

workers' liberty

reason in revolt



Taking socialist ideas onto the shopfloor



1937 sit-down strike, GM car plant, Flint, Michigan, USA

ideas onto the shopfloor



Right: The Striker, the factory paper of the branch factory of SMF Hartman at Dresden (Saxony). Zuschlager means "striker" in the sense of one who deals a blow, a militant; it's not the usual word for one who withdraws his or her labour.

Below: The Voice of the Exploited, Organ of the Communist factory nucleus Weitzen, Austria.

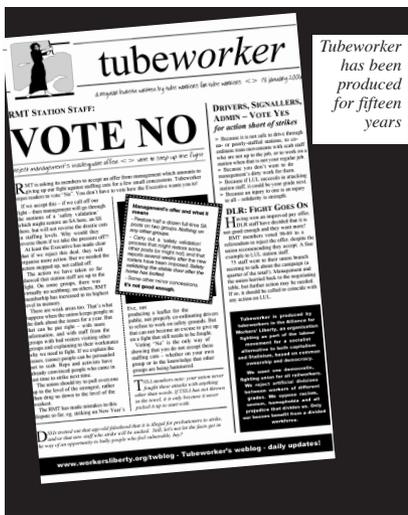
Both produced in 1925.



The Stamp. Communist factory newspaper at Anton Reiche. (Germany). Around 1925



Producing Tubeworker



Tubeworker has been produced for fifteen years

It comes out once every three weeks, with occasional special issues in addition. The front page has one or two longer stories — at least one of them about general politics, outside the Underground — and the back page carries about a dozen short pieces of workplace news and comment. Each issue is prepared and designed by a meeting of Workers' Liberty activists and sympathisers working on the Tube, but the bulletin quite often gets material from other interested Tube workers.

The bulletin is distributed in three ways. A number of Tube workers — not AWL members or sympathisers — pay to get a regular small bundle of bulletins posted to them. Others receive it by email, or download it from the AWL website. And the staple is other AWL members (not Tube workers) going round the Tube stations and depots to distribute the bulletin hand-to-hand.

These guidelines give an idea of how we go about collecting and selecting material for *Tubeworker*.

- Tell workers information that no-one else will tell them. Spread important news between the different departments. Tell workers about the management cock-ups that have been covered up.
- Listen to what people are talking about at work. What are their complaints about management? About their working conditions? Have they told you about incidents or issues which arose in other departments, or on other shifts, than yours?
- Give workers ammunition against the boss. Has a manager been excused for a mistake that workers would be severely disciplined for? Are there agreements that are not

widely publicised but which workers can use to assert their rights? (On the Underground, for example, the bosses were flouting — in fact, denying the existence of — an agreement that "reserve" station staff should have 28 days' notice of their shifts. A campaign by *Tubeworker* made the bosses recognise and observe the agreement).

- Think what has happened at work recently. An accident, injury, or other safety matter? A clampdown on some trivial rules about uniform? A new manager? A machinery breakdown? A problem with a contractor?
- Prioritise topical stories, but do not ignore "timeless" issues. If the discipline policy, or the state of the building, is awful, say so, even if it has been that way for years. We want to convince workers not to accept the way things are "because they have always been like that" — and not just to react defensively to attacks, but to fight for improvements.
- Look for stories about, or from, workers who might otherwise be ignored or considered "peripheral", e.g. catering staff, cleaners, temps or agency staff, contractors. Talk to them! Listen to them!
- What was discussed in the last union/management negotiating meeting? If you're not the union rep yourself, ask the union rep, or check the minutes. Read union newsletters, circulars, and notice boards.
- Read the employers' publications too. You may find good stories — and you will probably find stupid quotes you can ridicule.
- Monitor media coverage of your industry. Check the papers and websites.

By Sandra Marsh

TUBEWORKER, on the London Underground, is the longest-running of the bulletins produced by Workers' Liberty. It has been running for fifteen years now.

Agitate, Educate, Organise!

"Is it necessary to recall that Marxism not only interprets the world but also teaches how to change it? The will is the motor force in the domain of knowledge too. The moment Marxism loses its will to transform in a revolutionary way political reality, at that moment it loses the ability to correctly understand political reality. A Marxist who, for one secondary consideration or another, does not draw his conclusions to the end betrays Marxism."

Leon Trotsky

SOcialism is not only a good idea, but a stark necessity for humankind. Yet, the ideas of socialism are everywhere under attack. They are at the nadir of influence and prestige. Socialism is reduced to a vague word. Most people haven't a clue what real socialism is about or what it would look like.

Worse. The credibility of socialism is buried under the debris of the savage and malign pseudo-socialism — Stalinism. Many who accepted Stalinism at its own Big Lie evaluation, now say not only that Stalinism was "the socialism that failed", but the socialism *that was*, the only socialism that can ever be. It is the going wisdom.

In Britain, the labour movement itself has been ravaged; it bears the scars and mutilations of two decades of defeat, and of structural changes in industry forced through on the bosses' terms, in conditions of working-class weakness and defeat.

What can we do? Turn to the working class!

We live in an era when, as a consequence of the long dominance of Stalinism, of counterfeit socialism, revolutionary Marxist socialism has come to be something separate from the working class and even from the organised labour movements.

A socialism that bases itself on the working class and on working-class immediate concerns and, while advocating revolutionary socialist politics and perspectives, avoids becoming a toytown sect — that today is the property of only a minority of the socialists.

