

# solidarity

FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

NO. 16

JUNE - JULY

25 P



"No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle."

"Does anyone really expect us to be the exception?"

The atmosphere in Brixton in the days after the riots was carnivalesque - despite the police helicopter circling constantly overhead ( even at night ), and pairs of coppers on every corner, the sense of satisfaction and solidarity among people on the street was almost tangible. That moment was an important milestone in establishing the self-identity of the local multiracial community, and it was apt that it should come about in a sudden explosion of hatred and revolt against the police. In fact one

If it went no further than this, we could laugh off such false and mechanical reasoning as not worth thinking about. But when it is made the basis for an opportunist campaign such as that being run by the SWP over the New Cross fire in which 13 black people died, it is no laughing matter. In its frantic attempts to win recruits in the black community, the SWP is prepared to assert as a fact that the police are covering up, that the fire was beyond doubt the result of a racist attack, and so on. It concluded that no-one should ever believe anything the police say.

kind of approach would win the backing of the more liberal politicians, especially in the Labour Party, who do not see the rioters as criminals, but as victims, and who want to alleviate the underlying causes of poverty and unemployment by injections of cash, finance for black business ventures, more sports facilities and so on. It's a more subtle approach and one that deserves from us a more sophisticated appraisal than the simplistic dismissal that "soft cops are the same as hard cops."

So much for the state. What about the rioters? Clearly they do not

# THE BRIXTON CARNIVAL

of the most positive aspects of the riot was its obvious anti-police nature - attempts to classify it as a race riot were obviously ridiculous. The villains of the piece were identified beyond reasonable doubt as the police, evidence of whose harassment and intimidation of the local black population was recently made abundantly available by a local council-sponsored inquiry into police-community relations.

The riots were as, "Socialist Worker" rightly called them, the "festival of the oppressed, but where do the oppressed go from here? Euphoria is all very well, but this is not a football match in which the referee stops his watch while the team that has just scored a goal celebrates - the world carries on, and decisions have to be made about what happens next after the dramatic events of April.

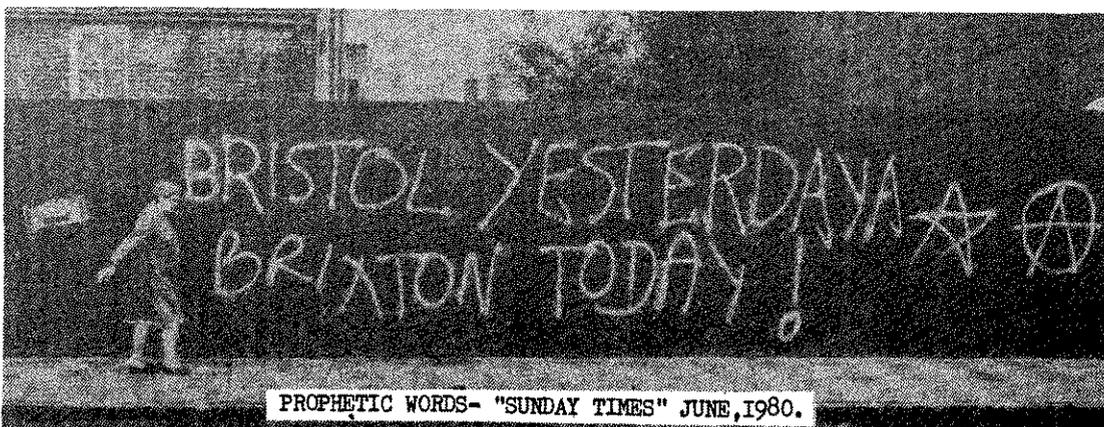
The ruling class must also be asking itself the same question; from its point of view, Brixton was a disaster.

In such a heated situation as this there is nothing to be gained from the cultivation of a righteous hatred of the police for behaving like pigs. They certainly did not bring about the Brixton riots on their own; they are not to blame for capitalism's inability to provide a just economy, or for employers' prejudices against blacks, or for the educational disadvantages faced by black kids in school. It is their job to hold the fort when trouble is engendered by such injustices. Although they are permanently in the front line, as it were, the society they serve is not of their making, nor does it exist to serve them ( or at least most of them ); maybe this is why they develop precious little understanding of what is happening all about them. And as the demands of their role become increasingly brutal and they themselves increasingly brutalised, the chances of such consciousness dawning become correspondingly more remote. There is apparently an alternative for the ruling class, based on a 'soft' approach including the adoption of community policing as a key method of 'infiltrating' the population and identifying areas of potential disaffection before they explode. This

constitute a ready-made band of highly conscious insurrectionists. They share a hatred of the police born of bitter experience, and on this occasion took the opportunity to settle some racial scores on the side, notably by burning down two racist pubs. On the other hand, when someone started throwing stones at the windows of the community action office, whose work is appreciated by local people, they were stopped. It is also true however, that many shopkeepers got their windows broken who did not deserve it.

The "movement" now seems divided over how to proceed. When it met just after Easter, the defence committee did oblige the self-appointed moderate spokesman, lawyer Rudi Narayan, to take a back seat but the meeting seemed not to know whether it wanted to be specifically black or mixed - when a vote was taken most abstained, and of the few who voted, a small majority wanted a black-only group.

It would be unfortunate in our view if the movement opted to be definitively black-only. In part this is because we see our oppression as transcending racial divisions and requiring a solution



PROPHETIC WORDS - "SUNDAY TIMES" JUNE, 1980.

ion that must do likewise. But it would also be a pity if the movement by accepting the racism openly displayed by many police officers were to respond with equally distorted prejudices - it is not true that all police are racists, or support the NF, and so on, even in Brixton; difficult though it may be, things must be kept in perspective if fundamental changes are ever to be achieved.

The riots were all the more unwelcome for the fact that only a couple of weeks before the authorities had found it impossible to make charges stick against 8 of those accused of serious offences in the Bristol riots of Easter last year, charges against the remaining 4 were then dropped, presumably not so much in the interests of racial harmony, as was claimed, but to save the police and the prosecution from the prospective ignominy of a 100% failure in securing convictions.

In Brixton the immediate cause of the riots was the police's heavy-handed attempts to reduce a high crime

rate by swamping the area with macho SPG squads. The rationale is that it should work - there is no point in trying to keep the lid on a boiling pot if you haven't got the strength to do so. In this case the pot boiled over, and the police got their fingers burnt.

The experience doesn't seem to have made them any the wiser. Had they withdrawn after the first incidents, many observers said, the rioting most likely would not have developed. But local police chiefs seemed so afraid of the challenge to their authority that they could only think in terms of violently suppressing it.

Their "pig-headed" refusal to consider any alternative approach was shared by Ms. Thatcher, and indeed is only to be expected of the authoritarian Right, whose instinctive reaction to authentic activities by the "lower orders" is to quash them. This attitude is mirrored by the more neanderthal elements of the Left, whose political know-how goes no deeper than mindlessly asserting that the worse it is, the better it is.

Exactly how the defence committee sees things is not yet known. Its most immediate task is providing aid for the nearly 300 people who were arrested. What will be aimed at in wider terms is more difficult to see; a spokesman for the defence committee has talked of the need to defend the community against the police, but whether this will be undertaken as part of a wider political programme is not yet known.

The West Indian community, which is most involved, is not particularly known for its libertarianism. Conventional sexual roles are more closely adhered to than in the white community. Kids tend to be brought up in a more repressive way; in fact conflict between black parents and kids is widespread, causing the "Sunday Telegraph" to call on black parents to improve matters as their contribution to stopping the riots happening again! Black feminism has yet to establish itself as a movement of any significance. Rastafarianism, which is adopted or looked on favourably by many young blacks, doesn't have much to do with socialism. The movement will limit its undoubted potential if those within it fail to raise these problems and perspectives.

N.T.



Dear Solidarity,

I think it would be worth putting the Brixton riots in the context of the several other riots/mass direct actions that have taken place in Europe within the last year or so - Zurich, Berlin, Amsterdam, Bristol, Brokdorf, Plogoff, etc.

...the riots do seem to have been overwhelmingly positive in that black and white working class people united against the oppressive police presence in their area, and in that the looting and attacks on property were directed in the vast majority of cases against shops, businesses, churches, pubs, schools and other capitalist property rather than against possessions belonging to working class people. Both rioters and Government ministers/politicians have said the conflict was not black versus white, but black and white against the authorities and the police.

M.V.

Gays in Brixton have suffered from the hostility of both the police and some local residents (see, for example the Final Report of the Working Party into Police/Community Relations in Lambeth, pp.72 et seq.). It was not, therefore, surprising that of the whites involved in the riots the majority were gay. Gay News (30 April) reports that their involvement has led to increased acceptance and sympathy from the black street community. Common action often leads to greater respect for one's fellows; we hope that the solidarity which has developed will be maintained and extended.

#### LARZAC INTERNATIONAL GATHERING

The Larzac peasants and the Larzac Movement, who for 10 years have been resisting the extension of the military camp on the Larzac Plateau in France, are calling an International Gathering this August. They want the gathering to give the opportunity for arguments and debate on how to oppose the threat of war and increasing state repression, and on how to create a "communist world" free from the drives of profit and exploitation.

The Larzac activists wish to discuss methods of resistance - they state that in their own fight they have not hesitated, where necessary,

to adopt illegal forms of struggle. They put their "popular resistance against the logic of war-mongering" in the context of the growing danger of world war, which they see as related to the world crisis and the consequent reinforcement of the economic battle between the great powers.

The gathering will be from 9th to 18th August.

More information from:

Paysans du Larzac,  
Rencontres Internationales Pour la Paix,  
Potensac du Larzac,  
12100 MILLAU, France.

# LABOURING IN VAIN

At the Westminster bosses' talking shop, aptly described as the best gentlemen's club in town, all is not well. Tory wets, that is those who favour, even in these crisis-ridden times, a continuation of Butskellite consensus politics as opposed to monetarist confrontation, have voted against a Tory government. One has even crossed the plush carpets to join the ranks of the opposition, and others may follow. On the Labour side, the Williams-Rodgers-Owen gang of three has grown to a gang of fourteen which, together with a motley crew of failed politicians, academics, businessmen and trade union bureaucrats, has formed the grossly misnamed Council for Social Democracy now rechristened the Social Democratic Party. The original Social Democrats led by Henry Hyndman were exponents of a singularly dogmatic brand of Marxism.

The media, perhaps fearful of the results of the Tories' right turn and Labour's move back from the Crossland mixed-economy ideology to leftist state-capitalism, has portrayed the Social Democrats as the greatest thing since sliced bread. And the notoriously unreliable opinion polls inform us that if the Liberals and the Social Democrats formed a united front it would win the next election. However, it is more likely that the Social Democrats will have as little real impact on parliamentary politics as the Ecology Party or the Workers' Revolutionary Party.

