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MARXISM and Anarchism have been the two major theories of revolutionary socialism since the middle of the last century. Yet since then they have constantly been at loggerheads. In this article **Conor McLoughlin** examines and compares the two to see do they, in fact, have anything in common.

Firstly it is essential to define both sets of ideas. What is anarchism? What is Marxism? For the moment I have decided to ignore all the latter-day disciples of both sets of ideas. So I will not talk about the various Stalinist, Leninist and social democratic developments of Marx's ideas. These have already been well dealt with in previous issues of this paper. Instead I wish to concentrate on the basic ideas of Marx and Engels.

BACK TO BASICS

For the anarchist point of view I will use the writings of Bakunin. He was Marx's consistent opponent and his basic arguments are accepted by most anarchists. Neither Marx or Bakunin were ever entirely consistent and the latter's writings are very fragmentary, however this seems to me to be the fairest method of comparison.

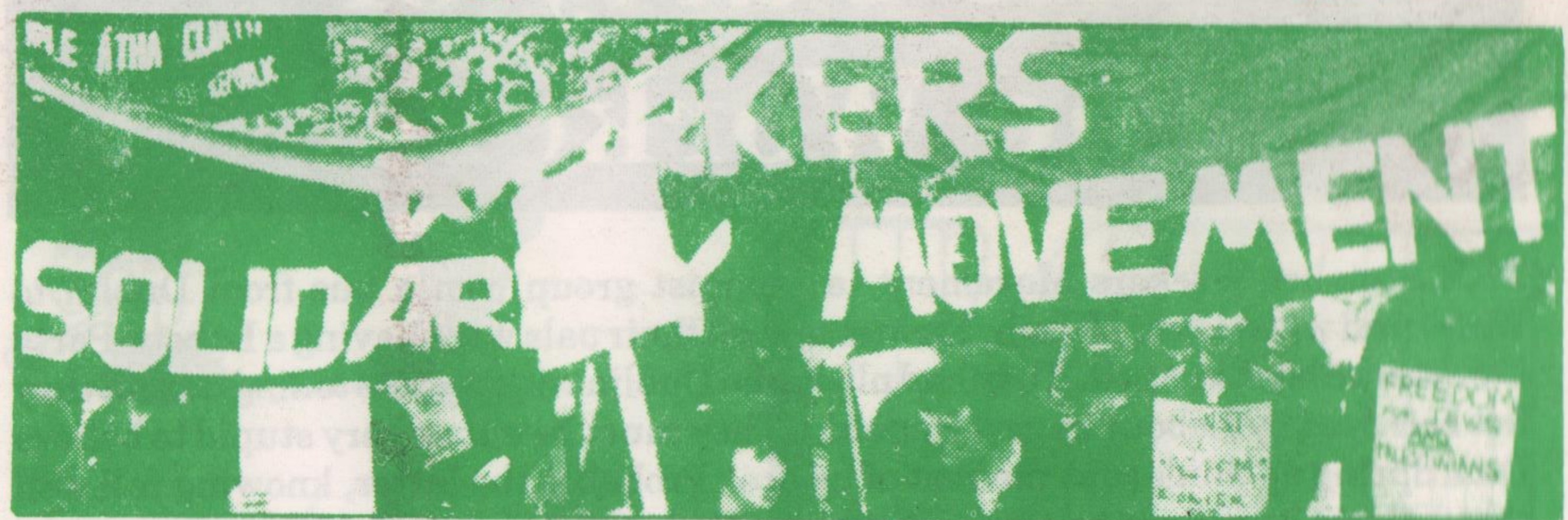
A lot of people who call themselves anarchists will probably be extremely annoyed when I say that the most striking thing is how much we have in common with Marxism. Both anarchists and Marxists are materialists. Both believe that the ideas in peoples' heads are shaped by the social and economic conditions in which we live. We see that ideas evolve and change through action. Thought leads to action and action provokes thought.

LENINISM: 57 varieties



All unfit for human consumption

Thinking about Anarchism



Anarchism and Marxism

Both sides accept Marx's theory that labour creates value and that in production much of this is creamed off by the capitalist as profit, leaving a fraction as wages. Also shared is the view that only the working class by, virtue of their role in production, have the power to destroy capitalism.

Further, it is in their interest to do so. Workers have the power to create a classless society and would benefit from it's creation. Both Anarchists and revolutionary Marxists accept that only revolution can achieve this and that it must be international to succeed.

Marx's 'Capital' is a wide ranging, well researched and referenced assault on the capitalist system. In his own words a synthesis; incorporating a range of ideas from right-wing economists like Weber, Ricardo and Adam Smith to revolutionaries like Proudhon and the Irishman William Thompson. Anarchists accepted and welcomed this critique. In fact Bakunin had begun a translation of the book into Russian (no mean feat if you've ever seen the size of this particular work).

LET'S BE FRIENDS?

So why don't we all just shake hands and let bygones be bygones?

Firstly there has always been a major disagreement on the nature of the state. By State we do not mean the country we live in. It is best described as the 'executive committee' of the ruling class, the mechanism that allows a minority to rule. Ultimately it defends its power through its monopoly of force, its powers of repression to protect the bosses' rule against challenges from below.

Anarchists have always seen it as non-essential for a classless society. However

it is vital to the bosses in all forms of class society. It intervenes massively in the running of most average capitalist countries and in some cases may even embody the whole of the ruling class in a kind of collective exploitation (as in the former Stalinist bloc).

Marx and Engels, on the other hand have always been ambiguous about the State. At several stages they stressed that it was a neutral body which could be used by workers in revolution. In 1848, after the Paris uprising, they drafted the 'Communist Manifesto'. In this they repeatedly speak of "The Worker's State" which was to nationalise and centralise all production, finance, transport and communication. There is no mention of how the workers would be able to control "their state".

WORKERS POWER OR DICTATORSHIP OVER WORKERS?

However in 'The Civil War in France', written after the 1871 Paris Commune, Marx toyed with the idea of replacing the State with "Communal Power" and "the self-government of producers", though without mentioning exactly how this was to come about. By the time of the publication of 'The Critique of the Gotha Programme' in 1875 he was back to the ambiguous concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat".

In contrast Bakunin consistently and vigorously attacked the idea of a revolutionary role for the State. He predicted the tyranny of Leninism with uncanny accuracy in 'State and Anarchism' written in 1873;

"The new social order (of Marx) should not be organised by the free association of peoples' organisations or unions, local and continued on page 22

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IRISH ANARCHIST MAGAZINE

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

75p outside Ireland
MAGAZINE OF THE WORKERS SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT
ISSUE NO. 39
SUMMER 1993 60p

Go... Move... Shift...



RACISM - Irish Style

Travellers evicted ...see page 3

MAY DAY saw WSM members taking part in the traditional march and also producing a detailed leaflet about the anarchist origins of international workers' day. Back in 1886 anarchists were hanged in Chicago for their leading role in the strike movement to win an eight hour day. It is from this struggle that May Day was adopted as a day when we remember the courageous men and women who fought for the trade union rights we take for granted today, and as a day to express our solidarity with those struggling to improve their lot. If you want to get a copy of this leaflet write to the address on page 23.

Later in May the WSM in Dublin held a public meeting to put the case for anarchism. Over forty people turned up. Unlike many left wing events, most of the audience joined in the discussion after the speakers had opened the meeting. The level of interest was best seen in that the bookstall sold out of several titles that night.

Also in May was the launch of the 1913 Commemoration Committee which hopes to remind people of the struggle that swept through Dublin eighty years ago, and to help rekindle a spirit of struggle. Among the events being planned are wreath layings at the sites where the three dead strikers were murdered and in Dún Laoghaire where the local secretary of the Transport

For Starters

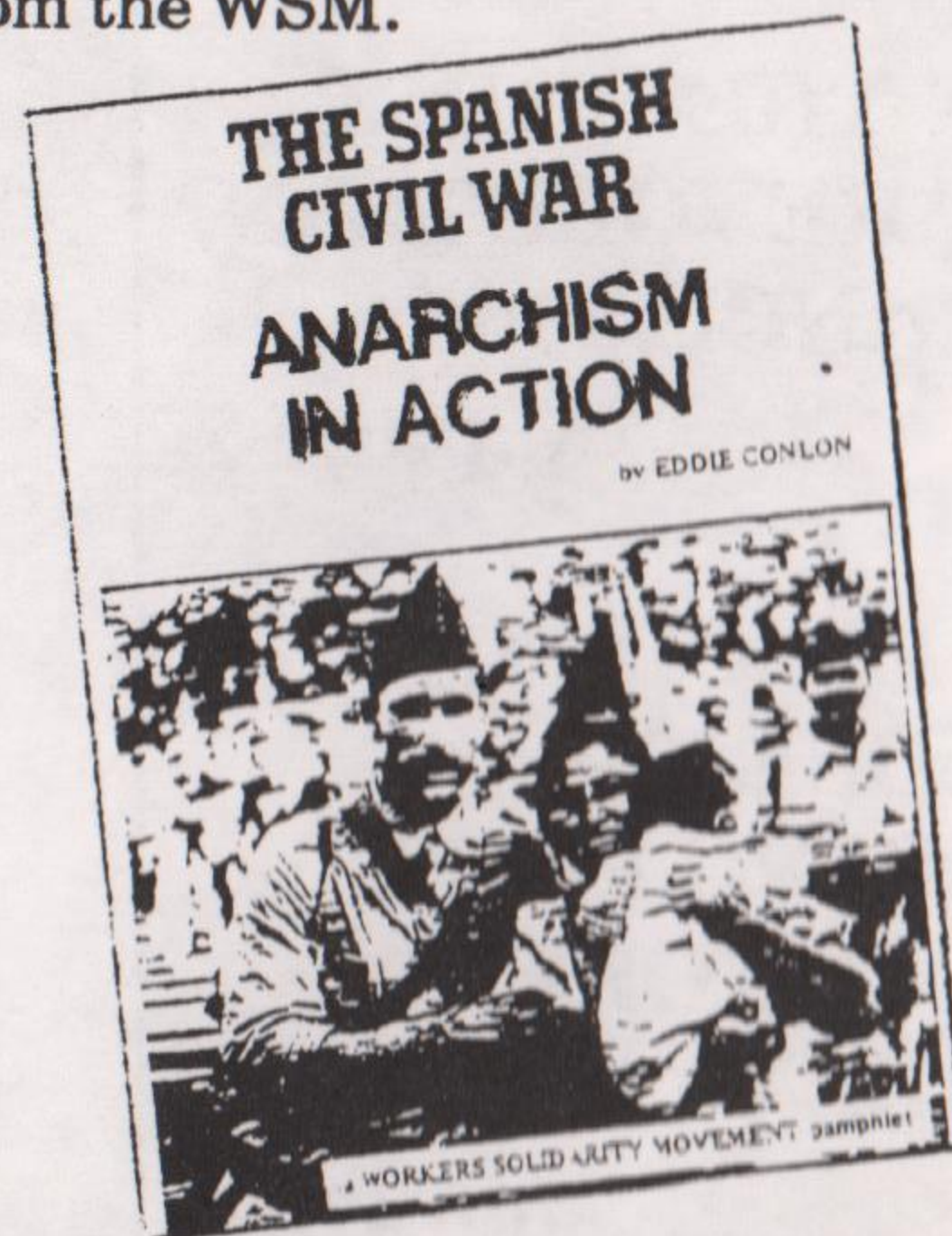
Union was beaten to death by the RIC, a public debate on the PESP and the Industrial Relations Act, production of a pamphlet about the lock-out, making a special radio programme, social events (of course!), and an exhibition of photographs reflecting struggles then and now. It will also be participating in the street pageant being organised by the Inner City Folklore Group.

This committee is genuinely open and independent, members come from organisations as varied as the Workers Solidarity Movement, Sinn Féin, the Workers Party and Red Action. There are also many members who are in no organisation. If you would like to get involved or find out more contact the secretary at 72 Morehampton Road, Dublin 4.

July will see a day of discussions organised by the WSM in Dublin. Topics being covered will be the relationship between anarchism and Marxism, the lessons of the Russian Revolution, the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War, and anarchism today. This is open to all readers who want to find out more about anarchism and the WSM. Further details can be obtained from members

or by post from the WSM address.

In 1986 we produced a pamphlet, 'Anarchism in Action', to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. Dealing with the constructive achievements of the anarchist movement and drawing lessons from their mistakes, it sold out quickly. Due to many requests we have now reprinted it. Of special interest will be the information it contains about Captain Jack White who trained the Irish Citizen Army and went on to work for the Spanish anarchist CNT union. It is on sale in radical bookshops, from WSM members or for £2 (including postage) from the WSM.



and raped. The 'Jang' newspaper located the jail in Nawabkot village, about 125 miles north-east of Karachi.

Unlike PAYE workers, the self-employed are allowed to assess their own tax bill. Last year 55% of them claimed that they earned less than £9,000. There must be a lot of very poor publicans, doctors, dentists, architects, accountants, stockbrokers, auctioneers, chemists and shopkeepers out there!

In January the US High Court ruled in the case of Leonel Herrera that evidence of innocence is not constitutional grounds for overturning a death sentence. Then he was executed.



In wealthy Dublin 4 around 45% of school leavers go on to third level education. In the working class inner city the figure drops to just 0.01%.

Privatisation has hit Pakistan in a feudal way. A landlord in the south of the country has built his own jail and imprisoned 250 bonded labourers who have been tortured

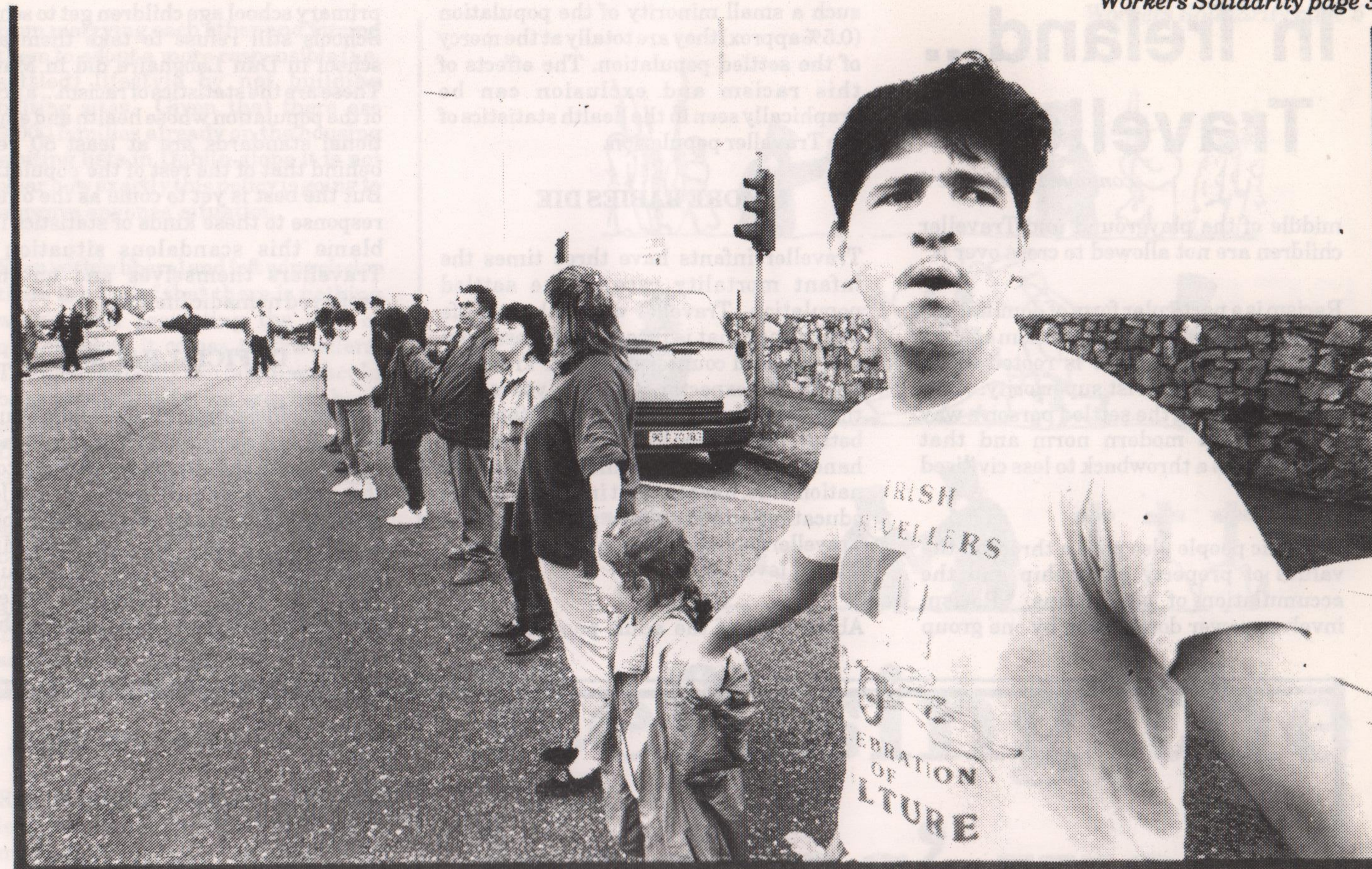
THAT'S CAPITALISM

US footwear giant, Nike, closed its last American plant in the 1980s and went off to South Korea in search of cheaper labour. In the late 1980s South Korean workers won the right to form independent unions and to strike. The company then shifted new factories to Indonesia where wages are just one seventh of South Korea's. The Indonesian workers, 80% of them women, earn just 14 cents per hour. According to the UN's International Labour Organisation 88% of Indonesian women working for these wages are malnourished. A pair of Nikes sell for \$80 in the USA.