And yet despite all that, the collapse of Stalinism has, objectively, opened the road for a mass rebirth of genuine socialism. How quickly it comes depends on us.

Nothing is more obvious than that the duty of socialists now — those who are worth anything — is to go to the working class and into the working-class movement, there to plant the seeds of unfalsified socialism once more, especially amongst the youth. Yet this work is scarcely being done.

How can it be done? Here we can learn from the early Russian Marxists, and from the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky.

For that reason, this issue of *Workers' Liberty* deals with a neglected and now largely forgotten aspect of the work of the early Communist Parties — the creation of factory newspapers or bulletins. It is an interesting and important part of our history. It can help us with our work now.

In that work the parties of the Communist International carried on a tradition rooted in the early history of the Russian labour movement. In the mid 1890s the Russian Marxists, who had until then made the advocacy of complex theoretical ideas to limited audiences their main activity, took up the work of agitation among the working class.



The Leverkusener Dyer (Leverkusen, Germany). "Let us drink champagne out of the skulls of the workers! Thus spoke Mr Dutsberg at a Conference of the Chemical Industrialists at Stockholm in 1912".

They were inspired by the example of what Jewish workers in the west of the Russian empire had done, and instructed in how to do it by a widely-circulated pamphlet written by Kramer and Martov, *On Agitation*.

The Russian Marxists had a tremendous success with this work of agitation — in conditions where trade unions were illegal, and the typical career of a Marxist agitator would be a few months at liberty doing political work that would have to be paid for by years in jail and Siberian exile. Lenin was heavily involved in such work in St Petersburg, and for it he was jailed and sent into exile in the Russian wilderness.

The one-sided use of agitation generated a political tendency, "Economism", which Plekhanov, Lenin and Trotsky condemned and fought — as did Martov, co-author of the manual on agitation. But, as Lenin was careful to argue, it was the one-sidedness of it, the neglect of the other Marxist work needed for a rounded political and educational effort,

that was at fault, not the agitational work as such. In this supplement we reproduce one of the factory leaflets Lenin wrote.

That workplace agitation is socialist work that still needs doing, and work that can be done by even a small group of socialists who have a member or a good "contact" in a workplace. It is work which the Alliance for Workers' Liberty does and has been doing for a long time.

Work the SWP did long ago, when it took the working class and the labour movement seriously. (See the item in this supplement on the Manchester Ship Canal). In France the revolutionary socialist group Lutte Ouvrière has produced such industrial bulletins, as a core political activity, for many decades, building considerable support among workers.

In advocating a turn towards factory papers, the Communist International insisted that one of the preconditions for starting a factory bulletin was that an organised Communist Party "nucleus" should exist in the given factory. In Germany in the early 20s such a "nucleus" might number its members in the hundreds. That was a different political world from the one in which we live and in which we must do our work.

Experience in conditions other than those in which the Communist International worked has shown that such work can be done with only a few revolutionary activists, or just one, in the given workplace, or with only a sympathiser willing to work with the revolutionary socialist organisation. The experience of Lutte Ouvrière in France is the most relevant to us — but there is also, as we saw, the example of the pioneering Russian Marxists.

In Lutte Ouvrière's bulletins the editorial is a common item. The other side carries comments, little articles, and snippets on what is going on in the workplace. Each bulletin will have a regular workers' meeting to collect and select articles. The distribution is usually done by members and sympathisers of Lutte Ouvrière from outside the workplace going to the factory gates.

Our conclusion for today is that socialists should explore the possibility of initiating such work. They should also explore new technologies. For example, the Workers' Liberty bulletin on the London Underground, *Tubeworker*, is complemented by a page on the Workers' Liberty website — <http://www.workersliberty.org/twblog> — which (thanks to the distribution of *Tubeworker*) is becoming more widely read, and can carry comment and discussion from day to day.

The Workers' Liberty website also has a page of reports and comments from Tesco workers. It will soon have a facility for any posting on the website to be printed off in leaflet form. With that to start from, even one or two Tesco workers in a store or depot could run a regular workplace bulletin.

The Communist International's turn to factory bulletins took place when the early stages of the "Stalinist" reaction — that is what it was, though its chief protagonist in the Communist International then was not Stalin but his future victim Gregory Zinoviev — were establishing their sway in the International. As a result, the "turn" went together with a bureaucratisation of the Communist Parties. But that bureaucratisation was no necessary part of a turn to factory bulletins.

Sean Matgamna

“Factory newspapers riled the employers from the beginning”

Abridged from *Inprecor*, the bulletin of the Communist International, February 1925

FACTORY newspapers are an innovation in the life of the Communist Parties of the West. They had their origin on the revolutionary soil of the Soviet Union in the form of wall newspapers. During the last year they crossed the boundary which separates the proletarian European East from the capitalist West, assuming the form of cyclostyled factory newspapers and becoming a form of agitation, propaganda and organisation which is really gaining in importance.

It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that factory newspapers are unthinkable without Communist nuclei. Factory newspapers are the organs of factory nuclei “by means of which the latter get into touch with the workers in the factories, getting to know them better and exercising Communist influence, all of which helps to draw larger sections of manual and office workers into the political life of the factory” (extract from the Resolution adopted at the Organisation Conference of the Communist International). For this reason factory newspapers must make it clear that they are organs of the Party nucleus. Unfortunately, the experiences hitherto at our disposal have shown that this was not always the case.