More important from a revolutionary viewpoint than the antics of politicians is the fact that the defection of Williams et al and the row over how the leader is to be elected has given the Labour Party, badly discredited by the performances of Wilson and Callaghan, a Left veneer, a measure of ostensible credibility as a "socialist" alternative to Thatcher. Certainly, the long term decline in Labour Party member-

ship has been reversed, 80,000 people joining in the last year, while the adoption by the Labour Party conference, although not by the Parliamentary Party, of such policies as unilateral nuclear disarmament indicate a turn (lurch would perhaps be more accurate) away from the Gaitskellite policies which have dominated Labour since the fifties.

## NEW RECRUITS

Many of those who've recently joined the Labour Party, are people who a decade ago wouldn't have touched it with a barge pole. Included in the ranks of these converts are not a few Libertarians who, it may be argued, have abandoned the sterility of trad anarchism for the impotence of the Labour Party. However, it is too easy to shield oneself from an unpleasant reality with the armour of dogma and endless repetitions of the stock phrases about people who join the Labour Party having crossed the "class lines" and the Labour Party being the "left-wing of capital" or "social fascist" or whatever the current epithets are. Reassuring though this may be, it does not answer the questions of why have a growing number of revolutionaries joined the Labour Party, of why many thousands of honest, decent, sincere people are members, of why, despite its abysmal anti-working class record, millions of workers still vote for it and see it as their party, or at least as the lesser of two evils. Until a realistic attempt is made to answer these questions the debate amongst revolutionaries about what the Labour Party is and what to do about it will remain so much hot air. We should also be asking ourselves why in times of crisis does working class rebellion against both the economic and authority relationships of society manifest itself not in a radical revolutionary, but in a radical reactionary, fascist way?

For a start the myth that the Labour Party is monolithic in the way in which the Soviet Communist Party or even the Tory Party is must be dispelled. The Labour Party is a consensus, a "broad church" uniting conflicting elements who know that, however much they dislike each other, in order to enjoy the benefits of office they must stay together. It is that knowledge that has prevented any serious split in Labour's 80 year history and has brought numerous "Left" defectors back to the Labour ranks. Certainly, attempts to build a "Left" parliamentary alternative to Labour, the Communist Party, the post 1931 ILP, Commonwealth, etc, have all been dismal failures. While the main tendencies, excluding entrust Trots, in the Labour Party are the advocates of a mixed economy on the one hand and of leftist state-capitalism on the other there are at rank and file level many actual or potential Socialists. These are the people who year in year out do the leafleting and canvassing without thought of reward. To dismiss them as traitors or as opportunists ready to sell out at the drop of a fiver would be a great mistake.

Many of these people agree with the criticisms of both Labourism and Leninism made by Libertarians. Yet for them leaving the Labour Party to join or start a Libertarian group would be a step into the wilderness. The sectarianism of those more concerned with preserving their ideological purity than winning support for that ideology amongst those for whom the ideology is meant to act as a guide to their self-liberation, does little to encourage them. There is within the Labour Party a potential large audience for the self-managed Socialist alternative. Given the loyalty of this audience to the Labour Party and their, in some ways healthy, distrust of verbose declasse intellectuals more

concerned with reliving the past than changing the present the problem arises of what is the best way to address this audience? The belief that the best way to do so is by joining the Labour Party has led some Libertarians into the Labour ranks. Such a path is fraught with dangers! History is full of revolutionaries, Herbert Morrison is a prime example, who joined Labour to turn it in a revolutionary direction and have ended up on the right. What then is the alternative? A choice between the incestuous life of isolated sects and sinking in the Labour swamp is like that between Satan and Beelzebub!

The over idealistic or over pessimistic may see support for Tony Benn as an answer, after all he has a lot to say about democracy and decentralisation. However, a reading of Benn's "Arguments for Socialism" will reveal that far from being a blueprint for revolution his thinking is less "revolutionary" than that of Cripps, Bevan, Strachey, Cole and Co. in the 'thirties or for that matter of MacDonald in Labour's early days. The Labour Party far from moving towards socialism is merely moving back to its position of the years 1931-51. The ideology of this period far from being libertarian was a hotch potch of Fabian reformism, Morrison style corporatism, Keynesianism, and anglicised versions of Stalinism. It was by no means accidental that Fabian intellectuals such as Shaw and the Webbs found their mecca in Stalin's Russia and Mussolini's Italy or that Labour Lefts such as Mosley and Beckett were the founders of British fascism. For all of them it was the plan and the planners and not the people which were all important.

Today the same is true for the Labour Left ideologues. What is important for them is not working people taking control of their lives, but state control of industry (sanitised with the cosmetic of "participation") and the defence of the British nation state from foreign competition. Their bait for the masses, who are seen merely as voting fodder, is populism and radical nationalism. Nor have many lost their admiration for the USSR, just look at the utterances of the Alex Kitsons and James Lamonds!

For all sections of the Labour Party the parliamentary road is the only road and this is the most dangerous illusion of all! What happened in Chile in 1973 must never be forgotten. Nor should we forget the rumours here in 1974 when the miners' strike was at its peak and Heath fell, of a military coup, rumours which led to the hasty dispatch of junior officers to the wilds of Belize. Socialism can be brought about by neither parliamentary reform or the machinations of conspiratorial vanguards. It can only come about by the conscious independent self-activity of workers. The potential for such activity undoubtedly exists, but it is far from being realised. For the most part, the working class "little man" (and woman) is still caught in the straitjacket of submissiveness and deference; for him/her politics is something done by politicians not by workers. How to realise that potential, how to unstrap the straitjacket should be the concern of all Socialists of all parties and none. Otherwise all of us will be labouring in vain.

T. Liddle.



I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, WE'LL HAVE NO MORE TALK OF SOCIALISM IN THIS PARTY



IT'S ZELDA CURTIS TIME!

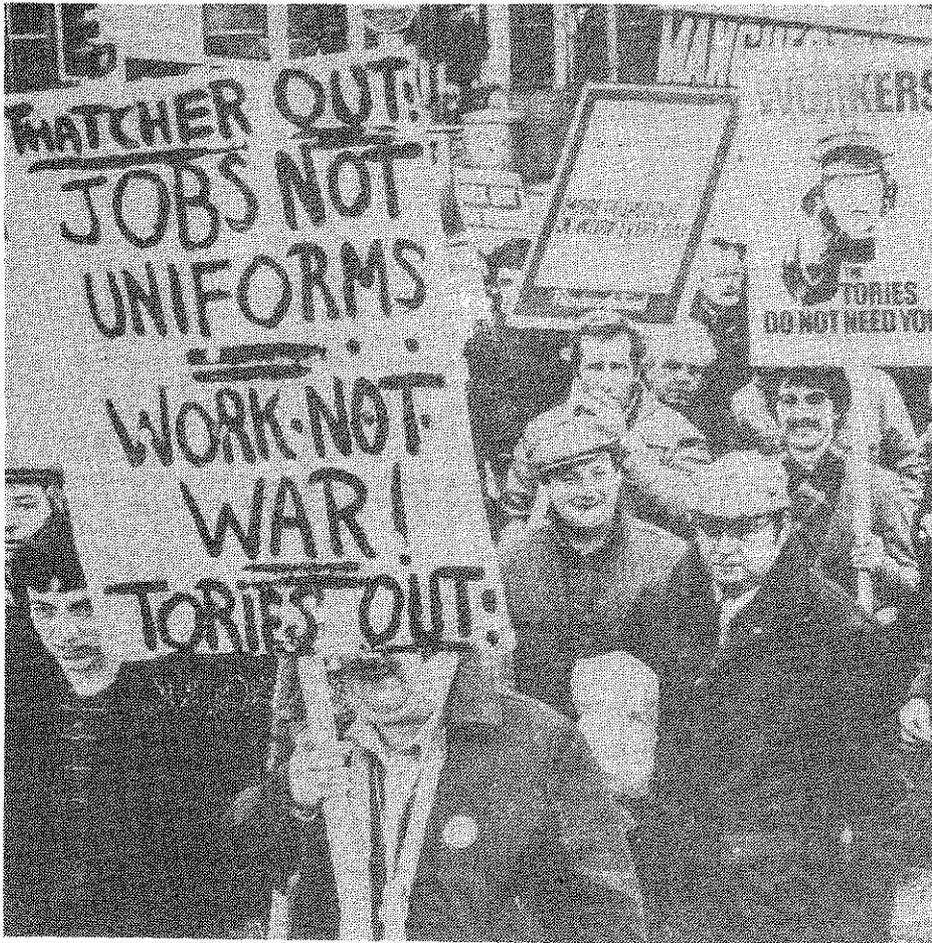
SOLIDARITY is very short of cash. The last issue was produced with money borrowed from a member. There is barely enough money to pay for this issue, and none for the next. Please send all subscriptions and donations to Solidarity, c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E.6.

## KICKING UP A STINK

A new tactic of protest was invented by residents of East London's Poplar district after the Spring Bank Holiday. Dustmen in Tower Hamlets have been in dispute with the Council for over five weeks and have been refusing to collect rubbish. Not surprisingly, this has got up the residents' noses. So in the launderettes of the area the word was passed, and on 5th May at about 5 p.m. people gathered, collected the bags of litter in the chutes of the tower blocks, and built barricades across streets used by traffic as short-cuts. Police gathered in force, even dog-handlers, but confined themselves to putting up bollards and advising drivers to turn round. A GLC van was booed and pelted with rubbish.

This is an ingenious way of forcing councils to provide services which have suffered under the "cuts".





# LABOUR AGAIN?

Over the past couple of years the political scene in this country would appear to have changed quite sharply. We had grown used to a large area of political agreement between the major parties which involved in particular a shared acceptance of the economic objectives of government (low unemployment, economic growth, high investment regional aid etc.) and a shared acceptance of how these objectives might be achieved (Keynesian demand management). Arguments between the parties have traditionally been about differences of emphasis; about how successful each party had been at achieving the shared aims, and about non-economic issues such as comprehensive education. The areas of dispute have often been so insignificant as to be virtually undetectable and had to be artificially blown up by rhetorical

language in the vain attempt to maintain the interest of the British public in what were basically pretty tedious squabbles.

All that has now altered. We have for the first time in many years a clear divergence between the Government and the opposition about genuine issues. The Conservative Party, or at least the section of it which has control of the Cabinet, believes that inflation is the main evil facing this country and that monetarism is the only way to deal with it. The Labour Party, for all its variety of responses, is clear on a number of things. It regards unemployment as the main menace and it does not regard monetarism as the sole guide to the management of an economy (though it is well worth pointing out that several key members of the Shadow

Cabinet believe that the monetarists have a point). There are rumblings of Trotskyist takeovers, there are motions about nuclear disarmament, there is a new leader and there are moves to establish a successor who will be 'still more radical'. The party has moved far enough to the left for it to shed a number of its more right wing members and M.P.s and for a large number of the politically active left in this country to join it. There is a new mood of optimism amongst its members and people you talk to speak of it becoming a real alternative and a mass left wing movement.

