WHY WAS I EXPELLED FROM SOLIDARITY (LONDON)?

by

Joe Jacobs

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Solidarity came into existence in an organised way to develop a critique of what it calls 'the trad left', already well underway elsewhere. (See 'The origins of modern leftism' by Richard Cobb, Pelican Books 1975) It attacks social democracy, all kinds, Bolshevism, all kinds, Marxism, all kinds. It included Anarchism in its critique, but here it demurred. It was more selective, drawing on the rich libertarian strands in the body of anarchist ideas. It expressed views and acted in order to take part in class struggle, according to its own definition of activity and class struggle.

All this has run out of steam. There is little left it can do to develop its critique of the trad left. Life itself has made the critique in practice. All Solidarity can say, in this context, is likely to be repetitive and boring.

It doesn't quote from Cardan's new writings, which, if quoted, might be very embarrassing. I have often quoted from these writings, but Solidarity (London) showed very little interest. Remember, Cardan has not taken part in any political group, as a member, as far as I know, since 1967.

Alongside and inseparable from Solidarity (London) ideas are its organisational practices. It began with little of the structure of the bodies it criticised. How could it? It set out to build a network of autonomous, self-active, self-managed groups, in its own image. This has failed on all counts. No such groups have existed for very long anywhere. Many have come and gone, the last group to liquidate itself, Manchester, did so in order to force the London group to support a call for the setting-up of the National Organisation, to pull together the people who supported Solidarity, but did so in isolation. However, Manchester reformed and the National Organisation came into existence.

I think that this is proving to be an embarrassment to the London group (1). I think some people had foreseen this possibility and were not at all enthusiastic about the idea in the first place. Now, any critics within the London group were no longer isolated in an organisational sense. This fact had important consequences. Instead of autonomous groups, by themselves, there was a place, the National meetings, approximately every two months, where the London group could be challenged re its ideas and practices. This has happened.

From the beginning of Solidarity in London, the group was obliged to develop some structures in order to function at all. Discipline, other than 'self-discipline', was no part of these structures. Critics and others left because of the 'superior stamina' of the elite, which had existed, de fact, for a long time. It could not avoid introducing the ultimate in discipline, expulsion or exclusion by any other name.

It had not really noticed that it had been excluding people all along, by insisting that they declare or show their commitment to something called Solidarity ideas. Later these ideas were stated in 'As we don't see it'. This became the 'yardstick' for admitting new members.

I wonder why 'As we don't see it' has not been used to expel members who depart from it in a particularly flagrant manner? (Am I THE only one?) e.g. After campaigning in the 1974 General Election, when a poster produced in London said: 'Slococke to 'em all', M.B. and R.W. both voted labour. I would not want to expel them for this. The issue of advocating one thing and doing something else should provide some food for thought. Not in the London group. This incident was swept under the carpet along with many other issues not considered worthy of consideration by the 'majority', i.e. any permutation out of an average attendance of 9 -10, where can members of Solidarity (London) go now? Either they will change themselves sufficiently, to meet the changes in society, as they occur, or they will be no use to the revolutionary processes, constantly in motion (2)

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(1) J.W.'s submission to the Liverpool meeting. See appendix 5, p.12

(2) The French Communist Party has just declared that it no longer supports the concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. This is not a complete break with Leninism, simply a recognition that very few people support this concept. It will be possible to isolate vanguardian further when more people reject that concept too.
'The Letter': Introduction (3)

I described this document as obscene when it was distributed at the National Solidarity meeting (Liverpool 31.1.76.).

I said that I had no objection to the distribution, as I wasn't in the censorship business and would not wish to suppress anything, however obscene. This document is based to a considerable extent on lies, absurdities and a clear attempt to malign and smear those who have left Solidarity, for whatever reason. An obscenity if I ever knew one. It maligns one person by name, Henri Simon, who has never been a member of Solidarity.

Revealing parts of the body is also considered by some to be obscene. I do not share that view. However, even in this meaning of the word, this document can be said to be obscene. When it deals with political matters based on the above, it makes clear, that my expulsion is also an obscene act. If public masturbation is considered to be obscene, this appears in the letter too. The methods used to expel me are also obscene and would come under the heading of 'depraved activity likely to deprave others' who might be influenced to commit similar acts. The 'justification' for such behaviour, whatever the intentions of those who will seek to justify it, can be considered as an attitude to 'licence', when dealing with others, with self-defined 'good-correct' objectives. I realise I have done this in the past and try to examine my own and other people's assumptions, as revealed by their actions. We do not have the gift to see ourselves as others see us.

'The letter': Techniques

I shall examine some of the techniques used to trap the unwary.

Using the terms leninist and leninism, knowing that those who you are addressing regard these terms as an outright condemnation of those people and attitudes to which the terms are applied, labelling people without the real possibility of those reading the label being able to examine the people themselves. The use of these and similar terms, which can have a subliminal effect, even if they are not specifically applied to the person being criticised. I shall deal with this by reference to the 'letter' when I examine its contents.

Other techniques are: guilt by association, misrepresentation, the use of words which can be read differently according to the context in which they are used. There are many other ways of persuading people, as in many forms of advertising.

'The letter': Contents

Paragraph 1./ I did request a statement re my expulsion. I also requested a statement before I was expelled, following the proposals to expel me. This was refused. Why? However, I produced a statement: 'Should I be expelled from Solidarity (London)?', which was rejected unread, at the ordinary business meeting which made this awful decision. Why the indecent haste? would some almighty plan have been frustrated if my expulsion had taken another week or month to be decided? It took no more than forty minutes to make the decision.

