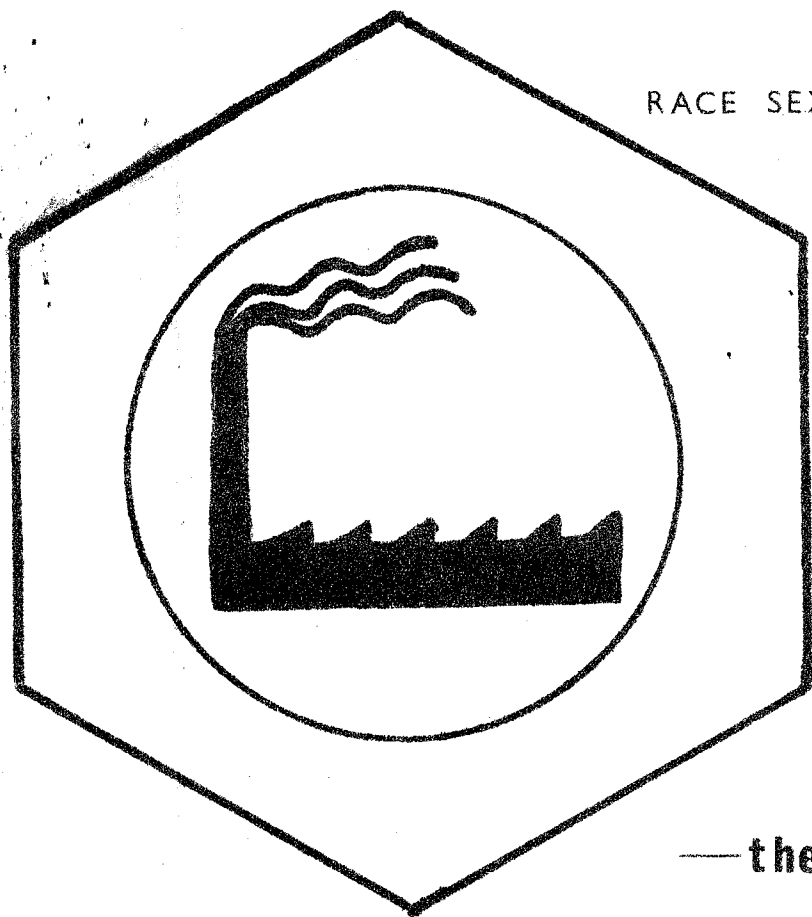


solidarity

north west



RACE SEX AND THE CLASS WAR

BOLTON—THE GILBERT ASH STRIKE

GUINEA — the unknown
revolution

BOOK REVIEW

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY—

—the occupation—

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the gilbert ash dispute- —bolton.

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by Dick Sheenan.

This is an account of a recent dispute on the Gilbert Ash site in Bolton. In this dispute, as is often the case, the role of the full-time union officials was despicable. It's not our intention to name, or single out individuals among them for attack. The stand they took was the only one they could, given the way unions work, and we feel any attack we make should be against the whole phony set-up, rather than against "bent" individuals.

The strike itself was the culmination of a long history of unrest and attacks on organisation by the management. Some time ago the Federation steward was sacked on the spot and only reinstated after a strike. After his reinstatement he was very restricted in carrying out his duties. Soon after this, 16 joiners were fired without any consultation and a little later all the operatives were dismissed for holding a meeting. When work was resumed an agreement was reached on consultation.

The firm then showed their absolute contempt for the men by announcing the redundancy of 46 men WITHOUT ANY CONSULTATION. This was the last straw, and on Monday 23rd February all 150 men came out on strike. Under the new Working Rule this dispute should have gone to a local panel, but for some reason this did not happen and the matter went straight to a Regional Disputes Panel. This panel met on Friday 27th February, and the findings were as follows. 1) They condemned the firm for making men redundant without following agreed site consultation procedure. Nonetheless they uphold the firm's right to hire and fire. 2) They criticised the Federation steward for exceeding his authority and impeding the management. They expressed their belief that this had had an effect on the attitude of the management in relation to redundancy. 3) They directed the men to resume work, saying a meeting should then take place on site to resolve outstanding differences. The employers, although criticised for their action, were not ordered to do anything BUT THE MEN WERE TOLD TO GO BACK WITHOUT THE 46 MEN WHO HAD BEEN SACKED! At a mass meeting the men voted overwhelmingly to stay out. They were ready to go back only if the firm showed its goodwill by reinstating the 46 men and then using the agreed site procedure to go into the whole question of the redundancies. In view of the history of the job this was entirely reasonable. At this time the line of the officials concerned was, as usual, "get back to work lads so we can open negotiations". They accepted completely that the panel had found against the lads, never once making the point that the firm had been criticised for its action.

