

# **solidarity**

**FOR WORKERS' POWER**

**VOLUME 4 NUMBER 5**

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# SIX YEARS HARD

With this issue SOLIDARITY returns to duplicated form. We don't know yet whether this is a temporary measure. But for the time being we've found it impossible, in terms of expenditure of time, money, and reserves of nervous energy to maintain a printed paper.

Since April 1965, when SOLIDARITY was first produced on offset litho, we have lost considerable flexibility. This is not because we have had to conform to the rigid requirements of commercial printing - which we could never have afforded - but, paradoxically, because we sought technical help from within the circle of our own friends and supporters. Ever since, the production of each issue and pamphlet has been one long tight-rope walking act: consequently our publications have become more and more irregular. Circulation has risen slightly but not enough to justify the change.

It would be pointless however to pretend that this reverting to duplication is only a technical failure. The reasons for our inability to maintain a printed paper are more complex. We feel bound to make an estimate of the results of our six years of existence.

SOLIDARITY has never tried to imitate the sterile formula of most left wing papers, which consists essentially of repeating the reports of the capitalist press and adding a 'revolutionary' epitaph or interpretation. We have long believed that traditional politics are dead and that, although industrial struggle is of primary importance, a real movement for socialism must become a total movement - one concerned with everything people do in society, with their real daily lives. We have tried to make a deep-going analysis of the struggles in contemporary class society and to focus on the many areas where people's lives come into contact with its authoritarian patterns of domination. We have sought to show how socialist ideas are relevant to these struggles. To what extent have the few of us who started on this endeavour succeeded?

A movement trying to say something new does not grow out of vacuum. It starts with people, with the human material it has inherited, reflecting all their strength and all their limitations. In terms of people, SOLIDARITY has basically been an attempt to weld together militants from two very different backgrounds: those who have experienced and rejected the politics of the conventional left (Labour Party, Communist Party and various varieties of Trotskyism) and those who have come into politics via the peace movement and its periphery of social protest, and who have never been tempted to participate in the sad manoeuvres of this conventional left.

Our main areas of work have been the struggle in industry against both employers and the union bureaucracy and the direct action wing of the anti-bomb movement. We have also constantly sought to encourage - and sometimes even to initiate - a thoroughgoing process of ideological clarification and renewal. Otherwise our activities would have been all movement and no direction. We have sought to open a real debate on the nature of modern capitalism, on the nature of the trade union bureaucracy, on the degeneration of traditional politics, on alienation in consumption and leisure, on the need for new techniques of struggle and - at a more fundamental level - on the meaning of socialism itself. To what extent have events been even marginally influenced by our activities? And to what extent have we ourselves been changed by the activities in which we have engaged?

Unlike most of the left, who paid only superficial attention to the upsurge round the peace movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, we considered this movement to be extremely important; we thought that it marked a new stage in the struggle for a free society. We said that this was the only mass movement in existence. The 'entrists' pointed to the slumbering millions who were allegedly members of the Labour Party - or who would become members 'once things started to move'. Unfortunately these do not constitute a movement. They do not participate in any way in 'their' organization.

Nothing which has happened has caused us to revise this judgment. The anti-bomb movement - contradictory and amorphous though it was - has completely altered the consciousness of many thousands of people. It reintroduced the idea of direct action to the Labour movement. Many people who have had no connection with the peace movement will behave differently because of its existence. Direct action is now probable in many situations where it would have been inconceivable ten years ago. Without the experience of the peace movement the new activists would still be in the fetters of 'revolutionary' politics.

The anti-bomb movement brought people into contact with the realities of class justice. They saw police brutality at first hand. The climate of opinion concerning the state has changed completely for large layers of people. The 'trial of the six' (February 1962) was an eye-opener to many concerning the operation of the courts and the functioning of 'justice'. The revelations of Easter 1963 concerning RSG 6 showed the cynical contempt of an inner core of top bureaucrats not only for the mass of the population but for the mass of the Establishment itself. The events of Greek Week (July 1963) showed how easily the democratic facade of British institutions could be shed, how fragile were our reputed civil liberties and how rapidly London could assume the appearance of a police state. The Challenor case showed that planting evidence and abuse of functions were common police practices. In all these areas things will never be the same again.

Of course the left had always known that the state was an agency of the ruling class, while being very careful not to come into too serious conflict with it. Nothing is more law-abiding than a traditional 'revolutionary' group. These people expressed polite astonishment that

the peace militants had to learn the 'elementary lessons' by practical experience, when they could so easily be acquired by merely glancing at the Communist Manifesto or at State and Revolution. But large masses of people seldom come to political consciousness through reading books. Workers learn from their experience on the factory floor, not from reading socialist pamphlets. Likewise it is only through struggle that one can gain a real - as distinct from a theoretical - insight into the intricate functioning of the state machine. It is only through constant probing that one can discover its weak points and uncover the innumerable bureaucratic inconsistencies of which revolutionaries can and should skillfully take advantage. It is through being involved in real action that one accumulates the genius as to where Authority is most sensitive.

We think we were right in trying to work with the activists of the peace movement. That is not to say that we think the experiment has been an unqualified success. In many respects it has been a failure.

The peace movement has not developed its moral protest at the atrocities of the warfare state into any overall criticism of society. Lacking any coherent system of ideas it is imprisoned by the concepts of established society. The activists' protest becomes an isolated moral gesture which at its worst degenerates into irrationality and exhibitionism. They have been unable to participate in the undramatic day-to-day issues which for most people comprise the reality of the class struggle. They lacked a bridge (or even any understanding of the need for a bridge) to the mass of ordinary people. The easing of international tension and the consequent decline in fears of atomic war has therefore left them aimless and isolated.

