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solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER

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MAY DAY 1967

For the first time for many years London saw a May Day procession actually held on a working day: Monday May 1st. A group of printworkers, tired of the yearly Sunday afternoon march through the deserted streets of London's West End, canvassed support amongst dockers, engineers and building workers for a stoppage of work and for a march through the busy lunch-hour crowds.

The march, consisting of about 150 to 200 workers, started outside NATSOPA House, the headquarter of the printworkers' union in Blackfriars Road. It proceeded along Fleet Street to the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Road. The marchers carried placards demanding an end to the wage freeze and to state regulation of wages. The mood was militant but good natured. The shouts of 'Down with Wilson, Gunter, etc.' got a good response from printworkers and others assembled along the route.

At a meeting following the march, chaired by John Lawrence of SOGAT, the feeling was determined but realistic. The speakers realised that the march was small, and that the mass of workers, however disillusioned with the Labour Party, had yet to develop autonomous methods of fighting the employers, the state, and the trade union bureaucracy. A committee was elected which will consider means of coordinating the struggle against the Prices and Incomes Bill, particularly those clauses which give the government power to gaoil strikers.

How did all this come about? How was the stranglehold of the traditional organizations dented?

On March 29 a public meeting had been convened by the Clerical and Editorial Chapel of SOGAT (Society of Graphical and Allied Trades). It was well attended by militant print workers from various unions and chapels in Fleet Street and the general printing industry. At this meeting a letter from Mr. Richard Briginshaw, national joint secretary of SOGAT, was read out. This stated that the Chapel had no authority to call such mass meetings, which could only be called in the name of rank and file printworkers. Amid loud laughter, those present then constituted themselves 'a meeting of rank and file printworkers' and proceeded to set up a May Day Committee. This committee worked closely with the Association of Rank and File Printworkers referred to in vol.IV, No.5 of our paper.

Ten thousands copies of a leaflet were produced and distributed among printworkers, but also on the docks and on building sites. Talking of Sunday afternoon May Day marches the leaflet said that

'what had started as a show of trade union strength had since degenerated into farcical and meaningless "demonstrations" ... which this year would probably be addressed by those architects of the wage freeze - Wilson, Brown, Stewart and Gunter - all no doubt wearing their red ties for the occasion...' 'The government's aim was to turn the trade unions into the docile instruments of state policy'. There could be 'no real progress in advancing the claims of (union) members unless this state interference with trade union activity was either ended or defied'.

We don't want to exaggerate the extent of support for the march. The campaign was obstructed at every stage by the 'official' organizations of the Labour movement and by the Communist Party who denounced it as of 'trotskyist' and 'anarchist' inspiration. Despite this it was a moderate success and shows what can be done, if one is prepared occasionally to take the initiative and not constantly to tail-end events. It showed the recognition, by a number of militant workers, of the need to break loose from the chains of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy, and to develop their own organs of struggle. It was particularly heartening to see that this group of militants did not see themselves as yet another leadership, but rather as one instrument of the struggle. It is from actions such as these, fragmented though they are at the moment, that a real socialist movement will be built.

The same evening at Conway Hall, a meeting of several hundred middle class socialists decided to resuscitate the 'New Left' movement of the late 1950's. No one there mentioned the May Day march. It is unlikely that the platform had even heard of it, or that if they had, they would have thought it of any importance. It is unlikely that this collection of generals will ever make contact with any troops.

ROBERTS ARUNDEL (follow up)

Since the report in our last issue, there have been further developments in the strike at this Stockport factory. The unofficial Direct Action Committee decided to call a series of short sit-down sympathy strikes in various local factories. These were to culminate in a half-day stoppage of work in the whole area and a mass demonstration at Robert-Arundel's. The first sit-downs took place at some factories and were moderately successful. Unfortunately the plan was abandoned when union officials claimed that it would merely antagonize firms which were cooperating in blacking Arundel's supplies (the 'blacking' of the firm's supplies and products appears to have been fairly successful).

The firm then announced that they were running down the factory, and would be sacking 100 scabs. The first 30 of these were dismissed on April 7, amidst the jeers and laughter of the pickets at the gate. Mr. John E. Cox, the managing director has also 'relinquished his position'.

(continued on p. 26)

ROLL ON FRIDAY

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LONDON ENGINEER

1. GOING TO WORK

The alarm clock buzzes, a hideous din. It is still dark. Another day has begun.

I climb out of bed, scrub teeth, shave and grab a quick cuppa. The mad rush begins. It is 6.30 a.m. Scurrying across the busy roads, I join the throngs of bus commuters.

The service is terrible. The first bus pulls up. Some people get off and you think you have a chance of a seat. But the bus was already overloaded. Only excess passengers have alighted (a polite term for being shoved off). Hard luck.

Eventually you get on to a bus, choking with passengers, all too absorbed in the struggle to get to work to take any notice of anything or even to talk to one another. They'll say "I'm not myself". What they mean is "I'm half asleep". I'm sure taking the odd morning off among older workers is often just reluctance to face the wet or to stand all the way to work, in the morning. Especially among the older women. A long stand is no joke if you've got varicose veins.

As the bus stops outside some big factories on the way, people stream out. They swiftly greet workmates with tired grins. I reach my destination, cross the road and walk down to the works. The road is packed bumper to bumper with parked cars, workers' cars. The night shift men look pale and ghostly. They make their way up the road while we, the day shift, stream down it. We don't look too good either. People exchange glances of recognition and make for their beds or go to their spare time jobs as the case may be.

Outside the factory are two cafes. These are very popular because both are cheap and near. Workers gather there on their way in to work or as they come out. It's about the only place most workers come into contact with each other. Most meetings are held in the road between these two coffee shops

The people go into the factory and make for the clock, to pay their daily homage. You take your card from the rack on the wall, place it in the horizontal slot in front of the dial and punch the handle at the side. This records the time you arrive. You put your card in the wooden box alongside and make for your department. The penalty for clocking someone else's card is the sack. Despite this many younger workers monkey with the clocks.

2. THE FACTORY

The music of industry (the workers' Glyndebourne) is made up of the purring of the enclosed automatic machines ('autos'), the shrieking of the milling cutters and the dull clanging and thuds of the press shop - where many of the older operators have a finger or two missing - evidence of days before safety guards. Today this factory has a good safety record thanks to good shop organization.

I make screws (who doesn't?). I push a steel bar and locate it in the collet (the part that grips the metal while it is being machined). I press the button, start the auto and wait for it to drop the 'first off' (the first sample after the machine has been set). I show it to my setter who has already 'set' the machine by putting in the cams and grinding the various tools, etc. He nods approval and sends me along to the sample inspector. I suppose he'll be all bloody day passing it . . . and I'm on bonus!

