solidarity
for workers' power

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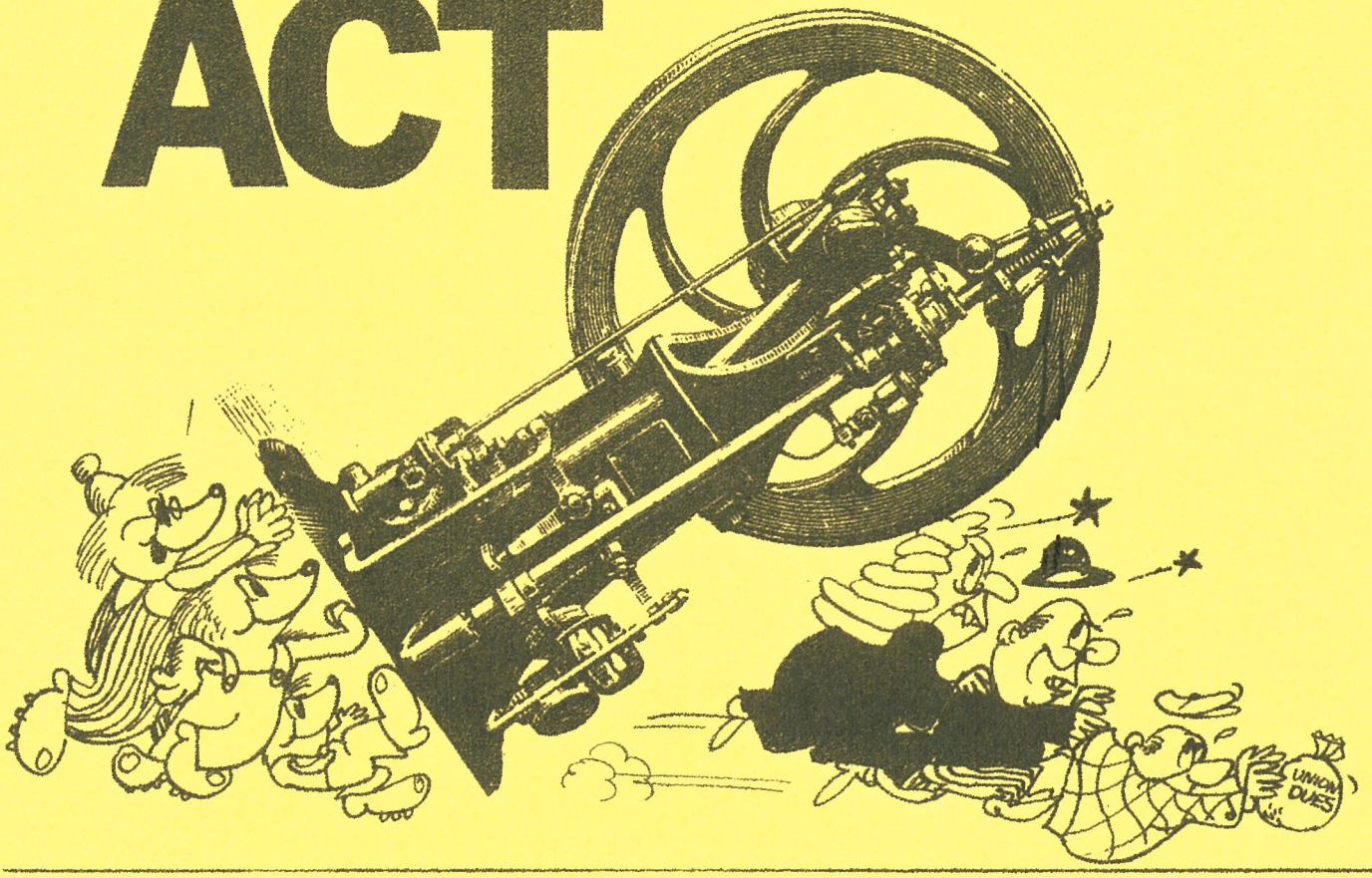
THE I.R. ACT



Occupations ■ The kibbutz experience ■ W. Reich

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CAUGHT IN THE ACT

When Mr Heath spoke recently to the Society of Conservative Lawyers, he claimed that "industrial relations in this country had been in a disorderly and unreformed condition for half a century or more"(1). What he really meant was that for over 50 years no government of 'right', 'left', or 'centre' had been able to tame the working class. The working class was still there, could not be prevented from struggling for its specific interests . . . . and would not go away. All methods, legal or otherwise, had failed to make workers accept their own exploitation and the objectives of the Establishment.

The Industrial Relations Act became law on February 28, 1972, amid cries from the traditional left in Britain, urging workers to "smash the Tory Bill" and "throw the Tories out". The origin of this piece of penal legislation was conveniently ignored. Few people stressed at the time that whether the Bill would 'work' or 'fail' depended not on what the Government did or didn't do - or even on what the Unions did or didn't do - but on whether the rank and file in industry and elsewhere allowed themselves to be intimidated by this piece of class legislation.

BACKGROUND

In 1965, Harold Wilson set up a Royal Commission into industrial relations. Later, after the 1966 seamen's strike and the Mersey Dock strike of 1967, the Labour Government began losing its reputation for a special ability in handling the workers. In 1968, Barbara Castle, Minister of Employment, put forward the document "In Place of Strife". It contained clauses which would enable the Government to enforce a 28-day 'conciliation pause' (or cooling-off period), to impose settlements in inter-union disputes, and to insist on ballots before strikes. This document was supported by Wilson and much of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Wilson was forced to drop his intended Bill, based on "In Place of Strife", by a demarcation dispute with the Union leaders over who should be responsible for preventing the growth of job organization. The T U C finally gave a 'solemn and binding undertaking' to instruct union leaderships to press unofficial strikers back to work.

A year later the Conservatives were back in office and the Tory Industrial Relations Bill was on its way. Its intentions were very similar to the proposed Labour Bill although it was more detailed and carefully worked out.

The Labour Party cried wolf, as though the Act were something new. They even 'argued' against it in Parliament. Here too, there was a demarcation dispute, this time between Tories and Labour over the minutiae of how to undermine shop floor resistance.

The Tory Act includes registration of unions, a 'conciliation' structure composed of the Commission on Industrial Relations (C I R) and a National Industrial Relations Court (N I R C). There are restrictions on unofficial

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(1) Daily Telegraph, June 21, 1972.

and official strikes, a list of 'unfair industrial acts', and provision for damages and fines for contempt of the courts' decisions. The Court has the power to delay any industrial action for up to 60 days if it "threatens the health or economy of the country". Ballots of union membership can be imposed, and industrial action against an imposed settlement becomes a contempt of court. All this is aimed at still closer integration of the trade unions into the state.

The Tory Act (and the intended Labour Act) were drawn up with a number of inter-related purposes. One objective was to maintain the Governments' policy of keeping wages down while increasing productivity. The crisis of productivity is a central one for capitalism east and west. "Basic wage rates are rising at a rate of between 11 and 12 per cent a year. This is far in excess of the rise of retail prices (6.3 per cent) or of productivity. If this trend is not checked, and soon, British industry will become steadily more uncompetitive".(2) For the ruling class it is a question of how to get workers to work harder in a situation over which working people have little or no say.