Quote: '...one could say a pitifully small group', is calculated to win sympathy. Solidarity (London) is well known on the left, throughout the world. It has produced masses of material which influences people. If it sees itself as it says, why does it allow four of its members, out of a current total of about 12 - 14, to expel one of them, whatever the alleged crime? I would not want the Nazi war criminals' fate to be decided in this way. In my case, three of the four were among those I had criticised for a long time. They decided my guilt and the sentence. I'm sure that this cannot be in the best interests of those who choose to call themselves libertarians.

Paragraph 2./ The words: 'myriad Leninist sects', is the beginning of the shit throwing process, in the hope that some of it will find its way onto me. Even subliminally. I'm not saying that the authors do this deliberately on all occasions.

Quote: '...and despite the fact that the actions of some of these people in Solidarity could be typified as consciously disruptive, none of them were ever expelled ... Whether because these ideas were seen to be undefeatable or merely because Solidarity members had the greater stamina, the leninists who had tried to capture us have retired and left the group.' (my emphasis). During my membership, over five years, I never came across anyone who could be described as a leninist. On the contrary, the dozens who I knew about were all clearly anti-leninists, including J.H. and co., who never denied that they were Marxists. The proof of this is J.H.'s personal involvement in the production of the 'Neo-narodniki' pamphlet and the controversy over the second Vietnam pamphlet by Bob Potter.

(3) I received a photocopy of the letter on 26.1.76., unsigned and undated. See appendix 1 and note on page 13.
J.N. helped to change Solidarity (London) in its views on National Liberation movements in a specific and overt anti-leninist direction. Nor, as N.B. continually suggests, has 'World Revolution' a leninist programme and even 'accepts the decisions of the first three congresses of the Third International. Do they accept support for nationalist movements in the colonies, the parliamentary tactic, the joining of trade-unions, the united front with social-democracy and the expulsion of the left communist parties which 'world Revolution' draw on heavily? All these decisions were taken at the first three congresses.

This whole paragraph is a preparation for connecting all those who have left Solidarity to the dreaded term 'leninist'. The guilt by association process.

The rest of the paragraph is very revealing. Is there a hint that the authors regard their idea as 'undefeatable'? If so, nothing could be more revealing of their references to 'worldview' and 'Socialist content', as used on other occasions. Any claim to the possession of 'undefeatable' ideas is monstrous, unless you happen to believe in the absolute truth.

As to the possible alternative, 'Solidarity members had the 'greater stamina' I would agree that this did drive many people out of Solidarity (London). This is something I have drawn attention to many times. Including my statement 'There are more ways of skinning a cat etc.', for which I was put on the carpet.

What happened to the boast about 'stamina'? Stamina is a physical force, which I agree, has been applied and resulted in subduing many people who did not stay and fight against what they clearly saw as a 'greater' force. I know how difficult it is to argue against the combined forces of A.O., N.B. and K.W., whom I have named as the elite of the Solidarity (London) group, not to mention its moon and various satellites. I once was such a satellite.

Paragraph 3./ The first sentence tries to pin on me, in an oblique way, an association with leninism. It uses, yet again, the dreaded term 'leninist'. Twice so far in this paragraph.

It says, according to them, in my words: '...all political groups are racketers and all their members are racketeers.' (my emphasis). I never used the word all in either case, all political groups or all their members cannot have the same character. This is an absurdity applied to me so as to undermine the credibility of anything I might say. This has characterised many ideas attributed to me, which has the effect. I shall come to some of this later.

The paragraph ends with the obvious question: 'If no one was expelled in the latter case, why should you be expelled?'. Note the use of the term leninist yet again, leading up to this question. Another way of including me, leading to guilt by association, which cannot be established in my case. There seem to be an awful lot of leninists under Solidarity (London's) bed.

Paragraph 4./ In this paragraph, the term leninist is not used because the views it seeks to stick onto Henri Simon and me cannot be anything but anti-leninist. Quote '... spontaneity of action by the working class is positive - whatever its stated purpose'. This is like saying that the working class cannot be wrong. Another attempt to declare your critics to be stupid and insane.

I quote from Solidarity London/Glydeside pamphlet '1. Revolutionary Organisation. 2. Open Letter to IS' p.19:

"I can only add here what Rosa Luxemburg, answering Lenin, said in 1904: 'Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary working class movement are infinitely more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee'. Are those words less relevant in 1968 than they were in 1904?" I would add after 'Central Committee', 'or any self-appointed, self-defined, so-called revolutionary organisation'. After 1968 add 'or 1976'. This is what I mean in the context of the quote from the letter'. The paragraph goes on to say that I and Henri Simon are opposed to all forms of political organisation. Once again, this is an attempt to make critics sound ridiculous. It does refer to 'any cohesive political structure... which could be said to mean I am not necessarily against all political organisations. The big impression, I think, leads to the conclusion that the authors wish to undermine their critics' credibility.

When we meet the terms: smash, disrupt, impede, obstruct etc.; all these words I certainly used. Are they more meaningful than the term liquidate? Yes, they are. Liquidate leaves very little room for an alternative. Smashing eggs can lead to making an omelet. The terms
I used do not include the use of violence on any person; I would use violence if it was used on me or others where I happened to be.

The term 'gang' I use advisedly, because, if people go around saying that I am opposed to all organisation, I am made to look stupid. If they would say I am opposed to all gangs, it would sound as though I had some sense.

quote:...'... you did state that you were proud that you had been able to drive or persuade out of the group some seventeen people.' I made no such statement. I could not name seventeen people to whom this could apply, why not ask some of the people why they left the group? J.B. for instance. If I did say this, what does it prove? That I am a no-good son-of-a-bitch?

