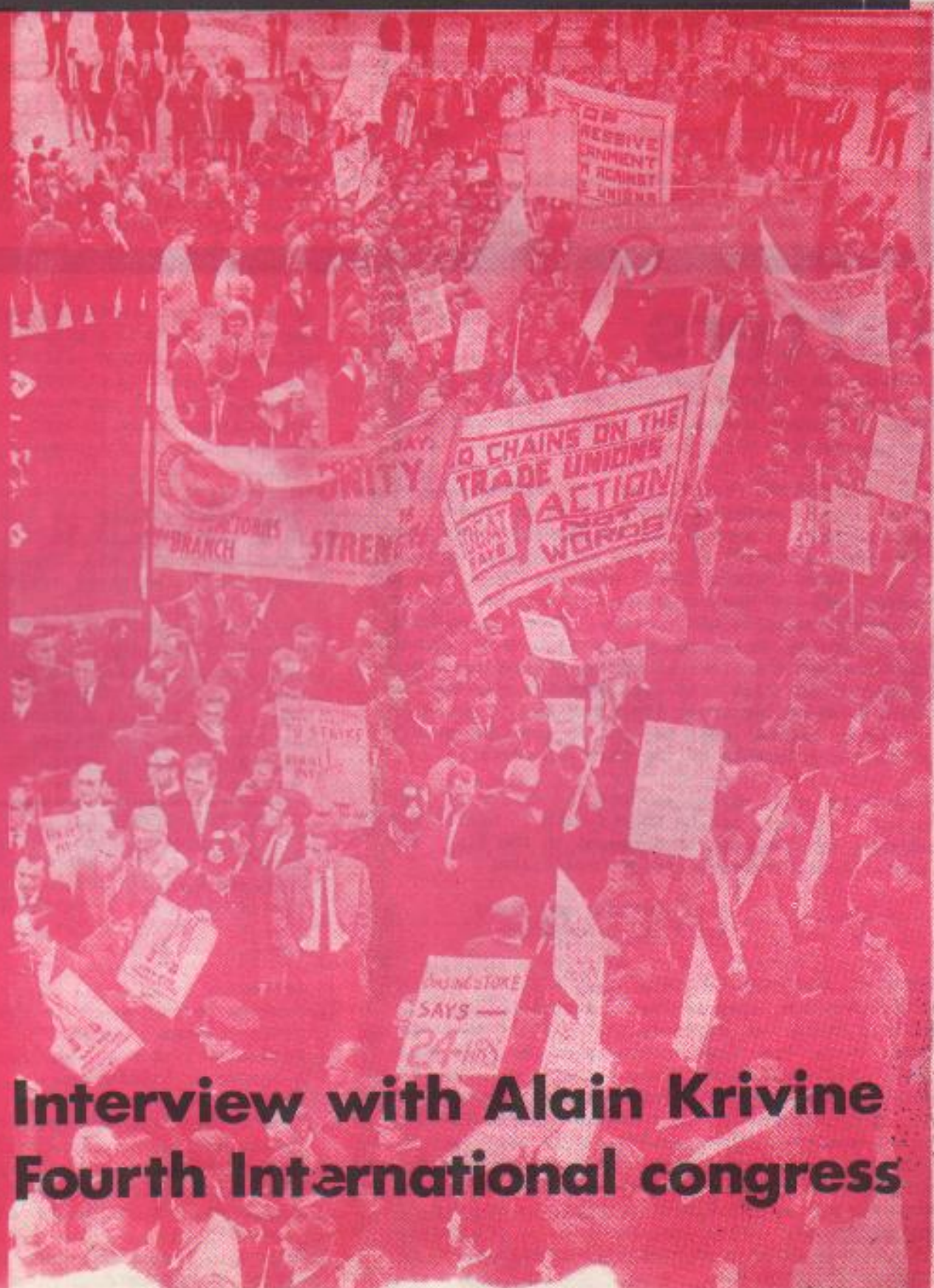


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WORLD AFFAIRS

STUDENT POWER



Interview with Alain Krivine
Fourth International congress

1/6

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Letters

Comrade van Gelderen's article, "No Compromise on Immigration" (International April 1969) suffers from a rather vulgar and oversimplified view of the means with which to combat racialism. It is self-evident that Marxists must at all times oppose immigration restrictions and fight racialism with class policies. However, it is crude in the extreme to assert that by quoting statistics the left is "doing so at the sacrifice of principle". This 'ultra left' position stems from a basic lack of understanding of the relationship between principles and tactics. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in quoting figures to expose the racist's lies; it would, however be unprincipled to fail to lay bare the reasons for their use of lie after lie; that is, it would be culpable indeed not to put to the fore at all times the interests of the united proletariat.

Racialism does exist, so does the danger of fascism. Neither can be fought with statistics alone, but they can be a weapon in the fight against these running sores of capitalism.

Robin Doughty and David
Buttrick, Birmingham

REPLY BY TESSA VAN GELDEREN

Of course the lies of Powell and all other racialists must be exposed; but I still maintain that there are some comrades on the left who, while explaining the reasons for these lies, do not, at the same time, state that there should be no restrictions on the number of people entering this country. As socialists, it is important to show that we are not interested in solving the problems the capitalists face. We also have to show that we are in favour of complete freedom of movement under capitalism. Any move by the capitalist state machine to restrict movement must be opposed on principle.

I am sure that comrades Doughty and Buttrick will agree that this is a principle (and not just a case of crude thinking or ultra-leftism) and this is precisely the point I attempted to make in my article; because the only way we can expose Powell's figures on immigration is to work out the number of immigrants entering the country and take it away from Powell's figure (and if this is not "vulgar and oversimplified", I don't know what is). But the only way of working out these "correct" estimates is to base it on the number of immigrants allowed into the country and this number by the immigration acts, to which we are all bitterly opposed.

So there is an "intrinsic" danger in using statistics in this way since it would appear that we are accepting the status quo of our capitalist society, instead of putting forward our own ideology. And this is a principle - not a tactic. It is the principle that we do not recognise that a capitalist state has any right to restrict the movement of any person.

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FOR WORKERS' POWER

WORKERS POWER VERSUS "IN PLACE OF STRIFE"

The February 27th and May 1st strikes showed the strength of the British working class. Although the number of workers involved was small - 100,000 and 200,000 (according to the ECONOMIST and other bourgeois sources, which would not exaggerate) - it has to be remembered that this was achieved with virtually no official union support at all. Scanlon and co., of course, faced both ways - opposing the strike at the AEU National Committee but supporting it behind the scenes via ENGINEERING VOICE. Other "left" trade union leaders behaved the same way: supporting the May 1st strike at the Sheffield workers control conference but at best doing nothing to implement the resolution passed at that conference.

Only the Communist Party and small Marxist groups gave general support to the strike. The danger of the high specific weight of the former has been demonstrated by the dropping of the originally projected June 5th strike.

The danger of relying upon trade union bureaucrats leading the struggle against the Government's anti-working class policies has been shown in no uncertain manner in recent weeks. The TUC proposals - which, in essence, only oppose the penal clauses of "In Place of Strife" - amount to an offer by Britain's trade union bosses that they should police the militants, instead of the Govern-

ment. The fact that the "left" trade union leaders - to a man - have also lined up behind this scheme is an important lesson for us all.

What is common to the Government, the trade union bureaucrats (left and right), the Communist Party and other miscellaneous lefts is that all fear above all the growth of a mass working class movement out of their control.

The February 27th and May 1st strikes showed that such a mass rank and file working class movement is a reality. The progression of the one-day strikes and the militancy of the strikers showed that the process would deepen and broaden. Almost certainly the June 5th strike would have been bigger - perhaps much bigger - than May 1st.

It is necessary now to start the patient job of constructing a movement with real influence in factories, pits, garages, etc., WHICH IS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT of the trade union bureaucrats. Recent experience has amply demonstrated that it must be independent also of the leadership of the Communist Party.

Of prime importance in waging this struggle will be the fight for trade union democracy. The bureaucrats will attempt to counter independent activity by expulsion and proscriptions - we must make it clear that we will not abandon the unions to them.