A major concern of any ruling class is the maintenance of its power. The Government as well as employers recognise the explosive effect that certain types of uncontrolled industrial action could have. It is hardly surprising that similar p enal industrial legislation already exists in other countries such as the U S A, Australia and New Zealand. In Russia and China they have more effective ways of coping with industrial 'trouble'.

In the last resort, however, if penal weapons such as the Industrial Relations Act fail, and if all the cultural, social and political mechanisms by which people accept existing authority and power relationships prove insufficient, the only card left to the ruling class is the open use of state violence. In the recent miners' strike (see Solidarity, Vol. VII, No. 1) the government held back from direct confrontation, recognising that on this occasion it might not have been able to deal with the results. Alec Douglas-H ome was speaking for many a worried industrialist and bureaucrat when he recently said, "We are beginning to realise that in many fields there are minorities flaunting intolerance, determined to challenge the intention of the law."(3)

THE ACT IN ACTION

The main applications of the Act so far have been against dockers and railwaymen. In April, dockers in Liverpool refused to handle containers that had been stripped and packed in depots using lower paid workers. They have been fighting to keep this work for dockers. There numbers have already been reduced from 60,000 to 40,000 in 5 years, mainly as a result of containerisation, not to mention the p revious steady contraction of the work force. The N I R C imposed fines of £55,000 on the T G W U for contempt in failing to stop its shop stewards from blacking containers on Merseyside. In late May the N I R C ordered the Union, under threat of further fines, to stop the blacking or withdraw credentials from its shop stewards. The T G W U leadership tried to stop the action (the movement had by now spread to other

(2) Daily Telegraph, June 15, 1972. (3) Sunday Times, April 23, 1972.

ports). At some future date, they said, they might even consider an 'official' national strike. They were hoping thereby both to bypass the provisions of the Act and to get the blacking stopped. They were also trying to replace an 'unofficial' action with one they could control. They hoped this would take the steam out of militant rank-and-file action. The union executive was caught in a dilemma: either to take action against the shop stewards (and risk spreading the unofficial action) or to defy the Court and support its members in 'illegal' action. In the event, it pleaded inability to do anything. The Appeal Court decision on June 13 to quash the fine on the grounds that the unions could not be held responsible for the actions of its shop stewards in the situation has let the T G W U leadership off the hook. The have not had to risk disciplining their shop stewards.

The N I R C subsequently ordered three London dock shop stewards to stop blacking a container depot. The men ignored the order and when called before the Court, refused to appear - hoping and expecting to be arrested for contempt. One of them, Bernie Steer, said "Let them come and arrest me. I will be on the picket line as usual . . . we don't take orders from judges, we carry out resolutions from the men who have mandated us".(4) Jack Jones (General Secretary of the T G W U) urged the Government to try to prevent the three arrests and warned of a "grave crisis" if the court's warrant was carried out. He said: "It is an explosive situation which can only be relieved by negotiation and conciliation."(5) The next day as the arrest of the men was iminent, 35,000 dockers closed most ports in the country in sympathy. Some paraded with posters saying "What next, Botany Bay?" and threatened to march on the Court if the men were arrested and appeared before it.

Faced with a situation quickly getting out of control, the Appeal Court moved fast and reversed the order, thereby averting the possibility of huge strikes throughout the country. Like a rabbit out of a hat, it produced someone called "the Official Solicitor" of whose very existence everyone had been unaware. This character saved the day, giving a legal veneer to what was obviously a Government decision.

After the railway unions (T S S A, A S L E F and the N U R) rejected pay rises offered on April 16 they imposed an overtime ban and work-to-rule lasting a week. The government then imposed a 14-day 'cooling-off' period. At the end of this, the unions were still refusing the pay settlement offered by the Railways Board. On May 11 the government applied for a ballot of the membership of the three unions, on the grounds that "irregular industrial action was going on", that "There was a grave threat to the national economy" and that "there were grounds for doubting whether the workers taking part in the go-slow did so willingly, and further, the workers had not had an opportunity of expressing their wishes in the matter." The outcome of the ballot was a 6 to 1 vote in favour of continued industrial action. Once again, the unions involved had complied with the Act. The only opposition came from isolated areas, mostly from drivers in the Southern Region.

On June 8 the three railways unions decided to re-institute the work-to rule on June 13, in a modified form to avoid contravening the Act. On

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(4) Daily Telegraph, June 15, 1972. (5) Evening Standard, June 15, 1972.

June 12 a compromise settlement was reached, well above the Government's norm for wage increases.

DIVIDED... BUT STILL RULING

There has been disagreement between sections of the state and some employers over the use of the Act from the very outset. With respect to the imposition of binding procedural agreements in disputes, the employers have preferred to let the state do the hatchet work, so that it is the government which starts the process of securing the agreements rather than an employer: and the government is therefore held responsible for the outcome. I C I have signed a pact with the ten unions to which their workers belong, declaring the company's total confidence in the negotiating arrangements established over the years. The Dunlop Rubber Co. is contemplating something similar, as are other companies. These employers recognise that it is much safer and cheaper to keep disputes out of the hands of the rank and file from the beginning. Collective bargaining with union leaderships around a table preempts the development of real shop floor militancy. These industrialists understand well how time and time again trade union leaderships have bargained away the interests of their members without the need for this sort of legislation. This is what 'modern capitalism' is all about.

The state imposed the ballot in the rail dispute in an effort to delay developments and to demoralize the railwaymen. Some sections of the Establishment, would you believe, even saw the ballot as a means of splitting off a 'militant' leadership from a 'passive' rank and file. Other sections though, would echo the editorial in The Guardian of June 2: "Is the country really to be asked to suffer a whole series of damaging strikes while Mr Heath and his Ministers prove to themselves the futility of much of their own legislation?"

The result of the ballot forced the leaderships of the rail unions, who had been looking all along for a compromise, to take a more militant stand, or lose their credibility with railwaymen. The fact that most of the workers involved took p art in the ballot (instead of ignoring it) and in a sense registered a vote of confidence in their trade union bosses to negotiate and decide for them shows how deeply implanted are traditional procedures and respect for the status quo.

The ballot may be used in a different way to isolate small groups of workers taking action, by subjecting them to a wide ballot of members of the union not involved in the dispute who might for a number of reasons vote against the action.

In the last few weeks, divisions in the Establishment over the Act have become more apparent. The crude use of the Act was deplored by the more sophisticated employers and trade unions alike. The state was forced to use the Act as a result of particular interests, of the pressures from within it and of the need to defend the credibility upon which its power depends. The attitude of the backwoodsmen is epitomised by the Daily Telegraph editorial on June 15. "It is difficult to see a credible and effective policy that does not involve something like a showdown with these overmighty subjects. No

sensible person would wish to see a repetition of 1926, though there is no denying the fact that the defeat of the General Strike did signal a diminution of union power, and gave many years of relative peace in industry. We in our time seem to be faced with something like the same problem. The Industrial Relations Act is a move in the right direction, but even its power to deal with unofficial strikes and blacking has been largely destroyed this week by the Court of Appeal, and it was never designed to deal with a properly conducted strike ordered by the trade union concerned. If this is right, it would suggest that the underlying question in British politics is the question of authority."