I never asked to be expelled. I have been asked to leave the group many times, but I refused to do so. One person said, 'why don't you fuck-off and leave us to carry on with what we want to do?'. I can now ask, why don't you fuck-off and leave others to carry on with what they want to do? MS for instance, and those who have left and are branded as leninists by you. I opposed and shall continue to oppose my expulsion and hope to continue my membership of the National Organisation and to be active with other people who may belong to other organisations.

If I sought expulsion to prove some point or other, would this remove all responsibility from those who committed the act? If I invite or incite someone to murder me, do they have to murder me? If they do, are they any less guilty? I don't know.

Paragraph 5./ Quote: 'On one level this is something of a joke: the business meeting that expelled you did it on the following basis: 4 votes for your expulsion, 1 vote (your own) against, with three abstentions!' Some joke! What this letter does not reveal is that J.Q., who voted for my expulsion, distributed copies of a typed document, unsigned, undated, to everyone on arrival. It was the only written document considered during the forty minutes discussion which reached the decision. J.Q. demanded that his statement, including the resolution, be taken seriously. No one said that they did not take it seriously, although there was some laughter. I did not laugh. The resolution was acted upon in the absence of any other written proposal. J.Q.'s statement reads as follows:

"WHEREAS it is his avowed intention to disorganise, disrupt, filibuster, fuck-over, shit in the ear of, piss in the pocket of, squeeze orange juice over the library books of, put ex-lax in the coffee urn of and generally shuck the groove of the Solidarity group and WHEREAS he has declared his wish to be expelled from the Solidarity group to prove some point or another and WHEREAS the members here present feel impelled to laugh to keep from crying, the disciplinary sub-committee of the executive committee of the central committee of the Solidarity Group

MISOLVES that Joe Jacobs be expelled from the Solidarity Group and be asked to hand back his bronze proficiency medal and certificate of merit."

This brand of 'humour' has to contain an element of truth, however small, if it is to have any effect at all. This is no exception. Besides the lie that I asked to be expelled, I would like to point out that exaggerated truth is also a lie. So much for the joke. I find this one particularly obscene. The item on the agenda of this ordinary business meeting was reached at about 10 p.m. We started after 8.30 p.m. We were in the pub at 10.40 p.m. I submitted a typed statement when asked if I wished to say anything re the proposal to expel me, which was not read, but rejected because there was not sufficient time to consider its contents. Why this indecent haste? Why not delay making a decision for a week or two?

Did a total of four people with three abstentions, myself against, constitute a sufficient number to take this decision? The meeting three weeks before this one (Christmas and New Year included) decided that it could not vote on my expulsion because there were only six in attendance. Did two more make it 'kosher'? Quote: '..the questions, the worries are still being discussed,'. I'm not surprised. They will worry you and others for a long time to come. Last quote: '..there is nothing personal in all this. Those who do like you and want to talk with you will continue to do so. Those who do not, will not.' Thanks for the kind, if somewhat inane, comment.

I would be very surprised if there is nothing personal in all this, because I think that the rights and feelings of persons are very much what 'Socialism' is all about, even if I don't always remember this.

I cannot love those who impose their will on others by any form of force. This does not mean that I hate them. If possible, I want to help them to change themselves, as I have
had to change myself. As for being sent to Coventry by a few, I don't much mind. There are lots of nice people there. So much for the 'letter' itself.

Conclusions

After the opening quote, what I write shall, with a few additions, be substantially what I wrote to the London Solidarity group before my expulsion and presented to the ordinary business meeting of 9.1.75, which expelled me. It was rejected, unread, as time wasting.

Quote('Revolutionary Organisation...' op. cit. p.15)

Dear Comrades,

It is remarkable how few socialists seem to recognise the connection between the structure of their organisation and the type of 'socialist' society it might help bring about.

If the revolutionary organisation is seen as the means and the socialist society as the end, one might expect people with an elementary understanding of dialectics to recognise the relation between the two. Means and ends are mutually dependent. They constantly influence each other. The means are, in fact, a partial implementation of the end, whereas the end becomes modified by the means adopted.

One could almost say 'tell me your views concerning the structure and function of the revolutionary organisation, and I'll tell you what the society you will help create will be like'. Or conversely 'give me your definition of socialism and I'll tell you what your views on the revolutionary organisation are likely to be'.

Does the future society as envisaged by Solidarity (London) include disciplinary measures for those minorities who wish to fight against majorities? If so, will they say what measures? Are they to be the ones used to deal with me, as a minority of only one. Roughly 6%, Decision majority of three or 25%.

I was expelled from the Communist Party on two occasions (1937 and 1951) for 'disruptive activities and fighting the party line'. I was one of a faction, expelled from a trotskyst organisation for 'fighting the political line'. I left a small group, formed to study marxism, after disagreeing with the majority. I am now expelled from Solidarity (London). Previously, I did not fully appreciate why the exclusions were necessary. I believed in building a 'revolutionary organisation' and thought I had the right and duty to state my disagreements within the organisation. With hindsight, I can understand why these organisations require the submission of the minority to the majority and, in some cases, the strict adherence to the leaders' decisions. This is the condition of membership for all organisations based on the principles of 'democratic centralism'. At the time, I never admitted to having engaged in disruptive activities. To paraphrase Marx, it is not what we think we are doing that matters. What matters is the result of our beliefs and actions. I often sought to justify what I did and found some satisfaction in the outcome.

