No. 7

SPECIAL ISSUE

9d.

WORKERS' FIGHT

WORKERS' FIGHT
June - 1968

All correspondence, reports, articles, etc., should be sent to the Editor, Rachel Matgamna, 31, Lecester Road, Cheetham, Manchester 8.

THE POWER NEXT TIME !

Suddenly, like an enormous explosion, the revolt of the French working class has burst on a startled bourgeois Europe. Already it has changed the political climate of Europe as sharply as the rising of the sun after a long arctic night.

Sparked by the militant actions of Trotskyist, Anarchist and Maoist students, and fanned by the viciousness of police brutality, the flames of revolt soon spread to the working class. It led to a great conflagration prepared by the long accumulated, bottled up discontent and frustration of the workers.

The working class had seemed drugged and demoralised by years of relative prosperity. It had remained confused and quiescent, under the control of conservative labour leaders, through the many crises that have rocked French post-war capitalism.

Now, with little warning, it rose to its feet, pulling its trade union leaders - "Communist", Catholic and "Socialist" - and political leaders helplessly behind it. Effortlessly it brought the country to a standstill. By instinct, without any real leadership - and initially against the 'leadership' - it seized and held the productive forces of society, wrenched from out of the powerless hands of the capitalists. It proceeded to enact what will surely go down in history as the dress rehearsal for the French workers' revolution.

Factories, mines, docks, ships at sea and in port, theatres, offices - all were swiftly occupied and placed under the control of workers' committees.

Grave-diggers and chorus girls, bank clerks and taxi drivers, petit-bourgeois as well as proletariat, trade unionists and non-unionists, the whole of the French working masses were in action. Journalists refused to lie to order, and printers censored their employers' press. Journalists and technicians at the ORTF (Television network) revolted against the role of whore assigned to them by the system. Even the farmers joined in. So did schoolchildren, who took over the schools, following the action of students who had seized universities. And they were joined by the teachers!

Everywhere the Red Flag was hoisted. Everywhere enthusiasm, marches, demonstrations of strength. The Internationale, sung too often discordantly by Stalinist functionaries, now thundered its command vigorously in its real tune in millions of voices, in every street of every city, and across the borders: "ARISE, ye starvelings...." And not only the 'starvelings' arose: the vanguard were, and remain, the best paid of all - the workers of the giant state-owned Renault plants.

The rulers of the rest of Europe and the world have looked in shock and horror at this stupendous demonstration of the power and revolutionary instinct of the working class. Their journals are still not sure whether or not to believe it.

For decades now, have they not preached, have their 'thinkers' and hacks not proclaimed - and proved, no less! - that the industrial working class is dead as a revolutionary force? Had they not, as late as May 12/13, carried articles cel-

ebrating the 10th. anniversary of the army coup that raised De Gaulle to power and gave France 'stability'? Is not this western Europe, in the year 1968; is not the number of cars and TV sets growing?

Are not the capitalists in possession of a vast bureaucratic army of efficient lieutenants within the labour movement to police it and keep the working class within the banks of bourgeois society? Are not Lenin and Trotsky long since dead and buried?

Thus it seemed. And then, before their fearful eyes, the working class rose suddenly from off its knees - and gripped French capitalism by the throat! By their rising the French working class have answered not alone the bourgeoisie, but all those within the labour and Marxist movement who had proclaimed or tacitly accepted that the epicentre of revolution had moved away from Western Europe for the next historical period.

It can now no longer be doubted that the conquest of power by the workers of Europe is firmly on the agenda. The French proletariat has smashed down the barriers, the mental ones as well as some of the physical ones. The road is opening up.

Everywhere now, with a serious international financial and economic crisis building up, the capitalists are asking: Where next? The ground moved abruptly under the French ruling class - whose turn next? Germany, Italy, Spain..... Stalinist eastern Europe again threatens to boil over. The USA is already in turmoil.

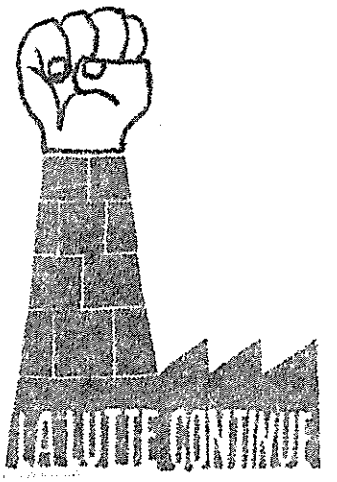
Britain? The Labour ministers look over their shoulders nervously. The British working class faces all the same problems as the French workers, who have already won the promise of big economic concessions as a result of direct action. The lessons will not be lost on many British workers, as yet still afflicted with a feeling of helplessness. We must make sure they're not lost!

A number of articles in this issue deal in more detail with this milestone event in the history of the working class. All that must be said here is that, given the entrenched power of pro-capitalist bureaucrats (some misnaming themselves as 'Communists') in the French labour movement, the full victory which was objectively possible was not to be expected. To achieve this goal the class will have to shake off the shackles of the labour bureaucracies and prepare a revolutionary organisation equal to its drive for control of its own life.

Not the least value of the strike movement is that it has given a great impetus to the work of reconstructing a genuine communist movement in France. There is every possibility of a qualitative breakthrough by the Trotskyists in the coming period. That in turn will be a decisive stage in preparing the conditions for success in the next round. To the degree that this happens this General Strike will have been a decisive step forward on the road to the conquest of power.

MEANWHILE - IN FRANCE AND IN BRITAIN -

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES !



THE MORE THAN GENERAL STRIKE

"I hate the revolution like sin" said the hangman of Germany's 1918 Revolution, the Social-Democrat Ebert. Less direct, but equally clear after the events in France, is the recent statement of the parliamentary leader of the Communist Party of France, Robert Balanger: "When we talk about revolution we now think in terms of a political struggle in which our party agrees to fight the bourgeoisie with their own weapons". And only with their own weapons: even during a mass insurrectionary strike of ten millions, with mass petit bourgeois support, with the bourgeois state almost paralysed and the workers in occupation of the factories. The CPF leadership does not, of course, openly hate the revolution. Its feelings are repressed, producing a sort of 'hysterical blindness': it simply refuses to see the revolution, even when it looms suddenly in front of it, as big as the side of a battleship.

There was, we are told, no revolutionary situation in France: only ultra-lefts say there was. Since what is ultra-left at any given moment is determined by the current policy of the CP, which is forever shifting to the Right, the ultra-left gets bigger all the time. It now includes those bourgeois journalists who have depicted the real situation and the actual roles of the participants in events.

In 1920, for the benefit of some real ultra-lefts, Lenin defined the cardinal conditions for revolution:

"For revolution it is necessary that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. Only when the 'lower classes' do not want the old, and when the 'upper classes' cannot continue in the old way, then only can the revolution be victorious. This truth may be expressed in other ways: revolution is impossible without a national crisis, affecting both the exploiters and the exploited. It follows that for revolution it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the class conscious, thinking, politically active workers) should fully understand the necessity for revolution and be ready to sacrifice their lives for it; secondly, that the ruling classes should be in a state of governmental crisis which draws even the most backward masses into politics (a symptom of every real revolution is: the rapid, tenfold and even a hundred fold increase in the number of hitherto apathetic representatives of the toiling and oppressed masses capable of waging the political struggle), weakens the government and makes ot possible for revolutionaries to overthrow it." (LEFT WING COMMUNISM, p.56)

Which of the above conditions obtained in France? Was there an objectively revolut ionary situation in France? If so, how and why did it develop, what happened to it, and what comes next?

ECONOMIC SITUATION

In 1967 the standards of the French workers were seriously cut: social security charges were raised by £250 million, extracted from the workers. This was to help prepare French capitalism for the fiercer competition which will come with the end of internal EEC tarrifs on July 1st. Consumer prices had already in ten years risen by 45%, by far the fastest of all the EEC countries. And wages? Whereas national wealth since 1958 had risen nearly 50%, workers had benefited little. One fifth of the total industrial labour force had a take-home pay of less than £8 a week. "While money wages have risen steadily, real wages have levelled off during the past year or two, because of a fall in the total hours worked. The total wage rates have actually fallen in real terms." (TIMES 24.5.68) Similarly with the masses of small farmers, who face

ruin in the EEC: "the position of small farmers, far from being relieved,has actually worsened." (Ibid)

Despite expansion, France's economy is sick: the only west European country in which the share of employment in manufacture has declined. With a decline in industrial investment, France finds herself at the bottom of the class for industrial expansion. Particularly so in building, leading to the most chronic housing shortages in Western Europe. Against this background, the deflationary cuts of '67, merging with the world economic slackening, generated the highest level of unemployment in 15 years - by January 1968 it was half a million, having increased in 12 months by 32% (by 51% in the Paris region, and 59% in the run down northern mining areas.) Most indicative of a sick economy, and a sick system, is that 23% of the total unemployed are youths - many of whom have never had a job.

Side by side with this very high youth unemployment, the number of students in France has trebled to over half a million in ten years: but university facilities have not kept pace. As a result the failure rate is 20% and a high proportion of the rest simply drop out. In Paris there are 156,000 students, with frightful overcrowding. They had good reason to join the international student revolt.

Thus we see a sick economy and apprehension at prospects, presided over by a rather nakedly aloof, unresponsive autocratic regime. But Britain too has big problems - and we must look to the revolutionary tradition of the French working class and its revolutionary consciousness to explain why it was the French workers who revolted. These traditions were a decisive element in the combustion.

A REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION

France's labour movement is marked by a revolutionary temper - expressed in spontaneous outbursts of class action going right back to the first workers' state, the Paris Commune of 1871, and also in the allegiance of the workers to what they have regarded as the revolutionary party. Already in 1936 a similar wave of sit-in strikes engulfed France, to be hoodwinked by the bourgeois Popular Front government, and the CP. In 1944 the armed communist workers of the resistance started to take ove the country. They had disarmed the Paris police and begun to take over the factories, only to be again deflected from their purpose by the leaders of the Communist Party, who entered the bourgeois coalition government and disarmed the workers, helping the bourgeoisie to rebuild their state. Again in 1947 a mass strike wave hurled back the advance of de Gaulle's then neo-fascist party.

Traditionally the CP is the workers' party, and gets 25% of the total vote. Thorez, its late leader,claimed primacy in developing the theory of peaceful roads to socialism. After its expulsion from the government at the beginning of the Cold War, it again assumed the role of an old social-reformist party in opposition, biding its time and the workers' time too. It differed from an ordinary social democratic party only in its allegiance to Moscow and in its rigidly undemocratic internal regime. It has, partly because of its unrestrained methods,effectively retained control of the working class, using demagogy and smashing down with violence of various types and degrees on any opposition to its class-collaborationist policies. It suppresses the sale of Trotskyist literature to this very day by systematic thuggery, which increased sharply in the last year as the tension built up.

Besides the CP, there is a variety of bourgeois and petit bourgeois 'left' parties, some gleaning workers' votes. In the last three years efforts at unity have led to the formation of a Federation of the Radical and Socialist Left, composing the Soc-

ialist Party, Republican Clubs,and the rump Radical Party (ie worn-out bourgeois liberals). Essentially a re-alignment of the parliamentary riff raff of the 4th Republic it is led by one Mitterand (11 times a Minister, Colonial Minister in 1950-51 and a defence witness for OAS leader Salan at his trial). They plan finally to merge into a social democratic party, with a predominantly petit bourgeois base. Collectively they dispose of 4½ million votes, but that is no match for the amalgam of Rightist groups making up de Gaulle's party. And so the Left Federation's eyes have turned - to the pariah party, the CPF.

The CP also wants unity. Not revolutionary unity for struggle in factories and streets with the followers of the Federation - but a parliamentary unity with the cynical scoundrels like Mollet and Mitterand who dupe and betray the petit bourgeois and the non-Communist workers. The CP supported Mitterand for President in '65, as a gesture of good will without making demands. In the '67 election they formed an alliance against the Gaullists, collectively gaining 59 seats. Rochet, (CP Secretary) made it clear that their policy was neither for communism nor socialism - but for "an end to the regime of personal power" and "a little bit more justice for the working man": mild reformism indeed! Both the Left Federation and CP in fact accept the de Gaulle constitution imposed 10 years ago by the army - they merely wish to cut bonaparte down to the size of a strong president by revoking Article 16. The biggest practical difference between the CP and LF is that one looks east to Moscow and the other west to Washington.(CP supports de Gaulle's foreign policy, LF opposes it!)