In relation to industry our activities have had equally contradictory effects. Our documentation of industrial disputes has won us a steady readership among industrial militants... and even among the more sophisticated industrial sociologists. Our pamphlets What Next for Engineers and The BLSP Dispute have been widely read among engineering shop stewards in the London area and have been repeatedly referred to by people discussing - from their various viewpoints - the industrial scene in Britain today. Our pamphlet Truth About Vauxhall was widely sold at the factory gates in both Luton and Dunstable in October 1962. In 1966 widespread 'scenes never witnessed before in an industrial dispute in Britain suddenly broke out in these previously quiet places, the issues being those highlighted in our pamphlet, namely the attempt by management to by-pass the elected stewards by the tame pussy-cat M.A.C., and the 'rights' of management to shift labour and to break up working gangs. We have addressed a number of meetings in various parts of the country about our ideas concerning industry. Our analysis of the union bureaucracy as a new social formation with interests of its own is at last beginning to find an echo, as militants begin to see the need of going further than a critique of the individual trade union bureaucrat. We have unearthed 'dirt' about the actions of union leaders in various disputes and made sure that the facts were known to the workers affected. Techniques of struggle developed by

groups of workers have been popularised in the pages of SOLIDARITY and made available to a wider layer of workers. We know that our articles on Fords are widely read in the plant. But we need massive help to increase both our industrial circulation and coverage.

Yet we meet the same problem among our readers in industry as among our supporters in the anti-bomb movement, namely the difficulty in passing from a partial critique to a total one, from a critique of industry (or of the warfare state) to a critique of authoritarian society as a whole. Industrial militants often criticise our paper when we carry material not directly related to industrial struggle. Our articles on prisons or schools or on the implications of civil disobedience as exemplified by the anti-bomb movement are seen as a 'diversion' from the real business in hand. We are told that articles on science or on modern music 'have nothing to do with politics'. We are told that issues like King Hill are 'minor local affairs', without serious implications of a more general nature - or that our interest in what happened in Berkeley (see Students in Revolt) only shows 'how far down the drain we have gone if we attribute any significance to anything that happens in the student world'.

We consider this kind of criticism a symptom of our failure to show the intimate interrelationships between every aspect of human activity and to expose how deeply modern bureaucratic capitalism penetrates every aspect of our lives. These limited horizons are also a symptom of the long-term effects of traditional socialist propaganda, which encourages working class philistinism and anti-intellectualism. The traditional socialists see the task of the working class as purely industrial. The working class is the horse, which need not understand, and which others - who do understand - will ride to the Revolution.

This is where technical and political difficulties mutually reinforce one another. Without a regular paper we cannot deal with half the problems we would like to discuss, cannot venture into half the fields we would like to explore. We can say bluntly what we are against. We can for instance point out that industrial militants who are racialists - or who favour flogging or capital punishment - have very little to do with revolutionary socialism, about as little as peaceniks who are in favour of scabbing, or as 'socialists' who beat up political opponents selling literature outside their meetings. The revolution is about everything. But a paper, laboriously produced and kept going by a mere handful, cannot be. We are not polymaths.

In the realm of revolutionary theory, the dissemination of our ideas has had equally contradictory effects. Whether people agree or disagree with us, no one could accuse us of sterility in this field. In a series of pamphlets and articles\* we have sought to develop new

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\* Revolutionary Organization (I, 4, 5, 6); From Civil Disobedience to Social Revolution and Civil Disobedience and the Working Class (I, 8, 9); Working Class Consciousness (II, 2, 3); The Bourgeois Revolution and the Socialist Revolution and Thoughts on Bureaucracy (II, 10); Politics 64 (III, 3); Consciousness and Theory (III, 10); The Fate of Marxism (IV, 3) and Meaning of Socialism, Socialism or Barbarism and Modern Capitalism and Revolution.

areas of discussion and systematically to broach new subjects. This evolution as a distinct tendency in the revolutionary movement has not been - and could not have been - a smooth process. From the onset we have had to face a double ideological onslaught from entirely different directions. The traditional left accuses us of being 'utopians', 'anarchists', 'way ahead of our times', 'socialist arcadians'. They object strongly to our excursions into subjects (such as techniques of manipulation and control, the structure of schools and of prisons, alienation in consumption and leisure) the integral function of which in a class society they seem totally to ignore. All they want is for all this to be 'under new management'.

Others accuse us of precisely the opposite failing. They resent the basic framework of our ideas, our talk of class and class struggle. The way to freedom, for them, is a molecular process, the slow addition of one free individual to another free individual. We have even heard it put forward that the only real revolutionary force in society today consists of those who have 'seen through the necessity to work' and who have 'emancipated themselves through drugs'. We are criticised for not having developed a sufficiently total critique of society.... by those whose notion of totality includes ignoring the real struggle in industry, where most people spend the major part of their life.

Finally, how have we ourselves been affected by all this? Although our influence in many fields has been considerable it has not proved possible to build up a group of supporters who will work consistently to spread and expand our ideas. There have been attempts to establish groups outside London. In Scotland this has been successful. Elsewhere there have been temporary groups. But SOLIDARITY remains preponderantly London-based. We had hoped that groups and individuals would use the paper as a means of spreading information about struggles in their localities. Generally this has not happened. Our circulation has risen but the number of people who are active in producing and selling the paper has not. For those who have seen it through, politics has been both fun and hard labour.

