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solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER

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6^D

POLICE MOB SEIZE EMBASSY!

BACKGROUND

There are strong ties of solidarity between the radical direct action movement in Britain and the movement in Greece. This tradition has grown out of a number of events, of which the occupation of the Greek Embassy on April 28, 1967 was only the most recent.

In April 1963 Pat Pottle, a former secretary of the Committee of 100 and one of the main defendants at the Wethersfield Trial, was arrested with others and beaten up by the Greek police when he attended the Marathon March. The following month Gregory Lambrakis, a left-wing Greek MP with many friends in Britain was murdered. His murderers were closely associated with the Greek Royal Family and with reactionary ruling circles in Greece.

In July 1963 the 'Save Greece Now Committee', an ad hoc group, organized a series of mass protest demonstrations against the state visit of King Paul and Queen Frederika of Greece. The CND and the 'League for Democracy in Greece' (a Communist Party front organization) quickly backed out of this Committee when they realized it really meant business. Peter Moule and Terry Chandler were later both sent to prison for organizing these mass demonstrations. There were a number of other arrests. Some of those arrested had half-bricks planted on them by the police. This led to the famous Challenor affair. (The police station involved at that time - West End Central - is the one responsible for the Greek Embassy case. Already there are many similarities : police violence, perjury, conspiracy to pervert the course of 'justice'. It remains to be seen whether the future course of events will carry the parallel still further.)

In the autumn of 1963 the Committee of 100 organized a convoy which went across Europe to participate in a demonstration in Athens. They were finally stopped at gun point on the Greek border.

Following this sequence of events it was only logical that a group of people should come together at the news of the recent coup in Greece, with a view to effective counter-action.

PROBLEMS OF ENTRISM

The Royal Hellenic Embassy in Upper Brook Street, Mayfair, was a difficult nut to crack. It is only some 30 yards from the American Embassy, on which there is a permanent and often substantial police guard. The Embassy is in a one-way street and there is nowhere nearby

where a crowd could gather without attracting a lot of unwanted attention. The door of the Embassy is always locked and precautions have been redoubled since the coup. To overcome these technical snags it was obvious that both secrecy and split-second timing would be necessary. Once occupation had been achieved it was going to be difficult to get basic information out. So there had to be a strong liaison group remaining outside. Plans were laid for diversionary activities to draw the police away from the immediate vicinity of the Embassy. The action also had to be carefully phased to fit in with newspaper and television deadlines. It also had to fit in with the Greek Orthodox Easter, traditionally a time for demonstrations in Greece.

To be able to organize a demonstration on this scale, with well over a hundred people 'in the know', without the Special Branch getting as much as a whiff of what was cooking, is a victory in itself. People have learned a great deal since the early 1960's. The entry party itself contained a very wide range of views indeed: everything from ultra-pacifist quaker to blood and thunder revolutionary - and everything in between. Many people who had been inactive for three years or more re-emerged to participate in this project. Action forged an unity which no amount of talk could have done.

WHAT THE BUTLER SAW

Our reporter met with a discreet and judicious silence when probing for details concerning the prior organization of the demonstration. Entry to the Embassy was obtained by a group of three carrying a large bunch of daffodils. They rang the bell and the butler opened the door. They presented him with the flowers. While he was sniffing and admiring them, over 50 people who just happened to be around poured through the door. Others entered through the basement. The Greeks, in turn, should now learn to beware of people bearing gifts.

The butler and the other staff inside the Embassy were told not to worry (both in English and in Greek). There would be no damage and no violence. They could stay or have the evening off. The front door was wedged shut. The demonstrators then spread out throughout the building. Public address equipment was set up on the first floor and a bilingual meeting was started explaining why we were in the Embassy. Others climbed onto the roof and hung a banner with the slogan 'SAVE GREECE NOW'. Others occupied rooms and locked themselves inside, wedging the doors.

SON OF CHALLENGOR

The police panicked. They had been caught on the hop. An emergency radio call was sent out to all divisions and police cars from all over central London converged on Upper Brook Street. They filled the whole street, causing a considerable obstruction and interfering with spectators indulging in the normal execution of their duties. Superintendent Butler of the Murder Squad was put in charge. The police gained access through the basement of the Embassy. They then had to

break into, enter and empty each individual room of demonstrators. One policeman rushed headlong into an empty room and was promptly himself locked in it by one of the demonstrators who was outside. The prisoner had to smash the door down to get out.

The police were very violent. So were one or two of the Embassy staff. Terry Chandler was repeatedly punched by an attache while he was held by policemen. (He was later charged with assault on a police officer!! Presumably if Terry had been killed he would posthumously have been charged with murder.) Ken Weller was punched in the stomach by one constable, because he had protested at the way the policeman had handled a girl. He was later dragged down stairs and repeatedly kicked in the testicles.

AFTERMATH

About 60 demonstrators entered the Embassy. But in the general confusion the number actually in police hands dwindled rapidly. Some simply walked away out of the Embassy stating they were plain clothes detectives. A dozen others, disappointed with the accommodation provided in the police van, decided to leave in spite of police protests. Only 42 people were actually charged.

The original charges were 'affray' and insulting behaviour under section 5 of the Public Order Act. These charges were soon changed to 'riot' and 'forcible entry'. The latter offence is covered by an Act which dates from 1381. It has the advantage (from the police point of view) of carrying no alternative sentence to imprisonment. The Marylebone magistrate refused to commit on this latter charge. He accepted the defence's submission that the 1381 Act was anti-eviction legislation, aimed at stopping the illegal seizure of land and property belonging to soldiers away at the Crusades.

There was a huge response to the action. Every paper had front page headlines. The BBC led its news bulletin with the story. In Greece the Government-controlled press had long reports of how a 'gang of hooligans' had occupied the Embassy. There were demonstrations at Greek Embassies in Italy and Denmark. George Brown sent a grovelling letter of apology to the new regime. Repercussions spread. Instructions were issued to the police from the very highest authority to clamp down on left-wing activities. This led to arrests in Oxford and Luton. In both these cases the charges brought forward by the police were dismissed by the magistrates. Even Peggy Duff was so nauseated by the attitude of the Foreign Secretary that she resigned from the Labour Party in protest! (Other CND Labourites reacted differently. Francis Noel Baker, owner of estates in Greece, came out four square in support of the Colonels, describing them as 'modest and sincere men'.

The League for Democracy in Greece reacted in a predictable way. It refused to allow a speaker on behalf of the 42 arrested to appeal for funds at one of the League's meetings. It made no reference to the demonstration whatsoever at other meetings. It also attempted to exclude some of the Greeks who had participated in the demonstration

from a broadly based anti-fascist committee. These are the people who keep prattling about 'unity'!

There are several lessons to be gained from the seizure of the Embassy.

1) that many people, of quite diverse views, are prepared to work together on projects involving radical action.