## OPTIMISM

Such naive optimism is immensely depressing. Because the Conservative Party is so bad there is an assumption that the Labour Party must be good. Because the record of the Labour Party was so awful when they were in office (reduced real income due to an income policy which ignored prices; remember?) there is an assumption that it 'must be different' next time. To me it seems more likely that the future record of the Labour Party will be similar to its past record. Just because there is a new party leader and a new system of voting does not mean that the fundamental nature of the party has permanently changed. There is surely every danger that the current leftward stance of the Labour Party is all part and parcel of its usual trick of becoming more radical in opposition - only to become increasingly timid in office. There is a very long tradition of good honest people joining the Labour Party and working damn hard to get it elected, in the hope that this time the party means what it says; that this time the slogans won't be dropped as soon as the election is over; that this time there won't be another incomes policy and another commitment to NATO; that this time it will be different. To date it never has been. The party regularly takes on a more radical tone when out of office and with boring regularity drops it again once in power.

What is worse is that the individual members get changed in the process. They get worn down and altered by the experience of trying to get their ideas implemented by the party. There is a long slow process of hard work meeting with frustrating failure, of trying once again and failing, of compromising where necessary and of toning down the message to appeal to the electorate. Given enough time this process turns good

strong militants into those weak proponents of 'realpolitik' who cling onto their positions out of pride and slow down and wear out the next generation of militants. Barbara Castle was a left winger, so for that matter was Wilson. Foot was so far to the left that the media campaigned against him exactly as they are now doing against Benn. Once he hit office he seemed to quieten down a lot. What kind of blind faith is it that assumes that once he becomes Prime Minister he will prove more resilient?

What is really dispiriting is the number of people who currently believe that the problem is one of personalities, that the reason why there is such a long historical record of staunch left wingers becoming tame Ministers is because they were all somehow susceptible to corruption because of who they were, that it is all a matter of finding an honest man, that Benn is somehow different - the incorruptible. It is not a question of Benn or anyone else being dishonest or selling-out - it is simply a matter of the forces which operate upon a reform orientated left-wing movement. The system has had a long record of success at absorbing reform movements and it has an equally long record of getting once radical reformers to become mild-mannered. There is a whole history of reformers starting out strong, just like Benn. What is frightening is just how timidly most of them finish. It cannot simply be a matter of chance (it has happened in too many countries on too many occasions) and if it is a matter of a historical force operating against reformist socialists then why should Benn be immune to it?

## BENN'S SOCIALISM

Benn has been built up by the media as some kind of madman (he is in fact, remember, a fairly mild Christian socialist and has never believed in any kind of revolution). The mere suggestion that he might (with the change in election rules) become leader of the party at some time in the future has been met with a split in the Labour ranks and a furious press campaign. It is almost as if the media is training him. If he wishes to operate within the system then he will have to learn the system's rules - or else.

This is not a new point. It is a long established one that many of those now joining the Labour Party are well aware of. The criticisms which they themselves used to make of the party were



often not based on its failure to adopt a particular policy or of its bad record in office. The most commonly leveled criticism has always been that it is the whole tactic of reform politics which is wrong. When you join something like the Labour Party you are joining a party which believes in operating within the system; which believes that something can be done to alter the system and improve it and that whatever can be done can be most effectively done gradually. I would argue (and a great many of those now joining the Labour Party themselves used to argue this way) that what is required is not an alteration of a basically sound system but an honest opposition to a system which cannot be reformed into the kind of society we want. I would further argue that even if you believe in reform then the most effective way of getting it is precisely by revolutionary activity. If you ask for radical reforms you tend to get mild ones; a Brixton riot tends to spawn radical reforms.

The Labour Party may now be a clear alternative to the Conservative Party but this is not because the Labour Party itself has changed and dropped its reformist approach. What has happened is that the Conservative Party has moved sharply to the right whilst the kind of reforms which the Labour Party is pushing for have changed somewhat. The Labour Party's programme has begun to sound increasingly like the demands of the Euro-Communists. The party hasn't so much moved to the left - it has rather fallen increasingly under the sway of those who see increased state intervention as identical to a move to the left.

## STATE SOCIALISM

This brings me to my final criticism of the Labour Party. I would argue that the kind of reform the Labour Party wants, and also the kind of socialism which most of the revolutionary

left in this country wants, is in the most part highly unattractive. In other words, the way that the left of the Labour Party (and the Marxist movement generally) conceives of socialism is seriously flawed.

There are a large number of people among the left of the Labour Party who seriously believe that increased nationalisation will have the effect of gradually bringing Britain nearer to socialism. They talk of nationalising the banks or the top 100 companies as though this will in some way improve the lives of the ordinary members of the public. It should not be left to the Conservatives to gleefully point out that the top 100 companies are nationalised in Russia nor should it take a genius to notice that there are state run banks in several countries in Western Europe which don't seem to have advanced the socialist cause one iota. The left of the Labour Party is still caught in the ideological trap of conceiving of socialism as something to do with state planning and there is precious little real awareness amongst them that what matters is not so much who owns industry but who controls it. After all the B.E.C. is a state run institution yet it would seem to be one of the leading bastions of the establishment. It should surely be clear by now (to anyone who looks at the real world instead of their Marxian textbooks) that when we look at a nationalised industry what we are looking at is almost identical in form and content to a non-nationalised giant corporation.

Those who are currently rushing to join the Labour Party are therefore, it would appear, ignoring (almost as an act of will) both the poverty of ideology of much of the left of the party and the whole tradition of the accommodation of the party within the establishment once it hits power. They are currently feeling virtuous because they are 'doing something' and are enjoying the illusion that they

# ABOUT OURSELVES

## IF YOU WANT TO CONTACT SOLIDARITY...

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56, St. Benedicts Street, Norwich.  
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8a, Hector Road, Manchester 13.  
Box 23, 163, King Street, Aberdeen.  
21, Treliske Lane, Highertown,  
Truro, Cornwall.  
4, The Grove, Lancaster.

The National Secretary can be contacted via London group.

The International Secretary can be contacted c/o 83, Gregory Cresc., Eltham, London, SE9 5RZ.

The National Treasurer can be contacted c/o 65, Oxford Road, Exeter, Devon.

Habitual readers of "Solidarity" will have noticed the considerable diversity of views expressed in our recent issues.

The disagreements which are aired in these pages reflect the debates and the divergent tendencies within Solidarity. It would be foolish to pretend that this lack of uniformity has not created problems for us (or that the silence of other groups on such matters means they have no internal dissensions.) But there are many problems which will still have to be solved, not least because many of these solutions can only be practical ones, and to abandon our commitment to critical, and self-critical, thinking would mean the stagnation of our politics.

From the letters and comments we receive it is apparent that some articles have given rise to misunderstandings, while others would like to make all of us responsible

for the opinions of each. We have no need of the kind of acceptability to be gained by attaching labels to ourselves, or by tailoring our ideas to conform to the prejudices of others.

If we aren't to recount the whole of our political experience in every issue, it is inescapable that this journal will be largely made up of fragments, the public formulation of a dialogue through which we give shape and substance to our lives. The least of our expectations is that a few of these articles, creatively applied, may be of use as we try to make sense of a bewildered world. While the contents of this journal generally reflect the group's politics, articles signed by individuals don't necessarily reflect the views of all our members.

The editorial production of this journal is rotated around various Solidarity groups nationwide. This issue was the work of London group.

**SOLIDARITY**

## LABOUR AGAIN?

are fighting the Tories by supporting the Labour Party. What they are forgetting is that it is not enough to have something worth fighting against - you have to have something worth fighting for as well.

Having said all that the obvious question becomes what can be offered in terms of an alternative strategy. My argument would be that the alternative strategy already exists and is being implemented by fairly wide sections of the population. It seems to me that the first and most basic plank of any attempt to change the system must be to believe in no-one and to trust no-one but ourselves. On this score there are few

among the non-political general public who would disagree. This means not placing all your political eggs in one basket - i.e. not staking everything on the return to power of Labour nor on the precise political programme devised by the guru of some minute left sect.

It means doing all our fighting for ourselves and not leaving it to anyone else (and then crying 'sell out' when they fail to come up with the goods). It means placing our faith in some of those fragments which Sheila Rowbotham described in her book 'Beyond the Fragments'. In terms of examples one could cite some of the work being done by certain elements in the women's

movement, in the gay rights groups, in local community protest groups, in the anti-bomb movement and some of the more imaginative struggles fought by those at work (e.g. Lucas Aerospace) and those out of work (e.g. some claimants unions). It means fighting for whatever you can in whatever way you can for yourself. By this I do not mean that we should get carried away on some anarchist dream and idealise each and every riot in the streets or each and every new punk band which spouts revolution. What I mean is that there are elements in the youth movement, elements in the black community and elements in the workers' movement which have common interests against the system which can be brought out and shared. The left in this country should be turning its attention to the long, tedious and difficult task of helping us all to learn to share our various fights and to develop our tactics (e.g. along the lines worked out in some of the Polish strikes). It should not be engaged in the task of assisting the efforts of any party - be it reformist or revolutionary - to persuade us that this time, with this leadership and with this programme things will be different. Only when it stops treating people as voting or recruiting fodder will the left begin to have something worthwhile to offer to ordinary people and I see no evidence that any of the political parties currently existing are prepared to do so.

Andy Brown.



# POLAND - ANALYSIS AND PROSPECTS CON.

at the level of informal communications. They would like to have more deputies and more space for the opposition, more newspapers, and so on. In addition they claimed to have a grip on a mass movement of that size. They wanted to show that they could control it. But that was a mistake, because now that some of the workers have arrived at more radical positions they will probably not accept that formula and the problem will be still more difficult, because it will entail overt rebellion.

MS - Would you say that the aim of the Mazowiecki group is to establish what we in the west call 'social dialogue'?

JS - Yes, it's like the Eurocommunists. This is where we also get demands for rotation of functions, strict definition of responsibilities at each level, etc. It's the next stage in the institutionalisation of totalitarianism.

MS - In Austria a perfect organisation of that type already exists, with union and company officials discussing

and fixing wage and price increases round the table.

JS - We thought of that too when we were talking about control over budget planning in the course of the negotiations. Unfortunately the government is now getting back to the corporate system, it only wants sectional and regional unions as partners. It is opposed to the higher level which would be necessary for what you're talking about. More important still, the workers have no interest in hierarchy as such. It was even difficult to set up a coordinating committee of the six regional MKZ. In particular, the workers of Szczecin and Gdansk were only in agreement for the purpose of protecting the weakest. The Central Committee was formed on the model of the MKS. The workers do not regard central functions as being all that important.