The 'doves', represented by Lord Denning, are with it enough to understand that when respect for and obedience to the law go there is no basis of authority or power left for the ruling class, except naked force. Denning's decision in the Appeal Court to quash the fine on the T G W U was a sop to the T U bureaucrats: "You can trust the law, it plays fair by everyone in the end". Similarly, the decision to reverse the arrest order on the three London dockers was a sop to workers in an effort to maintain the illusions and mystifications which keep things going. Incidentally, it let the Government off the hook!

The consensus now emerging in Government, Industry and Unions on the use of the Act is that it is bad for Queen and Country (i.e. for business). The use of the Act can put the state into situations where its power is threatened by the collective power of workers, where the owners of the means of production are faced with uncontrollable unofficial action and where the trade union hierarchy is challenged by its members. Jack Jones expressed his fears in the press "if the union is restrictive - holding back all the time - afraid to take action, then not only will workers be in a position to be victimised, and exploited, but the result could well be industrial anarchy, as workers say that 'the union can't do much for us, so we'll break away on our own - and look after ourselves'". He also made it clear that he was not talking about fighting capitalism, only about the reforms necessary to get things running smoothly again. Better procedure agreements would prevent disputes from being shunted off into some longwinded grievance procedure that breeds frustration (and thus, strikes). The Industrial Relations Court will be used more by reactionary employers seeking to bolster their powers, than it will by forward-looking employers who know the value of free collective bargaining.(6)

Vic Feather made the T U C's position clear at a recent conference in Hastings. "The need to create an improved, genuinely independent conciliation and arbitration service is high on the T U C's list of priorities.(7) The Confederation of British Industry endorses such a 'responsible attitude' - "At a meeting yesterday, the C B I's Employment Policy Committee is understood to have approved a document supporting the idea of a joint conciliation board run by the T U C and C B I, freed from Government influence, which would try to solve wage disputes before they reach the boil."(8)

The moves toward an independent collective bargaining set-up to solve industrial disputes has two major advantages for T U's, state and bosses. It

(6) Sunday Times, April 23, 1972. (7) Guardian, May 22, 1972.
(8) Guardian, June 2, 1972.

keeps the ball out of the hands of the rank and file, who cannot be trusted, and leaves it in the hands of the union and the boss where both can be confident of a reasonable agreement. This form of conciliation is designed to avert industrial action before it ever occurs. The use of the Act would be reserved for unofficial actions outside the control of the industrial firemen.

George Meany, President of the American A F L - C I O, could have been speaking on behalf of the union leadership in Britain when he talked, over-optimistically in our opinion, of the success of voountary arbitration in the U S A - "To a great extent we have eliminated the so called wildcat strike. Ten or 15 years ago we had 'em all the time. There would be a settlement, the fellows would go back to work and they'd be on strike again two months later about interpretation. With built in arbitration the worker no longer has the same sense of frustration."(9)

WHO'S KIDDING WHOM?

What has the trad. left been saying about the Act and what it means to workers? The C P have urged 'united working class action', for the 'movement' to make its voice heard at every opportunity. It has demanded that the T U apparatus make a call for all-out industrial action 'of General Strike dimensions' and warned: "the task now is to involve more unions and the T U C itself. It won't be done by irresponsible 'ultra-revolutionary slogan mongering' and blanket attacks on all trade union officials which create the impression that the rank and file can do it all on their own without the official trade union machine . . . Rank and file action is vital in the development of such a campaign, but it must be made clear that it is infantile 'day-dreaming' to imagine that its objectives can be achieved by the rank and file alone, no matter how militant the rank and file leadership thrown up by the struggle may be."(10)

I S, as usual, asserts a multiplicity of positions. In April they were still calling for workers to prod the union bureaucracies into fighting the Act. "No confidence whatsoever can be placed on the trade union leadership left to themselves. The crying need is for an organised rank and file movement with the will to win, a movement that operates both unofficially and inside the official structures, a movement that develops solidarity, coordination of claims, resistance to the Industrial Relations law and the leadership to make these things possible."(11) and "All that is needed is that the trade unions stand up and fight, explain the real issues at stake to all their members, and refuse to be intimidated by a law which the working class cannot and will not accept."(12)

By the end of May there seems to have been uncertainty in some I S quarters about this strategy, or at least a desire to have two bob each way "with the official leadership if possible, without them if need be, the fight against the law must go on."(13)

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(9) Guardian, June 5, 1972. (10) Carr's Bill and How to Kill It - A Class Analysis, by Bert Ramelson, C P publication, 1970, pp. 19-20.
(11) Socialist Worker, April 22, 1972. (12) Socialist Worker, April 22, 1972.
(13) Socialist Worker, May 20, 1972.

The S L L after the quashing of fines on the T G W U and withdrawal of warrants for the arrest of the three London docker delegates said "It is now entirely possible to make the government resign. This is the most urgent issue of the hour."(14) They continue to call for a General Strike . . . to bring in a Labour government.

The whole of the trad. left, in one permutation or another, have been calling for rank and file pressure on their union bosses and the T U C to force them to take a stand against the Act. As one docker put it, after the T G W U had further postponed the decision on a national dock strike "This has been the greatest sell-out since the Last Supper". Unfortunately, it isn't a question of one or more Judases, it is that trade union leaders have quite different interests to those of the people that they supposedly 'represent', and can't therefore sell-out something they never had. Union leaders are part of the professional apparatus of their union; the fact that they come to power through a system of patronage by the bureaucracy, apathy, and low polls in union elections means that they must inevitably share its ideas and interests to become and stay a part of it. The question is not to 'democratize' the unions or force the generals to change their ideas, or even to build new ones which will inevitably end up the same way. The real need is to bypass the generals altogether by creating forms of job organization controlled directly by workers. These forms of decision-making will start to make union officials redundant.

The moment of truth has arrived. The unions have backed down from their verbal opposition and the only real challenge comes from workers engaging in struggle. This does not mean that union leaderships cannot take 'militant positions' over certain issues. It will not even be surprising if certain 'leaders' are prepared to resist the Act where it threatens their interests. Short jail terms, as an industrial martyr, can be a passport to a future union career. There are plenty of examples of this in the U S A and Australia. One thing is certain, they won't make such a stand in defence of job organisation.

The attitudes of the trad. left, where they have influence in T U's either at leadership or factory floor level, have served to disarm workers about reality. They have reinforced the irrational faith that trade union machines still somewhere, somehow, 'in the last analysis', etc., etc., stand for the interests of the working class. For revolutionaries to 'struggle' (in or out of the T U's) to 'repeal the Act' is a non-issue. We should not be concerned with answering such questions as 'should we break the law?' The real question is 'should we or shouldn't we act effectively to defend and extend our interests?' This means refusing to political parties, T U's, etc., the right to formulate questions on our behalf, in the first place. Laws can never be effective if workers collectively decide to disregard them. The Act will become irrelevant, as will trade union leaders, when people control their own lives and struggle. If the use of the Act has done nothing else, it has shown how the trade union machines play an integral part in maintaining the system.

B.C.

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(14) Workers Press, June 17, 1972.