Over the last few years, although our ideas have become widely known, we have not grown. This we feel is one of the heaviest 'penalties' of our sort of participation in real struggles. We have not sought to recruit or to proselytise. We have tended to subordinate ourselves to the struggle in hand. Our objective has never been the growth of a small group of like-thinkers, although we have sometimes sorely felt we might have been more effective if more numerous. We are very aware of what happens to revolutionaries who put loyalty to an organization before loyalty to their principles or to their class. Our aim, first and last has always been to assist - in whatever way we could - the self-development of the real movement and the growth of a revolutionary consciousness among those who were undertaking revolutionary action or using potentially revolutionary methods. SOLIDARITY supporters, involved in these struggles, were willing to give their all, at the expense of organizational loyalties. It seems significant

that our real and meaningful successes were achieved on this basis, with our supporters more concerned with obtaining a victory in a given struggle than in 'building the organization'. As a result of all this there is a large fund of goodwill towards us, but we have not 'made' more than a handful of 'members'. For all our industrial work, for all our participation in the direct action wing of the anti-bomb movement, for all our involvement in campaigns such as King Hill, and for all our development of revolutionary theory.

There are further factors to add to the debit side of our experience. Our own friends and supporters have not been immune from the drift to private living which we have described. They have often been reluctant to shoulder responsibilities in a sustained manner, particularly the humdrum and unexciting tasks without which the production and distribution of a paper is not possible. Most organizations function like a bureaucratic pyramid: a few people take the decisions and the majority carry out the orders. We invert the pyramid: everyone participates in taking the decisions and then leaves it to a handful of us to carry them out.

The semi-anarchist milieu in which some of our ideas have proved popular was a milieu in which rejection of authority was equated with rejection of any kind of self-discipline or organization or even of any system of ideas at all. In this milieu the mass irresponsibility

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### STRAIGHT ANSWERS WANTED - BUT NOT EXPECTED !

On the following page we describe the developing campaign for non-payment of the political levy to the Labour Party. We would like to ask three straight questions of all Communist Party members and of the 'revolutionaries' associated with such papers as Voice of the Unions, The Week, The Militant, International Socialism, Labour Worker and Socialist Current :

1) How would you vote if the issue came up in your T.U. branch? Would you indulge in the usual double-talk of denouncing the Labour leaders and then ensuring, by your vote, that they continue having the financial resources to attack trade unionists?

2) How much longer is your outfit going to continue tail-ending events, and 'wait for the working class to move' when it is clearly on the move already?

3) When - if ever - will you discover that your outdated ideas of the Labour Party being 'basically a working class party' are an obstacle to the development of a new kind of consciousness?



# DONT PAY THE HANGMAN

We reprint below an article from the first issue of a rank-and-file printers' paper, The Printworker (obtainable for 6d., post free, from 29 Love Walk, London SE5). The author compares today's affiliation of trade unionists to the Labour Party to 'the affiliation of a condemned prisoner's neck to the hangman's noose'. We entirely agree with this view and support the paper's campaign for non-payment, by trade unionists, of the political levy to the Labour Party.

To date the following small unions have already decided to stop paying the political levy: Pottery Workers Union; Power Looms Overlookers Association; Weavers Association; Beamers, Twisters and Drawers Association and the Textile Warehousemen Association. Hospital electricians, several London bus branches of the TGWU, a branch of Croydon railwaymen and a branch of Grimsby fishermen have followed suit. So have hundreds if not thousands of individual militants.

These decisions have widespread implications which we will discuss in our next issue. Thousands of workers are now discussing at a very practical level the whole question of whether the Labour Party can in any sense be called a working class party.

The Executive Council of SOGAT, the biggest Union in the printing industry, have recently issued a damning indictment of the Labour Government.

In a statement entitled "SOGAT and the Wage Freeze" they declare that the Government is pursuing Tory policies, is making the rich richer at the expense of working people, and is using legislation to attack wages and trade union activity for the benefit of the big employers.

If this is an accurate description of the Labour Government's activities (and we think it is) how can we logically continue to support this Government through our affiliation to the Labour Party?

The Trade Union Movement created the Labour Party - as SOGAT's statement rightly says - "in order to achieve fundamental social change in Britain". For more than 60 years we have financed it and voted for it.

Trade Union affiliation fees and other donations amount to some £300,000 a year. Without Trade Union money and Trade Union votes there would be neither Labour Party nor Labour Government. And what after all these years has Labour achieved in the way of "fundamental social change"?

A small privileged minority still owns and runs this country while the lot of the great majority is still hard work and insecurity.

Unemployment, which many thought had been banished forever, is now with us again and rising all the time, and it has been deliberately created by the Labour Government.

The reward for all our financial and electoral support of the Labour Party is the Prices and Incomes Act which threatens us with fines and imprisonment if we dare strike to better our wages and working conditions!

How much longer are we going to tolerate this suicidal business? Whatever it may have meant in the past, affiliation to the Labour Party today is like the affiliation of a condemned prisoner's neck to the hangman's noose.

This Labour Government - the sixth since the Trade Unions created the Labour Party - threatens the very existence of trades unionism - free collective bargaining and the right to strike.

If we are to fight for our existence we had better make sure we are free to do so. Independence from ALL Governments, and from all political parties aiming to form governments, is the first essential.

This is, in fact, the view of one of SOGAT's biggest branches, the London Clerical, whose Annual Meeting last month, attended by some 150 delegates, carried overwhelmingly the following resolution:

"This Delegate Meeting . . . is opposed to the use of the Law and the State Machine to hold back or limit wage increases, and therefore opposes the Labour Government's Prices and Incomes Bill, its Wage Freeze, and the Tory Party's threat to reform the Trades Unions. All these policies will require anti-Trade Union legislation. This Branch therefore urges the Executive Council to prepare the Union for a policy of independence from all Governments and political parties and, to this end, suggests that Executive Council ballot those members who pay the political levy as to whether our present affiliation to the Labour Party should continue."

This resolution should receive widespread support. SOGAT's Executive Council say in their statement that unless the Government changes its course "they must forfeit our support". The London Clerical Branch agrees with this and asks that the decision be taken in the only possible democratic way - by a ballot of the membership.

Let the rank and file decide.