Under procedure the next step was a National Panel, which met in London. At this panel the two union representatives were THE SAME TWO MEN WHO HAD SAT ON THE REGIONAL PANEL WHICH HAD BEEN SO FAVOURABLE TO THE EMPLOYER! These were the two men who were to put the case for the lads! The Panel endorsed the findings of the Regional Panel (naturally). During the hearing there was an adjournment to see if the parties could reach any agreement. In fact they were close to an agreement on the basis that as a number of men had drifted away the remaining men could be re-employed en bloc. The stewards offered to waive demarcation until the job was running again. At this point the negotiations were interrupted and the panel resumed its hearing. Subsequently

(Cont'd on p.8)

THE ROLE OF THE

PRICES and



INCOMES

BOARD

book review

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"THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN 1900 - 1921"
by Walter Kendall (Weidenfield & Nicholson £5/5/)

One of the tricks the ruling class plays on us is to deny us our history. This isn't done by direct falsification, but by simple omission. How many children brought up on school history textbooks would realise that Britain was on the verge of social revolution just before and just after the First World War? How many would have heard of John MacLean, or of Sylvia Pankhurst in any role other than that of a suffragette? How many would realise that there is a revolutionary tradition in Britain in the first place? One of the great virtues of this book is that it fills in some of the gaps in our knowledge of our own past.

Kendall starts with an analysis of the pre-war revolutionary sects - and a pretty strange bunch they were. The Social Democratic Federation (later merging into the British Socialist Party), was Britain's original, rigidly Marxist party. It was led - often autocratically - by H. F. Hyndman, who combined an almost Leninist belief in the vanguard party with a completely mechanical materialism and a quite obscene chauvinism. The SDF didn't approve of rank-and-file militancy unless it was reflected in support for the SDF at the ballot box, and its contacts with militant workers were few and far between.

Equally out of touch, and in some respects even stranger, was the Socialist Labour Party, modelled on De Leon's American Party of the same name. It too was elitist in an almost Bolshevik fashion, but managed to exert more influence than the SDF despite being just as small.

The sects were cut off from the working class. The strangest thing about them was their complete failure to capitalise on the vast wave of industrial militancy which swept Britain between 1910 and 1914. This was the biggest series of large-scale, bitterly fought strikes since the 1840s. Not only did the sects play little or no part in them.. Their membership hardly rose at all, and their influence remained at best peripheral.

The industrial struggle spilled over into the war. The Trade Union officials sold out on every issue, only to be repudiated by the rank and file. In 1915 the Clyde workers took on, and partially beat, the employers and the State, who had the effective backing of the union officials. In 1916 10,000 Sheffield engineers came out (and were supported by Barrow engineers who struck in sympathy), to prevent the conscription of one man! In 1917, a nation-wide and completely unofficial strike took place - and was again partially successful - in the munitions industry against the extension of conscription.

Once again the influence of the sects was generally small. The shop stewards movement had a strong distrust of leaders, centralisation, and even of political ideas as such. Kendall believes that this was its undoing, and comes to the wholly reactionary conclusion that "no large-scale organisation could exist without a degree of professionalisation and bureaucracy" (p.167).

Yet the reason why the shop stewards movement was so important, and so inherently revolutionary, was this very refusal to accept bureaucracy and leadership from above. Its tragedy, and the cause of its eventual failure, was twofold. The movement was deeply fragmented, so that sympathetic action could never be guaranteed or co-ordinated in any way. And it never fully realised that it was presenting a political challenge, or that it could only succeed by a direct assault on the capitalist system and the state which protected it.

It's important to be very clear on this. If Lenin's "trade union consciousness" means pressure for improved wages and working conditions and nothing more, British militants had in this period far surpassed it. The campaign for workers' control of industry and poorly-defined but quite passionate and widespread hatred of capitalism which imbued the shop stewards movement, is far removed from the orthodox picture of "mere" trade union consciousness. The movement wasn't bought off by wage increases and plush jobs for the "ringleaders"; it was smashed after the war amid heavy wage cuts, by crippling unemployment and savage victimisation. If "political consciousness" means a conviction of the need to change society, rather than to nudge your bosses while accepting their right to rule you, then this had developed in Britain long before the formation of the British Communist Party, and quite independently of any of the vanguard parties of the time. (The only revolutionary ideas which came close to achieving mass working-class support in this period were those of the anti-political syndicalists; these were very far from being Leninist).

It was lack of effective (rather than merely sentimental) solidarity, and of united action, which proved to be the downfall of the British revolutionary movement. Even the famous Glasgow general strike of 1918, an attempt to prevent unemployment by imposing a 40-hour week after the union officials had settled for 47 - what could be more revolutionary than this? - failed to spread south of the border. 1918-1919 also saw widespread discontent among the conscript armed forces with enormous mutinies in both the army and the navy. Unity between mutinees and workers was how the Russian revolution began, yet no links at all were made between them in Britain.

None of this calls for rigidly centralised professional leadership on Leninist lines. The movement was dynamic and alive, precisely because it was its own inspiration and provided its own leadership. The failure to link up different areas of struggle, and to adopt an explicitly revolutionary perspective, would not have been solved by an English bolshevik party. Yet this was the lesson which was drawn from the failure of the movement by an active minority among the sects.

The analysis of the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain is perhaps the fundamental purpose of Kendall's book. He shows how genuine - and wholly understandable - enthusiasm for the Russian revolution gave an impetus to the unification of the sects. He argues, however, that the formation of a centralist organisation subscribing to the policy of Moscow-dominated Comintern would not have occurred without incessant prodding - and large amounts of cash - from Russia.