THE MANCHESTER SIT-INS

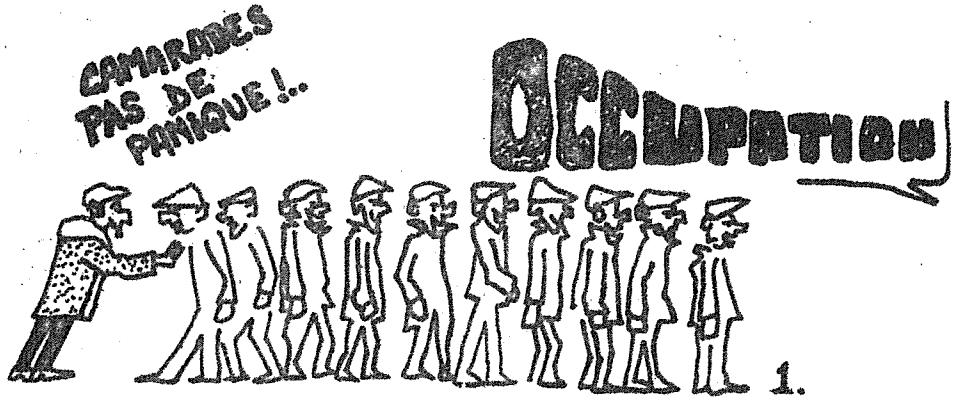
Following the breakdown of the national engineering pay talks last January, the Confederation of Shipbuilders and Engineering Unions decided on a policy of plant bargaining. In accordance with this a regional claim, to be negotiated at factory level, was put forward by the Greater Manchester District Confed. On March 27, 200,000 engineering workers were to ban piecework and begin a work to rule in support of a £4 a week minimum pay rise, a 35-hour week, and extra holidays. (Equal pay was mooted at one stage, although whether this was official or not remains uncertain - anyway, nothing came of it.)

The gun was, however, well and truly jumped when the men (mostly GMWU members) at Exors of James Mills - two GKN-owned steel plants at Bredbury near Stockport - voted on March 14 to ban piece rates the following day. The next morning the management threatened a lockout and suspension of all those involved pending dismissal if normal working was not resumed. The men responded by occupying the two factories - or rather one and a half of the factories - because at no point in the two months of the sit-in were the white-collar workers or those working in the rolling-mill involved in the struggle.

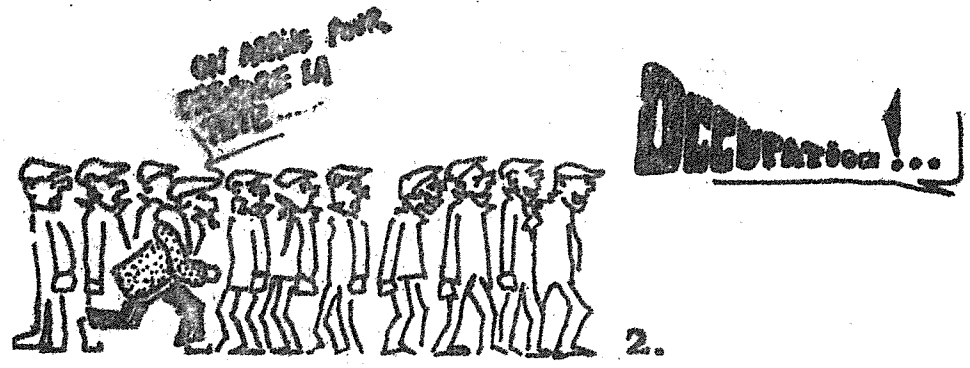
Nevertheless the Bredbury occupation got big publicity, and as a result the work to rule in the Stockport area was brought forward a week. By March 27, seven factories had workers sitting in and at the peak of the movement the number reached 26. In all probably something over 30 factories were occupied to one degree or another.

The word 'probably' here shows a basic flaw in the tactics. There was no attempt to let workers in other industries know what was happening. One comrade who lives near an engineering works was unaware for several weeks that it was occupied. There was even some confusion amongst the engineering stewards as to what was happening - one told me that the Metal Box works at Timperley was occupied when in fact it wasn't, although the workers did move in a fortnight later. Some flow of information between the factories must have occurred later as a by-product of morale-boosting sporting fixtures (the Inter-Sit In Fairs?). But by no reasoning can football be seen as a viable alternative to rank and file link-ups between workers in struggle.

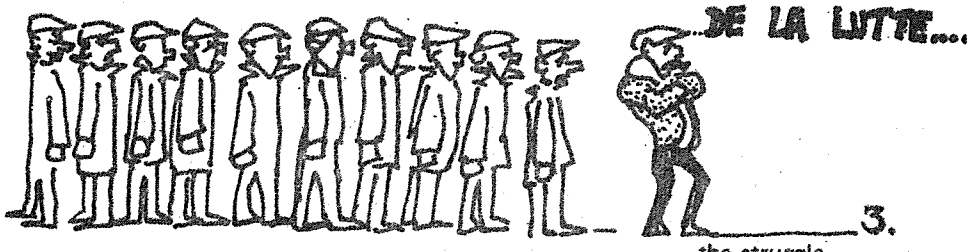
The first settlement reached was with Sharston Engineering, a small firm employing 22 workers and not a member of the Engineering Employers Federation. The managing director, Mrs Isabella Dubost, obtained a court order against the occupiers on grounds of trespass. When the bailiffs arrived next day, they were refused entry. Later that evening John Tocher, Confed. District Secretary and an AUEW official, announced that agreement had been reached over the reinstatement of four sacked workers and two extra



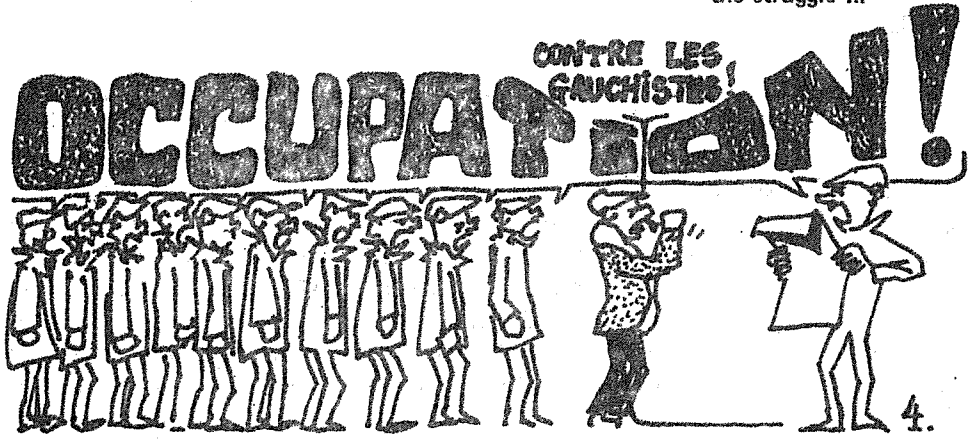
"Comrades, don't panic!...



I have arrived to lead ...



the struggle ...



against the leftists!"

days holiday a year. The pay rise had been deferred because of the firm's lack of orders. The firm was due to be taken over, and the question of pay would be brought up again when this happened. The men went back to work on this basis, but the settlement was short-lived. Turning up for work one morning they found a notice on the doors saying that the firm had closed down.

The first EEF member to break was Davies and Metcalfe of Romiley, Cheshire, bringing a howl of protest from other firms in the area. But then breaks occurred on the union side. The workers of Mather and Platt in Manchester accepted, against the advice of officials, an offer of £4.50 rise, with a £1 rise brought forward from August but no change in holidays or hours.