(John Lawrence, SOGAT)

# THE CAINE MUTINY

Students at the London School of Economics have recently been in the news. They have been opposing the appointment of Dr. Adams (of Rhodesia) as their new Director. They have even more strongly been opposing the denial by their present Director (Sir Sydney Caine) of their right to question these matters. An LSE student here tells the inside story.

Looking back over the past year and a half, it seems useful to begin with a description of L S E's reaction to U D I in November 1965. Within two hours of the news being broadcast, 250 students marched on Downing Street. The next day, November 12th, another march of about 350 students took place; this was finally dispersed by the police outside Rhodesia House, when 14 students were arrested. A week later, a third march took place - this time to the City: 300 of the 500 taking part were L S E students. These demonstrations suggest two points: firstly, the presence at L S E of some 300 students willing to demonstrate; and secondly that the issues they are prepared to demonstrate about are what may be termed 'liberal' issues. Where racism and Africa are concerned, some 10% of the School's 3,300 students can be mobilised at very short notice. As the Socialist Society (of which I am a member) has discovered through bitter experience, if the issue is closer home (for example, a reaction to Wilson's 'Red Plot' smear on the seamen), the equivalent figure is about 1%.

Students could be expected to react both in defence of liberal rights and in attack on racism. The potential of the issue raised by the appointment of Dr Adams as successor to Sir Sydney Caine was therefore enormous - but it was not understood either by those who made the appointment or by those who were instrumental in initiating the opposition to it.

On Monday, October 17th, a pamphlet entitled "L S E's New Director - A Report on Walter Adams" sold out its first edition within 30 minutes. That only 750 copies were produced initially is an indication of a total underestimation of the Report's significance. This has immediately been seized upon by the national press. After a day or two of 'straight' reporting, the editorial staffs weighed in, and in The Express, The Sun, The Mirror, and The Telegraph, the line began to be developed that students had no right to even question the choice of their Director. It became clear that the real issue was "what rights, if any, do students have"? Sir Sydney Caine the present Director recognised this; so did the Board of Governors and the Academic Board; and so too did the Socialist Society (who organised a teach-in entitled "The Adams Affair and Student Power"). But the Students' Union 'leadership' did not - and even after victimisation they still saw the two issues of 'students' rights' and the new Director as separate and distinct.

At the next Friday's Union meeting a motion "seriously questioning" Adams' appointment, and committing the Union to opposition unless he replied satisfactorily to criticisms of him within 18 days, was passed by 425 votes to 10 with 16 abstentions. This definition of students' rights challenged the bureaucracy, and immediately provoked a counter reaction. The Board of Governors met and wrote to Dr Adams "requesting and advising" him not to reply to the Students' Union. Lord Bridges, Chairman of the Court of Governors (four directorships), wrote to The Times saying he thought it "neither necessary nor proper that any reply should be made by the L S E" to criticisms raised by students; Caine refused permission to David Adelstein, the Union President, to write a reply, stating: "I cannot agree that these matters fall within the competence of the Students' Union".

The challenge had been made. The students took it up. On Friday, October 28th, the President was "authorised and instructed" to write to The Times in reply to Lord Bridges. What was now openly at stake was the liberal right of free expression. The 'militancy' of the ensuing struggle was obviously affected by the frustration felt by students at being neglected by the staff (L S E has one of the worst staff-student ratios in the country), at being overcrowded (7 square feet per student), and at being ruled bureaucratically. Equally, the fact that almost all students study the social sciences (everywhere a 'militant' faculty), and that the quality and content of the teaching is unsatisfactory, played a part. There are deep roots to the conflict, but what determined most students' actions was the discrepancy between the liberal ideology they have been brought up on and the negation of liberal freedoms by the bureaucracy.

What followed is fairly well known. The President was disciplined for acting under the Union's instructions. The students held a 75% effective boycott against infringements of 'natural justice' by the Board of Discipline, not against the Board of Discipline itself. Its success obviously influenced the Board's decision to find Adelstein guilty but not to punish him in any way. They were obviously worried. Caine himself said: "I cannot remember any protest on this scale before. There has been a change in student attitudes". But how big a change? The Union 'leadership' had fought the disciplining on purely legalistic grounds - there had been no assertion of our rights and any attempt to analyse the situation as a whole was rejected. The 'Adams Issue' was dying a natural death since as an isolated emotive issue it could not sustain itself over a long period. The Administration was beginning to make one or two slow moves in the direction of accommodating a student bureaucrat or two on some minor committees. But one important advance had been made. Students were now conscious of their collective power. They wouldn't fight for 'Student Power' at L S E, but if the right issue arose, they would use it.

This fact was understood by the Authorities. What they obviously did not realise, though, was that although students could now confront the official power structure one hundred times more effectively than ever before, it would require a new liberal issue to make them do so. There was and is no inevitable tendency towards conflict as long as the Administration acts with subtlety. A 'Stop Adams' meeting was scheduled for 4 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31st. It had been organised by the Union 'leadership' and all the indications were that it would not be very well attended. But at 2.30 p.m. on that Tuesday, Caine banned the meeting. In doing this, he violated the basic liberal principle of free speech and assembly, and so raised a new issue.

And this time it was serious. It was not a legalistic quibble, but a direct confrontation with arbitrary authority. Immediately, production of a leaflet entitled "Caine bans Free Speech" ("This meeting shall take place") was begun; following behind as usual, the Union 'leadership' set their seal to a fait accompli (they were later to be disciplined for this). At 4 p.m. a meeting attended by some 500 students began outside the Old Theatre (porters had been posted outside the doors - which do not possess locks - to prevent students entering). The sequence of events is not clear, but the result was that Caine told the students "You have no rights" yet was powerless to stop 150 of them from entering the Old Theatre. Inside, by candlelight (all fuses had been removed), he begged students to leave and hold their meeting somewhere else; a student shouted at him: "You cease to exist". It was true. For some 20 minutes, until word was brought of a porter's heart attack, Caine meant nothing: the students had established a temporary new order of their own.