The people who screw you if your bank account goes into the red know how to look after themselves. AIB directors Brian Wilson and Tom Mulcahy bought shares from the bank at knockdown prices on April 5th. On April 6th they sold them. Wilson netted a

profit of £183,000 and Mulcahy £113,000. Not bad for a day's work.

You can always trust a copper... March saw the police commissioner in Casablanca, Morocco sentenced to death for kidnapping, sexual violence and multiple rape.



• anti-eviction protest blocks Dublin-Galway Road in May

ANTI-RACIST work is a major concern of the left in Europe at the moment. Given the rise of racist attacks in Germany and France, especially, this is important work. However very few groups or individuals on the left in Ireland understand that the situation of Travellers is the most explicit form of racism in this country. Because Travellers are white, people have difficulty applying the concept of racism to them. However it takes no more than a quick perusal of recent press clippings to gather abundant evidence of the racism faced by Travellers. A few examples are as follows:

"A round the clock picket by protesting residents continued today to prevent a temporary site being set up for Travellers in Limerick". Evening Herald.

"The residents of an estate outside Arklow who are now to undertake a rent strike over the council decision to house the family of Travellers....." Wicklow People.

"Residents of a housing estate in Rathfarnham will this morning place a picket on the entrance to land which is to be developed by Dublin Corporation as a halting site for 20 itinerant families". Irish Press.

"A horrific attack involving the spraying of

In Germany... Turks • In France... Algerians • In Britain... Asians

In Ireland... Travellers

foul smelling cattle slurry against caravans of Traveller families has been criticised by a priest... a Garda spokesman at Tullow described it as a minor incident." Irish Independent.

The publican who barred 'Glenroe' actor Michael Collins from his pub confirmed last night he did so because he was a Traveller" Irish Independent.

Recently in Clondalkin two Traveller families have been intimidated out of their houses by mobs. Traveller camps have been petrol bombed, families have been physically attacked by farmers in Galway, all in the very recent past. Travellers are subjected to the most extreme forms of social exclusion and segregation which can only be described as apartheid.

many shops, launderettes, hairdressers, discos, hotels, cinemas and even some doctors refuse to serve them. At an institutional level unemployed Travellers are forced to sign on at different times to the rest of the population and in Dublin all Travellers who claim Supplementary Welfare have to do so in one separate health centre, Castle Street, whether they live in Bray or Balbriggan.

Officially this is done to provide them with a service that respects their nomadic culture. In reality nothing could be further from the truth, which is that it is done in order to discriminate against them more efficiently. At school many Traveller children are taught in totally segregated classes which cater for Traveller children of all ages in the one class. Some notorious schools have gone so far as to paint a white line down the

They are refused service in pubs, cafes,

continued over the page

In Ireland... Travellers

continued from page 3

middle of the playground and Traveller children are not allowed to cross over it.

Racism is a particular form of domination, exploitation and exclusion. Racism against Travellers and Gypsies is rooted in an ideology of sedentary superiority. This is the belief that the settled person's way of life is the modern norm and that nomadism is a throwback to less civilised times.

Nomadic people also pose a threat to the values of property ownership and the accumulation of possessions. Racism involves power domination by one group

over the other. Because Travellers are such a small minority of the population (0.5% approx) they are totally at the mercy of the settled population. The effects of this racism and exclusion can be graphically seen in the health statistics of the Traveller population.

MORE BABIES DIE

Traveller infants have three times the infant mortality rate of the settled population. Traveller women have a life expectancy that is fifteen years less than their settled counterparts and Traveller men's life expectancy is ten years less than settled men's. They don't fare any better educationally. In 1993 only a handful of Traveller children, about 50 nationwide, have made it into second level education and there are still only three Travellers nationwide who have completed a third level course.

About 80% of the adult population are

illiterate and still only about 70% of the primary school age children get to school. Schools still refuse to take them as a school in Dún Laoghaire did in March. These are the statistics of racism... a group of the population whose health and educational standards are at least 50 years behind that of the rest of the population. But the best is yet to come as the official response to these kinds of statistics is to blame this scandalous situation on Travellers themselves and on their preferred nomadic lifestyle.

OFFICIAL RACISM

A recent official report from Dublin County Council is a very good example of racist thinking. In this report which went to all the councillors in January, Travellers' lifestyle is blamed for all the major social problems in the county, including unemployment! The report concludes that it is time to break the cycle of Travellers' culture by discouraging them

from marrying each other and forcing them to adopt a more responsible (i.e. settled) lifestyle by not building halting sites. Given that there are 3,000 families already on the housing waiting lists in Dublin alone it is not clear how exactly this policy is going to improve anyone's situation.

Even within liberal and left wing circles there is a belief that there is nothing wrong with promoting the idea of quotas when it comes to Travellers. The idea that only ten families should be accommodated in an area has been promoted by everyone from the Labour party to the 'Militant'. Of course this is an inherently racist position to adopt. It would not be acceptable to suggest that only ten black families should be housed in any one community and it is no more acceptable to suggest this for Travellers. Likewise the idea of separate segregated and inevitably inferior services must be opposed.

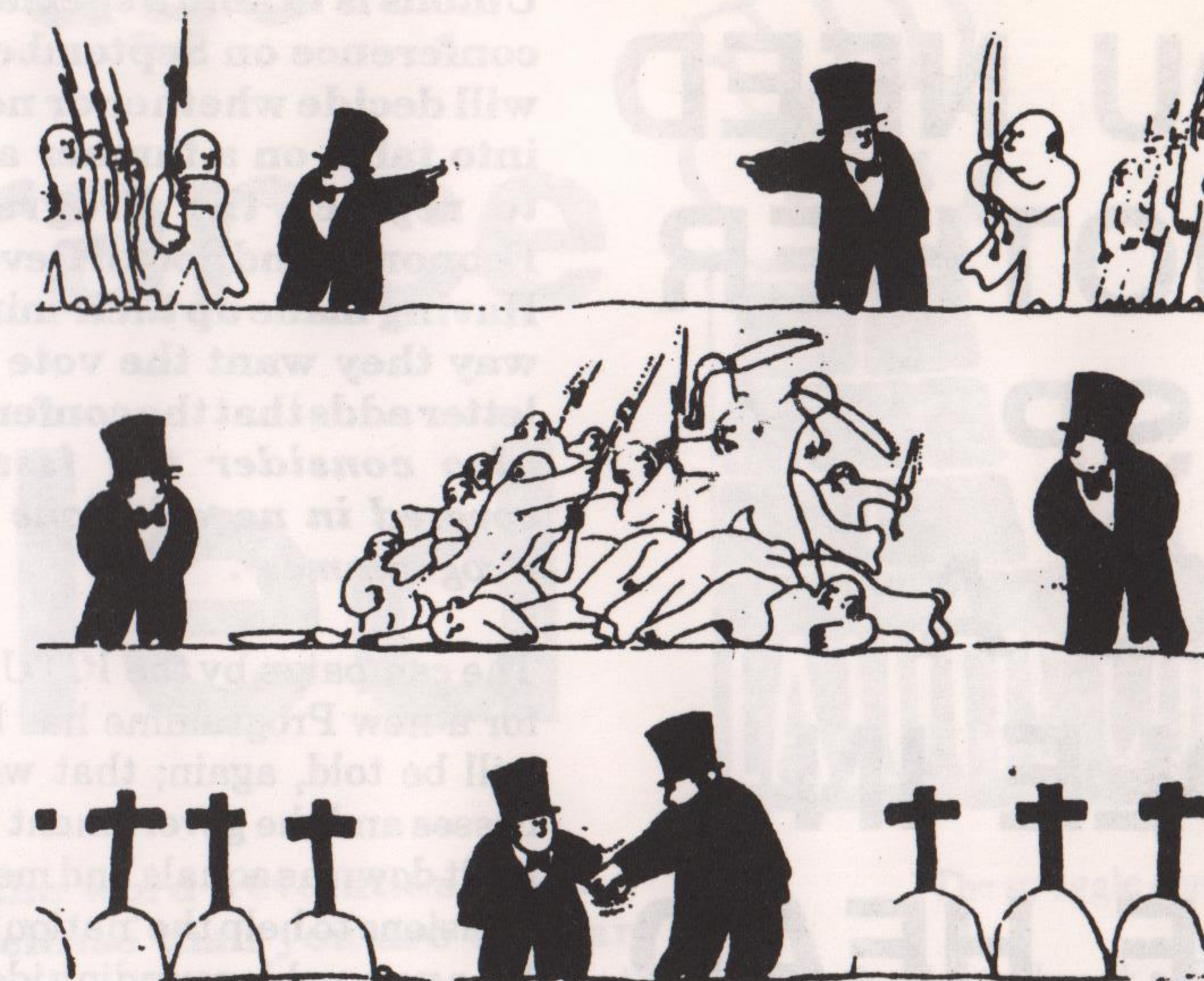
250,000 MURDERED BY NAZIS

Racism against Gypsies and Travellers goes back to the time they started migrating from India around the 11th century. It reached its height with the extermination of a quarter of a million Gypsies and Travellers by the Nazis. In Ireland the racism against Travellers is so deep and so all pervasive that few people even recognise it for what it is. In the fight against this racism Travellers themselves and their organisations need to be centrally involved.

They must set the agenda, deciding on what issues and how they want to fight. They need the active support of the left, and especially of the trade union movement, because they have very little muscle on their own. There have been attempts over the past thirty years at Traveller self-organisation but these organisations were quickly smashed by the state.

In 1963 the Gardai planted explosives on Gratton Puxon, the organiser of the Irish Traveller Community which was becoming a force to be reckoned with. Nearly twenty years later they planted stolen jewellery on Nan Joyce, a leading member of the Traveller-only organisation Minceir Miscli. Nan had run against a racist candidate in Dublin South West in the General Election of 1982, getting twice the number of votes. Currently the Irish Traveller movement is organising around the country. It remains to be seen if it will become a fighting body or confine itself to lobbying. For left wing activists concerned about racism there is plenty of it to fight in relation to Travellers.

Mary Collins



Refusing the bosses' war

AS NATIONALIST gangs terrorise residents of the former Yugoslavia, Croatian and Serbian draftees are refusing to fight. The largest refusal came in Kragujevac, a town with strong military connections, where 6,700 reservists reported for duty without their weapons.

They locked themselves in the military camp, refusing to go. In Valjevo 200 reservists returned from the front last November and sat-in in front of district government offices. They stayed until the commander signed a military roster saying they had completed their duties and were discharged.

On the front at Markutsica 700 reservists refused to soldier after completing their 45 days on December 18th. A general ordered their officers arrested but backed down when troops prepared to fire on him. Two weeks later 150 Belgrade reservists were permitted to return home after a three day hunger strike at the end of their 45 days.

But military authorities have been far less tolerant with individuals who acted alone. What we cannot accomplish alone can often be won with the solidarity of our fellow workers, against the military as much as against the bosses.

Source: Industrial Worker

Going easy on the rich

THE TAX inspectors branch of the IMPACT trade union is angry at the government decision to reduce staff in the tax arrears project, which pulled in £36 million last year. £1,200 million is outstanding in unpaid taxes. The 30 workers in the arrears project each collected £1.2 million. Yet staff are now being reduced. Too many complaints to politicians from tax-dodging businesspeople?



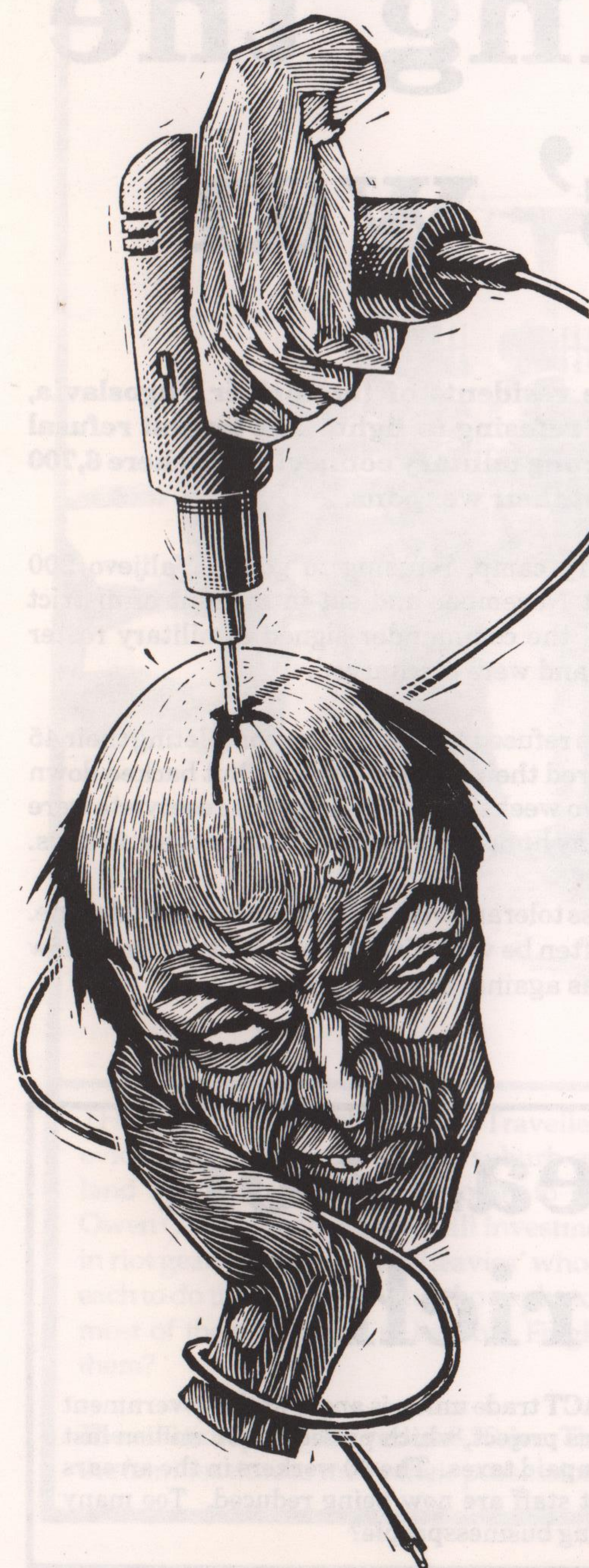
THURSDAY May 20th saw nine Traveller families violently evicted from the west Dublin suburb of Clondalkin. The land they were living on belongs to property developer Owen O'Callaghan of Bark Hill Investments. Forty gardai, in riot gear, backed up ten 'heavies' who had been paid £50 each to do the evictions. The above photo shows these men, most of them believed to be from Finglas. Do you know them?

The eviction party arrived at 8.30am. They refused to give the families time to move their possessions or even get their

children out of bed. Brigid Collins, 56 years old, had her foot broken by gardai in this racist attack.

Monday May 24th saw a response from 200 Traveller families from all the country, some of whom had hired busses to get to the protest. The main Dublin to Galway road was blocked at Lucan during the rush hour. The anger of Travellers at this latest racist attack on their community found expression in this very successful and forceful demonstration. Other protests are planned to force the County Council to provide sites immediately for the families who were evicted.

YOU NEED ANOTHER PESP LIKE A HOLE IN THE HEAD



THE IRISH Congress of Trade Unions is to hold a special delegate conference on September 30th. It will decide whether or not to enter into talks on a further agreement to replace the Programme for Economic and Social Development. Having made up their minds which way they want the vote to go, the letter adds that the conference "will also consider the issues to be covered in negotiations on future Programmes".

The campaign by the ICTU leadership for a new Programme has begun. We will be told, again; that workers, the bosses and the government will be able to sit down as equals and make the best decisions to help the 'national interest'. It's a very noble sounding idea until you consider that there is no 'national interest'. Workers and bosses have opposing interests. If they didn't we wouldn't need unions!

'NATIONAL INTEREST'

The 'national interest' is used to make us think we have more in common with our bosses than we do with workers in other countries. What do we have in common with crooks like Larry Goodman, Michael Smurfit or Ben Dunne? What have the workers in Nolan Transport in New Ross got in common with their rich, mean and union-bashing employer? Whose was the 'national interest' when the government reneged on the PESP pay terms in the public sector in February 1992?

Labour being in government won't make it any better. Within a few weeks of getting their backsides onto cabinet seats they had decided to tax disability benefit, cut the students' summer dole, not repeal the "dirty dozen" welfare cuts, broken their promise to provide the necessary cash for Aer Lingus. Indeed redundancies and pay cuts are being talked about. The 3% local bargaining clause of the PESP has not been paid in the public service. Probably the only promise they kept was to create some more jobs. The problem is that most of the jobs went to Ministers' families.

Once again we will be told, by every class of 'informed commentator', that PESP-type programmes give the best wage increases in Europe and that wage restraint will be returned in extra jobs. The fact is that - after the PNR and with the PESP almost completed - Ireland has its highest ever dole queues. The fact is that the percentage of total tax paid by PAYE workers has jumped to

almost double what it was in the allegedly bad old days before such agreements.

HAS ANYONE SEEN MY PAY RISE?

The fact is that the ratio of wage increases to inflation in those same 'bad old days' has fallen from 2:5 down to just over half that amount today. And let us not forget that the anti-union Industrial Relations Act was introduced in 1990, without a whimper of protest by the ICTU leaders, as a PNR commitment (see PESP page 84).