STUDENT POWER AGAIN

The mass media in Britain has not devoted so much space to the world-wide student revolt in recent months. However, it would be a big mistake to think it is in decline. On the contrary, in the past few weeks a series of countries has seen deeper struggles: in Argentina the biggest general strike for a decade is sparked off, Ivory Coast's university is closed, all over Latin America students spearhead demonstrations against Rockefeller, Holland shaken by the sit-in at Amsterdam, etc., etc.

We should never forget the lessons of France: there small vanguard groups set into motion a student struggle which in turn stimulated the biggest general strike in French history. Our fellow-thinkers in France, because of their role in the student struggle, because of the attention they gave to the need to struggle for a Leninist organisation, and their strength of ideas, have moved from being a typical "groupuscule" (with the typical "groupuscule's" social composition) to a 2,000 strong national organisation (30% of whose members are industrial workers).

In Britain the student struggle is only in its initial stage as yet. So far it has been mainly a case of the militants seeking ways of expediting the process of radicalisation. However, our attitude towards the student movement and its potential is based upon a sociological analysis. There are profound trends which create the conditions which favour the rise of student militancy and MASS

STUDENT ACTION.

But there are signs of a new phenomenon in the student field. In several towns recently students from teachers training colleges demonstrated because of their poor job prospects. These were not student militants anxious for a confrontation - they were ordinary students who regard teaching as a vocation and who had been led to believe that their future was assured.

The ECONOMIST of May 31st noted that "the huge expansion in colleges of education has meant that an extra 13,000 teachers above the number needed to replace those retiring are now available each year..."

Parallel processes will take place in the technological colleges, hardest hit of all by the Government's cuts. The arts colleges are already beginning to ferment. All of this is reflected in the change in the policies of the National Union of Students (that is not to have any illusions in that corporate body).

Thus it is reasonable to assume that we are due for our student revolt too; its form may vary, it may be a little longer coming BUT the processes of neo-capitalism grind on; only a workers revolution will bring them to a halt. Revolutionaries must be prepared to intervene in the student struggle to give it a thorough-going socialist orientation and to make sure that it materially assists the construction of a revolutionary vanguard

Productivity deals a socialist strategy



by John Peters

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Since 1945 Britain has been in a period of long-term relative economic decline. Despite the expansion of capitalism on a world scale the backwardness of British capitalism has given rise to a series of currency crises and a slower rate of growth than in any other industrial capitalist country. Any down turn in world trade, even a slowing down in the rate of expansion, would brutally expose all the accumulated weaknesses of British capitalism.

But Britain is not the "sick man" in an otherwise healthy world economy. Rather, the crisis is international - essentially a reflection of the contradiction between the productive forces and the private ownership of the means of production in economically outmoded national states - as reflected in the devaluation of the pound, the two-tier gold pricing and the round of devaluations threatened for the near future. Britain is the country where the contradictions are especially exposed and developed. Thus it is that we never reach the corner which the Wilson Government keep wanting to turn.

Indeed, the cutbacks by the U.S. administration point towards the laying of the ground for a full scale trade war, a war in which the British capitalists will have their backs to the wall. It is in this situation that the monopolists have decided that the trade unions must be institutionalised and integrated into the state; the trade union leaders through promises of "participation" in management, and seats on such bodies as the C.I.R., and the rank and file under threat of financial and penal penalties.

This is, however, only half the problem. "In Place of Strife" halts, or hopes to halt, the fight by the rank and file for better pay and conditions. There is another side to the problem - how to increase productivity and lower cost per unit of production to compete with foreign competitors. This is the role of the Department of Employment and Productivity and the Prices and Incomes Board, who say that productivity deals are the only way of getting pay increases.

Thus the employers, hiding behind the Labour Government, launched a national attack on the working class. In every major industry the men were faced with a productivity package; from Measured Day Work in the car and engineering industries, Devlin on the docks, to One Man Operated buses in public transport and pit closures unlimited for the miner.

But productivity deals are real. The extra productivity comes out of extra exploitation; it means worse conditions for the men who work it. To the car worker it means rubbing down the cars

till there's no skin left on his fingers, to the docker it means the destruction of a way of life known since he was a lad, for the busman it means physical assaults and beatings up from a public unable to stand the frustration of a "public" transport system, for the miner it means unemployment and a zombie like existence in a village condemned to death. Productivity deals mean, to the worker, the debasement of the whole quality of his life.

But the British working class is the best organised in the world. How then do the employers manage to force these cuts in working conditions upon them? The answer lies, of course, in the leadership of the trade union movement. Built in the bonanza days when the mere threat of a strike won claims, it is completely unable to cope with a situation where every wage claim becomes a struggle between the Government and the working class.

In particular, it is those who, seemingly, stand on the left, that play the most diabolical role in selling productivity to the men. Understanding, as they do, the crucial role of productivity but having no policy of breaking with the capitalist system they are forced to trade on their history of militancy to persuade men to accept package deals.

All the lessons to be learnt concerning productivity deals and the role of the "lefts" and others is superbly illustrated by the recent negotiations leading up to the signing of the latest productivity deal for London busmen.

BACKGROUND TO THE DEAL

To fully understand the deal, and see it in perspective, it is necessary to give a brief run down of the recent history of London Transport.

In the early years after the war the changing habits of the public (growing number of cars, television, etc.) meant that fewer people were travelling by bus. The London Transport Board replied by cutting services "to bring them into line with public demand" - always with the assurances that such cuts were in the interests of "efficiency", "productivity" and "economy". In fact, every year since nationalisation fewer passengers have been carried in fewer buses by a smaller staff.

Superficially, the argument that if fewer people travel, then fewer buses are needed to carry them is logical. However, the complete fallacy of this argument soon becomes obvious: the vast majority of passengers travel one mile or less, thus when the time between buses exceeds 10 minutes it is no longer a question of "have we time to walk or shall we take a bus?" but rather one of "have

we time to wait for a bus, or shall we walk?" The Board's reflex action is to increase fares, to stop the decline in revenue, and further cuts in services - "to bring them into line with public demand!"

Thus the situation is exacerbated. Between 1946 and 1967 services were slashed to the extent of some 20,000 drivers and conductors - 40% of the platform staff.

Yet for years the Board was able to get away with this policy since its massive fares increases brought sufficient extra revenue in to mask the decline in passengers. But today such an approach is no longer possible - the point of diminishing returns has been reached. Since 1963, whatever the percentage increase in fares there has been the same drop in passengers. Thus the Board has slid from a surplus of over £2 million per annum to a deficit of £10 million last year.

It was against this background of failure (to provide an efficient service, to provide an adequate service, to get London Transport to pay its way) that the Board in late 1966 put forward the panacea for all its ills - the Reshaping Plan - which would introduce One Man Operation (OMO) on London's buses, eliminating virtually half the work force and drastically changing bus design and routes.

As a nationalised industry there can be little doubt that this Reshaping Plan was part and parcel of the Wilson Government's national drive for "productivity" through modernisation and the PIB. Regarding public transport a three-pronged attack was to be made. Firstly, the regroupment of all transport (bus, rail, ferries, etc.) into Public Transport Authorities (PTAs), under the control of local authorities - who would run them in the interests of "efficiency" and "elimination of waste".

Secondly, financial inducements to the employers - a 25% grant towards the cost of OMO buses of approved design, a 75% grant for such projects as the development of "no-man" buses.

And thirdly, the use of Government legislation. Not only on a general level - the wage freeze, S.E.T., etc. - but also specific bills such as limiting the drivers' day to 9½ hours (with the staff shortage what it is the PTAs would be forced to "make the best possible use of employees", i.e., introduce OMO).

But in this national context London busmen could assume crucial importance. The largest single group of busmen in the country (33,000), any settlement with them could set the tone for all consequent deals up and down the country. Thus it was essential for any deal with them to be within the terms of the Government's policies.

THE ROLE OF THE UNION AND THE "LEFTS"

However, since the end of the war the status of the bus worker in London has been declining. Today, London busmen earn less (in real terms) than he did in 1938, and in many ways his conditions are worse! But in immediate terms, price

risers, increased rents, etc., proved a spur for the Central Bus Conference to call for their union (the Transport and General Workers Union) to live up to its verbal opposition to the PIB and press for a straightforward £1 on the basic.