The second month of the sit-ins was the month of settlements. At the time of writing there are 3 (The Times) or 4 (Radio 4) or, to put it another way, 'only a handful' (Manchester Evening News) of factories still occupied. The engineering workers have won pay rises, some have more holidays, but in no case are they working fewer hours.

The failure to achieve all the demands was largely due to the traditional 'trade unionism' of the AUEW bureaucracy, which means in practice the Communist Party. This trade unionist view was shared by a large number of the stewards. The engineering workers' struggle was seen as something affecting only engineering workers. When I asked one steward if any attempt was to be made to get financial help from other trade unionists in the area, he replied that there would be a levy made of all engineering factories settling. No attempt, he went on, was even being made to get the office staff at his works, mostly TASS members, involved. 'Even though TASS has a claim in for themselves?'. They were, apparently, handling that their own way. (TASS is technically part of the AUEW.) The C.P. leadership obviously did not want things to get out of control.

And it was the fact that the officials were in control that made such a farce out of the demand of 'plant bargaining'. All this meant in practice was that, instead of agreements being made between the unions and the Engineering Employers' Federation, agreements were made between the unions and individual employers. It did NOT mean that the initiative had passed to the rank and file.

Mass occupations would probably, though not certainly, have enabled the rank and file to have more control over the struggle. But the sit-ins were not mass occupations. For example at one factory which was billed as being occupied by 500 workers there were never more than thirty people inside, at any one time. They had no control over even the small part of the factory that they were occupying. The management, who were graciously 'allowing' them to have light and heat (though not at weekends), controlled the gate throughout the whole occupation. At no point did this, or other sit-ins, challenge property rights. As more than one steward said at the time, 'Basically we've just moved the picket line indoors'. Indoors. Safe from the wind and rain perhaps. But also with the firm's security men helping union officials to keep the 'struggle' safe from the big bad world outside.

J. G. W.

ON OCCUPATIONS...

In the last year sit-ins and occupations, previously unheard of, have become commonplace. Ever since 'Solidarity' came into existence, 11 years ago, we have consistently and actively campaigned to popularise this form of struggle. Occupations can be a more effective tactic than simple strike action for example, in a fight for wage demands or better conditions. But they can also be a forerunner, however deformed at the moment, of the forms of industrial organisation and democracy which could exist in a self-managed, socialist society. At the very core of our vision of such a society is the idea that there should be forms of social organization enabling people to take the decisions that affect their lives.

Occupations must therefore be controlled from below. Trade unions officials cannot be allowed to dominate such struggles. Their role in weakening and smashing countless rank-and-file struggles is a well documented fact of life. Nor is the Labour Party (the architect of the Industrial Relations Bill) going to be much help. We don't need to go through the experience of yet another Labour Government to see that the Labour Party stands for essentially the same ideas as the Tories - or to draw the conclusion that workers involved in struggle must control all aspects of such struggles themselves if real advances are to be made.

An occupation must be directly controlled by the participants not only in its internal organization but also in its relations with the outside world. For instance negotiations should take place directly between management and rank-and-file committees. To rely on the 'good offices' of national, full-time union officials, or on the Harold Wilsons of this world, is to court disaster.

But the technique of occupation is certainly no cure-all. If the control of negotiations and the strategy of the conflict is left to the trade union officials - or even in the hands of shop stewards' committees uncontrolled by the rank-and-file - the movement can become sterile and contained. The settlements at the sit-ins so far attempted, while possibly better than expected, are far from satisfactory. If workers are not self-mobilised, there can still be 'sell-outs' and ' compromises'. The form of struggle (occupation) is of itself no guarantee against bureaucratic manipulation. In fact there have been a number of extremely bureaucratic occupations (1).

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(1) See Solidarity Pamphlet No.30 Paris May 1968

But the very fact of workers spending days and weeks together, organizing themselves and discussing tactics, means that even the most bureaucratic and ritualistic occupation can be at the same time a university of industrial struggle. Thousands of workers will never be the same again. What is important is that the lessons, both good and bad, of each struggle are widely disseminated so that the movement progressively develops. We intend to do everything we can to aid this process.

One of the major problems of occupations has been the tendency for a sort of industrial Maginot mentality to develop. The occupied factory is seen as a besieged fortress rather than as a base for offensive operations. Too often (for example in France, in 1968) workers have been trapped behind the walls of their self-imposed ghettoes and isolated from events going on in the big bad world outside. Under such circumstances management may allow sit-ins to drag on and die in isolation and despair. This is likely to happen unless the workers in such occupied plants take a much more aggressive attitude and attempt to spread their action to other Company concerns, and to involve the outside community. At Kirkby the men have shown this offensive attitude, when they seized the spares from the Bendix depot. But things have to go much further than this.

One of the commonest misconceptions about the sit-ins is that it can only be attempted in the most well organised factories. This is not the case and the mass sit-ins in America (in the thirties) and more recently on the Continent are there to prove it. Many of these successful sit-ins took place in badly organised plants. The occupation of the key (1) plant of a combine allows the militants to concentrate their forces and to a large extent does away with the problem of scabbing. It places and keeps the initiative in the hands of the workers.

The occupation will come into its own in offensive struggles, in situations of acute conflict , where sections of workers have not been won over, or where there is organised (often union-led) strike-breaking. This is not as rare as might be expected. It happened in 1958 at Shell Mex House and BOAC, in 1967 at the Barbican (2) and in 1969 at Fords (3). If the postal workers during their strike had occupied the telephone exchanges, the problem of union-supported scabbing by telephonists and engineers would have been solved.

The problem of workers unity is not as simple as it sounds. Too often the slogan means unity in inaction. Everyone going at the pace of the slowest often means not moving at all. This attitude is a prime cause of the generally defensive posture of many workers in plants which superficially appear to be well organised.

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(1) By 'key' I mean a facility on which the smooth running and/or production of a large unit is dependent, for example a plant which makes a component on which many other plants are dependent. In the U.S. Automobile industry sit-ins in the thirties the metal-stamping divisions were a favourite target.

(2) See Solidarity vol. 4 no. 10

(3) See Solidarity vol. 5 no. 8 and 9

This situation is often played upon by the employers. For example at Ford, Dagenham, one site is arbitrarily divided into five plants, each with different shift patterns, starting times and foremens' uniforms etc. The key track workers are in a minority and themselves divided into separate plants. This fragmentation has been implicitly accepted by the Shop Steward Committee, whose own organization reflects the divisions imposed by the employer. Quite often, the most outrageous agreements have been imposed on track workers by the votes of other groups of workers, who are by and large relatively unaffected by the speed-up involved - and only receive the wage increases. This situation has substantially contributed to the present relative inactivity at Dagenham. There is a similar situation in many other industries.

For workers unity to have any positive meaning it must be dynamic. It must be unity in action. No one is in favour of small groups of workers isolating themselves by taking ill-considered action. On the other hand the lack of militancy among other groups of workers is far too often used as an excuse not to make any move at all. To wait for 100 % unity is often to wait for ever. Action by a substantial group can often act as a catalyst, bringing forward the whole. The occupation can be an effective tool in this context of offensive struggle, in which total unity is not achieved.