2) that effective demonstrations can be organized without the knowledge of the police. Intelligent planning, good timing and reasonable determination can overcome most tactical problems.

3. that demonstrations can still have an impact, and that internationalism is not dead.

It would be a tragedy if the sacrifices of the 42 should be in vain. The big stick of the police must not be allowed to deter future action. We in this country can influence the course of events in Greece (the 1963 demonstrations brought about the fall of the Karamanlis government). It is most important that the campaign should continue. Those interested should get together and plan future activities.

ALL DONATIONS TO AID THE 42 SHOULD BE SENT TO
THE 'SAVE GREECE NOW' DEFENCE FUND, 13 GOODWIN
STREET, LONDON N.4.

Dan Thersites.

DEMYSTIFICATION (a new series)

No.1. CANNABIS

Dr. Jerome H. Jaffe, Assistant Professor of Pharmacology and Instructor in Psychiatry, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York, writes:

'...There are no lasting ill effects from the acute use of marihuana and no fatalities have ever been reported.... Basic personality structure is not changed and thoughts or emotions totally alien to the individual are not aroused by the drug.... The causal relationship between these two events (use of marihuana and use of heroin) has never been substantiated.... There seems to be a growing agreement within the medical community, at least, that marihuana does not directly cause criminal behaviour, juvenile delinquency, sexual excitement or addiction.... It is not associated with physical dependence, withdrawal symptoms or craving....'

Where? No, not in a letter to Solidarity. In third (1965) edition of 'The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics' by Goodman and Gilman, a medical textbook of world-wide repute.



Reception at the Greek Embassy : the guests arrive.

MORE ABOUT VAUXHALL

In 1962 we published a pamphlet ('Truth About Vauxhall' by Ken Weller) which described the regime at this erstwhile haven of industrial peace. Since then things have begun to hot up there. This article by a NUVB shop steward at the Vauxhall factory at Luton describes what has been happening. The events here described hit the trade union officials (who had actively participated in the set up at Vauxhall's) just as hard as the management. Many articles had appeared in the British press between 1957 and 1962 describing Luton as a 'boom town'. Here is the other side to the story.

We have reprinted the pamphlet 'Truth About Vauxhall' with a new introduction. All those interested in the background to what has recently been happening at Vauxhall should read this pamphlet. It costs 10d., post free.

In this article an attempt will be made to bring the readers of Solidarity up to date. The changing fortunes of the Vauxhall workers since 1962 have given the town an air of 'doom'. Uncertainty as to the future and a growing recognition of the failure of the trade unions to cope with the problems of the day have filled the workers with increasing bitterness.

The attitude to the annual wage negotiations of previous years (when any pittance was accepted as long as there was plenty of overtime available) can be seen now for its true worth. Comparison with the earnings of Midland car workers showed, as far back as 1964, that the Vauxhall worker would require an increase of 2/6d per hour to bring his wages somewhere in line with those paid in the rest of the industry. The gap has now widened to nearer 5/- per hour.

In December, 1964, for the first time since the General Strike in 1926, action was called for. This was in response to the 'offer' received from Management in answer to the annual wage claim. A 24-hour token strike took place on Monday, January 4, 1965. A complete shutdown of both the Luton and Dunstable plants was secured. A mass meeting was held in Popes Meadow, attended by over 10,000 workers.

Negotiating officials of both the A E U and N U V B had, until this meeting, displayed a remarkable degree of verbal militancy. At the meeting, however, it was made clearly apparent to all that these worthy gentlemen were not present (as had been fondly imagined) to sound the call to arms but to wave the white flag. Resolutions calling for action were not allowed and the meeting turned into a farce.

Shop Stewards were later told that it was their duty to lower the temperature on the shop floor. This was followed by a shop floor ballot whether or not to accept the pittance that had been offered by the Management. The result of the ballot was announced as a large majority for acceptance. To this day I have never seen the result or met any other Steward who had seen the voting returns.

An air of uneasy peace reigned at Vauxhall for the rest of 1965. It was becoming clear that an increasing number of workers were at long last recognising the true worth of the bureaucrats in whose hands they had entrusted their future. Research for the presentation of the annual wage claim for 1966 must have occupied at least 10 minutes of the officials' time during the course of 1966.

By this time the Labour Government had instituted their $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ 'guiding light'. This was eagerly seized upon by both trade union officials and the Management of Vauxhall motors. Both of the Arthurs (Leary of the N U V B and Sjrogen of the A E U) made great play, at the Joint Shop Stewards' meeting, of the fact that this was 'our government' and that we must give its legislation a 'chance to work'.

The majority of Shop Stewards at Vauxhall could be classified as right wing Labour Party types. Pleas such as this were guaranteed to meet with their approval. The magnificent sum of $3\frac{1}{2}$ d per hour was accepted by a large majority. Harold Wilson breathed again. During the 1966 election the garrulous George Brown made political capital out of the 'good sense' of the Vauxhall Shop Stewards.

Among the Vauxhall workers one section (those belonging to No 5 Branch Luton N U V B) was determined, despite the failure of the officials, to secure an increase in wages. The continued speed-up over the years had led to a worsening of conditions in many areas of production. This had become particularly noticeable in the Paint Shop where these members are employed.

A series of stoppages and countless meetings with Management in previous years had not resulted in any appreciable change in working conditions in the Paint Shop. It was decided that a claim for payment should be drawn up and handed to the management and that this claim should by-pass both the Shop Stewards and the District Committee (it was realised that either of these bodies could veto such a claim).

The claim was handed into the Management on February 14, 1966. At first the Management's attitude was the same as in previous years. Vague promises as to future alterations were given but no mention of money was made. A series of stoppages took place and Management were left in no doubt that the Paint Shop intended to secure justice. A settlement was reached; the majority of Paint Shop workers now receive 3d, 6d, or 9d per hour 'condition money'.

Other areas such as the Body Shop have since submitted claims for condition payment but these have not met with any success. It is easy to see why. They have kept within procedure and that has never secured anything at Vauxhall. Talk has always been cheap. The Management of Vauxhall have always displayed their willingness to talk and their unwillingness to pay.

July 1966 saw the transfer of all Viva production to the Ellesmere Port Plant. This step caused the virtual abolition of the night-shift in passenger production areas at Luton. Hundreds of production workers became 'surplus to requirements' in the passenger build area and were either absorbed into the labour force at the Dunstable plant or placed in a 'labour pool' at the Luton plant. The breaking up of militant working groups was achieved in one swift step.

The loss of night-shift premium meant a drop in weekly earnings that might average out at over £3 per week. This was a serious drop in a town of high rents and mortgages such as Luton. A further drop in take-home pay was suffered by the workers in the passenger production areas upon the introduction of short-time working in September 1966. Salt was rubbed into the wound by the announced recruitment of hundreds of workers at Ellesmere to meet the increased demand for Vivas.

