken. As a first step a local conference, sponsored by Plansee Strike Committee, Firth Brown shop stewards and others with their jobs threatened, needs to be organised. Such a conference could pave the way to establish a local 'Council of Action'—based on delegates from trade unions, shop stewards committees."

Even now, the material basis for such a rank and file alliance grows. In mid April the large private steel employer—Hadfields—announced they wanted to virtually close their operations in Sheffield, threatening 1900 jobs. Unless a fighting alliance of the rank and file workers in struggle is forged, Plansee workers plight will soon become desperate. The momentum given locally by the Hadfields plans gives another chance.

The AUEW and its District Committee Secretary Caborn, will only do what they are pushed into. They are no different to the labour movement bureaucracy as a whole; they are merely excellent examples of it. They exist to gain reforms within capitalism and in a period of upturn can negotiate better wages and conditions. But when recession demands that the bosses attack workers, the union leaders shy away from a fight because the act of workers defending themselves threatens the stability, and ultimately the existence of capitalism itself. And if the union leaders were to threaten that, then they are undermining their own privileged existence as 'peacekeepers' between bosses and worker.

To emerge from 'splendid isolation' towards victory Plansee workers must now take the arguments out to Hadfields, Snows and elsewhere. The policies capable of uniting all workers faced with similar job threats are there. Against management attempts to use low order books as an excuse to sack workers, we must argue for work or full pay! Where work exists we demand work sharing with no loss of pay. To employers who plead poverty we demand the right to inspect their books and call for threatened firms to be nationalised under workers control. In this way, the bosses as a whole can be forced to pay out for the crisis of one of their own class.

BOSSSES' CRISIS

At all times it must be remembered that these proposals only make sense if it is accepted that this crisis is one of the bosses system and that neither Plansee workers or Hadfields workers should pay for its illness. Our solution must be at the bosses expense.

In addition Plansee workers must, in the coming month, be at the forefront of the battle to make the People's March a springboard for fighting unity between workers in struggle. Here again they will be up against the local AUEW officials and their plans to make the march no more than a peaceful protest.

Around this perspective and these policies a new revolutionary rank and file leadership can be moulded, committed to smashing capitalism once and for all and establishing workers' power. ■

Messages of support and donations should be sent to:

Plansee Tooling Strike Committee, c/o Len Godbehere, 138 Greenhow St, Sheffield 6



a scab haulage firm is quoted in the Daily Mail: "I regard this as a war - and my drivers are in the front line". He employs a security firm to ride shotgun alongside his drivers. This strike-breaking capitalist is right! It is a war - Ansell's workers must act accordingly.

The police have acted as high-speed escorts for scab beer entering Ansell's pubs. A picket was on crutches after a police vehicle ran over his foot outside the Harlequin pub in Birmingham. The small numbers on the picket lines, made inevitable by the tactic of picketing the hundreds of Ansell's pubs instead of the sources of the beer, meant ineffective pickets which were easy pickings for the police - several arrests have been made.

Pickets of the breweries will only be really effective if they are mass pickets of all Allied's breweries. This needs a call to the trade union movement and the unemployed in the areas of the plants for physical support, Ansell's workers do not have the numbers, but they can and must take a lead in organising workers' self-defence.

Mass pickets always call forth an intensified response from the police. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) invariably suggests relying on the unorganised fighting spirit of pickets, that numbers alone are enough to counter this. But the Grunwicks and steel strike mass pickets showed that a few score well-trained, disciplined and organised crack police and SPG units, using tactics like the powerful wedge formation and snatch-squads, can break up hundreds of unorganised pickets with little effort and great physical damage to the workers. Ansell's workers need their own crack squads - the fittest, most militant, class fighters, trained and organised in disciplined groups which are in close contact with, and enjoying the confidence and physical support of the mass pickets. This could counter police military-style intervention.

But so far the pickets on Romford and Burton are small, the aim's not to stop the entrance of the brewery workers, but of materials like sugar and CO₂ which are mostly carried by TGWU drivers. The strike leadership is relying on Kitson's unreliable official sanction of the picketing. All the indications are that Kitson

will not deliver. In the first few days of picketing, materials crossed the Burton line with the go-ahead of local regional T&G officials.