But necessity makes strange bedfellows. Sharing a perspective of a peaceful, endless, road to an other-world 'socialism' the CP and LF have a lot in common: to be precise, 49% of the vote in 1967. With a growing bond of mutual utility, things were looking bright. Time would smooth out the disagreements on foreign policy. Meanwhile the electoral margin would grow,the General would get older and maybe one day die: all was well and getting better.

But then the bloody workers went and spolit it all by taking things into their own hands..... For them, of course, things had been bad and were getting worse.

THE UNIONS

Not more than 30% of France's workers are unionised, split into three blocks: Force Ouvriere, 'Socialist', 600,000 members; CFDT, Catholic, 750,000 members; and the biggest and most important, the CGT, 'Communist' 1900,000. (It had 5 million at the end of the War.) The colours of the CGT banner are red and yellow: red for the workers and their aspirations, yellow for the stalinist bureaucrats and their way of life. Were the CP and CGT revolutionary, with a realistic perspective of mobilising the workers in class struggle, then the discontent of the French workers would have developed openly in mass struggles. But the antics of the CGT in day to day industrial issues have made them past masters at repressing the militancy of the workers, paralleling industrially the CP's role politically. It deliberately divides the workers, factory from factory, grade from grade, conducting separate,isolated, limited strikes instead of serious struggles. Such demoralising tactics as half-hour (!) strikes in a single shop, token one-day general strikes and extreme timidity in demands (with one fifth of the workers on less than £8 a week) have contributed to the explosive frustrations and led to the fall-off in membership since the war. As unemployment grew, as social shortages like housing remained chronic and social benefits and real wages were cut, the meanderings of the CGT only masked and disguised the resentment and thus prepared the violent and sudden character of the explosion.

Last Autumn they called for a general strike against the cuts, a token strike like so many others. There was little response. This must have encouraged the bureaucrats to

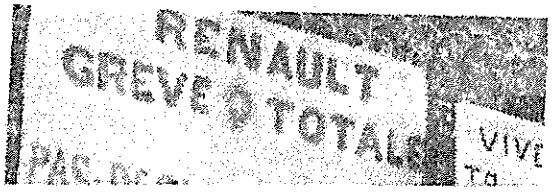
explain their own behaviour in terms of working class apathy. They forget, these bureaucrats who are addicted to commands from above, that the working class isn't an orchestra to play to order, that it must develop confidence in itself and in its leaders before it will respond - and there had been too many token strikes in France. The whole behaviour of the CP and the CGT since 1944 and earlier, and particularly the industrial antics of the CGT, had been designed to destroy any confidence in their own ability to win. They needed a fighting lead, the prospect of a struggle rather than a charade, to rouse them with the hope of winning. This hope the student movement, with its magnificent struggle on the barricades and in the streets, in the great tradition of the Commune itself, gave them.

STUDENT GUERILLAS

The students, free from the restraint of an ingrained loyalty to the CP, were responsive to revolutionary propaganda (Trotskyist, Castroist, Maoist) which helped them develop the revolutionary elan to face the state in pitched battles. When they stood up heroically in protest against police occupation of the Sorbonne, they were joined on the Night of the Barricades (May 10th) by many unemployed youth, attracted by their militancy. According to the Assistant editor of L'EXPRESS these fought most bitterly and, of the 30,000 on the barricades, were the last to retreat. (TIMES: 29.5)

The heroism of students and unemployed against the brutal police riveted the attention of the workers, who loathe the police, especially the strike-breaking CRSs. A wave of sympathy swept through the working class. To head off moves for serious solidarity action the unions called a one-day token general strike - one more token strike. But the response on May 13th was anything but token. 10 million workers, three times and more the number organised in trade unions, struck to 'celebrate' 10 years of de Gaulle. Meanwhile the student's insurrection, and the very threat of the general strike had forced the government to retreat: it capitulated - the students had won.

And the workers, who had earlier ignored the call for a futile pseudo struggle, under the baton of the tame CGT cureaucrats, suddenly had found a blueprint for their own needs - they too would go out to win. The single spark of student action had landed on dry tinder.



Meant by the leaders as a safety valve, May 13th only convinced the workers of their own strength. Immediately an aggressive mood built up. In spite of the general return ordered for May 14th, some strikes continued. From May 16th the takeovers began. Workers seized Sud-Aviation; the students seized the universities. The workers in the most militant factory in the country, Renault, Billancourt, took control. By the weekend a million workers throughout France had seized the big plants - the Red Flag was hoisted over the means of production. The strikers demanded wage rises, shorter hours and "a real policy to deal with unemployment". A great wave was rising, one which placed in question the very foundations of the capitalist system: its property.

THE REARGUARD OF THE ADVANCE

This was entirely spontaneous. The CGT and other unions had remained in the background. Now the CGT endorsed the strikes and takeovers, moving quickly to catch up with the runaway workers. But it made plaim that at that stage, with only a million out, it was not calling a general strike. But still the strikes continued to spread like a grass fire. Desparately now the CGT fought for control of the workers' movement. "The behaviour of the Communists has been fascinating to watch. From the beginn-

ing of the crisis they have been more concerned to crush the guerilla challenge on their left than to overthrow M.Pompidou's government". (OBSERVER 26.5.68)

The students, who had detonated the workers' revolt, were the first target in its campaign to reassert its control. At the beginning of the upsurge L'Humanite (the CP's daily paper) had denounced them; now it resorted to demagogy about outsiders interfering in the affairs of the workers. Cohn-Bendit was consistently referred to in their usually chauvinist press as "the German". Students were refused the right to participate in workers' demonstrations. When on May 17th they marched to Billancourt they were refused access by CGT officials (but the workers came out over the road to greet them: see picture p.17). Later, the only official CGT posters at Renault were numerous warnings against .. sellers of 'ultra-left' literature! A student plan to march on the Radio building on the 18th to protest against Government news control had to be cancelled because the CGT denounced it as a 'provocation' and warned all workers against taking part. Yet despite all this, the CGT and CP had to run very fast just to keep up with the growing wave of workers' action. "The paradox which underlies this controlled chaos is that the Communist Unions and the Gaullist government they appear to be challenging are really on the same side of the barricades... only in this way" (ie by endorsing strikes) "can the apparatus which leeds the Communist unions retain its control and protect its base from contamination. Economic dislocation and incredible inconvenience are the price which French society is having to pay to head off an insurrectionary movement which no one saw coming and few have yet understood" (OBSERVER, 19.5.68) By mid-week 23.5.68 the peak of the wave was reached with 10 million workers in possession of the factories up and down the land: control seemed to have slipped out of the bourgeoisie's hands.

TWO PERSPECTIVES

By its scope, tone and temper the mass strike was insurrectionary - the workers' drive was clearly for a total reconstruction. It raised inescapably the Big Question: which class is to rule? A choice of two perspectives faced the workers: keep physical control and take over entirely and go forward; or else settle for big concessions by way of ransom from the powerless bourgeoisie, which would - for the moment - gladly make them.

To attain workers' power the necessary steps were: a) to prepare organs of workers' power by generalising the factory committees (already taking many decisions not normally taken by workers) into local, regional and finally a National council of workers' deputies - thus opposing an embryonic workers' state to the bourgeois state; b) begin to actually run the factories, under control of the workers' councils; c) decisively smash and dismantle the bosses' state and consolidate the new order as a Soviet state.

Was this physically possible: what was the relationship of forces? The workers had the factories. On 23rd the Police Union declared itself in sympathy with the strikes, and unwilling to be used against them. The unknown quantity was the army: because of military discipline the only way to test the conscript soldiers is to confront them with a struggle which forces them to choose - and gives an opportunity to cross over. In THE TIMES Charles Douglas Home wrote: "In an extreme emergency the troops could be brought into operation, but it is appreciated that they could be used only once, and then only for a short while, before the largely conscript army was exposed to a psychological battering in a general campaign of subversion which it would probably not withstand." (31.5.68). This would confirm all past revolutionary experience.

The nominal armed strength of the bourgeoisie was: 83,000 police including 13500 CRS; 61,000 gendarmes; 261,000 soldiers in France and Germany. In a clash they could only

firmly rely on a few batallions of regular soldiers, and presumably the CRS. But there were 10,000,000 strikers, and over 400,000 members of the CP alone. Yet the CPF and their apologists say the workers would have faced massive defeat had they attempted revolution: actually, it is clear that with a minimum preparation, during the mass strike, the bourgeois state could have been smashed and dismantled. The strongest element of 'material' force that protected the bourgeoisie was the reformist, social democratic routine, the anti-revolutionary legalist-pacifist theory, and plain funk of the CPF leadership.

A party aiming at leading the working class to power in that situation would face the following tasks: 1)to raise the slogan of a workers' and farmers' government, as the immediate objective of the strike; 2)popularise the idea of workers' councils of self administration, to organise the life of the country and begin to elaborate a counter-state, leading to dual power such as that in Russia between the rise of the workers' Councils (soviets) in February and their victory in October 1917; 3)it would begin to form workers' militias, initially its own cadres, drawing in militants from all the factories - thus arming the workers for an uprising to disarm and suppress the paralysed organs of bourgeois power and establish the workers' state. A revolutionary party would have propagated this long before the upsurge. But even in the middle of the strike, such a programme of action, by a party with the ear of the masses, would have galvanised the workers - and at least led to a period of dual power.

WHAT ROCHET'S "REVOLUTIONARIES" DID

But the "revolutionary party" chose a different course: initially it did not even dare pose the resignation of de Gaulle and his government as an objective of the strike! Amidst the greatest workers' movement for decades, and France's biggest general strike ever, the CP/CGT concentrated on getting wage concessions! Running hard to keep control of the workers and to isolate the students and revolutionaries, the CGT and CFDT from the start of the upsurge demanded talks with the Government! (The MORNING STAR, 25.5.68, took Pompidou to task for being slow to reply!) The Catholic CFDT went further than the "Communist" union in demanding structural reforms to the system, as well as bread and butter concessions: and in fact they remained consistently to the left of the CGT!!

By the morning of May 27th they had got their Big Concessions: 10% all round increase; 35% rise in minimum wage; progress to a 40 hour week; social security cuts rescinded, etc. (By way of a tip Seguy was promised that henceforth the CGT too would be eligible for government subsidy for the training of its officials!) The size of these concessions is the measure of the bosses' desparate need to enable their labour lieutenants to placate the workers.

The happy band of bureaucrats, smiling and giving the thumbs up sign for the cameras, hurried to Billancourt, symbol of Labour Militant, to bring the glad tidings - and call off the strike. But the proletariat is an ungrateful class! Seguy and Franchon the CGT bosses were shouted down, and their 'big concessions' scorned. All over France the same thing happened: the workers refused to call off the strike. They wanted more - in fact they wanted everything. But the CP and its union - built over decades on talk of socialism - stood four square across their path, diddering and wriggling. And so, instead of advance, there was stalemate.

And now? Who could control the workers and end the bosses' period in limbo? The General seemed eclipsed, and there was nothing remotely resembling a government in sight. The students and revolutionaries, despite the CP's anathemas, were gaining: "The incredible success of the student leaders was to rally.... thousands of young workers disgruntled with the stick-in-the-mud unions.." to a mass rally on the 27th. Despite a number of CP counter-meetings 30000 attended, demonstrating the chasm that separated the timid leaders from large sections of the workers. But what was to be done?! Mitterand on May 28 hurried in with a solution to harness the workers' energies in the best interests of capitalism and of ... Mitterand: a Provisional Government to supplant de Gaulle immediately - headed by Mitterand, with Mendes-France as Premier. Naturally the CP agreed - but it had to haggle with these bourgeois politicians in whose small shadow it chose to walk, for a promise of a place in the new Government. A mass demonstration for "a change of policy opening the way to progress and democracy" covered Paris, 2 miles long, on the 29th. It looked as if by sheer strength of the mass movement the Left leaders and the CP would be lifted into the saddle - despite their earlier reticence.

But then de Gaulle came back on stage, having met Massu and arranged for CRS reinforcements and tanks to converge on Paris. On the 30th May he made his second, belligerant, speech, drawing confidence from the proven timidity of his opponents and their ability to dupe and confuse the masses, rather than from any other real strength he and his class possessed. Recognising that the strike must end either in insurrection or collapse, he said in effect to the cowardly social democrats of the CP: 'Attempt to take power, or put your hands up!' Knowing his opponents, and perhaps preparing their retreat, he announced a General Election.