I joined Solidarity and engaged in its activities, believing it to be different from traditional left organisations. That it was a 'libertarian revolutionary organisation'. I became critical of some of the ideas and some of the practices of some members, including my own ideas and practices. This organisation, like any other self-appointed and self-defined 'revolutionaries', could not avoid creating its own doctrine and organisation, which it had to defend against any substantial criticism, from without, but more particularly, from within.

I have been increasingly critical, not of some ideas and practices, but the idea of 'revolutionary organisations' which seek to define 'revolutionary activity' based on its critique of existing society, leading to a definition of its objectives, i.e. what the future 'socialist society' should be like, according to its values. I think organisations with this approach act as a brake on the revolutionary processes, in practice. This is demonstrated by those who struggle for themselves and find themselves in conflict with these organisations, e.g. trade unions, social democratic parties, Communist Parties, Maoists, Trotskyists, other Bolshevik type organisations; some anarchists etc. etc.

Libertarians and others seeking to avoid this fate try to create 'new' types of organisation. They think they can create an organisation which will not be elitist, vanguardist, hierarchical or oppressive. They claim to be attempting to create an organisation which will be a 'mirror image' of the future society. Here again, the words taken from Marx (see above), can be applied. In practice, (it should be no surprise) they cannot escape society's dominant ideology. They only create a capitalist type organisation, with all the means which capitalism uses to perpetuate itself. Arriving at this point of view, I want to combat these organisations.
I started from within Solidarity (London), where I happened to be at the time, hoping it might be possible to get it to go into voluntary liquidation, at least in its present form. I did not mean that it should stop producing relevant information and interesting texts. I wanted it to stop describing itself as a 'revolutionary organisation', attempting to intervene in struggles, in an exemplary fashion. That it should not hold itself up as a 'mirror image' of the future society, as defined by itself. Solidarity was unable to avoid resorting to methods used by other capitalist type organisations, when dealing with critics who challenged their existence.

After repeated attempts to get a reasonable discussion (see Appendix: 'Criticism of Solidarity London, for discussion. 5.8.74.' and, Appendix, To Solidarity London 4.5.75.), I was confronted with procrastination, censorship, misrepresentation etc. etc., to an article submitted by me for publication in 'Solidarity' which was critical of other articles which had appeared in the journal. I decided to withdraw the article. I am not alone in receiving literary criticism and arguments about priorities, in place of real discussion of the relevant political issues. See 'To the membership of Solidarity (London) 29-30 November 1975, D.B..

I was also treated to the usual character analysis, i.e., I was paranoid, getting senile etc. etc. I do suffer from a hardening of the arteries, I hope I shall not suffer a hardening of the categories.

I considered leaving Solidarity. Like other organisations, Solidarity has a very high percentage of people who come and go 'voluntarily'. Leaving behind the same few people or their heirs. They refuse to deal with this fact seriously, because to do so would expose the true nature of the organisation.

When my ideas became clearer, I was invited to make explicit what some members had already alleged. That my activities in the group were disruptive and since I could not get a change of attitude, I could only impede the organisation's development for as long as possible. Accordingly, Solidarity (London) was unable to ensure its existence, which it feels is threatened by my activities.

why are my Huffings and puffings considered to be so intolerable? Is it because those concerned believe that they live in a house of straw? ('a pitifully small group') or, have they built a temple of stone? ('. . .underdefeatable ideas...greater stamina.') In the latter case, must I be excluded lest I reveal what is going on inside? What should they have done, since I refused to go of my own 'free will'? i.e., surrender to the 'greater stamina'.

Those who combat exploitation and alienation by their own actions have no need of high priests who have discovered the dynamism of social change, ('underdefeatable ideas?') and by their exemplary actions will teach others how this social change should occur. Those who struggle, consciously or otherwise, are demonstrating that they have no need to be told how to conduct their struggles, They do not need experts to define the perspectives of their struggles.

Many people have found that self-management includes an inevitable decision making process, which will often lead to decisions that turn out to be wrong. It is important to try not to surrender the right to correct mistakes to those who would like to make decisions for us, however well-intentioned such efforts are, by those who may not realise that is what they do. Remember the quote from Rosa Luxemberg, above.

To advocate autonomy is to refuse to be victims of 'decision makers' who say they are only trying to help. In reality, this help is nearly always conditional. That we accept their ideas about existing forms of struggle. That such struggles must include a 'Socialist Content' as defined by the helpers. Real help is seldom refused if it is seen to be helpful.

Revolutionary forces including active participants in struggle always confound self-appointed revolutionaries. The 'new movement', which is developing, including what is useful from the past, can find the means to realise its autonomy. That is the way that it can be freed from exploitation. It can find its own organisational forms, as it has done in the past, even if these organisational forms have been liquidated and a new domination established. The struggle is always renewed.

This is not an inevitable process based on inexorable economic or political laws. I believe the oppressed can find the means to rid themselves of their condition by themselves. I do not think this process is based on 'spontaneous' actions, which somehow arise out of thin air. We do not have a 'free' choice to be a part of this process. We are involved as we breath and live.
I do not wish to avoid relationships with those who share some of my views. This does not mean forming a group which will create yet another organ of domination. It is possible for individuals to come together for precise forms of activity which they hope will fulfil their needs as defined by themselves. They do it all the time. This includes the production and dissemination of interesting and relevant texts on any subject.

If Solidarity (London) continues to function in its present form, it will find more people passing through its ranks only to become disillusioned or escape to find a measure of freedom in self-activity.