The sample is checked to a blue print and is found to be a couple of 'thou' (.002 inches) oversize. The setter soon fixes that and the job is OK'ed. Thank Christ for that. Having set another auto, the setter can now get down to the serious business of picking a horse or doing the crosswords while the operator - that's me - has to walk up and down the machines, keeping them fed with material and clear of swarf (metal shavings). Occasionally the setter will run his 'mike' (micrometer) over the pieces and make adjustments to his machine.

My setter is a skilled man. He has been in the factory for twenty years and considers himself a fixture. I go where the money is.

I am not classed as skilled and haven't had the advantage of an apprenticeship. I could 'better' myself financially by becoming a 'setter-operator'. That is to say I could set and operate my own machine . . . and grind myself to a standstill in the process. But stuff that.

The pieces produced by the machines are spewed into a perforated container, to allow the oil to flow away. Nothing must be wasted. The containers are then put onto a moving canvas band and washed under cleaning sprays. The work is now ready for viewing and checking.

Old girls usually check the work with gauges - metal blocks set to the required sizes. - Or they use plug gauges for checking hole diameters. A man fit for production work would hardly ever be on such a job. If the viewers pass the work, the checker weighs it up, to check the quantity which is then duly recorded.

Adjacent to the capstans and autos is the Plating and Finishing Shop. The air here is heavy with a sweet sickly smell. Warnings about the various acids and other poisonous substances are plastered on the walls. Here the various parts are cleaned and plated or enameled as required. The men all wear rubber boots and plastic aprons and gloves. Their charge hand

was until recently a shop steward and noted for being militant in voice and reticent in action. He no longer refers to his fellow workers as brothers. They can stand the loss of such a relative!

Work in the plating shop consists of cleaning off any oil or other substance from the numerous metal parts and then plating them to add to the looks of the job and to protect it against rust. Some delicate parts have to be 'wired up' before dipping in the vats. This work is done by women who are extremely nimble at it. Everyone is on bonus. People have little time to talk.

The Enameling Shop reeks of paint. The men wear masks while they spray the components. The parts are then placed on hooks and travel through huge ovens to dry. Next to this department is the Polishing Shop. Here they do rough grinding to take off 'burrs' (metal snags and sharp edges). They also do high class polishing of bright parts for exhibition work. Various other departments fill this particular part of the factory, but I shall skip them and come to the Assembly Shop, where several of my mates work. Here men are fed parts from the stores and build them into motors and dynamos.

This is the real rat race! Every job has been timed by the time and motion study department down to the last tenth of a second. The men and women slog away as fast as they can, as if their lives depended on it. They fit the components together to form a 'sub-assembly' and then, having completed their own operation, they pass this sub-assembly onto the next assembler until the job is complete. The one unwritten law in this shop is the only one that matters: "THE LINE MUST NOT STOP". If the line stopped they'd all be on 'waiting time' and would lose bonus. Some of these basic rates are appalling, evidence of the incapacity of both unions and men to fight for a good basic rate when the conditions were suitable, in the late 1950's.

The management would like to make operators like me responsible for quality. All round the factory are posters exhorting us to turn out 'reliable' and 'good quality' products. The management already have an Inspection Department which visitors to the factory are always shown. This is called the Standards Room. Personally, I think the management really resent the fact that the Inspection produce nothing. They would clearly prefer the operators to do their own quality inspection. But why should we? If I was responsible for quality on my machine I doubt they'd give me anything extra for it. I'm no inspector but already with genuine inspection plenty of scrap gets through. If the blokes did their own inspecting the firm might save something on inspectors' wages but would lose on the amount of rubbish reaching the line. But that's their problem.

3. REDUNDANCY THREATS

Production has been decreasing over the last few years in this factory due to a dispersion of various products to other factories in the group. Although the unions were told otherwise the management have started a redundancy programme. The shadow of the 'tin-tack' (cockney rhyming slang for sack) falls on all and affects us differently.

To the teenager this threat doesn't really matter, except that this particular job may have been conveniently near his home. Apprentices will not be affected. To the man in his late twenties or thirties the whole situation is bewildering. He may have spent over ten years in the place and accumulated lots of knowledge which he now realizes is primarily of importance to the company and of little value outside. If he hangs on now he may be all right. If he leaves he'll draw no redundancy money. On the other hand if he stays on he could miss getting a better job outside. It's a worrying time.

The next group, those aged forty or so, is in much the same predicament, except that their chances of re-employment are poor. The men and women in their late fifties are in a really bad way. No employer will take on people who will be unable to complete at least 10 years' service. Who buys old horses? The men cannot draw a pension until they reach 65. The women pick up theirs at 60.

RECENTLY REPRINTED

THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM by Paul Cardan.
(over 2000 copies already sold). What is a socialist programme? The real contradiction in capitalist production. The case for workers' management of production.

TRUTH ABOUT VAUXHALL by Ken Weller.
(with a new introduction). An analysis of new managerial techniques. Higher pay - but at what cost?

Each of these pamphlets may be obtained for 10d. (post free) from Heather Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

Rumours of forthcoming redundancies are rife and nobody at management level refutes them. Perhaps, as some people say, the bosses started the rumours themselves, to prepare the climate. Over a thousand people have left the firm since the old people were kissed goodbye last July. This atmosphere is very unnerving. It tends to destroy any sense of solidarity. The bloke next to you - instead of the management - is seen as the threat to your job. When those not in industry moan about lack of militancy its because they don't know how strong this feeling, however wrong, can be.

Certain sections of workers have asked the management for voluntary redundancy, i.e. the worker will take any 'bunce' (redundancy money due to him) and go. In certain cases this has happened. But the management have their own views about this. I will give you an example of their ideas about equality. They asked for four men in a particular assembly line to volunteer for redundancy. Four men duly arrived outside the office. They were among the fastest workers on the whole line. All four were turned down as 'volunteers'. One department is closing down altogether in July this year.

4. THE DINNER BREAK

Outside the sun is shining. It is 11.55 a.m. In five minutes the lunch break begins. We will have an hour off.

Many workers bring their own grub and flasks of coffee or tea. About 15% to 20% use the works canteen. The majority either have sandwiches or eat in one of the many cafes in the vicinity. Two of these cafes are just near the entrance to the factory. They place forms alongside rough wooden tables for the customers to consume their food and drink their tea.

After eating a discussion usually starts, often quite casually. This might be about football, boxing, Aden, horses, Wilson, immigration, Court cases, or crumpet. The views of some are very reactionary indeed, but they are seldom deeply thought out. When challenged, such views are often found to be only skin deep. Many heated arguments take place.

Attitudes are slowly changing. People are less inclined to rely on the newspapers for their opinions. Clumsily, they are trying to think for themselves. I heard the following a few weeks ago:

"Did you see the Mirror today, Sam?" asks Joe, a fitter.

"Yeah, what about it?" answers Sam, a grinder aged 50.

"About them bloody students, kicking up at their college". (Joe is referring to L S E.)

"Look 'ere, mate" cuts in Sam, now looking annoyed. "I saw something about it on the telly last night. Two of the young lads being interviewed. Made the bloody interviewer look a complete idiot. You ain't dealing with fools, you know. These lads were telling how their union was being pushed around by the teachers . . ."