For instance in Great Britain the first factory newspapers were published without indicating that they are the organs of the nuclei, without producing the impression that they are Party newspapers. This was the case with the *Nine Elms Spark*. This was a mistake especially over there in Great Britain where the Party is confronted with the great task of making organisational capital out of the sympathy of the masses, in order thereby to transform the small Party into a mass Party.

Considerable time elapsed, before the factory nuclei and also Party Executives hit upon the right way to publish a factory newspaper, capable of doing justice to the manifold tasks confronting it. Everyone understood that factory newspapers cannot and must not be a replica of ordinary Party newspapers. But what the difference between these two forms of newspapers should be, gave rise to many discussions.

In France factory newspapers were made up from one centre or a number of enterprises. This explains why even the outside appearance of French factory newspapers became almost uniform, and why the same headings and titles are to be found almost in all factory newspapers. Although in many cases the workers employed in the enterprises contributed to the newspapers, they were not blood of the blood nor flesh of the flesh of the factory.

They did not breathe the air of the factory, they were strangers to the everyday life of the factory.

In this respect even now everything is not as it should be. If for instance we peruse the factory newspapers *Le Drapeau Rouge* (The Red Flag) of the Schneider Creusot works, we see that factory questions are only given second place, whilst the first stage is devoted to a political survey which is too general and is not connected with the life of the factory.

Moreover, the so called factory questions, such as the question of locomotives in the last number, are frequently not concrete enough to persuade the indifferent worker that the conclusions made by us are correct also from his standpoint.

Of the French newspapers much the best in this respect is *L’Idée Nouvelle* (The New Idea) published by the factory nucleus of the Maison Thomson-Houston.

In many factories in Germany and in the first newspapers in Great Britain and Czechoslovakia we observe other forms of deviations.

The idea prevailed that ordinary Party newspapers deal with political questions, hence it is not necessary for factory newspapers to deal with them, and all our attention should be concentrated on the economic questions—within the factory by which means the interest of the masses in the newspaper should be aroused.

In some places one went even so far as merely to register factory events (this was done for instance in the first British factory newspaper) without showing the slightest intention to explain these events from a Communist viewpoint. This tendency exists to a certain extent. For instance in the *Nine Elms Spark*. The so-called factory nucleus newspapers of Germany, as for instance the *Leder-Prolet* are also to a certain extent tainted with this tendency.

The Communist International Organisation Conference condemned both tendencies and made it incumbent on factory newspapers to deal with all questions in a simple and concise manner:

- to illustrate questions in a way to allow workers to draw from them, their political conclusions quite simply and naturally,
 - to avoid abstract subjects, to deal with everything in a concrete manner,
 - to describe conflicts between workers and employers, and incidents from the life of the working class,
 - to avoid a stereotyped style in the factory newspapers.
- Factory newspapers are to appeal to the indifferent masses who have frequently a very perverted notion about

A factory nucleus paper of the Communist youth (Germany)



The priest appears as a representative enemy of the workers in this 1925 “Communist Youth factory cell paper” probably because the Communist Party was campaigning against the Social Democratic Party’s decision to support Wilhelm Marx (strictly no relation to Karl Marx!) of the Catholic Centre Party as the “lesser evil” in the second round of the April 1925 presidential election.

The youth bulletin is cruder and rarer in its approach to the Social-Democratic workers than some others, denouncing the Social Democrats’ militia, the Reichsbanner, as “black, reddish, mustard” in parody of the old German imperial colours of black, red, and gold. Most political parties had their own militias in Germany then — there had been attempted revolutionary uprisings by the Communists in 1923 and 1921, and a failed right-wing military coup in 1920. The bulletin also calls for aid for “seven thousand blameless proletarians languishing in the prisons of Germany”.

Communists and who never or hardly ever read a Communist newspaper. The task of factory newspapers is to win the masses for the Communist Party, for the struggle of the working class.

Therefore one should not allow the small everyday questions of the factory to be the widest perspectives of Communism.

Therefore it is essential to connect the small factory questions with the big political questions confronting the Party and to explain them to the masses.

This connection of political incidents with factory incidents affecting the workers directly has been achieved with considerable success by the German *Leuna-Prolet* which contained the following statement in an article entitled “Easter Reminiscences”.

“Easter, four years ago in 1921 [during the “March events”, when the CP attempted an insurrection] the Red Leuna Fortress surrendered. I recall this event with pleasure, for I myself was a bestial hireling in the force of the secret police. We did terrible bloody work in these Easter days. It gave us extreme pleasure to give these revolutionary proletarians a taste of what we could do. We made them stand for hours with their arms raised, we kept them also for hours on their knees. We beat them with our fists, we beat them with the butt-end of our rifles, and made them the target of our sadist propensities.

“Even today it gives me satisfaction to recall how these proletarians weltered in their blood, now they lay before us with broken eyes and smashed skulls.

“Today their bodies must have rotted long ago.

“All these others whom we compelled to drill and to sing the national hymn ‘Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles’ (‘Germany above all’), had to be witness of all this. We struck them in the face whenever we felt inclined, it was a regular treat far us. We had to take the Red swine to the prison much too soon, we would have liked to have had them in our power longer!

“I will never forget the glorious Easter of 1921, and the splendid red blood. To revive these glorious conditions I invite all sadists to vote on April 26th [1925] for the mass assassin, Hindenburg.”

Of course not every factory has such a revolutionary past as the Leuna Works. But on the other hand, there are in every factory everyday questions of all kinds which can be easily connected with general political questions.