It's difficult not to agree with his conclusion that the CPGB was a largely artificial creation, which did not correspond to the needs of the British situation. There was no earthly reason why British revolutionaries should need a

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centralised party on bolshevik lines. There was no Tzarist autocracy to fight: the Special Branch, for example, was a mere shadow of the old Tzarist secret police. Similarly, Lenin's stress of the necessity of using parliamentary tactics as well as direct action was almost absurd in a British context. Large numbers of British workers had had the vote for over 50 years, and disillusion with Parliament was deeply embedded among militant workers well before the war. As the sects were not themselves illegal, there was no reason to assume that the CPGB would be, and there was thus no need for a "legal wing", working through parliamentary institutions, to act as a cover for underground work, as Lenin argued for pre-revolutionary Russia.

Even accepting the validity of Lenin's case under Russian conditions - which I don't, without substantial reservations - its inapplicability to Britain seems obvious enough. This is why the mere force of example of the successful Russian revolution was insufficient to lead to the formation of a British bolshevik party. Kendall's conclusion, that sustained pressure from Russia, and from Lenin himself, played the major part in the process is one that I find quite unanswerable.

The cases of John MacLean and Sylvia Pankhurst, well-documented by Kendall, add weight to his arguments. MacLean was the most perceptive and courageous of British revolutionaries in this period. He saw clearly the potential of industrial militancy, as well as the need for the destruction of the political power of the capitalist state. Repeatedly jailed for his activities, this was rare, and proves just how dangerous he was considered to be - MacLean is cited by modern Stalinists as a leading figure in the formation of the CPGB. Yet he never joined it! Kendall exposes the vicious lie that this was due to mental instability in the closing years of his life. He argues instead that MacLean, drawing on James Connolly's combination of Socialism and national liberation struggle, wanted a separate Scottish communist party, while the sects wanted a Communist Party of Great Britain. It's unlikely that this is the whole of the truth - Lenin, always the champion of oppressed national minorities, would surely have given way on this. More important is the evidence that Kendall himself produces to show that MacLean opposed the rigid imposition of Russian ideas and bolshevik organisation principles on the wholly different British (and Scottish) situation. Kendall quotes him thus: "I am not prepared to let Moscow dictate to Glasgow." (p.287)

Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation has the unique distinction of affiliating itself to the Comintern over a year before the CPGB was established! The SWF later split on the issue of the CPGB's proposed affiliation to the Labour Party, with Pankhurst leading the secessionists opposing affiliation. (The Labour Party rejected the CPGB's application for affiliation, making the whole dispute rather academic). But Pankhurst had done more than any other individual - except perhaps MacLean - to popularise the Russian revolution in Britain and was for some time on very close personal terms with Lenin. Her break with centralism was in the end complete enough for her to publish English translation of Kollontai's anti-bureaucratic "The Workers' Opposition" in her paper the "Workers' Dreadnought".(1)

(1) Now reprinted by North London Solidarity as their pamphlet No 7.

Once established, the CPGB naturally remained very small, at least until Stalin-worship began in the later 1930's. Kendall argues that its formation was responsible for the death of the tradition of libertarian revolutionary activity in Britain. I doubt if it was ever that important.

In any case, Kendall's book shows that Britain does have very deep-rooted revolutionary traditions, that these pre-date the CPGB and were fundamentally at odds with Leninist conceptions of organisation and political tactics. Revolution in Britain was in fact very close in 1918-1920, closer perhaps than Kendall believes. (Though not as close as Lenin supposed at the time). The possible effects of a British revolution are quite incalculable: perhaps the degeneration of the Russian revolution would have been reversed; certainly the world would now be a totally different place. This book is an absorbing account of two of the most important decades in modern British history. It ought to be in every public library, and is compulsory reading for all revolutionaries.

John King

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(Continued from page 3)

the local officials were not interested in continuing negotiations along these lines, presumably with the intention of smashing the militants on the site so that the job could be reorganised later, this time firmly under the union's wing.

THE ROLE OF THE UNIONS LOCALLY

Just before the National Panel met, the local committee of the A.U.B.T.W. had had no official notification that a dispute existed, although the strike was then in its third week. In spite of this they recommended that the dispute be made official. The local management committee of the A.S.W. had recommended official recognition prior to the Regional Panel findings. Then they performed an amazing about face, instructing the Full Time Official to visit the site and try to get a resumption of work according to the panel's findings EVEN THOUGH THERE HAD BEEN NO QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN THE SITUATION. It seems that if a loaded panel finds against the men then the local union machinery just throws in the sponge.

THE POSITION NOW

At the time of writing the site is working again. The firm has achieved its objective of cutting the labour force by over $\frac{1}{3}$ at a time when unemployment is high in the area. One of the stewards on the job was forced out by simply delaying his return under the phasing until he was forced by necessity to find another job. Another, the scaffolders steward who had thrown in a foreman's job to become a steward, has thrown in his credentials and taken back a foreman's job (and who can blame him?). The lads on the site are now, naturally, very disillusioned at the inability of the unions to achieve even minor concessions, let alone gain any victories.

LESSONS OF THE STRIKE

It seems that as the employers merge into big consortiums they are taking lessons from the bigger employers in other industries such as engineering, and looking for understandings with the union leaderships. Gilbert Ash have not shown themselves to be anti-union, simply anti-organisation. They are afraid not of the official union machine but of rank and file organisation at job level! All the lads lacked was experience and distrust of union officials. They now have both.

GUINEA ———

the unknown revolution.

by Paul Harris.