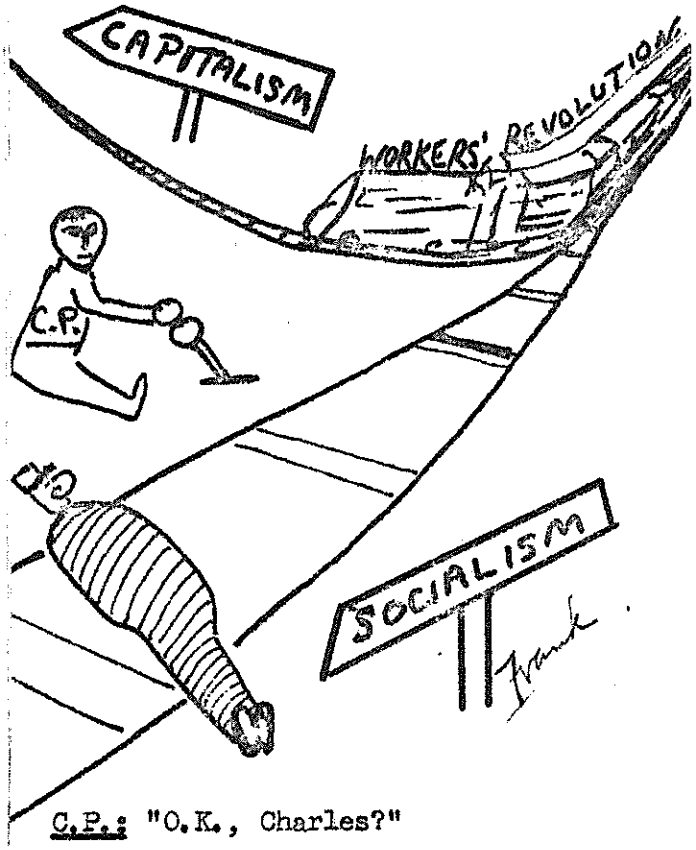
THE VANGUARD OF THE RETREAT

Within 2 hours of the ultimatum, in a situation where they were not merely strong enough to boycott any election but could actually prevent it being held, the heroes of the CPF announced that they accepted this election, stage-managed by the Gaullist state! "There was (in de Gaulle's speech) also an element of bluff: had he really the power to break the strike if it continued and made elections impossible? ... (How in any case could (the proposed election) have been organised in a country paralysed by strikes - who would have printed the voting slips?)..." (OBSERVER 2.6.68) De Gaulle could safely bluff. He was aware of one great asset: the inbred social-democratic inertia and fear of action of the CP, who had publicly proclaimed their intentions by maintaining their dog-tail relationship with Mitterand and Co. The demand for de Gaulle's and the government's resignation, so belatedly adopted, was now dropped like hot contraband. The other 'lefts' followed, with varying degrees of protest, where the CP led: "Even before the cabinet had announced its promise to respect last week-end's wage increases, the trade unions, disassociating themselves from the students, were engaged in back to work talks with their employers". (Ibid)

With de Gaulle's speech and the non-response of the workers' parties, his supporters raised their heads: "Paramilitary Committees of Civic Action sprang up here and there across the country, in one or two areas celebrating their legitimised thuggery by firing a few shots at trade union or CP office buildings..." The police, which had vacillated, now regained their loyalty to the force which appeared strongest, in face of the CP's feebleness: "at least we now know where we are", was the general police reaction to de Gaulle's speech, as reported in THE TIMES (31.5.68). And the Gaullists took to the streets, 500,000 strong, some chanting: "Cohn-Bendit to Dachau". (He had habitually been referred to in the bourgeois press as "the German Jew"; in reply the students and young workers took up the slogan "We are all German Jews", and young Algerians, making a distinction which many 'lefts' have yet to perceive, between Jews and the reactionary State of Israel, chanted that they too were "German Jews").

Having accepted the elections, the CP again ignored all but bread and butter issues. It explained to its militants, as it did the latest summersault, 'we have not changed - life has'! Meanwhile the police began to break up the strikes, starting with the post offices, radio, TV and fuel. The CP stood on the sidelines - warning against 'ultra-left provocateurs'. It "warned today that General de Gaulle had threatened to use 'other means than the elections'" ... Yet "the Communists would enter the electoral battle with confidence and (the CPF) called on everyone to guard against giving any opening to provocations wherever they might come from. ... Cancellation of last year's social security cuts will not now be part of the present settlement, because the government has said the issue should be discussed in the new National Assembly." (Statement of the CPF, as reported in the MORNING STAR 1.6.68)!! Lack of shame or self consciousness is one major asset these people possess!

Thereafter the CP, guided no doubt by the notorious injunction "one must know how to end a strike", energetically set about getting the workers back to work, splitting up their unity (by instructing everyone to return to work as soon as their <u>separate</u> settlements were made) and isolating the hard core to face the now increasing violence of the police, which was to result in several deaths. The Party's mind was on the coming elections, as that 'ultra-left' high Tory paper the SUNDAY TELEGRAPH put it: "Now there can be elections. The energy and violence generated by the upheaval can be canalised into a campaign for votes" (2.6.68). That is, of course, pretty much what Balanger said in the first place.



<u>C.P.:</u> "O.K., Charles?"

<u>WAS REVOLUTION POSSIBLE?</u>

Between May 16th and 30th, as we have seen, and even after that, there was a mass working class movement openly striving for more than just wage concessions. There was active support from the petit bourgeoisie in town and country. (Western farmers offered the workers cheap food for the duration.) The state was almost totally paralysed - even the police wavered. Objectively, had the movement developed in accordance with its own drives, the ruling class would no longer have been able to rule, and in fact their <u>rule</u> was momentarily suspended. There was a deep, long germinating national crisis, an eruption of 20 years of working class frustration. The deepest layers of the normally unorganised masses were brought into action by the struggle. Conditions were uniquely favourable for a relatively easy takeover by the workers.

One element was lacking to transform a revolutionary upsurge into a revolution: the 'subjective' factor. The organisations of the working class of all shades and stripes held it back, derailed it, split it up, and allowed the bourgeoisie to ride out the storm, regain the power of its political limbs and re-establish its suspended control. The workers' organisations

were not merely passive or negative, but actively hostile to the interests and the drives of the working class. The decisive role in maintaining the bourgeoisie in power fell once again to the Communist Party of France.

The Paris correspondent of THE ECONOMIST described it thus: "The French Communists did everything in their power to control the revolutionary wave, and once the General had made it plain that he would not abdicate, to direct it back to electoral channels. On the night of May 30th there was a risk of confrontation between the armed forces and the army of labour. Next morning the risk had vanished because the army of strikers had been dispersed. M.Seguy, the boss of the Communist-dominated CGT, could not demobilise his followers. But, followed by other trade union leaders, he divided his troops into separate batallions, each seeking additional gains, particularly in wages, from its employers. What had begun to look like a frontal attack on the state, rapidly became a series of individual skirmishes. And L'Humanite, the Communist Daily started to use the language of an election campaign. .... The Communist decision to call a retreat and the General's speech marked the turning point in the crisis. They were more decisive than the big Gaullist demonstration that followed the General's speech on May 31st." (8.6.68)

Instead of focusing the movement of the workers on the goal of workers' power, the most extreme demand the CP dared make was for a change of bourgeois regime, removing the mild bonaparte de Gaulle and putting in Mitterand as President and Mendes France (Premier when the Algerian War started) as Prime Minister. Instead of workers' soviets, pressure on the bosses' parliament, (which pressure drove the centre to the Right). Instead of revolutionary leadership, traitorous meneouvring to frustrate the workers' desires. Instead of unity of workers, students and farmers in action, deliberate attempts to divide them and confine "unity" to the parliamentary tops. Instead of workers' militia, the most cringing self-abasement and cowardice before even the threat of the violence which it was by no means certain de Gaulle could inflict. Instead of being the left party the CP and CGT were usually to the right of both the Catholic unions and Force Ouvriere - and even of the bourgeois radical 'socialist' Mendes France. And the final infamy: the government's ban on the Trotskyist, Maoist and Anarchist groups which sparked the movement, didn't even call forth a whisper of protest from the CP or CGT.

What could have been a great revolution looks like ending as a lost election, with the bourgeoisie and de Gaulle strengthened. There is a cruel dialectic during such periods in the relationship of the three main classes in society. The petit-bourgeois rallied to the workers, propelled by their own dissatisfaction. Had a revolutionary momentum been maintained they could have been taken along even to the point of struggle for power. But many may now rally behind the entrenched Party of Order in disillusion with the Party of Revolution which didn't even dare put forward a policy. The CP's policy of legality at all costs, having passed up the revolutionary potential in the strike, by no means assures it of electoral victory: the opinion polls show a swing to the establishment. Again let the Paris Correspondent of the ECONOMIST, who shames the pseudo-marxist apologists of King Street, explain: "A general strike is a tactic for seizing power, not for persuading voters. If the Left had seized power, it would now be the new order itself; but it stopped half way - after frightening many floating voters amongst the middle classes" (8.6.68). If they lose the elections they will naturally say it proves there was no revolutionary situation. The point however is that to let capitalism canalise revolutionary energy into the rigged channels of its institutions; or to see 'Revolution' only through the reversed telescope lens of the bosses' legality; or to try to filter an explosive mass revolutionary ferment through the slit in a bourgeois ballot box is to forego forever the prospect of workers' power. These institutions are specifically designed to prop up capitalism - not to knock it down.

Though it seems unlikely, victory for the CP and LF at the polls would make them prisoners of that bourgeois state (army, police, judiciary, civil service, etc) which they declined to break up in May, and of the laws of a capitalist economy - at a time when Fremch capitalism will be in big trouble. This would expose them further. Therefore victory is the most favourable outcome to ensure that the lessons are learned by the workers, opening up - at last - the road to rapid advance of the revolutionary left. (Assuming 1) that Mitterand and Company don't double-cross the CP, thus giving it an alibi, and 2) that de Gaulle would let them form a government.)

Though cheated of full victory the great strike leaves the workers with massive gains which will whet their appetite. Attempts to take back the concessions will mean serious struggles, a period of great instability and continuing class struggles. What may prove to be a pre-revolutionary period opens up.

The press testifies to a growing mass left opposition to the Communist Party: "a significant revolutionary movement has appeared almost spontaneously to the left of the CP ... in Party cells everywhere there are discussions bordering on revolt. The Communist leaders face their biggest crisis yet." (ECONOMIST 1.6.68) According to the scant information available, the French Trotskyist groups, with the exception of the Healy/Lambert tendency, have formed a United Front, shedding all but principled differences to face this new situation and its possibilities. A growth of right wing and fascist thug organisations is to be expected, particularly to the degree that a revolutionary left gains ground from the CPF.

MASS STRIKE MEANS REBIRTH

The mass strike, the self-mobilisation of the masses, is the 'natural' regenerative process of a stagnant labour movement. The similar French strikes of 1936 inaugurated a period of big struggles. Unfortunately the workers were not then victorious - again primarily because of the role of the CPF. But it was much more vigorous then than today, 30 years and an infinite number of treacheries later: now its senile reversion to social democracy is undisguised and the divisions that rend world stalinism lower still further its ability to rat with impunity. A real communist movement will be built in France, and it will finally settle with the stalinist 'flic' of capitalism - and go on to settle with their masters. The rejuvenating strike and its effect on the labour movement has already given a magnificent boost to this work. Finally, for a description of the regenerative process involved in any mass strike, one can do no better than quote Trotsky on the 1936 strikes:

"The strike has everywhere and in every place pushed the most thoughtful and fearless workers to the fore. To them belongs the initiative. They are still acting cautiously, feeling the ground under their feet. The vanguard detachments are trying not to rush ahead so as not to isolate themselves. The echoing and re-echoing answers of the hindmost ranks to their call gives them new courage. The roll call of the class has become a trial self-mobilisation. The proletariat was itself in greatest need of this demonstration of its strength. The practical successes won, however precarious they may be, cannot fail to raise the self-confidence of the masses to an extraordinary degree, particularly among the most backward and oppressed strata.

"That leaders have come forward in the industries and in the factories is the foremost conquest of the first wave. The elements of local and regional staffs have been created. The masses know them. They know one another. Real revolutionists will seek contact with them. Thus the first self-mobilisation of the masses has outlined and in part brought forward the first elements of revolutionary leadership. The strike has stirred, revitalised and regenerated the whole colossal class organism. The old organisational shell has by no means dropped away. On the contrary, it still retains its hold quite stubbornly. But under it the new skin is already visible."