When for instance the *Bergprolet*, the organ of the Bubiag Works nucleus, attacks the “watchdog Tomschke”, the overseer, and urges the workers to join trade unions in order united “to show the teeth to these creatures” — then connection between factory questions and a general slogan of the Party has been established.

The outward appearance of factory newspapers can contribute a great deal to the capture of the indifferent masses. Our experience on the field of agitation and propaganda show that great impression can be made by caricatures and good illustrations.

In Germany the factory newspapers used caricatures and illustrations with great effect. We will give as an example the illustration of the factory newspaper the Horsch works, the *Rote Stern* which shows in two pictures that the same capitalism, which in 1914-18 drove the proletarians dressed in soldiers uniform into the fratricidal struggle, is driving the proletariat now to bear the burdens of the war reparations (imposed on Germany by the victors of the 1914-18 war). The factory newspapers of other countries including Great Britain, did not know until quite recently how to make use of this form of agitation in the factory newspapers.

Unfortunately the caricatures concerned themselves only with general political questions, although it is obvious that for instance caricatures of unpopular foremen or managers and also caricatures, branding certain odious factory conditions, would appeal to the average worker.

Humour is also a good form of agitation. It is a frequent occurrence that humour is overdone in factory newspapers, but a certain kind of humour is essential.

The prologue which was published in the third number of the *Leuna-Prolet* can serve as an example:

“In building number 6 the machinery was being painted. A foreman had already given it a coat of minium (red oxide of lead), and the building was resplendent with red. Machenheimer, the overseer, wearing steel helmet and swastika (fascist badge), came upon the scene and saw the machinery. He called the foreman, and several workers were witnesses of the following conversation:

Machenheimer: Why is the machinery looking so red?

Foreman: It was given a coat of minium.

Machenheimer: Had it to be red?

Foreman: But minium is red.

Machenheimer: But you know that I do not tolerate anything red, that I throw out all red elements — how could you deliberately use this colour?

Foreman: But, Sir, I cannot help minium being red.

Machenheimer (excitedly): I ask you once and for all not to take such independent action in the future. Have the machinery immediately painted black and ring me up when this is done.”

Factory newspapers riled the employers and their lackeys from the beginning. With all means and power at their disposal they tried to find out who the damned editors of these obnoxious newspapers were, in order to punish them and to frighten factory nuclei into ceasing to publish such papers in future.

The editors of factory newspapers were not only simply dismissed, but dragged into court and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. This happened for instance in Hamburg and in the Ruhr Basin.

In a big Berlin enterprise the chairman of the Factory Council was dismissed on the mere suspicion of having edited the factory newspaper. His dismissal had the support of the Berlin police.

As a result of this, factory nuclei decided from the beginning to publish factory newspapers illegally. They had to be very cautious in their collection of the necessary publishing material. The newspapers had to be made up secretly, and the circulation had to be arranged in such a way as not to expose our comrades to the danger of being caught by the detectives working for the employer and the State. It is obvious why such caution was necessary.

Nuclei and factory newspapers pursued the aim of establishing the closest possible contact with the masses. But our class enemies succeed in removing the most active elements in the factories, our work becomes much more difficult. To prevent this, nuclei should not work too openly and factory newspapers should be published illegally.

The fact that factory newspapers have to be published illegally in the capitalist countries, contributes to many of them having their humorous headings and signatures. Particularly German factory newspapers excel in this. For instance, in the usual place for address of the editorial board we read: Editorial Board “On the Moon”, or the address of the manager of the police is given. The editor is either “Look for him” or also “His honour the General Manager” etc. In the place where it is generally stated how often the paper is issued we read, “Whenever it does not suit the police” or “As often as required”, etc. There was a regular competition in this kind of humour among the factory newspapers of Germany.

Continued on page vi

From The Searchlight (Germany)



Text of the illustrations: 1. Stacheldraht (employer) falls into a fit after the appearance of the new Searchlight. 2. Chief editor. 3. Editor for Art and Science. 4. Editor for factory news. 5. A new item of news.



Left: the factory paper of the H.Nucleus (Saxony). The first picture shows the "editorial board" of the Social Democratic daily Dresdner Volks-Zeitung.

A leaflet produced by the US Communist Party



Extracts from a factory newspaper

Factory Inspection (called the Murder Commission)

When there was a factory inspection a few weeks ago the foreman Figge surpassed himself. No work was allowed to be done from morning to midday, in order that there should be no smell of poison gas or any sign of dirt. Then the Social Democrat Jumpertz appeared on the scene. He looked around and found everything as it should be. Thereupon Figge went to the telephone and a few minutes later the murder commission arrived. The CG factory known for its dirty condition was now a marvel of cleanliness before the eyes of the murder commission — the finest and healthiest of factories.

Question?

Why does not the Murder Commission visit the factory unawares and during working hours?

Answer

Because it is in the service of the capitalist and not the workers!

Der Leverkusener Farbenkumpel (The Leverkusen Dyer)

Extract from a wall newspaper of the Russian Communist Party A reminiscence

Prior to the revolution, I never had an opportunity to see Comrade Lenin, to speak to him, but we Bolsheviks listened of course very attentively to every one of Lenin's words which reached us from beyond the border. More than once stress has been laid on the fact that Vladimir Ilyitch considered it his first and foremost duty whilst living abroad to be in as close contact with the masses as possible, to breathe so to speak the same air with them.