The news of the porter's death (he was not touched by students, but had a heart attack in the excitement) produced an immediate reaction. Members of the staff called for immediate and mass suspensions without any disciplinary procrastinations; the Governors supported the Director in all his actions; and among the students, right-wing leaflets full of personal smears appeared for the first time. It began to look as if the split in the student body would permit the Authorities to victimise whom they pleased. After a few days, however, the 'left' moved back onto the offensive. By Friday, February 10th, student feeling was so far back to 'normal', that the Union passed (almost unanimously) a resolution calling for the abandonment of disciplinary proceedings against students, and rejected overwhelmingly an amendment which would restrict this opposition to legal representations.

Once again, the Authorities had provided the issue. Unable to conceive of students acting for themselves, they chose to discipline the Presidents of the Union and the Graduate Students' Association, and four members of Union Council. The 'leaders' had to be those to blame. But in disciplining the students' elected

representatives, the School is challenging an undefined sense of 'fair play'. Some concessions have been made, but it seems doubtful whether things can quietly subside. The School can only appease the students by freeing their representatives; it can only appease right-wing staff and influential business interests by making some sort of example. They are in a dilemma. We are not.

S. J.

WRITTEN ENOUGH POSTCARDS TO YOUR LABOUR MP ?

PASSED ENOUGH RESOLUTIONS ?

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WANT TO 'DO SOMETHING' ABOUT VIETNAM ?

Then help us distribute

## A GREEN BERET BLASTS THE WAR

by Donald Duncan

where it will do the most good !

This 8-page, illustrated, quarto size pamphlet written by a much decorated U.S. 'war hero' (who was offered a battlefield commission in Vietnam but turned it down) describes - in language easily understood by any G.I. - why the author broke with the war. We hope it will be widely read by American Servicemen in Britain.

The pamphlet is produced by the Vietnam Information Group as their first venture. It can be had free from 96a Stanhope St., London NW1, but please send something to cover postage.

Due out shortly :

## FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY <sup>by Paul Cardan</sup>

a joint Solidarity Scotland and Solidarity London pamphlet; 10d.

What was the role of Bolshevik ideology in the degeneration of the Russian Revolution? How does the Russian bureaucracy resemble - and how does it differ from - the developing bureaucracies of the ex-colonial countries?

Can a backward country industrialize without becoming bureaucratised? What are the theoretical and practical implications?

# REVIEW

## THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH ARCH

[Macgibbon and Kee 30/-]

Joseph Arch was the leader of the Agricultural Workers' Union which grew rapidly in the 1870's, only to collapse a few years later. His autobiography, written, after he had become a Liberal M.P., is an interesting document. Arch fought fiercely against the squires and parsons who dominated the countryside and oppressed the farm labourers, but he never developed his attack on the farmers and landowners into an attack on capitalism; he remained firmly attached to the myths of the British Constitution.

One reason for this was the support which his union received from the Liberal Party and from wealthy industrialists. This reflected the remnants of the division between landowners and industrial capitalists which still persisted in the political life of the time. But support for the Farmworkers' Union was the last gasp of bourgeois radicalism. Towards the end of the century landlords and industrialists were uniting in the Conservative Party.

It has been claimed that this book illustrates why Britain didn't have a revolution. This seems a bit extreme; the farmworkers were not typical of

the British working class. Arch's reliance on wealthy sympathisers made him play down the connection with industrial workers. He was often attacked by radicals, and was even accused of corruption. These attacks seem unjustified. Arch was honest and militant, but quite unaffected by socialist ideas, while his concern for his fellow workers did not extend to immigrants, whom he described as "worthless pauper aliens, foreign Jews, vagrant Italians etc., the scum of their own countries".

When Arch jubilantly describes his defeat of the hated Tories in an election he sounds just like a Labour Party activist today. One can't help rejoicing with him although one knows his game of Cowboys and Indians had as little relevance to real problems as their's has. In Parliament, Arch was an ordinary Liberal M.P., not a militant spokesman for the farm workers.

His pietistic biblical phrases have a dated sound today, but his delight in the attention paid him by the great, and his self-righteous egotistical style is typical of most trade union leaders both then and now.

John Sullivan.

# DOWN YOU GO, JACK!

This article was specially written for SOLIDARITY by a young Durham miner, Dave Douglass, who also wrote the poem.

When you've finally made the decision, desperate because there aren't any other jobs for a labouring lad, or maybe blinded by the crap given out by the N C B via the colourful "man's job" posters or colliery training officers, against bitter disapproval from your pitman dad or with his reluctant consent because he can't afford to keep you at the Tech' or on the dole, you fill in the forms, usually adding another link in the chain that ties your family to the pits.

As you travel on your first morning to the mine Training Centre, a feeling not unlike that which you get after your first arrest as you journey to court, comes over you. All the more so if you come from one of the softer areas, knowing full well that among most pit lads the buckle-and-fist is the main recreation.

"Back to school" flashes through your mind as you enter the gate. A very hard school, you think, like Borstal maybe. Obviously everyone is thinking the same as they stand long-haired, leather-jacketed, teds or unphilosophical beats, and maybe you're thinking you're too mod, after all you are from "the toon". Everyone

tries grimly to make grim faces or making sure that their stance can't be at all puffy, you shoulder the wall, haunch your shoulders and take big drags from your cigarette.

At first light the conditions seem quite good - shorter hours and better money than an unskilled chap could get in most places. But in relation to where you're working (it's got to be seen to be believed) it's not good at all.

Lads from every colliery in the area are sent to the Training School where alternate weeks underground and in the school go on for about thirteen weeks. The first of these are of divided viciousness, often erupting into inter-colliery fist fights, but the strict discipline and out-moded ideas soon welds the lads into a common body fighting off any attacks on their long hair and "naughty language".