Here London busmen were in a position of unique strength. The Board needed to introduce the Plan in a hurry, so that it could be completed before London Transport was handed over to the Greater London Council (to be the country's first PTA). Thus, all the men had to do was to sit tight, refuse to accept the Plan until their demands were met - and no need to lose money through strike action!

Thus by early 1967 the scene was set. On the one hand the Board - to escape its social and economic impasse - was pushing the Government sponsored Reshaping Plan. On the other, the men, from a position of strength, were challenging the Government's economic policy by demanding a straightforward, no strings attached, £1 on the basic.

It was in this situation - a potential head-on clash between a militant section of workers, with a history of struggle, and the Government - that the union leaders, both official and unofficial, played their crucial role.

Separately, the Board and the union pushed two tactics to divert the men from open confrontation and channel their fight into paths acceptable to Barbara Castle and the LTB. The chairman of the London Busmen's Negotiating Committee was J.W. (Bill) Jones. In that capacity he represented the interests of all busmen in negotiations with the LTB. Bill Jones is also a member of the General Executive Council of the TGWU, Vice-President of the TGWU, a member of Finance and General Purposes Committee, and on the General Council of the TUC. He is widely accepted by press and public as a leading advocate and exponent of the union's declared policy of opposition to the Government's wage freeze and interference in trade union affairs.

How far was this policy expressed by Bill Jones on behalf of London busmen? On 1st May, 1967, The Central Bus Committee considered the advisability of tabling a wage claim. The official minutes of the meeting state: "The chairman (Bill Jones)...spoke of the difficulties of making a straightforward wage application at this moment of time and he believed that the only way to overcome this problem would be to put forward a PRODUCTIVITY SCHEME that would prove ACCEPTABLE TO LONDON TRANSPORT AND WITHIN THE TERMS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESENT WAGE POLICY".

And what was the role of the traditional "lefts" throughout the negotiations - the TGWU would fight to the death against the Government's policy of wage freeze - provided that London busmen restrict their claims within the terms of the Government's policy - of WAGE FREEZE!

This then was the first prong of the union's campaign to channel the busmen's fight into harmless paths - to push for the £1 as PART OF A PRODUCTIVITY DEAL.

The second prong was to frighten the men into accepting a "compromise" deal with the Board by stressing that the fight would be against the Government, and at the same time stressing the monetary "gains" which would accrue from productivity. This was done primarily through the columns of the journal BUS STOP, which Bill Jones edited.

Once productivity, as a means of increasing the basic rate, was accepted IN PRINCIPLE, then the Board was able to tie together the two separate demands - their own for the Plan, and the men's for £1 - under the one general heading of a productivity package.

As far as productivity proposals for crew operated buses were concerned the Board put forward no proposals at all! They left that to the Negotiating Committee! All the proposals which have led to cuts in working conditions were put forward by the union side!

By September, 1967, the Negotiating Committee had cooked up a hash which they thought would prove palatable to the men, and a deal was put to the branches. Out of 100 branches, 94 threw it out! But were the Negotiating Committee downhearted? - not on your life. They decided to press ahead, completely ignoring the branches' rejection of the deal. By March, 1968, the Committee had prepared a reshaping of their former proposals which they hoped - would prove acceptable to the membership. For a 10/- bonus, and another 10/- bonus to go on the basic in October and 20% for all OMO drivers the men were to concede freedom to proceed with the Reshaping Plan, cuts in running time and 5 standing passengers all day.

However, Powerful new weapons had been added to their armoury. Aubrey Jones' PIB report on the pay and conditions of busmen published in December, 1967, stated that 10/- was sufficient for introducing OMO. The direct intervention of Marsh (then Minister of Transport), and later Castle, who claimed that the two 10/- bonuses were TOO MUCH for the productivity items offered! Union officials could now talk about the "few shillings separating the two sides" - as though the discussions had nothing to do with the conditions the men were asked to concede. The negotiations had now been going on for over a year, and the men were fed up with waiting, many were now voicing the opinion that ANY decision was better than the endless uncertainty.

At this crucial psychological moment, Jack Jones (Secretary elect, Transport and General Workers Union) and Alan Thompson (TGWU National Passenger Secretary) met the chairman of the LTB in closed session. As a result of this meeting a "new" formula was offered to the Negotiating Committee. Instead of the 20% all OMO men would get a payment of £4. 10. per week, but all bonuses would be lost, a further productivity item was added - a licence, i.e., all new drivers would have to serve as both drivers and conductors as needed.

Behind the huge carrot of £4. 10. was hidden a deal which in fact put the OMO men worse off than

the Board's offer of 20% plus bonuses! for example, the driver of a 73 passenger capacity OMO bus would now be 18/- worse off than under the proposals of the previous month! The Negotiating Committee accepted these new proposals by 5 votes to 4, the chairman's vote carrying the day.

By the July, when the deal was again put to the men, sufficient branches had been worn down by threats, cajoling and promises of "big money" for the deal to be accepted by 56 votes to 43.

LESSONS FOR SOCIALISTS

Now, after the implementation of the deal, it is possible to detail what its results have been for busmen, and what lessons can be learnt by revolutionaries who might be faced by a similar situation in other industries.

As soon as the Board began to implement the deal, the cuts in running time, etc., individual garages all over the fleet struck until the schedules were withdrawn on a more acceptable basis.

The staff realised that schedules are the life-blood of the industry, and that they were going to be bled to death operating them. The more militant members screamed for the blood of the Negotiating Committee and those representatives who had supported the deal, the more passive walked about with a dejected air, and hundreds more "voted with their feet" by walking right off the job.

The strategy revolutionary socialists must follow when faced with such a deal, must be determined by their ultimate aim of building a revolutionary Marxist leadership within the trade union movement. Their tactics will be determined by the most effective way of doing this, bearing in mind their extreme numerical weakness and present political isolation in the trade unions.

General lessons to be learnt from the particular case of London busmen's productivity deal are: that in condemning any productivity deal we must not be afraid of apparent isolation - especially where the traditional "lefts" and leaders are supporting it and only individual militants are in opposition. We must have the courage to be unpopular, to call a sell-out a sell-out, to tell the men: "you are being conned", "you are being betrayed". We must explain on every suitable occasion how the deal is tied up with Government policies. A consistent fight, in alliance with other forces with whom we are in agreement, during the lead up to the deal will attract the militants to us.

Whether the best elements will be capable of guiding the particular section of the working class to a victory depends upon many factors which will vary from section to section within the working class - combativity, level of general consciousness, etc. Even if the deal goes through the most conscious elements will say: "we were warned by these people, they are worth listening to." Even though we cannot hope, in the short term, to establish control of the organisations, there will be little doubt that we will have established political hegemony.

A "Degree of Expectation"

by Julian Atkinson

In "It's the degree that counts" Jo O'Brien has produced a very readable and stimulating article. I have no quarrel with her argument that as well as the major contradiction between capital and labour there exist other contradictions which reflect the primary source only in a distorted manner. They can exist within the working class, as does the exploitation of women and blacks, and are neglected by Marxists at their peril. I do, however, disagree fundamentally with her thesis that racialisation is directly proportional to exploitation. This runs throughout the article: "The British proletariat suffered far greater physical hardship in the nineteenth century than it does today. In consequence the reaction to exploitation was both more militant and more consistent" ... and ... "Degrees of exploitation are like nerve endings - where they are raw the reaction to unfavourable conditions is instantaneous!" An equation has been constructed: exploitation = radicalisation, double exploitation = double radicalisation.

There are at least three meanings given to exploitation, by the left. Marx related it to the amount of surplus value extracted from a sector of workers. The sense in which Jo O'Brien uses it employs the concept of "greater physical hardship". A further definition regards it as, in part, a subjective phenomenon that relates to the degree of alienation. Definitions one and three do not most accurately apply to those in group two, and seem to most obviously apply to the "affluent" working class and the newly proletarianised layers of skilled technicians and white-collar workers. In this reply I will use the term exploitation in the sense that Jo O'Brien uses the term.