Trade Union Officials and the Joint Works Committee clearly showed, by their mishandling of the situation when they met Management to discuss short-time working, that the workers would be foolish to expect any semblance of justice to emerge from these talks. The request that surplus production from Ellesmere Port should be diverted to Luton met with a very firm 'No'. The matter was referred to the National Executive Committees but neither Alf Roberts (of the N U V B) or Bill Carron (of the A E U) showed any real interest.

The attitude of the rest of the Luton plant was that the passenger production areas were on their own. Why should they worry? They were still on overtime. An economy drive accompanied the short-time working. Among cuts involved were economies on the cleaning of toilets, cloakrooms and workshops. It was this measure that led up to the 'October Risings'.

A decision not to clean the Paint Shop every weekend was taken by Management but no one informed the workers concerned. When the Paint Shop men reported for work at 8.00 a.m. on Monday, October 17, 1966, it was found that both the Underseal and Primer Booths were in the same filthy conditions as they had been when work had ceased the previous Friday night. The workers refused to start until they had been cleaned. After two hours the Management sent the Paint Shop home. This led to a meeting in the main canteen which was also attended by workers from the Body and Trim shops, who had also been told to clock out.

The workers marched to the main offices. Scenes never witnessed at Vauxhall before broke out. The same thing happened on Tuesday, October 18. The Executive Suite was besieged. Traffic to the factory was stopped and roads blocked. Gates were barricaded and calls for the lynching of various members of the Board of Directors met with the approval of the crowd. It would however be quite wrong to imagine that these scenes were solely caused by a dirty floor in the Paint Shop.

A backlog of grievances were aired on both days: continual speed-up, low wages, high profits, uncertainty as to the future and the increasing American influence at Luton were just a few of the gripes that got an airing. Once again the matter was referred to the National Executives. And a negative result was once more recorded. But at least the Management were left in no doubt that the vast majority of Vauxhall workers hate their guts.

Another wage claim is now being prepared. The officials have still failed to agree on what to base this claim. The N U V B favour a return to payment by results. The A E U favour a substantial increase on the hourly rate. Whatever happens the shop-floor have no illusions. The officials will never buck the Government White Paper on incomes.

Peter Ashcroft.

'THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS IS THE TASK OF THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF.' (KARL MARX)

'If Hugh Scanlon, the favourite Left candidate (who is being opposed on his left flank by Reg Birch, who has recently been suspended from membership of the Communist Party after defending the Chinese viewpoint) were to succeed in defeating Boyd, as appears extremely likely, then the centre of gravity of trade union politics as a whole would move sharply towards the Left...'

Ken Coates, 'New Left Review' article on AEU, March-April 1967.

'The main difficulty which inhibits predictions about the outcome of such elections is that they normally involve something like only a tenth of the membership.'

Same author, same article.

WHAT'S LEFT?

1967 NEW LEFT MAY DAY MANIFESTO (pp. 44)

(2/6 from 60 St. Ervans Road, London W.10)

This pamphlet marks the re-emergence of the "New Left", after some years of political hibernation. Younger comrades might ask "What is the 'New Left'?" Older ones will probably be as startled as they would be if they suddenly read of the re-appearance of the Levellers or the I.L.P.

The "New Left" were a group of students and academics which sprang up after the dissensions in the C.P. provoked by the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. They flowered for a few years, before gently fading away in the difficult political climate of the early 1960's.

The pamphlet purports to be an overall view of today's political situation. It attempts to explain the process by which the Labour government has become one of the main obstacles to socialism in Britain.

The conclusions arrived at, after many months of intensive study, are:

1. That planning is quite consistent with modern capitalism.
2. That the various separate struggles which are taking place today stem from common roots; socialists should attempt to link them up.
3. That state intervention is now essential to the smooth functioning of a capitalist economy, and is not identical with socialism.
4. That imperialism can, and has, survived the end of direct colonial rule.

These might seem rather obvious conclusions, at least to readers of Solidarity. There's nothing, however, like everyone accepting gravitation. We should doubtless be grateful for the recognition of obvious truths, even if the re-discovery of these truths is presented as a major theoretical breakthrough, and even if these truths are stated, as in this pamphlet, in unbearably pompous and rhetorical language.

The confused, fuzzy style of the pamphlet makes it difficult at times to understand what is being said. It seems to be implied that the Labour Government's recent measures mark a dramatic change in Labour Party ideology and practice; that they are somehow a betrayal of previously held principles. This shows a pathetic clinging to a popular old myth amongst Labour's lefts, namely that there once was a golden age when the Party was democratic and socialist, before it was betrayed by Macdonald, Attlee, Gaitskell, or Wilson. The authors (one of whom, at least, is an historian) must know that there is no historical basis for this belief.

The pamphlet agrees with the rest of the Left that the Prices and Income policy is reactionary. But it conveniently omits to mention that the idea of a wages policy was launched in a New Left pamphlet by Ken Alexander and John Hughes. Mr Alexander has been duly rewarded by a directorship at Fairfields, the semi-nationalised shipyard. Perhaps we should welcome the New Left's belated conversion, but don't they accept any responsibility for their previous attitudes?

The pamphlet charges the Wilson Government with what amounts to semantic expropriation of the New Left, mixed with semantic counter-revolution. There is a good deal of truth in this. It was noticeable during the past two elections that the Labour Party's rhetoric was borrowed from the New Left. But if their slogans could be incorporated into the system of exploitations it surely points to a serious lack of content, or at least to serious ambiguities, on this score.

The pamphlet's concern with language continues the tradition developed by the New Left in its previous incarnation. The differences between old left and the old new left, during the 1950's, are described as being partly due to difficulties in finding a language with which to describe the system.

NOW OUT

THE RAPE OF VIETNAM

A new Solidarity pamphlet (No.25) by Bob Potter.

Our previous pamphlet on VIETNAM sold over 3000 copies. This is an expanded version containing much new dirt. Guaranteed to challenge your basic assumptions.

1/3 (post free) from Heather Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

Here the New Left generalises too much from its own dilemmas. Its language was always marked by pedantry and obscurity. This may be partly due to the writers' academic origin, but there are also other reasons. The obscurity of the language is an excellent smoke screen for the deep confusion among the authors.

For instance, they announce their support for all who work for the extension of democratic control in the nationalised industries, or in companies like Fairfields! Does this mean support for the Fairfield shop stewards, or support for Mr Alexander? Or do they think they can support both at the same time?

The best parts of the pamphlet (on welfare, and equality) are not original. It's been done before by Titmuss and other Fabians. Demonstrations of how little the welfare measures of the post-war years have done to reduce poverty and inequality cannot be repeated too often. But even here, the pamphlet falls into utopian reformism; it proposes specific programmes without ever considering the social forces which would make it possible to implement them.

But the most obnoxious thing about the resuscitated New Left is that it has nothing to say about the spectacular failure of their political analysis of only a few years ago. The central feature of their view of the world - at that time - was that the major forces for progress and 'socialism' (sic) existed in the undeveloped countries - the so called 'third world', (whose precise geographical limits were almost as hazy as those of the 'other world' of the Christians). The Old New Left made no study of the social conflicts which exist in these countries, just as they do in our own.

