

# Direct Action

For workers' direct control of industry

Inside—Workers and the Common Market : The Pawnbrokers' Budget Upsurge in East Europe

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION (IWMA)

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**East and West . . .**

## AGAINST OPPRESSION

**I**N 1956, the peoples of Hungary and Poland rose against their oppressors. In Poland the struggle got diverted into a mere face-lift for the Russian-puppet regime. But before their revolution was rubbed out by Russian tanks the workers of Hungary went further and dared to create the beginnings of a new social order based on Workers' Control of Industry, co-ordinated through Workers' Councils of delegates freely elected from the factory floor.

Now, again, the dictators face revolt—in the streets and classrooms of Warsaw and Cracow, within their own ranks in Prague. It will be a tragedy if once more the struggle for freedom in the East is starved of solidarity by workers in the West.

The workers of Western Europe in 1956, with a few honourable exceptions like the Merseyside and Hull dockers, allowed their bureaucratic union leaders to turn down the Hungarian Workers' Councils' appeal for boycott action against Russian intervention.

Let's not do it again!

**E**VERY day the West inflicts fresh horrors. In Vietnam the filthy napalm war for markets, materials and manpower is dressed up as an anti-Communist crusade. In the White Triangle of Rhodesia, South Africa and Portuguese Africa the mine and farm owners jail, beat, hang or just shoot out of hand anyone who threatens their supply of cheap Black labour.

Franco claims new victims. The Amnesty International report on torture in Greece makes sickening reading.

The "Free World" is a myth, a sick joke. The same financial and industrial rulers share ultimate responsibility both for this barbarism and for rising prices, wage freeze, the axing of services, the creation of unemployment, speed-up and attacks on shop-floor organisation in Britain.

Your personal lot just depends on chance—where you were born into the stinking set-up. It's all one system of class rule called capitalism and it'll all have to go. The sooner the better.

## And the Bomb is still with us!

**W**E hear a lot about the "new" Peace Movement these days. Vietnam is always before our eyes on the box, after all. Violence and suffering make such lively newsreels. And how much better off we are clothed by Burton instead of in napalm.

But whoever decided it, and however useless getting sore feet may be as a way to ban the Bomb, putting Aldermaston back at one end of the Easter March reminds us that today war threatens all mankind.

One reason Vietnam's so terrible is the destruction of a whole people. War on an unnamed battlefield's so much less horrifying than on someone's doorstep. An H-Bomb war would come to everyone's doorstep.

We hold that the Bomb is not just "another", more terrible weapon for the rulers of the countries that possess it to use in "ordinary" wars for material ends. This some socialists would claim. Nor, as some others, do we say the bomb is a deterrent to war since, by its very nature and the confession of those who control it, the possibility of accidental

war is a strong one.

The Bomb is a sick product of a sick society. The systematic exploitation and domination of man by man has led, over the years and with the evolution of technology, to a position now where a tiny minority responsible to no one could unleash universal destruction.

**The Bomb can be permanently abandoned only if we take from the State the power to remake it. And this can be done only by winning a society of brotherhood, with neither rulers nor ruled. Only an industrial organisation of the working class can do this.**

**DID YOU HEAR** about the Indians on a Reservation in the Northwest United States who were recently polled on their attitudes towards the war, and whether they thought the US should be in Vietnam?

About 80% of those polled said the US should get out of Vietnam. The rest said the US should get out of America.

(News and Letters, Detroit.)



# Workers and the Common Market

**THERE'S** nothing new about attempts to unite Europe in the interests of capitalism. They've cost the European workers their worst defeats—those of the 1914 and 1939 wars. The various national capitalist systems lack a single dominant force to which the others might subject themselves and are now, it seems, seeking unity in the Common Market.

Whether it's in institutions (councils and secretariats) or in economic agreements, one now sees both the symptoms of earlier trends in international business concerns and the desire to rise above frontiers in order to set up and extend these concerns. The Common Market is but a stage, and a European stage, in the concentration of world capital; it is both its instrument and its effect.

This explains a lot that seems contradictory. Every firm, or industry, given the right circumstances, needs to get into the Common Market. But if circumstances are unfavourable it retreats within national boundaries. From this spring endless disputes and seemingly contradictory actions.

As usual, rulers speak in vague political terms; but, as usual, contracts serve specific economic ends. Just as in national legislatures, governments and trade unions, the executives and delegates of the "Community" organisations represent the interests of particular capitalists and imperial powers. The division between "planners" (State capitalists) and free-enterprise advocates is reproduced at this level. The former, as is their wont, want more international centralisation and the latter stress nationality, or even regionalism.

## WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

The workers are even further from decision-making. Nationally, they have at least the illusion (whether through unions or through elections) of participation in democracy. But at the Market level, the worker only knows of decisions through their physical effect on his everyday life.

In terms of working conditions, it's a nightmare that rulers conjure up to force them to acquiesce in the results of mergers and to accept stiffer rates. More than ever, the system is continuously whitewashed, a society whose very size prevents the worker comprehending it.

In terms of living conditions, the Common Market is constantly instanced to justify both the sale of products and price increases.