I am not the first member of a 'revolutionary organisation' to seek its liquidation. Paul Cardan, often quoted by Solidarity, is one among many. Here are a few: Marx, the Communist League and the International Workingmen's Association; Lenin, the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1902 (practically); Gorter et al., the KAI and the NAIF in 1924; Bordiga, the Italian left in 1930's; Cardan, Socialisme ou Barbarie in 1967; various ICO in 1972-3: Invariance, Houvement Communiste et Communisten in 1970's. A large number of Solidarity groups all over Britain and many foreign groups associated with Solidarity have dissolved, from time to time.

When I made my 'confession', A.O. said words to this effect: this was a unique occasion. Never before had anyone called for the smashing of a group of which they are a member. This is the kind of history on which A.O. often bases his considerable detailed knowledge of analysis. A number of Solidarity members throughout the years have been members of other organisations, particularly ex-trotskists, who have taken part in wrecking activities within organisations. When this activity is no longer possible from within, they have formed new organisations to continue the war from their new base. This activity belongs to the past.

I was denounced by a friend and comrade of 24 years standing, A.F., who said that I had not made my views clear to the group. I had been told repeatedly that my activities were disruptive. He invited me to 'confess'. He had told me, many times, that Solidarity was different and had no constitutional means for expelling anyone. He voted for my expulsion. A.F. is a very nice bloke. He will help anyone, especially for their own 'good', as he sees it. He believes very strongly in his missionary endeavours to spread the gospel of whatever happens to be his current view of 'revolutionary activity'.

I am not arguing about good or bad people. London Solidarity members, including the elite, are among the nicest people I have known. It is a capacity for self-deception re our own ideas and activities, which is important. I am not arguing about the groups right to define for itself the need to build an organisation; but that it be understood that it is not what they think that they are doing that matters, but what is the result of their beliefs and actions. I am not excluded from the need to understand this.

The end of one political statement is often the starting point for another. That stands behind my expulsion from Solidarity (London) has deep roots. Some of this came to a head inside the group, when I submitted an article 'How not to think?', which challenged some of the cherished views of the 'elite'. This is when my conduct and character became a subject for discussion inside the group. By article directly challenged two articles by A.O., which appeared in 'Solidarity' ('revolutionary Bureaucracy' Vol. VII no.11, and 'Political consequences of a philosophical illusion: Marx's theory of Being and Consciousness' Vol. VII no.6). I withdrew my article. It exists in its original form and can still be published. I am willing to submit it again.

The arguments re the literary merits, priorities etc., of this article were a point where the expulsion process developed to its conclusion. Behind that article lies a long history how not to think. The elite's views on history, philosophy, politics, economics, society in general and revolutionary organisation, are very often lamentable. I would prefer to discuss this rather than my expulsion, which is only a small but integral part of those views.

My alternative to Solidarity (London)'s point of view on organisation is, briefly: people coming together to discuss, eat, drink, enjoy music, dance, love one another, etc., etc., also to produce and disseminate interesting texts, information, by those interested in particular subjects as selected by each person wishing to participate. This activity not to be exclusive. To participate in any activity where we live and work which each of us thinks will develop our ability to be self-active and to self-manage our own lives, in all forms of struggle, as much as conditions will allow, against all forms of exploitation and domination. There is much more to all this. Think about it and decide for yourself.

Joe Jacobs.
My statement cannot be complete. Even several massive tomes would still be incomplete. I draw your attention to the following texts, which contain many contradictory positions and ideas, which I do not hold. They may help to clarify the relevant issues.

1. 'Nouveau Mouvement' by Henri Simon, 34 Rue S, Sebastien, 75011 PARIS (English translation to be published, as decided, by Solidarity London, 123, Lathom Road, LONDON E.6)
2. 'The organisation' by Jacques Camette in 'Invariance' Annee V Serie II, N.2 and in a supplement Annee VIII, November 1975, B.P. 133, 83170 ERIGNOLES, France.
3. 'The tyranny of structurelessness' by Joreen. Reproduced from 'The Second Wave' 6 1972 by 'Female Liberation Inc.'
4. 'On spontaneity and Organisation' by Murray Boochin, Solidarity pamphlet 49
5. 'A Revolutionary Organisation, 2 Open letter to IS' Solidarity London/Clydeside pamphlet.
6. 'Alternative Socialism' by various writers, Birmingham alternative socialism group, 36 Sandford Road, Moseley, Birmingham 13 or 206 Fordhouse Lane, Stechley, Birmingham 30 or phone (021) 472-2945

J.J.

APPENDICES:
appendix 1.

Dear Joe,

As you requested the Solidarity (London) Group is sending you this letter to give the reasons for your expulsion. It is not the habit of the Solidarity (London) Group to expel people and this action does not come naturally to us. The Solidarity (London) Group is a small - one could say a pitifully small - political group. Over the years it has published its magazines and pamphlets, held its meetings, handed out its leaflets. It has also developed its position and continues to change. All this you know.

You also know that over the years various people have disastrously misunderstood the position of the Solidarity Group in its internal organisation and its position towards people and their struggles outside the group. We are not a vanguard party; yet people have tried to capture the group and use us as if we were. We are not a democratic centralist body yet people have tried to wish us monolithic orthodoxy of thought and action. In fact one of the things that Solidarity members have found most comic about the myriad Leninist sects is that each of them claims to be the vanguard of the working class and even in organisations containing handfuls of people insist on rigid hierarchy and discipline. For all the dissimilarity between this view of political action and that of Solidarity and despite the fact that the actions of some of these people in Solidarity could be typified as conciously disruptive none of them were ever expelled. Arguments were often bitter but so long as there were political ideas to be argued for, Solidarity argued for them. Whether because these ideas were seen to be unchallengeable or merely because Solidarity members had the greater stamina, the Leninists who have tried to capture the group have retired and left the group.