Sean Matgamna

WORKERS' control is Class Struggle

The great social earthquake which shattered the calm crust of French capitalism's Fifth Republic has sent out shock waves throughout Europe and the world. Even on the political seismograph of the blinkered dreamworld of the British Left we can expect at the very least to see a slight ripple recorded. If so, a number of conceptions which have sat around for years undisturbed by anything bigger than a chat over a pint will have a flood of light shed on them.

Among these are two conceptions of Workers' Control - conceptions aparently diametrically opposed, and yet having a great deal in common. At one pole is the militant syndicalism which, spurning politics, satisfies itself with the spontaneous take-over and running of factories, mines, etc., the <u>first steps</u> of which we saw taken in France. At the other end is a variety of more or less bureaucratic "workers'" control <u>measures</u>. These come in all shapes and sizes from the ritual demand for more "workers' representation" (ie union bureaucrat representation) on the Boards of nationalised industries, to elaborately ornate Owenite project-mongering.

The syndicalist approach forgets that the politics it spurns is socialist politics, leaving the field clear for bourgeois politics - liberal and even fascist. The 'projects' (eg Plan for Steel) are put forward in a well-meaning propagandist spirit, but tend to take the form of demands and resolutions to be instituted at some future date, rather than part of the struggle <u>now</u>. (So abstract and divorced from the concrete

class struggle is the dominant form of this propaganda in Britain, that it is actually carried out in association with, and even under the chairmanship of, trade union bureaucrats - the necessary enemies of real workers' control and even militant rank and file action.)

Even on this propagandist level, it can be useful in a limited way, in encouraging the idea that the workers and not the so-called 'experts', managers, etc., should make decisions both on factory and national affairs. But it does not go very far in this direction, and much of the good is dispelled by the illusions it fosters in the classlessness of the system: the whole assumption is that working class gains can be made through institutions set up in Whitehall - whereas if anything of the kind is instituted, by kind permission of the bourgeoisie, it can only be with the express aim of serving bourgeois interests.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE STATE

The more directly bureaucratic variants (at Board level) are simply and nakedly a means of bringing the trade union movement closer to the bourgeois state. As Trotsky wrote in 1940:

"The management of railways, oil fields, etc through labour organisations has nothing in common with workers' control over industry for in the essence of the matter the management is effected through the labour bureaucracy which is independent of the workers but in return is completely dependent on the bourgeois state. This measure on the part of the ruling class pursues the aim of disciplining the working class, making it more industrious in the service of the common interests of the state, which appear on the surface to merge with the interests of the working class itself. As a matter of fact the whole task of the bourgeoisie consists in liquidating the trade unions as organs of the class struggle and substituting in their place the trade union bureaucracy, as the organ of the leadership over the workers by the bourgeois state."
(TRADE UNIONS IN THE EPOCH OF IMPERIALIST DECAY.)

What practically all the recent campaigners for workers' control have in common is complete obliviousness to the class character of the state. If workers' control is put forward without stressing workers' power in society as a whole as the condition for it, then the whole project is planned to take shape either with the acquiescence of the bourgeois state, or in its teeth. If the former, then it will not be workers' control, but the workers controlled.

Recent examples of this abound, in this and other countries. The National Dock Labour Board set up in 1947 had equal union (T&GWU) representation in the running of the dock labour force. Which simply meant that the Union eagerly joined in such 'working class' projects as sacking and disciplining dockers and organising scabs to break unofficial strikes - the only ones known on the docks in any case. German capitalism makes large scale use of such devices. And in France it is likely that the promised measures of "workers' participation" will be harnessed to the profit-sharing (read productivity) schemes developed by De Gaulle to overhaul French capitalism.

If workers' control is to be against the state, then workers' control alone is entirely inadequate. It can be a dangerous trap, occupying the workers in the factories while the bourgeois state prepares for a reaction to smash them down.

The class nature of the state under which workers' control is envisaged is the vital issue. In losing sight of this whole question, while discussing how workers' control in the factories - as a stable arrangement alongside bourgeois (individual or state) ownership - can 'work', these advocates of workers' control reduce it to a purely reformist demand. As such it can be confusing in

stable periods, and downright reactionary in revolutionary ones.

In France workers occupied the factories and set up strike committees to take care of safety, of the choice of which essential services should continue to operate for the workers' benefit, etc. Such actions, the seed of real workers' control, are by definition necessarily carried out as part of class struggle against the bourgeoisie. (This is historically the only form of genuine workers' control.) For such control by the workers (even if they were actually running the factories as in Spain in '36) to survive until it was secured by workers' power, it must go on the offensive, linking up and co-ordinating the factory committees, setting up soviets to link up with other sections of the revolutionary population (small farmers, students, soldiers where possible) organising militias to defend its position, and so on until the embryo of the workers' state can smash the bourgeoisie and their state and establish workers' power.

In this kind of situation, any syndicalist satisfaction with control of production or occupation of the factories (even where this has reached a very high level) can only prepare for reaction - since the bourgeoisie will not sit back idly. Recently we have seen in Britain the question of "Workers' Control or Fascism" posed. But workers' control which does not consolidate as workers' power would be the surest way to a fascist reaction prepared by the ruling class in order to regain control of its' property. (And if workers' control is in this context being used as a safe euphemism for workers' power, the confusion this invites is highly dangerous, for it perpetuates the unconcern with the question of state power for the working class which is common to syndicalists and jazzed-up Fabians alike in the workers' control movement on the British Left.)

But far worse than passive syndicalism in this situation is to make the demand for workers' participation in running capitalism's nationalised industries - to make this demand on the government at a time when workers have occupied factories is utterly, consciously reactionary. It can only be made with the express purpose of pushing the workers' movement off the road to workers' power, and of depriving it of any real control which it has won. In counterposing its programme of nationalisation with a workers' control trimming, to be carried out by a bourgeois Popular Front Government under the auspices of the bourgeois state, the CP in France headed off the ferment. It wasn't the first time - but it is to be hoped that it will be the last. In future this reformist party will have somewhat less influence with the revolutionary militants.

The actual level of the workers' control movement in Britain, despite the presence in its leading ranks of a number of 'soft' Trotskyists, is similarly reformist. Its lesson from France is that it must make a complete break with this reformism, and rather than busying itself with left Fabian propaganda, set about encouraging, in day to day struggles, the development of real class control by the workers - necessarily at rank and file level, and in opposition to the bureaucrats. At present, the many good rank and file trade unionists who are influenced by the movement are not encouraged to develop this sort of struggle, but are diverted into resolution-making and passive propaganda.

Incidentally, the spontaneous nature of the French workers' actions must raise serious questions as to the need for strenuous advance propaganda (as opposed to actions) along these lines. A measure of workers' control does in fact arise organically through the struggle. What is not spontaneous is the series of necessarily conscious steps from the early stages that we saw in France, through to the final takeover of complete, overall political power against the bourgeoisie. To do this what is needed is not so much propaganda and plans to convince the workers that workers' control is poss-

ible, but rather a clear and conscious combat party to challenge the organisations of the bourgeois state and its bureaucratic agents in the working class, and to organise the seizure of power by the working class.

Such a party will have to make a firm distinction between reactionary, bureaucratic "workers'" control, and its revolutionary form - which is neither an idea nor a plan, but part of the class struggle. Equally, it will have to know the difference between workers' control over capitalist production and workers' power. The former is a step on the road to the latter, which in turn is the only way to secure workers' control and management of production as a permanent way of life.

R. Matgamna.

MARCUSE » PROPHET OR SIREN ?

It is impossible to begin to understand a movement without an examination of its ideology and its foremost thinkers. The serious and widespread militancy amongst students is no exception. Although within the student movement exist a number of groups with separate clearly defined ideas (Trotskyists, Maoists, Anarchists, etc) the mass of students appear to have come increasingly under the influence of Herbert Marcuse.The fact that he assigns to students a major role in social change, and that (particularly in the initial stages) this analysis appeared to be borne out in France, makes it all the more important to examine the ideas of this man. Do they lead forward, or are they a blind alley?

Marcuse broke from revolutionary Marxism in the early forties with the definite perspective that the working class had no role, was finished, as an organ of social progress. A recent book of his, ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN, reiterates this perspective, and provides the rationale for much of the wooliness of the advocates of STUDENT POWER - whose ideas, though useful in mobilising large numbers of students,have strict limitations when it comes to changing society.

According to Marcuse, modern technology has reached such a pitch that it has come to dominate man, instead of being used to free man. It has bought off the working class with material abundance so that class conflict is no longer the motive force of history. Workers and owners are both, it seems, equally mere tools of technology. It has created a massive fusion of interlocking military, corporate and political interests. Thus, effective protest and dissent are forever stifled as far as the mass of people are concerned. The system, says Marcuse, is able to keep men ignorant.

"The goods and services that the individuals buy, control their needs and petrify their faculties. They have dozens of newspapers and magazines that espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable gadgets that keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue - which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions." Thus, man rejects all thoughts that challenge "society's" rationale. Man becomes a "one-dimensional" being - a total conformist. Everything works to prevent man from having his "individual consciousness" expanded about his own nature,that of other men and of the material world. Thus Marcuse alternates between blaming the uncontrollable technology, and "society", for this stupefaction.

On the surface, taking a cursory look at US capitalism of the last 25 years, the picture appears to have some semblance of truth. However, the method here is one of sheer impressionism, born of a petit-bourgeois impotence in face of the accomplished fact of such things as a heavily bureaucratised labour movement.

Technology certainly expresses man's relation to nature and through this conditions his relation with other men. But it is unable, as such, to abolish the class contradictions that are ever present within the capitalist use of technology for profit rather than for the liberation of mankind from want and drudgery. Private production for profit arose out of the development of techniques in which the capitalist became the necessary repository of historical progress.

The inherent need of the system to accumulate capital in the never-ending competition between individual capitalists (or capitalist combines) and between capitalist countries, means that capitalism must attack the conditions of the working class (conditions it has been compelled to create) irrespective of the will of individual capitalists or "society". Since the war, with new technological discoveries and the resulting world boom, capitalism has been able to give small concessions to the workers in the advanced countries, but has by no means managed to abolish the class contradictions. In spite of the most developed technology ever before attained, the old problems remain and in fact intensify, not diminish. Marcuse, who knows his Hegel backwards, does not understand the materialist dialectic of developments. The inflationary attacks that capitalism has made in the post-war boom period have strengthened the working class by making it unionise in the most favourable conditions for this.

WORKERS RESPOND

The confidence generated in the working class will thus make it doubly resolute against any attacks on its conditions - attacks which are now increasingly intensifying. Marcuse is logically subscribing to the vulgar idea that the working class can only be revolutionary if it is reduced to absolute starvation. If the magnificent upsurge of the French workers, which brought into question all the institutions of capitalism, showed anything, it was precisely the crudity of an approach of this sort.

It is clear that Marcuse must accept that somebody or some group must be able to break out of the "one-dimensionality" otherwise he wouldn't have put forward his ideas. As we've seen, his notions are thoroughly 1984ish, eliminating the role of the working class and thus objectively playing into the hands of the ruling class. This is, in fact, borne out by the social support he seeks. If the working class cannot become conscious of its destiny to liberate mankind from capitalist barbarism, then who can? - "The young, the sensitive, the educated" says Marcuse, in an interview with TIME MAGAZINE.

But who are the 'educated'? Those who, coming from middle class homes mainly, are trained to be intellectual technicians for the maintenance of capitalist society: a minority may adopt revolutionary ideas as individuals, or take up an oppositionist stance for a while. But the intellectual concepts of the vast majority of 'educated' people are conditioned by their middle class backgrounds and future prospects. There can be no really independent stratum between the workers and bosses.

FROM MARX ..... TO PLATO !

It leads Marcuse in THE ETHICS OF REVOLUTION (1966) to an elitism which is as reactionary as it is pessimistic for the future of human society:

"It seems to me characteristic that, the more calculable and the more controllable the technical apparatus of modern, industrial society becomes, the more does the chance of human progress depend on the intellectual and moral qualities of the leaders and on their willingness and ability to edu-

cate the controlled population and to make it recognise the possibility, nay the necessity, of pacification and humanisation."

An age of "philosopher-bureaucrats", perhaps?

The 'left' side of this elitist coin, the notions of smashing the structure of capitalism by isolated acts of violence on the part of his "multi -dimensional" ones, is only a corollary of his lack of any hope for the independent action of the working class to establish a humanistic society.