"Oh, so you think they're right to kick up a rumpus and dictate who'll be in charge?" returns Joe.

"Look, cock, just belt up. If we 'ad half the guts of them youngsters and a quarter of their savvy, we wouldn't be in queer street now. Good luck to 'em", Sam concludes.

The surprising thing was that with one or two exceptions most of the men seemed sympathetic to the students! Yet these same men have many times ridiculed the C N D and Aldermaston marchers as 'long-haired', 'drug addicts', etc.

Every Wednesday at 12.30 outside the cafe, a group of men gather in the road. They are Christians known as 'Bible Punchers'. They all work in the factory and range from progress chasers to the Personnel Officer! Year after year they stand out there totally ignored by one and all!

Occasionally one of the group known as 'Mad Dick' tries to get people interested prior to the meetings. When the men have settled down to eat, Dick starts rambling on about God and Sin. He is met by shouts of "Get stuffed", etc. Nothing daunted he carries on.

One man, a fitter, asks Dick about a film he saw on television (a documentary on beggars in Calcutta). Dick hesitates. Then, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt" "You bloody hypocrite", says the fitter, "How can you believe in a God who brings children into the world to live a life of starvation or be bombed by napalm and die horrible deaths?". The blokes mumble agreement.

Unfortunately at this point the bell rings, summoning us back to the grind. It is 12.55. Some men get up and drift into the factory. Others hang on chatting until the last minute. We clock in and shuffle along to our various departments, like reluctant school children.

Western Europe

COMMUNIST URGES COOPERATION IN PRODUCTION

'I, like others, have been engaged in pleading the special difficulties of the South Wales coalfield as a defence for the high rate of absenteeism prevailing there... This, however, is only part of the explanation. Irresponsible anti-social behaviour represented by voluntary absences, especially on Mondays and Fridays, is the other indefensible element. There is a 'couldn't care less' attitude by far too many individuals.'

Mr. Paynter, Communist
General Secretary of the
NUM, speaking at Bedwas
(Mon), March 1967.

Eastern Europe

COMMUNIST URGES COOPERATION IN PRODUCTION

'If the trade unions are really out to defend the interests of the working people they must give their main support to those who work honestly and display the greatest initiative. They must pillory and punish undisciplined people, carelessness and incompetence wherever they may encounter it.'

Antonin Novotny speaking at
the VI All-Union Congress
of Trade Unions (reported
in Czechoslovak Trade Unions
No. 4, 1967).

5. THE BLOKES

Two setters have worked on the autos during the lunch break so no production has been lost. I check that my machines are running smoothly and then go to the Stores with a recci (requisition for material). On the way back I remember I'm low on razor blades. So I go to a couple of chaps I know in the Warehouse who sell stuff (usually at least 30% cheaper than the shops). As well as the ordinary articles they also stock "sportswear" (rubber contraceptives).

These blokes are to be found in any big factory. They sell anything from fags to overcoats, umbrellas to painted ties. They visit the wholesalers on Sunday mornings and stock up for the whole week, often laying out £100 to £150. Their stuff all goes in the course of a week. If a foreman sees you making for the Warehouse, he's unlikely to say anything. The odds are he's going there too! One of these blokes was recently sacked, to the relief of several foremen who owed him plenty!

The afternoon drags on. Today hasn't been too bad on the whole. Tomorrow is Thursday and we get our paysheets. On Friday we'll get our money. May be one the computer will foul up and pay us a three figure salary! Some hope!

Most of my mates are trying to buy a car if they haven't one already. They prefer new cars or a decent second-hand job in good nick (condition). To get one they are prepared to make sacrifices. They will do excessive overtime (now no longer available to them). They will work in part-time jobs in the evenings or on Saturdays. These jobs are many and varied and include helping in cafes, working the market stalls, selling insurance, debt and rent collecting, etc. To earn more some of the men will accept the wife doing a part- or full-time job. They will eat sandwiches at lunch time instead of a hot meal - even in the coldest weather.

No accurate statistics exist but I am sure that if asked what had top priority in their life the answer would be something like this: a good comfortable home, good education for the children (scholarship or apprenticeship) and a car.

A car means a lot to a working man and his family. Their parents probably never dreamed of owning a car. Ownership of a car gives a worker a feeling of achievement - something tangible to show for his dull, boring routine at work. He can drive out of London and drop into some country pub, where he's unknown. Dressed in a decent suit (like the car probably bought on H.P.), a clean white shirt and his missus dolled up to the nines in her C and A fur coat, he feels as good as anyone else if not better! At weekends he can, for a few hours, forget he is a working man.

6. END OF SHIFT

It is 15.00 hours. We have a ten-minute tea-break which lasts fifteen minutes. A frizzy blonde pushes her trolley. Although everyone moans about the tea (which is lousy) they rush to be served first. A cup costs 3d. While I'm drinking mine a collection sheet is passed around. This is quite usual when fellow workers are sick or somebody dies. This time it is for a kidney machine for a local nipper. £7,000 is needed. Several factories have been approached by the local mayor. The stewards are organizing the collection but the management will boast of how much the factory contributed. Friday afternoon is the best day for collections.

After tea-break is over I get cracking, visit the checker to see how the bonus is going to work out. Some jobs pay better than others, depending on the time allowed. In this factory it is very much each man for himself. Most of the time solidarity is largely a myth. This may be depressing, but it's true. The management have succeeded in dividing us up into dozens of layers. This is reinforced in many subtle ways. In the Short Order Department (highly skilled men making only one or two off) the toilets are expensively tiled, with electric razor sockets and stainless steel fittings. There are no exhortations on the walls. The Works toilets on the other hand are roughly painted. Several of the wash basins are cordoned off to cut down cleaning expenses. Screwed on plates remind one that "20 million gallons of water per year are used in this factory", implying that only a certain kind of worker causes waste. (The graffiti in both kinds of toilets however show a remarkable similarity!)

Soon it is 16.00-hours. The labourer attached to my section is busily cleaning the swarf and bar ends away. Soon he will be sweeping the floor. Many operators would consider the labourers as lesser beings, just as the labourer would consider himself a cut above the bog-wallah (lavatory attendant). Even the latter will say 'I've worked in higher class shit-houses than this'. India has no monopoly of the caste system!

I check the oil levels, swab down the machines and shoot down to the toilet for a wash. On my way past the machines I see my setter who is writing a note to his opposite number on nights. One of the machines is playing up. At present there are only two shifts, but I suppose we'll soon have a three-shift system.

The toilet is a huge room with great round washbasins, surrounded by men washing and talking away. There are not officially allowed to be there, except three minutes before finishing time, which is 4.30. It is now 4.15. The management however is powerless to stop this. We all smell of oil but we're so used to it that we don't really notice it. Our wives do though.

