French miners occupy condemned pits

Police, the world over, have well-established patterns of behaviour. The French variety showed their colours when attacking demonstrators against the Fascist OAS in Paris on February 8. Eight anti-fascists died—and the funerals of four of them, five days later, was marked by a general strike in Paris, with half-a-million mourners in the streets... and not a copper in sight. The bodies were borne to the Pere Lachaise cemetery by the working-class belt of Belleville-Monmartre, there to be interred near the victims of an earlier, exercise in State brutality, the massacre of revolutionaries that followed the suppression of the Paris Commune (1871).

These events, with the imminent ending of the Algerian War and the apparent threat of an OAS coup d'état, have overshadowed other French news and, outside that country, little has been written about one of the most significant struggles by workers there since the occupation of the factories in November 1933. It is a strike in the miners of Decazeville in the small Southern basin of Aveyron. From a French comrade comes this report, highlighting the great courage of the "gueules noires" (black miners), as the miners are known, and the cynicism of left-wing politicians who have been doing their best to hold the important economic struggle to their own ambitions.

Decazeville: population 12,000, 613 km. from Paris, 173 km. from Toulouse. Mountainous region, difficult of access. 65% of population is in coal mines. There are two mines, working Decazeville in the southern basin of Aveyron. There is a French comrade here. He tells us about the great courage of the "gueules noires" (black miners), as the miners are known, and the cynicism of left-wing politicians who have been doing their best to hold the important economic struggle to their own ambitions.

Six savage sentences

As we go to press, six members of the Committee of 100 have been sentenced at London's Old Bailey to savage jail sentences for offences under the Official Secrets Act—helping organise the sit-down at Wetheredfield (Essex) USAF B-Bomber base last December. Terry Chandler, L. M. Dixon, Trevor Hatton, Pat Pattle and Mike Randle get 18 months; Helen Allegraun 12 months. Their defence had been made impossible, as the judge ruled out question after question. The six refused an offer of leniency, unanimously recommended by the jury—if they understood that their sentences were a punishment of civil disobedience, the judge said: "I have to pass a sentence... that will deter others."

That was clearly the object of the trial—to smash the campaign by intimidation. To have people about who not only oppose mass-murder, but are prepared to take action against it, is more than the State can stomach. Our solidarity to the six—and those who have taken over from them.

Union threat to militant

John Hunter, a member of the Glasgow SWF group, is threatened with expulsion from the Constructional Engineering Union, reputedly one of Britain's Left-wing TU's, for advocating militant industrial action.

On January 8, the committee of the Glasgow branches of the CEU voted, by one vote to two, with two abstentions, in favour of his expulsion for "anti-union activity." This consisted of distributing the National Rank and File Movement leaflet, "Unite for Militant Industrial Action," among fellow CEU members.

An appeal will be heard by the CEU Executive during March. Meanwhile John's associates are organizing a petition in his support among rank-and-file CEU members, who remember his active record as a shop steward and his role in the big Paisley site dispute last summer.

Rank and File Conference

Arising out of the Rank and File Conference of January, 1961, the Rank and File Movement was born. Since that date some progress has been made, and militancy is beginning to become widespread, particularly in Glasgow and Manchester. In London Rank and File propaganda has been circulated throughout industry. The Sunday Press have been more than interested and shown concern about our policy of Direct Action and Workers' Control.

The Rank and File Movement will hold its second conference on Sunday, March 11 at the King and Queen Hotel, 67 Harrow Road, London, W.3 (on Paddington Green) from 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Give the opportunity to discuss common problems, not only on the job, but affecting workers in general. The need for a Rank and File Movement is more urgent than ever, as the TU leaders have integrated themselves with the boss class, negotiating and compromising to the detriment of their members. We urge all militant workers to attend this Conference. Admission is free. Buses 6, 8, 16, 70 to Paddington Green, Edgware Road underground.

East Germany—Last year 207,026 people fled to West Germany. The West Berlin Committee of Free Lawyers reported that prison sentences for political "crimes" in East Germany were known to have been passed on 629 people, but that such sentences were sometimes only disclosed after they had been served, there were probably considerably more.
more modest. They therefore find themselves faced with a sudden drop in living standards, because the wages they could get in factories of the region are below their present rates: "Le Monde, 20.12.61."

Examples: Miner's wages, 25 NF a day (underground), 18 NF (surface), rent-free housing, six tons of free coal a year, repayment of all medical expenses, better retirement rates at 55; Wages of a "resettled" miner, 28 NF a year, 13-16 NF daily and loss of all perks, 32-35,000 NF a year (a 60% cut). Proposals of the 4th reconstruction plan: building of factories, (now few in number); "guarantees" to "resettled" miners—three months' wages as compensation; 90% of present wages guaranteed for two years; ample loans, etc., etc., etc.

Psychological role of the elections: Cantonal elections were due and each political grouping (even those who voted for the plan) claimed to support vigorously the demands of the population. During the election campaign, Jacques Duquesne (leader of the CP) came to Decezeville on October 23rd to speak specially about the "anti-national" policies of the Government.

A stay-in strike took place from 17.9.61 to 5.10.61 in an iron mine at Lorraine (89 miners), which was to be closed; the management gave way. A "small strike," but one of importance that was to find an echo in Decezeville.