Today the disappearance of 'progressive' third world regimes is recorded without any attempt being made to revise the premises on which their earlier theory was based.

Any document drawn up by a number of people will contain compromises and ambiguities. This document, however, is practically schizophrenic. Support is pledged for "the serious and prolonged struggle" against Imperialist domination. Support is also pledged to the United Nations!

It would be pointless to list all the contradictions and incoherences in this pamphlet. It is, however, relevant to ask how left academics can be as fuzzy-minded as this. One reason is probably their illusion that they possess real power. They constantly forget that they are merely a number of individuals making a few suggestions. For instance they claim that an immediate lead can be given in education - by the creation of genuinely comprehensive universities. There is no mention of the social revolution which would be needed to implement this suggestion.

In itself, this Manifesto is trivial. But the very poverty of its content raises a serious issue. After all, this document has the support of most of the academic left. Edward Thompson, one of its authors, also wrote The Making of the English Working Class, the most important book on working-class history for many years. The only explanation for the contrast between his high academic standards and this woolly-minded moralising, is that politics is the left-wing academic's golf - a pursuit which takes up some of his spare time, but does not demand much intellectual effort.

But woolly-mindedness has a social function. It serve to obscure the correlation between the socialist aspirations of some intellectuals and the struggles through which they could be achieved; it allows them to be socialists in comfort. Humanitarian fervour, when divorced from serious analysis and a readiness to be involved in real struggle, soon degenerates into facile moralising.

There are references to the working-class in the pamphlet. The middle-class humanitarians perceive that they themselves cannot change society, so they look for a source of power which can. But the working-class is seen as a head of steam to be directed by others. Their conception of the relationship of intellectuals to a mass movement is the same as in Stalin - when he talks of the working-class providing the steam for the locomotive of history, the driving of which must be safely entrusted to the hands of the Party.

For us socialists, working-class struggle is not something which exists on the periphery of our political activity. It is the very essence of an activity in which we are constantly involved. Without the autonomous action of the workers socialism is inconceivable.

The task of the socialist intellectual should be to use his talents and skills to aid and assist this autonomous struggle. It is fortunate that the New Left are not likely to emerge from their academic ghettos and begin distributing copies of their manifesto to the deserving poor; for any contact with this pretentious rubbish would confirm the workers' in their distrust for intellectuals.

John Sullivan.

ROLLING STONES BREAKING ROCKS ?

The sentences dished out to Mick Jagger and Keith Richard are just the latest example of the systematic repression of young people. Our rulers feel (wrongly in our opinion) that the large scale use of drugs is beginning to threaten the stability of the whole social structure. The prison terms were clearly aimed at cowing rebellious, non-conformist youth as a whole. For this reason the case is political in the deepest sense of the word.

The whole atmosphere of the trial, the smears, the agent provocateur, the disgraceful role of the News of the World * and the hypocrisy of the bald judge (who told the jury to discount the opinions and appearance of the accused and then proceeded to sentence them - basically - for just that) are familiar enough to revolutionaries. The selection of the Stones for the chopper was no accident. Through their music and actions this group represents a more aggressive rejection of victorian sexual and social mores than the Beatles, for instance.

Socialists have for too long stood aside from this struggle, where they have not actively participated in the repression. Now let them speak up.

* Some people have reacted by ringing the paper (FLE 3030) on Saturday evenings and, in their delight or disgust, forgetting to replace the phone on the hook. This is outrageous, for if enough people did it, the paper's telephone communications with the outside world would be blocked. So please don't do it.

GLASGOW MEETING

A gathering of Solidarity supporters from London, Glasgow and Aberdeen was held in Glasgow on May 28th and 29th. Some 35 people attended.

Although Solidarity had not created the effective organization that some would have liked, we had nevertheless succeeded - over a period of six years - in making our viewpoint quite widely known. This in itself was an accomplishment. We had put forward a system of ideas more relevant to the problems of today than the received truths, or the muddled militancy, of most of the Left. We had also played our part in helping to re-create a tradition of direct action. In this we had helped bring about some of the union of theory and practice which most revolutionary groups uphold so strongly - in theory. Our activities had helped many to realise the need for a new kind of politics. But in the process of achieving this we too had changed.

Our ideas have been put forward in a number of publications. These are not just descriptions of isolated struggles. They reflect the many facets of a distinct political outlook. We owe a big debt to the intellectual demolition carried out by the original team of 'Socialisme ou Barbarie'. But what appears to us as an integrated body of thought might seem to others mere sterile iconoclasm. We had to state our ideas more positively. A simple statement was needed explaining the connection between the various struggles in which we had been involved and our overall critique of society. It was agreed to produce one.

We had to engage in relevant struggles. Revolutionaries could not pull movements of protest out of their sleeve nor substitute their own moral outrage for the involvement of masses of people. The anti-bomb movement, for instance, was now moribund. But experience and contacts gained there could be most valuable elsewhere. Our main field of work in the coming months would be in industry. We would also conduct systematic propaganda among people breaking from the ossified structures of the Labour Party and the Communist Party.

In the past there had been certain ambiguities about some of our attitudes (particularly in relation to pacifism and anarchism). Good will was often built up on the basis of fundamental misapprehensions. In the coming period our ideas would have to be put forward much more clearly. We have nothing in common with the kind of 'libertarianism' which seeks to create oases of freedom (whether in progressive schools or in 'factories for peace') or whose vision of social emancipation was the appointment of more libertarian prison governors (as in a recent issue of Anarchy). Other groups have rightly considered us heretics. Their criticism is most encouraging evidence that we have broken from their mental straight-jacket of stale platitudes.

Our difference with many of these groups is in our attempt to connect our socialist ideals with the problems of day to day life. The task today is not merely to proclaim that socialism is superior to capitalism (a proposition that hundreds of thousands would now accept). It is to show how our bureaucratic and inhuman society can be challenged in practice. There are groups on the left, some of considerable antiquity, and most of them several times the size of Solidarity, that stand for a libertarian kind of socialism. Most of them, unfortunately, have all the organizational paraphernalia of large parties. They do little else than hold regular classes in socialism; pass long, muddled and often mutually contradictory resolutions at their annual conferences; or spend their time reminiscing or discussing which foreign groups are the nearest to them ideologically.

The total ineffectiveness of these groups is no accident. It comes from an outdated vision of capitalism and an abstract concept of politics. Well-worn blinkers prevent them from recognizing the new areas of struggle within modern bureaucratic societies. The formulation of programmes divorced from struggle reinforces their inactivity. The era of the resolution as a meaningful form of struggle has ended. Solidarity had had a response because we try to fuse what we say with what we do.