The views you have expressed have been in some ways the mirror image of these Leninist views. Instead of trying to drive us into the position of a Leninist sect vis-a-vis the working class, with all the manipulation, self-seeking and elitism that is implied, you have said that we are already in that position. We are not alone in this you say. All political groups, no matter what their size or orientation, that come together to produce a consistent and generalised propaganda inevitably institutionalise themselves and inevitably take up a manipulative role in working class struggle. In your words; 'All political groups are racketeers and all their members are racketeers.' This is an intensely important question for all libertarian groups. Any libertarian who thinks at all must be continually aware of the way in which self-defined libertarian movements in history have, even against every instinct, formed crypto-parties. The expression of these views is by no means the reason for your expulsion - the dangers you point to have been far nearer the central concern of the Solidarity group than any Leninist attempts to turn us into little boishviks. If no-one was expelled in the latter case, why should you be expelled?

We recognise that your views derive from a development out of the French group Information Correspondences Ouvriers. In these ideas spontaneity of action by the working class is positive - whatever its stated purpose. A pogrom or race riot could be seen as positive in this light. This spontaneity of action is seen as the measure of revolutionary change and this has led to a declaration that any cohesive political structure is an obstacle to the revolution and such structures must be called upon to disband or, should be disbanded. How one defines a cohesive political group or the nature of the disbanding process are matters for debate. It was finally revealed how these questions were resolved in your mind via a
vis the Solidarity (London) Group. Your opinions and your expression of them had met opposition because Solidarity members seemed overwhelmingly in favour of preserving the organisation and the propaganda that stemmed from it. For some time you kept on pressing your opinions and this you had every right to do. Then you expressed it as your opinion that the consequence of your ideas on the racketeering nature of all political groups meant that you felt it imperative to 'disrupt or smash' and to 'obstruct and impede' (your words) these groups. You were asked many times whether you meant that you felt it your job to disrupt, smash, obstruct and impede the Solidarity (London) Group. Every time you answered 'yes'. You said that it was an enterprise that you had been engaged in for two years. We did not and do not know if this is true or not but you did state that you were proud that you had been able to drive or persuade away from the group some 17 people. You also said that the proof of the gang-like structure of the group was that anyone expressing your opinions would have to be expelled. You were asked whether you wished to force your expulsion as proof of your characterisation of the group. From this you demurred but said that your behaviour would be such as to force your expulsion. On this premise and on the basis of your many times declared intent to disrupt, smash etc. the group it was moved that you be expelled forthwith to provide you with the 'proof' you seemed to want and to save us from being disrupted for its own sake.

On one level this is something of a joke; the business meeting that expelled you did so on the following basis: 4 votes for your expulsion, 1 vote (your own) against, with 3 abstentions! The overwhelming feeling of the meeting was the absolute pointlessness of someone putting in some effort to disrupt proceedings of such a size. Your expulsion has since raised worries by several members about the 'sort of groups that expel people'. The spectre of tighter orthodoxy has been raised - and hopefully laid again. It has been felt that had the basis of any attempted expulsion been a difference of opinion then it would have been unlikely to have been raised let alone passed. The questions, the worries are still being discussed. Nevertheless we feel that we, a small group of libertarians who want to go on doing the sort of thing they have been doing have a perfect right to protect themselves from wilful and unredeemed disruption. There is nothing personal in all this, Those who like you and want to talk to you will continue to do so. Those who do not, will not. As far as the internal proceedings of the Solidarity (London) Group are concerned, however, you are now excluded.

Yours Fraternally,

The Solidarity (London) Group.

*See footnote on page 13*

Appendix 2.

Criticism of Solidarity (London) for discussion - from Joe J.


The separation of means from ends has been criticised for reasons which I do not need to detail here. If it is agreed that such separation is impermissible then I invite you to consider the following. If there is procrastination, petty objections, and even deliberate delay or explicit objections in dealing with the problems, can we assume that the real reason for the use of such means has a connection with an objective which is desirable or even the avoidance of consequences which are undesirable?

I have often had to decide matters of priority and would argue for not dealing with something if I thought other matters were more urgent. Everyone has to make this consideration and should insist on the right to try to persuade others. (A case in point was when we were dealing with J.N. and co. After repeated very long consideration of the point of view expressed, I argued that it would be counter-productive to continue.)

This is not the same as refusing to deal with matters when there is a lot of time available and little would be lost, even if there was no complete agreement as to the relevance of the subject. In any case, anyone who had not sufficient interest could vote with their feet. There has been some superficial discussion. I have repeatedly called for comprehensive discussion around certain specified subjects including cases where relevant documents exist:

1. Statements by H, Simon re organisation, theory etc. as well as those on differentials.
2. Quotes from Cardan.
4. A. Orr statements and articles.
5. Questions arising from statements made at seminars.
6. Actions by members of Solidarity which appear to contradict declared positions.
7. Matters relating to the functioning of Solidarity (London) and its relations with other
people and groups, national working group, etc.

8. Questions concerning 'consciousness' which I don't understand.

9. Certain criticisms by friends or opponents which we have failed to answer. (In some cases the reasons for such a failure could no doubt be justified.)

The list could be extended in this very general way. My reasons for raising them from time to time over a long period is to achieve greater clarity, to get rid of as many ambiguities as is possible, to alter our views when the 'facts' no longer support what we have believed, and to make our practice more effective in the direction we think desirable.