Marcuse's ideas may give students - "the young, the sensitive, the educated", a boost. In France it appears to have helped generate the confidence for the direct actions and the magnificent struggles of the students, and thus played a momentarily progressive role in throwing off moods of helplessness and powerlessness about their own role in face of the bastions of the Establishment entrenched throughout society. In the peculiarly explosive situation existing in France they thus started a landslide.

But France's recent experience dissects Marcuse's ideas mercilessly. The students moved, agitated by their own demands against the almost incredible conditions at the universities, and inspired by certain theories. In a country with growing discontent on the part of the repressed and leaderless workers, the vanguard insurrection of the students set the example: the big batallions of labour followed, and the boldness and scale of their actions surpassed anything the students are capable of achieving, however heroic they may be. This student action a la Marcuse brought down a crushing refutation of his central thesis - the immobility of the working class. Whereas if the students hadn't managed to spark the workers' movement, there would have been a great deal less to talk about now - except perhaps of their impotence to affect life beyond their own narrow sphere.

MARCUSE AND FRANCE

The limited outcome of the strike, with the capitalist-orientated bureaucrats limiting its effect and ensuring the continuation of capitalism, may reinforce for some the Marcusian theories. Thus the SUNDAY TIMES, June 2nd:

"...But it was Marcuse who wrote that the workers have ceased to be a revolutionary element in the State, since their institutions, particularly the trade unions, are committed to maintaining the status quo in a consumer-orientated society. The terms are tendentious but the experience of France suggests that they embody a notable truth."

But the opposite conclusion flows from France. The working class has proved capable, quite spontaneously, of a mass insurrectionary strike, despite its leaderships' every effort. Marcuse, in accepting the present 'leadership' of the workers as permanent and irremovable, offers nothing but protest. But, given the workers' urgent revolutionary drive, given their ability to learn by experience even if they have not the leisure (en masse) to learn from 'the books',

and given a number of revolutionaries determined to build a new leadership, then the old leaders will be pushed aside. No Trotskyist ever said it would happen during one struggle. It will take time, and in one sense it will be a race against time. But the events of the last weeks will make possible a giant stride forward towards this goal. Meanwhile, of course, the ideas of people like Marcuse and his whole impressionistic method don't exactly help.

STUDENT EXPLOSION

His stress on student action - wrong in motive and concept - coincides with certain developments which may call for some reappraisal of 'traditional' Marxist attitudes to students. It is clear that changes have been occurring in the relationship of universities to an increasingly technological society. The weight of students in society has increased with their fast-growing numbers.

They are no longer moved only by ideas (as in the days when they were ultra-privileged) but often by their own conditions. Agitation on student demands has thus grown in importance, although it is still vital for revolutionary students to become primarily orientated towards the working class. And the lesson of France is that, when pessimistic theories such as those of Marcuse are contradicted by reality, the mass of the students will wish to do likewise. There, a protest initially against education policies and the university authorities soon saw the connection with the workers' struggles. Now they help man the pickets: they have left Marcuse far behind them.

Marcuse's ideas are called "neo-Marxist". They are in fact the result of ideological prostration, one of many variants that have sprung up in the last decades in face of the reality of the defeats suffered by the working class in the thirties and forties and of the post-war expansion of capitalism. Bowing to this

Students and Renault workers fraternising at Boulogne-Billancourt

reality, they can see no way out. They are a product of one of the blackest periods of reaction and confusion in working class history: pseudo-Marxism, shipwrecked on the rocks of the power of social democracy, stalinism and capitalism. The great message of France is that that period is decisively over. With the reawakening of the working class, such enshrinement of hopelessness will vanish like the dew that has fallen in the night.

Stan Lomax

---

10 YEARS — OF WHAT?

The workers and students have been chanting in the streets of Paris and all over France: "Ten years is enough", and "De Gaulle is responsible". The "Communist Party of France", when it wasn't pretending that the whole question was one of purely economic demands, has placed the main emphasis on the need to end the "regime of personal power". But what exactly does Gaullism amount to?

Ten years ago, when De Gaulle actually came to power, it was quite common to hear, on the left, warnings about Fascism. These warnings came both from the reformist parties (bourgeois and stalinist) and even from some revolutionary organisations.

Even, and especially, now, after the recent events in France, it is difficult to give much credit to this theory that Gaullism equals some sort of fascism. In fact the reason why De Gaulle is not fascist is very simple: neither now nor in 1958 has there ever been the need for the French bourgeoisie to resort to such an extreme action.

Capitalist domination can usually be carried under the bourgeois type of 'democracy'. Only when this is not possible any more, does capitalism have to resort to fascism and to throw the burden of 'democracy' overboard. And why can't the bourgeoisie secure capitalist domination any more? Because of the strength of the working class through independent class organisations, at a time of violent social conflicts and struggles, thus constituting a threat to the very existence of the bourgeoisie.

Now! Was the French working class equipped with a leadership, a party, a programme of demands likely to be any threat to French capitalism in 1958?

The answer depends on the nature of the organisations of the working class, that is, first of all the mass party of the working class, the CPF and its trade union organisation the CGT. Certainly these organisations were <u>not</u> a threat to the bourgeoisie. They had very much at heart to disorganise the struggle of the working class which they did quite successfully. The fact that they might, in the coming period, lose part of their control of the working class can of course change many things. But up to now, why should the bourgeoisie have resorted to fascism (it never does so with a happy heart) when it could actually rule through collaboration of the classes, when it can rely on organisations which betray the workers while still retaining their support if not always their confidence?

The need for Gaullism must be looked for elsewhere than in the need for the bourgeoisie to defend itself against the attacks of the working class.

<u>BOURGEOISIE DIVIDED</u>

In 1958 the Constitution of the 4th Republic did not allow any more for the working of the parliamentary institutions: proportional representation gave the CP much power of obstruction since it collected 25% of the votes, while the Cold War made it unacceptable to the bourgeoisie as a government party. Due to historical circumstances and to this proportional representation, the different parties of the bourgeoisie were split in numerous unimportant groups, reflecting a fragmentation of the forces of the Right. The multi-party system tended to split up the political power of the bourgeoisie and keep it in a regime of permanent crisis. Any government thus had to be a coalition, and none of them could stay in power very long because any measure or reform would somehow threaten some of the interests involved in any given coalition.

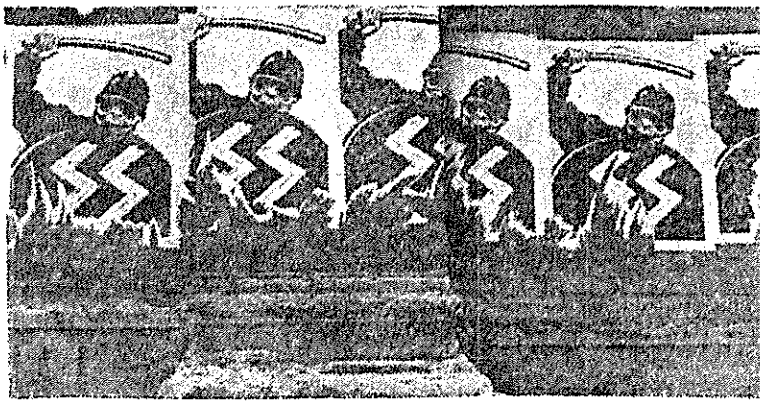
The problem being mainly of the failure of the constitution, the answer was a change in the constitution. The bourgeoisie needed to make the executive less responsible to parliament and even less to public opinion, to try and develop a strong party of the bourgeoisie in the frame of a desirable two-party system. (De Gaulle advocating the imitation of England or the USA in this matter). All this implied to discard proportional representation, which was opposed by the collectively numerous small minority groups and therefore not legally possible.

EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

The Algerian crisis that the 4th. Republic was unable to solve was to provide the pretext for De Gaulle's takeover, and make it acceptable to the nation. It took the form of an army revolt against the powerless parliamentary regime. Although rumours spread that the Renault workers armed with iron bars were going to take over Paris and defend the Republic, both against Massu's paratroopers and De Gaulle, nothing was really done to oppose De Gaulle's unconstitutional coming to power. Actively aided by the Mollet Socialist Party, platonically 'opposed' by the CP (which could only propose in face of De Gaulle, support for the existing government), De Gaulle imposed constitutional reform from outside. He assumed the role of arbitrator of the various interests in good bonapartist style. Article 16 of the new 1958 constitution gave executive power to the President to rule with or without parliament.

De Gaulle took power without a party of his own; later a Gaullist party, the UNR, was founded in an attempt to unite the right wing. He set up his new constitution and eventually after 3 years managed to solve the Algerian crisis in a way French imperialism could afford.

As far as the Constitution is concerned what he did (apart from the 'bonapartist' clause 16) was merely to make the French constitution catch up with the evolution of the other developed countries: centralisation, less responsibility to parliament and "public opinion", attempts at forming two big parties - perhaps all this in a slightly emphasised form, due no doubt to the character of the authoritarian autocrat, but partly as well to the historical evolution and circumstances. While the flexibility of the British institutions allowed such a change to take place gradually in England without formalisation, the French bourgeoisie had to resort to illegal action, to invoke a bonaparte to scrap the old constitution and rebuild a new one. What is more, due to the tradition of the French workers there is a need in France for a stronger state, whether the workers act spontaneously or are led by a CP which in normal times has to keep the kettle boiling if it wants to preserve its position in parliament and local government.



A 'MILD' BONAPARTISM

What has been achieved in fact is in the same line as the general evolution in other western countries, only more openly, spectacularly: in turn this flowed from the serious crisis of the bourgeoisie themselves on Algeria.

De Gaulle, rallying the bourgeoisie under his banner, benefiting from an undeniable prestige among the nationalist middle class and working class due to his action during the War (prestige which had been built with the very act-

ive collaboration of the CP, which even today is extremely respectful of De Gaulle personally in its press) and to his latest move "to save France from chaos", could then lead, with a policy of "collaboration of the classes" to a "rationalised" "reorganised French economy".

Securing the support (in fact if not sometimes in words) of the CP by his policy towards the Soviet Union, he was able to prepare the French economy for the increased competition of the coming Common Market. This of course meant as far as the workers are concerned, attacks (planified ones!) on the standard of living of the working class - wage freeze, devaluation, increase of productivity, redundancy, attacks on the Welfare State, increase of transport fares, etc.

What in all this is really that particular to France? What is particular is the more paternalistic approach of the state, the higher level of tradition of the French workers who frequently clashed with the already infamous CRSes, and the intervention of the French CP, quickly gaining control of any spontaneous movement the better to sabotage it. Meanwhile with the end of the Algerian conflict the bonapartist role of De Gaulle became more mild and, though the background extra-parliamentary powers continue to exist, the emphasis has been on the evolution of a new party system.

All this shows that, in fact, there is more to Gaullism than De Gaulle and his near collaborators; that those who are fighting against De Gaulle, shouting "De Gaulle is responsible" or "10 years is enough", are in fact up against not only the man but against his state, against capitalist domination through a modified bourgeois "democracy." Those who are claiming that they fight for "a more democratic France" and want to remove the man but not the system either do not understand what Gaullism is, or, and that is more likely, are traitors to the working class, longing to take in charge the control of the system.

But the workers do not need another "Popular Front". We had one in 1936, and what it gave the French workers was very quickly regained by the bourgeoisie in terms of increased productivity and devaluation. Capitalism knows very well how to take with one hand what it has just been made to give with the other.

Gaullism is of course this kind of capitalism and the fight of the workers against Gaullism, is a fight to the death against capitalism, a fight for a socialist revolution.

Paul Itize

Protest!

The revived French state has cracked down viciously on those working class and student revolutionary organisations which consciously express the revolutionary aspirations of the working class shown in the May strike. Trotskyist, Maoist and Anarchist organisations have been banned, and many of their militants are now in jail, at the tender mercies of the CRS who have been exacting the violent vengeance of the bourgeoisie on the hard core strikers. Information is scanty. We learn that Pierre Frank of the Parti Communiste Internationale (USFI) is in jail - and clearly leaders and militants of the other Trotskyist groups, such as Voix Ouvriere, and the Maoist and Anarchist groups, will also have been rounded up. Naturally the "Communist Party of France" has not protested - it will, initially, benefit most from the elimination of its communist accusers.

We on the other hand must protest: by getting labour organisations to denounce the repressions and by demonstrating in solidarity outside the French Embassy and Consulates.