Professor Walt Rostow, the "anti-communist historian", strongly argued that exploitation meant radicalisation. He constructed what he termed an "index of social tension" for the period from 1792 to 1850. He found that the trough of a slump was associated with maximum unrest. For this period of history the evidence is not as conclusive as Rostow has claimed. Many aspects of working-class political education suffered during slump times as Thomas Cooper's "Life" shows.

After 1850, Hobsbawm has suggested that the arrival of the world-wide cyclical crisis may be responsible, the pattern changes. Working-class activity now occurs less at the trough of the slump and more at the upswing of the cycle. Both the 1887-90 and the 1909-12 upswings in Britain were marked by explosions in trade-union membership and activity. This pattern was less clear cut on the Continent, where the old depression pattern, especially in Belgium and Italy, lasted into the early 20th Century.

In Britain during this century slumps have been periods of political reaction. The militant Shop

Stewards and Workers Committee Movement flourished during the full employment of the first World War. The interwar slump weakened the working-class movement and installed a monumental Tory majority in Parliament. It was not until the second World War brought back full employment that the shop stewards movement revived. Today it is not the beleaguered NUM but ASTMS and DATA that exhibit militancy.

The degree of exploitation argument presents revolutionaries with a problem as to which sector will form the vanguard of the struggle. In the absence of a slump, the protagonists of this theory might be forced to "sit out" a whole period until there is sufficient misery and deprivation to generate activity again. Alternately, they might, recognising that the working-class is played out, look for new progressive forces. This is the road that Marcuse has taken. "...the masses are integrated and marshalled within the framework of a democratic pluralism. Outside, or rather beneath, this democracy, there are whole sectors who are not integrated into it, who perhaps never will be: racial minorities, the permanently unemployed, the poor. They are the living negation of the system." Why have the workers been downgraded from their historical role? They are affluent and insufficiently exploited. "Why should the overthrow of the existing order be a vital necessity for people who own, or can hope to own, good clothes, a well stocked larder, a TV set, a car, a house and so on, all within the order?"

In this last passage, aspects of the arguments seem like a Tory diatribe against cars on council estates. Marcuse is absolutely incorrect to dismiss the revolutionary potential of the workers. It is very likely that "non-integrated" sectors such as blacks, students or women might weaken the structure of capitalist power, but it is only the working-class (regardless of its "affluence") that can replace capitalism. Mandel comments decisively on the affluence/apathy syndrome: "Those who were blinded by the rise in standard of living during the last 15 years did not understand that it is precisely in periods when the productive forces are increasing (periods of accelerated "economic growth") that the proletariat acquires new needs, and that the gap between their needs and the available purchasing power grows wider." As the workers' standard of living and level of culture rises, so the hierarchical inequalities of capitalism and the intensified alienation of the consumer society become intolerable to the workers. Deprivation motivation is still a goad to revolution, but we will disarm ourselves in dealing with the problems of neocapitalism if we see it as the only goad. It seems more useful to assemble a model in which the major causation of radicalisation is the degree of expectation. When workers are affluent they are also confident. Their gains, which they have fought for, they come to accept as normal. Even small cuts in this standard will provoke very sharp reactions. We need to refine our analysis of the roots of revolution in this period. We will pay a hard price if we fail to do so.



Photo by Hermes

An interview with

ALAIN KRIVINE

WHY FRENCH TROTSKYISTS ENTERED PRESIDENTIAL RACE

by Richard Wood

Alain Krivine was one of the leaders of the JCR (Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire - Revolutionary Communist Youth), one of the most important groups in the leadership of the youth during the May events, and which was banned by de Gaulle last June. Members of the former JCR and of the Internationalist Communist Party, which was also banned, formed the core of what became the new Communist League in April of this year.

Krivine was arrested last July and charged with reconstituting the JCR. However, the Government never brought him to trial, but released him on parole and drafted him into the army, where he is a private.

On May 25 I was able to speak with Alain Krivine and other leaders of the Communist League - Charles Michaloux, Hubert Krivine, Daniel Bensaïd and Henri Weber - during a break in the hectic campaign schedule the members and leaders of the League are following. Eighty major meetings have been scheduled throughout the country for Krivine and other leaders of the League in the short campaign period, and many more smaller meetings are being run by local units of the League during the course of the campaign. The League has been given the use of two planes by sympathisers to transport League spokesmen to all of these meetings and appearances (there are too many for Krivine to appear at all of them). The newspaper ROUGE (red), which reflects the views of the Communist League, has moved from a biweekly to a weekly publication schedule and its press run has jumped from 30,000 to 50,000.

Those meetings which have already been held have been very successful. For example, on May 21 the great hall of the Mutualite in Paris was packed with over 5,000 people to hear Krivine and other leaders of the League. Campaign meetings have been held at Renault and other factories. In some provincial towns, attendance at meetings of the League has been higher than for meetings of

the French Communist Party. In Rouen and Montpellier, there were 1,200 and 1,500 people respectively at League meetings.

In discussing the election campaign with me, leaders of the League stressed that they are using the lessons of the May, 1968, events to make their socialist programme more concrete.

For example," Krivine said, "take the idea of workers power. There are a series of examples we are recalling to people through the campaign, where the strikes of last May developed from a "passive" to an "active" stage, where workers occupying plants began to exercise limited power. In some places strike committees began to take over social functions, like the distribution of food, using trucks and other equipment in the factories the workers had seized control of.

"However, these embryos of workers power were decentralised, local, spread over the country. The power of the capitalists remained centralised in the government and state apparatus - their power was very much weakened, but it remained centralised. And, although the capitalist class was sharply divided (one of the indications that the situation in May, 1968, was truly a revolutionary one), it was saved almost in spite of itself by the Gaullist clique, with the help of the Communist Party. The CP did everything it could to divide the striking workers, limit the strike movement to non-political demands and finally to disperse it.

"We do not say that the great general strike of May and June could have immediately led to a socialist revolution. We do say that we could have smashed Gaullism through an insurrectional strike which would have shed very little blood. While we would have still had a bourgeois government with someone like Mendes-France or Mitterand, the working class would have grown in confidence and seen the power of extra-parliamentary mass action by the workers themselves. The strike committees would have continued to develop. And this could have led to a struggle for socialism, a struggle by the workers to take state power.

"It's true we are no longer in the situation we were in May-June, 1968, and the question of tak-

ing power is not an immediate one. But this doesn't mean that we should just sit around waiting for the "big evening" as the anarchists say, when there will be another revolutionary situation like May, 1968, but we have to prepare now.

"We are not only using the campaign to explain the potential of the 1968 events, but also to project demands and forms of struggle which will reach workers at their present level of understanding and at the same time raise their consciousness and bring them toward revolutionary conclusions.

"For example, we point to what has happened to the gains won in the May-June strike. As a result of the strike, there was an average rise in wages of 12 per cent., some workers having won even more. There were many other gains resulting from the strike, including promises about the reduction of the work week.

"Where does the situation stand today? Price rises have taken away at least three-quarters of the wage gains the workers won in May. The length of the work week has increased. Capitalist rationalisation and increased capitalist competition resulting in the shutting down of smaller uncompetitive plants have resulted in rising unemployment and a whole layer of small capitalists being forced back into the proletariat. Unemployment is hitting the youngest and the oldest workers the hardest.

"The tactic of the government and the bosses is to divide the workers, and the CGT (General Confederation of Labour - the CP-dominated union centre) plays along with them. (For example, last winter there was an auto strike in Renault in Paris, in Le Mans and in other towns - the CGT kept all these strike struggles separated and isolated instead of uniting them, and as a result they were lost. Our militants in these factories

attempted to begin to counter this policy by issuing a strike bulletin with information on all the strikes.) In the campaign, we are projecting demands which will help unite the workers and direct their struggle against the capitalist government and capitalist class as a whole."

To fight unemployment, the CL is raising the demand for an immediate return to a 40-hour work week with no reduction in pay; a sliding scale of hours. On working conditions, they are raising the concepts of workers control over the intensity and speed of work, etc.