These, the cuts in production costs and the quest for markets suited to the particular business, are for the workers their only first-hand experience; they mirror exactly their significance to capitalism.

Cuts in production costs mean being near sources of primary products and a pool of docile labour. Africa under neo-colonialism is wide open to European capitalist exploitation. One basic characteristic of the Common Market is absolute self-sufficiency in food production. To the workers these points are important:

(1) Capitalism is becoming, at the Continental level, more stable and less open to opposition, just as is the USA or the USSR; it may develop into an integrated capitalism with significant results for workers.

(2) Basic industries are shut down (like the mines) or moved (iron foundries); retooling and service industries grow up. The resulting upset of workers' lives adds to the effects of capital concentration.

(3) Agriculture, however stable, is carried on at prices well above the international norm, owing to traditionalist

methods. This handicaps European capital as against those countries that depend on buying food at world prices, which pay less for agricultural labour, or at least pay for it with industrial products.

## SECURING MOBILITY OF LABOUR

This last point, however, gives European capital new opportunities, through the intensification of agriculture (particularly in France and Italy), reducing all the peasants who are thrown out of a living to the status of wage workers. One can see that the needs of the Common Market will accelerate this.

This, coupled with the use of cheap immigrant labour to cushion the hazards of capitalism, makes up for the lack of labour, cuts payrises, and limits the effects of periodic depressions. The constitution of the Common Market stipulated freedom of travel for workers. One knows what purpose "mobility" of labour serves for the capitalists, but in practice such mobility isn't easily gained, even within a single State. (Indeed, in France, it's a significant factor in workers' resistance to the concentration of capital.) So this point has remained a dead letter, but this has been overcome by the use of immigrant labour. The Common Market can recruit labour from the poorer countries of the Mediterranean, Italians, Turks, Greeks, Slavs, Spaniards and Portuguese, also Africans from the South. And herein lies a new form of colonial exploitation, for these people carry all the weight of the contradictions of European capitalist development.

If a stated analysis is in order, it would appear pessimistic. The European working class is in the same relationship to this foreign sub-proletariat as was the American working class fifty years ago to the Negroes and the then-recent immigrant workers. If a European proletariat exists, it is this sub-proletariat culled from all over Europe, not the workers of the several nations (whose struggle is on the national level, indeed even on a regional one, and who are not subjected to the laws of capitalist concentration). Moreover, these latter find some dubious supporters in the national capitalists, who use the resistance to centralisation to preserve their own particular labour pool and their own market. One example here is the measures taken at national level, under pressure from various interests, to limit, if not destroy, the breaking down of tariff barriers.

## STRUCTURE EMERGING

The result of this set-up is that living conditions vary from country to country, the working class of each country remaining enclosed in its national frontiers, however close the links are that the capitalist, the financier, the State, and the union bureaucrats may have built, and however they try to evolve political policies.

Behind the veneer of national States and politics, the structure needed by modern capitalism is emerging; from this springs a trend to standardisation of living and working conditions, a single decision-making—even where this works through national and local powers—and the elimination of the traditional middle class that had survived in industry, agriculture and commerce.

None of this is peculiar to the Common Market and it is difficult to say how this capitalist concentration will work out in practice. What one can forecast—despite the inevitable rifts and their exploitation—is the growth of business concerns and of bureaucracy, whether in trade unions, politics or economic organisations. Standardisation of conditions will make for united struggle throughout Europe.

On the one hand, one can predict bitter strikes arising from centralisation and planning, as from attempts to build direct links between factories in struggle in the same business syndicate or industry. But, on the other hand, the



# THE PAWNBROKERS' BUDGET

LABOUR speakers, perhaps with some justice, used to say that when a Tory government wanted to make the public forget home or economic troubles they would find some colonial or foreign affairs crisis to excite their fears or indignation and thus distract their attention. But in power that is just what a Labour government seeks to do, and there they have had some lucky bonuses. One "Rhodesian crisis" after another, interlarded with ever-worse news from Vietnam, has come like the "deus ex machina", the god from a contrivance, that used so often, to solve the problem of classical playwrights when the characters had wandered into a cul-de-sac.

So the Government has tottered on, hoping to escape their home-made storms by news of bad weather abroad. But after the shouting, the anger, the joy of rhetoric of denunciation, the rent man calls and man's appetite and the bills the postman brings turn one's mind to the consideration of the less exciting problems of economics.

For Wilson, the call to duty comes from the international bankers who did not speak any uncertain trumpet, but gave their orders loud and clear. In the evening of Budget Day they were reported as saying they were very well satisfied with the Budget, it was rightly severe and it fulfilled their wishes (BBC-TV).

The Labour Government in order to repair the breaches and loss of confidence caused by their manufactured crises and inept handling of national affairs, had to go to the world moneylenders. To pay for the grandiose political machine created by Wilson: six foreign secretaries as against two when Britain was a great power, over 100 Labour MPs out of 363 with ministerial jobs, prisoners of Wilson's benefactions, the new and useless ministries, of sport, of art and others, the many baneful new political machines such as the Prices and Incomes Board and the tens and tens of thousands of extra civil servants to man them—all these call for more money, pawnbrokers' money and extra taxes.