Who is organizing the strike? Each pit or service has an action committee formed by union delegates (CGT, CFTC, FO, CGC); an inter-union committee studies and proposes activity and demands; decides all questions of organization and procedure; fixes the demands to be presented to the Government. Although the unions have nominal participation in the committee, differences often arise with their regional and, above all, national leaderships.

Development of the strike. At the beginning of November, notification of eight miners to be fired. December 19, 1,000 miners go down the mine, determined to stay there until their demands are met. The eight sacked miners are among them. Wives are alerted to prepare meals for the stay-in strikers. December 21, Decezeville occupation; the strikers present a list of 16 demands to the Government. Slogan: "The Decezeville miners have as much right as the Algerian patriots." December 25, Sentimental exploitation of the strike by newspapers and radio; stressing the "solidarity" of peasants and shopkeepers like those in Bourgogne, Belgium, 1840; political appeals to the Government, De Gaulle's arbitration called for—no results.

December 27, six miners' sons on hunger strike; 24-hour sympathy strike at Decezeville, 24-hour sympathetic response by the bishoips and by peasants, who declare themselves in the request of the strikers. But some begin to fear a political influence, that could destroy unity. "Le Monde, 29.12.61.

December 28, 3,000 Decezeville women demonstrate outside the Decezeville prefecture; general stoppage in Avranches; token stoppages in other mines. December 29, the mayors of the mining basin resign in protest.

January 2, 307 mayors of Avranches decide on an administrative strike. January 3, Press conference of the inter-municipal committee at Paris, where delegates declare: "The strikers will not leave their pits, their workshops, their offices until their legitimate demands are met..." January 7, 24-hour sympathy strike in the Provence basin; January 9, General sympathy strike, march of 30,000 to Decezeville; Paris-Toulouse railway line blocked for five hours at Capdenac; peasant barricades on the roads.

January 11, Youthful burn reactionary newspapers in the square at Decezeville. January 13, Government declaration; Under no circumstances will there be discussions while the strike lasts; no question of changing decisions already taken. January 14, Written question by Thorez (Communist MP) to the Minister of Industry: "Is this a political problem of national interest?" (while the miners were declaring "our strike is not political" and were striking in defense of their living standards).

January 17, 24-hour solidarity strike called by CGT in Northern mines; 44,000 workers stop work at Metzelle, Cauterets, FO of CFTC opposed to these stoppages. CGT raises slogan of "French coal" and violently attack FO and CFTC, who "have done their utmost to sabotage the solidarity strikes"... and adds: "It is an important element in the fight of the working class... to finish with the policy of economic and social degradation by the Gaullist Government... the population has realized... that we must adopt policies more in conformity with the interests of our country." CFTC "demonstrates again that the CGT is the union which can provide solidarity by refusing to organise collectives in common and by trying to make of this elementary duty an inadmissible propaganda operation, for which the strikers are paying the cost." (Le Monde, 19.1.62.)

January 19, Miners protest: "We want work for our husbands, a living standard equal to that we have had up to now." January 19, 24-hour strike of Lorraine miners (response from 6 to 60%); 24-hour strike of uranium miners (all called by CGT). January 20, 700 uranium miners march to Decezeville with 10,000 demonstrators. January 26, 17 South Western departments declare their solidarity. Demonstrations in several towns, but far less well supported than on January 9. Official pressure:

"Yesterday important Government instruction, transmitted by the Prefecture, were distributed, stressing the illegal nature of this strike." January 24, 43rd day of the stay-down. Solidarity received, 20,000,000 AF (about £50,000). January 31, Hunger strike planned. February 1, inter-union committee leaders in Paris (not to the inter-union committee directly representing the miners), after consultation with the OEEC. These are: 1. Temporary allowances to miners over 50 (variable percentage of pension); 2. Reimbursement to miners of three months' wages by 10% of a month's pay for each year of service above 15; 3. Guaranteed same wages; 4. Special housing allowances, education fund to be set up for children. These proposals were transmitted to the inter-union committee.

February 2, Miners meet; rank-and-file committees unanimously reject terms offered and vote to continue the strike. General meeting of women. 200 volunteers for hunger strike; the stay-down goes on.


February 7, 2nd day of the stay-down. Two miners, both on hunger strike, brought up and replaced. February 8, Parliamentary commission visits Decezeville.

Differing attitudes towards the strike: These can be divided in three—Sentimental, to a greater or lesser extent hypocritical; Technocratic, who deny the political character of the strike, for whom it is not a social struggle, but one of politics. Examples:

Sentimental: Message from the Bishop of Rodéz. ...The strike continues, conserving its uncontested character of courage and dignity. This strike is hard, because it is long, fatiguing, because wives and mothers must face heavy burdens without the help of the Grand Banks... This strike is hard above all because the workers have still not been heard... Economic policies must never ignore the sacrifice of this dignity to the material or technical interests of organisation. This clear-cut position is expressed by a fairly Catholic influence in the department of Aveyron.

Technocrats: Le Monde (3.1.62). Under the headline, "Social conquests or working-class Poujadism." Declares, "The need to keep his job, his social standing, even often outweigh their improving his living standards. The basic message of progressivism is this: it even exaggerates feelings of insecurity. Privileges conceded the miners are because their job is particularly hard. Why should they keep them if they leave the industry without physical harm?" M. Aron, in Le Figaro, compares the strikers with Ludlows of the 19th Century. La Vie Française (financial paper) ironically compares the lot of the miners with that of North African workers, or Breton peasants.