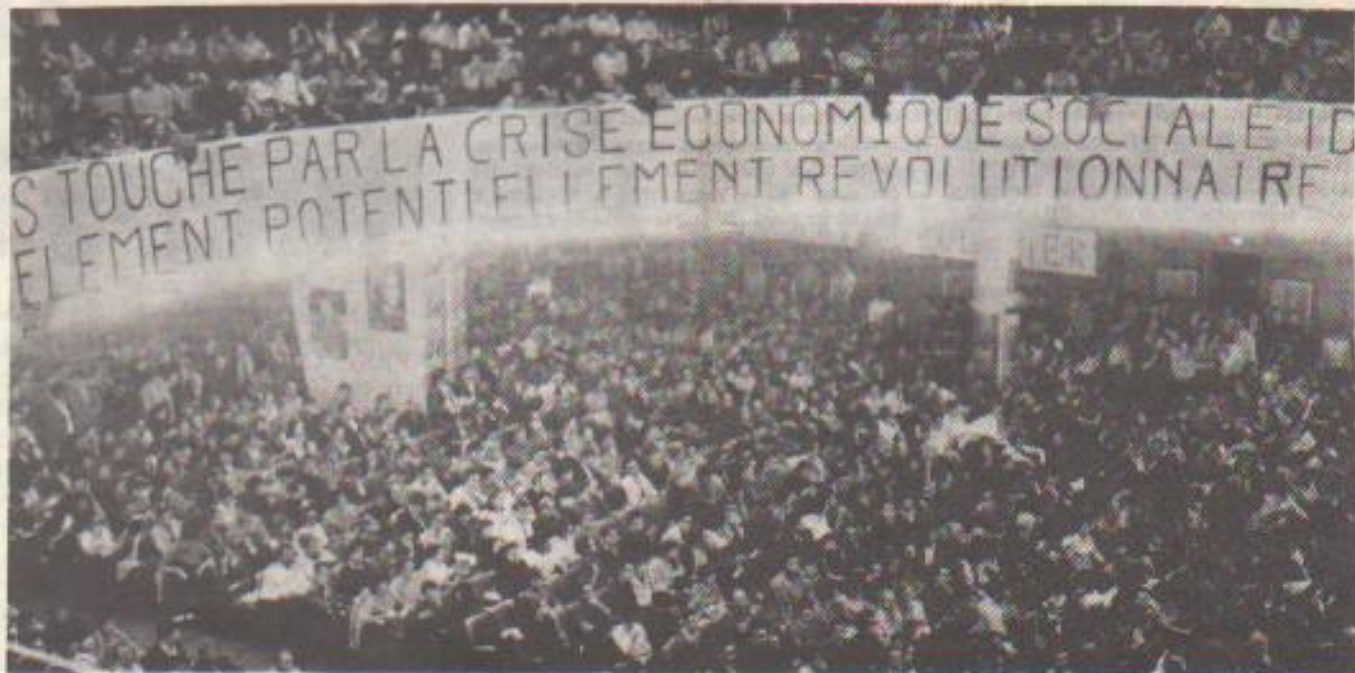
"In addition to popularising these demands, we are using the election campaign to publicise local actions where workers have won through struggle some control over the speed of assembly lines, over the amount of time they have for lunch break, etc.

"In raising these demands," the League spokesman told me, "we tie them in with the need for a fundamental transformation of society, for a socialist revolution. The central focus of our campaign, against the concept of a peaceful and electoral transition to socialism put forward by the CP, is to explain that it is not possible for the working class to take power without a revolution.

"We cannot make a socialist revolution by electing better people to staff the posts of the capitalist government - in that sense Krivine is not running for president at all. We're using our campaign to explain the necessity of completely transforming the existing society, breaking up the old capitalist state and replacing it with a workers state."

One of the questions Krivine and the other Communist League campaigners have asked of them time and again is whether the CL advocates violence.

We are against violence," Krivine explains, "and



PARIS RALLY. Mass meeting during revolutionary events of last May. Meeting was organized by the Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR), which, along with other anti-

capitalist groups, was banned by De Gaulle. Many of those associated with the JCR helped launch recently founded Communist League, French section of the Fourth International.

want to build a socialist society and socialist world free of violence. Violence is inherent in capitalist society - not only in its police and army, and not only expressed in the horror of war, but also there is the daily, continual violence done to individuals in the exploitation of man by man. We want to eliminate the source of this violence: capitalism.

"But we warn the workers that the capitalist class itself has absolutely no scruples against using violence to maintain itself in power. It will never allow socialism to be "voted in". If it feels its power threatened, it will use its army and police, or if those fail, fascist gangs to defend its power and privileges. And against that violence the workers have not only the right but the duty to prepare to defend themselves against capitalist violence, and we are using this campaign to help to explain this to the workers.

"It's worth recalling a statement made by Trotsky on this subject: 'It is as absurd to attack ballot boxes with machine guns as it is to defend yourself against machine guns with ballot boxes.'"

Another question often asked of CL campaigners is just what kind of socialism they advocate.

"Neither the 'socialism' of Wilson or Husak," they explain. "Real socialism has nothing to do with reforming capitalism, making it run better, which is what the social democrats advocate. It is impossible to do what the 'left' social democrat candidate, Rocard advocates, that is, to transform the organs of the capitalist state, like the capitalist parliament into organs of workers power. Neither are we for the bureaucratic system found in the deformed workers states like the USSR. We advocate the nationalisation of all major industry, banking and commerce, and the operation of the economy under a rational plan democratically decided by organs of workers power.

"Here again we use the examples of the May upsurge to show how strike committees and action committees could become the embryos of a new form of state power, based on democratically elected workers councils. The councils on a local or factory level would elect higher councils, and so on up to a central council which would be the highest organ of state power in the workers state. We also favour, in addition, to such a democratic structure, other measures to combat bureaucracy, such as the right of immediate recall of any official, no wages of any official to be higher than those of a skilled worker, etc. Such a democratic workers state would be transitional to a truly socialist form of society where social classes and the state itself would gradually disappear."

In addition to such points the Communist League is using the campaign to explain why the French people should solidarise with the struggles of the Vietnamese against U.S. imperialist aggression (the CP candidate only supports the Paris talks). Krivine is also the only candidate who supports the Palestine liberation struggle. (Letters threatening Krivine's life have been sent by both Zionists who accuse him of betraying Judaism and by fascists who accuse him of being

part of the "international Jewish conspiracy.")

Krivine is also explaining the Communist League's opposition to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia, and his support to such communist dissidents as Kuron and Modzelewski in Poland, who call for workers democracy in their countries.

The Communist League has solidarised with revolutionary groups in the French colonies, which have urged voters in the colonies to boycott the elections, on the grounds that these colonies should be free of French rule and therefore should not participate in the French elections.

Krivine has also demanded an end to restrictions on democratic rights - specifically the lifting of the bans imposed by de Gaulle on various revolutionary groups after the May events; the return of scholarships taken from many students for their activities in May; the reversal of the expulsions and banning from France of student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Ernest Mandel, a leader of the Fourth International, Joseph Hansen, editor of INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS, and others.

The response to the Krivine campaign among university students has been generally favourable, including most groups who have political disagreements with the Communist League. There is a minority of "spontaneists," however, who criticise the League for running a candidate because they feel this helps promote illusions in the bourgeois electoral process.

"We did not create the illusions in the bourgeois electoral process which, unfortunately, the vast majority of French people still have," Krivine observes. "Since these illusions do exist, however, the mass of people regard the elections seriously. To abstain from them would mean to allow the reformists, who do reinforce illusions in the elections and in capitalism, to go unchallenged. We enter the elections, and take advantage of such democratic rights which are part of the electoral process (these rights themselves were wrested by the people in past struggles with the ruling powers) to expose the sham nature of these elections. One of our posters, hundreds of thousands of which have been put up all over France, declares: 'Against the electoral farce, for the upsurge of class struggle!'"

It is also said that the Communist League is attempting to monopolise the legacy of the May upsurge. The League spokesmen told me, "it is true that in May, the predecessors of the Communist League were one tendency among many. Millions of workers participated and dozens of groups. One of the key differences between us and almost all of the other groups was our insistence upon the need to build a democratically centralised combat party to lead the struggle of the workers for state power through to victory.