By only means of raising these questions is by repeated reference to them at group meetings and by talking to individual members and others, I have never used the methods obtaining in so-called revolutionary organisations where 'democratic centralism' is practised. I do not approve of such organisations and therefore I cannot use their methods.

I have met a number of objections to my criticisms along the following lines -

1. I am too long-winded.

2. I should produce written statements where I have failed to do so. (What happens if - for various reasons - one is unable to do this?)

3. I am not specific.

4. If I am against something I should be ready with an alternative proposition. (What if I say honestly 'I don't know'? Must I accept something which does not satisfy me?)

5. There have been objections to documents because of alleged inadequacies in the quality of translations. (Despite the fact that many people are capable of making their own translations which would permit them to discuss the contents if they wished to do so.)

6. Unwillingness to attend international meetings because of difficulties with translations etc. (There is nothing wrong with opting out if one feels the discussion is a waste of time, and one should say so.)

7. As usual, I am accused of misrepresentation - not deliberately! (I too claim that I am misrepresented, also not deliberately)

8. That I quote out of context. (Who doesn't?)

9. That such quotes are not a real reflection of the author's views. (How do we know if we don't discuss them?)

The reason why my lists are so long, and could be extended, is that they represent an accumulation over a long period of failure to deal with them. If I had to write statements on all of this I would be fully engaged for a very long time. I think there are sufficient documents already existing to make matters clear and to specify in detail the substance of my views.

The reasons specified above for delaying discussions are not complete. The real the very old method (means) which cannot be divorced from the end: to avoid handling 'not potatoes' - i.e. questions which make one feel uncomfortable because they challenge cherished opinions which are being perpetuated to the point where they affect the means employed (i.e. the method of discussion) in which I reject, or deny, the existence of the members and others to express themselves, do not encourage self-activity, violate the declared aim of trying to establish a self-managed collectivity in the form of 'autonomous groups'.

As you will see, I have introduced a new dimension to my other criticisms because - as I said in the beginning - there can be no separation of means and ends.

I hope this will not lead to interminable discussions about directions, and so delay the inclusion of the questions raised as part and parcel of the total critique of ourselves, as part of society, and not as a 'sect', cut off by our own failure to relate as realistically as possible to what is going on in the world.

The main issues are presented in the following quotes:

"...The management of production by the producers, and the collective management of their affairs by all those concerned in all areas of public life is impossible and inconceivable without an unprecedented display of the autonomous activity of the masses. This means that the socialist revolution is nothing more nor less than the explosion of autonomous activity. It will institute new forms of collective life and will eliminate - little by little - not only the manifestations, but also the foundations of the old order, and in particular all separate categories or organisations of leaders. By creating at each of its stages points of support for its future development, it will be embedded in social reality..."

"...If socialism is the full flowering of the autonomous activity of the masses, and if the aims and form of this activity can only flow from workers' own experience of exploitation and oppression, then there can be no question either of inculcating them with a "socialist consciousness" produced by a theory, or of substituting ourselves for them in the leadership of the revolution or in the construction of socialism...

"...Two factors seem to me to have decided my attitude at the time. The first was that I measured - in all its breadth - the extent of the problem of centralisation in modern soc-
"Icy. (I still think that this was underestimated by those in the group who opposed me in this question.) The second was the contradiction implied in the very idea of organisation and revolutionary activity: the problem is why, when we know - or think we know - that the proletariat should arrive at a conception of revolution and of socialism which it draws from itself, should we not sit back and do nothing because of this...

"The only political problem is precisely this one: how can men become capable of resolving their problems themselves? It became very clear, and was affirmed, that at no time and in no way could such an organisation (which remains indispensable) claim to have any form of leadership role without ceasing to be what it wanted to be. The only coherent position for me was, and still is, that the functioning of a revolutionary organisation is to facilitate both the workers' daily struggles and also the accession of workers to the consciousness of universal problems of society. The organisation could only accomplish this by waging war against all ideological, reactionary and bureaucratic, mystification, above all by the exemplary character of its manner of intervention, always orientated in the direction of the management of the struggle by the workers themselves, and of the group's own existence as a self-managed collectivity..." (Castoriadis La Societe Bureaucratique tome I, pp.22, 23, 38, 39, - editions 10/18)

It does not matter so much who said this or if it has been translated perfectly, or if it is taken out of context. Is the context of these statements worth talking about, useful and relevant to our views, important to our present and future attempts to function as an organisation or as individuals?

J.J.

appendix 3
To: Solidarity (London)