Anyone trying to instil socialist ideas into their heads may end up banging his own. It would seem that their only interests are: fuck the boss, pay on Fridays, getting sloshed, getting their oats, and beating up rival gangs. Their only discussion: which lad is the hardest. But as the weeks progress and hard work is shared,



an unusually strong bond of comradeship is formed which I think, for whatever reasons there may be, is unique to this industry. After this time it is easier to try and put forward some of the basic socialist principles which arise in connection with everyday struggles. Once moved from their inbred distrust of anything which isn't Catholic-type Labour Party, a desire to be recognised with a more "Left" body becomes apparent. Their initial understanding and appreciation however is shown by their painting hammers and sickles on their backs and shouting "Up the Reds" as a greeting. Some of the lads never rise from this shallow basis. With others the sparks of militancy are taken to their hearts and kindled.

After finishing at the Centre the lads return to their home pits to start work either on the surface or underground, supposedly going through a job progression engind in coal-face training (piece work). Jobs on the surface involve work in the timber-yard, shifting planks, props and wood lagging ready to be sent down the pit. This is hard work, often shared by lads from 15 to 17 years old, waiting to receive their underground training. This pushing, carrying, lifting is as hard as any down the pit (with the exception of face work) and the young "rookies" get no kid-glove treatment.

Another surface job is "screens", where coals are separated from the big stones, graded and washed, etc. The men and lads stand in lines next to the conveyor lifting off stones (weighing 1 cwt. or so). It is backbreaking work for 8 hours a day.

After six months at each of these two jobs, you may progress to the pit yard. This involves more moving and carrying of pit supplies, either for underground or surface use. On the other hand a lad may be placed into the less manual sequence of the lamp cabin, first aid room, time office, baths and fitting shop before going down the pit. Wages at bank are three shillings per shift less than underground, hence most lads will kick up hell if they don't get underground work as soon as possible after training is finished.

When you finally do get down the pit there are many jobs you can be put into:

#### SOLIDARITY PUBLIC MEETING

Sunday, March 5, 8 pm.

The Roebuck, Great Dover St.  
London SE1 (3 minutes' walk  
from Borough Tube station,  
Northern Line)

INSIDE THE LABOUR PARTY.

IS IT WORTH IT ?

(a) Timber Leading

This is the hardest and most common job. In most of our old pits in the North and Durham, this is manual haulage, which involves a tram filled with props being pushed, as in the nineteenth century, along the track by hand and head. Some have the benefit of ponies, although these are usually used for carrying iron girders. Most pits have manual haulage in one of their districts. This is degrading and backbreaking, in heights sometimes less than four feet. Gates can be so low (the result of depth pressure and bad management) that the trams are pushed while crawling. If you happen to be in a return airway, your job is twice as difficult because of heat and scarcity of air making it difficult to breathe. In theory young workers are not allowed within fifty yards of the coal-face because of water, powder-reak and coal dust, but naturally these conditions prevail much further than that. The wage at 16 is 22/6d per shift.

A sub to SOLIDARITY  
and SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS

costs 10/- for 12 items  
(post free).

Send to Heather Russell,  
53A Westmoreland Road,  
Bromley, Kent.

(b) Other Haulage Jobs

These include "the ropes", which means clipping tubs onto a moving rope. This work, although not as hard as that of their poorer brothers, is long, constant and boring and the lads still face the same conditions coupled with repetitive work.

You may be lucky enough to get a job as a "lineslad" (assistant to the linesman). This is considerably easier than any others. The harder parts are that you must cover the entire area of maybe several districts. This means continuous walking in the heights and conditions mentioned above, for many miles, nearly always crossing or working on coal faces, either to establish a face line or reach another gate by a shorter route. Linesmen often face the same environmental conditions as piece workers on the same low grade as the other lads. The advantage of this job is a constant day shift.

Wages are fixed according to your age and not depending on what job you do. The underground rates are:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Weekly Wage</u>		
15	6	11	6
15½	6	14	6
16	6	17	0
16½	7	0	6
17	7	4	6
17½	7	10	6
18	9	8	0
19	10	0	0
20	10	19	6

Many people on the "Left" seem to have the attitude: "the pits are closing, good riddance!". Well, sometimes maybe. But right now pit closures are no cause for merriment, not when the prospects are unemployment, much lower wages or longer hours. Most miners will tell you (right or

wrong) they'd rather pox up their lungs now and get more money on Friday, than see sun all week and ration their pint.

To me, the working-class everywhere have nowt to boast about and it's a toss-up which is worse, good money and bad conditions or vice versa.

Rusting coils of iron jutting from mud pools in skyday  
shrouded fields

Looking down at my feet walking slowly, unwillingly to the mine

High above, the pulley wheels stare bluntly at the daylight

Like I, grasping its presence so as to remember it.

Resting my head against the wall of the cage as it drops into  
Satan's arse, noisily bumping and pains deep in my bowels,

Down here it's gone - everything. Anything.  
just a spectrumless void and souls grope and dig  
in semi-conscious stupor of half life beatitudes

But I know, somewhere up there my girl, my girlheart waits  
symboled in sunlight, or kissed by the trickles of warm rain,  
she waits for me.

Times are when I don't know, but today I won't die.  
No angry earth would kill our love, nor squash my head,  
miserably, or leave my widow, or sad my children. No earth  
in her torments of windy picks could do that and my waiting  
love believes that

I will ascend into moonlight at least, or soul-light,  
tonight, tonight, not now, hold thoughts,  
stop mind,  
work now - tonight Maureen...

D. D.

# VIETNAM

## 2. WITH THE RULERS OR WITH THE RULED ?

In this article, we continue the discussion started in SOLIDARITY vol.IV, No.4. There will be further contributions in forthcoming issues.