THE SYSTEM WE ARE fighting, the system that puts profits and privileges before people, is world wide. The poor and oppressed of all races have a common interest in destroying this system, and as socialists we should do our utmost to bring this point home to people in Britain and to destroy the myths of racism and nationalism with which they've been visited.

For these reasons what is happening in Guinea is of special importance, for in Guinea black men, villagers mostly, are destroying the armed forces of their Portuguese oppressors, who are being helped by Britain, the U.S.A. and other western capitalist states. Guinea is also important in that it raises questions of how democratic and far reaching a revolution in a peasant country can be. One other thing, it is our job to report little known struggles of this type precisely because they're not as 'fashionable' as Vietnam or Biafra, as there's no doubt which side deserves to lose, our glorious ally- Portugal.

The facts of this article are taken from two excellent books: 'The Liberation of Guinea'- Basil Davidson, Penguin 5/-. 'Revolution in Guinea'- Amilcar Cabral, Stage One 9/-, and the pamphlett 'Portugal and NATO', Frelimo 3/-. What follows is a brief account to encourage further study.

1. History/Geography.

Portugal, one of the poorest countries in Europe, is the only European colonialist country not to make any attempt to give independence since the war to her colonies. She holds on to them for reasons of economic gain, for prestige and because they provide a distraction to keep the Portuguese people's minds off the rotten system in their own country.

The African colonies are Angola, Mozambique and Guinea. Guinea is a small country the size of Switzerland, stuck between ex-French Guinea and Senegal. Of her population of 800,000 (just more than Liverpool) the vast majority are peasants.

2. Armed struggle begins.

For a long time peaceful attempts to gain independence for Guinea led to severe police repression, especially by the notorious secret police, the P.I.P.E. So in 1963 the African party for independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands P.A.I.G.C., founded by a young black intellectual, Amilcar Cabral, decided to take up armed struggle in the countryside. In the course of events the PAIGC had tried to get help from 'democratic' Britain and France, nothing doing, they stood by fascist Portugal. So PAIGC take help from countries willing to help them, the USSR, China, Cuba and her neighbors in Africa.

PAIGC needs all the help she can get, for the enemy in 1966 had 25,000 troops in the field, a high percentage of a total population of 800,000. Portugal also has American B26 bombers, German Fiat 91 jet fighters and all-american napalm. Where does she get her arms from?- NATO!

3. The role of NATO.

As NATO is supposed to 'protect' us from Russian 'aggression' (how many Russian troops are in Vietnam!) you might wonder why NATO bothers about a war in Africa. In fact the answer is simple, NATO is a Yank creation, so the Yanks are frantic to save the sacred profit system wherever it's threatened. Portugal has some useful places in Africa from which the continent can be guarded against the Red menace. So the Yanks, and their small chums like Britain, have a vested interest in Portugal's colonial wars. So by selling arms to Portugal, which they use 'unofficially' in Guinea, NATO helps the massacre of Africans to continue.

Britain supplies weapons to Portugal - viz - in 1961 she sold 2 frigates which the Portuguese used in Africa (Portugal and NATO, pg.24) from 1961 -64 'we' supplied 150 lightaircraft, also used in Africa (Ibid pg.44) in 1965 we sold them 200 Austin jeeps (Ibid pg 45) etc. etc. So our hands are bloody.

Since 1963, despite the tremendous disadvantage in arms, P.A.I.G.C. has liberated about 60% of the land of Guinea, 20% is contested, 20% held by the Portuguese. P.A.I.G.C. then is showing the big, white boss that when the slave revolts, he's dangerous!

4. P.A.I.G.C.

P.A.I.G.C. is the creation of middle-class black Guineans, the children of the people who were supposed to do Uncle Tom acts and become black Portuguese 'citizens'. The Party leader and the driving force behind the movement is Amilcar Cabral, the General Secretary.

Cabral is the theorist of P.A.I.G.C., what he has to say deserves attention. Cabral puts his Socialism firmly in a Guinean context. He says that 'The national liberation of a people is the beginning of the historical personality of that people, its return to history'. The classic Marxist theory that the motive force of history is class struggle would mean, he argues, that those tribes in Guinea without classes as we know them, are therefore without histories. So Cabral asks the question, what is the motive force of history before (and after) classes exist? The answer - the mode of production. Thus imperialism has held up the historical process of class formation, it has imposed a false history upon Guinea, and has 'removed' the Guinean people from history. This means that the Guinean people must control their own productive forces to regain control over their own history.

The attempt to take back their productive forces from the Portuguese is not a nationalist struggle, Cabral says ' the Neo-colonial situation is not resolved by a nationalist solution, it demands the destruction of the capitalist structure implanted in the national territory.....The liberation struggle is a revolution....it does not finish when the national flag is raised' (Emphasis in original) (Cabral Pp 86-7)

Cabral analyses the forces operating in this revolution, and finds no national bourgeoisie, no clearly-defined working class. He sees P.A.I.G.C. as a middle-class created party with a mass base of mostly peasants, plus some urban workers. He describes this as the 'nation class' whose task it is to seize control of the productive forces and hand them over to the working masses, who can then begin to construct the Socialist System.

5. P.A.I.G.C. structure.

P.A.I.G.C. is a democratic-centralist party with a wing of armed militants, guerillas as regular fighters, (about 2,000 of them.) The highest policy-making body is the Congress, which elects the 22-man Central Committee, which in turn elects the Executive and Political Committees.