## THE PARTY MENTALITY

MS - Walesa himself was against centralised power.

JS - That's a very interesting thing, and it goes back to their activity in the illegal unions, where they acquired a real party mentality. That's how they come

to be against the election of factory councils by all the workers, whether in a union or not. For them that would present the risk of submitting to the test of popularity. They don't want to share anything they have gained. They do not even want the number of delegates in the regional union committees to be determined by the number of workers in the factories, because they do not want to share power with the old unions. It's very dangerous. They do not see the seriousness of the economic situation. For years they have been saying that everything was for the best, and now they imagine that it's enough to take from the rich, but it's impossible. It is probable that they will declare a general strike, because the wildcat strikes will exert so much pressure on them that they'll have to choose between losing contact with the workers and launching a general strike. And certainly Mazowiecki will not be able to stop them. He couldn't even stop the one-hour strike although he did everything he could. He was in Gdansk and he drew up for Walesa the text which was to be read on TV and which did not fix a date for fulfilling the demands, and it was the presidium which voted No. All the same the presidium is not very radical, it is the plenum which is increasingly so.

MS - By the plenum you mean the delegates from the whole country?

JS - Yes. The presidium (of what was the MKS, whose members constitute essentially the leadership of the unions) was founded when there were only 32 enterprises represented in the MKS, on 15 August. Later there were nearly 400 of them, yet no other member was elected or co-opted onto the presidium. That's why their interests diverge. The delegates to the plenum have no access to the leadership. They wanted new elections in the two months following the Gdansk Accords, but the statutes envisaged a delay of 2-5 months at factory level, and up to 10 months at regional level. The presidium decided that, and here we can see its party mentality. They think they are the only ones who know what has to be done. It's a very dangerous development, and in this respect Gdansk is distinct from the other regions. Elsewhere people who haven't this experience of clandestinity behave differently.

MS - Walesa wrote a letter to Kania claiming that he had not annulled the strike order because the government was not disposed to satisfy the workers' demands.

JS - This is what happened; the workers were ready to call off the strike if the government agreed that by 21 October all the demands should be met; on that condition there would have been no strike on 3 October. But the government would only commit itself on a very general formula, with no exact date. Mazowiecki himself was in favour of that formula, and Walesa likewise, but it was opposed by the presidium. The problem is that Walesa cannot stop wildcat strikes that do not arise from the non-implementation of the Accords, but from the Accords themselves. The situation is very dangerous, since if the presidium no longer has control of the workers, and if the workers have no more confidence in the presidium, i.e. if their ideal of free trade unions dissolves, they will then resume their activity as a mass, like in the 70s, with the same problem of articulation.

MS - Can we foresee what will happen on 21 October?

JS - I think the government is not capable of applying the accords in their entirety. For example, improving supply of provisions, abolishing "commercial prices", instituting food rationing - that last point would lead to disaster. Because with ration cards, the situation of regions like Silesia or Gdansk could only get worse. You need to be able to distribute in a more or less equal way. Now there is not enough meat for everyone. At the moment they distribute most of it in certain regions; if distribution was to be equal for all, those who are best provided would lose out (and they are also the ones who struggle in the most resolute fashion). In the small industrial towns, the situation is really bad, even bread shortages occur. I don't believe things will improve between now and the end of October.

## EXPERTS

MS - Does a reform have any chance in Poland?

JS - As far as I can see, there is no chance that agreement will be reached on an economic reform. Three models are being published, two comparatively good. They're applying the worst, Professor Pajetska's, which apart from its confusion, is not even a real system. His group is the only one working with the government. He was in Gdansk too.

MS - On the other side?

JS - Yes, it was quite surrealistic. Given the ambiguous attitude of people who adopted a critical position in Poland in the 70s, Pajetska, as an "official" was

That was what provoked the wild-cat strikes. The government is using the old unions to put all that into effect, because they are organised by sections. It insisted on this model, because it wanted to map out an area of action for the old unions.

MS - And this is how it's still happening today?

JS.- Of course, because it's in the accords. The government is right to say that the strikes did not break out because the accords were not respected; there's only one factory in five where they were not. Rather, the workers are less and less satisfied with the negotiations and with the independent unions. I'm in the middle of investigating this; we have been questioning workers in Gdansk, and the first interviews show that certain of the workers have been overcome by apathy, because they think that the independent unions are the same as the old ones. About a quarter of them are becoming radicalised, especially the young.

## CONFLICT

MS- So there are also contradictions in the new unions?

JS - Yes, heaps. For example, all the conflicts that were present at the time of the strikes are now arising again. Thus there was a conflict with reference to the form of the new unions, the leading role of the party, and so on.

MS - I noticed that during the negotiations, when the delegates were arguing over that last point. They asked Walesa to come and discuss it, he got up on the platform and said it was all a misunderstanding.

JS - And today the conflict reappears. The Solidarity Statutes were refused by the court in Warsaw be-

cause they did not include that formula about the leading role of the party. If it was not included it's because the plenum of delegates now controls Walesa and prevented him from bringing it in. Of course it is there indirectly, since the statutes affirm the validity of the Constitution and of the Gdansk Accords, but the government wanted it to appear specifically. I think, though, that the present degree of radicalisation makes it impossible. Already during the strike, the formula could only be introduced by using manipulation, without it being voted in the big hall. It should have been put to the vote, because the rule was that they would vote on fundamental questions, and when there was disagreement within the presidium. But it was not put to the vote, when even in the presidium there were some opposed to it.

It was a very interesting situation from the point of view of the workers' class consciousness. I was on the small working group when the government formulated that requirement for the first time, on the second or third day of negotiations. There were twelve people present; 3 negotiators on either side, and 3 experts for each. On the third day they explained to us that the independent unions would constitute an ideological precedent, and that on the workers' side we would have to do something to refute that. Of course, all this was way beyond what the workers could imagine or make sense of. The MKS (Inter-factory Coordinating Committee) was an entirely practical creation, it had been conceived of as a place for technical coordination; the workers were not thinking in terms of class representation on one side or the other, they had no model. So they did not understand what this point meant. For that same reason it was difficult to get them to accept it. The government would have had to explain it to them in advance, but it wanted to avoid doing so because

it would have attributed a new degree of power to the workers. That's why they had to use the experts, because we had seen at first glance what it meant. The formula was brought in through the mediation of the experts and the trust that was placed in them. The government alone, faced with the workers, could never have introduced it in that way, taking account of the radicalism displayed by the workers, and without them fully understanding its importance. I saw exactly how the workers were reacting; why bring it in here, it will all be worked out in practice. For them it was a practical problem. That was the difference in the capacity to understand; radicalism is a question of the capacity to understand.

MS - The party is insisting more and more on the principle of its leading role. Kania says for example that the unions are divided on the organisational plane, but that their unity on the political plane must be preserved.

JS - The formula of the leading role of the party is fundamental for them, but not for the workers. The way it was brought in seemed to many delegates to be completely unjustified. On the last day, certain delegates were not allowed into the hall because of their oppositional attitude. There were lots of little incidents of that kind. Which meant that the radicalism of the plenum increased, and that of the presidium declined. All the questions which were decided in an undemocratic fashion, like point 8 (wage rises), and the political formula (leading role of the party) are now time bombs. Regarding what we can learn, it's very good, because it shows that in a movement like this all interference and manipulation is futile.

## CATHOLICS

MS - It's a movement which can't be led astray.

JS - Right, that has only been done from outside. And it only made the situation more difficult. During the negotiations in Gdansk the government was ready to make concessions, it did not absolutely insist on that point; if the worst came to the worst, it would have been content simply with the reference to the constitution, like at Szczecin. The Szczecin formula was put forward by the government, it wasn't made the object of negotiation, they received and accepted it as it was, and the party doesn't come into it. I think it's all Mazowiecki's fault. They wanted to show their loyalty, it's an argument in favour of their own catholic movement, it's already been put forward in Parliament and



# LETTERS

Dear Solidarity,

When I read the sound libertarian arguments of your magazine, it comes as a surprise to me that such commonsense does not appeal to the vast majority of workers in this country. Naturally such a mass rejection of a workers' magazine by the workers must cause you some qualms, but you seem to pay little attention to the reasons behind this rejection. As a relatively new reader I am therefore left to assume your explanations - possibly along the lines of a ruling hegemony, maintained by capitalists through or by the State, with blanket control of education and mass media; thus ensuring that all challenging ideas are stillborn. I find this kind of argument unconvincing, just because in my experience workers nearly always have a set of worthy reasons for rejecting Solidarity's ideas.

Now although your magazine presents the arguments for libertarian/anarcho-communism clearly, and with topical and practical reference, nevertheless the (in some cases strong) arguments against do not seem to be presented and refuted.

As an example take the 'problem of leadership'. An 'a-political' person (maybe the 'man in the street') might claim leadership to be necessary in order for anything to get done - and instance organisations such as the Army, Hospital, Ship etc. Similar claims were made by Lenin, who could also quote Engels (Lenin - State and Revolution: Continued Part 2: Controversy with the anarchists.)

In order to bring the argument into focus take the example of Poland and Lech Walesa - (who is able to delay and perhaps prevent strikes by the simple and familiar expedient of threatening to resign as union leader). Interviewed by Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci for the Sunday Times 22.3.81, Walesa made several revealing comments. Thus, at a crucial meeting of 2,000 Gdansk workers, their boss had just asked them to leave and they were complying - when Walesa arrived, gave the boss a straight left and became workers' leader. The workers, according to Walesa, need a

Certain ideas follow  
Walesa: a contempt  
discussion, and a  
government'.

There are striking similarities between the Polish workers' need for a leader, and the Hungarian workers need for a leader in the revolution of 1956. In Andy Anderson's account (Solidarity London 1964) the name of Imre Nagy recurs again and again. To the obvious bewilderment of the author of this account, the Hungarian workers persist in supporting or clinging to their 'moderate', law and order leader, even after (the author suggests) Nagy calls in Russian tanks.

In the face of such a powerfully abasing need that looks like human nature, it is indeed difficult to see how such leaders can ever be made accountable to large assemblies, re-callable, ready to be sacked or to make way for others to share or rotate the job. The iron law of oligarchy rules, and revolutions only reshuffle the top people.

I emphasise that I don't subscribe to such views, but that I think they are widespread, and that I would like to see them taken seriously, and seriously refuted.

Yours fraternally,  
Nick Keene

Dear Solidarity,

Carry on the good work, don't be too dogmatic - life started in the swamp.

The libertarian left over here (Norway) seems to be divided between rather 'orthodox' anarchists/anarcho-syndicalists without much following and milieu/ecology activists who are very strong in Norway - relatively speaking. Public opinion against nuclear weapons is also

strong here, maybe 50% of the population, at any rate a really sizeable proportion, with even the biggest (or next biggest) daily paper against such weapons. Norwegians are well aware that even in a 'limited' nuclear war there won't be much left of Norway after both sides are finished. Unfortunately the main political parties don't seem to understand this - so as usual it's no good asking them for help!