This tactic is the extension of the strike leadership's failure to give a lead to the rest of Allied's workers - to spread the strike. This led to the missing of a great opportunity at the Leeds brewery, where workers faced with an identical attack to the one at Ansell's were the obvious allies of the Ansell's workers against Allied Breweries. The strike leadership should have sent delegations to Leeds calling on the workers to occupy the plant to pre-empt the 28 days closure threat; but nothing has been done. The brewery could act as a militant centre of pickets for Allied's northern breweries and depots.

A so-called "delegate" conference of all Allied breweries workers was held in Birmingham on March 27th; it was controlled by the TGWU bureaucrats. It consisted of national officers, regional officials from each region with a brewery, and one delegate from each plant. It coincided with the opening of Allied's attack on Leeds, but it made no attempt to give a lead and spread the strike. Terry Austin, region 5 official in charge of brewery workers, justified this with the because Alloa, Wrexham and Leeds faced attacks, they were unlikely to take strike and other action alongside Ansell's workers!

This highlights one of the most important lessons of the dispute - the need for rank and file control of the machinery of the trade unions and the running of the strike. A step in this direction would be to build an effective combine committee both representing the rank and file, and providing a lead in the struggle against Allied Breweries' attacks, part of the ruling class's offensive. A real delegates conference could make a start, with Ansell's delegates advancing the arguments for solidarity action. A fighting rank and file combine organisation is sorely needed. ■

By
QUENTIN
RUDLAND

workers power

OCCUPATIONS, PICKET LINES MUST BE DEFENDED!



Picture: Morning Star

Plansee Tooling workers occupy their plant in Rotherham

Birmingham: Ansell's

ON GOOD FRIDAY the Ansell's workers, fighting to re-open Allied Breweries' Aston plant in Birmingham and save over 1000 jobs, held a mass meeting. A 90% turn-out took a virtually unanimous decision to continue and escalate the struggle in the face of company intransigence by picketing other breweries in the Allied empire.

It was decided to concentrate on breweries in Romford, which had been picketed before, and Burton-on-Trent, which is Allied's key beer producing plant.

DECISIVE CHANGE

The management did not know where the pickets were to strike, but they feared the decision marked a decisive change in the mood and tactics of the rank and file. They feared that it *could* lead, for the first time, to effective picketing of their breweries - a really serious blow at the one thing they care about, their profits.

Allied had been put on their guard as the result of a meeting between themselves and Alex Kitson, acting general secretary of the TGWU, 10 days before the mass meeting. The T&G regional and national officials had demonstrated their readiness to make a rotten compromise with the company by demanding the withdrawal of pickets from Romford, under threat that the dispute would be made unofficial, in order to facilitate this meeting with management.

Emboldened, Allied were in no mood for any kind of compromise. They had already announced 90 redundancies, a cut in pay and worsening of conditions at their Leeds brewery under a threat of 28 days notice if the workforce resisted the package. They bluntly told Kitson that they could only "offer" 400 jobs at the Aldridge and Gravelly Park depots with £1,000 "ex-gratia" payments to the sacked 600 production workers. The Ansell's workers had already decisively rejected this a month before.

Management only added one point - the offer only lasted until the end of the month when all jobs and the payment would be withdrawn. Even regional officials like Brian Mathers and Doug Fairburn could not swallow this, given the

mood of the rank and file. But none of these trade union "leaders" were prepared to give a militant lead - caught between a ruthless employer and a militant rank and file, they attempted to get out of the firing line. Kitson stated that he was prepared to "condone" any decision taken at the mass meeting, thereby supposedly guaranteeing that any picket line would be "official" in any TGWU region, unlike the earlier Romford picket.

Allied's ruthless pursuit of their union-busting, job and pay slashing policy created a situation where the rank and file and strike leadership were granted some room to manoeuvre independently of the trade union bureaucracy.

Allied decided something more had to be done. They launched a smear and red-scare campaign in the local and national bosses' press, in order to divide the Ansell's workers and frighten them and their leadership with the threat of police, and even Special Branch, intervention on the picket lines. This orchestrated campaign was engineered through Ansell's Security Manager, David Helm, a former Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who has contacts with a Crime Reporter on the "Daily Mail", one Peter Burden.

INVITATION TO SCABS

On Tuesday following the mass meeting, an article appeared in the Mail under the headline: "Trots go to war on pub families". It accused WORKERS POWER of advocating, through our strike bulletins, and participating with Ansell's militants in, threats and attacks on scabs, pub landlords and their families. The "Express and Star" and the "Birmingham Evening Mail", glad to continue the attack launched by the "Sunday Mercury" on the 22nd January, joined in.