## POLITICAL SPENDTHRIFTS

But large sums of money are not given or lent without conditions. Many a Faust's bargain has so been made, and the happy, pipe smoking "purposeful, thrusting, dynamic" chatty days pass and the usurer points to the small print on the back of the pawn ticket.

After we have puzzled over the various financial percentages one fact is clear—our standard of living has been lowered, not just by the one per cent. suggested by Jenkins on budget night TV, but by a substantial slice off the body. Nor is this a once-for-all cut; Uncle is watching. The tendency of Socialist governments receiving extra cash from taxation is to spend it—and yell for more. It will be hard

## COMMON MARKET (cont.)

possibility of a European capitalism and nationalism growing up must be foreseen.

That is to the extent that struggles can be diverted into unsought channels; it may not be possible for any of us to force the developments we desire. We can only struggle, in the conditions in which we find ourselves, and, by analytical and informative work attend to the development of struggles, and show their relation with the development of capitalism and the international class struggle. And attempt, through our international links, to help workers in struggle to build their own links, at whatever level they desire.

HENRI SIMON

for political spendthrifts to resist the temptation of having a glorious spend-in with a bonus of £900 million. If the money or part of it is spent, by anyone, and not destroyed, the value, the security of the pawnbrokers is lowered and even more drastic measures will be demanded.

Of course, for generations, Socialist politicians have said that, in various ways, that heavy taxation is a good thing. One way of advancing this proposition is to state that the share of the national income taken by the State should constantly increase, and that taken by the "private sector" decrease. This is supposed to be to the general good, but ignores the obvious fact that the totally non-productive State, by its armed forces and bureaucracy is growing daily and devouring the crops, and by its voracity hinders the "private sector" in developing production.

One organisation, the old Socialist Labour Party (most of whose members entered the Communist Party at its birth) used to say that workers, in fact, did not pay taxes or rates. Taxes on goods were, it said, absorbed by the sellers, not paid by the buyer, as, by the law of supply and demand, the market price would remain the same. They never foresaw PAYE. If any man believes that workers do not *really* pay taxes or that higher taxation is a good thing, let him propound these propositions to his workmates. Unless he has a reputation for clowning, he will soon find himself having a free ride in a white van with darkened windows—and the sooner the better.

## TORIES' RECORD

Even by the low standards of general politics, the Socialist politicians are inept, and their economic advisers creatures from another planet who have not yet become familiar with this one. The Attlee government, too (1945–51), increased taxation. Workers' wages were taxed by as much as 9s 6d in the pound, starting on a low level, and a single man earning £2 a week was inflicted with PAYE.

It could not be helped, they said, yet the Tories when returned in 1951 very soon reduced income tax and increased earned income and other personal allowances. This happened again in the following budget. Production and wages increased as men felt more encouraged to work and spend and the Exchequer did not complain about a low product of taxation.

Of course, the Tories did not solve the Social Problem or show any great genius in developing economic theory. The Social Problem can only be solved if first of all capitalism is abolished, but the Tory party would no more think of doing than would that other capitalist body, the Labour Party.

Let us not forget that the Budget is only one of several ways of putting on the Squeeze. The Wage Freeze is another. The TUC "voluntary" wage freeze was bound to be rejected. When a man votes for a wage freeze he is voting for the wages of the man next door to be frozen; he makes a mental reservation that his own wages will be immune. So the TU leaders vote a freeze, go out, are confronted by their paying members and go and make a wage claim.

A voluntary freeze cannot exist; as well ask an accused man to hang himself to save his accusers the onus of his death.

Better to act now against the Squeeze and the Wage Freeze and strike at your enemies, beginning with the Labour Party. Follow the sensible action of the Sheet Metal Workers and Copper Smiths' Union, disaffiliate and stop the political levy, you and your union.

If you do not fight, the worst is yet to come.

TOM BROWN



# Direct Action

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British section of the International Working Men's Association

## How many hangmen?

"COME once again, O sportive memory." If voters remembered, politicians would not make quotations.

"Mr. Peter Tapsell (Con.) spoke for many of them [Conservative MPs] when he invited the Commonwealth Secretary, Mr. Thomson, to recall some words of Sir Winston Churchill. 'Grass grew quickly over the battlefield,' said Mr. Tapsell with controlled fury, 'but over the scaffold never.'" (*Daily Telegraph*, 7.3.68).

Churchill said this when the British Government were, with 150,000 soldiers attempting to wipe out the last remnants of the Boer army in 1902 (South African or Boer War). The Boers, except two small companies of artillery, never had uniforms; they were farmers. Some, after being in the field so long, had no boots and only torn rags of clothing when they captured British Army supplies.

They donned army boots and khaki trousers and tunics, without, of course, British Army buttons and badges. When taken as prisoners of war, for this crime they were hanged—by a Conservative government. Yet, the Boers always behaved kindly to the prisoners they took (who were many). This is never denied.