I well remember the following incident: in 1907 I was a member of the Managing Committee of the first Moscow Shop Assistants Union (one of the biggest Moscow Trade Unions at that time). We Bolsheviks were only a small but strongly welded together group which was persecuted and derided by the Menshevik liquidators. Mockery and derision, demagogic attacks of the lowest kind, nothing was bad enough to serve as a weapon against us.

But we did not allow ourselves to be intimidated, and it happened frequently that the Mensheviks were defeated, whilst we managed to get our proposals accepted and to win the sympathy of the non-Party workers.

During one of these struggles — I do not remember what it was about — the Mensheviks behaved very badly indeed, and we related this incident in a letter to Vladimir Ilyitch.

As the incident was very commonplace and not of particular importance, we did not expect to get an answer from Ilyitch. But it came almost by return of post. What struck us in this letter was that Lenin wrote, as if he were in our midst. But he did not limit himself, as we had done, to mere comments on this everyday incident. As it was his wont, he dealt with this insignificant incident from the viewpoint of principle. For him insignificant questions did not exist, where the revolutionary struggle of the workers was involved.

We were victorious and we will go on from victory to victory as long as Lenin's spirit lives in us.

Golenko

Essential tools

Leon Trotsky discussed factory bulletins, and their place in the overall work of a revolutionary organisation, in a letter to his French comrades of January 1938.

RECEIVED your large packet of factory newspapers and leaflets, etc. Indeed, this is the only suitable way for a weak organisation with a small paper to approach the least educated masses while not only maintaining but continually deepening its theoretical understanding. A certain type of "democratic centralism" is necessary in the organisation of written propaganda and agitation as well. You approach the workers with the simplest demands and slogans, which flow directly from life in the factory. You are not obliged to draw all the conclusions on every occasion, that is to say, in every article. Every day has its task.

But in order to do this loose, uncoordinated mass work, the party's thinking must be sufficiently centralised and it must find its daily inspiration in a laboratory where all questions, even the most complex, are analysed and sharply focused. The Bank of France is obliged at certain times to renew its gold reserves so that the money in circulation is not debased by inflation.

I don't know what the current circulation of *Lutte* is, but there are tens of thousands of workers in France who are not only capable of understanding an article that takes a broader view, but who are demanding from the workers' press in-depth answers to the complex questions posed by the world situation.

Let us recall the discussion with the Molinier group on "a mass paper." The pamphlet by our poor N Braun makes a number of excellent points on this subject. By transforming the central organ of the party into a kind of factory paper, you

will never reach the masses, but you will lose your distinguishing political character, and with it your own members...

I believe that the difficulties of the Belgian section can be explained to a great extent by the lack of a French-language theoretical journal. The importance of this question cannot be overestimated. These are stormy times; the masses are restless; the most intelligent workers are seeking above all to understand what is going on. They will not be satisfied with the mere repetition of the current slogans. They must be given a complete answer. A dozen or a hundred workers of this calibre won to our general ideas can lead tens of thousands of rank-and-file workers to our movement.

None of this is in any way directed against mass work. Our work in the unions is absolutely decisive. The worst mistake committed by the Borinage comrades was in wasting their time, energy, and prestige by creating "unions" for their own satisfaction. They took their inspiration not from the experience of decades, not from the lessons of the first four congresses of the [Third] International, but from the example of a bureaucrat without program or principles, that is, Sneevliet.

Work in the reformist unions, I repeat, should come first. But in order for this work to be carried out in a truly revolutionary fashion, the party must have a good central paper and a theoretical journal...

Factory papers and a theoretical journal, January 27, 1938

Notes

Lutte was the French Trotskyists' paper, *Lutte Ouvrière*. Raymond Molinier had led a splinter group from the French Trotskyists in December 1935 around the project of creating an immediate "mass paper" (which failed).

N.Braun was Erwin Wolf, a Trotskyist kidnapped and murdered by the Stalinists in Spain in 1937, who had written a pamphlet against Molinier. The Borinage was a mining district in Belgium where the Trotskyists had some strength.

Henk Sneevliet was a Dutch revolutionary socialist. One of Trotsky's major disagreements with him is that he maintained a tiny separate left-wing union federation, the NAS, instead of merging it into the mass reformist-led union organisation.

“Workers cannot write newspapers? Really? Just tell us some news about your factory”

Pieces from communists involved in producing factory newspapers. Taken from the Funke, the paper of the party workers of the Berlin-Brandenburg district of the German Communist Party. 6 August 1925

It was about three weeks before the Reichstag election. In our district we discussed how we could mobilise factory nuclei for the struggle and also how we could utilise the election campaign for the activation of our nucleus work. In this connection we naturally came to speak of nucleus newspapers.

A big nucleus had just then started a newspaper for all the enterprises in our district, but we realised that this was a more than doubtful expedient.

A common factory newspaper for a number of different enterprises is nothing but a far from improved new edition of the German Communist Party's central paper, the *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag). The factory newspaper should not be for a whole district, but for the smallest possible part of the district.

We had therefore to establish factory newspapers in every enterprise, big enterprises of course taking precedence. But how? Newspapers do not come of themselves.

As a rule comrades welcomed the idea as a new opportunity to spread our ideas. They were only at a loss to know how to go about it, for to publish a newspaper is by no means easy!

Firstly to write it, is something that an ordinary proletarian has not learned to do! Secondly, where is the money for the printing to come from? Thirdly, how is the newspaper to be made up illegally, for legal methods are impossible, if the whole nucleus is not to be thrown on the streets in a very short time. And finally the circulation!