The sit-in/occupation can and must be used offensively. A number of industries (not in the front rank of struggle) are capital-intensive and rely on centralised, expensive, and non-duplicable production facilities. These would be very vulnerable to a campaign of occupation. To name but a few: glass, rubber, paper making, artificial fibres, oil refineries, telephone exchanges, certain parts of the food industry, even large department stores or the central offices of various combines. But the method is equally valid for the classical well-organised industries, such as engineering and motors.

At Kirkby, for example, the management was given 10 minutes to leave the factory. In many occupations in Italy and France the bosses would regard themselves lucky to receive such an ultimatum. In many cases they have been 'imprisoned' within their own offices, sometimes for considerable periods. We hope and believe that the actions we have seen so far are only the embryonic stage of this form of struggle.

It is both practical and important that workers in occupied plants utilise the facilities available to fulfil social needs for the surrounding community - for instance by providing halls for recreation, printing facilities, repair facilities for appliances, etc. If public service workers (such as busmen) took over their workplaces, they could try to provide some sort of service without charging the public.

If this new form of struggle is to be a real challenge to this rotten system - and if it is to avoid becoming ossified - it will have to reject many of the legalistic rituals that are part of the normal working situation. Traditional priorities and routines underpin the whole of our society, which places profit, property and power before people. We hope to see changed

attitudes, among workers, about the bosses' property, and less reluctance to alter the schedules and habits that applied before the occupation. In an occupation internal arrangements should suit the needs of the occupiers (and of workers outside the factory) rather than the employer's future interests.

An opportunity presented that so far has not been utilised is to use the occupation to turn the factory into a university of struggle and a precursor of what life could really be like. Not only the workers in struggle should be involved but their families, neighbours and other workers generally. Such an approach could create a base for the further development of struggle. There should be film shows, theatrical events, wall newspapers, posters, sports, debates - all drawing on the considerable talents now available to the working class movement. This could be just a beginning.

So far, there has been a tacit acceptance of the 'rules' by the boss. When the movement becomes dangerous this will change. Sooner or later, there will be a massive physical confrontation from the boss and his agents (we do not exclude the union leadership from this category). All sorts of contingency plans will have to be considered. For example, in the event of a sudden surprise swoop by the police and the ejection of workers from the plant (most likely in the early hours of the morning) a mass reoccupation of the factory - or even of another one belonging to the same group, if convenient - should not be excluded. The besiegers could find themselves in the position of being besieged.

The technique of occupation must not be allowed to become a ritual of last resort. It must develop, both in form, militancy and scale. Without this development and the parallel development of political consciousness, the occupation can become sterile. With this development, a great deal is possible - and we hope to see it.

M. F.

THE KIBBUTZ EXPERIENCE

Revolutionary consciousness has certainly grown in the last few years. With this growth there have appeared certain (more or less explicit) trends away from 'politics' and towards communal living and various forms of 'community action'.

Attempts to implement one's beliefs in real life are a welcome departure from traditional, resolution-passing politics. There are pitfalls however. Communal living can very readily degenerate into an abdication from the struggle to transform society as a whole. And 'community action' is very liable to reformist recuperation. For those who want 'action at any cost' such action may soon become a substitute for the fundamental task of raising socialist consciousness.

The following article illustrates the degeneration of a whole movement originally based on ideas of self-management and community oriented politics. It emphasizes the primacy of the real social environment. It shows how the ideas of self-management - if not constantly related to overall political conceptions - can often come to mean the management of one's own alienation. Without coherent ideas of their own, even the most well-intentioned will sooner or later succumb to the dominant ideology.

THE KIBBUTZ IDEAL

The kibbutz-type of agricultural settlement in Palestine has always attracted the attention of non-revolutionary socialists in the West. The reasons are not hard to find:

1) the kibbutz (literally: 'in-gathering'; actually: 'community') could be established without revolution. Even the British rulers of Palestine did not object to the development of these communes on a fairly wide scale.

2) private ownership of the means of production was abolished within the kibbutz. Apart from some personal belongings individual members owned little, if anything. The exploitation of hired labour was rejected as a matter of principle.

3) the founding members of the various kibbutzim were idealists. They could easily have had an easier life in the city or in a settlement based on the private ownership of land. They consciously rejected this, usually giving up their profession as lawyers, clerks, managers, doctors, etc. Moreover, having rejected one way of life and chosen another entailing considerable hardship, they actually lived up to their principles by implementing their beliefs in practice.

4) the kibbutz implemented new social relations. The nuclear family was replaced by communal child-raising. The educational system was relieved of most of its competitive aspects. Everyday life was 'revolutionised'. Every kibbutz had a communal dining hall served by one kitchen. Dishwashing and serving was done by rotation. All members participated.

5) a conscious attempt was made to overcome any institutionalised division of labour. Unskilled jobs were filled by rotation. Members were encouraged to rotate the skilled jobs as well.

6) all decisions affecting the kibbutz were taken by general assemblies of all the members. No one was allowed to become entrenched in a decision-making or administrative role.

7) the kibbutz did not attempt to crush individuality. It sought to transform it into an individuality 'of a new type'. It aimed to create an individual who had the welfare of the community rather than his private well-being as his main motive.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PRACTICE

According to the Official Statistical Yearbook of Israel (1970) the total kibbutz population, at the end of 1969, numbered 84,200. These men, women and children lived in 235 kibbutzim. Most of the settlements were more than 20 years old and some had been going for 40 years or more. It is therefore impossible to reject what is happening to the kibbutzim as insignificant. It cannot be argued for instance that the 'experiment' was too short-lived: many of the kibbutzim now comprise a second generation of kibbutz-born children. Nor can it be argued that the practice was on too small a scale.

Despite differences between the different brands of kibbutz (each Zionist political party established its particular variant), there was a very definite pattern of life common to all. This is outlined in the previously mentioned points. Over the last 20 years this pattern has undergone profound changes. Both the pattern and the changes must be carefully studied by anyone sympathetic to communal living in a modern society.

Originally the kibbutzim were - as a matter of principle - dedicated to agriculture. They refused to undertake industrial production. They did, however, develop a highly mechanised and modern type of agriculture.

In the 1950's most kibbutzim branched off into industrial production - mostly light industry.

One must remember that the kibbutz was not created in order to solve the personal problems of its individual members. Every member founding a new kibbutz considered it as a means to a social goal, namely to create and sustain a 'socialist' Jewish community in Palestine, based on Jewish labour, a community that would not exploit the labour of others. It followed directly from this that Arabs could not become members of a kibbutz.

One Zionist party ('MAPAM') which preaches fraternity between nations used to train a few Arab youths in modern agricultural techniques in its kibbutzim. But whenever Arabs applied for membership they were flatly turned down. No kibbutz has, or ever has had, Arab members. Moreover kibbutz girls who fell in love with Arab apprentices in the kibbutz had to choose between their love and their membership of the kibbutz.

This flaw in the social practice of the kibbutz flows directly from its Zionism. It is therefore not a departure from the original aims of the kibbutz. In the last 15 years however most kibbutzim have developed practices which are recognised by their members as being in direct contradiction with their declared aims. The first of these is the employment of hired labour in the industries set up by various kibbutzim. This practice has been spreading rapidly in the last 20 years.