Churchill attacked the Tories for this act—he was a Liberal then. Later, as a Liberal in a Lib-Tory coalition (December, 1918 to 1922), he took part in the Irish "troubles", first as War Minister, then as Secretary for Colonial Affairs under a Liberal Prime Minister, Lloyd George. (Churchill was Right-wing Liberal, Lloyd George Left-wing Liberal.) At that time, 1920-21, they hanged several Irish "rebels" including one boy of 18 years.

"During the period of Labour power, as now, the realities of imperialism were most starkly revealed in Britain's African colonies.

"A minor prelude was provided by the shooting in Kenya in January, 1947 of African native soldiers who struck against delays in demobilisation. Other troops were brought in and ordered to fire on them. Six Africans were shot dead and ten wounded . . . The expendable 'blacks' received no more than a curt paragraph in the British Press." (*How Labour Governed* ("Direct Action" Pamphlet), page 21.)

## GROUP NOTICES

**ABERDEEN:** Contact Russell Knight, 42 Mathews Road, Aberdeen.  
**BELFAST:** Contact Tony Rosato, 103 Deer Park Road, Belfast 14.  
**BRISTOL:** Contact Adam Nicholson, 10 Bellevue, Bristol 8.  
**GLASGOW:** Contact R. Lynn, 16 Ross Street, C.1.  
**HULL:** Contact Jim & Shelagh Young, 3 Fredericks Crescent, Hawthorn Avenue, Hessle Road, Hull, Yorks.  
**LONDON:** Open meetings every other Wednesday at 8.30 p.m. at Lucas Arms, 245 Grays Inn Road, WC1 (5 min Kings Cross). Correspondence to 34 Cumberland Road, E.17.  
Next meetings:

April 10 and 24

**MANCHESTER & DISTRICT:** Contact Jim Pinkerton, 12 Alt Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

**POTTERIES:** Contact Bob Blakeman, 52 Weldon Ave., Weston Coyney, Stoke-on-Trent.

"But Bevan omitted to mention the death of 29 other people and the wounding of 237 others in riots which followed the firing by the police (in Ghana) on February 28, 1948, on a procession of unarmed ex-servicemen taking a petition of grievances to the Governor. Two Africans were killed and five wounded." (*How Labour Governed*.)

Later six African leaders, including Nkrumah, were arrested and, without trial, deported.

On November 8, 1949, African miners in a Nigerian Government-owned mine went on a "go-slow" on rejection of an increase of their wage of 5s 10d a day. On November 15, 150 hewers were sacked. The other miners staged a stay-in strike. On November 18, police fired on strikers killing 21, wounding 51.

At Port Harcourt, in a General Strike, police fired on demonstrators, killing 2. (*How Labour Governed*, pages 22-23.) Etc., etc.

"In Malaya, the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions, representing 91 p.c. of organised workers, was banned, and its former President SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR POSSESSING A REVOLVER." (*The Labour Government* 1945-51, D. N. Pritt, QC, ex-MP.)

This, or any other government is not made up of gentle, kindly humanitarian pacifists. Every brand of politician uses bloody violence when it will serve his end, but some are even more hypocritical than others. The struggle is one for power in which the character of the conflict is screened by a tinsel curtain of fairy-tale monarchy and the lives of men are pawns in a monstrous game.

## No sugar daddies

WE NEED £200 a year in donations from readers to keep going. That's £17 a month in round figures.

We're grateful for all donations received to date. But already we're short of our target. And every month we must pay our bills to keep going at all. Anyone who works for a living surely knows you get nothing free in this capitalist world.

If you want to go on reading this paper, please send us some cash. We've no sugar daddies to fall back on—honest.

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### DIRECT ACTION FIGHTING FUND—March 1968

London, S.A. 3s 6d; Vancouver, D.J. 3s 6d; London NW3, K.H. £5; Windsor, W.N. £1 10s; Wolverhampton, J.L. 12s; Glasgow SE, R.L. 10s; Maghull, B.R. 5s; Herne Bay, P. & S.R. 10s 6d; London SWF Group £2 17s 3d. Total for March £11 1s 3d.

Previously acknowledged £34 12s. Total for year to date £45 13s 3d.

## THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS' REVOLUTION

A concise account of the  
Workers' Councils and Workers' Control  
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Direct Action Pamphlet—6d.  
(9d. postpaid; bulk orders 6s. a dozen)

● The SWF has reprinted its leaflet, "A Cheap Holiday", attacking tourism to Franco Spain. Copies are available at 1s. 6d. for 100; 15s. for 1,000, postpaid.



# UPSURGE IN EASTERN EUROPE

AMONG the five European countries that knowingly traded with the Smith regime in Rhodesia despite the United Nations call for sanctions are Poland and Czechoslovakia. When a high-ranking Czech Communist General was recently proved to have conspired to use military methods to prevent a liberalisation of the regime, he did not choose to escape to Russia, which might certainly have been embarrassed, nor to Albania, China, Algeria or Cuba but to the USA. The cynicism of the Americans, in boasting of their catch, is only outmatched by the cynicism of the Czech Stalinists who nevertheless can have the face to pretend that the present upsurge in Eastern Europe is an American-inspired return to capitalism. While in Poland the Party leaders have managed to claim the present protests are inspired by International Zionism and West German Neo-Nazis!