The Politicians: Firstly, a criticism of the way planning is being carried out, coming either from liberal capitalists (Mendès-France), technocrats, such as Pissarro and Perret, and Part Part (accent on economic nationalism and against the Common Market). One could also ask to what extent there may have been concealed here an economic conflict between finance capitalism (in power behind De Gaulle, who seeks to undertake important undertakings, and the bureaucracy (planners, Left parties, trade unions), who seek to increase it [for example the suggestion of national undertakings for resettlement, dependent on the nationalised coal industry, the suggestion of M. Paul (CGT) and Theroz (CP) to build a new national electric grid, dependent on the nationalised EDF]. The struggle of the miners thus serves as a pretext for a settling of scores between finance capitalism and the technocracy. This is also the meaning of PSU criticism (article of Serge Mallet in France Observer, 12.6.2), seeking to take the struggle into the street (that is to say political), instead of occupying the mines (social struggle) and criticising "false planning", citing Mendès-France "the Grand Banks and the abandonment of the coal industry concentration in the name of the machines of free enterprise.

One final point: Fears of seeing the strike "take the wrong turning", expressed by the political parties, because they would then be forced to disown it, as FO and CFTC are beginning to do. "Defeat of the miners would fail to cause resentment and bitterness. (Tribune Socialiste, 20.1.62.)

HENRI SIMON.

Strike ended Feb. 23. ...the miners seem to have obtained much more favourable terms... than were offered before the strike began. The Times, 21.2.62.

SOUTH AFRICA—Mark Shope, general secretary of the multi-racial South African Congress of Trade Unions, has been banned by the Minister of Justice from attending political meetings for five years.
The postal work-to-rule

During the whole of January (Jan. 1–Feb. 1), the GPO were working to rule in protest against the pay pause. Working-to-rule means simply that the work is done, but it is not done as efficiently as it could be, or not at all. The postal authorities have ruled that the postal rates for mail must be increased by 5%. If these rates are not accepted, the postal workers will stop work. This is an official strain—look if he reports it, meal relief, etc., have been forced on the employers by the union.

The dispute, as for the most part, to ensure a quick, efficient and amicable settlement of the dispute, the postal authorities have stipulated that when work-to-rule was applied—giant pile-ups in city centres and smaller ones in the towns. The employers' reaction to this was to enforce the petty rules, regarding dress, to the full extent, they were not enforced. According to this (this means the early morning (4 a.m.) supervisors missing their “coppas”, 5:40 a.m. this is officially certified—look if he reports it, meal relief, etc., have been forced on the employers by the union.

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Railwaymen must have the patience of Job. The Guildhall Report, clearly stated that they were not behind other workers in comparable trades. The British Transport Commission offered a 5% increase in the £1 (25p), which the unions accepted, but the Government then took the road and asked the Chairman of the Transport Commission to refer the pay claim to arbitration. The findings of the tribunal are not binding and, if it was not more than the prescribed amount, the Government and the railway companies will not accept. All the negotiation funny amounts to so much shadow-boxing and rail and file railwaymen have taken action accordingly, as did the Underground workers when London's traffic grinds to a halt on a Monday, January 29. A showdown must come sooner or later, the Government White Paper throws down the gauntlet—fight, or accept 5%, in the £1 (25p) per week for good behaviour. The TUC are sitting in their session room, the conservative has mentioned the wicked words “General Strike” and panic set in: “Industrial strength must not be used for political ends.”

Gaitskell appeals for discipline—none must embarrass the Labour Party—guaranteed seats in the General Election if it works. If the government are still in power, busmen or any worker is looking for his salvation through parliament, he is flogging a dead horse. Parliament is for the benefit of the ruling class. Our only salvation is in Direct Action through our own efforts—and linking up with our mates in relief work. The links between busmen and railwaymen must be strengthened and next time either section moves into action, it must be with the other's support. Forging those links as a joint driving-cabin level is the immediate task for rail and file militants.

TWO NEW PAMPHLETS

Strikes—1926 and now

THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE by Tom Brown (Direct Action Pamphlets, No. 6, 4d.)

THE STORY of the British workers' greatest industrial struggle, the General Strike of 1926, is told in telegraphic fashion, in the book by Tom Brown, in the book by Tom Brown, in the book by Tom Brown. The book is: Storm closes - On the First of May... Lions led by rats... Class against class... Revolutionary beginnings... Betrayed... Thirty pieces... Poor mortem... We shall rise again.

The rats were the Labour leaders, who betrayed the strikers and their cause, the direct action of "Daily Mail" machine-room men made that impossible, did everything possible to stab the workers in the back. Men like Ramsay MacDonald ("All my life I have been opposed to the sympathy strike"), Jim Riddell ("I have no voice (to protest to the Constitution, God help us unless the Constitution won") and J. R. Clynes ("I told my own union in April that such a strike would be a national disaster") were determined that no effective support should be given to the workers. Instead, support is in the hands of TU or Labour leaders, instead of themselves taking control.

STRIKE STRATEGY (National Rank and File Movement, 2d.)

A SIMPLE ABC of strike action has long been needed in Britain. As this Rank and File pamphlet points out, "We know from the many experiences of the industrial front, that the issues (of struggle) are only half understood, or even known, or have been learned too late in a strike to be effective... We can no longer rely on habit and tradition to see us through the strike, even the greatest must be studied and propagated."