Today reformists are incapable of achieving even limited reforms. They are paralyzed by their acceptance of the existing world. We should therefore participate in rank and file struggles, even for limited objectives, bringing to them our own concepts of action. Such participation does not depend on those involved accepting our ideas. But we should not systematically refrain, as we have in the past, from putting forward our views through fear that this was tantamount to pushing them down peoples' throats.

The practical problems facing the different Solidarity groups were found to be very different, and consequently required different solutions. Neither the Glasgow nor the Aberdeen comrades have instituted formal membership within their own groups. They were in fact opposed to it.

The meeting also discussed ways and means of maintaining more regular contact and carrying out joint work. Addresses were exchanged to facilitate joint activity. It was decided to meet again in the autumn and at regular intervals afterwards.

CORRECTION

A factual inaccuracy crept into the editorial of our last issue. The meeting on March 29, which helped organize the May Day stoppage and March, was convened by the 'Press Association Clerical and Editorial Chapel of SOGAT' ... not by the 'Clerical and Editorial Chapel of SOGAT'. A printworker has rightly pointed out to us that there is no such animal.

72 HOUR WEEK ON THE SOUTH COAST

by Dudley Edwards

An extraordinary lockout has been taking place in Brighton. It has now developed into a war of attrition between 17 workers (who dared join a trade union) and the management of a small company manufacturing hosiery.

While this fight is hardly typical of the industrial struggle throughout the country, it has significance for the South East of England. Brighton is now developing into a great conurbation. Industrial expansion is also taking place. Many light industries are moving into the area and are beginning to push Brighton's purely holidaymaking aspects into the background.

These light industries have moved in not only because of the space available, but also because managements expect to find pools of cheap and unorganized labour, possessing little experience or background of industrial struggle. In the next 10 to 15 years the authorities have estimated that there will be an increase of over a million in the population of the South East. One might almost describe this as a second industrial revolution. Despite all the 'planning' talk it carries with it much of the profit-grabbing spirit of the earlier one in the North. The employers are quick to drive the hardest possible bargain with the largely unorganized labour force available.

In terms of employment, Brighton was until a few years ago almost a distressed area. Thanks to the payroll tax it is in danger of returning to this condition. In the middle of the holiday season there are still some 1500 to 2000 unemployed. In previous years thousands of workers were in some way dependent on seasonal trades, mainly related to the holiday or catering industries. At the same time the South Coast became one of the great illusory 'escape routes' from the rat race in the older industrial centres.

The never ending and colourful advertising of the Development Companies and 'Jerry Builders' attracted great numbers of middle class people as well as 'browned off' workers, old age pensioners and semi-retired people. These arrived with their life savings, often small private pensions or small sources of income. They managed to raise the wind sufficiently to get into their bungalows 'set between the silver sea and beautiful downs'. But needing additional income to survive, they are ready to accept wages which would be thought intolerable in the areas from which they came.

All this adds up to difficulties for the increasing number of younger workers both local and from outside the area who are drawn into factories like the C.B.R. Mills, where the present lockout has occurred, and who have to live on the wages paid.

There has never been a really big local strike in Brighton. There is therefore not much confidence in the power of industrial solidarity to alter the incredibly bad conditions of employment in some of the mushrooming small shops now a feature of the area. However there are signs that this picture is beginning to change. The stand made by these few lads at the CBR Mills is demonstrating that it is possible to prevent the district becoming a low wage paradise for employers looking for large pools of cheap labour.

The conditions of employment which caused the revolt in this particular concern bring to mind the history of the early 19th century industrial revolution in the North of England. Many workers who have achieved effective industrial organization elsewhere will find it hard to believe that such conditions exist today in 'beautiful Sussex'.

In a leaflet produced by the National Union of Hosiery Workers we read:

'Minimum working week 72 hrs. Six 12-hour shifts, 2 weeks in 4 on nights. Shifts: 8 am to 8 pm. Men: 5/6 to 6/- hourly. Women: 2/6. Derisory bonus scheme adding little to basic pay. Machines run 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Night shift weeks: no extra pay.'

The campaign so far has been maintained with a certain doggedness by the relatively small Hosiery Workers Union and the local Trades Council. Admirable support has been given by socialist students from the new Sussex University, though those with industrial experience will know

that this can be a danger from the publicity angle, if solid working class backing is not maintained.

The weakness of the struggle lies in the failure of the rest of the workers - about half the labour force - to come out in sympathy, thereby also defending their own interests. However a look in at the busy labour exchange (where Mr Callaghan's pay roll tax has at least increased the demand for Labour Exchange clerks) will partly explain the fears of those still operating the machines.

There has been a number of demonstrations. These have now reached a stage where they can only be described as 'Duke of York' tactics. What needs to be done is to raise the campaign to a national level and for the workers concerned to make direct contact with militant shop stewards and workers in all parts of the country without worrying too much about doing things through formal T.U. channels. Unfortunately there seems to be a tendency to think that if these victimized workers are financially supported, things will come out alright. Clearly only a drastic blacking of all the management's trading outlets will modify their present arrogance.

One is tempted to say that if the great British trade union movement cannot put this tin pot firm in order, then it has indeed been reduced to impotence. Unless a really determined movement develops from below, the union bureaucracies in present day conditions will restrict themselves to paper resolutions and the bosses will get away with it. It is up to militants, everywhere to spread the news about this struggle and to assist both with finance and whatever form of industrial action is possible.

Contributions and requests for further information should be sent to the Secretary, Brighton Trades Council, Lewes Road, Brighton.

SEXUAL THERMIDOR

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was, initially at least, a total revolution. Traditional, repressive, patriarchal morality crumbled together with the power of the old ruling classes. Despite the ambivalent attitude of the Bolsheviks, brave efforts were made to expand freedom into new areas of human life.

The counter-revolution (Thermidor) saw the accession to power of a new ruling class. With the destruction of the soviets and the institution of one-man management of production, a new authoritarian sexual code gradually replaced the libertarian ethic of the first few years. This article gives some idea of how far this process has gone.

In 1959 a book was published in Moscow called 'Problems of sexual education'. Over 100,000 copies were sold in a few days. The author was one T.S. Atarov, 'physician emeritus of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic'. The book provides an interesting insight into 'official' Russian attitudes to sexual matters and into the social reality from which such attitudes arise.

After a 'marxist' introduction to his theme (comprising long quotations from Marx and Engels on the servitude of women in bourgeois society) Atarov declares that the October Revolution put an end to many wrongs in this field, in particular to prostitution 'for which there now no longer existed any social basis'. The institution of monogamous marriage had, it is true, been kept, but 'in Soviet society it had a different meaning'.

'It would however be an error', Atarov points out, 'to believe that the transition has been complete. Ideological remnants of the old bourgeois society persist'. These are listed as men being unfaithful to their wives without experiencing pangs of conscience, and as young people having pre-marital sexual relationships without feeling guilt. What is even worse, according to Atarov, is that 'some young people see in their relations with the opposite sex a mere satisfaction of physical needs, unrelated to spiritual or moral considerations.'