"During the May uprising itself, during the upturn in the struggle, it was understandable that many people should agree with the spontaneists. Cohn-Bendit was the best of them. But the need for serious organisation began to be felt as soon as the actual power of the capitalist state began to be felt, especially when the repression began.

There is no question that in the final struggle itself, a combat party will be necessary for victory. We are in the process of constructing such a party.

"So while we were just one (although an important one) group in May among many, we have been the one to consolidate organisationally the experience of May, putting these lessons into the context of the rich theoretical lessons of other struggles which are a part of the Marxist programme, and in that sense we are the legitimate continuators of May."

I asked the League representatives to make some comments on the other candidates.

"Well," they said, "Pompidou is presenting himself as the 'man of order' and keeps pointing to the 'dangers of May.' He says he is for 'continuity with an opening,' which means essentially the continuation of Gaullist policies and the Gaullist Fifth Republic without some of the idiosyncrasies of de Gaulle. Pöher, who says he is for 'an opening in the continuity,' is an absolute mediocrity. He is fishing for support among the middle layers of the bourgeoisie, who have some grudges against de Gaulle, although he would rule in the interests of the big bourgeoisie just as Pompidou would, only he would be weaker than Pompidou."

"Although Pöher is trying to get the support of the middle bourgeois layer, he doesn't really know exactly what to say to them. So he is trying to say as little as possible, for every time he opens his mouth he loses votes. (It's just the opposite with us. The mass of the workers don't know about us or what we stand for. The more we speak, the more support we receive.)"

"There are two social democrats running, a left one and a right one. The right-wing one is Defferre, who has the support of Mendes-France. He

wants to run capitalism more rationally, and calls for better roads, wants to know the truth about prices, etc., and is pro-Washington.

"The left social democrat is Rocard, who calls himself the nominee of socialism. In fact his central theme is reformist, calling for the gradual transformation of the capitalist state, from the inside, without destroying it. He wants to unite both the revolutionary and the reformist currents. In reality he is squeezed between Mendes-France and Krivine. He says that he has two regrets: that his good friend Mendes-France is supporting Defferre, and that Alain Krivine, who was so good in May, has gone back to Trotskyism, which is an old-fashioned theory."

"During the campaign, Rocard falsely accused Trotskyism with being against independent trade unions. He cited a position taken by Trotsky during the civil war in Russia in 1921. This gave us the opportunity to explain our view that under a workers' state, the trade unions should not be mere 'transmission belts' for orders to the workers, but independent organisations defending the interests of the workers."

"The CP has put up an old Stalinist hack, Jacques Duclos. He is presenting himself as the candidate of the 'unity' of the left - on a completely reformist programme."

As a result of the campaign, besides reaching millions of workers with the Communist League's revolutionary socialist programme, Red Committees are growing rapidly. Red Committees are springing up in towns where there are no members of the League. Sailing, Krivine points out that "I'm the only candidate who can say beforehand that he has won the elections, that his objective has been achieved."

9TH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

During the week of Easter 1969, a total of 98 delegates, fraternal delegates and observers from 30 countries attended the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International (the third Congress since reunification of the world Trotskyist movement). The high point of the Congress was the affiliation to the Fourth International of the Communist League of France, numerically the strongest section which has joined the International since its Foundation. The Congress itself reflected the progress made by the revolutionary Marxist organisations during the recent period, as a result of the worldwide upsurge of the new youth vanguard and of the new rise of world revolution which has become manifest since the beginning of 1968.

The Thesis on the New Rise of World Revolution

presented to the World Congress summarises the turn which has occurred in the world situation in 1968 in six main points:

1. The imperialist counter offensive launched by American imperialism following the victory of the Cuban revolution, after having scored important temporary successes in Brazil, in Indonesia, and in a number of African countries, has been repulsed by the heroic Vietnamese people who took the military initiative with the Tet offensive of 1968.
2. The victorious resistance of the Vietnamese people coincided with a general decline of the economic growth of the imperialist countries, which has exacerbated the social contradictions and intensified the class struggle in most of them.

3. May 1968 in France began a new revolutionary upsurge in Europe.

4. The successful defence of the Vietnamese Revolution and the rebirth of revolutionary struggles in many imperialist countries has given the colonial revolution the possibility of overcoming the obstacles in its path.

5. Simultaneously with the Vietnamese Revolution & with the revolutionary crisis in France, the ripening of conditions for political revolution in the bureaucratically degenerated workers states has already led to mass mobilisations in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and political revolution is knocking at the door of the USSR itself.

6. The appearance of a new youth vanguard on a world scale, largely free from the control of the traditional mass organisations, favours the solution of the central task of our epoch: the creation of a new revolutionary leadership for the world proletariat.

The Congress discussions were centred around an evaluation of these key developments and around the elaboration of a strategic and tactical line which will enable the movement to utilise the existing favourable conditions for a further expansion of the Fourth International. The conclusion reached through these discussions was that the revolutionary Marxist organisations themselves are making a major turn, and in a series of countries have already been able to take political mass initiatives and launch effective mass actions, especially on the level of the vanguard.

The main documents adopted by the Congress will be printed in many languages. They were:

- The Thesis on The New Rise of World Revolution and the report of Comrade Germain who presented them, approved virtually unanimously.

- A resolution on the perspectives of the Latin-American revolution, presented by a report by Comrade Roca, approved by a two-to-one majority.

- A resolution on the "Cultural revolution" in China, and the report of Comrade Livio Maitan presenting it to the Congress, approved by a majority of over three-to-one.

- A resolution orientating the work of the International in the coming period toward radicalising youth, and opening a discussion of the problems posed by this orientation with a document presented by Comrade Albert.

The Ninth World Congress also adopted the activity report by the outgoing United Secretariat, presented by Comrade Germain, the report on the financial situation of the International, as well as resolutions dealing with specific questions of the movement in Argentina, Ceylon, Germany and Great Britain. In Britain, where previously there was no official section, the Congress recognised the International Marxist Group as the British section of the Fourth International. The Congress decided to refer to the next session of the International Executive Committee the discussion of a draft resolution on the tactics of revolutionary

Marxists in Western Europe, as well as a draft resolution on the balance sheet of the Algerian Revolution.

The Ninth World Congress of the 4th International elected as honorary chairmen revolutionists who are suffering repression on behalf of imperialism or the Stalinist bureaucracy, as the result of their activities in the service of world socialism. The honorary chairmen included comrades Hugo Blanco and Creuz in prison in Peru; comrades Daniel Camejo and Carlos Sevilla, in prison in Mexico; the Greek Trotskyist victims of the terror unleashed by the military dictatorship in their country; the Spanish Trotskyists in Franco's jails; comrades Kuron and Modzelewsky, in prison in Poland; Neville Alexander and his comrades imprisoned on Robben Island in South Africa; and the oppositional Soviet communists arrested for protesting against the occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by the armies under the command of the Kremlin's bureaucracy; and the two Argentine comrades gravely wounded during a strike of oil workers in their country. The Congress likewise honoured the memory of all the cadres of the world Trotskyist movement who died since the 8th World Congress, among them comrades Rose Karsner and Bea Hansen from the United States, comrade Mallikarjun Rao from India; the leading comrades of the Partai Acoma, killed by the fascist dictatorship in Indonesia, and comrade Ernesto Che Guevara, the symbol of a new generation of revolutionists all over the world.

The World Congress ended with the election of a new International Executive Committee composed of 37 members and 9 alternates, as well as of an International Control Commission composed of 5 members.

LSE: Growth without direction?

by Vinay Chand

The last year has brought a great deal of growth on the left at the London School of Economics, yet, if anything, the present situation is very depressing. In March 1968 there were very few militants at the L.S.E. who were in favour of an emphasis upon radical activity at the College with a view towards building of a Students Revolt. By October, there were very few who did not want to do precisely that. The period March - October 1968 is very important in any analysis of the situation at the L.S.E. to-day; for within that period there emerged not only the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation, but also contradictions which have contributed to the present debacle at the L.S.E.