I return to my section, stop the machines and stand waiting for the finishing bell. The foreman of our department comes out of his little metal office with its glass windows and stands near the door, preventing people from leaving before time. Until recently disabled workers were allowed three minutes to get out of the factory, ahead of the others. Now the company's doctor has decreed that one minute is sufficient. That's progress.

People edge towards the door. The bell goes and we stream out into the sunshine. Cars fly around the corner and people dash across the road. Some get into their cars. Workers from other factories join the flood of humanity. They stop swiftly for a paper, then rush on. Spreading out in all directions like some giant spider the workers make their way home.

I join a large queue at the bus stop and hope we won't have long to wait. At last a bus pulls up. All semblance of order is forgotten. People jump on before any passengers can alight. Those left behind moan about queue jumping. Ding, ding. The conductor rings his bell. The bus shudders and starts to move. Ding, Ding. The bus jerks to a halt throwing two standing passengers forward. "Who rang that bell?" demands the conductor. No one answers. But a man reaches down and extends a hand to a blind man standing on the pavement. He climbs aboard and someone offers him a seat. Everyone knows him. He is assisted to the platform when he reaches his stop.

Only five passengers are allowed to stand on the lower deck. It's London Transport rules. Often a conductor turns a blind eye to an extra one. There are six standing now. The bus is slowly nearing a stop where an Inspector usually boards it. "One of you has to get off", says the conductor, "or I'll have to stop the bus". No one moves. Ding, ding! The bus stops. The driver looks around through his window. Everyone wants to get home. We are in no mood for delay. The passengers glare at the supposed culprit, a middle aged woman gripping two loaded shopping bags, on the seat nearest the platform. (Actually she wasn't the last passenger on. He was pushed up to the front. No fool, he!) The elderly woman cannot win. With a sigh she capitulates and gets off, giving the conductor a dirty look.

I could have argued. I could have given her my seat. But it happens all the time. It's happened to me. One can't be a permanent martyr. The work slowly kills us, and in more ways than one.

At last I reach my stop and walk to my house, ready to turn the key. The door opens before I can do so. My wife is there. "Hello, darling", she says, "Had a good day?". "You must be joking", I reply. "Roll on Friday!"

GREEK EMBASSY: ENTRISTS SUCCESSFUL AT LAST

Recent events in Upper Brook Street have shown how wrong we have been, all these years, on the 'entrism' question. Mass entrism can be a viable tactic. It has generated more enthusiasm and carried the message of solidarity with the Greek people far wider than the systematic non-entrism practiced by such sectarian outfits as the Communist Party, Labour Party and S.L.L.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky stressed that revolutionaries should carefully determine not only when to enter an organization, but also when to leave it (political dys-entrism). This message too seems to have sunk home. We understand that several demonstrators arrested inside the Greek Embassy walked out (in a principled manner) from a police van conveying them free of charge to West End Central Police Station.

REVIEWS

"RUSSIA IN REVOLUTION 1890 - 1918", by Lionel Kuchan,
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 55/-.

"THE RUSSIAN TERRORISTS", by Ronald Seth,
Barrie and Ruckliff, 35/-.

"PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION", by Raya Dunayevskaya,
News and Letters, 50 c.

This year being the 50th since the Bolshevik Revolution and the 100th since the publication of Marx's "Capital", we must expect a flood of publications on Russia and Communism.

For the initiate, uncorrupted by sect or faction, there can be few better introductions than Kuchan's "Russia in Revolution, 1890 - 1918". It is brief, 280 pages to be exact, comprehensive, and scarce a paragraph is undocumented. (There are sixty pages of chapter references and bibliography, in addition to the index!.) All the best of E.H.Carr's love of detail (History of the Bolshevik Revolution) and Trotsky's (History of the Bolshevik Revolution) have been extracted into this little masterpiece.

I was particularly impressed by (1) the author's analysis of the revolution as an integral part of Russian social development, (2) his masterfully vivid portrayal of Russian society - the peasantry, the working class, the weak national capitalism, the almost floating autocracy, (3) the historical development of Bolshevism, and its many common points with earlier revolutionary thinkers, (4) the analysis of "Menshivism", its failure due to its lacking any material roots in society.

I was especially interested in the treatment of the Kerensky Government, and a whole mass of material on its positive achievements usually omitted from histories of the period.

* * *

Quite a different kettle of fish is "The Russian Terrorists" by Ronald Seth. The book tells the story of the Russian "Narodnicks". As these people and events haven't been written up to the same extent as the various Marxist groups, I found much of the book new and interesting.

Seth himself is a political idiot, but in between the various enthusiasms for "we English" and the thanks givings that we live in a "land of freedom", he has gathered into one volume the stories of the almost legendary Vera Zasulich, Maria Spiridonova, Vera Figner and dozens of others!

As an author, Seth should stick to writing books for the kiddies (which he does quite successfully). For those wishing to know a bit more about Russia's pre-revolutionary direct actionists, the book helps to fill a void that I hope will soon be filled by someone more competent.

* * *

"Philosophy and Revolution" by Raya Dunayevskaya, published by the American "News and Letters" Group is much more pertinent to our day to day struggles, and, in spite of my minor differences here and there, I wholeheartedly recommend this little booklet to all serious students of politics.

It sets out to examine the relevance of Marxist theory to modern (state capitalist) society. Raya makes no secret of her devotion to Marx, but emphasizes that Marx's work cannot be a substitute for an examination of existing society.

She recapitulates her important contribution to the history of Lenin's philosophical development* from the elitist author of "What is to be Done" in 1902, to the democratic Lenin of "State and Revolution" and "April Theses" in 1917. (Few revolutionaries ever allow for the development of Lenin's ideas. How many "Solidarists" could defend their political views of 12 years ago?)

Raya illustrates this development by examining the differences between Lenin and Bukharin, two positions that polarized into whether the worker is "subject" or "object" in society.

This is no academic discussion, for Raya sees the struggle of modern man for freedom (i.e. his striving to be the "subject" of history) as the specific feature of today's battle against the bureaucratic society. Every epoch produces its own revolutionary opposite. Lenin's contribution in his epoch was that the population to a man must run production. The arrival of automation dresses this demand in new clothes.

Can it be coincidental that this is the period when Marx's humanistic essays are "rediscovered"? asks Raya. "Once the Russian tanks began to shoot Hungarian revolutionaries, no one could any longer separate the philosophy of freedom from the struggles of freedom. At the same time, the new forms of self-liberation - Workers' Councils, Councils of Revolutionary Youth and Intellectuals, all fighting for de-centralisation of state power, for freedom from Communism - could not be pressed back into old moulds. Now that a river of blood separated Communism from Humanism, the Communist opposition to the young Marx's writings had as much an academic air as 'the empericism of a machine gun'."

*This whole subject is dealt with much more fully in her "Marxism and Freedom", 1.50 dollars from "News and Letters".