Atarov denounces these 'law breakers', some of whom even seek to give a 'philosophical expression' to their attitude. For instance some of these inadapted elements see their promiscuity as replacing the prostitution of the past. They declare that life in society requires a certain degree of freedom in sexual matters, that this freedom is 'biologically natural', whereas monogamy represses man's instincts.

This attitude, says Dr. Atarov, is contrary to all Lenin's teachings. In Lenin's view, 'free love' was no solution in a 'well-ordered socialist society'. It was untrue 'that sexual licence was an inevitable substitute for prostitution. In bourgeois countries there was both. Under socialism there would be neither.

In Chapter I of his book, Atarov defines a happy and harmonious solution as one that would combine 'liberty and discipline'. His yardstick for such a state of affairs is that 'the personal desires of the individual should coincide with the interests of society at large'. (He actually does this without quoting Kant!).

In Chapter II, Atarov insists on the difference between puberty and sexual maturity. He advises parents on how to help their children through 'these difficult years'. Discussing menstruation he says that 'under no circumstances should any cotton or gauze appliance be introduced into the vagina, as so many women do'. The outer parts should be washed twice a day with warm boiled water.

Another complex problem, for Dr. Atarov, is the problem of masturbation. 'Under Soviet conditions masturbation is no longer the mass phenomenon it was in the past. But it persists'. Various factors lead to it: tight fitting clothing in the nether parts may evoke sexual feelings by constant friction on the genitalia. Other causes are listed as the bad habits of boys who keep their hands in their pockets or under their blankets, or who lie on their stomachs. Constipation and full bladders are also conducive to it, as are the reading of erotic books and the contemplation of the sexual activity of animals. Particularly blameworthy are a sedentary life, isolation from the collectivity and - need it be stressed? - alcohol.

There is no shadow of doubt in Dr. Atarov's mind that masturbation has a bad effect on the nervous system. Adolescents who masturbate become irritable and apathetic. They tire easily and lose interest in physical and intellectual work. Atarov gives advice on how to fight this peril. Yes, regular meals, exercise, walking, sport and gymnastics, in fact 'anything that will deflect the child's attention from sexual preoccupations'. Sleeping habits are most important: a hard bed is essential. Adolescent eyes must be shielded from the sight of copulating animals. Any tendency to use swear words must be nipped in the bud. Young people should be forbidden from serving in cafes, restaurants or bars, 'for the atmosphere of these places encourages them to indulge in pre-marital relations'. Only married people should work there.

In Chapter III, Dr. Atarov deals with the 'moral education of the young'. He harps back again to the difference between puberty and sexual maturity and complains of the fact that young people 'don't seem to realize this difference'. They seem to believe, he says, that the mere existence of sexual desire is a justification for its satisfaction and that abstinence is bad for one, and contrary to biological laws. According to Dr. Atarov, 'science has completely rejected this view'. 'No illness' he says, 'was ever caused through abstinence, which is quite harmless for young and less young alike'. 'The chaste have no complaints, they are full of energy and creative power. Sexual promiscuity leads to impotence and to a premature old age.'

Chapter IV is devoted to extramarital relations. Dr. Atarov denounces them pitilessly, giving fearful examples. For instance:

1) Boris, a turner aged 20. No secondary education. Worked in a factory since the age of 15 'without his parents having protested'. A good worker, well thought of by his foreman and manager - but with a completely erratic private life. One night, at a dance, Boris meets a girl. They become friends. Three days later 'intimacy' occurs. 'Boris hadn't even asked her name, although he had been eloquent enough to talk her into it'. The liaison doesn't last. A month later Boris leaves the girl. According to Dr. Atarov, what needs stressing in this sordid tale isn't only Boris' attitude, but the unlimited trust of the young woman. Her parents are to blame. So is the school she attended. As for Boris, his conduct will bring him no joy. He is condemning himself to solitude. He will never know the joys of family life. Finally he will contract some venereal disease.

2) Peter, a student of 26, was living with a young woman he wasn't even married to. During a holiday he meets another girl. They became intimate without even knowing their respective first names. Peter contracts V.D. and, on returning from his holiday, infects the girl he lives with. 'This is a disgusting, Don Juan attitude'. And yet, despite this, Peter does well in his studies and is well thought of by his colleagues.

In this chapter Dr. Atarov's views on marriage emerge. 'When a young person is contemplating marriage the parents should not be neutral. Soviet marriage is not only a private matter. It is a question involving society and the state'.

In Chapter V, Dr. Atarov talks of unrequited love. 'This is no vital tragedy. In socialist society where public service is the main thing, provided the lover has enough self-discipline he should get over his unhappiness. Work and the cooperation of his comrades should provide all the help needed'. A final phrase of Atarov's sums up the spirit of his book: 'The law cannot concern itself with every case of immoral conduct. The pressure of public opinion must continue to play the leading role against all forms of immorality'.

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It is amazing to see how closely 'official' Russian sexual morality - as seen through Dr. Atarov's work - resembles the kind of 'advice to parents' dished out round about 1890 by the bourgeois dogooders of that time. (No wonder that most contemporary Russian literature reads like the works of Baden Powell, but where the word 'socialism' has replaced 'duty', 'loyalty', 'service' and 'patriotism'.

In Atarov's book one finds all the fetishes of bourgeois morality - or more generally of all systems of morality characterising patriarchal class societies. Everything is there: all the reactionary ideas pompously disguised as 'science', every backward prejudice, and

all the hypocritical bad faith of the puritan petty bourgeois. If morality is a 'superstructure' whose content is determined by a certain 'infrastructure', how come that the moral superstructure of a 'socialist' society - and in particular its sexual ideology - should be identical with the most rigorously bourgeois sexual morality, the bourgeois morality of the late 19th century?

Before we assess the social significance of Russian sexual morality - and before we can appreciate its function in reinforcing the whole structure of Russian society - we must briefly discuss some of Atarov's 'ideas' at their own level. Atarov starts off with a hoary old chestnut: the distinction between puberty and sexual maturity. Ignorant as he is in the realms of science, medicine and ethnology, (1) he draws quite arbitrary conclusions from his dubious premises.

Both Atarov and bourgeois sexual morality seek to deny sexual relations to adolescents on the grounds of their reproductive 'immaturity'. But if the sole justification of sex is reproduction, why not forbid sex to women after the change of life? Why not forbid sex, more generally, to the entire human race, except on the few occasions necessary for the perpetuation of the species?

Human sexual function has far more than a purely reproductive significance. A normal human being has sexual relations thousands of times throughout his life. Only a few of these acts would be sufficient to ensure procreation. The whole discussion, moreover, is absurd. If puberty is not associated with sexual capacity, why forbid something impossible? (After all no one forbids infants to fly aeroplanes!). All the pseudo-scientific arguments concerning the presence or absence of sexual maturity amongst adolescents are just a smoke screen: their purpose is to hide the fact that society wishes to forbid adolescents the full exercise of their sexual faculties - just as it seeks to forbid any individual the exercise of these functions outside of a framework imposed by society.