In February 1968 a group of 13 students from and around the L.S.E. went to Berlin to attend the Vietnam Congress and the demonstration that fol-

owed it. Student militancy in Germany had attracted the attention of some militants at the L.S.E. but hardly any ideological approval. Some felt developments in the S.D.S. to be adventurous and totally isolated from the sort of activity which groups like the International Socialism group advocated in order to forge links and struggle with the working class. Indeed this separated these comrades from purely student "activists" in the Radical Students Alliance who were concerned with gaining power within the structure of the National Union of Students in order to further the causes of student representation and political debate. The trip to Berlin, it is important to remember, was organised by the N.L.F. Society more than by the Socialist Society at LSE.

The group that went to Berlin went with many reservations about the S.D.S. but upon its return some within it were impressed with the necessity of working with students. The wide gap which existed with these and the hard core of the Socialist Society was clearly evident when a group from the S.D.S. in Berlin attended the March 17th Demonstration in London. Very few common perspectives existed between the S.D.S. comrades and the I.S. group at the L.S.E.. Both were to adapt their positions in the following months although many in both claim that only the environment altered.

The May events in Paris were to provide the catalyst. The agitation following the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke had already emphasised the feeling of isolation of the student vanguard in relation to the working class in Germany. In Paris it became obvious that students could act as a detonator, but also the vital importance of the link with the working class. In London it reinforced the hands of those comrades in the Socialist Society in general and within I.S. in particular, who wanted to work more actively with students. There followed a rejection of the arguments being advanced by a minority group who still questioned the role of students. Out of this debate emerged the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation. But the reservations of the minority group were to induce a hesitancy in the majority which constituted the vanguard. True, all militants had been prepared to take up issues like the appointment of Doctor Walter Adams, to radicalise within Universities, but there was now a vital emphasis at stake.

From October 1968 the Socialist Society grew rapidly in size and this included a large number of new students. The L.S.E. also now has a substantial number of students who identify with some of the aspirations of the Socialist Society. It was they who stood firm at the Meeting at Friends House during the closure of the L.S.E. and they who voted in a Socialist Society majority on the Union Council. But there was a sad lacking of any political education within the increased base. True I.S. was now joined by other tentative formations in competition for the allegiance of militants, but none of the other tendencies was formalised or strong enough to provide an alternative leadership. More recently there have been one or two tentative nuclei emerging, the two major ones being Robin Blackburn's Red Bases theory, and the Ultra-Left Group. But, in a way, events were to overtake and undercut

these developments.

The administration collided with the militants at first and then deliberately set about an attack on the Left at the L.S.E.. When the crunch came, the militants had failed to politically educate the L.S.E. students sufficiently to withstand such an attack, and found themselves a large but isolated and frustrated minority. Those who advocated action even if taken by the University alone, and those who advocated the building of Red Bases now looked entirely unrealistic.

The examinations loom ahead, and although some of the militant minority would like to question and act against them, the students as a whole do not feel convinced enough to jeopardise their tickets on the gravy train. Even militants, in the past, have often hibernated for weeks or months in order to ensure a good degree. Can we blame the majority, who have only identified with the left on an emotional basis without adequate attempts to reinforce this with analysis, for deserting us now in face of the chopper? We have provided no alternative, perhaps because we have not thought enough in concrete terms, and we find ourselves unsure whether we have one.

With the Ford strike and agitation against Government legislation against workers rights, many comrades have now started to question activity in the universities and many of the criticisms which had been advanced by the minority group are being advanced again. However, a return to February 1968 is impossible. The lessons of May cannot be swept aside.

The great tragedy is that even out of the comrades who have been active within the Socialist Society, many have not got the sort of analysis which they need to survive as militants when they leave the L.S.E.. The general desire for an ideological battle at L.S.E. does tend to try to undo many of these omissions. Also, many recruits for the Ford picket line, the Squatters, the Poster Workshop, and political groups have been made. However, the gains made compare unfavourably with the possibilities available. These are likely to grow even more rapidly next year.

When two comrades from the S.D.S. came to this country a few weeks ago, they found a great deal of common perspective with militants here. No longer is the attitude to get up on a platform and announce the country you came from, the lessons you have learnt which you think the audience should consider. We all have a more open and internationalist attitude, and look for lessons which can be learnt from the experience in Paris, London, Prague and Berlin.

Student power

The sheer viciousness of the attacks on the latest New Left book "Student Power" from the respectable reviews columns should please the editors almost as much as the large sales they have achieved. It demonstrates that they are on target when they receive the accolade of such a torrent of bourgeois spite and malice. This book is, however, being taken seriously by the student re-

revolutionaries as well as reactionary academics. A measure of this seriousness will be the extent to which the book is rigorously and critically analysed in the continuing debate about the future of the student movement.

Any collection of essays is bound to be uneven; this book is no exception and includes in uneasy proximity the perceptive with the mediocre. Even the better articles sometimes have a discontinuous flavour and occasionally become precious. The big words and the pitter-patter of dropping names are distractions from the central purpose of the book, as is the superfluous inclusion of such inexact and unhelpful concepts as "the spectacle" and the McLuhanite electronic village.

None of these criticisms detract from the outstanding merit of the major essays. Steadman-Jones has attempted to construct a comprehensive explanation of "why the student revolt" and has sketched in a suggested strategy for the militants. Bob Anderson and Blackburn have done much to destroy the deference that students might hold towards official ideology and its paid apologists. Carl Davidson has contributed an exceptionally useful piece on campus tactics; a genuine hand-book of rebellion.

The book fails to adequately answer the tactical and strategic problems in front of the student left. This flows in part from the failure of the editors to evolve a consistent political line. There is a tendency to retreat, at crucial areas of the argument, into a non-gelled eclectic iconography in which Gramsci, Althusser, Trotsky and Mao are conjured forth. A serious appreciation of just where the movement is, where it has to go and how it will get there is lacking. It is sig-

nificant that it is an American, Carl Davidson, whose article will be of the most immediate use to the British militant.

The avoidance of seriously answering these questions can only be explained by the fact that the book has been filleted of a necessary and central concept; the formation of a revolutionary vanguard. It is this that knits together the disparate aspects of the student revolt and enables them to be seen within the concept of a total strategy against capitalism.

The student radicalisation in Britain is still in its initial phases. It is weak organisationally, and uneven in development. In consequence it either makes concessions to spontaneity theories or puts off attempting to form the basis for a revolutionary vanguard to a distant future. The student "detonator" initiated the explosion in France. The May Events also showed that the struggle could not be completed in the absence of a revolutionary party. The detonator effect might be a product of conjunctural forces. If this were the case, then the real significance of the student revolt would be that it constitutes a training ground for a new generation of revolutionary cadres. The only sectors who could then intervene meaningfully would be those who wish to build the revolutionary party. The absence of an awareness of this key problem detracts from the long-term usefulness of this volume, but it remains still the best book on the student movement as yet published in Britain.

by Peter Milner

* Published by Penguin : Price 7/-.

Discussion on Ireland

by Murray Smith

I should like to take up some of the points raised by Brian Dunlop's letter (May International) and to elaborate some of the points in my original article.

First of all, on the question of support for the demand of a united Ireland, rather than a united socialist Ireland. This point was aimed at socialists in Britain, and was based on our duty to support the right of the Irish people to self-determination, regardless of whether or not this produced a socialist Ireland. It is perfectly appropriate, of course for Irish socialists to demand a socialist Ireland, and to determine their relationship to those (Irish) who simply fight for a united Ireland. As regards self-determination, I think there can be very little doubt that self-determination for the Irish people as a whole would result in a united country. True enough the majority in the North are against this at present - but the present crisis in Ulster ultimately stems from the fact that Northern Ireland is an artificial creation, imposed in

1921 to suit the interests of British Imperialism and the Northern Irish capitalist class. Its very existence is dependent and always has been, on the systematic oppression, politically, economically and socially, of one-third of the population - on keeping them as second class citizens. On the question of the loss of support by the Nationalist Party at the recent election, (which I welcome), I think this was in spite of its position on the border, and because of its pusillanimity on the Civil Rights issue by comparison with Peoples Democracy or even Hume and Jorder.