From the Arsenal

STRIKE & REVOLUTION

Two excerpts from works by Leon Trotsky

W H A T I S A P O L I T I C A L G E N E R A L S T R I K E ?

With the economic strike it has only one thing in common: in both instances the workers suspend work. In everything else they are absolutely dissimilar. The economic strike has its own fixed and narrow goal - to exert influence upon the will of a given entrepreneur and to remove him from the ranks of competition with this goal in mind. Production is halted in a factory in order to gain changes within the confines of this factory. The political strike differs profoundly in nature. It does not at all exercise pressure upon individual entrepreneurs; it does not as a rule present partial economic demands - its demands are directed, over the heads of the entrepreneurs and consumers who are cruelly affected, to the state power.

How does this political strike act upon the state power? By paralysing its vitality. A modern state, even in so backward a country as Russia, rests on a centralised economic organism composing a single body whose skeleton is railways, and whose nervous system is the telegraph. And if, so far as Russian absolutism is concerned, the telegraph and railways and generally all conquests of modern technology do not serve for cultural-economic aims, then they are all the more indispensable to it for the purposes of repression. Railways and the telegraph are the indispensable instrument for shifting troops from one end of the country to the other; and for unifying and directing the activities of the administration in the struggle against disturbances.

What does the political strike do? It paralyses the economic apparatus of the state, disrupts communication between the various branches of the administrative machine, isolates the government and renders it impotent. On the other hand, it unites politically the mass of the workers in the mills and factories and counterposes this army of workers to the state power. In this, Messrs. Judges, is the essence of an uprising. To unite the proletarian masses in a single revolutionary protest and to counterpose them to the organised state power, as one hostile force to another - that, Messrs. Judges, is precisely an uprising, as the Soviet of Workers' Deputies understood it, and as I understand it. We have already witnessed such a revolutionary clash between the two hostile sides during the October strike which broke out spontaneously without the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, prior to its formation, and which itself created the Soviet.....

(From: IN DEFENCE OF INSURRECTION, Trotsky's Speech to the Czarist Court, October 1906.)

THE VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF GENERAL STRIKE

The question of the general strike has a long and rich history, in theory as well as practice. ... The world experience of the struggle during the last forty years has been fundamentally a confirmation of what Engels had to say about the general strike towards the close of the last century, primarily on the basis of the experience of the Chartists, and in part of the Belgians. Cautioning the Austrian Social Democrats against too flighty an attitude towards the general strike, Engels wrote to Kautsky, on November 3, 1893, as follows:

"You yourself remark that the barricades have become antiquated (they may, however, prove useful again should the army turn one-third or two-fifths socialist and the question arises of providing it with an opportunity to turn its bayonets), but the political strike must either prove victorious immediately by the threat alone (as in Belgium, where the army was very shaky), or it must end in a colossal fiasco, or, finally, lead directly to the barricades."

These terse lines, incidentally, provide a remarkable exposition of Engels' views on a number of questions. Innumerable controversies raged over Engels' famous introduction to Marx's THE CLASS STRUGGLES IN FRANCE (1895), an introduction which was in its time modified and cut in Germany with a view to censorship. Philistines of every stripe have asserted hundreds and thousands of times during the last forty years that "Engels himself" had apparently rejected once and for all the ancient "romantic" methods of street fighting. But there is no need of referring to the past: one need only read the contemporary and inordinately ignorant and mawkish discourses of Paul Faure, Lebas and others on this subject, who are of the opinion that the very question of armed insurrection is "Blanquism". Concurrently, if Engels rejected anything, it was first of all putsches, ie untimely flurries of a small minority; and secondly, antiquated methods, that is to say, forms and methods of street fighting which did not correspond to the new technological conditions.

In the above quoted letter, Engels corrects Kautsky, in passing, as if he were referring to something self-evident: barricades have become "antiquated" only in the sense that the bourgeois revolution has receded into the past, and the time for the socialist barricades has not come as yet. It is necessary for the army, one-third, or better still, two-fifths of it (these ratios, of course, are given only for the sake of illustration), to become imbued with sympathy for socialism, then the insurrection would not be a "putsch", then the barricades would once again come into their own. - not the barricades of the year 1848, to be sure, but the new "barricades", serving, however, the self-same goal: to check the offensive of the army against the workers, give the soldiers the opportunity and the time to sense the power of the uprising, and by this to create the most advantageous conditions for the army's passing over to the side of the insurrectionists. How far removed are these lines of Engels - not the youth, but the man 73 years of age! - from the asinine and reactionary attitude to the barricade, as a piece of "romanticism"! ....

(Engels) differentiates, as we have seen, between three cases in relation to the political strike:

1) The government takes fright at the general strike, and at the very outset, without carrying matters to an open clash, takes to concessions. Engels points to the "shaky" condition of the army in Belgium as the basic condition for the success of the Belgian general strike (1893). A somewhat similar situation, but on a much more colossal scale, occurred in Russia, October 1905. After the miserable outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, the Czarist army was, or, at any rate, seemed extremely unreliable. The

Petersburg government, thrown into a mortal panic by the strike, made the first constitutional concessions (MANIFESTO, October 17th, 1905)

It is all too evident, however, that without resorting to decisive battles, the ruling class will make only such concessions as will not touch the basis of its rule. That is precisely how matters stood in Belgium and Russia. Are such cases possible in the future? They are inevitable in the countries of the Orient. They are, generally speaking, less probable in the countries of the West, although here too, they are quite possible as partial episodes of the unfolding revolution.

2) If the army is sufficiently reliable, and the government feels sure of itself; if a political strike is promulgated from above, and if, at the same time, it is calculated not for decisive battles, but to "frighten" the enemy, then it can easily turn out a mere adventure, and reveal its utter impotence. To this we ought to add that after the initial experiences of the general strike, the novelty of which reacted upon the imagination of the popular masses as well as governments, several decades have elapsed - discounting the half-forgotten Chartists - in the course of which the strategists of capital have accumulated an enormous experience. That is why a general strike, particularly in the old capitalist countries, requires a painstaking Marxist accounting of all the concrete circumstances.

3) Finally, there remains a general strike which, as Engels put it, "leads directly to the barricades". A strike of this sort can result either in complete victory or defeat. But to shy away from battle, when the battle is forced by the objective situation, is to lead inevitably to the most fatal and demoralising of all possible defeats. The outcome of a revolutionary, insurrectionary general strike depends, of course, upon the relationship of forces, covering a great number of factors: the class differentiation of society, the specific weight of the proletariat, the mood of the lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie, the social composition and the political mood of the army, etc. However, among the conditions for victory, far from the last place is occupied by the correct revolutionary leadership, a clear understanding of conditions and methods of the general strike and its transition to open revolutionary struggle.

Engels' classification must not, of course, be taken dogmatically. In present-day France not partial concessions but power is indubitably in question: the revolutionary proletariat or Fascism - which? The working class masses want to struggle. But the leadership applies the brakes, hoodwinks and demoralises the workers. A general strike can flare up just as the movements flared in Toulon and Brest. Under these conditions, independently of its immediate results, a general strike will not of course be a "putsch" but a necessary stage in the mass struggle, the necedsary means for casting off the treachery of the leadership and for creating within the working class itself the preliminary conditions for a victorious uprising. ....

We should also add that Engels did not point out another "category"of general strike, exemplars of which have been provided in England, Belgium, France and some other countries: we refer here to cases in which the leadership of the strike previously, ie, without a struggle, arrives at an agreement with the class enemy as to the course and outcome of the strike. The parliamentarians and trade unionists perceive at a given moment the need to provide an outlet for the accumulated ire of the masses, or they are simply compelled to jump in step with a movement that has flared over their heads. In such cases they come scurrying through the back-stairs to the government and obtain permission to head the general strike, this with the obligation to conclude it as soon as possible, without any damage being done to the state crockery. Some-

times, far from always, they manage to haggle beforehand some petty concessions, to serve them as fig leaves. Thus did the General Council of British Trade Unions (TUC) in 1926. Thus did Jouhaux in 1934. Thus will they act in the future also. The exposure of these contemptible machinations behind the backs of the struggling proletariat enters as a necessary part into the preparation of a general strike.

From: In the Middle of the Road, September 1935.

The French bourgeoisie has started its counter attack with the energy of someone who has just escaped violent death - and it now feels secure in the knowledge that its opponent has now been disarmed. During the strike, until the end of May, the bourgeoisie and De Gaulle first of all, did not dare show their face, or attempt to resort to armed force - all lying quiet trying to be forgotten like a beetle pretending to be dead. Meanwhile the CP, its militants, its fantastic machine, were regaining control of the whole movement - to lead it back into the parliamentary blind alley.

The bourgeoisie then revived itself, regained its confidence and began to strike back at its disorganised and disarmed enemies, splitting their ranks, isolating - with the help of the CP - the militant workers from the rest: they granted some demands and called the army immediately afterwards.

The apparent lack of reaction, as long as the movement of strikes and protest lasted on a national scale, was not the generous act of a frightened bourgeoisie refusing violence and ready to see all its wealth taken over, and its state dismantled by the workers. This class, if threatened in its existence, would not have elected to disappear without a fight. Rather, its apparent passivity was the best way to facilitate the task of the leaders of labour - especially the CP. It was not alone the paralysis imposed on its sections by the strike that restrained the bourgeoisie from resorting to naked force. It knew it could rely on other and more convenient means of dealing with the workers.

(Above: Rochet, angel of mercy)

HOUSEHOLD GOD

And when De Gaulle said to the new US Ambassador: "From now on our fate is in the hands of God" - it would have been

quite right to assume that from now on the CPF was God. After all, we must say the French capitalists have good reason to see the CPF as the benevolent arbitrator of its fate, one that has saved it from extinction on at least 3 separate occasions now. Moreover it has been and is a very convenient god, that can always be kicked in the pants once the miracle is performed.

Let us look back briefly at the evolution of the Party, founded to lead the socialist revolution, but which has in fact succoured the capitalists through all their tribulations over 3 decades. Let us look at the double mature which has determined the success and failure of the Party.

The construction of the Party, started under Lenin and Trotsky, completed under Stalin (not on the same plans, nor for the same purposes) had made of the CPF a party in strong dependence on Moscow. At first the "Moscow" of the October Revolution; then the Moscow of the Stalinist counter-revolution. This, true of all CPs, was perhaps especially true of the French.

The French CP was not built from nothing. It emerged from the famous Congress of Tours (December 1920), when the majority of the Social Democratic Party, the SP, which had failed so helplessly during the War, decided to join the Comintern. The fact that people like M.Cachin, a vicious patriot during the war, remained with the majority is the measure of the problems that had to be faced in transforming the movement into a Leninist organisation. By the time the Stalinist reaction began in the Soviet Union - and also in the Communist International - the transformation had still a long way to go. And suddenly as Stalin replaced Lenin and the theories of "Socialism in One Country" replaced the revolutionary internationalism of Leninism, the blue-print on which those parties like the CPF were being transformed changed imperceptibly. The increasingly bureaucratised Comintern gradually becoming a tool of the apparatus which was gaining control in Russia, began to need not parties modelled on Bolshevism, but parties led by individuals who would be faithful and servile agents of the Soviet bureaucracy and its spokesman Stalin.

Throughout the 1920s, as the Left Opposition fought the bureaucratic tendencies in the state and party, the process waxed. It was not finally completed, the Thorez', Dutts, Fosters and Togliattis not finally selected, until the end of the decade. But it began in 1923/4. In France, under the slogan of "Bolshevising" the CP, it was stalinised: shortly, by the mid-1920s, all the founding leadership had been driven out, together with a good portion of the ex-SP membership.

By the early 30s, the Party had a highly disciplined machine and had shed so many of its members that it was almost limited to its Moscow-orientated aparatus: it had become a stalinist organisation.

The Soviet bureaucracy, after '33 threatened by Hitler, began to seek some support from the rulers of western capitalist countries. Under the schema which saw the foreign CPs as pawns and frontier guards for the Russian rulers, this meant a sharp turn to the right, away from the ultra-leftism of 1929-34 (Third Period). From now on the parties' role was to push their national governments to strong opposition to Hitler and alliance with the Soviet Union.

To do this the CPs started to become ultra chauvinistic in their propaganda in their own countries, perhaps in compensation for the connection with Moscow. The French CP developed its own nationalist policy and consequently, as this implied an all out effort for a ntaional Front and thus concessions to the bourgeoisie - a reformist programme. (Incidentally, the famous Laval-Stalin Communique of May 1935, in which Stalin announced that "M.Stalin understands and fully approves the national defence policy of France in keeping her armed forc-

es at the level required for security", marked the open turning-point here, away from Communist opposition to militarism.* Soon the French CP began to carry the Tricolour and sing the Marseillaise.