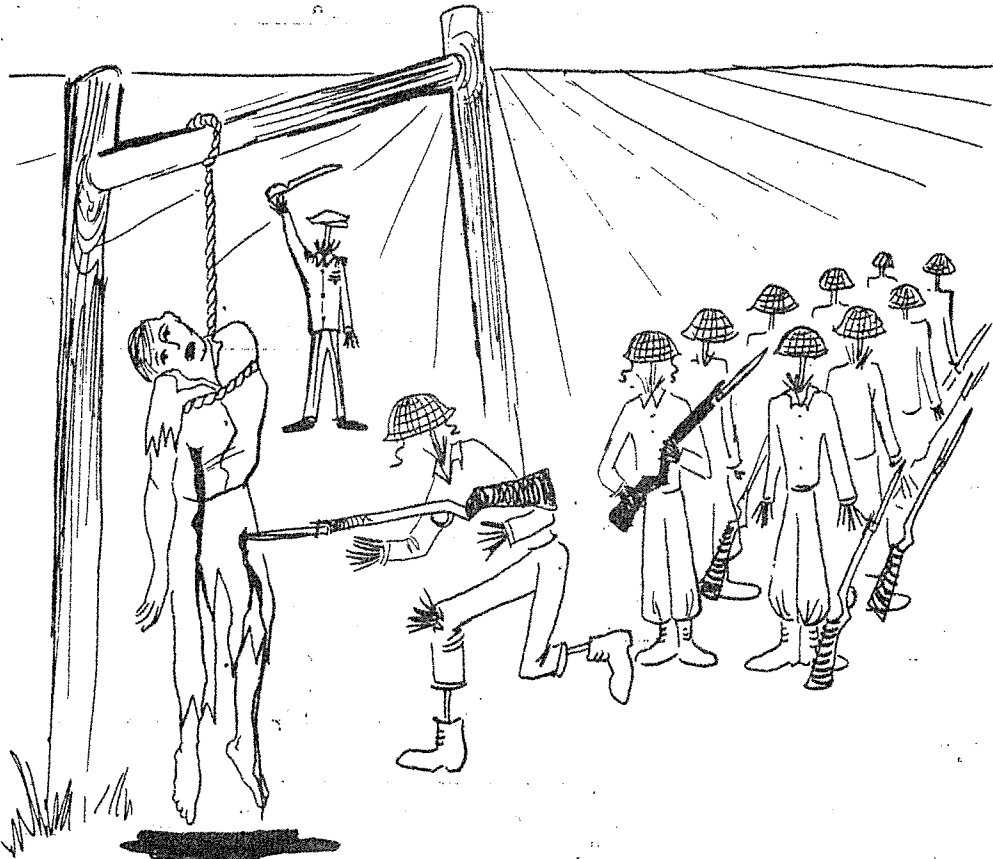
A brief section on China as a newly arrived state capitalism follows. It leads logically to the rejection of supporting state capitalist aims in Vietnam (whether of the Russian or Chinese variety). As for the struggle against the American aggressor, Raya makes the point that the Negro Revolution has done more to rock U.S. capitalism, then all the thunderous statements of China and her disciples.

Capitalism is summarised as: the abstraction of the worker, his alienation from his creation and himself, his perverted relationship to man and things, the reification of man himself, and the fetishism that enables commodities to determine social relations.

I found the appendix, a critical analysis of Rosa Luxembourgs "Accumulation of Capital", written by Raya Dunayevskaya 21 years ago, of particular interest.

I don't propose to go into detail here; suffice to say that the falling rate of profit tendency is correctly seen by Raya as the central force of Capitalist development - from which arises the bureaucratic society, and the workers' reaction so engendered. I find this much more satisfying than Cardan's theory which sees bureaucracy as arising from ideology ("bolshevik" or otherwise) rather than from the productive process.

BOB POTTER



ABOUT OURSELVES

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

The response to the editorial 'SIX YEARS HARD' (Vol.IV, No.5) has been heartening. We have received a number of letters and many offers of help. We are now taking steps to use this sympathy to create a real and substantial Solidarity group.

On March 19 a public meeting was held at which our difficulties were openly discussed. A Statement of Aims ('As we see it') was presented and subsequently published (Vol.IV, No.6). Although this statement was inadequate in some respects (in that it overemphasized the experiences of certain comrades with certain left-wing sects), it was agreed that it should form the provisional political basis of a more formal SOLIDARITY regroupment.

Those who were willing to participate on the basis of these ideas now constitute the nucleus of the London Solidarity Group. Two further meetings of the group have since been held, at which the following organizational proposals have been agreed:

1. Shall be considered members all those who
 - a) are in general agreement with the ideas outlined in our previous publications, with the statement 'As we see it', and with such further ideas as the group may collectively develop in the future.
 - b) are prepared to engage in practical activity aimed at disseminating these ideas.
 - c) pay a minimum subscription of 5/- per month.
2. New members will be accepted by simple majority.
3. Isolated individuals, not living in the London area, may apply to join the London Solidarity Group. Our long term aim, however, is to assist in the development of viable autonomous groups in as many areas as possible.

The main change is obvious. London Solidarity will now have formal membership rather than being a loose association of sympathisers. Members will be expected to pay subs and to help in common work. The group will seek to expand and in the process will itself determine its own composition and objectives.

During the past few years SOLIDARITY has played an active part in a number of struggles. But the expansion of sales and influence has not been matched by any parallel increase in the number of people actively engaged in creating a real political presence. Alas, power

corrupts and work fatigues. An increasing work load has fallen on the same number of shoulders. This tended to create considerable problems in an organization advocating mass participation and dedicated to the anti-cult of the individual.

In the past we have avoided the creation of a formal organization. This attitude was influenced by our identification of socialism with the autonomy of the working class, by our deep conviction that 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself' (and of nobody else), and by our deep aversion to organizational pyramid-building and to a certain kind of sterile political activism. Our views on these matters have not changed. What has changed is that through our experiences we have come to realise that the way to avoid the dangers of substitutism and of internal bureaucratisation was not to renounce organization as such (which isn't possible anyway). Nor did it lie in the rejection of systematic political activity.

A group which decries organization becomes simply a circle of friends and can become, in practice, as exclusive as any vanguard party. Assumptions which are tacitly accepted as being agreed upon within the group may prevent the discussion and development of new ideas just as successfully as the most rigidly bureaucratic constitution. Real democracy requires a framework, however fragile, in which to operate. It requires regular and reasonably structured meetings at which ideas can be jointly elaborated, criticism aired where all can hear them, and where policy can be collectively challenged and changed.

A meaningful democracy implies other things too. It implies a certain continuity of attendance. It is only fair to the majority that time and energy should not be wasted going over old ground again and again, for the benefit of sporadic attenders or for those political dilettante for whom group activity is not a common and continuous commitment but something rather like the theatre, something one may or may not attend according to whether 'there's a good programme on'... in other words something depending on what others may do or decide.