I think, however, that having made clear their position on the question of unification of Ireland, socialists should not emphasise this aspect at the moment, but should seek to emphasise those aspects which separate them from the Northern Nationalists (and the two southern bourgeois parties). That is, they should concentrate on widening the programme of the Civil Rights movement to include socialist demands on jobs, housing etc. In spite of their opposition to partition, the Nationalist in the North have never been able to become more than a Catholic party because they

are not in any way opposed to capitalism. Only a socialist programme for the Civil Rights movement will be able to win to it the Protestant workers - which, as comrade Dunlop points out, is very important. It is quite wrong, however, to moderate the very justified demands of the Catholics, or to duck the question of the border, in order to appeal to the Protestant workers. The Protestant working class in Ulster has a record of collaboration in the oppression of Catholics which matches that of white workers in America in relation to the black people. I think the comparison I made between the Ulster Protestants and the "poor whites" of the U.S.A. was very apt. But when I made this comparison I didn't intend to create the impression that the Protestants don't suffer from bad housing, unemployment, etc. They most certainly do (even though, in general, not as badly as the Catholics.) This is why they can be mobilised around socialist demands. The point is that by assisting in the oppression of Catholics, they maintain the split in the working class which only helps the capitalists to exploit both Catholics and Protestants. The task of socialists is to extend the struggle to the Protestant workers without damping down in any way the struggle of the Catholic workers. The only Catholic-Protestant unity possible is a unity based on a common struggle against Orange capitalism, as it oppresses and exploits both. Unity is not possible on the basis of concessions to the present unconsciousness of the Protestant workers - which only reflects their present adherence to the Unionist Party.

Finally, on the question of whether a united capitalist Ireland would be a step forward. I think if a united Ireland could be achieved even under capitalism it would be a step forward. It should have been achieved fifty years ago, and if

it had been then the working class of Ireland would have been much better able to build a socialist movement. Instead, for fifty years the main issue in Irish politics has been the border. On the basis of this uncompleted task of the bourgeois revolution, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have retained much support based on nationalist feeling, while in the North the issue of the border has kept the working class divided between Protestant and Catholic, Unionist and Nationalist. However, I think the real point is that today there is no prospect of a united Ireland being achieved under capitalism. The only way that Ireland could be united would be by a bitter struggle against the reactionary Orange capitalist class in the Six Counties and against the Paisleyites. Only the working class of the Six Counties, organised around a socialist programme, could defeat Orange capitalism (and, incidentally destroy Paisley's base of support among Protestant workers). Faced with such a prospect, there is little doubt on which side would be found the British Government, the Northern Nationalists, and the Southern Bourgeoisie. Thus today, the national struggle in Ireland is inextricably linked to the socialist revolution. The unity of Ireland will be achieved on the basis of the common struggle against capitalism of the Irish working class and its allies on both sides of the border. Such a struggle would have to be based not simply (or even principally) on the demand for unity, but on a revolutionary anticapitalist programme around which could be built an all Ireland movement. It is the elaboration of such a programme and the building of such a movement which will enable the Irish working class both to complete the Irish bourgeois revolution and begin to carry out a socialist revolution - that is, to carry through the Permanent Revolution in Ireland

Interview with Mexican student leader

(Editorial note: very little news has appeared in the British press - even the left-wing - about the terrible massacre of Mexican students, which occurred in October of last year.)

(One of International's correspondents was fortunate to get the following interview with one of the leaders of the Mexican students at an international conference.)

(For reasons of security the identity of this student has to remain undisclosed.)

QUESTION: Could you describe briefly the events which led up to the massacre of October 2nd last year?

ANSWER: The first obvious sign that the Government was edgy came in July, when large numbers of the leading cadres of both workers and students

were arrested, of course, without explanation. In response to this move, the students in Mexico City especially, but also in other university towns, began to agitate for the release of the detained. The unrest in the university had to be quelled and in September the army occupied the area (Mexico University). About 1,000 leaders of the Students' National Council were arrested.

During the second half of September 4 or 5 peaceful demonstrations were held - against the occupation of the university and against the arrests. Another demonstration was held on October 2nd. The difference from the others was only in the outcome: 500 people killed and over 3,000 political cadres arrested.

Q.: What was the effect of the events of October 2nd on the movement in Mexico?

A.: Of course, the first reaction was one of horror. Everyone was shocked and very angry. It had the effect of clarifying issues, consolidating the opinions of the students, who had been politically educated by the previous four months of confrontation; and another obvious result was lull in activity.

Q.: Why?

A.: Let me go back again to July. After the mass arrests of July 26th, the Students' National Council was replaced by a National Strike Body. By October 2nd, most of the leaders of the NSB had been arrested, killed or had gone into hiding. This left the students with a leadership made up from politically less-experienced cadres. The leadership which had been lost was experienced, respected by students and workers, and had started to make very close contacts with worker militants - their replacements were less experienced, often from very small marxist organisations with little experience of leading a movement which demanded a complete absence of factionalism. Also many of the new leadership were CP-trained in the ways of "organising the grand defeat". (In October, VICE OF MEXICO, the CP paper, was calling for an end to the students strike).

Q.: What has happened since October 2nd?

A.: Because of the Olympics, October was an official holiday for the university. After the games the army occupation ended and it was reopened officially at the end of November. Nobody returned. The Government then threatened the CP leadership and said that if students did not return to the university, the military would be sent back. Throughout the strike period regular student assemblies had been held, and now the leaders went into the assemblies and urged the students to end the strike and go back to school.

This confused many students as they did not as yet understand the nature of the change in the leadership, which was now adding its voice to that of the Government and university administration. The strike ended.

Q.: Wasn't this new leadership in danger of being isolated?

A.: Yes, But it became conscious of this, so when there were signs that the students were still militant they organised a demonstration. Over 10,000 were to march from the university to the Polytechnic across Mexico City, but the army was called out in force and it encircled the university. Again there were many arrests but most were released after 2 or 3 days.

Q.: What about this term?

A.: Since the university reopened in January there have been more arrests. The police are still looking for the leaders and spend a lot of time investigating students. People disappear for a couple of days and it turns out that they have been with the police.

In the university there has been an important administrative change - not important in itself

but an indication of what is happening. The Social Relations Department has a new supervisor - a General, a former Director of a prison. The Government is still very jumpy. There was a protest in April in the Polytechnic over the conditions of a Laboratory. Within minutes the army had occupied the building and did not leave for four hours.

Within the student organisations, the most important development has been the establishment of new co-ordinating committee to replace the NSC: the National Struggles Committee. This committee co-ordinates activities and organisations from all establishments of further education and at the moment is engaged in a large programme of political education and discussion of theory.

We are now assessing the effects of the last 10 months and the role that we as students should play in future developments.

Q.: Did the students see the social implications of their struggle?

A.: May be not at first, but by October there was no doubt.

Q.: Is it consciously anti-capitalist?

A.: Yes. And, of course, the more experienced cadres, work consciously to educate and form more cohesive groups of students. Some are interested in the formation of brigades, which will prepare them for future action. There are also attempts again to link the student struggle with the workers' struggle.

Q.: What of the Fidelista tendency?

A.: There are, of course, many students who belong to this tendency, believing that the answer is guerilla warfare. We do not know how advanced their plans are - but they are planning, maybe for the next confrontation. For most of us, especially after last October, the idea of guerilla warfare is in our hands but it is not on the immediate agenda.

Q.: And what of your programme for the future?

A.: Our main task is to continue to politicise and organise the students. The problems that we face are large but not insurmountable. We have to work out how we should protect ourselves against repression; how we can overcome the strength of the Government. We are forging links with the workers - and this is rooted in the past 10 months; the workers have told us that the experience of the students has been invaluable to them - any illusions that they might have had about the Government have been removed.

(N.B. Very comprehensive material about the student struggle in Mexico appeared in issues of the INTER-CONTINENTAL PRESS of October, November, and December of last year; these can be obtained for 2/- each from Pioneer Book Service).

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