The continuing build up of American forces in Vietnam, the policy of 'controlled' escalation and the obvious failure of that policy to achieve its objectives may well eventually force the Pentagon to launch an all-out land invasion of North Vietnam.

As revolutionary socialists we must have an attitude to this war. What should this attitude be? Should we support the demands of the pacifists and liberals, demands such as 'Negotiation not war' or 'Peace in Vietnam'? Should we organize petitions asking Wilson to try once again to get Kosygin to agree to reconvene the Geneva Conference?

Or should we join forces with the Communist Party, and vaguely 'demand the right of the Vietnamese people to determine their own affairs', and then by a brilliant feat of mental gymnastics, identify such a demand with 'unconditional' support for Ho Chi Minh?

Or should we perhaps follow in the wake of the Trotskyists who offer various gradations of 'critical' support to the Ho regime, whilst intensifying work in the Labour Party 'to build a powerful left-wing that will force Wilson to send atomic weapons to the Viet-Cong'?

And if not, what is the alternative?

## THE REAL ISSUES

Let's clarify some of the real issues. We have already documented the history of Vietnam (see Vietnam, Solidarity Pamphlet No. 20) since the Second World War. If one fact emerges from this history to supersede all others, it is that what happens in Vietnam is mostly determined in Moscow and Washington - in Moscow in the sense that in spite of Hanoi's independent position, Ho is dependent

on Russian military aid (aid that, as the war intensifies, Peking just couldn't provide) - in Washington in that the successive puppet governments installed in Saigon wouldn't last a day without the armed American presence.

The second point we must note is the basic similarity in the social structure of these two great powers, dominating the historical development within Vietnam. With the passing of time they grow more and more alike. Both are class societies, in both there is the class that manages, and the class that obeys. In strictly marxist terminology both systems are based on the accumulation of capital, in both the worker is a wage labourer, producing a surplus, which is converted to capital, i.e. both are capitalist.

In the West, the State controls and 'owns' an increasing proportion of the national economy; the role of the private capitalist is gradually lessening in significance (1). In the East, meanwhile, production is increasingly geared to the demands of the market (2).

The basic identity of the two systems is recognized by the more advanced sections of the ruling class in both states - it is unfortunately only the 'revolutionaries' who still manage to delude themselves into seeing the communist world as in some way connected with workers' power.

## IMPERIALISM: OLD AND NEW

Although the two major world powers are fundamentally capitalist, capitalism has altered, and is constantly altering. One of these changes is the new relation of imperialism to the colonial world. The new attitudes and patterns of action develop unevenly and at times reversion to old methods is all too easy as the Vietnam example shows.

In the days before the disintegration of the British Empire it used to be argued by orthodox 'marxist-leninists' that the relatively high living standards of the British working class were possible only because of the super-exploitation of the colonial

- 
- (1) This development was clearly foreseen by Marx himself in vol. III of 'Capital'. He anticipated the state taking over the role of 'capitalist'. Anyway 'the capitalist is only capital personified' he pointed out.
  - (2) At the last Communist Party Congress in Moscow Kosygin anticipated that by the end of the year one-third of the engineering industry would be producing for the market.

peoples. The old imperialisms needed their empires to dump their surplus commodities, to obtain cheap raw materials, or to export their surplus capital to. This exploitation was very real, but subsequent events have shown that capitalism CAN exist and in fact expand quite happily without colonies of this particular type. The examples of Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium are there to show it.

Modern capitalism isn't based on 'oppressed' nations. As it develops now, it is more total and all-embracing, drawing the ex-colonial countries into its own giant hierarchical structure, expanding its dominion over the world, involving everyone, at every level, in every nation, manipulating each and all as worker and consumer alike. The relationship of France to Algeria is far more typical of modern capitalism than, say, that of Portugal to Angola (or of the USA to Vietnam).

American policy in S.E. Asia is, in this respect, out of step. It is in the tradition of the old imperialism. Indochina has been a sphere of US interest since the 1940's, when she clashed with Japanese imperialism over this specific issue (see Solidarity Pamphlet No. 20). Today political considerations have largely replaced the economic ones. Vietnam is seen as a major base against the advance of 'Red China' and of various local movements of national liberation. A few years ago, Eisenhower said quite bluntly that 'Indochinese tin and tungsten are essential to the American economy', but today this is one of the less important preoccupations of America's rulers.

The major point in relation to Vietnam is that present American policy is not basic to but rather contrary to the newly developing form of capitalism. The bureaucrats in Moscow and Washington both know this. In fact, both would welcome an immediate peace in Vietnam based on a Korea-type carve up.

## FEUDALISM OR STATE CAPITALISM ?

The histories of Ho Chi Minh and of the Indochina Communist Party follow a pattern very familiar to students of communist parties in backward countries. The 'revolution' was carried out through manipulation of 'popular fronts' and the 'liquidation' of elements hostile to the creation of a strongly centralized totalitarian state.

The State bureaucrats in Hanoi control the Viet-Cong (or 'National Liberation Front' for those who get excited over names), whose tactics remain the same (murder of any opposition). The Viet Cong increasingly depends on North Vietnamese aid. Victory for the Viet Cong would mean the setting up of a state modelled on the North.

Only the most naive can doubt this. There is no likelihood of a scattered peasantry - and even less of a scarcely existing proletariat - exhausted by years of civil war being able to impose an independent socialist solution.

In one sense the victory of the Viet Cong would represent progress. The Americans have given their support to the status-quo, i.e. to the old feudal landlord class as opposed to the land-hungry peasants. The Ho regime is anti-landlord, for land reform, and for industrialisation. Ironically, the Ho regime is therefore the more capitalist of the two. And as everyone knows capitalism is 'progressive' in relation to feudalism.(3) Support for the Viet Cong is support for national state capitalism. It is progressive in so far that there can be no working class power without the prior creating of a working class.