An article by Yair Kotler entitled 'The Exploiters' recently appeared in the Israeli daily 'Ha'aretz' (March 31, 1972). It mentions that in the Beit-She'an area alone 40 kibbutzim were operating 11 industrial projects and were employing some 200 permanent hired labourers and another 400 temporary workers, during the peak season. About 100 managerial jobs in these projects were filled by kibbutz members. Mr Kotler states that he asked Mikha Pereg, a member of Kibbutz Hamadia and a manager of this complex if his conscience was not bothered by the employment of hired labour:

Pereg: 'The working conditions in our industry are better than in similar industries under private ownership. We are kibbutz members and the 'Histadruth' (Zionist TUC) resolutions are sacred for us. Still, we do have a bad conscience about employing hired labour.

Kotler: Why not let the hired workers share the profits of these industries whose financial turnover reached £5 million this year?

Pereg: The factories work only for the kibbutzim and not on the profit principle.'

Kotler then describes how he went on to visit one of the 11 factories which happens to process dates (1000 tons per year). The manager, Moshe Zaith from Kibbutz Kfar-Rupin, was concerned about competition from Palestinian producers in Gaza. 'I am very worried', he said. 'Every season they flood the market, charging 1/3 of our cost prices'. What a statement

from an advocate of communal life and shared property! Kotler then comments that all these factories demand more workers but that these particular kibbutzim are still unwilling to employ Arabs, although they are available. He quotes Pereg as saying 'the factories were founded about 15 years ago. We have never employed Arabs here and I personally abhor the idea'.

Hiring Arab labour is no longer abhorrent to other kibbutzim. The Israeli evening paper 'Yedioth Aharonoth' (April 2, 1972) reports that the latest official publication by the Ministry of Employment gives a long list of kibbutzim fined by local Employment Tribunals for employing hired Arab labour from the occupied territories without authorisation by the Ministry. 'Kibbutz Ma'aleh Ha'hamisha was fined £100, Kibbutz Yad-Mordechai, £45. Some kibbutz representatives defended themselves by saying that they applied to the local employment bureau for labourers but did not get the full number they had asked for. The courts accepted this in deciding on the fines.'

By employing hired labour a kibbutz is breaching its socialist principles. By employing Arab labour it is breaching its Zionist principles. Both practices are growing trends. And both are recognised by the founding generation and by the first kibbutz-born generation to be in direct contradiction with the basic social aims of the kibbutz. There is however a second generation born on the kibbutz which considers both the principles and the moral scruples they provoke among older members to be relics of an irrelevant past.

This is a generation which demanded (and obtained) the implementation of the official matriculation exams in the kibbutz schools to enable those reared on the kibbutz to enter outside colleges and universities; a generation which has a growing demand for personal consumer durables (cars, hi-fi sets, etc.); a generation to which all the communal aspects of kibbutz life mean little and which is constantly leaving the kibbutz for the city. In many kibbutzim about half the second generation leaves for the towns. These young people share the desire for private consumption with others of their own age group in the society outside. Most kibbutzim can replenish their manpower with young volunteers from abroad. If it weren't for this most would face serious problems within a few years.

CONCLUSIONS

Anyone trying to establish a community based on a communal way of life within the framework of a bourgeois society which has its own values must take account of the kibbutz experience. Some lessons clearly emerge:

1. The values which dominate society at large will gradually assert themselves over the values of any 'sub-society' within it. This process

may take a few years, or one or more generations, but the outcome is almost certain. The 'example effect' of such a sub-society is no substitute for revolutionary politics aimed at transforming society as a whole.

2. A 'do-your-own-thing' type of 'sub-society' is not a threat to the values which dominate society. The likelihood of the values of such a sub-society ever becoming mass values is negligible. Modern society will tolerate such 'monasteries' in the knowledge that it will be able to cope with or assimilate their dissent at a later stage. Those who get off the bus are less of a problem than those who want to drive it themselves.

3. Dedication to a social ideal and attempts to implement it in one's personal life are insufficient to transform the values which dominate society. While revolutionaries must strive for a life style and for organisational forms that prefigure those of a free society, they must also be aware of the fact that in class-dominated society, complete emancipation in these areas is impossible.

4. Communal living may help to alleviate some individual problems in bourgeois society. But it is often 'inward-looking' and the cost is usually the renunciation of any attempt to tackle the problems of society at large. Social change demands mass understanding and mass participation. Islands of freedom in a sea of non-freedom will sooner or later be swamped.

5. A thousand ties will link islands of any subculture to the surrounding society. The nature of these ties is not determined by the inhabitants of the 'island'. They have no choice but to accept them. This acceptance is the first breach of the dykes.

6. Communal living and communal decision-making do not constitute a complete value system. Unless all the dominant values are consciously challenged, communal living can readily become a new channel whereby the dominant values are regenerated or sustained.

A. O.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING

During the weekend of March 8-9 an international meeting was held in Northern France, organised by the French group Informations, Correspondances Ouvrières (ICO). The meeting was attended by 3 comrades from Solidarity (London), 9 comrades from ICO, one comrade from the Dutch group Action and Thought and 2 comrades from the Belgian group Liaisons.

Because of the small numbers present the meeting was able to proceed without a chairman. The level of the discussion was always highly political. The meeting was self-disciplined and nobody went off at tangents.

It was collectively decided to start by discussing industrial struggles in Britain. Most participants felt that these were being fought on a more advanced level of organisation and consciousness than on the Continent - an opinion shared by the Dutch comrade, although the situation in Holland was very similar.

J.J. (from Solidarity (London) presented a fairly detailed analysis of the situation in Britain, dealing with the state of the economy, the role of the trade unions, the current struggles and their lessons, and how Solidarity and other groups 'intervened' in these struggles.

Many questions arose which emphasised differences between struggles here and on the Continent, and also between the groups present at the meeting. We felt that comrades on the Continent tended to see struggles in Britain through rose-tinted glasses. The conspiracy of silence in the Continental press, radio and TV which had surrounded the wave of occupations in the North West - and before that the miners' strike - had given birth to some illusions about the nature of these struggles. Although occupations are relatively new on the industrial scene in Britain the situation in the North West was far from revolutionary. A form of struggle is not revolutionary by itself: it is the content that matters. There can be reactionary occupations just as there can be militant 'classical' strikes.

There was no fundamental political disagreement amongst those at the meeting. The differences between the groups were more in the way one should analyse the T.U.s and their role. Some comrades from ICO thought that one could not compare T.U.s in France and Britain because their whole background and development were so different and because there was such a difference in their size. Others replied that the size of membership was not really what mattered. The important thing was the role the T.U.s played as autonomous bodies, with their own interests (distinct from those of the working class) in the economic and social relationships inside and outside the labour market. One could not ignore a very important psychological factor - namely how workers related to T.U.s and what T.U.s represented for them. There was a whole mythology here which often played a crucial role in struggles, as for example when there was a confrontation between the rank and file and the union bureaucracy.

On Sunday morning people wanted to discuss the role of revolutionary groups and the whole question of 'intervention'. The subject was introduced by the Dutch comrade, who described the types of activity his group had been trying to put into practice. From concrete examples he pointed out how they tried to break down all sorts of mystifications and illusions which often prevented workers in struggle from understanding the full significance of what they were doing. This was done by leaflets and by talking to the workers, but also by publishing accounts of struggles from which lessons could be learnt for the future.