Genuine democracy also implies a constant and considerable self-discipline by the majority in allowing full opportunity for the expression of minority viewpoints. But majorities also have rights. They have the right to be effective. They have the right to protect themselves from 'nuts with bees in their bonnets'. Moreover majorities must not constantly be paralyzed from undertaking agreed tasks because agreement did not happen to be unanimous. These are real problems for real organizations, that is organizations that do things (even if only turning out the occasional leaflet). They are particularly relevant to organizations that occasionally do things requiring a minimum of savvy and mutual trust.

Real democracy finally implies quite onerous duties as well as fundamental rights. Some will ask what guarantees we can offer that our new proposals are not the first step on the slippery slope - that they are not the herald symptoms of our own bureaucratic degeneration.

There are no such guarantees. None whatsoever. On the contrary. Those who seek guarantees are ideal material for manipulation by others, for they expect organizational measures to absolve them from the requirements of constant awareness and continuous participation. There can be no safeguards other than those exerted by the members themselves.

Our turn to more formal organization is determined by the increasingly urgent needs of our own work and, paradoxically, by our awareness that democracy should start at home. We are not itching to establish a phantom mini (or micro) bureaucracy. Nor have we any inclination to found yet another of the sects with which the labour movement is already liberally endowed.

At present we just don't know how many people would describe themselves as SOLIDARITY supporters. Formal membership would at least make it impossible for us to deceive ourselves on this score. It would involve far more people in decision taking and ensure a more rational allocation of work. We hope it will result in far greater participation among those who claim they accept our ideas. Specific comrades will be asked to undertake specific commitments. The vague, comforting but inaccurate notion that 'somehow' all the practical tasks will always 'automatically' be solved - by others - will have to be recognised for the wishful thinking it is.

We are determined that our organizational set-up will be an aid to action, not a hindrance. This might sound like stating the obvious but anyone with past or present experience of political organizations (from the anarchists to the Communist Party) will know that most activity consists of talking and that many projects become lost in a sea of verbosity.

The payment of regular subscriptions will greatly improve our financial position. Up till now we have had to rely on sympathisers to send us the occasional few bob. But this has been totally insufficient. In fact it has barely covered postage costs (some comrades seem to assume we can somehow dispense with stamps). All sorts of opportunities have been missed simply through lack of lucre. We want to produce leaflets, whenever required. And we want to be in a position where we can afford to send speakers to various parts of the country when asked to, without the whole burden falling on those inviting us.

We want potential members to have no illusions about us. We are very small. We have no charismatic leaders. Anyone who joins us will have to accept us as we are. He, she, or it will have to be capable of making their own way. They will not be spoonfed activity and platitudes. We also have no intention of emulating these minute sectlets which have the full structural paraphernalia of mass organizations, and which are surely one of the most pathetic sights in politics. Nor will we put most of our energy into resurrectionary endeavours, i.e. injecting some semblance of political life into those who fall by the wayside.

We are optimistic that we are going to grow. We hope to create a much more effective and viable group on the firm basis of ideas and methods of work which we have evolved over the last six years. We are confident that in time a movement will develop which will not just fill in the political commas, but which will pose an entirely new alternative both in analysis and in concepts of political action.

If you consider yourself a sympathiser of SOLIDARITY and are prepared to work with us along these lines, please write to us, c/o Ken Weller, Garden Flat, 49 Knollys Road, London SW16.

LSE

LSE. WHAT IT IS. HOW WE FOUGHT IT.

An Agitator publication. 1/6 or 15/- per dozen (post paid)
from Alan Fowler, 42a Manor Road, London N.16.

This excellent pamphlet tells the inside story of what happened last term at the London School of Economics. Written by some of the most active participants, it is not only an exciting account of the making of student history, but also an attempt to analyze history in the making. The dynamic of the struggle emerges clearly for at each stage the actions, reactions and thinking of those involved are related to the broader context. The ideological pressures exerted by class society are dealt with particularly well.

The LSE pamphlet is in the tradition of such direct action pamphlets as 'The BLSP Dispute', 'Busmen, What Next', 'Resistance Shall Grow', 'Students in Revolt' and 'KCC versus the Homeless'. The emphasis throughout is not on what others did (or should have done, given the 'correct' leadership) but on what those most directly involved (either as witnesses or as participants) themselves advocated, experienced and learned.

It is a measure of the changing political attitudes of the last few years that an action such as the one at LSE should have taken place, and that the need to describe and document it, for others, should immediately have been perceived. The frame of mind and political insights of the authors - at least as expressed in this pamphlet - are very close to those of Solidarity. We are pleased that we were geared - both practically and ideologically - to help in its production, and wish it every success.

WEST COAST SCENE

In Socialism or Barbarism (Solidarity pamphlet No.11) we spoke of the youth revolt in modern society as being 'without common measure with the previous conflicts of generations.' 'Youth', we said, 'no longer opposes adults with a view to taking their place in an established and accepted system. They refuse this system'. Unfortunately these rebels prefer to act out their rebellion rather than to verbalise it. In this article, Marvin Garson describes the San Francisco hippies of 1966.

In the spring of 1964 hundreds of young people were arrested in civil rights demonstrations in San Francisco. Because of tremendous legal confusion it wasn't until the summer of 1966 that the final appeals failed and some 65 people had to serve their 30-day sentences.

With the San Francisco County Jail full of political prisoners, one might have expected a month long discussion of Lenin, or C. Wright Mills, or Franz Fanon, or Camus - but in fact the favourite book and topic of conversation happened to be the I Ching, a classic of Buddhist philosophy. One prisoner brought a Bible in with him, but it was not for reading. The political prisoners cut up pages of the Book of Revelation soaked in LSD and ate them with milk for breakfast.

When, two years earlier, the demonstrators had been arrested singing Bob Dylan's 'The Times They are a'Changing'', no one realized quite how fast or in what direction the times would change, nor that they would themselves soon be enchanted by the Beatles' lyric 'Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream'. Where two years ago the slogan was a good old-fashioned cry of 'Free Speech', the state of the movement today is represented by the aphorism 'Let the Baby Jesus open your mind and shut your mouth'.

I've deliberately exaggerated the contrast between the old 'politicos' and the new 'hippies'. It's true that the extreme hard-core hippy, a devotee most likely of some Hindu philosophy, has no use for the 'games' the politicos play, and that the extreme hard-core politico, generally a puritan, considers drugs to be the opiate of the people. But in the San Francisco Bay Area there is a very large middle ground of people who, whether politico or hippy, feel affection of one sort or another for the other side. In the hippy badge boutiques you can find posters of Leon Trotsky side by side with the Hindu Swamis, and in the flats of ideological radicals you can generally find marijuana as well as duplicators.

The recent student strike at Berkeley, last December, actually climaxed with a formal call for an 'alliance of politicians and hippies', consecrated by a political action based, hippy-fashion, on a pun. (The University Administration had accused the strikers of practicing 'mass coercion', so the Strike Committee distributed thousands of black Lone-Ranger masks for students to wear as evidence of 'maskoercion').