Twelve years ago we saw (following the rising of 1953 in East Germany and Vorkuta), first in Posnan then throughout Poland, and then even more in Hungary, the beginnings of the Socialist Revolution against the Communist regimes. We saw, going hand-in-hand, the demand for a restoration of a parliamentary system, and the formation of workers' councils or soviets as the effective government.

## AFTER STALIN'S DEATH

We saw, hand-in-hand, an upsurge of nationalism and obvious love for the people's own distinctive national characteristics and culture, with an assertion of internationalism, a desire to be neutral in the Cold War, the waving of the original red flag (divested of the hammer and sickle and adorned solely in black tape in mourning for their first martyrs). Two traditions basically divergent mingled. This was because under a dictatorship the demand for liberty to say what is wrong with society is an essential first demand for the revolutionary; under a foreign occupation and its puppet-quisling-imperialist regime the first manifestation of the desire for freedom takes a nationalist form. (Just as it did in the emergent countries of the Third World.)

In 1956, before the revolution, the Petofi club in Hungary and Po Prostu in Poland focused new thinking among the youth members (mainly students) of the Communist Party. Starting in Russia itself, just after Stalin's death, writers and other big-name intellectuals demanded a somewhat privileged status, the right to speak out. (Partly to clear their consciences for their subservience under Stalin.) This was taken up at two levels: budding bureaucrats took the opportunity to agitate for more preferential treatment for "skilled and intellectual workers", while student youth demanded for amateur writers the same freedoms as for the big names. (Of course, there was an overlap.)

In this atmosphere flourished the socialist-humanist theories previously advanced by the Hungarian philosopher George Lukacs (who had in his lifetime been through stages as a Luxemburgist critic of Lenin, a near-Syndicalist critic of Trotsky, a Stalinist hack and the rediscoverer of Marx's humanist essays).

Today, we see the same pressures at work, but on a different level.

In Poland last year, the *Open Letter to the Party* and the defence put forward by Ludwig Hass, like the writings of Lukacs, certainly harked back to the humanist reasons for being a socialist in the first place, but they were phrased in essentially revolutionary and internationalist ways. (Hass certainly reveres Trotsky, but his State-capitalist analysis of the Soviet system, and his insistence that the State is incompatible with socialism, show his dream stems from the myth

of Trotsky the arch-opponent of Stalin rather than the reality of the Trotsky who destroyed the Kronstadt Commune and the Vyborg Soviet in Russia.)

Whereas Lukacs was a university lecturer whose dissident views had been so modified as to avoid imprisonment, Hass is an old-time worker revolutionary who has spent most of his adult life in a concentration camp.

## POLES MAY PUSH EVEN HARDER

In Czechoslovakia today, the new "Liberal" First Secretary of the Communist Party is already tending to call a halt to extreme criticism of the past. He has already clamped down on solidarity demonstrations with the Poles in revolt, and started to discourage calls for Novotny's resignation. (Though I expect despite this application of the brake that by the time this is published, Novotny will have gone.) All the signs are that the "new man", Dubcek, is cast in the mould of Poland's Gomulka, and that even if (as is very likely) the pressure for reform goes beyond him, it will still not make any fundamental change in the country. As the Poles have said for the last ten years, all that changed in 1956 was Gomulka.

But in Poland itself there cannot be another Gomulka. In 1956, Victor Zorza (who has now very much changed his tune) of the *Manchester Guardian*, deplored the fact that the Hungarians could not find someone as balanced and moderate as Gomulka to win their freedom; but the Hungarian masses wanted freedom and Imre Nagy acted as he did because he was pushed. This time the Poles will be liable to push even harder than the Hungarians did then.

In 1956 it was obvious that Khrushchev stood to lose more by suppressing the Poles than he did by doing a deal with Gomulka. He was a "reasonable" man who Moscow could talk with, and had the support of a country far larger than Hungary, which would have taken far more troops to suppress than Hungary did.

Today, it is equally obvious that in Czechoslovakia a similar deal will be done with Dubcek and anyone more liberal who may replace him. True, in the Slovak section of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, and among the writers, there have been rumblings now for over a year; these have now reached the point of demanding guarantees whereby non-Communists may fight in elections. But there is no sign of a demand above "Communism with minimal liberal-democratic rights". Both the old-time Stalinists and the new "liberals" are trying to show the *other* side represents power and privilege.

## IN THE BALKANS

In Czechoslovakia, as in Poland (though on different sides of the fence), the farce of factory resolutions of support for the government is to be seen. Without trade unions or any form of free industrial organisations, such resolutions are meaningless—so much so that in Jena, East Germany, on June 15, 1953, such a resolution was issued by workers in the Zeiss factory, but two days later these same workers stormed and destroyed the offices of the local Communist Party!