All the best,

John Downing

Dear Solidarity,

At long last some of the Trad Left groups have woken up to what is happening in Poland and have decided to do something about it. This something was a march to the Soviet Embassy on April 13 by 500 people including a couple of Solidarity members. The march organisers, which included a number of local Labour Parties and several Trotskyist groups had banned "cold-war" slogans though nobody knew what the these might be. Someone suggested that "Fuck Brezhnev" would be, whereas "Fuck the Bureaucratic Deformations of the Workers' States" wouldn't be. Because of this the Polish Solidarity Campaign had withdrawn its original sponsorship of the march. The realities of Trad-Left double-think were shown by the slogan saying "Defence of the Soviet Union - Yes; Bureaucracy - No".

The traditional march was followed by the traditional meeting, addressed by Tariq Ali and a couple of Labour MPs. Comrade Ali called on the Western bankers to cancel the debts owed to them by Poland. There followed interventions by the Spartacists, a Trot. group whose favourite slogan is "Hail to the Red Army", and World Revolution, who accused Reg Race MP of murdering Rosa Luxembourg. Reality was restored by a Polish speaker who said that what Solidarnosc needed was money to buy duplicators and similar equipment. So far, for all its blather, the Left in Britain has only sent two duplicators. The TUC has launched a half-hearted appeal for a miserly £20,000, but much, much more is needed.

Towards the end, a sister said that if we were honest the only way we could support Solidarnosc, faults and all, was on its own terms.

Meanwhile, while the British Left has rabbitied, Rumanian workers, inspired by the Polish example, have acted. In the mining and oil-refining districts, they have threatened to strike for a shorter working week, profit-sharing, and Yugoslav-style workers' councils. Dissidents have been silenced and the security forces strengthened, but Rumania may well be the scene of the workers' next big struggle against the parasitic bureaucracy.

A. Sorotnik

# POLAND - ANALYSIS AND PROSPECTS

The following consists of excerpts from an interview (about the beginning of October 1980) with Jadwiga Stanisłowska, an Assistant in sociology whose activity during 1968 led to her being imprisoned and then excluded from university. In intervals of work as a nurse and other jobs and being registered as unemployed she prepared a thesis on bureaucracy (1971) and published it in 1972. Her thesis on the contradictions of organisation was refused access to a printer. After a year in the USA she wrote 'The Dialectic of Socialist Societies' (to be published by Princeton Press and Einaudi). On her return to Poland at the beginning of July she obtained a teaching contract at university.

This interview was published in German, translated into French and made available to us by comrades in Echanges. English translation and editing: LW.

## PROSPECTS FOR REFORM

JS.... When they are remote from power people adopt a critical attitude but they don't change their way of thinking. The only way out for the Party would be a new leadership proposing a new course with some credibility. But there is no question of that. The Kania group is clearly using the same methods as Gierek; slackening the reins, temporising, resorting to the Catholic Church as a factor for stabilisation. They thought they could bring the workers to the same point as the intelligentsia in the 70s, that the workers would be content with the existence of independent unions, with no access to the decision-making process. That might have been the case with organisations like the Free University or even the KOR, for whom it is enough to exist, but for the workers that's not enough. After scarcely a fortnight, they were already demanding more. In the Gdansk Accords provision was made for the creation of commissions to deal with workers' safety, and then nothing came of it.

MS (interviewer) - So they wanted workers' control?

JS.- That's something else again. This workers' movement is anarchist in its way, but in the good sense of the term, that is it opposes every institution and hierarchy. It is constructed on the principle of minimal hierarchy. It's not interested in guarantees about control of leaders, what they want is confidence and rotation. They have decided not to participate in the existing institutions, like the factory councils or the self-management committees. They are applying the same general plan as during the strike; demand and protest, without taking on any responsibility. Moreover, it must be said that there is no area in which they could have taken part in decisions. For the moment, at factory level, no-one is taking decisions. So, short of a reform on the Yugoslav or at least on the Hungarian model, there is not the slightest possibility of participation. The workers are using their strength only to obstruct things. Unfortunately, the reform project currently being worked on by the Kania group has no controlling line and is very technocratic. The unions will oppose this reform and block it... (The Kania group) are inconsistent, they only take half-measures. That's why I think our economic situation will only get worse... In these conditions, short of a real reform that would offer the unions the room to participate in decisions, they will win nothing but penury, with enormous power of obstruction by the unions which are becoming increasingly radical because they have no power of positive action.

## DILEMMA

JS... Reform means the modification of prices, and 'socialist bankruptcy' for about a quarter of all enterprises, which lack efficiency. It also means that the whole Plan system will be changed, with no more authoritarian planning, only models and very generous controls for the banks. Loss of employment will follow for thousands of people in the administration, and the dominant group is incapable of bringing about anything of the kind. They are so weak that they cannot do anything to risk disturbing such a fragile equilibrium.

MS - But what can come of it? Do

you expect the obstruction mechanism to provoke a major shake-up, or will it lead to a general strike?

JS - I'm really afraid that there will be a general strike in a month's time. I'm not in favour, because it would mean Soviet intervention. But from another point of view the situation on the workers side is very complicated; they are not only dissatisfied with the fact that the Gdansk guarantees are not being applied, they are also more and more dissatisfied with the Accords themselves. There were mistakes on both sides, on Walesa's part and on the part of the government. Point 8, on future wage negotiations, stipulates that they should be carried out by sections, using the old scales, which has two consequences: it will get out of the control of the new unions, which is why the government insisted on it; and it also means that it will be very anti-egalitarian, because those at the highest levels will get more than those in the lowest paid categories. The workers' protests and the several weeks of strikes in Krakow and Silesia were not directed against the non-application of the Accords, but arose because this way of applying them is creating increasing tension.

## WAGES

MS - This undifferentiated increase in wages is already under way and the workers' delegates have already reduced their claims by a quarter.

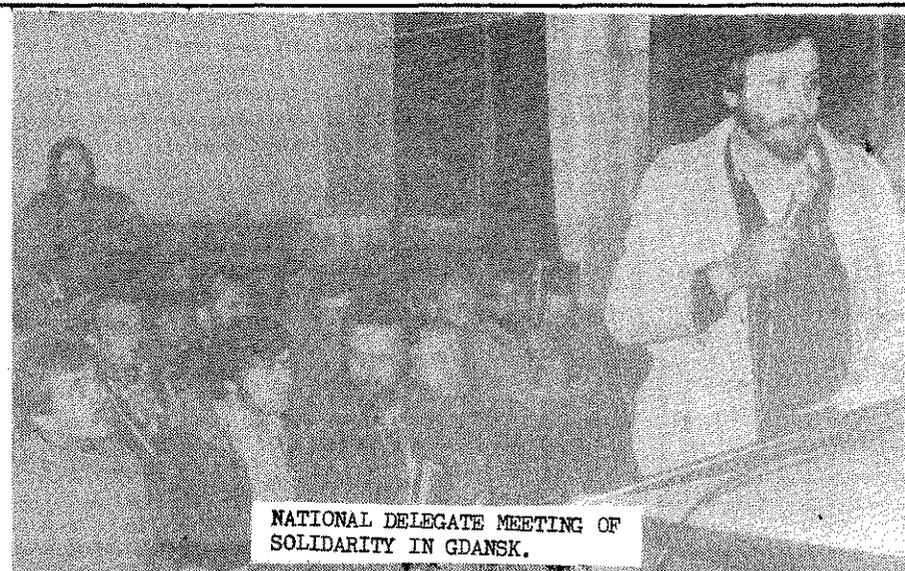
JS - It goes even further than that. There are very wide inequalities between the various categories of workers, and more differences with each section. At the start they were asking for 2000 more zlotys for everyone. At the end of August, they were asking that all those earning more than 3500zł. should get 500 more, and those earning less than 3500 should get 1000 more. And then Walesa and Jagielski agreed between themselves that everyone go up one category. It is a great mistake, because of the great inequalities between workers. The wages vary widely. It might be 150 zł., a

also a bit critical; and I, or Kowalik, or Mazowiecki, naturally a bit more so. But we were all part of the same Establishment in Warsaw and met at the same conferences and so on. That's why the negotiations could go so quickly, the atmosphere was pleasant, but the danger was that it could end by creating too much complicity.

Mazowiecki decided not to broadcast any information on the conflict to the plenum of delegates during the negotiations, so as not to disrupt them. It was the first step that led later to suppressing the twice daily delegates' meetings, votes, etc. And that arose partly from the fact that the atmosphere was so friendly. The preliminary pourparlers were very easy, we were on the same wavelength, sympathetic to the workers. This certainly allowed a good synthesis of their demands, but it also falsified the authentic expression of their movement. Because the workers were really very opposed to the system, to the point where they wouldn't even touch it, still less reform it. They were against it, full stop. And this was what was falsified; in a way we made 'liberals' out of them, after the fashion of the intelligentsia. In the end, they were heard to say things like: high-ranking party members must not be excluded from the new unions, that would be discriminatory - which was not at all the way they spoke at the beginning. At the start they would think: why be against discrimination - given that they themselves had been discriminated against for years. They were for discrimination against party members. Subsequently they amended their language, but at the organisational level they behaved in a less democratic manner. There was less and less voting and information. There was an excessive orientation towards liberalism, and on the other hand less and less direct, practical democracy.

MS - We might point out in this connection that if Walesa had been alone, faced with the government representatives, it could have turned out worse than with the experts. Perhaps the workers would have fallen into traps?

JS - I don't think so. The only point which could have been more difficult is the registration. The government lawyers tried to demonstrate that this demand was a false problem because Convention No 87 of the ILO banned all government interference in union activity, and that registration meant less than what the union's centrals are doing. All this is wrong, of course, but none of us is an expert on the matter, neither Mazowiecki nor Kowalik nor I - I had never taken an interest in the unions before. At Szczecin they decided, without experts, on registration within the



NATIONAL DELEGATE MEETING OF SOLIDARITY IN GDANSK.

framework of the CRZZ, the old trade union congress. Of course, that was modified later, after the Gdansk Accords.

## SELL-OUT?

But on the other points the presence of the experts solved nothing. On Saturday 30 August, the last day of negotiations, the workers decided, after the first point had been signed, to negotiate all the following points by themselves, because they were not happy with the political formula in Point One - 'leading role of the party in the state'. They negotiated alone through the night of Saturday to Sunday and imposed several of the most radical resolutions, with the exception of Point Eight (wage rises). They got along very well in the negotiations.

MS - Who were the participants?