Three years ago a handful of union activists came together to oppose such collaboration with bosses and government. The network they formed, Trade Unionists and Unemployed Against the Programme, won the sponsorship of over 300 shop stewards, produced tens of thousands of leaflets and newsletters arguing for a 'no' vote. Public meetings were held in most larger towns. Despite most unions having pro-PESP policy and despite the fact that the anti-PESP forces ran on a shoestring budget, almost one third of all trade unionists who voted rejected the deal.

TUUP (now called Trade Union Fightback*) didn't close up shop and go away after the vote. It is getting ready to launch a campaign against whatever new proposals emerge. It has the sensible position of not being fooled into believing that workers ever stand to gain from making concessions to either government or to millionaire employers.

This time around the socialist argument against class collaboration should be made as loudly as the specific arguments on wages, jobs and social welfare. We have to rebuild a sense of working class political independence. Beyond the immediate campaign against a PESP mark 2, a rank & file movement strong enough and confident enough to remain independent of the union leaders and willing to openly defy the anti-union laws is needed. It won't be built overnight but there is no time like the present for getting people thinking on these lines. Anarchists will be there arguing for libertarian structures, for participatory democracy **and** for the anarchist alternative to the present system.

Alan MacSimóin

Trade Union Fightback can be contacted at 10 Comyn Place, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

25 years ago When France rebelled



•The struggle continues

THESE DAYS you are more likely to hear the word 'revolution' on the soundtrack of a film or on the latest pop release than you are to hear someone talking about bringing one about. It is partly for this reason that people think of revolutions as buried deep in history. Yet, as little as 25 years ago France was on the verge of a total revolt with 12 million workers on strike, 122 factories occupied, and students fighting against the old moribund system in which they found themselves.

In the late sixties in France real wages were on the rise, but large sections of the working class were still suffering from low pay. This was despite foreign trade having tripled. 25% of all workers were receiving less than 500 francs (£46) per month. Some unskilled workers were only getting 400 francs per month. Unemployment was at half a million, in a period which was considered a post-war boom. Trade union membership had dropped to around 3 million, as opposed to 7 million in 1945. Not many victories had been won in the preceding years. Michelin boasted that they had only talked to trade unions three times in thirty years. So how did everything change so quickly in the France of 1968?

Nanterre was a university outside Paris. It was a new soulless campus built to cater for the increased influx of students. The place was unlike the throbbing cultural live wire of the famous Latin Quarter (Left Bank).

On March 22nd 1968 eight students broke into the Dean's office as a way to protest at the recent arrest of six members of the National Vietnam Committee. Among these was a sociology student called Danny Cohn-Bendit. He had been part of a group who organised a strike of 10,000 to 12,000 students in November of 1967 as a protest against overcrowding.

STUDENT ANGER

In the preceding 10 years the student population had risen from 170,000 to 514,000. Although the state had provided some funding this was not equal to the huge influx of students it had asked the universities and colleges to take. The total area covered by university premises had doubled since 1962 but the student numbers had almost tripled. Facilities were desperately inadequate and overcrowding was a serious issue.

Six days after the occupation of the Dean's office the police were called in and the campus was surrounded. 500 students inside the college divided into discussion groups. Sociology students began to



•You're young. Shut up!

boycott their exams and a pamphlet was produced entitled 'Why do we need sociologists?'. The students called for a lecture hall to be permanently made available for political discussions.

The lecturers began to split, some in favour of the student demands. The college did provide a room, but by the 2nd of April a meeting of 1,200 students was held in one of the main lecture halls.

After the Easter break agitation was more rampant. On April 22nd (one month after the occupation) a meeting was held in lecture hall B1. It was attended by 1,500 students and the resulting manifesto called for "Outright rejection of the Capitalist Technocratic University" and followed this by a call for solidarity with the working class. It was clear that the March 22nd Movement (which had come together as a semi-formal alliance of anti-authoritarian socialist students) was winning the battle of ideas in the campus amongst their fellow students.

The college decided to discipline eight of the students involved, including Cohn-Bendit. They were called upon to appear before the disciplinary committee of the Sorbonne on May 3rd. Four lecturers volunteered to defend them.

The education strike had not interested the Minister for Education. There were major industrial strikes the preceding year at Rhodiacta and Saviem. In Rhodiacta (a synthetic fibres factory in Lyons) a strike took place involving 14,000 workers over 23 days. Management went on to sack 92 militants at the end of the year and had also resorted to lock-outs. In June of 1967 Peugeot called in riot police during a dispute and two workers were killed.

From March to May 1968 there was a total of eighty cases of industrial action at the Renault Billancourt car plant. It was becoming obvious that "the French did not interest their leaders" as Alain Touraine (a professor at Nanterre who was prepared to defend the student action) said. These leaders were soon about to be awoken from their oblivious slumber.

RED & BLACK FLAGS DRAPE THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

On Friday May 3rd a few students gathered in the front square of the Sorbonne. The students were from

continued over the page



•A police baton charge against demonstrators

Nanterre and they were joined by activists from the Sorbonne college itself. The 'Nanterre Eight' were about to face charges on the following Monday. The eight and some colleagues from Nanterre were meeting student activists from the Sorbonne to discuss the impending Monday.

The crowd began to swell and the college authorities panicked. By 4pm the Sorbonne was surrounded by police and the Campagnies Republicaines de Securite (CRS riot police). Students were being arrested by the CRS, on the basis that they were spotted wearing motorcycle helmets. News spread rapidly and students came from all over the city. Fighting began to free those who had already been arrested. Such was this battle between students and police that the college closed.

This was only the second time in 700 years that the Sorbonne was forced to close, the other time being in 1940 when the Nazis took Paris.

The National Union of Students (UNEF) and the Lecturers' Union (SNESup) immediately called a strike and issued the following demands

1. Re-Open the Sorbonne.
 2. Withdraw the Police.
 3. Release those arrested.
- These unions were joined by the March 22nd Movement. The original discontent had arisen from overcrowding but it now began to take on a larger perspective.

On Monday May 6th the 'Nanterre 8' passed through a police cordon singing the 'Internationale'. They were on their

way to appear before the University Discipline Committee. The students decided to march through Paris. On their return to the Latin Quarter they were savagely attacked by the police on the Rue St. Jacques.

The students tore up paving stones and overturned cars to form barricades. Police pumped Tear Gas into the air and called for reinforcements. The Boulevard St Germain became a bloody battleground with the official figures at the end of the day reading: 422 arrests and 345 policemen injured. This day was to go into the annals of '68 as "Bloody Monday".

A long march followed on the Tuesday and by outmanoeuvring the police Red & Black Flags were draped from the Arc De Triomphe and the 'Internationale' echoed around the streets. The week continued on in similar fashion and the streets were alive with crowds and talk of politics. By Wednesday public opinion was shifting.

STOMACH FOR A FIGHT

The middle classes were appalled by the brutality dished out to the students by the police and large sections of the working class were inspired by the students' stomach for a fight against the state. On Friday (May 10th) 30,000 students, including high school students, had gathered around the Place Defret-Rochercau. They marched towards the Sorbonne along the Boulevard St. Germain. All roads leading off the boulevard were blocked by police armed for conflict.

Fifty barricades were erected by the

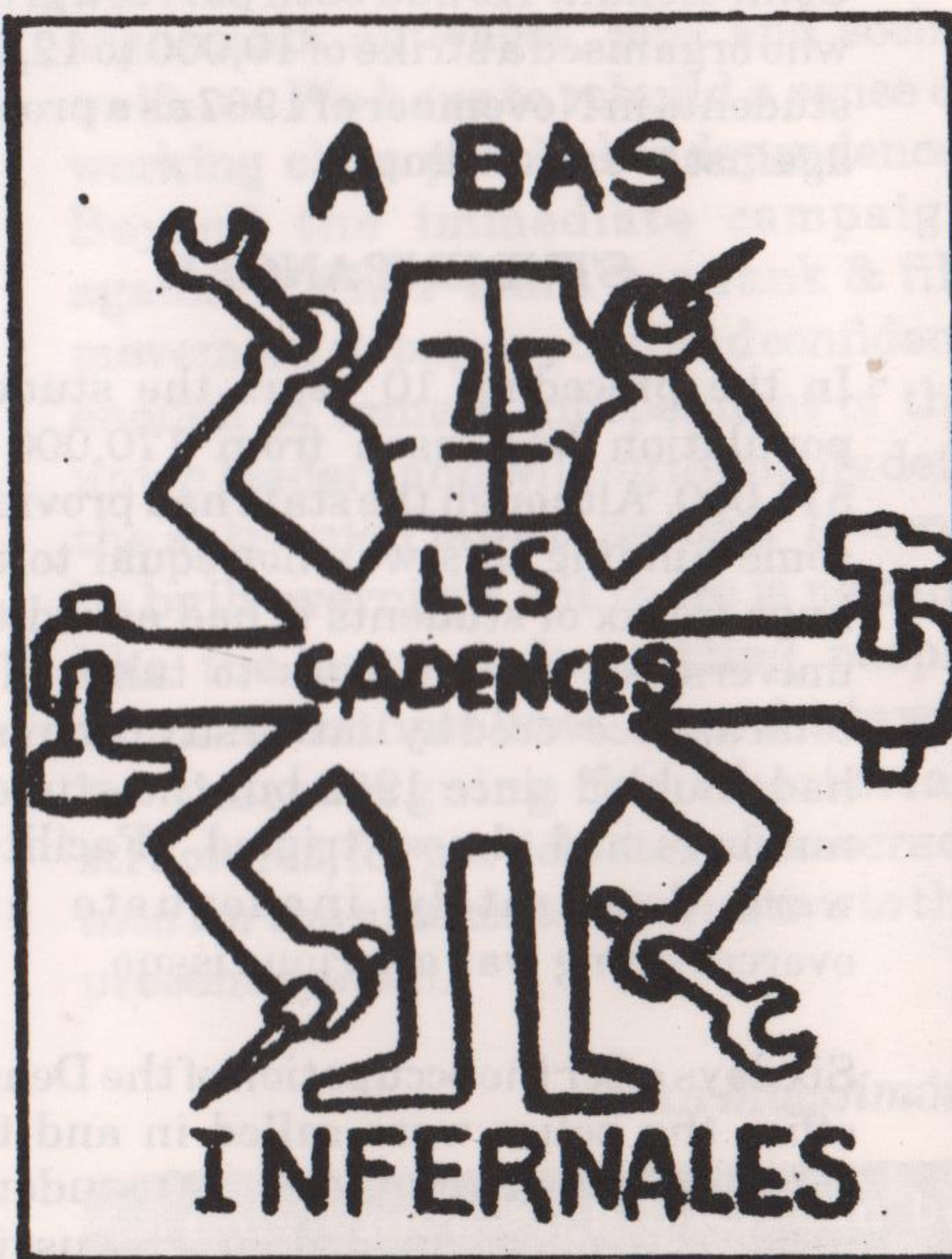
demonstrators in preparation for an attack by the police. Jean Jacques Lebel a reporter wrote that by 1am "Literally thousands help build barricades ...women, workers, bystanders, people in pyjamas, human chains to carry rocks, wood, iron". "Our barricade is double: one three foot high row of cobble stones, an empty space of twenty yards, then a nine foot high pile of wood, cars, metal posts, dustbins. Our weapons are stones, metal, etc found in the street." reported one eye witness.

Radio reporters said that as many as sixty barricades were erected in

different streets. France stayed up to listen to reports on Europe One and Radio Luxembourg. The government had yielded on two of the three demands but would not release those arrested. There was to be no "Liberez nos comrades!"

THE BEAT GOES ON

The barricades were attacked by the police. They used tear gas and CS grenades. Students and demonstrators used handkerchiefs soaked in baking soda to protect themselves from the nauseous gasses. Fighting continued throughout the night. Houses were stormed by the police and people were dragged and clubbed as they were thrown into vans. The police, and in particular the CRS, were most brutal in their treatment of the demonstrators.



•Down with the speed up

There were reports of pregnant women being beaten. Young men were stripped and some had their sexual organs beaten until the flesh was in ribbons. At the end of this battle of the streets there were 367 people injured, and 460 arrested. On Saturday morning troop carriers were brought in to clear the barricades and they were booed and hissed as they drove down the Boulevard St Germain.

On Monday May 13th the students were released but the spark had already started the forest fire. The trade unions called a one-day strike and a march was organised in Paris for the same day. Over 200,000 people (a conservative figure) turned up for the march shouting "De Gaulle Assassin". The leader of the government was now singled out as an enemy by the people. After the march there was a call for the crowd to disperse and many did but a large group of students decided that they would occupy the Sorbonne.

COMMUNISTS UP TO THEIR OLD TRICKS.

The PCF (French Communist Party) had condemned the Nanterre rebels from the start. Their future General Secretary, Georges Marchais, published an article entitled "False revolutionaries to be unmasked". In this article he claimed the March 22nd Movement were "mostly sons of the grand bourgeois, contemptuous towards the students of working class origin" and predicted that they would "quickly snuff out their revolutionary flames to become directors in Papa's business....."

But by May 8th the when the party leadership saw the size of the movement they changed their tune and attempted to take control of the uprising. They saw that the example of the students was now being followed in the workplaces. They thought it better to be seen encouraging action than letting the situation escape their control.

Once again the Communists had misjudged the situation. The CGT (the Communist dominated trade union) leadership also started to support workplace action, though only after workers had already taken the lead. Louis Aragon (France's most famous Communist writer) was sent to address a meeting at the Odeon. Those of the March 22nd Movement who were present jeered and heckled him throughout with satirical cries of "Long live Stalin, father of all people".

One member of the political bureau Roger Garudy embraced the students' doctrine of economic self-management, autonomous councils and decentralisation. Along with extending solidarity with the aims of the students he also applauded the events of the "Prague Spring". He was soon expelled from the PCF. Mostly, the PCF persisted in classifying the student

movement as "an entire ultra-left, petty-bourgeois cocktail of Bakunin, Trotskyism and plain adventurism...".

TRUTH IS... WHATEVER SERVES THE PARTY

Around this time an anonymous article was published in the party paper 'L'Humanite'. It's author claimed that the Minister for Youth had "contacts" with Cohn-Bendit and that money was granted to the March 22nd Movement. This accusation was a complete fabrication and the height of some very strange imagination. This, of course, was neither the first nor last time the Communists resorted to this type of tactic.

The Sorbonne became transformed overnight as posters of Marx, Lenin, and Mao decorated the old pillars surrounding the front square. Red & Black flags hung alongside the Vietcong flag. Trotsky, Castro and Che Guevara pictures were plastered on walls alongside slogans such as "Everything is Possible" and "It is Forbidden to Forbid". This picture of the Sorbonne gives a good indication of the confusion of ideologies encompassed within the student movement.

A fifteen person occupation committee was elected on the May 14th and its mandate was limited to 24 hours. The central amphitheatre was pulsating day and night with political debate. The examination system was condemned as "being the rite of initiation into the capitalist society". The March 22nd Movement wanted to "eradicate the distinction between workers and managers rather than turn more workers' sons into managers".



•Real worker-student solidarity (as at Renault-Flins against the CRS who tried to occupy the factory)

The Ecole de Beux Arts (School of Fine Arts) was occupied on May 14th. There were meetings every morning at which themes were chosen. Then posters would be produced via a silk screen production basis. It was most ironic that these posters became almost immediately collectors'



•Striker (at Sochaux) tackles the Peugeot lion items and were soon to be found in the homes of the rich.

The posters were covered with such slogans as "Mankind will not live free until the last capitalist has been hanged with the entrails of the last bureaucrat" and "The general will against the will of the general". Paris was plastered with such posters.

The political atmosphere of the time led to occupations by radical doctors, architects, and writers. Even the Cannes film festival was disrupted in 1968 when "Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut seized the festival hall in support of the national strike movement".

STRIKES

On the 14th of May the workers of Sud Aviation near Nantes occupied their factory. Then Renault plants at Cleon, Flins, Le Mans and Boulogne Billancourt all went on strike. Young workers at Cleon refused to leave the factory at the end of their shift and locked the manager into his office. The union leadership were stumbling behind the mood of the workers. At places like Sud-Aviation the decision to go on indefinite strike was taken by the workers without consulting the union officials.

The CGT leaders had been taken totally by surprise and now were desperately trying not to lose all influence. The workers were leading, in their demands and actions. The union leadership - for a short time - followed like a dog keeping up with its master, as it saw this as the only method to maintaining some influence over the workers.