It is not so certain today just where Moscow will see its own best interests in all this. Czechoslovakia is, after all, the most highly industrialised Communist State per head of population, and has the most established working class and a far longer history of working class militancy. Yet the Czech workers did less than those of any other country in setting up the existing regime. One cannot see Czech workers



## Martell on the rocks

AT LONDON Bankruptcy Court on March 15, Edward Martell, one-time leader of the "Freedom Group", heavily subsidised by high army officers and big businessmen in its campaigns against militant trade unionists, was reported to have estimated that he had total debts of £179,634—and no assets!

Official Receiver Mr. Walter Haigh said Martell had made three attempts to produce a draft statement of affairs, but none was satisfactory. The latest draft showed that of the £179,634 only £20,108 was expected to rank for dividend.

A deficiency account submitted by Martell was described as "ludicrous" by Mr. Registrar Parbury, who ordered him to produce a statement of affairs within 21 days or face possible serious consequences. The public examination was adjourned to May 3.

## EAST EUROPE UPSURGE (cont.)

long accepting a Gomulka, however much they may have stomached Novotny backed by naked terror.

Whether Warsaw will burn this time depends whether the Russian leaders think resistance is most likely to spread in imitation, or in humanitarian horror against suppression. It depends therefore, on the situation in the Balkans and in the Soviet Union itself.

In the Balkans, the Romanian regime, however much in revolt against Moscow, may well be expected to rally to its defence if any serious threat is apparent, especially as at least one demonstration within Romania has been reported. The Bulgarian dictator recently forestalled a *coup d'etat*, the details of which as far as I know have not been published in the West. (Some readers of DA will remember that we published, in 1961-2, reports from the Anarchist underground in Bulgaria which said had the Hungarian rising continued another week, the Bulgarian workers would have risen in sympathy.)

Obviously, if the Hungarian masses dare, they will wish to settle a long account with their dictator, Kadar, and there, too, there are records of recent demonstrations. Remember, under a dictatorship it takes more courage to demonstrate—even if the horrified reports of Western journalists who have seen police repression in Warsaw and Katowice seem to describe events in Grosvenor Square and on Ardanam Pier.

In one of her books, Raya Dunayevskaya, the American philosopher, describes how under bureaucratic rule radical slogans escalate with remarkable speed. Workers are dissatisfied with an increase of norms, or horrified (as in Hungary) when a student demonstration they had not supported is bloodily suppressed. They strike spontaneously; their instinctive desire for someone to voice their demands causes them to elect a spokesman and makes them immediately demand free trade unions and shop committees and so elections. The demand is therefore made automatically for workers' democracy. Because the Bolshevik State has suppressed all forms of democracy, the workers demand at one and the same time the legalisation of political parties, and control by workers' committees over State enterprises.

This is why there is the seemingly strange alliance between what seems a call for some form of bourgeois liberalism (generally not linked to any desire to return to private enterprise), and, at the same time, the making of near-Anarchist demands. Given a desire for freedom, men teach themselves revolutionary truths as they struggle for that freedom.

LAURENS OTTER

## What We Stand For

**THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION** seeks to establish a free society which will render impossible the growth of a privileged class and the exploitation of man by man. The SWF therefore advocates common ownership and workers' control of the land, industry and all means of production and distribution on the basis of voluntary co-operation. In such a society, the wage system, finance and money shall be abolished and goods produced and distributed not for profit, but according to human needs.

**THE STATE:** The State in all its forms, embodying authority and privilege, is the enemy of the workers and cannot exist in a free, classless society. The SWF does not therefore hope to use the State to achieve a free society; it does not seek to obtain seats in the Cabinet or in Parliament. It aims at the abolition of the State. It actively opposes all war and militarism.

**CLASS STRUGGLE:** The interests of the working class and those of the ruling class are directly opposed. The SWF is based on the inevitable day-to-day struggle of the workers against those who own and control the means of production and distribution, and will continue that struggle until common ownership and workers' control are achieved.

**DIRECT ACTION:** Victory in the fight against class domination can be achieved only by the direct action and solidarity of the workers themselves. The SWF rejects all Parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.

**ORGANISATION:** To achieve a free, classless society the workers must organise. They must replace the hundreds of craft and general trade unions by syndicalist industrial unions. As an immediate step to that end, the SWF aids the formation of workers' committees in all factories, mines, offices, shipyards, mills and other places of work and their development into syndicates, federated nationally. Such syndicates will be under direct rank-and-file control, with all delegates subject to immediate recall.

**INTERNATIONALISM:** The SWF, as a section of the International Working Men's Association, stands firm for international working class solidarity.

## Four jailed in Spain

FOUR more victims for the police State of Franco fascism: Jose Ortega Zambrana, Francisco Pozo Souza, Francisco Castro Mejias and Antonio Porta Rodriguez. They appeared before the so-called "Tribunal of Public Order" in Madrid, on February 15, charged with distributing the Paris-published libertarian magazine, *Presencia*.

For this "criminal" exercise of free speech, Ortega was sentenced to four years, two months and one day in jail; Pozo to three years, Castro to two and Porta to one. Just to emphasise that the much-vaunted "liberalisation" of Franco's regime should not be taken seriously, each of the young Sevillian Anarchists was fined 10,000 pesetas.