Further, the "Daily Mail" reported that a "Special Branch probe has uncovered 30 political extremists believed to be behind the violence". As there are nothing like 30 members of left organisations involved in the dispute, the statement reveals the real target of the Mail and Special Branch - militant strikers and pickets.

Doug Fairburn, TGWU regional official, and Ken Bradley, TGWU branch 5/377 chairman, responded

to this threat of police victimisation with an offer of co-operation with any investigation! Bradley stands by his statement reported in the Express and Star and the Evening Mail: "I am quite willing to give the Special Branch any help and co-operation needed...I have already offered to line up our pickets so people who say they have been attacked or threatened can come and look at their faces".

Put into practice, this would be an invitation to scabs to hand over militants to the tender mercies of the police and courts. It stands as an example of how not to defend workers against scabs and the police. For clashes with scabs are inevitable in every serious industrial dispute, and the law is openly on the side of the blackleg against the picket. Only "peaceful" picketing is legal - any picket seriously intent on stopping scabs, who can rarely be "persuaded" by argument, is always on the wrong side of the law.

DEFENCE SQUADS

Every striker and picket must be defended against police victimisation, irrespective of the legality of clashes. No trade union leader should be permitted by the rank and file to co-operate in police investigations. This is an elementary defence of the right to effective picketing.

The only "evidence" the Daily Mail can cite to "prove" its charges are these words from our Workers Power Strike Bulletin No 1: "Steps should be taken to make sure that pickets are prepared for police attack - with defence squads ready to physically defend the pickets".

And that is exactly what we argue: for the organised, militant and disciplined defence of mass pickets against company, scab and police strongarm tactics; not individual or small-scale attacks on the police, scabs or landlords and their families.

The Ansell's workers' own experience bears out the need for such defence. A militant's home has been subject to fire attack by anti-union thugs; scab beer transporters have been carrying weapons to use on pickets. A certain T. Aucott - a managing director of

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Rotherham: Plansee

THE ENGINEERING EMPLOYERS have launched a coordinated attack on trade union organisation in South Yorkshire. Their attack comes in the wake of BL's attack on Longbridge militants and 18 months of wretched betrayal by AUEW officials in the face of the Tory onslaught.

Two plants in South Yorkshire have already felt the brunt of this planned attack—100 workers received dismissal notices at Snow Engineers, a convenor has been dismissed at Canning Town Glass and 90 workers have received dismissal notices at Plansee Tooling. The bosses had good reason to target Plansees. This well organised shop had managed in previous negotiations to achieve a domestic agreement which included a 35 hour week by 1982.

Throughout 1981 Plansee suffered from the effects of the profits squeeze. Late in the year, a new manager was moved in—Innet by name—to take on the unions. He tore up the 35 hour deal, and tried to impose a 5 month wage freeze followed by a 7% pay deal. On 16th February the Plansee workforce walked out at this arrogant attack on their conditions. On March 11th Innet issued dismissal notices to the strikers and two days later they replied by occupying the plant and so holding it to ransom for their jobs.

Although the dispute was made official early on and formal recognition given to the occupation, the *real* role of the AUEW bureaucracy was to seek to isolate and contain the dispute. By delaying the payment of strike pay for over two months they clearly hoped to demoralise the workforce too.

Such action by the AUEW is not accidental, nor the product of an inefficient local District Committee but a part of a definite strategy by the labour bureaucracy. In the aftermath of the miners partial victory several flashpoints of resistance have either started or been strengthened, offering a small but real opportunity to unite the working class in an offensive against the Tories. Lee Jeans, Ansell's and Plansee are among them.

Yet in the face of this the official leadership has deliberately *derailed* these struggles by diverting the labour movement's energies and resources into the passive protest of the 'People's March for Jobs'. Instead of unity of workers in struggle against the bosses and the Tories, they have counselled the crippling unity of workers, bosses and church worthies to plead with the Tories.

Indeed, the same AUEW District Committee which has dragged its feet over Plansees has spent months concentrating on the Eastern leg of the march. The District Committee and its secretary, George Caborn, have constantly resisted attempts to link up a number of disputes in the area—Bone Craven, Snows, Firth Brown and Plansee who were all taking some form of action. When the Plansee management went to court and sought an eviction order to stop the occupation

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