JS - Three people, Gwiezda, Lis, and Kablinski, with no experts. All the points except the first three were negotiated twice over on Saturday night, without experts. There was a moment of drama when Jagielski made a little speech after the signing of Point One; he explained what that meant to him, how pleased he was that there was agreement with his party, etc. That was when the workers realised what the political formula meant, drawn up in such carefully-chosen terms; they were so furious that Walesa said afterwards; our only chance is that the Central Committee will refuse it. But it accepted it on Saturday afternoon. It was then that the workers wanted to throw out all the experts from the shipyards. It didn't affect me, because I had taken no part in working out the formula; I was against it.

MS - Did you play a personal role in it?

JS - When the government put forward that requirement, and I saw that the workers did not understand

what it meant, I refused to negotiate on it. Firstly because it was meaningless anyway, as it was put in the formula. And then, it should have been discussed by all the workers, all the delegates. I was opposed to this procedure behind closed doors. It was a question of an ideological decision which should have been taken by the workers themselves, not by the experts; the question was one of decision, not of expertise. But at the same time the situation was exceptional, and it was a difficult decision; so on 28 August I told the presidium: I think this is a decision which depends

ends on the workers, and we experts should hold back for a moment. The other experts said that they would stay and work on the formula. I withdrew from the group of three experts and Garenek took my place. I came back later when they got down to practical questions, medical services, hours of work, etc.

I had the impression that this question of the political formula was so at variance with the real feelings of the workers that it should at least have been discussed with them. But it was read out to them without explanation as a formula that had definitely been decided by the presidium and the experts. They were very annoyed.

## HOW DIRECT DEMOCRACY DISAPPEARED

Mazowiecki and all the experts knew very well that panic had supervened on the government side, because of the miners' strike, and that it would probably have accepted a non-statist definition of socialism, such as for example, socialisation of the means of production and people's power, and that could have been the basis of negotiation. Well, there was no negotiating, only editing. On the

# POLAND CON.

government side they got more than they hoped for.

MS - Why were there no regular mass meetings of the shipyard workers and delegates, where it could have been discussed? That could have set in motion a process of learning and of politicisation...?

JS - Because the workers would have refused the Accords. They were very radical, although a third of them were party members (200). The leadership were afraid of mass meetings, and the experts themselves advised against them. The way things were, the workers did not want to allow any party members into the unions. Their opposition could have been used as an argument in the negotiations. In my view it would have been better to let the government see the real mood of the workers, to formulate it explicitly. Because it was an ideological precedent of rebellion against the statist definition of socialism. For me, socialism is not a one-party system, it has nothing to do with the party, it has to do with the organisation of society with (collective) ownership of the means of production, etc. For me, it was arrogance on the part of the experts to want to enunciate the political formula in the workers' place. All the delegates would have needed to discuss it. Of course, that was not without its risks, because we knew to what extent they were radicalised. But it was their movement, they had the right to express their position. From my point of view, it was better that that radicalism which made them oppose any political concession should prevent them from obtaining so-called independent unions. Then the alternative would be a reform of the old union structure, under guarantee of a pure utopian faith in the future. Today, they have supposedly independent unions which are not independent.

MS - And what are they dependent on?

JS - They are even dependent on the party secretary in the factory. At the start they wanted to begin with little things, taking posts at a level lower than managers in the factory, for example foremen, away from the 'apparatus'. They met with a refusal; before, it used to be the province of the local party secretary, and that's still the case today. It is not necessary to be a party member to become a foreman, but it depends on the local party organs. In September, the free unions were told that they

would get nowhere on that one, that it was part of the leading role of the party to take such decisions. And if they construct an apparatus to control the central powers they will be told the same.

It is probable that the party leadership will not bring any changes tending towards greater equality even with reference to the higher family allowances for members of the security services, party apparatus, militia, army, etc. I don't believe they'll risk it, because in the 70s the support of all these groups was won by granting them these privileges. It's a point which played a role in the negotiations with Jagielski in Gdansk. What's more, the Gdansk workers said that they could find other resources to allow an improvement in wages, for example a redefinition of the export policy of the Gdansk shipyards. But that is also a political problem, the problem of un-taxable exports to the East.

There was a sort of ideological movement here, and the acceptance of the (political) formula falsified their position. The workers obviously never thought in those terms, but they sensed it, we're sure of that now. I saw how furious people were at the signing of the Accords. If we go into one of the yards now, they're less and less pleased to see us. The situation today is that the implementation of the Gdansk Accords is bringing to light the mistakes that were made in Point One and Eight.

## THE WORKERS' GREAT REFUSAL

We have problems posed by the institutionalisation of the unions, by the postponement of elections, by the tendency to oligarchy, etc. and we also have others born of the movement itself, as it arose here and there, through external groups, the Catholic Church, and others besides, trying to enhance their standing...still it remains a workers' movement.

MS - After the strike, I interviewed Andreas Hegedus in Budapest; in my opinion the free unions must not try to take on the social-service role of the old unions, because if they do they will become bureaucratic.

JS - They don't want to. What they want is the exact opposite, to take no part in any decision. They only want to put forward demands, without trying to find out how they can be satisfied, just demanding and protesting. It's very dangerous,

because the majority of workers have not got that far. Seeing that the decision to strike carries risks with it, even today, even from a material point of view. They lost a lot during the summer, they only got basic pay, and most of what they get comes from overtime, etc. Wages are very low. This leads the workers towards apathy; they are tired of strikes. So there must be something between the two, between demand and protest. But for that to happen there has to be an economic reform, and there is no hope of that happening. That would require real decentralisation as for example in Yugoslavia, with workers' councils able to decide what should be invested and what distributed in wages, directors nominated annually, workers able to decide on personnel policy, etc. In the present system, authoritarian, with planning from above, none of these attractive possibilities exists.

But this workers' movement is hostile to all political institutions for political reasons. They have been deceived for years with "self-management conferences", that's why their programme is to take no part in that sort of thing. But they are not satisfied. They are in a false position. They have accepted a formula which is not acceptable to most of them, and conversely they are more radical than they want to be in reality. On the other hand, the party apparatus, e.g. in Gdansk is likewise getting involved in a development which does not correspond to what it wants. It would like to do more, but can't because of Kania's policy.

MS - The leading groups in the party are obstructing each other.

JS - Yes, and there is an increasingly wide polarisation between the workers and the local party organisms. The economic situation is getting worse, and it could happen that the free unions could lose control of the whole movement. That seems very likely to me.

MS - Then people will take to the streets, and it will come to a confrontation.

JS - I hope they won't, because they don't want to get shot. But they will reduce production.

MS - That means a strike which doesn't call itself that.

JS - Yes, but the situation will probably be so serious that the Russians may be tempted to do something. We shall see. I'm very pessimistic.

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# STIRRING THE P.I.E.

The recent trial and imprisonment of Tom O'Carroll, the principal mover of the Paedophile Information Exchange, raises questions which must be of concern to libertarian socialists.

First, there is the matter of sexual relationships involving children. It certainly seems to be the case that children are sexually aware at a much earlier age than adults like to admit. I can remember at about the age of ten discussing sexual fantasies (principally involving a harem) with one of my best friends at school, and much more recently the young daughter of a neighbour holding my hand and refusing to let me leave the house for at least ten minutes, causing the mother to remark that if her daughter was like that at that age she could expect a good deal of trouble when she was "old enough to take a serious interest." But there is something undeniably disturbing about sexual relations between children and adults which is hard to analyse. I think that essentially it is an abuse of power. By this I do not mean that the younger partner is necessarily physically or emotionally frightened into acquiescing, but where such activities do take place they generally seem to be where the adult is in some relation of authority to the child (e.g. parent/child; vicar/choirboy; scoutmaster/scout). It is also noteworthy that such activities and fantasies seem to be predominantly the prerogative of the male sex. Such sexual fantasies of women as I have been able to discover seem to relate to the youth rather than to the pre-pubescent boy. Whether this is because the older female/young male couple is far more socially disapproved of than the opposite, or because women in general seek more emotionally mature relationships, I cannot say.

less concealed, less repressed, perhaps. It cannot simply be the need of people conscious of aging to feel youthful and desirable, for that is common to both sexes, and as I suggested above paedophilia seems to be almost exclusively a male concern.

What I find particularly disturbing about paedophilia is not what dark secrets it may awaken in my own subconscious - I have actually thought about it a good deal and come to the conclusion that I prefer the greater emotional depth in my relationships which only comes with wider experience; indeed I find that throughout my life I have preferred relationships, not only sexual ones, with persons of at least my age or older. But once one becomes aware of sex - through a proper sexual relation - one can never again look at another person of the gender (or genders) to which one responds without assessing them as a sexual partner. One's friendship can never again be entirely innocent, and it is this loss of innocence which I find sad, not only among the eleven-year-olds, but also among the fifteen-year-olds, and even the eighteen-year-olds. Obviously people have to grow up some time but I mourn its loss too young.



This leads on to a further point, what is the actual appeal of the child? It seems to me that active paedophiles must be seeking relationships without particularly complex emotional involvement - the child's desires and feelings are less hidden,

Having said that I find paedophilia wrong, O'Carroll's case must give rise to a great deal of concern and serve as a dire warning. I maintain that what he advocates doing is undesirable,

but he was not prosecuted for that. Nor was he prosecuted, as some seem to think, for publishing a book of child pornography, for sexual assault on children, or inciting people to do such things. He was sent to prison for having made contact with a number of people who shared his interests and swapping his sexual fantasies with them. Technically he was given two years for conspiracy to corrupt public morals, an offence which was invented by the House of Lords in 1961 in the famous case of DPP v Shaw, when they claimed to have the power to declare illegal all "ways in which the wickedness of men may disrupt society."

O'Carroll had also published a book (Paedophilia: The Radical Case) which argued for a lowering of the age of consent, to an extent which most of the country would find very wrong. However, in a democratic society people are supposed to have the right to advocate and argue for any change in the law, so long as they do not break the law in so doing. No evidence was presented to show that O'Carroll was involved in sexually assaulting or inciting others to sexually assault children, or indeed that any children had been so assaulted or corrupted. Groups advocating a reduction in the age of consent for homosexuals are not prosecuted, nor were the authors of the recent report of a Royal Commission which suggested reducing the age of hetero-sexual consent, albeit to a lesser extent than Mr. O'Carroll. In 1971 the editors of IT were convicted (and given 18 month suspended sentences) of conspiring to corrupt public morals by printing homosexual contact adverts. Today the back pages of Time Out are composed of little else.

O'Carroll, then, was done because the prosecuting authorities disapproved of what he said, wrote and thought; not for anything he did. Tomorrow it could be the Legalise Cannabis Campaign, or the Lucas Aerospace workers for thinking factories ought not to be shut, or Solidarity for advocating workers' councils as an alternative means of organising society. A judge-made lynch-law which entitles the courts to penalise any thoughts of which they disapprove has got to go.

Sid French

p.s. Most of the observations concerning the psychological aspects of this subject rather than the legal aspects of the O'Carroll case remain speculations on my part, and further discussion would be welcome.