Awaiting trial in Carabanchel prison, Madrid, is David Urbano Bermudez. His "crime"? Having written for *Presencia*, while living in France. He was arrested while visiting his family, having made no contact in Spain with other libertarians, nor being in possession of what Franco fascism calls "illegal propaganda." For this, he faces a six-year sentence and a heavy fine.



# SOUTH SHIELDS DUSTMEN STRIKE

AT SOUTH SHIELDS, on March 1, 120 dustmen and drivers resolved to strike to compel the Labour-controlled council to dismiss a foreman (one of the people the Communist Party calls the "backbone of industry"). This foreman had, over more than two years, built up a pressure of resentment against him for his driving and bullying. The men believed that strike action was the only way to be rid of his threats, for the Labour council, like the worst sort of pre-1939 employer, supported the gaffer against the workers.

As this crisis developed, Communists in South Shields were selling the CP pamphlet *What Socialism Offers Key People*, with the timely statement, "Whatever the supervisors of Britain enjoy they have well earned."

As the strike went on, each daily meeting of the workers showed an increased majority for staying out. The Socialist aldermen and councillors, still like the worst sort of employer, said they would not negotiate with or speak to the strikers or their union, the Municipal and General Workers, until they went back to work; and called on citizens to burn their

rubbish. With so many centrally heated flats, smokeless zones, electric, gas and oil stoves, this wasn't very successful and the garbage piled up in the streets. By Saturday, March 9, shopkeepers were working in teams sweeping the pavements in front of their premises—into the next parish.

The Labour council made propaganda about the "inhumanity of leaving hospital bins unemptied". The strikers replied they would volunteer to empty the hospital bins if foremen who were working as usual would act as drivers. The "backbone of industry" refused.

The men said they would try to get volunteer drivers for the two hospitals if the council would agree to release the lorries.

A peacemaker suggested a public inquiry. The strikers agreed, but said that the tribunal should be impartial and the hearing should not be secret. The Socialist council agreed to an inquiry, but not in public, and insisted that their committees, not neutral referees, should hold the investigation. "We are the only people who know the facts."

As the strike neared the end of its second week more than 1,500 tons of dirty rubbish and rotting fruit lay on the streets and market place and the ratepayers became angry, the Socialists began to retreat. They agreed to a public impartial inquiry.

By majority vote, the strikers agreed to resume work on March 18, but they will refuse overtime, only a 40-hour week will be worked until the council's promise is fulfilled. This means the 1,500 plus tons of rubbish cannot be moved, indeed 40 hours a week is not long enough to keep up with the weekly load of rubbish. It may be a dusty answer, but it's an insurance against Socialist politicians.

**DIRECT ACTION REPORTER**

## TINBASHERS HAMMER LABOUR

By a three-to-two majority the membership of the new 76,000-strong National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, Copper Smiths and Heating Engineers has voted to disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

The ballot had to be held by law on the merger of the powerful Sheet Metal Workers (the "Tinbashers"—particularly strong in shipbuilding and motors) and the Heating and Ventilating Engineers. The poll was 23%—low enough, but still high by modern standards. General Secretary L. W. Buck said, "Unfortunately the general [anti-Labour] feeling appears to have been demonstrated either by a direct vote against political affiliation or by abstention."

Mr. Buck is reported as disappointed that his Union's voice won't be heard inside the Labour Party. But the empty places at Labour Party Conferences will speak louder than any words.

Meanwhile, more and more workers in every industry are refusing to pay the TU political levy. Are you? Remember, if your union card doesn't mention the levy you may nevertheless be paying. Contract out now and get your mates to do the same—don't support the party of the Wage Cut and Bankers' Budget.

Two whole unions—Tinbashers and Pottery workers—have now disaffiliated from the Labour Party, completely. The Transport and Salaried Staffs Association will debate whether to do so in May.

I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me, and yet I assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means—except by getting off his back. (Tolstoy).

## D is for Death

A DEPUTATION of councillors from five "D" villages in SW Durham went to Bishop Auckland Town Hall to meet Arthur Skeffington, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing. While the deputation waited in the town hall, another deputation of about 200, mostly young married women, waited outside for Skeffington. They wanted to make sure he heard their point of view in their own words.

The Ministry has designated the five villages as "D". That means that no new houses will be built there, no repairs, no new necessary amenities, the villages will be allowed to rot until they fall down in ruins. But the wicked people want their villages, but not in ruins, they want the ordinary repairs to roads, etc., and normal amenities.

The local Labour MP, H. J. Boyden, talked to the 200 outside the town hall, but he did not want them to do any talking; but they did, and TV heard more "bloodies" than ever came from a whole series of Alf Garnett's programmes. However, Boyden's concern was to act as decoy for Skeffington, of whom BBC-TV caught a beautiful picture of a tip-toe walk to the tradesmen's entrance of the town hall.

As Skeffington came creeping out of the side door, the women realised they had been tricked and he was pursued by 200 banner-toting angry women. More "bloodies" rent the air as he escaped in a fast car.

Back to the councillors, who now came out to report. Skeffington had refused to discuss "D" villages. Councillor Dodds: "He flatly refused to discuss our problem." Councillor York: "Only public opinion and a show of force will get a change."