This was no shotgun wedding imposed by perverse leaders on a manipulated mass; it came out of a strike meeting of about a thousand students which, after hours of discussion and voting, spontaneously broke into song - not 'Solidarity Forever', the customary song whose lyrics nobody knows - but the Beatles' warm and cozy 'Yellow Submarine'.

During the Free Speech Movement, two and a half years ago, we sang a Beatles song allright, but re-worked the words a little ('If I fell in love with you' became 'If I negotiate with you'). Now the words get sung straight. In fact, to give you an idea of how the interpenetration of opposites works in the San Francisco Bay Area, I must tell you that I first heard the line 'Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream' (from 'Tomorrow Never Knows' in the Beatles' album Revolver) in the apartment of a young Maoist friend, then a member of the Progressive Labor Party. He said we ought to smoke a little pot if we really wanted to understand this song, and he was sorry that his Party discipline forbade him to offer me any. (Communist Party discipline, by the way, also forbids marijuana to its members, but without much success. I have turned on with two Berkeley friends I know to be CP members, and several others I suspect are members. The younger CPers say they're justified in violating discipline because the anti-marijuana rule was made without proper debate or vote - proof that marijuana really is consciousness-expanding, for some people anyway.)

The radical movement in the Bay Area has always been tolerant of the hippies, even back in October 1965 when a Vietnam Day Committee march was led by Allen Ginsberg singing Hindu mantras and banging tambourines on top of the sound truck. Today the hippies are no longer a tolerated minority: they have come to set the tone for everybody else. The left-wing movement is no longer 'what's happening' in the Bay Area; it is the hippy movement, centred in San Francisco's new Bohemian district, the Haight-Ashbury, that draws the attention of disaffected young people all over the country, while the radical movement is increasingly thought of as a bunch of old fogeys (old, in this context, means over 21).

The leading hippy organization is The Diggers, provo types whose ideas are based on those of the Diggers and Levellers of 17th Century England. They believe in the abolition of money, and have started practicing it by free distribution of food. They gladly accept gifts of potatoes, carrots, onions, and anything else that will make a soup, but if they are given cash they will either burn it in front of the startled donor or walk through the streets distributing it to amazed 'straight' passersby. They believe in voluntarism, and they practice it by taking up brooms and dustbins and cleaning the streets themselves. Most of all they believe in Love, not an exalted Quaker-pacifist love but an earthy, good-natured, sexual kind of love.

What is the basic hippy ideology? It's hard to say, because most hippy writing is complete rubbish, more a rebellion against punctuation than anything else. Their San Francisco newspaper, The Oracle, is designed rather than written. When it does have intelligible words they are generally denunciations of 'typeheads' (compulsively verbal people). But if a philosophy can be deduced from their actions and aphorisms, it would have to be expressed in the language of game theory. Where the radicals see life as a struggle between forces, the hippies see it as moves in a game.

They dislike ordinary political demonstrations, where one side plays cops and the other side plays protesters - because according to the rules of the game which everybody knows, the cops always win. They prefer to break the rules entirely by, for instance, picking out the meanest cop in the precinct as a target for unremitting affection. They hand him flowers and they smother him with kisses. By making such completely unexpected moves, they hope not necessarily to convert him but to 'blow his mind' and thus render him incapable of functioning.

At the end of the student strike last December, the Berkeley radicals picked up the phrase. They announced their determination to 'blow the minds' of the Administration, albeit in a somewhat more malicious and less loving spirit than the hippies. A left-wing professor dampened some of the 'blow their minds' spirit by replying 'Blow your noses'.

Very quickly the word 'Berkeley' has come to represent, throughout the United States and even the world, militant left-wing student protest. 'San Francisco' is quickly coming to mean the hippy style everywhere in the United States... and I imagine in England too pretty soon. There is the 'San Francisco sound' in pop music, represented by such electronic rock bands as The Grateful Dead, Big Brother and the Holding Company, The Jefferson Airplane, and The Quicksilver Messenger Service. There is the 'San Francisco look' in posters whose letters twist around each other so much that it takes real dedication even to read simple words like '8 pm'. And there is the San Francisco style in mass leisure, the giant dance hall illuminated by ultra-violet light and flickering white strobes, where a thousand gaudily dressed people dance to an electronic rock band while abstract biological images projected on the walls pulse in time with the music.

What does it all mean? I'm not really sure ... may be it has all blown my mind too. But here are some preliminary reflections.

First of all, we ought to be thankful that the declassé types who make up the hippies haven't attached themselves to any fascist movement, and won't. Many mystical Bohemian movements, in Europe anyway, have shown a predilection for fascist-type ideologies, but it is clear that to the extent that the hippies are political, they are left-wing: anti-racist, anti-war, anti-censorship, and generally anti-authoritarian.

But isn't the hippy movement 'reactionary' anyway in that it urges young people who would otherwise be politically active to 'drop out', to take a stance of political neutrality? Hasn't Timothy Leary, the great guru of LSD, explained his slogan of 'turn on, tune in, drop out' by saying specifically that he 'is opposed to all acts of rebellion'?

Yes, but then Dr. Leary, despite his prominence in the mass circulation press, is regarded with a great deal of suspicion by the hippies. His 'psychedelic worship services' attracted only the 'straight' types in New York, and his tour of the San Francisco area was a great deal less than triumphal.

But leaving Dr. Leary aside, it remains true that the hippies believe in 'dropping out'. The big question, of course, is dropping out of what? Not out of society in general; the hippies are socially conscious in that they believe their function is to set an example for the rest of society; they want to 'psychedelicize suburbia'. They are not indifferent to such things as war and peace; they are not trying to drown awareness of Vietnam in a wave of hedonism. Remember that the slogan 'Make Love, Not War' is pre-eminently the hippies' slogan, even if the politicians have been open-minded enough to adopt it too.

No, I think we have to reject the standard, easy criticisms of the hippies based on the notion that they are like certain previous bohemians who turned their backs on the rest of the world in order to organize their own orgies. It just doesn't fit the facts (the facts of San Francisco, that is).

It may be easier if we think of the hippies as constituting some kind of religious sect with a vaguely left-wing social philosophy, something like the Quakers. The Quakers are not of course a revolutionary organization. But by and large they are an honest group, worth working with on anti-war projects and the like. They don't 'function objectively as agents of the capitalist class'. And neither do the hippies.

The real trouble with the hippies is their swarm of fellow-travellers, those who are on to it because it's 'what's happening' this year. The fellow-travellers, when they are not phonies, are the worst kind of creeps. I remember one barefoot fellow, for instance, who sat for months at the Vietnam Day Committee headquarters, utterly mute, with a faint grin on his face. He slept and ate in the office, but his only contribution to the movement was to get photographed often. I had come to think of him as part of the furniture until one day he broke silence with a simple remark like 'Got a cigarette?'. He was a safe creep, but there were others who did a lot of talking and to the extent that they set the tone of the left-wing movement it was rather embarrassing. Now that they have found new fields on which to spread their bullshit, I feel a little cleaner.