Due to the world economic crisis the discontent of the working class increased to the point when it openly upsurged. And masses of workers then joined the ranks of the Party because it was the more radical, because of its direct affiliation to the Russian Revolution. But nevertheless on a reformist and nationalist basis. It was out of the question for the CP to lead the upsurged working class to a socialist revolution, as this was against the interests of the alliance between Russia and the "Free Western Countries".

And when the upsurge occurred spontaneously the job of the Party was to aontrol it and demonstrate to the ruling class that fascism - i.e. tha smashing of the workers' organisations - wasn't really necessary. The CPs could do the job in return for political concessions.

In 1936 in response to the election of the Popular Front (alliance of SP and radicals, ie liberal bourgeoisie) Government, the French workers responded with a general strike and occupation of the factories. It was a movement exactly as the recent one, only smaller. Capitalism could easily have been overthrown, given a revolutionary party. The CP chose to give its full support to the government and help suppress the strike, thus betraying the workers to reaction. It was at that point that Thorez uttered the now notorious "one must know how to end a strike".

With the German-Soviet pact of non-aggression in August 1939 came one of those violent swings characteristic of the CPs. For 5 years they had peddled the anti-Nazi front, and preached class collaboration at home in defence of "democracy". (With some curious twists: in the late 30s Thorez took the National Front line to absurdity by advocating an alliance with "patriotic" - i.e. anti-German - Fascists!)

Now the policy was reversed. The "Great Western Democracies" were as black, if not blacker, that Stalin's new German allies had been. The strain on the CPF was very heavy: it lost a huge part of its membership. And even those who remained with the Party were not always supporting the Party line.

The complete suddenness of the Nazi-Soviet pact meant it took a little while for the implication of the new international line-up to register with the national CPs, who had the difficulty that many of their members had been recruited on a purely anti-fascist line. Thus they at first continued the old line and supported their own countries against Germany. *

After 5 years of a nationalist and reformist policy, it was out of the question to find again a genuine proletarian internationalist attitude. The CP, as it then was, had not been constructed for

---

* There is a story told by Koestler, who worked for the Comintern then, that when Stalin and the French Premier Laval were discussing this, Laval asked Stalin: What if the CPF can't be got to agree to this? To which, characteristically, the cynical "Leader of the World Revolution" replied by drawing his hand across his throat. "Hang them!" he said cryptically.

* Pollitt actually issued a pamphlet supporting the British declaration of war - "How to Win the War" - and when the penny dropped, once Stalin and Hitler had carved up Poland and called for peace, he had to resign as CPGB Secretary for a couple of years. In France, however, things are always taken to extremes: on the outbreak of war Maurice Thorez joined the French Army! A few weeks later he deserted and went to Moscow.

that. Its opposition to both imperialisms, first German and then British, was motivated, it claimed, by its concern for the unity of the French Nation, and for a "True National Policy". Outlawed, under a fantastic pressure from public opinion, it was in fact waiting the signal for a new change.

JUNE 1941 - ALL CHANGE AGAIN

In June 1941 Russia was attacked by Germany and the relieved CPF threw itself head first into the "Resistance" - back to a new phase of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Quickly it gained control of the whole of the Resistance, and though it spoke of "Revolution after the Liberation" (as in Spain it had promised - first win against Franco, then have the Revolution), again the alliance of the Soviet bureaucracy and the Western Countries could not have allowed it even if the CP had had any will to revolution.

But it had not - and what was left of revolutionary Marxism was just the terminology. The Resistance was at the service of the bourgeoisie, as determined according to the deals cooked up at Yalta and Teheran by Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill: East Europe was to be Stalin's domain, the west that of Imperialism. So the CPs in Italy and France complied, and disarmed the workers of the Resistance, allowing the capitalists to rebuild their state. The ineffable Thorez raised the slogan for liquidating the partisan movement in France: "One army, one state, one people"!! (He had been given special permission to return to France in 1944; De Gaulle, commenting in his memoirs on his reasons for giving this permission, said: "Thorez is a useful man to have around"!)

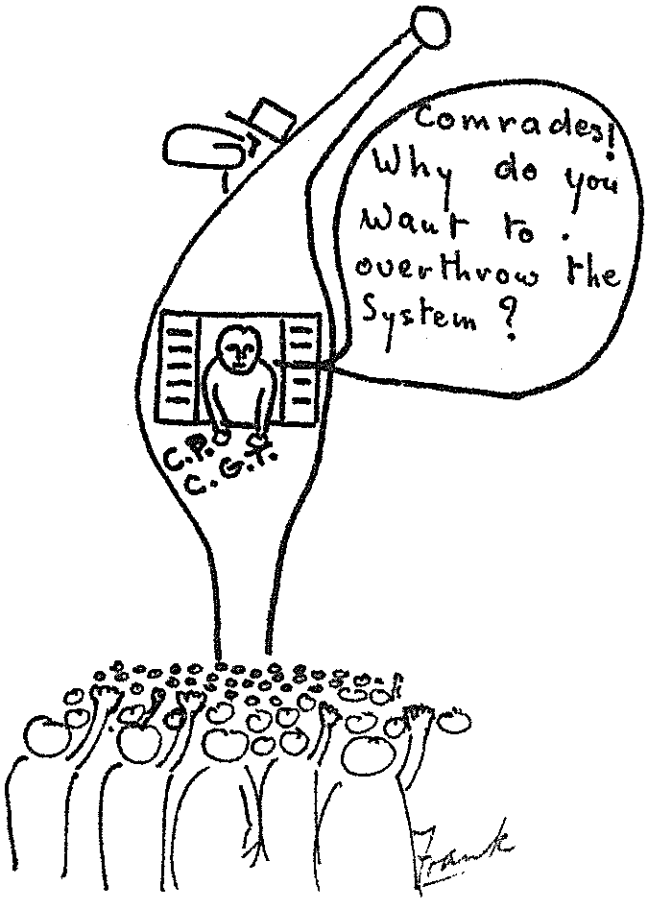
So long as good relations were maintained between Moscow and Washington, the CPF was at the service of the bourgeoisie. At the Liberation the CP had partial control over the South of France and tremendously strong influence elsewhere (while the capitalists were totally discredited and almost disarmed). It used its influence to help rebuild the France of the bosses, and entered a coalition government with De Gaulle. "Roll up your sleeves" was now the slogan.

This line had to be abandoned at the beginning of the Cold War, with the CP thrown out of the coalition government, and now attacking US imperialism. Once again it did so on Nationalist grounds. (So congenital is the nationalism that in 1965 a faction of the Maoists who had broken away from the CPF on a leftist basis, came out for support of De Gaulle in the Presidential elections: on the grounds of a National United Front with the Anti-American Bourgeoisie!! (see British Maoist journal MARXIST, No.6))

INDO-CHINA

In the meantime the Party had voted in parliament the credits the Imperialist French army needed for the war in what was then Indo-China, now Vietnam. It was to do the same for the Army in Algeria, and in fact never throughout the war did it take a clear position in favour of full sovereignty for Algeria: nor did it organise aid for the Algerians. When in 1958 De Gaulle was installed by the Army the CPF went through a few small motions of shadow-boxing, but did nothing to organise the workers in opposition.

With the coming of age (in bourgeois politics that means at least 40!) of a new CP generation whose allegiance to Moscow is not as strong as that of previous generations, a mood has developed creating a clash between the interests of the Russian bureaucracy and those of the actual, mass reformist basis, (and the petit bourgeois political and ideological basis) of the CP in France. This has cost it many political opportunities in the sphere of its parliamentary-political activities. Thus we see a change in the relations with Moscow: what has been defined as "Polycentrism". This is now, with the breaking up of the monolithic world front, the case with a few other mass stalinist parties. It is the relationship between



these two features of the party, its programme and methods of recruitment on the one hand and its relations with Moscow on the other, which condition its evolution and the growing process of "Polycentrism", the tendency for a mass reformist stalinist party to loosen and possibly to break off its direct ties with Moscow. The Moscow link, with its importance for foreign policy, has led the bourgeoisie to refuse the participation of the CP in any government - except a coalition in conditions of extreme crisis and during alliances with Russia. The break with Moscow is the necessary step to make the CPF acceptable to the bourgeoisie as a government party. That step has to be taken for any lasting realisation of that appealing prospect: "The Reunification of the Left".

MOSCOW OR THE ELYSEE

Such a step will mean giving up any independent foreign policy and adopting the bourgeoisie's own one. Positions such as on Indo-China and Algeria were already steps at concessions in this direction. It can't all be done at once, but on the other hand a party can't gain popular support, win over partial control of the local government and substantial participation in Parliament for decades and decades without any hope of ever taking part in a government, and having a hand in driving the capitalist machine which it has worked so hard for so long to maintain in running order. The final break with Moscow is the unavoidable conclusion of this evolution.

By its role in the current crisis the CP has exposed its fundamentally reformist nature as never before. The more open this becomes, the more its militants will turn away from the Party. While this is already happening fast, the CP still undoubtedly has the general support of the workers, partly because of its revolutionary past, and also because of its link with Moscow and ultimately the October Revolution.

The breaking of this link for the sake of a more successful and respectable parliamentary career, combined with the recent exposure to more and more militants, may well be its last act as a party able to abuse the confidence of the working class.

In that case the destiny of the bourgeoisie will really have been put in the hands of God, which won't help it very much at all. We can safely say - not as much as the "Communist Party of France" has done!

Francois Calmat

workers' fight

BRITAIN: the Left must prepare

Just as the coffin is being lowered into the grave, alongside the hopes of those who have looked for a mass movement of Labour's left against Wilson, there has come a faint knocking from the inside of the box. On reopening the coffin the corpse is seen to have a flicker of life still left. A weak smile hovers on its pallid face. Pinned to its chest is the undoubted cause of this self-satisfaction. It is an old fashioned looking document, written on parchment and entitled: THE SOCIALIST CHARTER. "Sign here, please!" mutters the corpse.

The new Socialist Charter put out by TRIBUNE must be seen on two levels: on the merits of its proposals, and on its possible role in evoking a mass left wing movement in the Labour Party and Trade Unions, a movement which, whatever ideas it started out with, would express the feeling of the rank and file against Wilsonism and for socialism. The first is obviously irrelevant unless the Labour Left can lead a mass movement: the field of ideas and policy has never, unfortunately, been one of its strongest positions.

The Charter contains nothing new. Demanding "Economic Independence", it plugs a utopian reactionary economic nationalism; it talks about Planning, without asking <u>who</u> plans; demanding an extension of public ownership until the 'public' sector dominates the private, it shows extreme naivete in imagining that the bourgeoisie will be expropriated en masse by their own state; it demands that profits, prices and dividends be "controlled": this is <u>impossible</u>. Either smash capitalism, or a Labour Government (like Wilson's) must administer it according to its own laws. The Charter wants to end discrimination, and calls for strengthening of the laws - Michael X will be amused, and maybe also Enoch Powell. In foreign policy they want to support both the UN <u>and</u> anti-Imperialist movements. And when the UN is used to suppress anti-Imperialist movements (eg Korea) - what then? The working class comes into all this, if at all, as anonymous cannon fodder and signature signers.

All this sounds familiar: most of it was the stock-in-trade of .... yes - Harold Wilson, Barbara Castle, etc. These are simply the ideas of Wilsonism out of office. Ideologically they are an untenable no-mans land. The Wilsonites, in power, had to move from that place to a non-utopian administration of the realities of capitalism. Those who want to really oppose Wilson will also have to leave the ground of TRIBUNE for a more realistic stance - the working class Marxist realism of class struggle.

But what of the <u>effect</u> of this 'leftist' campaign'? This is the serious part of the question. In the current atmosphere any campaign from within the labour movement, with the resources of the Tribunites, could start something going. They plan a national campaign for signatures and endorsement by Labour Party and Trade Union branches. It might in the current situation prove possible to rally support round even such pseudo socialist confusion as the SOCIALIST CHARTER. Though it has no Bevan, it has what the Bevanites never had - a block vote of 2 million plus. That it is a <u>block vote</u> should be emphasised. A real struggle cannot depend on block votes wielded by bureaucrats. That will do for an entrenched Right - not an aspirant Left. Given the run down state of the Labour Party any immediate movement would need to link up with the rank and

file industrial struggle. But side by side with the Fabian ideas of the Charter, its union sponsors take no stock of direct action. In fact they oppose and betray it. It might be said that a "persuasion" campaign around the Charter could well be, for these people, a substitute for a fight now where they already have forces - the shop floor. This, and the notorious reluctance of the Labour Left to challenge the machine, raise doubts about the prospects of a serious movement and serious struggle. If a movement of any size is generated, Marxists must participate: both to expose the confused ideas of the TRIBUNITES and pose real socialist demands; and to organise a struggle not only against the 'official' opportunism around Wilson, but also against the 'unofficial' opportunism around Cousins and Foot. Meanwhile the work continues to build a revolutionary left, and prepare it for the major struggles to come.