And this is done by "Strike Strategy", with whose proposals and conclusions we are in complete agreement. An invaluable two

GLASGOW: Readers in the Clyde-side area interested in SWF activity are asked to contact R. Lynn, 22, Ross Street, Glasgow, S.E.
Swedish Syndicalists hit Franco’s tourist trade

SYNDICALISTS of the Swedish Workers’ Central-Organisation (SAC) and their weekly paper, “Arbetareen”, are keeping up a steady campaign of propaganda and action against the Franco dictatorship. Articles in the Syndicalist paper, giving news of the repression in Spain, are widely quoted by the Swedish press. A letter was sent by the SAC to the French ambassador in Stockholm, protesting at the ban imposed by the French Government on papers of Spanish anti-fascist exile. The national Swedish news agency put out a detailed report of the banning and the liberal daily, “Dagens Nyheter”, published it. This led to the Socialist Youth sending a protest telegram to Paris (reports the CILO bulletin).

On the initiative of SAC comrade Helmut Ridderg, Sweden’s four big youth organisations, the Socialists, Social Democrat and Christian, decided to campaign for boycott of travel to Spain.

The labour movement’s travel agency, RESO, had previously been advertising “Trips to the country of the sun” and “the land of the flaminia, where the Swedish crown has high purchasing power,” but its leaflets and brochures now stress the socially reactionary and dictatorial character of Franco’s regime.

The Franco Embassy in Stockholm protested to the Swedish Foreign Ministry about this. RESO’s head replied through the Press that his agency was not independent of the boycott. He was right to call them out of one open door in Spain. Gejer, chairman of the Swedish UCF and of ICFU, was recently quoted in the Press as supporting the boycott. From small beginnings the campaign has grown and it is now probable that many Swedish travel agents will not be going to swell Franco’s treasury.

SICILY

A HERO OF THE PEOPLE

On December 20, 1961 the curtain came down on one of the most terrible dramas in the sickening story of the Sicilian Mafia, when four of its members were sentenced to life imprisonment. The trial had started last February with the trial of a Sicilian trade union leader, the first time in a post-war catalogue of some fifty similar crimes against union militants.

Salvatore Carnevale, the murdered man, was a peasant who taught himself to read and write so that he would be a more effective champion of the rights of his fellow workers, first in the feudal estate of Princess Notarbartolo at Chiara and later in a quarry belonging to the estate.

In 1951 he founded the branch of the Socialist Party in Chiara and organised a local labour exchange. He led a symbolic occupation of the land by the landless peasants and a strike in the quarry for an eight-hour working day and the payment of arrears of wages. He was the first Socialist labour organiser to appear among the Mafia.

For 150 years there has been in Sicily an unholy alliance between the feudal gentry and the Mafia. The four men brought to justice, together with a fifth whose body was found in a water tank soon after Carnevale’s murder, were all members of the Mafia and employed by the administrators of the Notarbartolo estate.

They warned Carnevale to stop his militant activities and tried to bribe him with an offer of an olive holding. “I prefer to live in poverty but honestly,” he replied.

Not even the threat of death could deter him, and on May 27, 1955 he was shot.

Had it not been for the matching courage and tenacity of his mother, who would not be terrorised into silence, we should never have heard of Salvatore Carnevale, just as history has failed to record the names and deeds of countless other heroes of the people. Yet it was the quiet courage of men like him, not with few exceptions, that led to political change, that we owe what measure of freedom and political justice has been won, and it is such men who are still patiently building the new society of the free and equal, that will one day replace the sham democracies of both East and West.

ITALY—A general strike in protest against police brutality was called in Trieste on January 26, after six people had been injured in a disturbance of 1,500 striking workers.

U.S.A.—Workers for two of New York’s biggest privately-owned bus companies, normally carrying more than a million people to work, struck for higher wages on New Year’s Day. A settlement was reached in January 4. Building operations were brought almost to a standstill by a strike which began on January 10 of 9,000 electrical workers for a 20-hour week with no reduction in pay. One of four employers’ associations agreed on January 18 to a 5-hour working day and a substantial increase in their hourly wage.

World Labour News

New strike patterns

STRIKES heralded 1962, they closed the old year, but the dominant pattern of wage battles has shown a new development in the social struggle of Britain. Which makes us reflect that for a decade we have been told that Syndicalism is outmoded, because it is based on the industrial workers and the non-industrial, or white-collar workers, are daily becoming more numerous and significant.

It is not, of course, true that Syndicalism is based exclusively on those workers who get their hands very dirty, it is on all wage workers as the central base of general social struggle. Syndicalist activity revolves around the Comrades, striking in heavy industry, but that, because workers there always been in the forefront of the class struggle.

The employing class has long been able to persuade large sections of office workers to identify themselves with strikes, for example by such cheap tricks as “staff strikes” or “staff canteens”, or even smaller teacups, or calling wages “salary”. Driven by economic problems, a little growing social consciousness, or even a desire to help keep up with the competition, our fellow workers are learning, little by little, a few Syndicalist techniques.

Within a few months we have seen action, the desire to act, by large groups of workers considered strike-proof. Schoolteachers called a few isolated day- or week-long strikes. Tinit, but beginning. Civil servants called and carried their own strike, the strike of the post office workers is in a polite sort of manner have developed the rudiments of struggle with some success, though not yet on a national scale. Actors and other performers are on strike against the money-lords of commercial television. Post Office workers have used the workers’ strike.