Bishop Auckland people believe that the people living in any locality should have some say in how that place develops or does not develop, that citizens should have some influence on their environment.

Skeffington and his sly grin will not come back, but Boyden has to, even if it is only at the next election.

## Subscribe to DIRECT ACTION

Yearly subscription rate 6s 6d (USA & Canada \$1—dollar bills preferred to cheques owing to loss in negotiating latter) from 34 Cumberland Road, London E.17. Cheques and p.o.'s payable to Syndicalist Workers' Federation.



# REAL CHANGE NEEDED NOW

**HERE** in Aberdeen, the Scottish TUC conference and the local council elections are to take place soon. Both ought to give us an insight into how the power seekers and apologists for our society work.

At last year's STUC conference, one of our comrades acting as a reporter for *Peace News* told us how the speakers hammered Wilson's policies, denounced the Labour Government, moaned violently about the wage freeze . . . and gave Harold a standing ovation when he entered! The only thing that present-day TUC conferences prove is that the trade union leaders have lost all contact with the workers and that they have lost sight of the original aim of the unions—that of seeking a complete take-over of industry, transport and production and the establishment of **WORKERS' CONTROL**.

The Unions today are a buffer between the bosses and the workers, and stifle the efforts of the workers in their fight for control of their own lives. How often do we hear of strikers having to fight the bosses, government, police and unions to win their case?

We in the SWF believe that full support must be given to the "unofficial", rank and file, and shop stewards defence committees, and to all "unofficial" strikes. The very fact that these workers' committees are springing up all over Britain and that the majority of strikes are unofficial, shows that the British workers are seeking an alternative to the present set-up.

In Syndicalist organisation, there lies a real alternative. Not an alternative leadership leading to yet another betrayal, but an alternative of policy, tactics and organisation. Our idea of a union is that of an organisation to represent the workers' views and opinions with *no* full-time posts and with frequent changes of representatives. This way, no-one can "get to the top" and take control. We must also have a final aim in unionism of taking control of industry, transport and production.

## THE ELECTION

Nothing reveals so much the depths to which people are prepared to lower themselves in order to gain a position of power or control, no matter how small, as an election, local or general. Candidates talk for hours and say nothing, constantly dodge issues, and will do almost everything to bring in the votes. Conservative, Labour, Liberal even Communist and Nationalist candidates are *all* tarred with the same

brush. Their main claim is, "What is wrong is bad leadership—our leadership is good." The Syndicalists say it's time for a real change.

The Aberdeen Council at present consists of councillors with large property interests, slum landlords and the like, and scarcely a house is built here by the council but some councillor supplies the bricks, windows, doors, heaters, slates or something. One councillor recently asked for several thousand pounds to clean up his slums—so that he could charge higher rents.

We suggest: (1) Show your contempt by not voting. (2) Form factory, shop, or office committees. (3) Link up with other unofficial bodies. (4) Build up unofficial rank and file organisations into a Federation of Labour for joint action. (5) Form Tenants' Defence Committees. (6) Go the whole hog—join the Aberdeen SWF or at least make sure you get our own *Aberdeen Militant*.

**ABERDEEN BRANCH, SWF**

## Calling all London workers

WEDNESDAY

MAY 1

**DEMONSTRATE**

**DEMONSTRATE**

**DEMONSTRATE**

Are you **REDUNDANT**—or likely to be?

Are your **WAGES FROZEN**?

Are you a council tenant with a **CLIMBING RENT**?

Are you being **FLEECE**D for bad accommodation by a private landlord?

Are you **FED UP TO THE TEETH** with Government?

This is the situation of most London workers in 1968 under a so-called Labour Government. Something **CAN** be done about it.

**DEMONSTRATE IN A GREAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT**

**MARCH AND MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 1**

Show this Government—and all Governments—that the workers have had enough of being pushed around and now mean business. **STOP WORK** on May 1 and march for security of jobs—decent houses—low rents—and high wages.

Who says the country can't afford it when we watch the rich get richer every day.

## WHY MAY 1?

Because May 1 is **MAY DAY—WORKERS' DAY**—set aside since 1890 for workers to demonstrate their solidarity and determination to win a better life for those whose labours produce all the wealth of society.

This May Day Rally will assemble at 11.45 a.m. at **TOWER HILL**, near the Tower of London. Raise the idea in your Trade Union Branch and your place of work. For further details get in touch with the London May Day Committee which is composed of rank and file printers, engineers, dockers and building workers. The address is printed below.

**STOP WORK ON MAY 1, 1968**

(Text of leaflet published by London May Day Committee, 29 Love Walk, S.E.5.)

## A day to remember

March 15, 1968 A.D. Kensington election result. Gold crisis, Stock Exchange closed. George Brown resigns.

March 15, 44 B.C. Julius Caesar assassinated.

"Beware the Ides of March." Shakespeare always has the last word!

## LITERATURE

<b>WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS?</b> by Tom Brown	4d
<b>WORKERS' CONTROL</b> SWF Pamphlet (2nd printing)	6d
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Add 4d in the 1s for postage—minimum 3d

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