# NO RETURN TO THE SIXTIES



The bomb, at long last, is an issue again. Just like in the sixties, many thousands of ordinary people have been frightened by the threat of a nuclear holocaust, and once more there have been well attended demonstrations and public meetings throughout the country. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is currently experiencing a rapid revival, and the Labour Party has adopted a conference resolution calling for unilateral disarmament, just as it did in 1960. The faces of the demonstrators and the names of the latest weapons have changed with time, but the message and methods remain the same as they were twenty years ago. Yet for all the positive aspects of this resurgence, one cannot help but remember that the old 'ban-the-bomb' movement failed utterly in its most important objective; and in this light the similarities between the sixties movement and its modern equivalent take on a somewhat ghoulish complexion, especially when it is considered that the nuclear weapons now facing us and our counterparts in Eastern Europe are both more deadly and more numerous than ever before. To put it bluntly, if all that happens now is a repeat performance of the failure of the old movement, the human race may have missed its last chance: it is absolutely imperative

that we learn from the mistakes made last time if we are to succeed in ridding the world forever of the nuclear menace.

So what went wrong last time? What lay behind the apparent evaporation of public concern about the bomb in the mid-sixties and the resultant demise of the anti-war movement? In one way, the answer is simple, in that the international tension which reached a climax with the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 eased considerably with, ironically, the escalation of the conventional conflict in Indochina. Having brought the world to the brink of nuclear disaster, the super-powers decided to play out their aggression in a manner which was less immediately threatening to the inhabitants of Western Europe, and although the radicals reacted by simply shifting their focus to Vietnam, most people simply stopped bothering about international affairs. To claim this is the whole story is, however, somewhat mistaken. Changing international conditions no doubt go some way to explaining the collapse of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but on top of such extraneous factors it is undeniable that the disintegration of the movement was induced by the disillusionment and despair of the rank and file membership. The CND

activists had worn themselves out organising marches and petitions, lobbying MPs and wooing the Labour Party, but for all their efforts they had achieved nothing. In spite of the election of a Labour government pledged to unilateralism by conference, in spite of the thousands who had marched to Trafalgar Square, in spite of the celebrities who had been attracted to the cause, there was not a sign of governmental willingness to even consider disarmament. The tactics which CND had chosen, those of traditional pressure group politics were clearly not up to the task: CND had simply underestimated the entrenchment of the governmental commitment to nuclear weaponry, even in the face of massive popular disapproval. Yet by the time its members realised this, it was already too late, and instead of adopting new tactics better suited to the harsh realities of the situation, they gave up in exhaustion.

Now this would be a mere cautionary tale but for the fact that the current movement against the bomb is suffering from precisely the same naive faith in 'a few more demonstrations and a Labour vote next time'. There is not a hint in CND today that disarmament might be a little more difficult than that, not a mention of the ways in which the bomb's existence is intimately connected with the needs of the power structures of modern industrial societies. No-one, in short, is asking why the nuclear arms race exists in the first place, and this is a question which demands an answer if we are to be clear what we are up against. There is not the space here for a detailed discussion of this issue, but two points can be made which seem particularly relevant. The first is that expenditure on nuclear weapons specifically and arms in general grew up initially because of the nature of arms expenditure as a stimulous to national economies both sides of the Iron Curtain. The growth of the military sector of both Eastern and Western economies after 1945 was just one of the ways in which states integrated potentially unused resources and labour with the market, the unacceptable face, if you like, of the state regulated economic expansion which gave the industrial world

full employment for two decades. While such factors were decisive for a long period, however, as a result of fundamental changes in the world economic situation they are less immediately relevant today. On one hand, the national economies of the West are suffering from an inflation which is increasingly ruling out expansionary fiscal policy of the type which characterised the post-war boom, while on the other, the continued economic expansion of the Soviet bloc is threatened by an imminent shortage of labour and certain crucial raw materials. On purely economic grounds, both sides would thus seem to have good reasons for slowing down the arms race; the fact that the escalation of armaments continues at breakneck speed in spite of this indicates that other factors are at play.

## THE BOMB AND POWER

So we come to our second point in this attempt to explain nuclear proliferation, that the bomb's continued existence relies on the fact that it helps to maintain the divisions of society into those who have power and those who have none. By dangling the threat of nuclear extinction by the 'enemy' under the noses of their subjects, the ruling elites on both sides have found a uniquely effective device for bolstering their power. Not only can they lay claim to popular allegiance on account of their protection of the citizenry by building 'deterrents', but it is also possible for governments to so develop conventional 'defensive' forces in the climate of international tension that any opposition to the regime in question has to take into account the existence of massive armies ready to make a blood bath of popular dissent. The latter use of the arms race is perhaps more typical of the Soviet bloc, while the former is characteristic of both the Soviet bloc and Western democracies: in either case, however, the perceived threat of an aggressive enemy is used by the relevant governing elites as a way of increasing their own powers, and it follows from this that neither side really wants to pull out of the arms race game, so useful is it as a means for keeping the sentiments of domestic populations in check. Problematically, as time goes on, so the dangers of patriotic indignation reaching a level which can only be satisfied by nuclear attack are

increased; and this happens more and more as the weapons get bigger, more numerous and more deadly. We find ourselves living in a world which has played out competitive nationalism to a point which threatens the very survival of humanity; only an international abandonment of the system of divisions between rulers and ruled and between nations is a wholly satisfactory way out of the danger.

## MANIPULATING THE MOVEMENT

Now it should be clear from all this that the arms race in general and nuclear weapons in particular have their reasons for existence deeply embedded in the social and political structures of the industrial world; and this has important implications for anyone who would like to see the nuclear menace removed. First of all, we must be extremely wary of the new anti-bomb movement being manipulated by power seeking politicians of whatever persuasion; a unilateralist Labour Party is all very well, but the fact that the Labour Party exists for the purpose of gaining power over ordinary people makes it extremely unlikely that a Labour government would not use the 'Russian threat' as a means of whipping up nationalistic sentiments to enhance its legitimacy, even before American pressure is taken into account. Secondly, we should be extremely cautious of simply becoming a pressure group: the bomb is part of the wider issue of who controls our everyday lives, and rather than crawling to those in power we should be seizing the initiative with a bold and daring campaign of direct action against military installations. Nuclear shelters for county councillors, recruiting offices and perimeter fences are just a few targets to start such a campaign: later, to be successful we shall probably need much larger actions to force the government's hand. Thirdly, any attempt to whitewash the nuclear armaments of either side must be vigorously opposed; the arguments of Communist and Trotskyite apologists for the so-called 'workers' bomb' of the Soviet Union, or of establishment multilateralists excusing the West from all responsibility are equally pernicious. Our aim should be to force the British government to disarm regardless of squeals about the Russian threat, in the hope that such

action will inspire ordinary people everywhere to seize similar political initiatives. To put all this simply, we just can't afford to be fooled again by the leaders and ideologues who rendered the anti-war movement impotent last time: the fact that CND today looks as if it is once more tramping down the road of polite protest without any sense of the necessity for undermining the entire shibboleth of mystificatory nationalism and domination of our everyday lives by bosses and leaders of all types bodes ill for its future and, indeed, for the entire human race.

Paul Anderson.



## THEN AND NOW



It is reliably reported by our legal sources that a certain Swiss inventor has come up with yet another nuclear fall-out shelter, but is having trouble agreeing a contract for its manufacture with a possible supplier. Apparently he wants to include a term absolving him from all liability to relatives of the users if the device fails to live up to its advertising.

Justin Forcash.

# DANGERS OF POWER

Christian Rakovsky, "Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR 1923-30", Allison and Busby, £4.95".

Rakovsky, like so many of his comrades, was one of the Old Bolsheviks who fell victim to the bureaucratic tyranny he had helped to create. The work under review is a compilation of his writings from the years 1923-30 when he was a leading figure in the Trotskyist Left Opposition. Unlike many of his fellow oppositionists, he never recanted and spent many years in exile in remote parts of the USSR, an attempt at escape meeting with failure. When the terror of the purge trials was unleashed in the mid 1930s, it was inevitable that he should be a victim. After an interrogation lasting eight months, he confessed to espionage and in March, 1938 was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment. It is thought that he was shot on Stalin's orders in 1941 after the Nazi invasion of the USSR.

Gus Fagan contributes a biographical essay to the book, which shows the great contribution made by Rakovsky to the formation of the Labour movement in his native Balkans. Nothing, however, is said of the strong Libertarian influence on the Bulgarian working class or of Rakovsky's opinion of this influence. One can also not help wondering what were the feelings of the Bulgarian and Romanian Social Democrats who were imprisoned and murdered by the Communist tyranny of which Rakovsky, a founder of Social Democracy in both countries, was in part the architect.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the essay, is that dealing with Rakovsky's years in power when he was head of the Soviet regime in Ukraine. This throws much light not only on the contradictions between the theory and the practice of the Leninist doctrine of the right of nations to self-determination, but also on the Bolsheviks' attitude to other Socialist groups. In particular it shows the Machiavellian nature of their dealings with the Borotbists, a Left

SR group named from their journal Borotba (Struggle) which had considerable support amongst the peasants and its own independent partisan units. It is a great pity nothing is said of the equally treacherous manner in which the Bolsheviks dealt with the Makhno movement without the support of which they could not have defeated the Whites in Ukraine.

For those who believe that socialism and bureaucracy are not identical and that the outcome of October 1917 was as much due to the nature of Leninist ideology as to the adversity of economic and social circumstances, the most interesting of Rakovsky's writings is his essay "The Professional Dangers of Power" written in 1928. The essence of this essay is Rakovsky's statement:

"When a class takes power, one of its parts becomes the agent of that power. Thus arises bureaucracy. In a socialist state ... this differentiation begins as a functional one; it later becomes a social one."

He continues:

"Another consequence is that certain functions formerly satisfied by the party as a whole, by the whole class, have now become the attributes of power, that is, only of a certain number of persons in the party and in this class."

He goes on to compare the Russian experience with that of the French Revolution writing:

"The political reaction ... consisted in this, that the power began to pass both formally and effectively into the hands of an increasingly restricted number of citizens. Little by little, first by the force of circumstances and then legally, the popular masses were eliminated from the government of the country."

It follows from this that if a socialist revolution is not to experience a bureaucratic reaction then power must be exercised by the working class as a whole and that the class

must evolve an organisational form to facilitate this. It is obvious that a centralised, elitist structure of the Bolshevik type is useless for this task, that a tyrannical organisation with a tyrannical ideology cannot build a free society. Yet the bulk of Rakovsky's writings consist of protestations of unswerving loyalty to that organisation and ideology, protestations echoed today in defiance of reality by the ever-increasing number of Trotskyist groups.