This method, always associated with Syndicalism, is only one of many ways of striking by our comrades here in Europe and America. It was first used in France between the 1914 war by railway workers—men who were forbidden to strike by the Strike decree and who decided that since employers claim that industries can only run if they make the rules to carry out all lawful orders. This soon resulted in the completion of the strike. The method was used with great success by railway workers in north-eastern England on the proposal of a Syndicalist railway group in their ranks some 40 years ago. Little more was heard of this method in England until 1960. The first such issue was printed “Trade Unionism or Syndicalism” aroused some discussion among engineering and post office workers. The SWF pamphlet “What’s Wrong with the Unions?” (a title borrowed by Peking Books for one of their best-sellers) and the pages of “Direct Action” furthered discussion of this effective method. No one, except perhaps the wage slaves of Whitehall, is in a better position to beat the red-tape statesmen at their own game than are the postmen.

This brings us to a strike method which is not Syndicalism—the ‘one-day strike’ of the engineering workers. While, of course, we walk out with our fellow workers in such stoppages, we do it without illusion. A one-day strike is an excuse for not striking, it is a form of protest; it is no more effective than an extra Bank Holiday Monday. It is a salve to one’s conscience—and a demonstration of weak will to one’s opponents.

Even worse is the poster parade and procession, when they take place not as incidents in a strike, but as a substitute for strike action. Shouting and waving banners will not scare the enemy. Sooner or later one has to grasp the nettle.

Ghana—The arrest of Daniel Kwame Apedeh, an Opposition member of Parliament, and 80 other people in the Volta region was kept under the Preventive Detention Act to about 500. Five new recruits to the ranks of Ghana’s political prisoners are the editor and four journalists of the Ashanti Pioneer, the only Opposition newspaper. The January 29 issue was embargoed, and the paper is now effectively controlled by the Government.
THE BATTLE OF GARDNER'S CORNER

Warmth to the south-through the City of London, passing St. Paul's, the Exchange and all the great houses of commerce and exchange, and finally, beyond the shops on the south side of this street, are the Mint, the Tower of London and the Thames; at its eastern end is Gardner's Corner; on the right, Leman Street leads to Tower Bridge; on the left, Whitechapel High Street, below which is the City ditch. Through the populous heart of the East End and Commercial Road takes us to the docks. Here, at the gate of London's East End, the workers fought a campaign, triumphant Fascism in a struggle which has become known as the Battle of Gardner's Corner.

Mosley's Fascist force was certainly growing in strength and numbers in the mid-thirties. Money was pouring into its coffers, it claimed tens of thousands of uniformed storm troopers, the mighty Rothermere press, headed by the "Daily Mail", supported it. The Fascists claimed that the Law was on their side; they daily grew more aggressive and Jews-baiting was becoming intense in the East End.

Flushed by this success, Mosley announced triumphant marches through this concentration of slum areas and places of employment. Four columns of storm troopers, 7,000 in all, backed by civil guards, were to march from Tower Hill to Victoria Park. They marched through Whitechapel and Aldgate, to London Road, Limehouse and Solomon Lane, on October 4, 1936.

In the little factories, the slum areas and the crowded markets, neighbours spoke with a sense of purpose that women would follow the march. Amongst them were the workers, there was no hope of any help outside of themselves. But the local politicians believed that they could stem the tide by appealing to the State, although all experience pointed the opposite way. Protests from the Labour Party were loud, but the East London boroughs were made to the 500-man march which was expected to ban the march. It was even suggested that the mayors should put on their chairs of office and the robes of medievalism and go in procession to the Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel, and John Simon to ask them to come down to ban the march, or to come down with elaborate police preparation to ensure its success by clearing the streets of hostile gatherings.

But what could the politicians do but hold harmless meetings and pass resolutions to send to the Home Secretary? What no word of solid defence. The Communist Party and the U.P. did last call for a counter-demonstration and held meetings in support of this call, but the appeal was not to fight Fascism and prevent its storm troopers invading the East End in support of its march, but to be able to stand up to the Olympea "counter-demonstration", when and when many were sent into a Fascist rally, there to be cruelly beaten up and have their wounds exposed to the public as a public propaganda. The Labour Party said, "Stay at home".

The majority of local workers were made inexcusable by such advice and probably recognised the folly of it, but a militant minority, independent of any political party, were determined to fight, and the new form of Leftist collaboration with the Spanish workers in that year had made the first big stand against Fascism and these London workers translated the slogan of the Spanish anarchists, "No Pasaran" into the English "They shall not pass!" And they were ready to translate it into action.

The Commissioner of Police completed his plans and early on Sunday, October 4, assembled east of the City the whole of the Mounted Division and 6,000 constables. A police airplane stood overhead, while a signal car was driven along the streets. At 7.30 the Commissioner himself took command, setting up his headquarters off Tower Hill. The Special Constabulary was mobilised to take over the duties of the suburban police and a police reserve force assembled.

The militant workers, with that instinct for correct strategic action which is so often the attribute of a revolutionary force, assembled, singly and in small groups, about Gardner's Corner, which, in the populous quarters of Aldgate, London, was the point where the Kent End of this further the broader part of which opened out to the broad expanses of East London's bricks and mortar. Had the venue been nominated by politicians, it might have been the Houses of Parliament or even Highgate. But it all happened early on Tower Hill, backed by civilian supporters who also moved into the streets of the route. The police had for hours been trying to clear the crowds from the streets, but without success. Soon they were in a third line, backed by the New Kent Street. They looked determined in their workday clothes and it seemed they had followed Isaac's advice: "Never wear your best trousers when you go out to defend liberty." The police pushed and the defenders pushed back.