Cabral's Party is not, according to Davidson, elitist or bureaucratic. Davidson finds a genuine empathy between 'leaders' and masses; Cabral emphasises the need to destroy elitism of all kinds. Indeed, one could ask how a party could wage such successful guerilla warfare without mass support and the aid and confidence of the peasants.

6. P.A.I.G.C. Programme is a mixture of democratic, nationalist and Socialist demands. Thus it would allow 'private exploitation' which boosted the economy to co-exist with State and co-operative property. One must see the P.A.I.G.C. programme, which calls for an independent, lay, republican, and democratic State of Guinea, in the context of Guinea as a small, poor African state. Within these conditions, demands for 100% Socialism would be Utopia.

7. P.A.I.G.C. achievements.

1. By tying down so many troops to help the struggle of all unfree black people in Africa eg. Angola.
2. By defeating white Fascists, to strike a blow for black pride.
3. By emphasising the distinction between the white workers of Portugal and their white Fascists rulers, to have combated racism and identified the enemy as a system - colonialism - organised by the Portuguese ruling-class.
4. By making liberation inevitable, to have struck a blow against U.S. strategic meddling in Africa.

Within Guinea - the Liberated Areas.

1. To have replaced chiefs by village-elected committees.
2. To have women take up 2 out of the 5 places on each village committee - a big step for Africa.
3. To put land in liberated areas under the ownership and control of the whole village.
4. To have fought tribalism eg. by sending troops of one tribe to liberate the land of another tribe.
5. To have created Peoples' Shops in which the people exchange goods without using money.
6. To have improved health and education facilities in these areas.

Comments.

Above are ten good reasons for supporting P.A.I.G.C. From reading the books mentioned, P.A.I.G.C. appears not as an elitist party, but as a party of and for the people. A party organised into a structure that can provide effective communications and all the other requirements of military struggle. A party whose theory and method are rooted in the needs, hopes and aspirations of the Guineans people.

No doubt their programme and structure are not libertarian, one could ask how they could be under their particular conditions? But their revolution will abolish colonial power, it will make most property public, it will increase economic strength, improve health and education and it is involving the mass of the people. These are all pre-requisites for a society in which the libertarian revolution is possible. The victory of P.A.I.G.C. will make the progress of a complete revolution more likely and strike a death-blow to Portuguese Colonialism.

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Now dogmatists, Socialists, Sectarians and Utopians, all can pick holes in Cabral and his Party. Let them. Some will maintain their ideological purity (and their intellectual arrogance) by pretending to support the masses but not the 'leaders' or the 'structure' of the Party. Let them. Whether they like it or not, a revolution is being carried out in Guinea, a revolution in which the ordinary people play a vital (and active) role. This brief summary of the Guinean question is intended to provide a basis for further reading. However, it is not negatively critical of P.A.I.G.C. because of brevity, but because within Guinea, P.A.I.G.C. seems the right kind of party doing the right kind of job. Let us leave those who would support a mystical mass against mystical leaders and instead join with the real people of Guinea who fully support their Party by saying with them, 'Victory to the P.A.I.G.C.!!'

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Hot on the heels of the news that Russia supplied coal to Spain in order to break the Asturian mine-workers' strike comes the news that the East German Government has signed an agreement to supply £14 million worth of high tension electrical equipment to GREECE. Workers solidarity for ever!

157 race, sex and the class war

As the Women's Liberation Movement has gained strength a great deal of nonsense has been talked about it in the ranks of the left. The most common accusation made against the comrades involved has been that they have been "splitting the movement". This is utter rubbish. The class, which must in the end become the movement in any truly socialist society, is already split wide open on this and many other matters. If I may be excused for a slight oversimplification there are three parallel fights being waged at this moment. First the obvious class struggle, where workers are fighting against the capitalist system, second the racial issue, blacks against white supremacy, and third, but by no means least, the fight by women to end male domination of society.

These three issues are all facets of the same battle, to end privilege. To attempt to fight any one of these in isolation is completely useless. Racism and male domination are so tied up with the capitalist structure that neither one can be ended within the framework of society as it now exists. This does not mean that these problems should be shelved until "after the revolution". To be black is not something one can ignore. To be rated second class because of your sex is unendurable, although these issues of course are not peculiar to capitalism. In feudal times sex discrimination existed. Racial prejudice was not invented by the capitalists they merely exploited it to the full. Nevertheless it is not enough to be motivated by class consciousness alone. To smash the capitalist system without ending all forms of prejudice, discrimination and inequality will not bring about socialism. Private monopoly capitalism has been overthrown in Eastern Europe, but anti-semitism is rife, and socialism is as far away as ever.

The three issues of sex race and class are so deeply intertwined that it is essential for any real socialist revolutionary to have a proper perspective of them all. As a matter of fact many people are involved in two or more roles anyway. The black worker, the woman worker and the black woman all suffer from two forms of repression. The black woman worker of course is a three time loser. Thus while a white militant worker is aware of the exact identity of his enemy, for a woman or a black the issue is more complicated. Within the basic struggle they have a more immediate one. When Marx says that the emancipation of the working class can only be achieved by the class he is absolutely right of course, but the argument can be extended. The emancipation of the black races can only be achieved by themselves, and exactly the same is true of women. No white can liberate the blacks, men cannot end the secondary role of women any more than a middle class intellectual can emancipate the working class.