Report from Dublin

((Trotskyism in Ireland has a notoriously feeble history - so much so that precise details of the few individuals adhering to the movement in the 1930s and after are hardly known. In Northern Ireland the SLL built a strong YS, which has, true to form, rapidly disintegrated, though it still functions. In the South, efforts to consolidate even a small group came to nothing.

But now for perhaps the first time, certainly for the first time in decades, an organisation openly declaring for the Trotskyist Programme of workers' power, has been established and consolidated in the 26 Counties. On April 6th/7th this year THE LEAGUE FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC was founded at a meeting in London. The new organisation has branches in London and Dublin, and supporters in a number of provincial areas. In the heightening struggles in Ireland around anti-union legislation, the Vietnam war, and the attempt to rig the electoral system, its prospects of growth are good. It will be an all-Ireland organisation.

The L.W.R. originated as the "Trotskyist Faction" of the Irish Workers' Group. Within the I.W.G., a left centrist Group containing a very wide range of disparate elements (left Labourites, semi-stalinists, semi-Trotskyists and consistent Trotskyists) the Trotskyist Faction took shape in the struggle to lay the foundations for a Leninist-Trotskyist organisation: for principled politics. The formation of the new organisation meant the shedding of the left centrist integument, the centrist morass of the I.W.G.

The L.W.R. has brought out a bi-monthly printed paper, WORKERS' REPUBLIC - a new series of the quarterly magazine hitherto produced in association with WORKERS' FIGHT. Copies are available from us. The LEAGUE and WORKERS' FIGHT will, naturally, work together in the future as in the past.

Below we print a report from a LEAGUE member in Dublin on recent developments on the Left.))

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE LEFT IN DUBLIN.

In 1966 we in Ireland celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion (1916). The writings of James Connolly, which prior to then had been read little, and then only by the older 'hands', began to be read more widely. The younger generation found through his writings that he was not quite as the 'Christian Brothers' in school taught - "only the 7th leader of 1916". They found in his writings Connolly the revolutionary, the worker, the union organiser and

Marxist. Via Connolly's writings many young readers were able to side-step the watery politics of the stalinists and adopt firm, consistent socialist politics.

The new firmness and consistency is reflected best in the slogans raised on the increasingly numerous and sizeable demonstrations and the growth in Dublin of militant Marxist groups. In fact it is in the traditionally 'soggy' demos that the militants are showing best.

The Irish Voice on Vietnam (IVV) is dominated by stalinists and republicans and is best understood by its slogan "Peace in Vietnam". On all the early demonstrations the most radical slogan would be "Hey Hey LBJ..." etc. On the latest, however, slogans such as "Victory to the NLF", "Escalate the Peoples War" and others of solidarity with the NLF are chanted. These slogans were most in evidence on the last demo (April) when it rained heavily before, throughout and after the demonstration. The crowd numbered about 450 (a far cry from the days when only 200 turned up in the best of weather) and not a Hey Hey LBJ-type slogan was to be heard.

When on reaching the Embassy some militants from the Connolly Youth Movement (Irish YCL) tried to block the road, their leader was forcibly stopped by a policeman - and the secretary of the Irish Workers' Party (Southern Irish CP). The secretary no doubt did not want the rumour confirmed that the marchers were not content just to chant solidarity slogans but were also prepared to show their solidarity physically if given the leadership.

Just as the anti-war demos are getting out of the hands of the organisers, so also are the demos against the chronic Dublin housing shortage. This shift of initiative to the rank and file is not alone feared by the cops, but also by the "left" bureaucrats. The only way the bureaucrats can regain control is to have fewer demos, badly advertised, while the police have the sole deterrent of violence in their hands.

The cops resorted to attacking the demonstrators during the two housing demos in May. The earlier one was the traditional picket outside City Hall while the corporation had its monthly meeting inside. The usual contingent of cops and "S men" (Special Branch) were there, and so also was the riot squad headed by "Lugs" Brannigan the punch-happy cop. In the course of the picket these psycopaths unleashed their pent up frustrations on the demonstrators. Three demonstrators were taken to hospital.

The following Saturday a public meeting of protest was organised. The meeting marched to the Mansion House and then marched back to the city centre. By this time the numbers had dwindled greatly. On reaching town 3 times as many cops as were together before that evening awaited them. When the demo did not break up quickly enough, the cops attacked and accelerated the process of dispersal.

Noticeably prominent in these demos were the students, who themselves (through the "Internationalists", a Maoist fringe group) organised a picket of protest against Belgian Imperialism when the King and Queen of the Belgians were in Trinity College. The police attacked the picketers of about 10 or so and rapidly neutralised them. During the course of the beatings some students unconnected with the picket were assaulted by the "defenders of peace and order". The HERALD, a paper in the "INDEPENDENT" (!) Group, took care of the public relations side and put out that the students attacked the police and that they intended to physically attack the King and Queen.

The mass of the students then marched to the INDEPENDENT offices to protest against mis-representation in the press. The misrepresentation was echoed in the Dail by the Fine Gael leadership when they said that Trinity was a breeding

ground for communists and that the arrival in Ireland of Ralph Schoenman (promptly arrested and deported) was part of an international plan to create student unrest in Ireland.

The organisers of the initial student demo, the "Internationalists", are to be congratulated for it. But they are all the stalinist Groups in Dublin, whether they are 'hard line' or 'revisionist', are to be condemned for not swelling the ranks of the Young Socialists (an independent youth group) in their picket of solidarity with the French workers outside the French Embassy. This demo was organised by the YS and students. The Connolly Youth Movement said it was ultra-left and insisted there was not a revolutionary situation in France.(Which if true is due entirely to the reformist policy of their French counterparts!) Granted they had a meeting at the time, but since they meet only a 5 minute bus ride away from the French embassy they could have adjourned and given at least token support.The Irish Communist Organisation (another Maoist grouping) promised support, but true to sectarian (with regard to Trotskyists) form did not turn up.

It was heartening however to see the YS taking the initiative on this question, and they deserve full support from all real militants. The day will come when consistent Marxist politics will win through and demos like the French one will be as well attended as the present anti-war ones, if not better.

P.G.

Whither V.S.C.?

With Grosvenor Square behind us, and optimistic talk of a demonstration of 100,000 in October, the first delegate conference of the VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN was an enthusiastic, if at times confused, gathering. Taking place as the first week of the general strike in France was drawing to a close, it was not surprising if much of the discussion was in one way or another concerned with this event. But if France did much to enhance the militant mood of the meeting, it also gave rise to some of the confusion.

Obviously a major purpose of this conference was to discuss the future direction and activity of the large and militant membership which has been attracted in less than two years. The predictable 'line-up' was between advocates of bigger and better demonstrations, and those who argue for the solid and painstaking work of spreading the Campaign more widely into the labour movement, though not to the extent of excluding such activities as demonstrations. Given the strength of the Campaign in numbers and in the willingness of these to be active, such a turn to the working class could play a most valuable role in helping to raise the political consciousness of the amorphous and leaderless left.

But though the conference was more or less agreed, after some initial confusion, that the emphasis of its activities must be on solidarity rather than sympathy, that this meant international class solidarity, and that this in turn must mean stepping up our efforts to make working class action in this country more effective - while all this was accepted, the conference was still reluctant to decide definitely in favour of a determined turn towards the working class. Some thought it would necessitate dropping Vietnam as the key issue of the

Campaign, though they could not provide a convincing reason why this would happen. Others actually wanted this, and led the discussion up a blind trail with suggestions that the Campaign should become a complete revolutionary party. Observably the advocates of this were those who owe allegiance to no aspirant revolutionary party now.

Between these extremes, it was pointed out that international working class solidarity did not mean diversifying into a complete programme, but meant that the Vietnam struggle must be thoroughly identified with the class struggle here, with Vietnam as the focal point of our activities on this. This can be done just as well by a Campaign as by a Party.

After much discussion, no decision was arrived at. The 'demonstrators' poured cold water over the talk of building a working class base. Identifying the VSC with the Paris students, they said confidently that all we had to do was "show that we could win" and the workers would follow our example en masse. Despite the recent pro-Powell demonstrations, they contended that there was no need to try and raise the political level and socialist awareness of the labour movement. Spectacular demonstrations would do the job!

I don't know if these people have learnt anything from the course taken by the French events since May 19th. But many of those confused by such talk must inevitably have seen that demonstrations can, given certain conditions, spark off a movement of the workers, but cannot bring it to a successful conclusion. We have lived for so long without a revolutionary upheaval in Western Europe that many people have come to see the main task of revolutionaries as being to start one going. Now it is time to go back to the lessons of the thirties and forties: a revolutionary ferment, if the factors that cause it are present, can be started by anything - or it can be spontaneous. The big problem is not so much to start it as to finish it in workers' power. In preparing for this the one task that cannot be shirked is for the revolutionaries to integrate themselves with the vanguard of the workers' movement, and to work to raise the political level of that movement. Once again it must be stressed: there are no short cuts to workers' power.

However much the 'demonstrators', under the leadership (perhaps surprisingly) of E.Tate and the Group around the new monthly Week, "International", may scorn such activity as unspectacular, the basic need remains to back up the militant mass demonstrations with a massive campaign in the labour movement, at factory and dock gates, at building sites and among young workers and apprentices.

Linking up the struggle here against the Government's attacks on the working class with the struggle of the NLF can immeasurably raise the level of struggle of the British workers. Solidarity with fighters as heroic as the Vietcong can only embolden workers here in their struggles, and in turn give the NLF the kind of support that solidarity implies.

R.M.

STAND UP TO the RACIALISTS

Enoch Powell's notorious speech has given the professional back street racialists something apparently solid upon which to build their racialist propaganda. Playing on the backward emotions, fear and insecurity of normally non-political workers, fascists, both open and incipient, have moved into action to organise racialist committees in certain industries.

In some London areas, the old markets and docks due for the axe, places where workers see their jobs threatened and, unable to see any other solution, blame things on the nearest scapegoat - in these places the racialists have found fertile ground for cultivating their own brand of gangrene.

On July 7th. they plan a demonstration and march on Downing Street, using the name of "IMMIGRATION CONTROL ASSOCIATION". There are several groupings involved in this. The Smithfield Market Committee, containing one or two Mosleyites (directed from behind the scenes by the Mosleyite candidate for S.W.Islington in 1966) is organising the July march. It has contact with the "Dockers' Immigration Control Association", also led by a Mosleyite candidate.

They plan to involve other markets - but Covent Garden will not attend: it has already condemned Powell's speech. At Billingsgate however, the racialists may make ground because of the weak and hypochritical leadership they have in Jim Nicks, Branch Chairman of the T&GWU.

The July 7th. demonstration, unlike the lightning strikes and demonstrations of April which swept up all sorts of people who would not normally turn out for that kind of thing, will surely attract predominantly hard-core racialists. They must not be allowed to march unchallenged. The fascists and their dupes carry a virus that is deadly to the working class. THEY MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO DEMONSTRATE PEACEFULLY IN SUPPORT OF THEIR FILTH.

The labour movement must mobilise in counter-demonstration to coincide with theirs - and drive them off the streets.

As in the 1930s and the fight against fascism, there are those who caution restraint. Meanwhile the racial inciters, Mosleyites and ordinary psycopaths alike, have impunity in their campaign (the 'Law' won't touch them!). Quietism is not the answer. It is time the labour movement began to fight back against the racialist disease that threatens it with disaster. July 7th. offers a chance to do so.

The obvious course is an Ad Hoc Committee of socialist and anti-racialist trade unionists to organise a counter demonstration. We propose that such a committee be set up immediately. We must show that the racialists are not the labour movement.

Harold Youd
(T&G/U Shop Steward)
Port of Manchester.

(Published by WORKERS' FIGHT, 31 Leicester Road, Cheetham, Manchester 8.)