Blows were exchanged, fighting became general. Hour after hour on that same October morning, the fighting went on. The newsreels shown in cinemas next day revealed a great crowd at the "Corner", which swayed a little outward, then swayed back again. Inside, the sounds, was heard the gunshots, long baying and the cries of "Stand fast!" or "They shall not pass!"

The streets markets became deserted, many traders shutting up their stands. News of the battle along the great main roads of Poplar and Mile End tricked up the little streets. Would the politicians, the "people's leaders," be able to keep the workers passive while the gallant minority battled in London's East? Or would they come out and swept away the Blackshirt enemy?

The fight went on, sweating men and horses now almost tied to one spot. There seemed no way for Mosley that day. Whitechapel and Commercial Roads were still barracaded; though hundreds had been hurt and there seemed to be more police, the crowd held. The bells of the City churches chimed and a great booming trembled on the air—one, two. A cheer went up, two o'clock and Mosley had not marched; yet.

But there is another way into the broader East End. Between Commercial Road and the Thames lies a poor thoroughfare of working class homes and shops, Cable Street. It was then decided that instead of four, there should be a single march of Fascists, penetrating the area by this street. Before this could be cleared.

But the only habitants had thought of that, too—a barricade.

DIRECT ACTION AGAIN

The SWF is now again publishing its original paper, DIRECT ACTION, which has incorporated "Workers' Voice." This appears fortnightly, edited by Bill Christopher in duplicated form, and gives first-hand information on all aspects of the workers' struggle against capitalism and State oppression, as well as news of workers' action to close the SWF, 355, A. Membey Road, London, W.8, or 5s, for 12 issues.

went up. The gates of a builder's yard were burst open, a wagon was overturned to form the centrepiece; planks and scaffolding pieces went on, furniture was thrown from the houses, a load of rose hedges, tied together; sailor fashion, this little symbol of revolt and heroism. Bottles were smashed and thrown about the street before the barrier. Already in the flaming houses doors and lower windows had been barricaded, the rooms vacated. Instorms, at open windows, defenders stood with hammers full of bricks ready for the Blackshirts.

Some agile ones were waiting on the roofs.

The police, mounted and armed, took the barricades, but the barricades fell. Again the charge, and again, and again. The Blackshirt storm troopers sprang to attention as Mosley, in a black military uniform, with peaked cap and jackboots arrived on Tower Hill in a black sports car—and a brick smacked the windshield. With an escort of Blackshirt machine-guns, Mosley went on to inspect his troops.

In the streets came that feeling of approaching crisis which, in such events, so often moves and men spoke of going over to the offensive on the flanks of Tower Hill. The police were firing. How could one know, that the police should bear the burden of the day, while the organising of disorder were safe inside the Mint. There too, came the portent of crisis. The Commissioner, from his field headquarters in a side street of Tower Hill, summoned Mosley, and on his own responsibility ordered the Fascist leader off the march.

guarded by the police reserve, the Fascists columns retreated through Eastchurch and Queen Victoria Street, the Thames Embankment, followed by the police, from the fringes of the City. There the workers were, at first, unbelieving of the reports of retreat, thinking it might be a trick. Then the police fell back. The workers followed until, at the Temple Steps, formed a great barrier and the London Police had to clear.

Defeat is an illusion, but victory has many fathers. Many have claimed this victory as theirs, some even the Fascist single-handed. But the single, evident thing is that the Blackshirts, stopped by the spontaneous barricades, are now bolstered by the support of the police and are being reinforced by fascist workers, who are now the support of the "people's leaders."

Tired, hungry and bruised, we trudged home. Yet our hearts were happy, for on that day, October 4, 1936, THEY DID NOT PASS.

TOM BROWN
Ireland and the Common Market


FRATERNAL greetings from comrades in Ireland to British comrades meeting in Conference in London.

Since the General Election last October, the Irish Government has become more reactionary under pressure of the decision to seek membership of the Common Market. Several moves have reflected this trend. During a strike by Electrically Wrought Iron workers for a wage increase, the Government proposed a bill to coercively bring these workers back to work, under penalty of five years’ imprisonment: under pressure of the EEC threat, the bill was withdrawn. In November the Government introduced the Military Court Act, to deal with strikes under “Offences against the State Act”, and aimed at the IRA and Sinn Fein, this has also been used to convict unemployed militants. It differs from “constitutional” Courts in that no jury is present. “Feelers” have been thrown out by Government spokesmen on public reaction to joining NATO. There has also been an element of the foreign policy, to make Ireland more adaptable to the Americans and their reactionary allies in Europe. Internally, the way has been cleared for invasion by Continental right-wing militants.

As in Britain, the Common Market has become the great grey “imminence”. Once inside, weak Irish industry, without tradition and boosted down the years by high tariff walls, will have to try to adjust itself to the new, Continental competition. The capitalists make no bones about it. They will make trials, or “feelers”, as usual, the Government, employers’ organisations, the Chamber of Commerce and, alas, trade union leaders are calling for hard work and sacrifice—sacrifice of the nation under siege—challenge facing the nation as the capitalist Press likes to call it.