This is not to say that we cannot play a role in each other's struggles. The white revolutionary can obviously service and assist the black to liberate himself, the intellectual can play a vital role in the class war, men can assist women in their emancipation, but in the end liberation takes place not in an overt field of activity but inside the head of the person concerned. Whilst we can help each other to achieve this form of liberation we cannot fight on the behalf of others while they play a merely passive role. This is paternalism. Each oppressed section must liberate itself --- BUT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE.

14.
Only when we become fully aware of all the issues involved can we begin to see the real issue. ... Not just the overthrow of capitalism, but the ending of society as it now exists; a society based on greed and possession, on privilege and authority at all levels----- right down to the most basic human relationships even within the family structure. A society where competitiveness is instilled into even the smallest child so that, for instance, instead of a fancy dress parade we have a fancy dress competition, and FUN is replaced by the desire to win, the desire to be superior to others. In the end what we are surely aiming for is a society which is not concerned with labels such as 'black' or 'woman' but rather with people; and without having some perspective of this society we can never hope to achieve it.

Rick Sumner.

MAY DAY

Last year in Manchester, as in other places, May Day was marked by a massive strike and a well supported demonstration. Of course there was a big issue at the time, the infamous White Paper "In Place of Strife". This time there isn't such a clear cut issue and the likelihood of a big successful strike being held is remote. Nonetheless May Day is not being ignored. Solidarity (North West) has joined an ad-hoc committee which is organising a march to celebrate the day. Instead of calling for a strike we are in fact saying "May Day is a holiday so take it. Come on the march, bring the kids, booze, sandwiches. After the march we are having a rave up with beat groups, folk singers, cans of beer."

Why not come along? If there is one thing that bosses hate more than us having a day off it's thinking we are enjoying ourselves while we are off!

The march starts at 1.30 p.m. under the Mancunian Way, Oxford Road, Manchester. This year May Day is a Friday.

Its May Day -- take a holiday -- take a long weekend.

NORTH WEST SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS.

No. 1. MAIL ORDER MILLIONS. by Paul Bolton.
aA workers-eyeview of the thriving Mail Order business, showing the exploitation which takes place. 10d (inc. postage).

No. 2. THE BUILDING WORKERS' PAY DEAL. An analysis of the recently signed pay and conditions deal signed by the building unions.

Obtainable from,

Janet Harris,

96, Doveleys Road,
Salford M6 8QW

THE OCCUPATION.

The recent 'troubles' at Manchester University have their roots, of course, in the very power structure in that University which reflects the structure of the society we are living in, but more specifically they began last November. At that time the news was given out, in typical paternalistic fashion, that the choice had been made as to who was to take over as Vice Chancellor of the University the following September (i.e. 1970). There were two main objections to this; first of all the most undemocratic manner in which the selection was made, and secondly many objections could be raised as to the man chosen. The general discontent led several hundred students to stage a token occupation of the Whitworth Hall, part of the Universities Administration Block. This done, very tidily and very enjoyably, the current Vice Chancellor made the surprising and disturbing statement to a national paper that he was compiling FILES on those students who had taken a leading part in the occupation. This is now ignored by the national press, who instead insist that the issue of files first arose when some Warwick students, who

were occupying their administration building over the issue of an autonomous Students Union, discovered some extremely interesting, and of course confidential, correspondence between the Vice Chancellor of Warwick and V.Cs of other Universities, including Manchester.

The Students Union of Manchester had meanwhile tried to find out more about what exactly was this information their V.C. was compiling about them. There is no doubt they were greatly aided by the Warwick revelations, especially because of letters which had been written by the V.C. of Manchester, but also partly because the Warwick discoveries tended to confirm the existence of political files on individual students and also on members of staff. (They were also very enlightening on the business connections of the University, but that's another story.) The upshot of these events was a motion which was to be put before a General Meeting of University of Manchester Union demanding that all files kept on students should be open to inspection by them and calling for an occupation of the Administration Block until this demand was met. This motion was given the publicity required by the Union constitution, and was to be held on Thursday 26th of February. However on Wednesday 25th the injunctions intervened. It is well known now that the V.C. of Manchester University, in conjunction with what is known as his "Fire Brigade Committee" (in reality his most trusted cronies on Senate, the governing body of the University), saw fit to apply in court for injunctions to be placed on five members of the University Students Union, in order to prevent them speaking at a Union General Meeting.

This decision had a profound effect on many students, and non students too. The result of these injunctions was of course a two week occupation of the Administration Block, an occupation which the injunctions had ostensibly been intended to prevent. This however is a debatable point as the V.C.'s action is interpreted by not a few as an attempt to push the Union into rash action in the hope it would smash itself by splitting itself irrevocably and isolating the 'left extremists' -- whoever they might be. Be that as it may, it is clear that the V.C. and his colleagues on the Senate intended, with the injunctions, to undermine the autonomy of the Union and, as expressed by the Union President, "smash the Student Union movement nationally."

This move, as we have seen, failed in the short run. The occupation, which began the day following the taking out of the injunctions, was successful beyond the hopes of all but the wildest optimists on the left, even though the V.C. may be congratulating himself for getting it all over without conceding anything of real importance, unlike the V.C. of Leeds after last year's occupation there. In my opinion the success of the occupation lies not in the satisfaction gained over the demands made, but in the occupation itself, the feeling it generated, the spontaneous organisation to which it gave rise and the enduring solidarity which characterised the whole two week period, at least among the hard core of 1,000 or so students who slept, ate and worked there during the occupation.