Revolutionary socialists must support the struggle of the South Vietnamese against the old feudal regime. But they must also support the North Vietnamese against the Ho regime. The American presence serves to strengthen the ruling class in both South and North Vietnam. The intensified American attack - which at the moment falls short of all out invasion of North Vietnam - drives the Vietnamese people closer and closer to the Ho bureaucracy. Because of this the defeat of the American intervention is the pre-requisite for the victory of the social revolution in both North and South Vietnam.

Some of our readers have criticized our pamphlet for arguing that the only solution to the Vietnam war is the 'world socialist revolution'. What can we do, they ask. Put bluntly, not much! Apart from actually going to Vietnam, not to fight but to assist in the defeat of the various bureaucracies (clearly a ridiculous suggestion!) we cannot influence the conduct of the war.

/continued overleaf/

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- (3) Vietnam is not an isolated case. The most significant development in the emerging colonial countries is that they are 'skipping' private capitalism and leaping straight into state capitalism, often under the auspices of a national 'communist' party. In these countries the imperialist domination preceding independence precluded the development of a national bourgeoisie. The cruder interpretations of Marx which ignore the relations in production, the relationship of man to man, and concentrate exclusively on 'centralization', 'state control', 'nationalization', and the 'development of the productive forces' are the ideal ideology for the developing state capitalisms.

In England though, there is an enormous amount to be done. We must win people for socialist ideas. We must assist in their demystification concerning the 'socialist' nature of the North Vietnam regime. We must get the facts about the real cause of the conflict known, and we must explain the futility of relying on Harold Wilson or any other professional politician to solve the problems confronting the Vietnamese people.

As revolutionary socialists we must especially oppose the pacifist 'Peace in Vietnam' calls. We are not for a 'peace' which would keep the people enslaved both North and South. We are for the social revolution in Vietnam (and everywhere else) and we know that no ruling class in history has ever resigned its privileges 'peacefully'. The demand for 'Peace' is a demand that the Vietnamese workers and peasants resign themselves to the rule of the bureaucrats - a utopian and reactionary demand.

OUR class enemy is here at home. But to say this doesn't mean we ignore workers' struggles in other lands. The dissemination of honest, factual information about their struggles is the best way to help them, using their experiences to develop our own class consciousness.

This is not to become 'armchair theoreticians'. Our activity isn't confined to discussions. Everywhere, at every level, where there are meetings, marches organized to protest at US (or British) government policy, revolutionaries must participate, never hesitating to point out that the demonstrations in themselves can achieve nothing - in fact in so far as they call for someone else to do something - be that someone Wilson, Johnson, or any other bureaucrat - they are advancing the illusion that workers can get others to act in their interests.

This is the kernel of the matter. Experience has shown that genuinely revolutionary action is that which helps people do things for themselves. It is this fundamental attitude which divides us from all traditional 'revolutionaries'.

BOB POTTER

'The most important point to emerge from Mr Kosygin's speech was the speed and determination with which the new profit-linked system of economic management is being introduced into industry. The Premier repeatedly emphasised that introduction of the new system is a precondition of success in reaching the 1966-70 five year plan targets. He announced that 1000000 workers will be working under the new system by the middle of this year. By the end of the year, one third of the workers in the engineering and textile industries will also be governed by it.'

'Financial Times', April 13, 1966. From article entitled: 'The Soviet Congress: New Light on Economic Development'.



CONTINUED FROM P. 6.

created by bureaucratic society is soon shown, in practice, to be a total phenomenon. Attitudes towards revolutionary organization were revealed as just extensions of attitudes about any kind of organized grouping. Debts were not settled - in fact many acted as if money had already been abolished. Undertakings were ignored, appointments not kept, letters not answered. Some came to realise the level of commitment which real participation in a serious libertarian group involved and soon found excuses for non-involvement or joined organizations demanding less of their supporters. This put an intolerable extra load on the few comrades prepared to work in a systematic manner. This kind of crisis is not confined to our own ranks.\* It reflects something much deeper. Anyone who has any insight into the problems today confronting any living group will readily admit this.

We shall continue our work. We want to make a serious effort to come out monthly. We still believe it is possible to be both libertarian and organized, both revolutionary and rational. But the solution to our problems is not only up to us. This would be a denial of all we stand for. It is up to you, our readers and supporters, most of whom we don't even know. We need your help. We need more articles and more reports. We need more volunteers for typing, duplicating, assembling, stapling, wrapping, addressing and other work. We need more money - that which is owed to us and donations too.

We intend to introduce some type of formal membership so that we will know who feels committed enough to do something concrete to help us. We call on all who feel our experiment has been worthwhile and who want to see it developed further to get in touch with us now. As a first step we are calling a meeting to discuss these matters and reach some working conclusions. Please come

on Sunday, March 19, 8 pm.

to The Roebuck, Great Dover Street, London SE1.  
(3 minutes' walk from Borough Tube Station, Northern Line)

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\* Nor is it confined to organizations with a 'marxist hangover'. See for instance a most honest and revealing editorial by Jeff Robinson in vol.I, No.2 of The Anarchist: '.... we hear a lot about free access but hardly a word - except from syndicalists - about the production of the goods we are to have access to... lots of talk about freedom, none about responsibility. Lots of talk about how nice anarchy will be - none about the great effort needed to achieve it and make it work. The emphasis is always on the easy things... Certain of the provincial groups and federations believe that ordinary people can and ought to be responsible for the running and smooth functioning of massive, complicated industrial societies. And yet these precursors of the same society, these idealistic pioneers, these heralds of freedom are themselves too bleeding lazy to write a letter and drop it in the pillar box. And too mean apparently to contribute to the costs of organizing...'

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