In plain terms, Ireland is about to be devoured by Continental monopoly capitalism, within which there will be no room for the small, go-between-manufacturer, manufacturer who used to be found in all towns and villages, with his pathetic attempts to set up factories producing goods for the home market and benevolently protected by his Government tariff walls. This era of the go-between-man began with “independence” and “national sovereignty”. It is now at an end. They have sucked the blood and sweat of the working class for 40 years and made a bold effort to fill in the shoes of the late ascendant classes. The surplus population which, because of native capitalism’s weak roots, could not be absorbed, was exported. There has always been an unemployment rate of 8-10% and an emigration figure which last year reached 74,000. The Irish national bourgeoisie’s efforts to assert itself met with opposition from a wide-ranging, vested interest in keeping it subservient. The two came into conflict during the 1930s, the period of “radical” Fianna Fail Government. Fianna Fail’s failure to reflect the interests of the Irish bourgeoisie, but for fear of total losses, the bourgeoisie was unable to pursue the economic isolation of making the national bourgeoisie independent of British capitalism. The “Ireland of the Levellers” is the realisation of its aims. Fianna Fail Government fulfilled a role similar to Roosevelt’s “New Deal” in the US, the British Labour Government after the war and social democratic governments elsewhere, which have saved the capitalist system by their reforms.

During the period of attempted national industrial revival, there was a law that all companies by the small, go-between-manufacturer would be nationalised. This was encouraged with a vested interest in keeping it subservient. The two came into conflict through the 1930s. The period of “radical” Fianna Fail Government. Fianna Fail’s failure to reflect the interests of the Irish bourgeoisie, but for fear of total losses, the bourgeoisie was unable to pursue the economic isolation of making the national bourgeoisie independent of British capitalism. The “Ireland of the Levellers” is the realisation of its aims. Fianna Fail Government fulfilled a role similar to Roosevelt’s “New Deal” in the US, the British Labour Government after the war and social democratic governments elsewhere, which have saved the capitalist system by their reforms.

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Death of two comrades

HARRY T. DERRETT

OAK LON BURAD, Derrett, of Glendiner, Argyll, has died at the age of 12, following a long and painful illness. A retired police officer, Harry Derrett was known throughout the community for many years. Older comrades will remember his pamphlet “Under the FRP,” published by the Anarchist-Communist Friends. Through the last war and the work which made a decisive attack on the folly and futility of the capitalist system. Under his leadership, the group of old militants who joined the SWP on its formation in 1970, two others, Bill Ogg (London) and Gerry Williams (Belfast) have also left us for the last time. Telling us of his father’s death, Harry R. Derrett writes:

FELIX GURUCHARRI

FELIX GURUCHARRI, who died in London at the beginning of this year, was a CNT militant who will always be remembered by those who had the privilege of knowing him. Particularly by the Barcelona transport workers, among whom his activity was well known for many years. A man of action, he was marked down by the authorities of a republic surrounded by right-wing combatants. The industry was brought under direct workers’ control. “Chezri” was a member of the delegate committee that controlled bus transport in the big city of Barcelona. Felix was the first to throw the necessary things themselves. Afterwards he shared the hardships of exile—resistance camps at Vernet (France) and Délia (North Africa). He arrived in Britain towards the end of 1944. Many comrades followed his example, carrying the CNT flag, to its last resting place at Williston cemetery on January 5.

The SWF expresses its sympathy to the families of these comrades; we share the feeling of bitter loss and can best honour their memory by upholding the struggle against Capitalism and the State, to which their lives were dedicated.
BULGARIA—HOW THE WORKERS LIVE

The following report is the first part of that made by the Bulgarian delegation to the XII Congress of the IWMA giving first-hand and fully documented details of conditions for workers and peasants in that country. The second section, dealing with the universal theft which is an integral part of the system, industrial accidents and the resistance movement, will appear in our next issue.

*        *        *        *        *

Before the Stalinist dictatorship was set up, on September 9, 1944, Bulgaria had for over 20 years been under an absolute monarchy favourable to Fascism and Nazism, which had claimed victims in the tens of thousands. Traditional friendship with Russia and an affinity of her class interests with those of the Russian and Russian people facilitated the growth of Bolshevism. The new regime's need for Allied support led to the declaration of war on Germany—a war that cost 40,000 lives and had no beneficial results, only accelerating the economic and social ruin.

Stalinism in power soon organised repression against democratic and progressive movements and, as usual, the first victims were the Anarchists and Syndicalists, who form a significant minority among workers, peasants and intelligentsia. Afterwards it was the turn of the Agrarian Party (representing a large section of the peasantry). No other political parties were allowed, nor were any political meetings. The result was the great majority of the peasantry. Nor were the Social Democrats forgotten and the terror extended to the bulk of the working class, always giving life to their inhuman tendency to murder, oppress and murder, treated as Fascist tendencies, of which they are one of the chief accessories of the “Zveno” Group, adapted themselves to the regime, some becoming ministers and filling important Government positions. The CP leader, Kostouko, joined the government.

Politically, the “Fatherland Front” comprises the entire adult population, with a separate youth organisation. All workers, manual or intellectual, must belong, and are subject to decisions, through which the hierarchy supervises the operation of economic plans and controls the working class, crushing any attempt at independent demands.

Nationalisation and industrialisation enabled the Stalinists to turn the country into a vast prison. The rural population, once they needed 72 concentration camps and 24 extra prisons, are now hundreds of thousands, even millions, and have been subjected to torture and severe corruptions, among them conscription to the armed forces.