The first evening of the occupation an administrative committee was elected, consisting of the President and Welfare Vice-President of the Union and more or less anybody else who wanted to be on it. Formalities suddenly seemed of very little importance. From this committee there sprang firstly the 'four points' which became the minimum demands of the occupiers, satisfaction over which it was felt must be obtained before there could be any thought of leaving. Over the next few days there also sprang up a quite phenomenal organisation of cleaning, information (a permanent desk was set up), a 24 hour refreshment shop, poster workshop, public address system, security, for all of which there was never any lack of volunteers, or come to that, efficiency. As a result of this, but also I think because of it, was a general feeling of common interest and of the need to participate in the running of things. A corollary of this was that many people discovered the joys of communal living, much to their own surprise!

The 'four points' were, briefly, demands ; that an independant public enquiry be set up to investigate the taking out of the injunctions, i.e. the power structure that enables one man to take such a decision, and also to look into the question of political files; that the injunctions be lifted unconditionally ; that no student or member of staff be victimised in any way for taking part in the occupation ; for 'full' representation of students on the various Administrative and Faculty Boards. (A fifth demand was later added for political autonomy of the Union, which had been undermined by the injunctions. A

A negotiating committee was elected to meet the V.C. and his committee regarding these demands, and one of the committee elected was one of the students against whom the injunctions had been taken out. This was an indication of the solidarity of the students on this issue -- it was a necessary gesture to the V.C. and the Senate to show what the students thought about the injunctions.

A regular feature of the occupation was the regular holding of General Assemblies attended by over three thousand students which were the policy making body of the occupation. These general assemblies voted unanimously for ten days to continue the occupation, and there was a 68% to 70% majority in favour of boycotting lectures. The boycott never took place however, since it had been decided that a 75% majority was needed to back up a successful one --- but there is no doubt that the threat of a strike and the continuing large majority in favour of one helped the negotiating committee in its task. There are even those who feel it was advantageous not to achieve the 75% majority, as an unsuccessful boycott would have been very demoralising and would have seriously weakened the position of the negotiators. However there seem to be little grounds for supposing a boycott would not have been successful even with a 70% majority, and there are many who feel a 2/3 majority would have been quite sufficient. It is a debatable point whether the boycott would have strengthened the position of the students, but there is no doubt at all that the threat of one was in itself a strengthening factor.

Amongst the other important features of the occupations were the teach-ins, held every two or three days although none was planned more than a day in advance. They generally centred round the subject of the University and Society and the power structure of both. There was also one on students and socialism and one on the Middle East question. These were organised in a very spontaneous fashion by groups of students who felt they would like to do so, and the teach-ins were generally very successful and of great educational value. To a man, every student who has taken an active part in the sit in maintains that he/she has "learned more in these two weeks than in the entire six months/1½ yrs/2½ yrs I've been here." Many were struck by the irrelevance of their courses to what was going on, and following from this the irrelevance of their courses to the world in general, and there grew up renewed dissatisfaction with course content. As with other more immediate complaints it then came to be realised that the real problem was power----- the power structure of the university, and of society in general.

It was from this realisation that the demands for full representation grew--- although it was soon realised that representation in the present structure would change very little in fact ---- what is needed is the abolition of the present hierarchical structure: only then can students and professors come together as work teams on a basis of equality and equal concern over social issues. Often as part of the teach-ins outside speakers were invited to come to the occupation among whom were members of the A.E.F. (Engineers Union) and Building Workers, who expressed their solidarity with the students in their struggle against authority, a struggle they are well acquainted with. In particular the building workers were sympathetic on the question of 'files', having the same problem themselves with the 'black list' of militants. Other speakers included Bernadette Devlin and Paul Foot, who had also understood the situation very well, and made valuable contributions. Bernadette Devlin spoke in rousing terms to a packed hall of over three thousand and, much to the surprise of the traditional left, succeeded in warming what had been previously regarded as apathetic students, or at best moderates, to some very revolutionary views. She pulled no punches, and got several standing ovations for her trouble. Paul Foot had done a lot of research into the business connections of universities, as well as of individual academics, and was thus able to contribute much valuable information.

Apart from 'pure education' entertainment was abundant during the two weeks. Perhaps the most popular of all was 'Occupational Hazard', an ad-hoc group of drama students, who staged a nightly show of satire and songs. The contents of both were almost entirely political, and so this group added a new dimension to the occupation, and to political agitation in general. Badly acted plays, good humour and pithy songs were seen to be an excellent way of getting the message across. Here also 'moderates' were found applauding revolutionary views whereas previously they had refused to even listen. This should be a very sobering lesson to would-be-revolutionaries who have never been able to communicate with these people in two or three years at the university. Other entertainments included pop groups, many of whom performed gratis in solidarity with the students struggle, folk groups, a group of 'wandering players' and films. Many of these entertainers came unasked. This is an indication of the potential for a really fine movement in Britain, encompassing not only 'dedicated revolutionaries' but also other dissatisfied elements who long to see radical change, which would free them from the oppression which they keenly feel, but which they feel helpless to eradicate. Certainly I feel there is a

place in revolutionary propagandising for guerilla theatre groups such as 'Occupational Hazard' was. There is no doubt they play a very useful and highly enjoyable role. This question of fun, enjoyment, pleasure, by the way, is vital in a revolutionary movement. I cannot agree with those who say revolution isn't for fun ----- it must be fun (as well as being extremely serious of course), or else what are we going to end up with after our grim life-long fight? Whatever our new society will be like it's not likely to be very cheerful if, in the course of achieving it, we have all lost the capacity to enjoy ourselves. Surely the aim of the revolution is to increase happiness and the joy of living, through the abolition of exploitation and privilege. Consequently we must create happiness throughout the revolution if we hope to find it afterwards. For this reason I must stress the importance of the entertainment factor in the occupation, and in revolutionary movements generally.