Why these taboos? It is often said that free sexual activity among adolescents would have catastrophic results, that it would lead to the procreation of thousands of children for which these adolescents could not assume either economic or moral responsibility. This is a false argument. In most instances sexual relations between adolescents do not lead to conception. There are Polynesian and Indian tribes (2) where adolescents enjoy several years of complete sexual freedom,

(1) From a physiological point of view the only difference between puberty and sexual maturity is that puberty is associated with sexual capacity (i.e. the ability to have intercourse) but is not necessarily associated with reproductive capacity (i.e. the capacity of women to conceive and of men to procreate, which in most cases seems to develop a few years later).

(2) See Coming of Age in Samoa, by M. Mead and The Murias and their Gothul by Elwyn Verrier.

forming transient, unstable relationships, without begetting hordes of kids. (This is either because of the forementioned physiological immaturity, or because the girls have retained that knowledge of their bodies which Western women seem to have lost, and avoid intercourse on days they might conceive.) When this phase is over, the adolescents are recognised as adults by the tribe. Young men and women then form stable relationships and have families.

The argument is false on other grounds too. For what is there to prevent adolescents being given contraceptive advice and provided with contraceptive appliances? Nothing! Nothing but the wish of established society to repress their sexual activity by waving before them the threat of the unwanted child - just as in the past society used to wave the threat of V.D. (Incidentally, Atarov is still at it!)

If one looks at this problem not at the individual level, but at the general one, other questions arise. Why should adolescents have to carry the financial responsibility of a child that might be born to them? Why should they be without economic resources? Why should they be brought up in a manner which renders them incapable of assuming responsibilities of any kind? We are not saying that adolescents should have large families. What we are saying is that to discuss these problems without once questioning the postulates of established society is the irrefutable hallmark of the complete philistine.

Atarov's views on masturbation are just as reactionary and anti-scientific, for all the pseudo-science in which they are garbed. Let's pass over the ridiculous relation Atarov postulates between masturbation and tight clothing (all this was part of the sexological wisdom of the 1880's!). Let us also pass over the fact that Atarov contradicts himself when he talks simultaneously of widespread masturbation and of the absence of 'sexual maturity' in adolescents. For masturbation presupposes both a sexual desire and the capacity to satisfy it. Why is this desire satisfied in this way? In most cases because both external and internal constraints prevent it being satisfied in normal ways. The hypocritical morality which Atarov seeks to defend first creates the 'evil', and then condemns and denounces it.

What Atarov says about masturbation is not only factually wrong, it is actually harmful. Insofar as masturbation in adolescents has any harmful effects, these are not due to the act itself. They arise from the conflict - in the mind of the adolescent - between his urge to satisfy his desires by the only method open to him, and the social or 'moral' taboo of society. They arise from the sense of guilt society imposes, from the castration phobias which inevitably follow allegations that physical and moral disintegration are implicit in masturbation. All this guilt and all this anxiety can only be increased and made more widespread by the kind of old wives tales peddled by Atarov and his like.

All this is of course linked to Atarov's half-baked concepts concerning abstinence. Arguing with him is like trying to get to grips about physical theory with someone who knows nothing either of modern or of classical physics. Atarov's views don't only bear testimony to a complete ignorance concerning psychoanalysis (3), but are not even on a par with classical (pre-analytical) psychiatry. They are not even up to the standard of good 19th century family medicine which certainly understood the importance of a satisfactory sex life in maintaining marital harmony and preventing anxiety.

Atarov poses the whole problem of the relation between abstinence on the one hand and health and creativity on the other in a very crude way. What abstinence? Whose abstinence? At what moment of one's life? For how long? In what context? For what purpose? With what compensations or sublimations? The question of abstinence is meaningless unless discussed in this light. Atarov's views - namely that abstinence increases energy and creative ability - are not only empirically false (one need only look at history to see that among creative artists just as many have been 'debauched' as 'chaste', just as many 'perverts' as 'normal'). His views are also a caricature - grotesque because so naive and oversimplified - of the very freudianism they are attacking, for they presuppose that the totality of sexually unfulfilled libido is integrally transformed - without loss - into sublimated forms of activity. This is monstrously false. The problems of the relations between repressed libido and sublimation are infinitely more complex. A general 'rule' of this type has really no meaning.

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All this debunking of reactionary ideas will obviously be thought unnecessary by most of our readers - who will probably have rejected this kind of stuff even before they came to the revolutionary movement. What is interesting - and we hope informative - is the detailed account of how prevalent these ideas still are in an allegedly 'socialist' country.

What is basically at issue? Atarov's pseudo-scientific arguments (and the arguments of those who used to think like him in the West) serve to mask an ideology and a sexual 'morality' which are quite arbitrary from any rational viewpoint.

But this 'arbitrary' ideology has a precise function, a precise significance and definite social roots. It is identical with the repressive morality which still prevails in some Church-dominated Western countries and until recently prevailed on a much wider scale.

(3) Nothing surprising here when it is remembered that the recent Treaty of Soviet Psychiatry states that 'Freudism has no scientific value. Its popularity is to be sought in its ideological significance: it is profitable to the capitalist system. It is only accepted by those with a superficial understanding of clinical psychiatry.'

Both East and West these ideologies aim at denying to individuals the autonomous (i.e. the conscious and self-managing) exercise of one of their fundamental activities. They seek to deprive individuals of freedom and responsibility in a fundamental realm and to oblige people to conform to externally imposed norms and to the pressures of 'public opinion' rather than to criteria determined by each person according to his own needs and to his own experience. The ideologies are therefore repressive and alienating moralities, in the deepest sense of the term.

The purpose of these repressive moralities is the mass creation of individuals full of internal conflicts, of individuals whose character structure complements and reinforces the hierarchical structure of society. Such individuals will accept irrational norms, because such norms have been sanctified by the existing state of affairs. They will revert to infantile attitudes when faced with those who incarnate - on the scale of society - the image of their parents (i.e. kings and queens, politicians, religious leaders, leaders of industry, etc.). And finally, to compensate, such individuals will adopt a domineering role in their families or at work, as most men do, for this is the function and the compensation allocated to them in any hierarchically organized system.

Atarov's book shows us far more about the allegedly socialist basis of the USSR than the author thinks. The face of the USSR emerges very similar, whichever aspect of it we may examine. It is the face of an exploiting and alienating society. And this whether we look at how work is organized in its factories, at its political structure or at its official sexual morality.

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(This article is based on a text by Alain Gerard and Marc Noireau, first published in March 1963, issue No.34 of 'Socialisme ou Barbarie')

STRATFORD FREIGHT DISPUTE

'I have given them everything: promises of security of jobs, promises of expansion and promises of capital expenditure to provide for this. I cannot do any more.'