On May 16th a few thousand students marched to Boulogne Billancourt where 35,000 workers were on strike. The CGT officials locked the factory gates to discourage communication. But workers got up on the roof of the factory and shouted

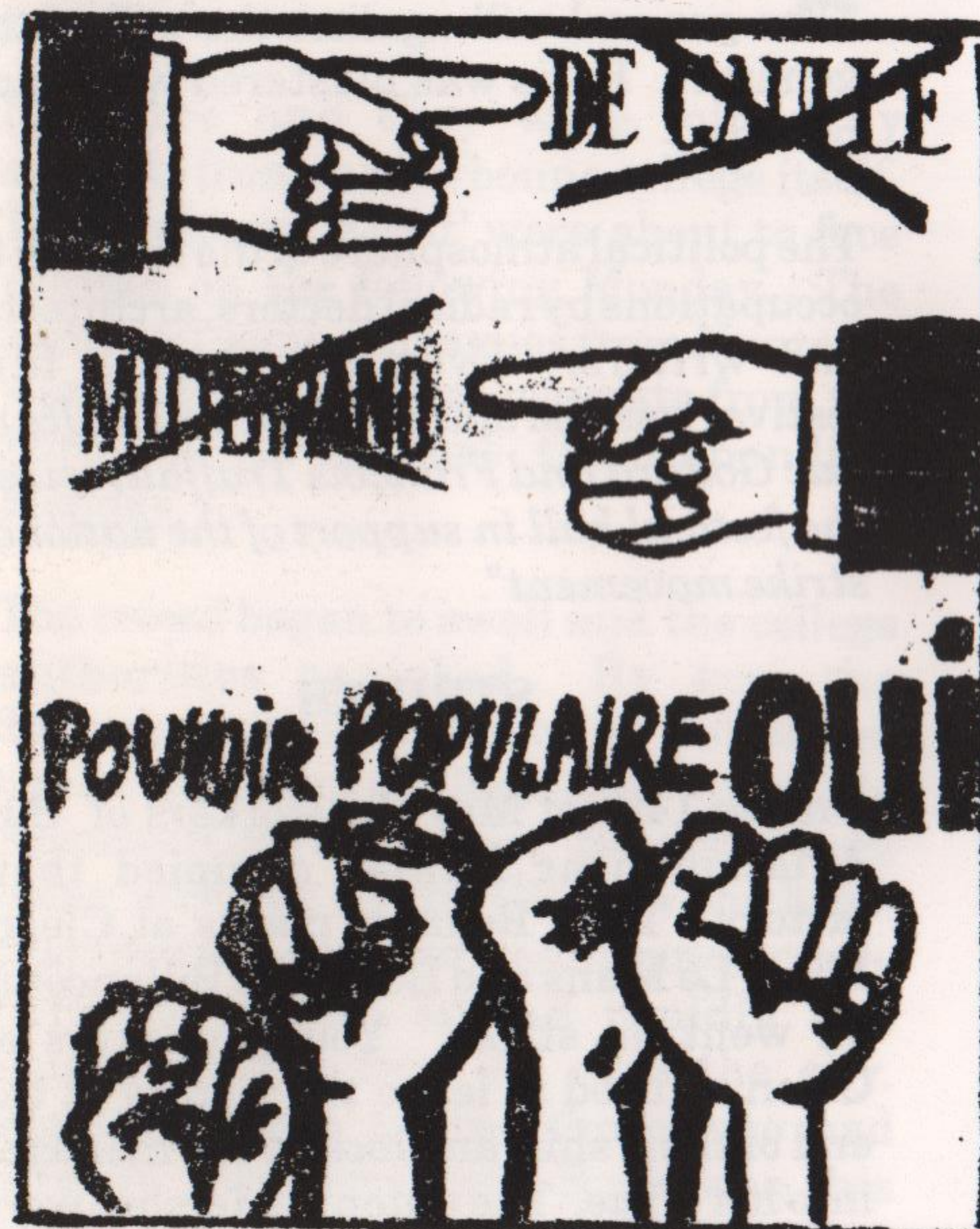
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greetings and discussions took place through the iron railings. Solidarity was there and it could not be suppressed by a few chains and locked gates.

Industrial Normandy, Paris and Lyons closed down virtually on mass. On May 18th coal production stopped and public transport in Paris halted. The National Railways were next to go out on strike. Gas and electricity workers took over control of their workplaces but continued domestic supplies. Red flags hung from shipyards at St Nazaire which employed 10,000 workers. The weekend of the 19th of May saw two million people on strike and 122 factories were reported to be occupied.

STRIKE WAVE SWEEPS FRANCE

Money withdrawals from banks were limited to 500 francs as the possibility of a Bank Of France strike panicked people. Petrol supplies soon dried up as drivers stocked up. By Monday the 20th no cross-channel ferries were in operation and tourists queued for buses or evacuation coaches to Brussels, Geneva, and Barcelona.



•For the power of the people

The Citroen factory which employed a lot of immigrant labour from Portugal, North Africa and Yugoslavia was still in operation. On the May 20th as the morning shift headed into work at 6am they were greeted with the sight of a student picket. As the young foreign workers were puzzling over the students' leaflets and whether or not to go into work along came a march of colleagues from a nearby factory. Citroen was on strike.

The textile industry and big department stores of Paris joined the snowballing general strike on Tuesday 21st. The air traffic controllers in Orly and French television (ORTF) had already voted to come out the previous Friday.

On the 20th of May ORTF staff issued the following demands;

1. Forty Hour Week
 2. Lower Retirement Age.
 3. Abrogation of the anti-strike laws of 1963.
 4. Minimum wage of 1000 francs a week.
 5. Repeal of the government's involvement in the television station.
- Teachers were on strike as of the 22nd, although many attended school in order to keep in contact with school students as the unions had requested.

NOW IS NOT A GOOD TIME TO DIE

Within a fortnight of the general strike being called, more than nine million were out on strike. As one person put it "On Wednesday the undertakers went on strike. Now is not a good time to die."

Workers displayed a great ability to lead by example. The gas and electricity workers joined the strike but maintained supplies apart from a few brief power cuts. Food supplies reached Paris as normal after initial disruptions. The postal workers agreed to deliver urgent telegrams.

Print workers said they did not wish to leave a monopoly of media coverage to TV and radio and agreed to print newspapers as long as the press "carries out with objectivity the role of providing information which is its duty". In some cases printworkers insisted on changes in headlines or articles before they would print the paper. This happened mostly with the right wing papers such as 'Le Figaro' or 'La Nation'.

In some factories workers continued or altered production to suit their needs. In the CSF factory in Brest the workers produced walkie-talkies which they considered important to both strikers and demonstrators alike. At the Wonder Batteries factory in Saint-Ouen the strike committee disapproved of the reformist line of the CGT and decided to barricade themselves in rather than talk to the union officials.

A WORKERS' CITY

In Nantes, the whole movement and events of 1968 were to reach a pinnacle. For a week in May the city and its surrounding area was controlled by the workers, themselves. The old guardians of power and authority looked on helplessly as workers took control of their own lives and city. On May 24th road blocks were set up around the city as farmers made a protest of solidarity with the workers and students.

The transport workers took over the road blocks and they controlled all incoming traffic. Petrol supplies were controlled, with no petrol tankers being allowed into the city without the workers' permission. The only functioning petrol pump was reserved for use by doctors. By circumventing the middle man, the workers and farmers made it possible to reduce the cost of food. Milk was now 50 centimes as opposed to 80 previously. Potatoes dropped

48 centimes per kilo in price.

To make sure these price cuts were passed on, shops had to display stickers provided by the strike committee saying "This shop is authorised to open. Its prices are under permanent supervision by the unions". Teachers and students organised nurseries so that strikers' children were cared for while the schools were closed. Women played a very active role in Nantes organising, not only as strikers but also playing a vital role in committees dealing with food supplies.

This all too brief week in Nantes is a prime example of the working class seizing control of an area and running it in a socialist manner, even in such difficult circumstances. We can see that the society created in many ways was an improvement on the one Nantes unfortunately slipped back into after the events of 1968.

PACIFY AND DISSIPATE

De Gaulle, now fearing for the survival of his government and slowly looking at his power disappear, addressed the country on television on May 24th. He spoke of "a more extensive participation of everyone in the conduct and the result of the activities which directly concern them." De Gaulle asked the people through a referendum as a "mandate for renewal and adaption".

On the same day the March 22nd Movement organised a demonstration. 30,000 marched towards the Palace de la Bastille. The police had the Ministries protected, using the usual devices of tear gas and batons, but the Bourse (Stock Exchange) was left unprotected. This was the time to act and a number of demonstrators armed with axe handles, wooden clubs and iron bars went and set fire to it.

It was at this stage that some left wing groups lost their nerve. The Trotskyist JCR turned people back into the Latin Quarter. Other groups such as 'UNEF' and Parti Socialiste Unife (United



•To work now would be to work with a gun in one's back

Socialist Party) blocked the taking of the Ministries of Finance and Justice. Cohn-Bendit said of this incident "As for us, [March 22 Movement] we failed to realize how easy it would have been to sweep all these nobodies away....It is now clear that if, on 25 May, Paris had woken to find the most important Ministries occupied, Gaullism would have caved in at once....". Cohn-Bendit was forced into exile later that very night.

The students of the March 22nd Movement would not have caused the collapse of Gaullism with this occupation, but it would have raised the consciousness of many of the young militant workers who were inspired by the fighting spirit shown by the students. The students' struggle, although confused, and encompassing many varying ideologies, had been an inspiration. The dynamite was there and the student uprising was the fuse paper.

TO THE MINISTRIES

The occupation of the Ministries would have been one step further along the line towards a social revolution. Of the 12 million workers now on strike only 3 million were previously involved in trade unions. The general strike which had paralysed the country saw workers' demands far surpass those issued by the union leaders. Expectations had been raised by the wave of agitation that was sweeping across the land.

The occupations of the Ministries could have brought an awareness to people that what could be won here was more than economic agreements with the bosses. The move would have brought the workers closer to the realisation that what was at stake here was how the system was run and not just how to tinker with its engine. In every uprising of the sort we witnessed in 1968 there is a need for organised groups to win the battle of ideas and to fuse those ideas into action so that people are aware of what can be gained, what victories are possible.

The student movement, if it had of occupied the government buildings, would have taken a step in this direction. The workers were inspired by the fight of the students on the streets of Paris, militant workers would have been inspired by the occupations of the Ministries, and a realisation could have swept through France that there was more to be won than pay rises from the bosses.

FIN

By Monday May 27th the Government had guaranteed an increase of 35% in the industrial minimum wage and an all round wage increase of 10%. The leaders of the CGT organised a march of 500,000 workers through the streets of Paris two days later. Paris was covered in posters calling for a 'Government of the People'. Unfortunately the majority still thought in terms of changing their rulers rather than taking control for themselves.

De Gaulle and his puppets had been so scared by the possibility of revolution that he flew to military airfield at Saint-Dizier and talked with his top Generals, making sure that he could rely on them if he

•To work now would be to work with a gun in one's back

needed the army's help to maintain his grip on power. On May 30th he once again appeared on French television abandoning his plans for the referendum and promising elections within forty days.

De Gaulle in typical fashion promised tougher measures if, as he put it, "the whole French people were gagged or prevented from leading a normal existence, by those elements (Reds & Anarchists) that are being used to prevent students from studying, the workers from working....". Following De Gaulle's address the CRS were sent to disperse the remaining pickets from workplaces.

By June 5th most of the strikes were over and an air of what passes for normality within capitalism had swept back over France. Any strikes which continued after this date were crushed in a military style operation using armoured vehicles and guns. In isolation those pockets of militancy stood no chance.

SNATCHING DEFEAT FROM THE JAWS OF VICTORY

All street demonstrations were banned and once again the PCF sought respectability by using its influence to destroy what was left of the action committees. By the end of June the colleges were regained and the Red & Black flags were torn down from the front of the Sorbonne.

In this climate of defeat and demoralisation people turned back to the certainties of conservatism. In the elections the Gaullists captured 60% of the vote. Their grip on the reins of power was reinforced.

In 1968 you had a system which is replicated in most countries in western Europe today. Yet, during the events of May that system was in total turmoil and De Gaulle had foreseen that he might have had to use the army to crush the movement of people. The streets of France could have flowed with blood like they most certainly did in Chile five years later.

Cohn-Bendit and the March 22nd Movement aspired to a classless society based on workers' councils where the division of labour between order-givers and order-takers disappeared. But obviously this vision of a future society was not shared by others on the left and the part they played was to place more obstacles in the way rather than to overcome the ones that already existed.

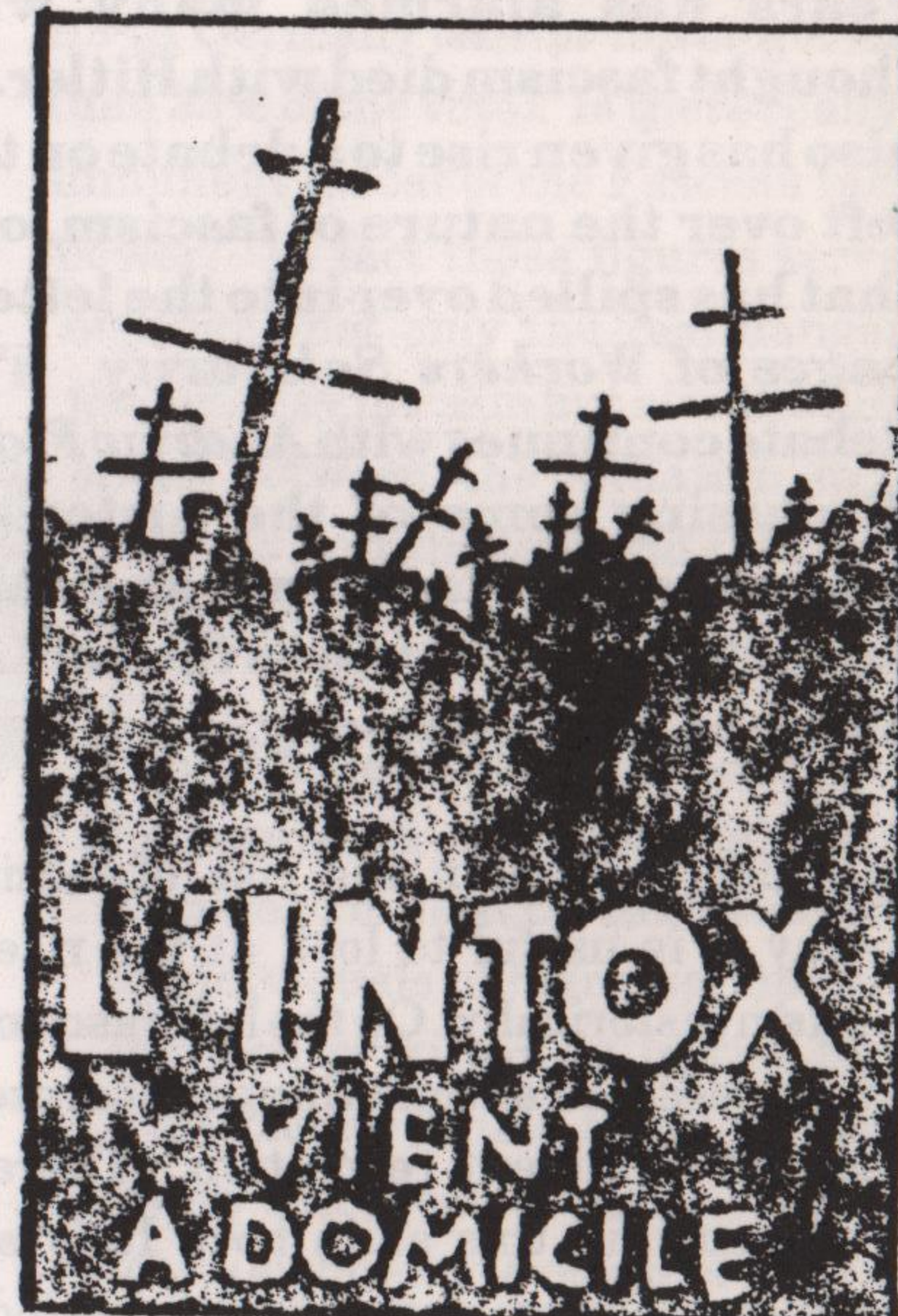
Where the power of the state has been broken down, the working class led by example, as in Nantes where they showed themselves capable of controlling and managing their city. The most active strikers were more progressive and far sighted than their union leaders. Workers showed that there was more to be attained than simple demands and inspiringly took that fight to the bosses.

STALINISTS WANTED TOTAL CONTROL

Why did France '68 ultimately fail? There was no co-ordination of ideas or tactics when events reached a crucial stage. The influential PCF believed that their power would increase in the elections and so were hostile to all movements which were outside of their control. The trade union leadership helped pacify the workers by restricting the focus of workers to 'bread and butter' demands and away from the wider political issues.

Many people had fine aspirations but not much idea of how to achieve those aims. Too many things were left to chance and

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•(Biased TV news) Poison delivered to your home

1968

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the whole movement seemed to stumble on from day to day like a blind man desperately trying to find the light of freedom that must exist at the end of the tunnel. What lessons can we learn from the events of '68. We saw a developed capitalist society being brought to the edge of revolt, people questioning the entire system.

The events took place very rapidly as the working class, fused by the energy and bravado of the students, raised demands that could not be catered for within the confines of the existing system. The general strike displays with beautiful clarity the potential power that lies in the hands of the working class. However, the situation needed more co-ordination and

organisation. The workers needed to organise inter-workplace committees, and create a mechanism whereby delegates began to deal with the real problems.

FROM NEGOTIATIONS TO REVOLT

The anti-authoritarian left, though very active, were too weak among striking workers. The various workers on strike could have co-ordinated their action in order to push the state backwards. France was already in turmoil industrially and the government was weakening. Workers' councils and real democracy throughout the workplaces could have led to stronger negotiations and, eventually, outright revolt.

Once the factories went into a position of self-management the state would be losing the battle. Self-management never got onto the agenda, for reasons explained above. Shopfloor workers needed a mechanism to represent their views and

have an effective democratic decision making process. The union leadership feared and circumvented this. But through democratically elected delegates, factory committees could have raised demands which would be impossible for the state to satisfy. It could have posed the question, who should run France?