In fact, if you insist on deciding whether every phenomenon is 'reactionary' or 'progressive', you might consider the thought that the hippy movement plays a progressive role by drawing all the cranks and charlatans away from the left.

The hippies are even more vulnerable than the left to subversion by cranks because while the left is addicted to words - and specifically to words arranged in the formal ways you'll find them here, with commas, periods, capitals and the like - the hippies are suspicious of words and don't like to see them get organized. This verbal chaos makes it easier for any Rasputin to become a spokesman.

In San Francisco the hippy movement is still playful and inventive, although the fellow-travellers are moving in fast. In London on the other hand, the whole scene may consist of people fellow-travelling San Francisco. If this is so, then the attitude of the British left ought to be simple enough: the people in the Roundhouse ought to be free, as they ask, to 'do their thing', without excessive attention. If, on the other hand, the London hippies show a sense of playfulness and inventiveness, then political revolutionaries ought to plagiarize from them any new tactics that seem worth a try. In any case, the important thing is not to get up-tight about it and not to start a witch-hunting investigation of every comrade's state of consciousness.

'If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a real moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle.

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.

Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted with words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.'

Frederick Douglass,
Negro abolitionist.

vietnam

We here continue the discussion started in vol.IV, No.4. In our next issue we will publish an answer to the letters by A.Esterson and R.Archbold (see last issue). Meanwhile activity in relation to American Servicemen is steadily continuing (and we don't mean shouting slogans at them or passing resolutions deploring their presence here).

A discussion about our attitude towards the 'National Liberation Front' is important. But it is not the major issue facing revolutionary socialists in Britain today. And it can be a diversion.

Over the past 20 years at least, the history of 'left-wing' politics has been the history of attitudes towards events taking place - or having taken place - hundreds or thousands of miles away. Long and bitter debates and splits have followed disputes on exactly which bureaucracy to 'support' (critically or otherwise)... in Spain, Korea, Greece, South Africa, Algeria, Cuba, Bolivia or Black Africa. The story (and the mistakes) have been repeated ad nauseam.

These politics by proxy have at least one big advantage: they put no one in Britain in serious jeopardy. People can take extreme 'left' positions without actually having to do anything, except sign appeals, pass resolutions, have arguments with other left wing groups - or go around with a collecting box. The papers of the 'left' are full of this verbiage. They scream slogans which have no practical consequences here, on the general theme of how to be good revolutionaries without ever actually being uncomfortable. Yet at the same time these travellers of the easy path belabour those who have taken a road which means actually something. These perpetually expatriate revolutionaries usually attack others for lack of revolutionary ardour!

A story is told of Durruti, the anarchist leader in the Spanish Civil War. When Emma Goldman, the American anarchist, asked whether she could become a nurse in his column, he replied to the effect that they had plenty of nurses. If she really wanted to do something she should help the struggle in her own country.

In the 1914-1918 war virtually the whole socialist movement (and not a few well-known anarchists) flocked to the colours of their respective countries. They cried that while they had no time for their own government, 'the other side' was so infinitely worse that it had to be defeated, be it Prussian militarism or British imperialism.

In September 1915, at Zimmerwald in Switzerland, those minority socialists who opposed the war came forward with internationalist slogans which are as valid today as they were then. They put forward the right priorities: 'The main enemy is in your own country' and 'The workers have no fatherland'.

It is today possible for various defenders of various regimes - the social patriots in exile - to go through a crowded political life, from one campaign to another, without ever doing a single thing about this rotten society, or without ever coming into direct conflict with the authorities here. Such a perspective has nothing to do with revolutionary socialism, however radical the phraseology in which it is garbed.

I'm all in favour of a greatly heightened campaign on the issue of Vietnam, but only in so far as it means direct action here and now. We are against appeals to the humanity, good sense or intelligence of world leaders, be they those of the East, of the West or of the United Nations. Socialists should be against campaigns, which, however well intentioned, contribute to illusions concerning the real issues and forces involved in these national liberation movements.

In the past we were against granting verbal support to Kenyatta, Kaunda, Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Castro, Nehru, Ben Bella (or Boumedienne). In this we differed from sundry others. Today we do not support Ho Chi Minh. The world is littered with regimes which were 'supported', in their formative years, by the 'left'. As the chickens come home to roost, this left must share responsibility for its past actions, for the illusions it has sown. There is no need to go on making the same mistakes for ever.

I am for a practical and sensible campaign on the Vietnam war. By being sensible I mean considering the consequences of one's actions beforehand - and not getting caught. This campaign should take place here and now. It should be directed at two main targets:

1) at the British Government's involvement in the war. The Labour Government helps train U.S. and South Vietnamese troops in Malaya. It manufactures and sells napalm and toxic gases to the USA. It builds and guards airfields in Siam, which are used as US bases. It has sent RAF and Fleet Air Arm 'observers' to fly combat missions with the USAF and has even sent a small Special Air Service contingent to the war zone itself. And finally it has sanctioned large consignments of military equipment to Ky's government (the Ford Motor Company alone has sent something like a thousand engines to Vietnam).

2) at the American Forces stationed in Britain. The Vietnam Information Group (96 Stanhope Street, London NW1) has already initiated a campaign aimed at undermining their morale and increasing that growing number of American servicemen who are refusing to fight or deserting rather than go to Vietnam.

Both these campaigns can contain people of differing views concerning the nature of the regime in North Vietnam.

We have no doubt our position will be misunderstood. That is not our fault. The systematic misunderstanding of other people's positions is now a way of life on the British left. We can only repeat that a campaign here and now, about matters we can actually influence, is the way forward for socialists. It is the only true and meaningful internationalism.

Ken Weller.

ROBERTS-ARUNDEL (continued from p.2)

There are now just under 100 people employed in the factory, of whom about 70 are production workers. The Company's announcement of several weeks ago that all machining work was to be ended was subsequently amended. If the factory really is being run down, it is being done very slowly. The company has also ordered new machinery, and has also formed a dummy company - Millcraft - as a front for obtaining 'blacked' materials.

A meeting of management and union officials has been fixed for Friday, May 12. The strikers are calling a mass picket at the factory to coincide with this. It isn't expected that any agreement will be reached.

So the strike still continues after 23 weeks. The attempts to widen support by means of a solidarity committee have so far failed to get off the ground. And yet the Manchester area is a stronghold of the 'left' in the AEU and in the Labour Party. The strikers still need financial support (Strike Committee, 125 Wellington Rd., Stockport, Cheshire).

It seems clear that if the management have decided to stick it out, nothing but large scale unofficial supporting action will make them capitulate.

Union officials made contact with other officials of the International Metal Workers Federation to seek support from the firm's factories in Belgium and Italy. Needless to say, these high level talks were a flop. Unofficial contacts with a socialist group in Belgium were more productive. The firm's factory at Bruges was at least leafleted. Readers of Solidarity in Italy and Belgium are invited to write to the Strike Committee for particulars as to how they can help. This at least would be real internationalism.