Dear Comrades,

At a group meeting (28,2,75.) under the item, 'Any other business' I was confronted with some charges. I replied to same and a discussion followed, without anyone questioning the procedure.
1. I had presented my point of view, including differences with the majority, to people outside the group.
2. I had voiced by criticism of the document 'AS WE DON'T SEE IT' while remaining a member of Solidarity.
I pleaded guilty.
The majority present, i.e., those who spoke, were of the opinion that the charges did not constitute a crime. That I had a right to express my views. The fact that this matter had been raised in this manner and where this attitude had its origins and possible consequences, was not mentioned. Nevertheless, others proceeded to make charges of another kind. That I, had wrongly accused the group of suppressing my views of the group and some of the ideas as stated in published articles etc. I was not notified in advance, that these charges were to be made on that occasion. Therefore, I could not prepare an adequate answer and had to deal with the situation as best I could, at the tail-end of an ordinary group meeting. This was not the first time important matters have been handled in this manner. In order to avoid a repetition of these procedures, in my presence, I will not attend all group meetings. I wish to remain a member of Solidarity and like most other members, will attend only those meetings and activities which interest me.
If any questions relating to my views and actions are to be raised, I would welcome notice in writing, and expect the group to be advised, also in writing, by those who wish to raise such questions. This procedure has been requested of me, in the past, when I have made verbal statements without prior notice. This might help to prevent a further deterioration of the group's functioning at group meetings. If as is often said, my conduct is the cause of the troubles, my absence should enable the meetings to proceed without relating to issues I might wish to raise. If these issues are irrelevant, it won't matter. If they are relevant, it will not be possible to avoid them in the future, without the group itself becoming irrelevant.
The methods used in dealing with me cannot be separated from the political issues themselves, even if I am a paranoid, senile, unclear, long-winded, use bad translations, quote out of context, etc. etc., (all this has a familiar ring).
I would prefer my differences with the majority of the London group, to be published and distributed to those who receive the material I am criticising. If there is a majority decision not to follow my proposals, I can draw my own conclusions and act accordingly. Of course, I am aware that I will be judged by those who I am criticising. This is not only my problem. It has far wider and more serious implications.

Fraternally,
J.J.

4.3.75.
Dear Joe, Thanks for your letter dated March 4th. This was read and discussed by the group meeting on Friday March 7th.

The group asked me to say how much we regret your decision to attend fewer group meetings, but we hope you feel free to attend as many as possible. If anything is raised at group meetings relevant or of interest to you of course we will keep you informed, and in the meantime if there is anything we can do to be of assistance in things you are doing you have only to ask.

We would like to say how much we appreciate your many contributions to the work and life of the group and only hope that they will continue.

All the best,

Yours fraternally,

K.W.

Appendix 5.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MASS CONSTRUCTION

"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." (Report on Glasgow conference, May 28-9, 1967, Solidarity Vol.4 No.8)

"Anyone with past or present experience of political organisations (from anarchists to the Communist Party) will know that most activity consists of talking and that many projects become lost in a sea of verbosity." Structure and Function (editorial), Solidarity Vol.4 No.7 (emphases in originals).

G.W.'s document 'Solidarity The need to recruit' seems to regard the present paralysis of Solidarity as an organisational problem. If we do different things then all will be well. However, it is all very well to write about producing leaflets, using posters, and holding more public meetings, but just to be awkward, could I ask what they are to be about? If the subject matter of these is to be coherent as a whole, if they are not to be a chaotic mesh of unconnected one-off interventions that occur every time someone has a 'bright idea', then this means we must have a clear political perspective on what our activity should be.

In Solidarity at the moment there is none.

This does not mean that we should adopt some sort of Leninist strategy and simply orient the whole programme to...  

This does not stem from individual attitudes of Solidarity members but from our whole approach to revolutionary theory. We have tended to see it as some sort of all-embracing explanation of everything - Marxism has been explicitly criticised in Solidarity for not fitting this bill - instead of seeing it as a tool to be changed or amended as the need arises. This has meant that what theoretical work that has been done has become more and more academic, less and less real, as we go chasing the will o' the wisp of objective consciousness.

But revolutionary theory does not and cannot be produced by "objective" outsiders. It originates in the practice of struggle - without a revolutionary movement there can be no revolutionary theory - and its only use and relevance can be to aid the struggle. And for this to happen it can only be produced by those who are going to use it. Experience should
have told us that those who theorize in Geneva while the revolution is going on in Russia are the manipulators - the future ruling class - and this is true metaphorically as well as literally. Because they distance themselves, the detached observers claim that they see things "objectively", that - unlike those involved in day-to-day details - they understand things as a whole. In truth they understand nothing but the infinity of their own arrogance. Any ideas they produce will inevitably be elitist.

This, then, is the problem with Solidarity - and was what killed Socialisme ou Barbarie. We have failed to abandon the Leninist method of theorizing but have combined it with a genuine desire not to be manipulative. The two are incompatible, and we have recognized the dilemma by doing nothing. It is not that political activity is impossible for us, but that we have made it impossible.

In order to overcome this we are going to have to redefine our attitude to the struggles going on in the world outside Solidarity. We are going to have to decide whether or not an organised revolutionary libertarian socialist involvement in them is possible, desirable or necessary. This in turn depends on resolving the question of whether or not we think self-management needs a "socialist content". And when I say "decide", I mean "decide". Again I make the point that I do not want this in order to create a "line", but so that those who find themselves in a minority at least know what they have to argue against if they wish to reopen a debate. It will isolate the areas of disagreement between us and thereby lay the basis for their resolution if we deem it necessary (which of course we may not; there are some disagreements which are important). Above all, it will lay the basis for further development of our ideas, and, if we want it, collective Solidarity activity.

The question of "what we do now?" is one we should not run away from. Certainly we should not repeat what three London members did when we discussed C.W.'s document and make self-congratulatory obituaries. This sort of behaviour is sure to kill us off, what we have already achieved is part of the past. What we must consider now is what we want to try to achieve in the future.

J.G.W.
Manchester, November 1975.

Note to appendix 1

Appendix 1 is the version of the letter giving reasons of expulsion of J.J. distributed at the Liverpool conference (31.1. - 1.2.76). It is not the letter sent to J.J. informing him of his expulsion and the reasons for it. This second letter contained several differences compared with the first, the most important being that, at the point marked * in appendix 1, the words "(perhaps most available expressed by Henri Simon)" are omitted. The version as sent to J.J. then reads, in that sentence: "In these ideas (perhaps most available expressed by Henri Simon) spontaneity of action by the working class is positive - whatever its stated purpose."

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