We, the working class, must prepare ourselves for the rapid explosion of revolt, so that we do not settle for pay rises when more is to be won. We win pay rises when we can but in France in 1968 the state was more vulnerable and the possibility for a radical change in society was there. We must have the ideas and a system prepared to replace the one we live under at present. When our chance comes to knock the bosses from their pedestal we must grab it with both hands. We must destroy and replace the system when it falls into a position of weakness, not just for our own sakes but for the future of humanity.

Dermot Sreenan

physically fight the fascists but the fascist tactic of smashing the left on an area by area basis meant they, on their own, lacked the strength to stop the fascists. Armed anarchist resistance to fascism was to continue throughout Europe until 1945.

This fascist tactic of swamping areas was only possible because these gangs were funded by the industrialists while those fighting against them were workers who could not leave their jobs for long periods of time to concentrate where ever the fascists were. Later on the main unions would also, sometimes, hold demonstrations against fascism but more often than not these were broken up by fascists, sometimes even though the fascists were heavily outnumbered. Most of the left shied away from any physical confrontation, preferring to rely on the social democrats and the liberals to protect them through the state.

The fascists served other purposes for heavy industry as well. Their focus on "the nation" and rearming suited the industrialists. Heavy industry was the main supplier for the war industry and during re-armament massive profits were made by the industrialists. Re-armament essentially served to provide massive state subsidies and guaranteed profits for the bosses. To achieve this goal and to drive down wages and conditions heavy industry supported fascism in its drive for power. The importance of this financial support was explained by Hitler when in 1934 he invited his audience to consider what it had meant in the elections for the Nazis to have a thousand cars put at their disposal.

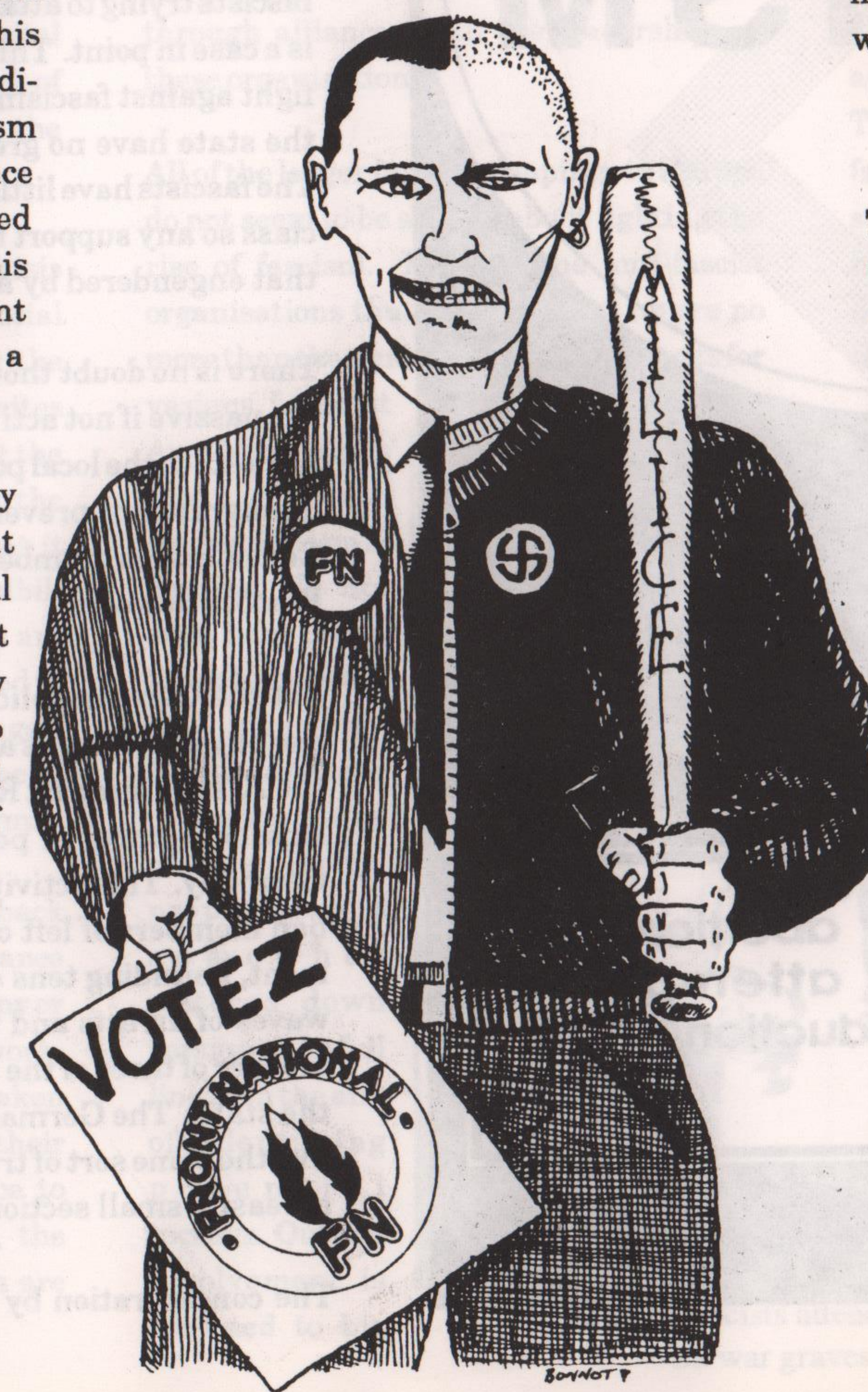
Did the difference between heavy industry and light industry mean that the light industrialists were natural anti-fascists. Their business were not so capital intensive as heavy industry so they did not have the same need to drive down wages as recession could be controlled by laying off a section of the workforce. They supported social partnership with the social democrats and the trade unions. To a large extent a militaristic expansion did not favour their needs and because they would, at least in part, have to pay for it.

WE NEED A REVOLUTION

However as fascism grew and gained mass support it became

obvious it was going to come to power. The only thing that could have stopped it would have been a revolution. The light industrialists, when faced with a choice of losing their power through a workers' revolution or the more minor disadvantages of fascism, were obviously going to make one choice. In any case fascism did promise them lower wages and the destruction of workplace organisation. This went some way towards making up for its potential disadvantages.

Fascism's mass base was built around the middle class, which in both Italy and Germany had been impoverished. After the war very high inflation served both to drive down their earnings and reduce drastically the real value of their income. They lacked the organisation of the workers so it was not unusual for them to be paid less than manual workers. In this situation they could have been won over to socialism but socialism has been very much discredited by the combination of the degeneration of the Russian revolution under Lenin and the repeated betrayals of the social democrats in power.



Can the European fascists take power in the 1990s?



THE GROWTH of the far-right throughout Europe in the last few years has alarmed many who thought fascism died with Hitler. It also has given rise to a debate on the left over the nature of fascism, one that has spilled over into the letters pages of Workers Solidarity. The debate continues with Andrew Flood discussing some of the historical features of fascism and the importance of racism as the central plank of fascism to-day.

In order to explain the rise of fascism to-day it is useful to look at the rise of fascism historically. On the left, fascism is often presented as something that arose to head off imminent revolution. There is some truth in this as in both Italy and Germany fascism appeared in a period of great social upheaval. Germany saw workers' risings in 1918 and 1923. In Italy the years from the end of the war to the

early twenties were known as the Red Years and saw waves of land and factory occupations.

Although the prototypes of the fascist organisations came into existence at this time they were not significant in defeating these uprisings. They were defeated instead through a combination of the conventional forces of the state and the intervention of the social-democrats, turning protest away from an attempt to fundamentally change society into one of gaining a "fairer" version of capitalism. Significant reforms were won including higher wages, the eight hour day and breaking up of some of the larger landlords' estates. In both Italy and Germany the workers had set up factory councils. Rather than going for a head on confrontation with these bodies the bosses legalised them and converted them into toothless consultative bodies.

The bosses were not altogether happy with this because such reforms were paid for in part out of their profits. Heavy

industry in particular with its much heavier ratio of fixed costs in the shape of machinery resented this. The state however represented the interests of the capitalists as a whole, and light industry preferred the stable conditions created by the policy of class collaboration rather than a confrontational approach. Therefore the state was unwilling to launch the serious attacks on the workers' organisations that heavy industry demanded.

FASCISM AND BIG BUSINESS

The heavy industrialists were the first to turn to fascism to help them win back their profits. Initially this was by financing and arming the variety of fascist gangs that had arisen after the war. In Italy in particular the industrialists funded an army of fascists composed of alienated war veterans, adventurers and petty criminals that would arrive in a particular locality and set about smashing the local union organisation and whatever socialist organisations existed. At the time only the anarchists were willing to

The same was true for the peasantry. Agricultural prices had plummeted in the post war years. The left for the most part made no attempt to influence the peasantry, influenced primarily by the concept that peasants could play no progressive role. Indeed the Russian revolution was attacked at the Italian Socialist Party conference for having given the land to the peasants. In these circumstances it was the fascists rather than the socialists who gained support in rural areas. In Germany the big landowners were able to use fascism to get the peasants to form a block with them, calling for higher food prices.

Fascism also recruited from other sources but it was singularly unsuccessful in recruiting any sort of working class base. In the German factory council election of 1931 the fascists achieved only 5% of the vote. In the partial elections of 1933 they achieved only 3% and this with Hitler in power. In Italy the fascist unions were only built by waiting for the fascist gangs to arrive in an area and then firing anyone who was not a member of the fascist union. The gangs would fill the employers need for labour and smash any resistance. Eventually the workers would be starved into joining the fascist unions. Despite the odds against them it would sometimes take months before a majority of the workers would submit.

FASCISM TODAY

Today it would appear the far right are on the march again. If election figures alone were anything to go by they are 2/3rds of the way to power in France and about 1/3 in Germany (Hitler never got more than 33% of the vote). Is there really an imminent threat of the Fascists taking power? In fact these figures serve to highlight not only the real danger of modern day fascism but also the differences between the situation in the twenties and thirties and that which exists today.

Two different threats need to be distinguished when we talk about fascism. The first threat is the threat to individuals of being set upon and maimed or killed by fascist thugs. This clearly exists today in almost every European country. Since the early eighties an average of two racist murders have occurred a week in France. Racist attacks in Germany

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last year became a regular feature on all the worlds news services. Attacks on leftists have also become far more common throughout Europe in the last few years.

The second threat is different, this is the threat of fascism on the road to power, where the right wing attempts to smash all opposition by

In France Le Pen's Front National gained 14% of the vote, while fascist parties polled 10% in Belgium.

**SMASH
NAZISM**

In Hitler's Germany abortion was banned in an attempt to increase the reproduction of the Aryan race.

physical means. European fascism has not yet entered this phase. It does not have the backing of any sizeable section of the ruling class. Its attacks to date are designed by the leaders of the fascist organisations to win it more support. The concentration on racism rather than attacks on workplace organisation is not primarily due to the fascists hiding their true colours. As yet big business has not called upon the fascists to play their historic role of smashing potential opposition to austerity measures.

There are few reports of fascists attacking pickets or breaking up the premises of unions. Direct attacks by fascists on the left have increased but are still very much fewer than the number of attacks on immigrants. This is not to say there are none, the bomb attack on the office of the Danish section of the International Socialists in which one of their members was killed or the physical attacks by FN supporters on anti-fascist demonstrations show such activity is occurring. Leftists have been killed in Germany by fascists and in Britain physical attacks on the left have become more common.

There was the recent daytime attack on the anarchist Freedom Bookshop in London's Whitechapel by the neo-nazi C18 gang (the 1 and 8 refers to the letters of the alphabet, A & H, or Adolph Hitler) and the attempt to burn down another anarchist bookshop, the 121 Centre in Brixton. It is, however, a secondary feature of the activities of fascists to-day.

LONDON ARRESTS

As yet there is little evidence for any substantial link between the fascists and sections of the ruling class. This is also the reason why the police can sometimes choose to move in force against the fascists. The recent arrest of some 300 fascists trying to attack the Bloody Sunday march in London is a case in point. This is not to say the cops are an ally in the fight against fascism, just that at the moment the cops and the state have no great enthusiasm for the fascist groups. The fascists have little support from any section of the ruling class so any support they get from the police is restricted to that engendered by a set of common prejudices they share.

There is no doubt though that the fascists in Germany have the passive if not active support of the cops a lot of the time. At Rostock the local police failed to do anything to protect the immigrants or prevent fascists from arriving at the town. Considerable numbers of anti-fascists were arrested in Rostock however.

Yet the German polices response when sections of the left use physical force as a weapon is much more spectacular. In the 70's the terrorist Red Army Fraction (RAF) killed a much smaller number of people than the fascists have killed in Germany. This activity was enough for the German state to ban members of left organisations from any state employment, hounding tens of thousands out of their jobs. It saw waves of arrests and torture in police custody. It saw the murder of three of the leading members of the RAF in jail by the state. The German far right has not received anything like the same sort of treatment. They do have the support of at least a small section of the ruling class.

The concentration by the fascists on racism also explains

why their supporters include many workers this time around. When all the mainstream political parties are blaming unemployment and poor housing on immigration the fascists are able to say, look we are fighting to get you jobs by driving out these foreigners. This is why many on the left see the far-right as being ultra-racists rather than fascists. At the moment the fight against the manifestations of racism is more important, but this can not be artificially divided from the fight against the far-right parties. This separation also comes out of a analysis of fascism that sees it as something which can only arise in opposition to the existence of a large militant socialist movement. Essentially in this analysis fascism is a tool the bosses use only when there is a working class movement heading in a revolutionary direction.

Before World War Two fascism did not arise to head off an imminent revolution in either Germany or Italy. It arose because the bosses needed to squeeze the working class a lot harder than the democratic capitalist state was capable of. Wage cuts were so savage under fascism that wages in Germany, for instance, did not reach the 1931 level until 1956. Including cuts in the social wage, new taxes and direct wage cuts workers lost at least 50% of their pay. In fact a large part of the German "economic miracle" after World War Two was due to the fact that post-war German bosses were left both with the physical legacy of the capital created under fascism but also a level of wages and conditions much lower than the rest of Europe.

At the moment capitalism is in a deep crisis and it would appear that neither social partnership as practised in Ireland or the "free market" economics of the Thatcherites can pull it out. This does not mean that the bosses will necessarily turn to fascism in the near future, it does however mean that it would be dangerous to rule out this possibility. It has been argued that the unions are very weak and the bosses would not need to resort to such measure to drive down wages. As against this wages in most European countries have not yet fallen in real terms.

Attempts by the bosses to actually cut back wages have been met with limited resistance like the metal workers' strike in Germany or the miners' marches in Britain. Some workers, like the tube staff in London, have taken action outside the official structure of their unions. The actual level of resistance to substantial real cuts is unmeasured, the bosses could decide the current states are incapable of enforcing their will.

The current status of the European far-right as a primarily racist rather than fascist movement does effect the way we fight it. It is the official racism of the governments and opposition parties that has made the far right acceptable. Yet many of their campaigns built by the left-to-day have sought to include soft racists in the fight against the hard racists. This is a mistake for three reasons. Firstly it means those sections of the population subject to racism will just see the left as not offering any real alternative. Secondly it makes the fascists' racist agenda itself more acceptable although it aims to make their methods less so. Thirdly, it's wrong to give any respectability or comfort to racism.

The racists have succeeded in creating a consensus throughout Europe that runs from the far right to the soft left. Immigration is identified as the key to the problem affecting workers' conditions. The difference between the fascists fire-bombing houses and the French Socialist Party deporting immigrants is, in the final analysis, one of tactics and not one of principle. The fascists may well lose support to the more moderate racists if these 'moderates' succeed in slowing immigration. This demonstrates how it is not the fascists setting the terms of debate but rather the mainstream parties. There is a need to win what remains of the activists in social democratic parties to a more serious anti-fascism but this can not be effectively done through alliances with the leaderships of these organisations.

All of the larger far left groupings in Europe do not seem to be serious about fighting the rise of fascism. Many of the anti-fascist organisations that have been set up are no more than the crudest of recruiting fronts for various Leninist parties. Some like the Anti-Nazi League and 'Youth against Racism in Europe' do not even have a real branch structure or meetings. They operate entirely as a wing of the Party, propagating a somewhat watered down version of the full line with the aim of identifying potential recruits. Outside involvement is confined to big

This is very much a repeat of the tactics used by both the Communist Parties and the social democrats in the early thirties (albeit from a different political angle). They tended to identify the other left groups as a more serious threat to themselves than the fascists, the Communist Parties going so far as to characterise the social democrats as "social-fascists". Later when the depth of the threat had been realised alliances with "progressive" elements of the bourgeoisie were ranked as being more important than any physical opposition to the fascists. Indeed it was feared that any physical confrontation might drive away liberal supporters.

CONTROLLING THE ANTI-FASCISTS?

What is needed is an open campaign that will fight against fascism as part of a broader campaign against racism. Physical confrontation, and physical defence and mobilisation of their victims, will have to form a key part of this. What we can expect is unfortunately somewhat different to this. The bulk of the left is so demoralised by the events of the last few years that all of the large organisations are afraid of involving their members outside the immediate role of paper sellers.

It was the refusal of the left in the 20's and 30's to recognise a common enemy and work against it that helped fascism into power. The struggle for the control of the anti-fascists became more important than the struggle against fascism. Cute phrases about history repeating itself can not sufficiently describe the horror that will come about if the same mistake is made again.



•British fascists attending annual nazi gathering at the SS war graves in Diksmuide, Belgium.