It is not at all so difficult to solve these questions, but it is extremely difficult to convince our comrades that they can be solved.

Well, our nucleus met, and objections were coming thick and fast. How were they to be met? A printer had been found and the money too. It did not come from Moscow but from the workers of some comparatively better placed enterprises who had made sacrifices.

So I said: Dear comrades, you will have to write and to circulate a newspaper, and we will help you in both cases. Let all the rest be our concern for the time being. Subsequently you will have to use your ingenuity and collect as much as you can. But proletarians cannot write newspapers? Really? Just tell us any news about your factory.

Then came a perfect avalanche of accounts of incidents. I made notes of anything that was striking in these accounts and wrote down the name of the person who was telling the story. Is that all? There was silence.

All right, Karl, you have to write down by the day after tomorrow what you have just told us about the last wage negotiations, and you, Erich have to write down the beautiful story about your foreman...

Uproar! But there is no help for it. I finish reading the list of

names and tell them where the manuscripts have to be the day after tomorrow. I also tell them that they should write quite naturally and any grammatical mistakes will be put right by us (in fact I had hardly very much to add or correct.)

A poet was discovered in our midst who sent a satirical contribution.

Then the question arose if this was a good paper for our election campaign. Everyone admitted that it was not political enough. Stories about factory life are a good thing, for otherwise our fellow workers would not read the paper, but the Communist element must be added, otherwise we miss our aim.

Above all we give after every report quite briefly the conclusions which the workers have to draw from the report, then we give some extracts from the papers of our opponents... hardly had I said this when proposals came thick and fast. A few strong telling slogans and the thing is done.

Then I said: do you know, the paper is complete! General surprise. But what should its make up be like, what should be at the head... What is comparatively unimportant and can be left out if there is not enough space?

The most difficult part of the work was done. The comrade who made himself responsible for the editorial work had to spend a few hours after all the contributions have come in to do the necessary corrections. The larger newspapers with bigger editions are printed, while the smaller ones with only 100 or 200 copies are stencilled by a woman comrade office worker behind the back of her boss, and subsequently duplicated.

Then the great day comes. One evening the nucleus meets, and the next morning every worker finds the Spartacist bacillus on his breakfast table. If that cannot be done, unemployed workers living in the neighbourhood come to the factory gates to distribute the paper. As soon as they notice the approach of the police, they make themselves scarce.

In the factory there is a regular fight for the paper, as the edition was too small. And the authorities cannot cope with this. Search raids are made on all Factory Councilors, everything is turned upside down, but the result is nil.

We have produced 12 newspapers in the manner described above: not a single comrade has been caught by the detectives.

And the result? The whole factory discusses for several days the contents of the newspaper. Socialist Party workers cannot help agreeing with the criticism of the factory conditions, but they naturally will have nothing to do with that part of the paper which deals with general politics.

Nevertheless they have become thoughtful, for something is sure to make an impression. And all those who were hitherto indifferent or merely timid, begin to see that the Communist Party, which was supposed to be dead and buried is very much alive.

When the agents of the Criminal Investigation Department make their appearance and rummage in the drawers of the suspected workers, the whole factory rejoices at their failure to find anything. The feeling becomes general that after all these Communist fellows are not so bad!

And without any effort on our part, money comes in for the next number of the newspaper.

The second number is much easier. Some comrade has taken courage and has made himself responsible for the work. All he wants from now, is advice occasionally. The first number was far from perfect. Such a large number of the promised contributions had failed to arrive that one could see that part of the paper was not made up in the factory. But that has never discouraged us: for the first imperfect newspaper made all fellow workers come up to the scratch, and so many contributions came in for the second number that it was a hard job to sift the material in order not to leave out something important for the lack of space.

culties. For instance America is by no means a classical land of factory newspapers, and yet the few factory newspapers of the American Party have set into motion enterprises which were a morass' only a little while ago, rousing the workers to energetic action against the employers.

When the question of factory newspapers was discussed at the Communist International Organisation Conference in Moscow, the question arose as to what the attitude of these newspapers should be to the groups of workers of national minorities or to the foreign language groups. This applies particularly to France and America and in a lesser degree also to Czechoslovakia and other countries. The Conference recommended that in factories of that character special columns be reserved in the factory newspaper for correspondence in the native language of the said group. The experience of the French Party with the Italian workers shows that there was justification for this standpoint and that it resulted in complete success.

In conclusion it is essential to throw light on the attitude of the factory newspapers to the young workers of the factory. In many places, especially in France, young workers have begun to publish their own factory newspapers. It is frequently expedient that wherever no separate youth newspaper as yet exists, the young workers should take an active part in the work connected with the factory newspapers of the Party nucleus and should become contributors to it.

The collaboration can also take the form of a special youth column, as is the case with the wall newspapers in Russia.

Factory newspapers are a means to educate for us proletarian editors and real proletarian writers. We will have to return to this subject many a time. Today we should like to say in conclusion: pay more attention to the question of factory newspapers.

The nucleus which formerly existed more on paper than in reality is now a live institution. Its work which is common work has welded all the members together.

Of course everything is not always as it should be. The first newspaper came out a week later than it should have done, but the comrades put up with it.

But one cannot blame the workers for their impatience, for we have much to learn in the matter of organisation. We must create an apparatus which can function as though legal authorities and their lackeys do not exist, and as if, as in capitalist enterprises, an overseer stood behind every compositor seeing to it that he does his task.