It is indeed tragic that the efforts of a Rakovsky, efforts motivated by a genuine desire for the liberation of the working class, should have ended in failure, a failure for which millions of workers in Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria,



STALIN: FROM VICTIM TO EXECUTIONER

Romania and beyond have paid with their lives. But until revolutionaries progress beyond the simplistic but reassuring practice of blaming it all on the wicked Stalin and examine the ideological roots of the Soviet tyranny these failure will be repeated again and again. While this book is useful in that it makes available to the Anglophone world the writings of a leading figure in the Russian Revolution, because much of its content will serve to reinforce Trotskyist mythology its use as a tool of a most necessary demystification will be at best limited.

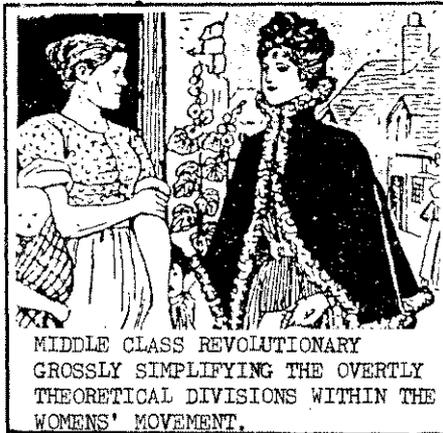
A.A. Raskolnikov.

Dear SFSR,

# LETTERS

Luciente's article 'Patriarchy, Capitalism and Feminism' in SFSR 15 raises some interesting points (and I agree with much of the argument) but it seems to me that the author falls into a number of traps common to many discussions of feminism and the women's movement in SFSR and elsewhere. The first concerns the author's method of criticising the women's movement on the basis of a critique of the arguments of a handful of feminist theoreticians. It seems quite obvious to me that the women's movement cannot be accurately characterised by the overtly theoretical statements certain participants have issued from time to time, but rather that it is notable precisely for its lack of explicit and coherently formulated theory; the dominant trend in the women's movement for the last decade and a half has, if anything, been a rampant anti-intellectualism. This does not of course mean that the women's movement has been somehow 'theory-free' or magically 'concerned with practice not theory'; particularly in politics, the very idea of 'theory-free action' is ludicrous. It does, however, serve to underline the fact that whatever theory the women's movement has been based on has remained largely unconscious or unclarified, implicit in the practice of the movement. Trivially, this means that books are not the place to find the theories of the movement: more importantly though, a whole new set of problems are generated. In particular, the implicitness and unclarity of the theoretical foundations of the women's movement lead one to wonder whether such foundations might not be extremely shaky; and this in turn makes one ask exactly why it is that the women's movement has not generally engaged in deep, rigorous, public discussion to clarify its basic principles - why, in other words, the sharply defined tendencies Luciente claims to have identified have not really developed throughout the women's movement. Here, as I see it, the answer seems to lie in the high value placed on the autonomous expression of 'sisterhood' by all elements in the women's movement: the solidarist assertion of a separate and unified identity has tended to act in such a way as to prevent or limit the development of the wide range of critical opinion necessary for rigorous discussion of fundamental theoretical princip-

les. Now this tension between solidarism and criticism leads to an intense instability in the women's movement; it is pulled simultaneously on one hand towards an empty and ultimately quietist unity, and on the other to principled discussion of fundamental issues, which leads to fragmentation. It is the latter tendency which I believe should be encouraged; the former leads nowhere but the idolisation of 'woman' much as workerists idolise workers, and for all its possibly spectacular short term 'practical' results, 'solidarism' in the long term does more harm than good by effectively acting as a brake on thinking for oneself, surely a prerequisite for acting for oneself. If the women's movement really was thinking as clearly as Luciente makes out it is, discussion with it and within it would be no problem, a fruitful process for all: as



MIDDLE CLASS REVOLUTIONARY GROSSLY SIMPLIFYING THE OVERTLY THEORETICAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.

it is, it seems to me that it has yet to reach that stage as a movement.

My second criticism of Luciente's approach is that he or she grossly simplifies the overtly theoretical divisions within the women's movement which do exist. Neither 'socialist' nor 'revolutionary' feminists form united theoretical blocs: 'socialist feminists' are divided between those focusing on the material bases for patriarchy (in the form of domestic unpaid labour) and those concentrating on the ideological (usually psycho-sexual) origins of the same. The latter, in turn, argue continually about the relative merits of classical Freudian and neo-Freudian accounts of the development of sexuality

in children. Similarly, 'revolutionary (or radical) feminists', while admittedly distinguished from socialist feminists by their insistence on patriarchy as the basic form of social stratification (in a more than merely anthropological-historical sense), are themselves crucially divided over the origins of patriarchy itself. Some offer crudely biological-determinist models, others Freudian or neo-Freudian explanations, still others adopt Jung and Hegel (see for example Mary Daly's bizarre but fascinating 'Beyond God the Father'). In this light, to seize upon particular arguments as the positions of revolutionary and socialist feminism is to drift into hopeless caricature: if Luciente wants to criticise Firestone, Mitchell, Rowbotham, Wolstonecraft, Pankhurst or anybody else, he or she is more than welcome to do just that, but let's not get involved in fighting paper tigers which 'represent' whole tendencies in the women's liberation movement. Unlike 'Marxism' feminism has no single ultimate reference for criticism, and it seems crazy to treat it as if it had.

To conclude, it seems to me that two main points emerge from all this. First of all, it is absolutely necessary in discussing the women's movement not to blur the distinction between the gurus of the movement and the movement itself. Secondly, it is pointless, indeed mystificatory, to simplify and caricature the ideas of the gurus, or for that matter those of anyone else. The women's movement as it currently exists is a complex phenomenon, and while it is essential in the current political climate to maintain continuous debate on its stances, actions and prescriptions, to play down its complexity can only hinder the task of developing an open, universalisable, libertarian approach to the problem of the sexual stratification of society, a task which, I presume, we all share.

Yours faithfully

P.A. (Oxford)

# REVIEW

## The Destruction Of Nature In The Soviet Union

The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union. Boris Komarov. Pluto Press. £2:95.

Boris Komarov's account of ecological mayhem in the USSR is, among other things, an engrossing read - prime subversive stuff. The foreword, by one Harry Rathman, isn't bad either. With commendable restraint he only mentions Trotsky once.

According to the blurb, 'Boris Komarov' is a high Soviet official in touch with the scientific and political establishment. Publishing this book must rate him prolonged residence in the slammer. He is therefore very much saying what he wants to say: his account is not a down-payment on a grant, not a text-book. It's vivid, blackly humorous in parts, and plonks you solidly down in a land of gargantuan excess which makes the world of Catch-22 seem sane and reasonable.

We've heard rumblings about Lake Baikal for some time; Zhores Medvedev's detective work on the atomic disaster 'cover-up' at Cheliabinsk has become well-known; but pretty well everything else in the book will be new to Western readers. Komarov makes four major allegations:

Colossal environmental destruction, rivalling anything the United States has 'achieved', is in fact taking place in the USSR. (1)

The Soviet authorities have done everything they can to suppress public awareness of this: by censorship, propaganda, showcase deception, and by diverting attention to the ecological misdemeanours of the 'capitalist' West. (2)

The destruction in the USSR is even more insane than that in the United States where short-term profits are made and consumers duly stuffed. There's often

no such point in the Soviet Union, the benefits being 'political.' (3)

The de facto ruling elite knows about the eco-situation but does nothing because such action would threaten its power and privileges. (4)

Komarov's remedy for the situation he so effectively evokes is linked to human rights and autonomy. While it is difficult to be optimistic about positive developments in the face of current Soviet repression, the motivation for change, Komarov insists, is powerful: "The very air we breath forces us to understand: if we want to survive we must know the truth, and tell it to others."

This book should be on the shelf of anyone interested in human emancipation. Cautious spenders might like to recommend it to the local library.

1). Komarov estimates that an area equal to that of Western Europe has been converted to 'sterile land, industrial wasteland or semiwasteland' by dumping, logging, mining and other industry, including lunatic hydroelectric schemes initiated by the NKVD itself.

A bulletin restricted to a 'narrow circle of specialists' lists more than one thousand cities with levels of noxious gas in the atmosphere five times the legally permitted minimum concentrations. Largely because of increasing air-pollution, the incidence of lung-cancer doubled between the late Sixties and the late Seventies. Each year five to six per cent more infants are born with genetic defects.

Pollution of Lake Baikal, the largest body of fresh water on this planet, proceeds remorselessly. The Sea of Azov is now a 'latrine' yielding a fish catch only one ninetieth of what it was 30 years ago. Rivers in the basins of the Black and Azov seas have been turned into 'sewers'; likewise rivers and tributaries of the Urals, and in the southern Ukraine.

2). "The poisoning of Lake Erie, the oil-drenched beaches of England, and the mountains of garbage in New York... flash before him on the television screen..." But, since 1975, the ordinary Soviet citizen has not been able to find a 'single reference' to the air, water, and soil pollution in his own country.

3). The USSR is unique in that it has constructed hydroelectric power plants on flood plain rivers. This produces vast reservoirs which spread out and have laid waste a land area equal to four Belguims. Merely the hay harvest from the area flooded by the Dniepr Hydroelectric Power Plant, used as fuel, would yield as much energy as that put out by the plant. The money spent on controlling erosion of the shores of the reservoirs and combatting algae

has long since exceeded the short-term advantages the plant once yielded.

Lake Baikal is the notorious instance of this syndrome. Originally it was industrialized to produce a specially durable cord for bomber tyres, a process demanding huge quantities of pure water. The water has since become too polluted to allow the production of such cord. "However, this no longer bothers anyone. Since 1964 .. such cord has been made from petroleum." Nevertheless the lake continues to be destroyed to produce marginal amounts of such products as ordinary cord and coarse wrapping paper. The authorities plan to complete its destruction by setting up a mining complex on the Kholodnaia River, north of the lake.

4). "All the grandiose plans to 'harness nature', to divert river courses, to correct 'millennial errors by nature' were advantageous for the ruling bureaucracy purely politically, and they became facts ... ecology was not taken into account at all. On the contrary, the more such projects contradicted the laws of nature, the more highly they were regarded. The more brilliantly the illusion of their success demonstrated the power and wisdom of the new leaders of the country."

I think anyone who has been in the armed forces will understand the lunacy which prevails in the USSR. The first thing you encounter in the forces is 'bullshit' - in its strict military meaning: activities like polishing bed-springs - the useless creation of appearances to placate authority. I was once stationed at an RAF camp where many hundred cut flowers were stuck in the ground to create a 'garden' for the benefit of an inspecting Air Vice Marshal. Grass was painted green round a flagpole, etc., etc. Blow this up to gargantuan scale, throw in a generous proportion of Gulag logic, and you've got much of what goes on in the USSR - and in 'coercive hierarchies' in general.

Bryan McCarthy.