Nigerian anarchists released

IN THE LAST two issues of *Workers Solidarity* we reported that four anarchists were among the trade union and political activists arrested by the military government in Nigeria. An international week of solidarity was held in February. Protests were organised outside Nigerian embassies and consulates in Germany, Russia, Britain, the USA, Brazil and Ireland. In Dublin the Workers Solidarity Movement handed out leaflets about the four jailed members of the Awareness League and then protested at the embassy.

Other gestures of solidarity came from anarchists and libertarian socialists around the world, some of whom lacked a Nigerian embassy to lodge a direct protest with. India, Norway, Poland, Canada, South Korea, Turkey, Spain, the Netherlands, Estonia, South Africa, and Bulgaria have all reported protests and messages of solidarity.

As the protests were being organised, word arrived that the court had granted bail to the four on 'compassionate' grounds with the condition that they sign on daily at the headquarters of the secret police (State Security Service). The four had been arrested and detained without trial in June of last year after a wave of worker and student protest against IMF and World Bank austerity plans. On their release they were found to be "badly emaciated, weak and sick". They were promptly hospitalised for two weeks.

However, as they left the court "there was an attempt", according to the League, "to have our colleagues re-arrested outside the premises but this was stoutly resisted by the crowd", which included 100 AL members plus scores of others.

Ifeanyi Chukwu reports from Nigeria "On the political front the situation in our country has not improved one bit. Repression is mounting. Workers nationwide have been on strike against the background of worsening economic conditions. Only a couple of weeks ago a tribunal sentenced six opposition elements, including a retired army General, to death on trumped up charges".

World anarchist News

More Peruvian anarchists arrested

LAST WINTER *Workers Solidarity* reported that Peruvian anarchist Andres Villaverde Aguilar had been arrested on charges of 'sabotage'. When the anti-terrorist DINCOTE agency couldn't come up with any evidence he was then absurdly accused of being a member of the Maoist Shining Path guerillas. In jail since October 27th 1991 he still has not been brought to trial.

On May 9th the anarchist Victor Navarro Huarmiyuri was arrested by DINCOTE while leaving the maximum security Castro-Castro prison in Lima. Victor had been visiting Andres Villaverde. Also detained was an older brother of Andres. A third person, Pablo Salazar Deveraux, a US citizen of Peruvian descent and worker on the *Love & Rage* anarchist paper in New York was also visiting Andres at the time.

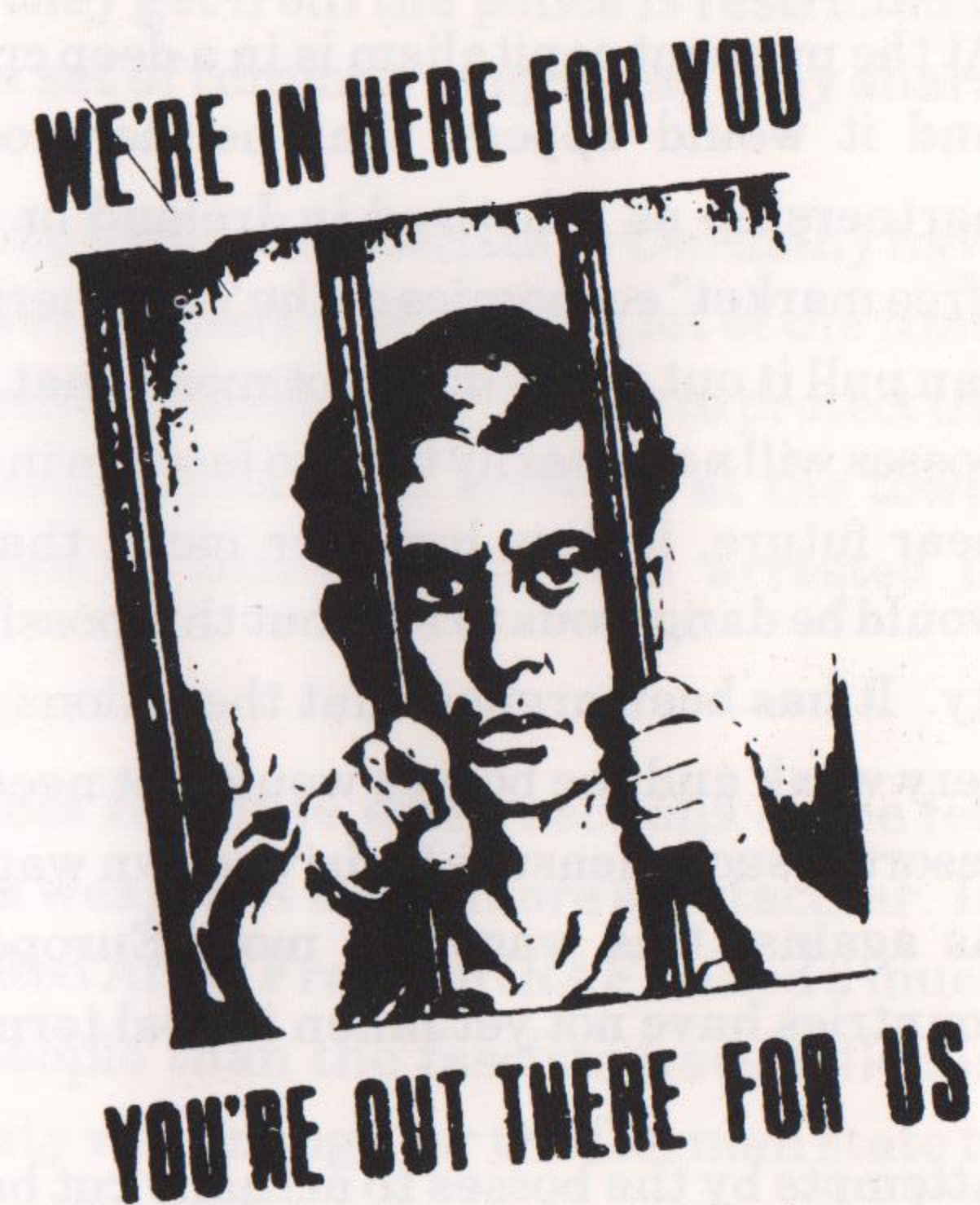
All three are now being investigated as possible members of the Peruvian Communist Party-Sendero Luminoso (PCP-Shining Path). As anarchists Victor, Pablo and Andres clearly do not support the authoritarian PCP-SL. Andres's brother is not a member or supporter either.

On Sunday May 9th all visitors to the prison were strip searched on exiting as well as entering the prison (it is not clear if this was a once-off occurrence or a permanent change in exit procedure). Pablo was searched first and, as nothing unusual was found in his possession, he was passed on to the next checkpoint. However a letter from Andres to an anarchist friend outside the prison was found on Victor. The mere possession of such a letter violates prison rules, as all letters to and from prisoners must be censored by the National Intelligence Service (SIN). When Andres's brother was searched photocopied articles from *Love & Rage* about the international campaign for Andres's release were discovered.

Both were taken to DINCOTE headquarters. The prison security didn't realise that Pablo was with Victor and Andres's

brother and he was able to leave the prison without any problems. The next day Victor's residence was raided. The following morning (May 11th) Pablo left Peru on a flight he had booked the week before. Later that day an order for his arrest was issued by DINCOTE and police at the airport were ordered to detain him. DINCOTE seemingly is (or was) unaware that he had already left the country. On May 13th they ransacked the houses of his uncle and his cousin. On May 17th they were still sitting in unmarked cars outside these houses to arrest Pablo should he return.

Anarchists in the USA, Canada, Germany and Spain immediately sent money to Peru to facilitate their release. (As we go to press we still don't know if they have been granted bail.) Through their investigation it is quite possible that DINCOTE will try to characterise the entire Peruvian anarchist movement as pro-Sendero and will increase the repression against them.



Andres's lawyer is also concerned that the investigation will also be used to adversely affect his upcoming case. This may be heard in July by a Tribunal Sin Rostro (Faceless Tribunal), special courts established after President Fujimori's coup in April 1992 which are composed of three hooded judges who try cases of

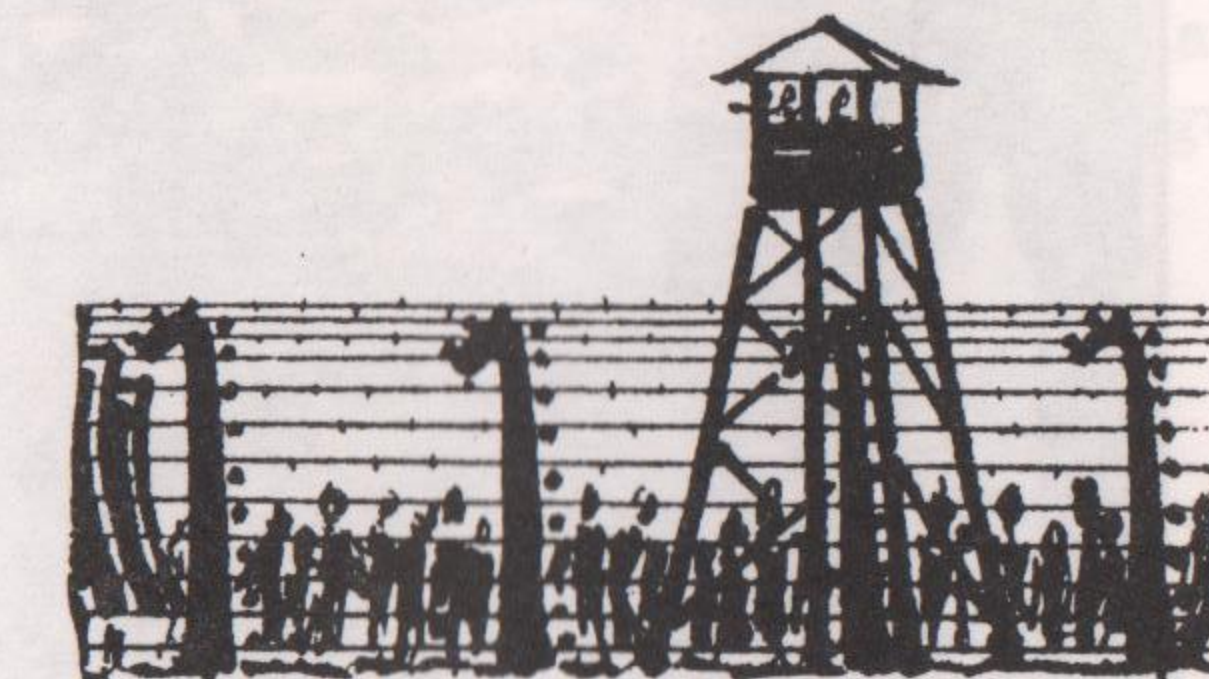
accused terrorists. The accused are denied almost all normal legal rights in these tribunals and practically no evidence is required for a conviction.

We have no way of knowing the current situation of Victor and Andres's brother as they are being held incommunicado. DINCOTE is known for its use of torture. Amnesty International has documented cases of electric shocks, rape and beatings. In Peru today detainees have no rights. Detainees of DINCOTE are not even provided with food and only eat if someone on the outside brings food to the prison each day.

Money is needed for food and legal costs. Peruvian workers are poor and are looking to us to help them out. Donations can be sent to the Peruvian Solidarity Project

c/o WSM, P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 8. All contributions will be acknowledged.

The Fujimori government is trying to smear and isolate the anarchists and revolutionary socialists in their country by linking them to Sendero. The detainees are accused of having connections to SL. They most certainly do not. Anyone with any sense would know that anarchists would have nothing to do with such an authoritarian outfit.



After Warrington A New Peace Movement?

DUBLIN SUNDAY MARCH 28TH. On a rainy afternoon about 20,000 people (*Irish Times* estimate) crowd O'Connell Street to protest at the deaths of two children, Jonathan Ball and Tim Parry. At the fringes of the rally a small group carry pictures of some other victims of violence. Fergal Carahers's widow holds a placard saying "also, remember, British soldiers killed my husband". Others hold pictures of Majela O'Hare, Aiden McAnespie, Seamus Duffy, Karen Reilly and other victims of security force violence in the North.

A small section of the crowd reacts angrily and begins to heckle them shouting "out, out, out!". Gardai move in quickly to grab the offending placards. In death as in life it seems that some are more equal than others.

The Peace 1993 movement was set-up after the Warrington bombings as people reacted angrily to the killing of innocent children. Their efforts to distance themselves from politics have not been entirely successful. Attempting to mould the peace movement in their own image were New Consensus and the Peace Train Organisation.

These organisations are little more than fronts for the Democratic Left, Workers Party and others who see the IRA as the

incarnation of all evil. They are partly financed by the British government, through the Northern Ireland Office (see 'Peace train runs out of steam' *Workers Solidarity* 33). The people involved in Peace 1993 events have the best of motives and are sickened by the violence on all sides. Unfortunately they are being used.

GANGSTERS AND PSYCHOPATHS?

Peace 1993 has started with the analysis we are offered again and again by our rulers and the media. Paramilitaries, especially republican ones, are portrayed as gangsters and psychopaths used and manipulated by cynical "godfather's of crime". It is because of the IRA (we are told) that "normal democratic politics" cannot proceed. If they were to lay down their arms everything would be Hunkey-Dory. Unfortunately this is not the case. Indeed the ceasefire of 1975 between the British government and the IRA was broken unilaterally by the British. They used the opportunity to conduct raids and searches for arms, and provoked the republicans in every way possible. The ceasefire was not signed by the loyalist gunmen who stepped up their sectarian campaign.

Sinn Féin's electoral support is 10% in total and 30% among Northern Ireland Catholics, concentrated in the working class areas of West Belfast and Derry and

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Peace 1993?

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among small farmers in the border counties. The IRA have no difficulty in recruiting young Catholic workers and unemployed and will continue to do so. They are not the problem, they are a product of the real problem.

This is the Northern Ireland State. There can be no "normal politics" in Northern Ireland. This is a State founded on blatant sectarianism and the repression of the minority. Catholics are still twice as likely to be unemployed as their Protestant neighbours (according to the government's own Fair Employment Agency). This is combined with day-to-day harassment by the security forces and the recent acceleration of sectarian attacks. These are the conditions that make it very unlikely that the IRA will just disappear.

POLITICS OR POND LIFE?

The IRA are a response to a State that was a model in sectarianism. The British State succeeded in buying the loyalty of Protestant workers with marginal privileges. They created the reactionary ideology of unionism. Normal politics in Northern Ireland is illustrated graphically by the activities of the Belfast city council which recently took another giant



•IRA firing party salutes one of their dead

step into the dark ages when it renewed its ban on over 18s films on Sundays. The normal politics of this council chamber was described as "more like pond-life than politics" by one recently resigned SDLP councillor.

As long as the British occupation continues and as long as unionism is propped up by them, so-called normal politics in Northern Ireland remains in the realm of sick humour. The IRA are not to blame for the situation in the North. But they will never be able to change it.

The armed struggle over the last 20 or so years has done little more than irritate the British and Irish governments. A small guerrilla army will never defeat the combined resources of the British and Southern Irish States. Like all small guerilla armies they are elitist and unanswerable to those they claim to represent. The only role they offer Catholic workers is to cheer on from the sidelines.

No group of this nature no matter, how brave or well armed, will ever set us free. Ultimately the armed struggle is no substitute for mass action. The only way to fundamentally change things is by uniting workers North and South of all religions and none to defeat the bosses, orange and green, and build a secular worker's republic.

WINNING SUPPORT ...FOR MORE REPRESSION?

The so-called economic bombing campaign in Britain is another reflection of the IRA's political bankruptcy. Any serious socialist anti-imperialist group would attempt to enlist the support of British workers against their own ruling class.

The IRA's simplistic strategy is that they can bomb them into submission by causing massive economic damage. In fact it alienates British workers and makes the introduction of anti-Irish laws like The Prevention of Terrorism Act that bit easier.

And it has to be said that the IRA know well that the authorities will occasionally ignore or delay a bomb warning in order to whip up anger at the Provos. With this knowledge it has to be said that the IRA take a very cavalier attitude towards the lives of ordinary people every time they plant a bomb in a shopping mall or railway station. It would not be unreasonable to ask if their bombing of Warrington amounts to manslaughter.

The economic bombing campaign of the last 20 years from the Birmingham pub bombs, through the attacks on Downing Street, the stock exchange and the recent massive attack on the Nat West tower have not shaken the British government's resolve. Despite the cost (the Damage from the Nat West bomb is estimated at £3-500 million or about 1/10 of the annual bill for running the North for a year) they still hang on.

MORE PROGRESSIVE THAN THE LEGION OF MARY!

Anyone waiting eagerly to hear radical ideas from the IRA's political wing, Sinn Féin after the slight relaxation of Section 31 (of the Broadcasting Act) forced on RTE can stop holding their breath. Take womens' rights for example. At this year's Ard Fheis a motion was put forward committing them to support a woman's right to choose abortion. One delegate

(Daisy Mules from Derry) in support of the motion said that "the struggle for human rights and democracy must include womens' rights which includes the right to choose".

The party's ruling Ard Chomhairle had different ideas. Tom Hartley claimed that existing policy was "the most progressive held by any political party in the country" (Not true, of course, both Democratic Left and the Worker's Party have gone further in their limited support for abortion rights). Gerry Adams claimed that to change policy "would be the biggest mistake we could make this weekend". The motion was defeated (An Phoblacht/Republican News' 25th February).