We can nevertheless say that we have now instead of one paper, ten factory newspapers, and that 20,000 workers in 20 big industrial enterprises are waiting to see what the Communist Party has to tell them after the elections.

What are to be the form and the contents of the factory newspaper? When dealing with this question, one should take into consideration the mental development of the factory workers and their attitude to the factory newspaper. An illustrated paper is more effective. Articles should not be too long. Articles, poems etc should be written in a manner to enable our fellow workers to take in their contents and to impart them to others. It is on this practical experience that we have built up our factory newspaper which we intend to continue publishing in the same spirit.

Nucleus Bureau of the H Works.

THE foundation of the paper was made by six comrades who wrote articles, extracts from which were used in the papers. The illustrations in the paper are the work of a young locksmith, who does heavy physical work. 300 copies were produced by a comrade of the district leading organ without any changes in the original material. Thus the paper, such as it is, was entirely the work of the nucleus.

The effect was excellent: some of the more wide-awake comrades distributed the paper in the factory. We had a meeting attended by six comrades. Everyone of them was allotted his share of work. The comrades were selected a couple of days before, and were instructed as to their attitude. Their attention was drawn to the usual attitude and behaviour of foremen, or the police, the officials and to the sneaks among our fellow workers. We pointed out to these comrades the various places where papers could be deposited without being noticed. I gave minute instructions about everything. When I was satisfied that everyone had carried out the instructions given him, the papers were given to the selected comrades at a party meeting. Everyone of them knew what would be his fate if he were caught.

In the morning, as soon as the signal was given, everything was in readiness at the factory gates. The papers were not sold or distributed openly, but deposited in various places at the time when the others were changing their clothes in the dressing room.

If it was impossible to distribute the paper in this way, it had to be during working hours, leaving copies in the lavatory or in an unobtrusive manner in the workshops, on carpenters' benches etc. By eight o'clock no one was to have more than one paper on hand.

A comrade who distributed literature was hauled before the management as one of the renegade lot had betrayed him. The management asked this comrade who the distributors were, and wanted them to tell them at least the name of the editor. His answer was of course, "I do not know anything about the matter."

How we circulate our nucleus newspaper: there can be no hard and fast rule in this matter. The nucleus should endeavour to use different methods every time a new number is published. We have up to the present published four numbers. This is how we proceeded with the first number...

A nucleus meeting was convened, at which every member was given 20 copies. Those who could not attend received their copies in their homes.

Since our nucleus is as yet not strong enough to undertake the sale of all of the 1,000 copies, we get the unemployed to help us. Our mode of procedure was as follows:

The factory has four main entrances. We post one seller and one collector in all the streets leading to these entrances, and behind the sellers and collectors we post another comrade, who must be on the lookout for policemen, detectives, etc. Our experience is that everything went off all right, if these rules were adhered to, but in two places this arrangement did not work: 180 copies were taken away from a young comrade, but he tore them again out of the hands of the police and threw them to the workers who had just arrived by train, they picked up the copies in spite of the policeman, and our success was all the greater, as this was a splendid advertisement for the paper. The name of the author of the paper must be kept secret even from the nucleus as a whole.

This was how we managed for the first number. Another of our methods consisted in convening all the nucleus members and instructing them to sell the paper throughout the locality, or to board tramcars leading to the works, to sell the paper and to vanish. These comrades are told not to waste time over giving change.

As I said before we must continually change or mode of procedure, for you see that by so doing we are always able to keep going.

Riled employers

From page 3

How is a factory newspaper to be produced? We have already said that it must be produced with the utmost caution in order to escape destruction on the part of our class enemies. This being so, it is frequently impossible to produce them in a regular printing works. Nevertheless many German factory newspapers are printed.

Some of the German and most of the French newspapers are produced on [stencil] duplicators, which in some cases belong to the Party Committee but in many cases even to the nuclei.

It has been frequently asserted that the necessary funds cannot be found everywhere. The example of the Horck Works in Germany and of the Nine Elms Railway workers in Great Britain shows that provided nucleus members exert themselves, the necessary financial support for factory newspapers can be obtained from non-Party workers.

Moreover the necessity to procure funds compels factory nuclei to be more active.

There are many examples of the fact that in factories where newspapers were published, the formerly indifferent workers have been roused out of their apathy, they even began to participate in the production of the factory newspaper.

By drawing the factory workers in sympathy with us into the work, it has frequently been possible to establish the factory newspapers on a sound basis without any great diffi-



Extracts: Lament of a Social-Democrat

Have I, an old dissenter to vote for a priest? I who have not been to church for the last 20 years? Bebel, Liebknecht, our leaders, taught us that the spirit is free. Have they deserved to be thrown today on to the rubbish heap? No I cannot deny them, my colour is red and not black, tell me merely for whom I shall, comrades, say for whom you are going to vote?

For the workingman Thälmann!
• From *Der Scheinwerfer* (The Searchlight) factory newspaper of the S&N Factory (Germany). The Communist Party was campaigning against the Social Democrats' decision to support the Catholic Centre Party candidate, Wilhelm Marx (no relation), in the April 1925 presidential election.

• Die Pflife (The Siren) factory newspaper of the (German) Siemens works published the following:
Riddle: Why is it always snowing now?
Solution: Ebert [the hangman of the 1918 German revolution] is now in heaven and has throttled the strike of the snow-sifters.