Sir Stanley Raymond, Chairman of
British Railways Board.

You can, you nit! Get off their backs and let them run the job themselves. What the men want is CONTROL OF THE JOB. Might make you redundant, but that's another story.

VIETNAM

DISCUSSION CONTINUED

Solidarity claims to be a revolutionary, libertarian, socialist paper. That you should have published (in vol.IV, No.6) those articles on Vietnam by A. Esterson and R. Archbold at first sight appears surprising. The first was not revolutionary, the second not libertarian.

On reflection your motives become clearer. The articles were, as you said, 'prototypes of patterns of thinking and methods of argument which are widespread on the left today'. In a word: caricatures. This is practical political education with a vengeance. In a magazine one can learn about muddle-headed do-gooders and verbal revolutionaries ... just as in a zoo one can admire the woolly sheep and the wild rhinoceros. In neither case need one meet them in their natural habitat.

One thing stands out when one coldly looks at these viewpoints. It is how shallow they are when committed to paper. A.E. 'considers the war (in Vietnam) first and foremost from a humanitarian viewpoint'. Boiled down to its practical essentials his 'humanism' consists of three propositions: a) the call for the Americans to leave Vietnam is an 'irrelevant' demand because it will prolong the war; b) the Vietnamese (who are making this 'irrelevant' demand) have 'suffered' and therefore lack 'sufficient detachment to make the most rational judgment'; and c) the 'alternative' is 'to try and modify and change the policies of governments'. This latter task, believe it or not, is simultaneously described as 'almost impossible' and 'at least feasible'. Those who have nothing to say should not give such wordy evidence of the fact.

For any self-respecting socialist A.E.'s position is untenable. It is untenable whatever one's views of the social forces involved in Vietnam and whether or not one considers that the struggle there can open up any socialist vistas. The Vietnamese people have an absolute and unchallengeable right to wage this struggle as THEY see fit and for as long as THEY deem necessary. A.E.'s 'pacifism at the expense of others' is an impermissible kowtowing to the momentarily established fact: the presence of American imperialism in that part of the world. This accommodation (so much easier in London than in South East Asia) is paternalistic liberalism at its worst. It is moreover extremely naive. It conjures up visions of hopeful sheep passing resolutions in favour of vegetarianism before the wolves have been converted to the doctrine.

As so often occurs the pacifist position is linked - and in this there IS an internal cohesion - with complete confusion as to the class nature of the Hanoi regime. This regime, A.E. claims, 'may not be particularly democratic'. This does not matter as it is 'widely popular notwithstanding any excesses' (such as shooting a few revolutionary opponents?). One of the hallmarks of the fellow-travelling liberal is his inability to think in class terms, which for him are 'all jargon'.

But for revolutionaries the yardsticks used by A.E. are themselves useless. After all the USA government might also be described as 'not particularly democratic' yet 'widely popular (in the USA itself) notwithstanding any excesses' (such as using electric cattle prods against a few 'niggers?'). The very categories used by A.E. are part and parcel of the ideological baggage of our opponents.

The article by R.A. is of a very different order. It typifies the ingrained tendency of the residual legates of bolshevism to attack ideas which they have not even taken the trouble to study. 'Be yourself' is about the worst advice you can give certain people. This kind of deep-going ignorance really cramps any serious attempts at dialogue.

To say, as R.A. does, that 'not one word is used in condemnation of US imperialist aggression in Vietnam' is ridiculous. Bob Potter's article (vol.IV, No.5) specifically describes American policy there as 'being in the tradition of the old imperialisms'. Isn't this sufficient? Do we really have to froth at the mouth and shout the appropriate slogans to convey that we are opposed to it?

R.A. attacks the reference to 'the enslaved people in North and South Vietnam', saying it undermines international support for the Vietnamese. He is clearly irritated by 50% of the statement - the 50% referring to 'enslavement' in the North.

For us the identification of a people with its leadership, of the slave-drivers with the slaves, is a typically bureaucratic attitude. For which Vietnamese are we 'undermining support'? In the South the conflict of interests between rulers and ruled is obvious enough. No great effort is needed to see the gulf between the well-fed, corrupt politicians and generals in Saigon and the women, riddled with hookworm, breaking their backs in the paddy fields. But in the North? Is there really a community of interests between the Haiphong docker or cement worker and the political commissar in Hanoi? Between those who led and those who suppressed the peasant uprising of November 1956? Between the political prisoners and those 're-educating' them? Are these interests really identical? If so why the executions of revolutionary opponents of the regime? R.A. should really tell us more about what happened to Ta Tu Thau and his followers.

Was honest reference to Stalin's concentration camps - even at the height of World War II - 'undermining international support' for the Russian workers? Or was it preparing the ground for a later, deeper understanding. Even those who give 'critical support' to the Vietcong should not remain silent about the fact that there IS a class struggle in the North as in the South. The truth is always the sharpest weapon in the hands of revolutionaries, however unpleasant it may momentarily be.

Finally R.A.'s statement that we 'carefully avoid' defining a socialist solution for Vietnam is both childish and dishonest. Our yardsticks have been repeatedly defined, in a number of former publications (The Meaning of Socialism, Socialism or Barbarism, Modern Capitalism and Revolution, From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy, etc.) R.A. probably isn't hostile to facts - he just seems apathetic about them.

For us socialism implies a total autonomy of the working class (organizational, political and ideological) and not the military rule of a party, allegedly acting on its behalf.

If the function of a discussion is to confirm others in their errors, R.A. has certainly succeeded. Santayana once defined fanaticism as 'redoubling one's efforts when one had forgotten one's aims'. This seems a singularly apposite description of the mental attitudes of many now giving uncritical support to the Vietcong.

Maurice Brinton.

letter

Dear Comrade,

I am writing to seek the support of your readers for a small group of men and their families who for over a year now have been the victims of a viciously reactionary management and of a government which refuses to lay down the minimum principle of compulsory trade union recognition in industrial relations.

In March 1966 a strike began at the Newhouse, Lanarkshire, factory of the Square Grip Reinforcement Company. The issue was trade union recognition and the dispute was declared official by the TGWU. In May of last year the company was granted an interdict restraining the union from picketing their premises and from trying to get their products blacked by other workers. When the application for a permanent injunction was heard this May, judgment was deferred until August.

Meanwhile, in April, after a year idle, the strikers were inexplicably instructed by the TGWU to seek other jobs. 18 of them are still without work. Unemployment in the area and the attitude of other managements toward men who participated in this dispute make it virtually impossible for them to get it.

Can I appeal to your readers active in the Labour movement to raise this as a matter of urgency in their branches and committees with a view to making an immediate donation? These should be sent to: Ian Armstrong, 5 Loch Road, Chapelhall, Airdrie, Lanarkshire.

Yours fraternally,
Tony Southall,
Secretary, Glasgow Woodside
Labour Party.