Sinn Féin's politics continue to be based around a desperate attempt to make

friends with right wing nationalist elements like Fianna Fáil TD Michael Noonan and the SDLP 'grassroots'. This strategy has failed totally and their vote in the South remains minute.

The truth is that neither Peace 1993 nor the republicans can change things. Their simplistic solutions of "Lets all put down our guns and be pals" (unless we happen to have uniforms) or that of a united capitalist Ireland underline the lack of ideas of both organisations. Not only have they no solutions they haven't even begun to ask the right questions.

WORKERS' ACTION

Our solution is not quite so simple. It is a longer and more difficult route, but it is the only one which will work. It involves

uniting workers in Ireland to fight for a united anarchist republic.

In the short-term this means supporting and building, where possible, united action against the bosses. Also where united struggles do take place trying to make connections showing how the only way to real unity against the bosses is to oppose partition which is used to keep Protestant and Catholic workers apart. In the long-term it means fighting both British imperialist occupation of Northern Ireland and our own native bosses and Southern clericalist laws. The only way to do this is through massive united class struggle. There are no short-cuts on the road to freedom.

Des McCarron

A Rebel Spirit

LEAH FELDMAN, cremated in London on January 7th, was one of the ordinary men and women who rarely get into history books but have been the backbone of the anarchist movement.

Born in Warsaw in 1899, as a schoolgirl she became interested in anarchism. She said that her mother used to hide her shoes so that she could not attend meetings, which were then illegal in Poland. Finally she ran away to her sister in London where she earned her living at the sewing machine.

Working in the sweatshops of the East End she became active in the Yiddish-speaking anarchist movement that flourished at that time. When the Russian revolution broke out in 1917 the overwhelming majority of Russian male Jewish anarchists returned home. Many of those women whose husbands and lovers died at the hands of the Tsarists or the Bolsheviks, remained in England. The Jewish (in the sense of neither racial or religious but Yiddish-speaking) anarchist movement gradually dwindled and ended with Leah's death in January.

Leah, however, had made her own way to Russia. Upon arrival she saw the reality of Bolshevik rule and was not impressed. As a working woman she could see the effects of their dictatorship in a way that visiting intellectuals could not. Before leaving Moscow she attended Kropotkin's funeral, the last permitted anarchist demonstration until the collapse of Stalinism. (In a great display of self-discipline all of the anarchist political prisoners who were paroled for the funeral returned to jail, in the hope that the Bolsheviks would

give parole to others in the future).

Leah travelled south to the Ukraine and joined the anarchist Revolutionary Army led by Nestor Makhno. The Ukrainian anarchists fought Tsarism, foreign intervention and then the Bolshevik dictatorship. Though she did not actually fight (some women who could ride horseback did) she joined the train that followed the army and prepared clothes and food for the orphans and strays they picked up everywhere.

When they were defeated in 1921 she got out of the country by changing her nationality through a marriage of convenience to a German anarchist. They did not meet again. She made her way to Paris and then back to London. There she acquired British citizenship by another marriage of convenience, this time to a derelict ex-serviceman who was paid £10 for his services. They did not see each other until many years later Leah received an official communication that he was in a geriatric hospital. She used to visit him with presents of tobacco.

Before World War 2 she travelled to Poland and Palestine, working her way to



both places. In Palestine she organised a federation of anarchists. One surprise was meeting her old friend Paula Green, who had been pressurised into marriage in Russia, so had chosen an atheist zionist with whom she was in love. Paula knew he was active in Labour politics but thought it impossible that he would ever be in government as he thought her ideas impossible.

Green changed his name to Ben Gurion and became the first prime minister of Israel. His wife did not leave him but she never once took part in any public functions with him. She remained a

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A Rebel Spirit

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still believing, if passive, anarchist.

When Leah returned to London at the end of 1935 she helped raise money for the German sailors who organised an anti-Nazi resistance group in the 1930s. She also did tremendous work for the Spanish anarchist movement when the civil war broke out.

Leah was a member of a working group of immigrant anarchist women in Holborn ever since 1939. How, with the confusion of tongues - broken English, Yiddish, Polish, French, Catalan, Spanish, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot - they understood each other was a mystery to many. But they managed.

Leah had to give up work when her eyesight went after an operation. She was completely blind in one eye thereafter and increasingly so in the other. She used her free time to help the movement she had given her life to. In the 1960s she smuggled arms into Spain for the fighters who had continued resisting the Franco regime since 1939. The Catalans, who are prone to giving nicknames, christened her "la yaya Makhnowista" (the Makhnovist granny).

Her last years were sad. Not only were all her family and her early friends dead, there was nobody left with whom she could talk in her own language. But she never gave up. She still supported anarchist meetings and always attended the annual London Anarchist Bookfair when her health permitted.

Our movement has been built by working women and men like Leah. It is right that we do not forget their contribution.

Thanks to Leah's friend Albert Meltzer and to the Kate Sharpley Library for information about Leah's life.

letters

UNDERESTIMATING THE FASCIST THREAT?

Dear Sir/Madam,

The rather incoherent analysis of fascism propounded by Alan Reid, a correspondent to the Spring '93 issue of *Workers Solidarity* begs a response. Mr Reid concludes his letter with the assertion that 'revolutionaries should be directing their fire at the establishment root of the problem, not playing the bosses game of targeting the neo-Nazi fringe'.

If Mr Reid had any clear perception of the social, economic and political philosophy of fascism he would be well aware of the intrinsic relationship between capitalism and the promotion of racist ideas by the capitalist class to divide and rule workers. Far from being unaware of this interconnectedness genuine anti fascists have a political analysis which recognises that it is essential to fight both fascism and capitalism.

David Irving and other 'historians' of the Revisionist school may be quite easily dismissed as marginal Hitler enthusiasts' as this allows both the popular media and the soft left to ignore the problem of the spread of far right ideas via the regular exposure of the loony theories disseminated by Irving. Such dismissal is thus an easy cloak with which to mask the fact that the anti-immigration policies being implemented by parties of both the right and the mainstream left in Europe are achieving part of the fascist agenda in the democratic sphere. It should come as no surprise to socialists that the idea of white supremacy should be intrinsically linked to that other European invention, capitalism and its twin offspring of economic imperialism and fascism.

Mr Reid is also incorrect in his assertion that there is no connection between the rise of fascism and the crisis periods of capitalism in the 1930's and 1990's. Any cursory examination of the of the panic introduction of capitalism in Eastern Germany will draw close parallels between increasing unemployment among white working class youth and the rise of racial tension against immigrants. The fact that both the trade union movement and the so-called left have refused to take any serious or principled stand against increasing racism in Europe, as it refused to fight the erosion of workers rights, points to a problem within the left rather than the claim that as a result of this inaction fascism is not a threat.

The most dangerous conclusion of Mr Reid's thesis, that neo-Nazi ideas are unlikely to gain political precedence in Europe to the extent that they did in the 1930's and, consequently, that the rise of the far right on the streets is not a threat, is an open recipe for inaction on the left, the very fact that has allowed the current situation to develop. Mr Reid's strategy is yet another application of the alleged tactics currently being put forward by groups such as the 'Anti Nazi League' and 'Youth Against Racism in Europe', both supposedly fighting Fascism on a socialist basis.

The platform of both these groups consists of constant polemicising against the establishment basis of racism, while simultaneously calling for governmental action to curb the influence of the fascists, an infantile analysis if ever there was one. Their tactic of holding sham demonstrations against the Nazis, with plenty of militant 'fighting' rhetoric, but no action, achieves nothing and is in fact counter-productive as it convinces the Nazis that the left is not a threat to their control of the streets. Whenever there is a successful large scale mobilisation against the Fascists, as at Waterloo in September '92, the ANL, YARE, etc. are nowhere to be seen, being busy organising meaningless rallies elsewhere.

Any socialist with a true knowledge of the social and economic factors behind the development of fascist politics will work to defeat racist ideas in both the educational and political spheres. Socialists must place a central priority on winning the hearts and minds of white working class youth away from the ideas propounded by the nazis as it is this social grouping that the far right targets for recruitment.

In Britain Anti Fascist Action has proved that the influence of the fascists can be curbed by an integrated policy of determined political opposition to far right ideas centring around ideological and physical opposition to fascism. The overt manifestation of fascism as brute force on the streets must be countered with physical resistance just as much as the anti-working class policies of the establishment must be met with strong political action on the left.

To ignore the rise of fascism, which is the logical conclusion of Mr Reid's argument, is to allow it the space to spread and gain recruits through the absence of any response on the left, too busy digging for the root to notice the rotten fruit about to descend on them.

Yours sincerely,
M. Glennon,
c/o P.O. Box 3355,
Dublin 7.

letters are always
welcome

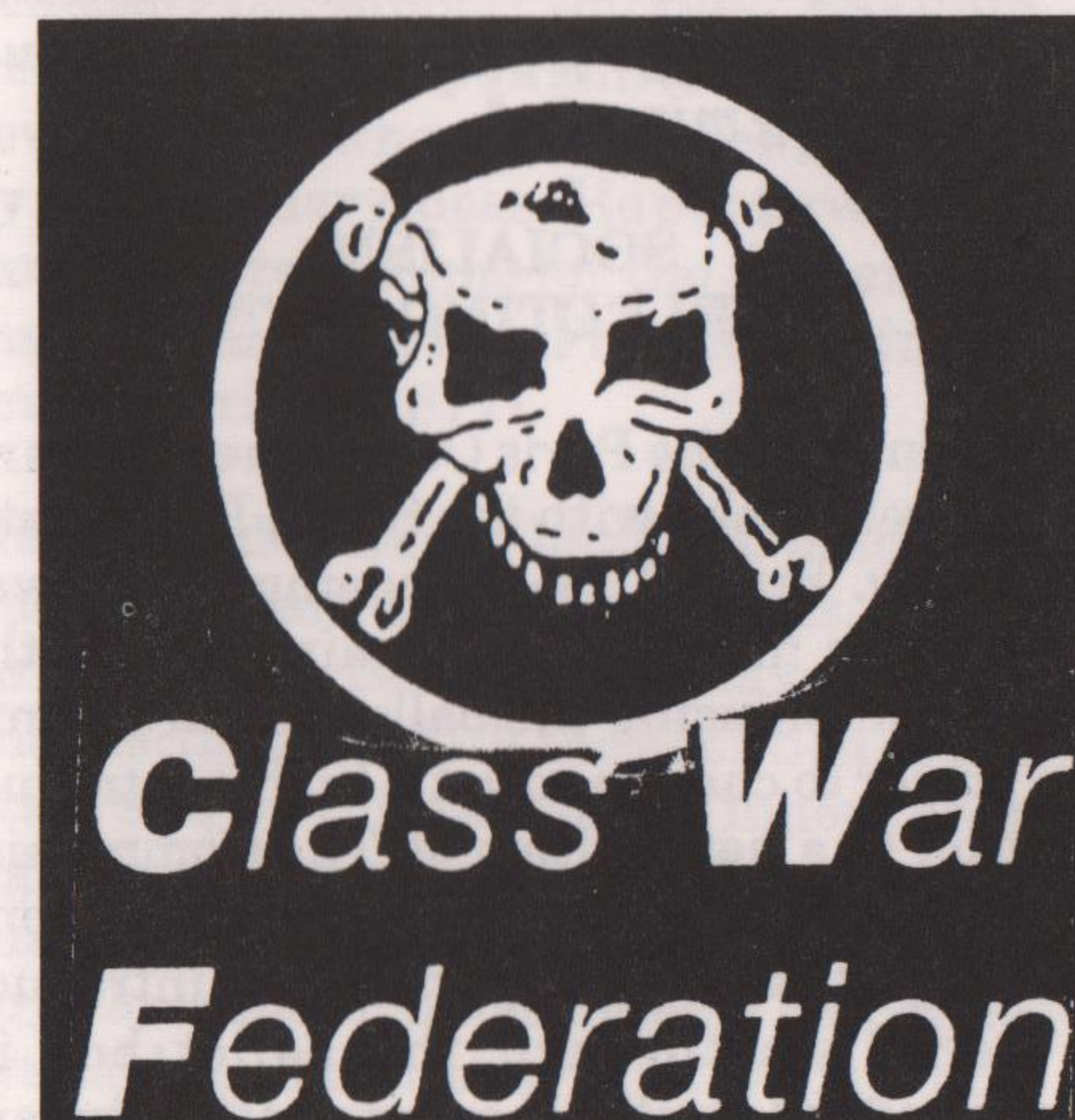
REVIEW

CLASS WAR - THE BOOK

UNFINISHED BUSINESS ...THE POLITICS OF CLASS WAR (AK Press) £4.50

CLASS WAR is a British group which came into existence at the time of the 1984 miners' strike. Since then it has gained a certain notoriety with the British media and has been blamed for the 1991 Poll Tax riots among other things. This suited Class War, the paper focused on individuals or groups lashing back physically at the system and presented the rest of the left as soft, middle class and boring. Class War however found itself unable to build out of the nation-wide coverage it got during the Poll Tax riots, unlike Leninist groups like the SWP. This helped win the argument inside Class War for a turn to boring politics.

'Unfinished Business' is 186 pages of Class War explaining its political outlook. What's more it does seem to represent a real if unacknowledged break with their past. The book is divided into sections



which include capitalism, the state and revolutionary organisation. It provides a good, if sometimes flawed, introduction to the topics it covers and even attempts to tackle Class War's historical problem area, Ireland.

The section on Ireland is a good place to start. For the first time Class War clearly lay the blame for the war at the feet of the British state. A clear distinction is also drawn between the activities of the Loyalist sectarian terror gangs and the IRA. They also say that Ireland needs to

be raised in the same way that other political issues are raised with British workers.

CLASS WAR AND THE IRA

However illusions do exist in republicanism as is shown by the description of the INLA as a "more class struggle oriented group". This implies not only that the INLA is a socialist organisation but also that the Provos are as well. In reality the socialism of the INLA has never amounted to more than fire-bombing Dunnes Stores during the anti-apartheid strike. This was condemned by both the strikers and their support group and demonstrates a real elitist style of "doing it for you" politics.

The republican movement has always opposed any element of socialism which might lose it support from the nationalist middle and ruling classes. As far back as the war of independence the IRA drove off landless labourers that had occupied big estates in Munster. Socialists should defend the Provos against the British state because they are anti-imperialists not because they are 10% socialist. Attempting to find bits of socialism in the politics of the Provos just serves to sow illusions in them and throws doubts about what exactly Class War considers socialism to be.

Fortunately the rest of the book makes clear that Class War would have little in common with the "socialism" put forward by the left of the republican movement or the elitist theory of republicanism in general. As the blurb on the back says "We argue here for the re-creation of an independent revolutionary movement within the working class, under the control of no-one but themselves, inspired by the best traditions of unity and solidarity".

WHAT TYPE OF ORGANISATION?

The section on organisation refers to "The Platform for Libertarian Communism" with which Class War see "no need to disagree". Previous articles in *Workers Solidarity* have discussed this pamphlet which we reprinted some years ago. It was produced by anarchists who had fled the USSR in the 1920s and argued that anarchists needed an organisation with theoretical and tactical unity that was based around collective responsibility and federalism.

The issue of what Class War intend to do to build such an organisation is avoided however, instead anarchist groups are criticised for putting all their efforts into various campaigns. Class War however are "going to build organisations which will have in-depth support and popularity in this country....and whose groups and activities will be dispersed throughout our class where it counts". Sounds good but isn't this the way every anarchist organisation sees itself.

One criticism of the book is its tendency to set up plastic versions of the rest of the left which can then easily be knocked down. Anarchists, we are told, "hope that some sort of spontaneous mass uprising and revolution will develop on its own". If this was the case then why we would bother forming organisations at all. Later we are told that anarchist organisations "are loose and political emphasis varies from one anarchist to another". This is just a standard criticism of Class War stood on its head and is hardly an accurate description of anarchist organisations like the WSM.