Announcement by the Factory Management

In view of the very high cost of living, our workers can no longer by their earnings secure for themselves a peaceful old age. We have therefore established a funeral fund which will enable our workers y life-long contributions to secure a decent burial for themselves in a cardboard coffin.

The Management

• Die Zündkerze (The Magneto) factory newspaper of the Alder Works.

Editor: Chief Detective Sander

M.A.N.-Prolet (Germany)



The verse translates as:
*A curse on the capitalist, the king of the rich
Whom our poverty could not soften
Who squeezes the last bit of strength out of us
And has us shot down like dogs.*

Leafleting on the Manchester Ship Canal

zzzThis article was based on the experience of Workers Fight, from which AWL has developed and which worked inside the International Socialists (predecessor of the SWP) at the time. It was part of a drive to turn IS towards production of factory bulletins at the end of the 1960s. It has been abridged.

The "turn to the class" by IS is currently using the methods of factory leafleting. Presented here is a short report of the experience of using this method on the docks in Manchester.

Leaflets have been published in the Manchester docks for about three years, at first by the old Workers' Fight group. At the start these dealt with big issues, such as Devlin [radical reorganisation of the terms and conditions of employment on the docks], Powell and the dockers [when London dockers struck in support of racist Tory MP, Enoch Powell], strikes etc, and they appeared irregularly.

With the last issue we expanded the bulletin into a mini-paper of four sides called *Ship Canal*, which is sold for a penny or just given away. It contained, in the main, a treatment of the coming redundancies planned in the ports, and a programme of demands for fighting them.

The response has been the most encouraging yet. The mini-paper has now called forth articles, cartoons, jokes — and an offer of racing tips.

From the start the leaflets have had to appear in opposition to the existing industrial vanguard.

In the port of Manchester there is, and has been for over 15 years, an unofficial committee which is also the leadership of the small trade union branch of the NASD [a minority union]. Despite a certain Catholic influence on them, these men are good from a syndicalist point of view.

But they are permanently caught in the toils of "backstairs" negotiations and deals with the management; they have a limited trade union outlook, a one-port parochialism and no perspective other than "getting a little more butter on the crust". Consequently they vacillate in strikes; they had no response whatever to Devlin, nor do they have against the current limbering up of the company for massive redundancies.

In the course of a number of struggles, we found the relationship with this "vanguard" to be one of extreme conflicts. Their conceptions remained fixed at the trade union level, and they opposed actions against Devlin. In the 1967 strike [against Devlin] they acted as a brake. The same again this year on the question of the May Day strike [against the proposed anti-union legislation by the Wilson Labour government], which was carried against their inclinations.

And yet had we simply come upon the situation from the outside without knowing much about it, we would have



been happy to work with these people. At the time of the struggle against Devlin this would have meant following the line of simply collaborating with Devlin — perhaps even listening in sympathy when they complained that "the men wouldn't do anything". In these circumstances this would have been a complete abandonment of any serious attempt to do what should be the purpose of our industrial work — to create a collaboration of the militants with a Marxist group so as to really struggle against the system.

Necessarily such a group must be in advance politically (in its analysis and programme) of even the militant industrial vanguard.

Perhaps the [idea that IS might have worked blandly with the existing workplace leaders] is hypothetical, perhaps a caricature. But we do know of leafleting work by IS which is not much different, even now — and of course the entire philosophy of IS industrial work up to about a year ago decreed that anything more assertive was elitist, substitutionist (for the working class by the socialists) etc.

This attitude is far from eradicated, not least in the ranks of the IS leadership.

Nor is the simple lack of such an attitude much of a safeguard, when the mechanics of a small group (or isolated local branch striking out on its own unguided initiative) falling into the "servicing" trap (producing, typing and duplicating service for activists that never politically rise above good trade unionists) are all too easy.

Normally the most favourable experience of the leafleting work we are now turning to is to make contact with the existing militantly trade union leadership in the factory "the vanguard" — get their collaboration and proceed to leaflet.

Trotsky long ago warned of the danger that an adaptation to the existing level of the working class could become an adaptation to conservative trade unionism. Given inexperience and no central political guidance this is particularly likely. In fact unless we have our political understanding to contribute, it is arrogance to think we have anything else to give: "servicing" of this sort is justified by very little — other than literacy and a duplicator.

The above is an argument for recognising that the work of turning towards the class is too vital to be done casually. It is an argument that the only "guarantee" of avoiding the pitfalls Trotsky described as "tail-ending" (behind even some of the relatively advanced elements of the class) is to be found in the seriousness of the organisation involved — in its education, its cohesion, its discipline, its relative independence even of the class, and above all in the political responsibility of its leadership. (Which is where the responsibility rests, and not with the young, new comrade doing his best with little guidance or criticism.)

IS is still so loose — without serious structures, a centralised organisation, a detailed supervision of the politics of the industrial work by the politically most advanced people in the group — that the dangers inherent in this type of work are tremendous. When IS helped to produce in 1967 the *Dockworker* paper — a particularly bad example of economism — a new and inexperienced member was entrusted with the work. When challenged about its badness, the leading member of IS responsible for this — Tony Cliff — thought to excuse himself by saying he "hadn't read it". More than anything else, this was a self-indictment.

Thus, the turn to the class must be accompanied by a struggle for a more serious IS: or what we will expand is not the scope of our serious work, but the scope of our blundering.

Harold Yould, Sean Matgama. *IS Group Internal Bulletin*, August-September 1969

From the French Communist Party



The clean sweep. Issued by the miners of the Courrières, France