Forced collectivisation has imposed on the peasants a variety of forms of repression, in which the workers revolt on a scale never previously known in Bulgaria and leading to a flight of cattle and flight of peasants in the frontier districts. The present CP leader, Theodore Jivkov, said last year (1945) that a progressive decrease in the number of bullocks and cows had not been halted since 1946.

Through police dictatorship a fresh division of society into two classes has been achieved. Although private ownership of the means of production has been almost completely abolished (100% in industry, transport and commerce), agricultural, economic, political, professional and cultural privileges have created a new ruling class, greater in numbers and weight, more fearful than the old bourgeoisie. The rich, too, are also more numerous than the former rich. This repression has deprived workers and peasants of their personal rights, while the CP no longer has any control over the masses. The new ruling class includes, in the front rank, the leading military and political sections of the CP, who live a life of luxury in country mansions and suburbs, taking their children to special schools, having in their homes food and valuables of which everyone else is deprived, and travelling in large cars, with blinds down so that they cannot be seen taking their children about public places. These people are subject to no restrictions.

In second place come the senior technocrats, administrators, TU bureaucrats and officials connected with cultural activities, and finally local officials, NPs, work-brigade foremen and overseers and privatised CP workers. They are all automatically police informers (and can choose where and when to work), they prefer the children and preference for entry to schools for political, diplomatic and military training. They have the best jobs and the average pay of those who are between 300 and 1,550 levas a month. Even when temporarily under a cloud for lack of party work, they never drop below 700 levas. To supplement, double, or treble these they invariably turn to that theft which has become general, and in the case of “productive workers” come managers and workers for armament factories and heavy industry, deputies and foremen for mines and foremen and workers where wages are theoretically higher. Armament workers get 850-1,300 levas a month, while agricultural factory workers get 900 levas, plus production bonuses, while for a 12-hour day in forestry the rate is only 700 levas. In the food and clothing industries, where there is an eight-hour day, there is a very high production rate, wages vary between 580-650 levas a month. The average worker is determined not to hold CP membership. Those who are displeased with the treatment of the children and prefer to take them to schools for political, diplomatic and military training. They have the best jobs and the average pay of those who are between 300 and 1,550 levas a month.

Among the children of the privileged are found the tedsy boys, whom the Press claim are hanging up the past. Among the children of the privileged are found the tedsy boys.

Of a total population of 71 million, about a million are industrial workers, a little more than 2 million peasants and an equal number of the poorer professional men do not hold CP membership. The oppressed and disaffected class have no rights except to work, and fulfil the various plans to build “socialism” and maintain a lazy and grinding role. To the bonfad people.

Doctors, engineers, agricultural technicians, schoolmasters, scientists and artists not belonging to the CP get no credit for their work, while those who are members are praised. The Press is completely passing off the yield as a 100% successful operation. The present CP leader, Kostouko, had joined the government.

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APPENDIX 2
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION COSTS AND SELLING PRICES (to State marketing organisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Sale</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cow's milk</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep's milk</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>11.89</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sale prices are average for several counties, calculated on the basis of official figures given by Jivkov at the beginning of 1961.

Cuban Syndicalists jailed

PERSECUTION of libertarian Syndicalists in Cuba by the Castro-Communist Government continues. Many are in prison, some sentenced to long years of forced labour, among them Placido Mendez, transport worker; 12 years; Alberto Garcia, clinic employee and ex-General Secretary of the Federation of Medical Workers, 20 years; Joaquin Aubli, of the Social Revolutionary movement, 30 years.

Among those detained who have not yet been tried are Luis Miguel Llanasini, catering worker, ex-lieutenant of Castro's rebel forces and former General Secretary of the Eastern Province Federation of Catering Workers, under detention for more than six months; Antonio Dumas, film worker, Spanish libertarian militant and assistant secretary of the ICTU group in Cuba, detained for about a year; Jose Cenz, worker at the "La Polar" bar and lecturer at Vijorino Institute, arrested last July and for Jan. 14 (19); and Sandalo Torres, peasant and builder worker, arrested five months ago and several times threatened with imminent execution by firing squad in the Pinar del Rio prison.

All are lifelong libertarian militants, whose only crime is loyalty to their revolutionary ideas.

CEYLON—While power-seekers plot palace revolutions and those in the saddle multiply repressive measures, the discontent of the masses with their empty "freedom" is demonstrated by an almost endless series of strikes. As bus crews all over Ceylon returned to work on December 14, after a successful six day strike in defence of two workmates, 12,000 Colombo dockers struck for a guaranteed minimum monthly salary. Blacklegs in uniform were moved into the port and a 24-hour general strike was called on January 5 in protest, but was not widely observed. The dockers were still out in February, demanding a five per cent raise for higher wages due in the last quarter of last year, and a resumption of a strike suspended last April, after the declaration of a state of emergency. Only the People's Bank remained unaffected.

Other strikes lasting a week or more hit a cinema chain and the Standard Vacuum Oil Company on December 22.

RURAL WORKERS—Following the abortive New Year's Day revolt at Beja, a mass demonstration was held on January 31 in one of the main streets of Oporto, Portugal's principal port. Demanding an amnesty for political prisoners and shouting in favour of General Humberto Delgado, the demonstrators lay down in the road, unhitching the loads of trolley-cars and stoned police cars before being dispersed by fire hoses. A number of arrests were made. January 31 is the anniversary of the unsuccessful Republican revolution which broke out in Oporto in 1890.

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THE LABOUR PARTY ILLUSION

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