Finally, the occupation was very instructive on the role of leaders, and of the 'followers', or the mass. The leadership during the occupation consisted of the Union President and a few others, most of whom were on the negotiating committee. They made many mistakes, but a real lesson was learned. This was the necessity for the leaders to ask for criticism, and even more important, for the 'mass' to make their criticisms known, not just to each other, but to the leaders themselves. It was realised that only in this way could the leaders be truly responsible, and the process be truly democratic. It is dangerous and mistaken to expect the leaders to take all the responsibility for democracy----- the mass must also take responsibility by continually harassing the leaders and making known their views, and also by making it quite clear that the leaders will be suffered only so long as they give satisfaction. If they start becoming authoritarian or paternalistic they must be recalled and replaced. This system allows the most competent administrators to administrate without becoming rulers. But, I repeat, they can't be expected to prevent themselves from becoming rulers, this is up to the rank and file.

The occupation then was a lesson on Socialism in many ways. The end of the occupation, however, was a return to raw politics, the politics of a pre-revolutionary society where the fight is very much alive. After certain concessions had been made over the 5 demands, namely the lifting of the injunctions, an assurance of no victimisation and the promise of an enquiry (note - not an independent public enquiry, but an internal one) the 'right' decided to attack. They decided, predictably, that these concessions were enough to justify withdrawal from the occupation, and they proposed a motion to that effect on the 17th day. This motion was defeated, but only by a majority of 60%, which is quite understandable, given the psychology of the difference between supporting a motion (to stay), and opposing a motion (to leave), and also allowing for the fact that the injunctions had been lifted and they were the original reason for the occupation. Nevertheless this result had a very demoralising effect on some of the occupiers and, more important, seriously weakened the position of the negotiating committee, since every one concerned felt that the next time such a motion was put it might be successful. Many forgot that the occupation had lasted 17 days before the Right felt strong enough to overtly oppose it, much longer than is normally the case. The outcome of this stab in the back was that although the University acceded to the student demand for an impartial chairman for the enquiry, no more satisfaction was obtained. It was decided, for tactical reasons, that the President must propose withdrawal in order to prevent demoralisation and the disintegration of the occupation. It was felt that the students must

leave in a body, still fighting. Withdrawal was duly proposed and voted by the General Assembly --- not without several bitter attacks on the right. Withdrawal then took place the following day, taking the form of a march round the Admin Block singing revolutionary songs, and generally manifesting the continuing solidarity of the students.

This isn't the end. It is hoped it has been just a very good beginning of something much wider and more permanent. One consequence of the occupation has been the creation of a new Union society, called Students for a Democratic University. It is hoped that by agitation within the university for democratisation of the structure, students will be able to contribute in a positive way to the general struggle for freedom to control one's life, a struggle which is being waged in many other sectors of society. Many political lessons have been learned from the occupation, some of which I have outlined above; a further lesson has been that in a struggle such as this one, it becomes necessary at some point to assess the relative importance of a) the demands one is making, and b) the movement that has been created around these demands. It became clear towards the end of the occupation that the movement had become far more important than the demands which had led to it. Obviously at first, and until some satisfaction was obtained, the demands were of the utmost importance (not least because at that time they were helping to create the movement). But the situation changed, as all situations do, and it came to be felt that by far the biggest gain was the solidarity of the new student movement. Consequently this had to be preserved, even if this entailed some sacrifices. Hence the tactical withdrawal, before all the demands had been met, but also before the movement became fragmented. A further lesson learned, at least by some, was the need to reject dogma and be prepared to learn lessons from such actions as the occupation. Action and theory are both essential to a revolutionary movement and each must come from the other, with continual reappraisal and development of the theory. Thirdly the need for nationwide movements was reaffirmed. Many of us realised that whatever we do in Manchester, it will be of little use unless it relates to the national struggles both inside and outside the university. The contact made with representatives of the workers were greatly appreciated, as were the messages of solidarity from students of other universities, and the action of many of the latter in taking up the struggle in their own colleges.

It is imperative that the action initiated should continue, that students carry on their struggle in the universities; but also the links that have been made with other oppressed groups in society must be maintained and multiplied. It is not enough to democratise the Ivory Tower, --- the Ivory Tower as such should be abolished and replaced with a truly Free University, open to all. Obviously this cannot be realised in the present society --- a democratic university is impossible within the class structure which exists today. Nevertheless, by working for democracy within the university students can help to undermine the authoritarian structure of society as a whole, as other groups are striving to do in the particular institutions in which they find themselves.

P.A.R.H.

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