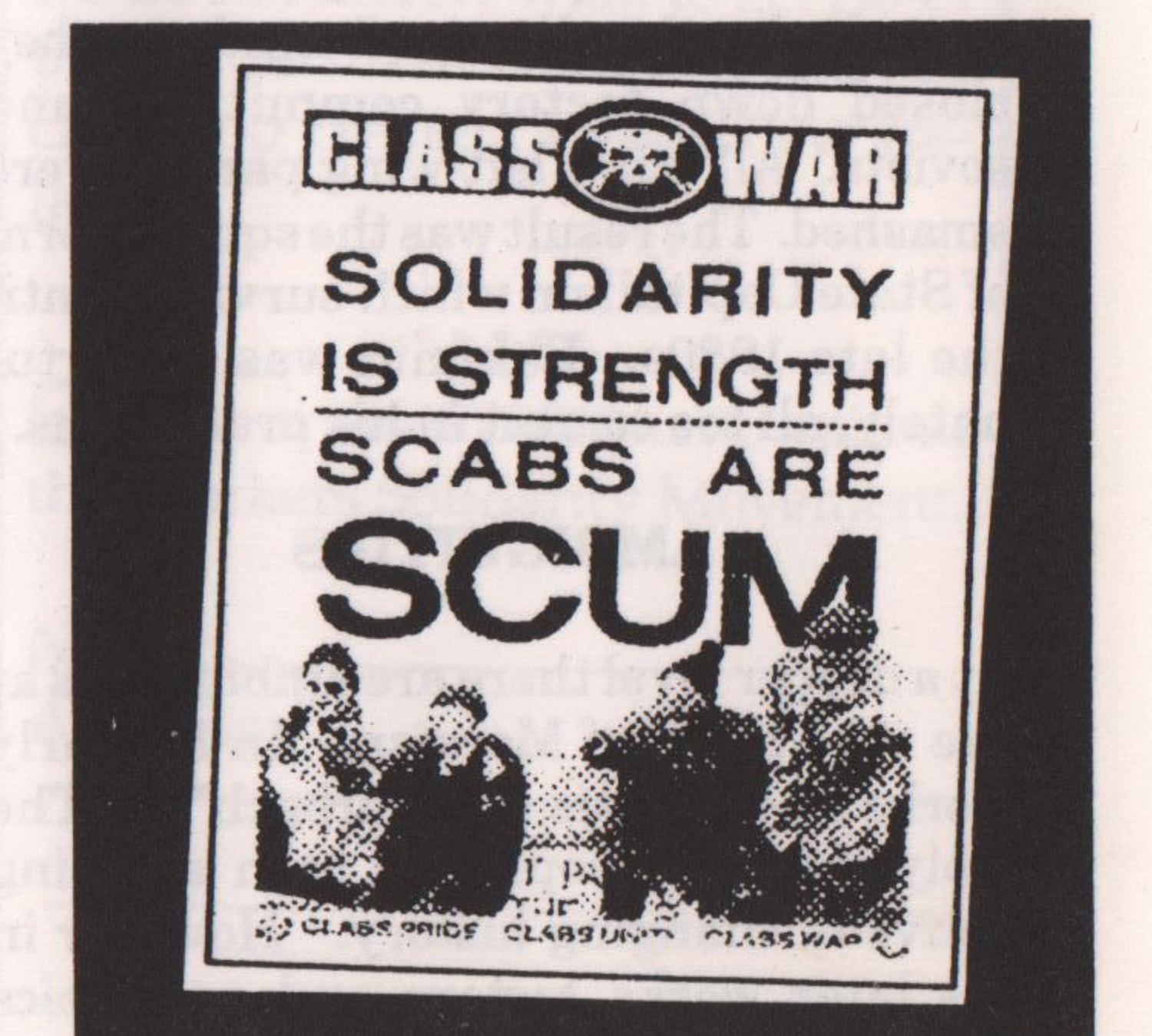
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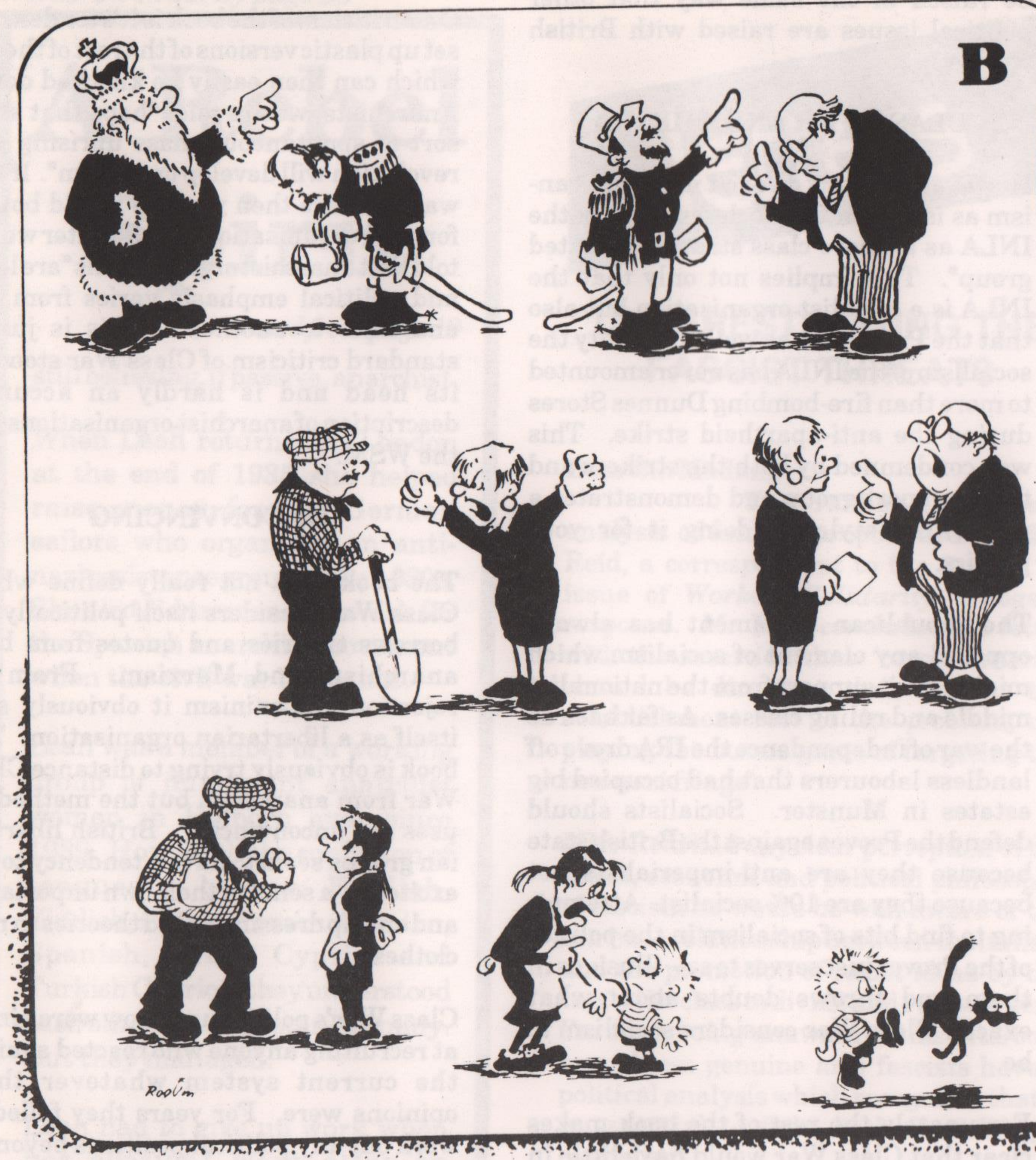
The book does not really define where Class War considers itself politically. It borrows theories and quotes from both anarchism and Marxism. From its rejection of Leninism it obviously sees itself as a libertarian organisation. The book is obviously trying to distance Class War from anarchism but the methods it uses are unconvincing. British libertarian groups seem to have a tendency to get excited by a sense of their own importance and end up dressing up old theories in new clothes.

Class War's politics up to now were aimed at recruiting anyone who reacted against the current system whatever their opinions were. For years they failed to work out any political positions beyond a general 'bash the rich' philosophy. The attempt to turn the organisation around would obviously be filled with difficulty and last year rumours started of an impending split. The British anarchist fortnightly 'Freedom' carried a letter from Class War saying those who edited this book have now been told to "fuck right off" out of Class War so this turn may well be over before it started!

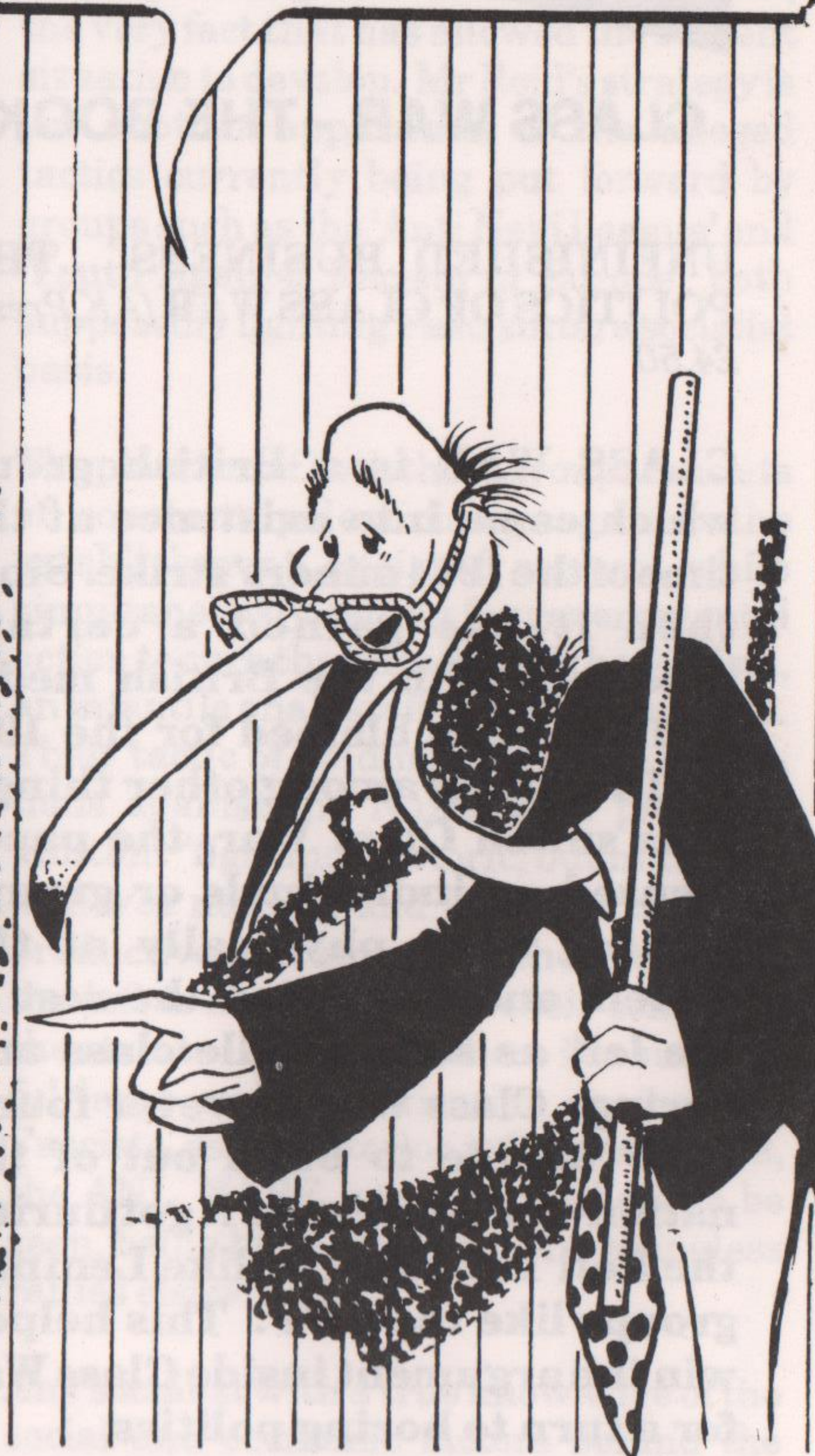
'Unfinished Business' offered a new approach, only time will tell whether or not Class War has returned to it's old ways. In any case the experience does demonstrate that it is a mistake to believe that political theory can be sacrificed on the altar of fast growth. Perhaps Class War will need to change it's motto from "by all means necessary" to "chickens coming home to roost".

Joe Black





B
BOSSES AND BOSSED
 HAVE THE KIND OF RELATIONSHIP
 WHICH CAUSES MISERY
 AT EVERY LEVEL.



Gay Pride Demonstration • Sat. May 24th • Parnell Square 2pm • March with the WSM contingent

Anarchism and Marxism

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regional, from the bottom up in accordance with the demands and instincts of the people, but by the dictatorial power of the learned minority which presumes to express the will of the people."

In Russia in 1917 the Bolsheviks attempted to implement Marx's basic programme. As part and parcel of state controlled nationalisation from above, they closed down factory committees and soviets. All other left-wing parties were smashed. The result was the squalid form of State Capitalism which survived until the late 1980s. Bakunin was, unfortunately, all too correct in his predictions.

AMBIGUITIES

At a deeper level there are ambiguities at the very heart of Marxism. In his early works like "Thesis on Feurbach" or "The Holy Family" people are seen as being active in changing history. However in his later works history and economics take over and are seen to sweep us along

with them.

There are shades of this thinking in 'Capital'. In this he puts forward the idea that capitalism would become a fetter on the further development of production and would be shuffled off in an unspecified way. He puts up the vague idea that capitalism would become so big and so planned that socialism, purely in terms of efficiency, would be the next logical step. Capitalism would "rationalise itself out of existence" as he put it in his 'Grundrisse' notebooks for 'Capital'.

This is very deterministic thinking. It removes workers from the stage as consciously moulding and changing the world. Socialism becomes a matter of waiting for capitalism to "mature". This was the reason for some Marxists like the German Social Democrats believing there was no need for a revolution.

Marx, and then Engels after his death, did follow this through to it's logical conclusion. They flirted with the idea of bringing about socialism through social democracy and the ballot. In 1869 they supported the German Social Democratic Party's line of forming alliances with right-wing parties.

Bakunin poured scorn on these ideas. He

described the democratic state as: "State Centralisation and the actual submission of the sovereign people to the intellectual governing minority".

SOCIALISM... BY ELECTING 166 TDS?

Soon after the Paris Commune Marx and Engels broke with the Social Democratic Party. But in 1895 the ageing Engels was back to his old tricks again and put the accent on using the ballot box to get into power to change society, (in his introduction to a new edition of 'The Communist Manifesto'). Marx also claimed, at one stage that it was possible to introduce socialism through the ballot box in advanced capitalist countries like Britain and America.

It appears that, except for a brief period around 1871, Marx and Engels never gave any serious consideration to the idea of workers managing society. Even then they didn't look into to the matter in any detail. In contrast Proudhon (with whom we would have our differences), Bakunin and Kropotkin did. Marx saw this as very much being a long-term aim.

Bakunin's rejection of Marx's determinism also gave him an insight into the role that small peasants could play in a

The Party or The Workers?

THE Socialist Workers Movement (a Leninist group) ran a bus from Dublin to Waterford when Dick, Niamh, Emmet and all their pals were having a Labour Party Conference back in April. They had plastered Dublin with posters telling us that they felt betrayed by Labour in government. (They must be either very stupid to believe Dick Spring or think that the rest of us are. Probably the latter, knowing full well that Labour would not be slow in breaking their promises.)

Most, though not all, of those who took the bus were SWM members. One of those of those who wasn't ran a 50p sweep on the Grand National. Most people bought in, bringing the pot to £18. The race that wasn't has now gone done in history. But the story is not finished. Rather than give everyone back their 50p the busbound bookie suggested we give it to the strikers at the 'Japan' boutiques, who had been out on strike since January. A nice touch.

But it was not to be. Over the protests of the non-members the SWM said they were keeping the money because it was their bus. And they did. No shame, no embarrassment. Everything for the Party, even a paltry £18.

Now that's what we call liquidation

Workers occupying a Forges de Clabecq steelworks in Belgium protesting about a threatened 10% pay cut seized 7,000 bottles of wine from the company's cellars and threatened to sell them off at 200 francs each.

revolutionary situation. Marx saw the peasants as a reactionary class who would generally not support workers. Bakunin believed that peasants could be revolutionary where they were influenced by revolutionary ideas. He put forward an excellent programme for the peasants in his work 'Letters to a Frenchman in the present Crisis' (1871).

His basic idea was to hand the land over unconditionally to small peasants, and to do away with conscription, taxes, rents and mortgages. With the abolition of the State and by this the loss of inheritance rights the individual would be the only guarantor of his/her property. With a large amount of land suddenly becoming available and with anarchist propaganda pouring in from the city and from landless workers, a programme of voluntary collectivisation would soon suggest itself. This is exactly what happened in Spain in 1936 and the Ukraine in 1921. These ideas might still have relevance in many developing countries.

VOLUNTARY OR NOT AT ALL

He also warned about the dangers of forced collectivisation - it would have to be voluntary: "collectivism could only be imposed on slaves and that kind of collectivisation would be the negation of

humanity".

So there are important and major differences between anarchists and Marxists. Marx was no libertarian and took a very deterministic view of history and class struggle. His disciples from Lenin to Stalin and Mao picked up and expanded on Marx's bad ideas to come up with their theories of 'the party before all else', the rationale for their dictatorships.

On the other hand Marx and Engels have unfairly been demonised by a lot of anarchists. Most anarchists accept the much of the economic analysis put forward in 'Capital'. These ideas are a synthesis putting together the results of hundreds of years of research and struggle. As such they are not, properly speaking, the property of Marxists. One can accept a materialist method of analysis and Marx's critique of capitalism without accepting the politics of Marx and Engels. These ideas are not the property of theorists, either Marxist or Anarchist. They really belong to all the workers of the world and it is our job to spread them.



GET IN TOUCH

THE world's wealth is produced by us - the working class. We ought to enjoy its benefits.

The Workers Solidarity Movement is an anarchist organisation that fights for a 32 county Workers' Republic.

We stand for a socialism that is based on freedom and real democracy, a society based on workplace and community councils.

This kind of socialism has nothing to do with the state capitalism that was practiced in Russia, and still is in China, Cuba and other police states.

We oppose coercive authority, and hold that the only limit on the freedom of the individual should be that they don't encroach on the freedom of others.

As part of our fight for anarchism we are involved in the struggles for higher wages, for trade union democracy, for womens' rights, for jobs.

We oppose all divisions in the working class. We fight against all attempts to set Protestant against Catholic, men against women, skilled against unskilled, old against young, heterosexual against homosexual.

We are opposed to the British state's presence and to partition. We defend peoples' right to fight back. But we are not nationalists, we do not merely want to get rid of the border. We want to unite our class and create a totally new Ireland.

I want more information about the Workers Solidarity Movement.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Return to WSM, P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 5