The Dutch comrades had been trying to develop a revolutionary theory from what was actually happening. This meant criticising some of the things workers might be doing. All the groups at the meeting stood for this type of intervention, which was quite different from the practice of neo-populist groups both in Britain and on the Continent. The latter suffered from 'ouvrierisme' ('workeritis'). They worshipped 'the workers', uncritically jumping around from one struggle to the other, whatever the issue might be. This whole tendency tended to describe struggles in triumphalist tones, putting all sorts of words into workers' mouths, often for the sake of immediate popularity, and injecting - at what they considered the appropriate time - big doses of their own revolutionary mythology. Some were not even averse to putting out texts as if they had been written by rank and file workers, in a very manipulatory manner.

A small meeting continued on the Sunday afternoon (several comrades had had to leave at about 2 pm). We tried to explore the differences between influencing people's ideas and actions and manipulating them. It was found almost impossible to define 'manipulation' or to decide whether it was always to be condemned. For instance when workers are planning an occupation to fight the closure of their factory, if everyone spreads the word and takes part in deciding the date, the management will soon hear of it and close the factory before anything gets under way. In this sort of case (one among thousands) people will have to trust some individuals to give the signal to start the action. This is how the occupation started at Fisher-Bendix. Is this a form of manipulation? Is it reprehensible? Can it be avoided?

Three years ago the political differences between the various libertarian European groups on this general wavelength (i.e. Action and Thought, ICO, and Solidarity) were still quite large. The Continental groups, in our opinion, still made quite traditional marxist analyses of the situation and of the struggle and saw their development in rather a mechanistic way. But it was clear at the recent meeting that we had all evolved a great deal. Some of the groups in our opinion still see the basic contradiction of capitalism in rather more exclusively economic terms than we do.

We came away with the feeling that one short meeting was not enough. We learnt a great deal during the two days, yet felt we could learn more through more frequent meetings. This would certainly help reinforce a dynamic and developing international network of autonomous libertarian groups. It would also prepare the ground for coordinating our actions on an international scale.

C. S.

REVIEWS

WHAT IS CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS? by Wilhelm Reich.
Socialist Reproduction, c/o 57D Jamestown Road, London N W 1. (Price not indicated). October 1971.

This 76 page, off-set litho, pamphlet consists of a translation of Reich's famous essay, first published in 1934 (under the pseudonym of Ernst Parell). It includes an introduction, some well-chosen illustrations, an excerpt from the Preface to the third (1945) edition of Reich's Mass Psychology of Fascism and the full text of the Sexpol Manifesto of 1936.

The subject is topical in view of the resurgence of interest in Reich's writings and of the new awareness, at least among some revolutionaries, of the many factors influencing class consciousness, delaying its appearance or distorting its features. The essay is essential reading for anyone interest in looking a little deeper than the surface of things, or dissatisfied with the facile political 'explanations' which are the stock-in-trade of so many on the Left.

Unfortunately Reich's text, while containing many insights of deep significance, is viciated by a number of leninist residues. Throughout Reich endorses the belief that "the leadership must bring revolutionary consciousness to the masses". He claims that "awareness of the social situation, of the means of its mastery and of the correct path to socialism must be concentrated in the revolutionary vanguard". Party members are described as the "engineers . . . bricklayers and carpenters" of the building of socialism. Lenin is described as "the greatest mass psychologist of all time". All this moreover is not merely a verbal tribute: it permeates much of the practical approach. It is always the Party which is failing to understand the real nature of class consciousness, failing to stress this or that in its propaganda, and thereby failing to evoke the appropriate echoes.

It would be a tragedy, however, if modern revolutionaries saw no further than these hang-ups and, in their revulsion, failed to get to grips with Reich's main message, namely that "one of the reasons for the failure of the revolutionary movement is that the real life of individuals is played out on a different level than the instigators of social revolution believe". "While we were presenting the masses with grandiose historical analyses and economic arguments about the contradictions of imperialism, their innermost feelings were being kindled for Hitler". Still shocked at the "total failure" of the German Left, in the early 1930's "to seize the imagination and enthusiasm of the masses" Reich is making a plea for a revolutionary political psychology. This is a useful approach, provided it is seen as a means of gaining a new awareness into the springs of human behaviour, rather than as a means of developing a new manipulative technique.

Despite its title, Reich's essay is not really about the nature of class consciousness. It is about all that prevents the growth of such consciousness. Although constantly stressing the need for revolutionary leadership, Reich is realist enough to perceive that even the best of leaderships cannot create class consciousness. It could not even contribute to the growth of such consciousness if it were not "inherent in the daily experience of the working class". The main problem for Reich is to seek what it is, in society at large (and in the practice of revolutionaries, in particular) which inhibits the growth of that consciousness.

"If you want to develop class consciousness", Reich writes, "you must at least know what you want to develop, why it does not spontaneously develop under the pressure of deprivations of every sort and hence what stops it doing so". Queries of this type, Reich reminds us, would always cause intense annoyance among party functionaries or activists of all kinds, a clear indication that the Left were not even aware of the importance of these questions, let alone capable of providing an answer. In this respect the 'scene' doesn't seem to have changed much.

Reich starts by contrasting the 'consciousness' of the leaders and the consciousness of the masses. The leaders know "about the contradictions of the capitalist economic system, the terrific possibilities of socialist planning, the necessity of social revolution in order to accomodate the form of appropriation to the form of production". They know all about the "progressive and reactionary forces in history". The consciousness of the masses "is remote from such knowledge and from wide perspectives. It is concerned with petty, banal, everyday questions". The leaders "grasp the objective socio-economic process, those external conditions of an economic and social nature to which the individuals constituting society are subjected". The masses, on the other hand, are "completely unconcerned by the quarrels of Russia and Japan, or England and America - or in the development of the productive forces". Mass consciousness is "made up of concern about food, clothing, family relationships, the possibilities of sexual satisfaction in the narrowest sense, sexual pleasure and amusements in a broader sense, such as the cinema, theatre, fairground entertainments and dancing". It is concerned "with the difficulties of bringing up children, with furnishing the house, with the length and utilisation of free time, etc. If politics are to bring about international socialism, they "must find the connection with the petty, banal, primitive, simple everyday life and wishes of the broadest mass of the people, in all the specificity of their situation in society".

Reich then turns to the "traditional allegiances" and to the "wishes, anxieties, ideas and thoughts" which inhibit the development of class consciousness. He points out that "political reaction, with Fascism and the Church at its head, demands of the working masses the renunciation of earthly happiness, obedience, propriety, abjuration and self-sacrifice". Reaction "grows politically fat from the fulfilment of these demands by the masses themselves". It bases itself "on the guilt feelings of every member of the proletariat, upon their usual unassuming moderation, upon their tendency to undergo privation with dumb willingness and sometimes even with joy". Reaction and the Church exploit the identification of the masses with the glorious Fuhrer whose "love for the nation" is substituted for the real satisfaction of popular needs.

Reich then comes to the kernel of his analysis. Revolutionaries must recognise that "the principle of renunciation is harmful, stupid and reactionary". "The principle of full earthly pleasure (by which Reich does not mean 'beer and skittles') must be set against the political reactionaries' principle of renunciation". "The moderation of the 'simple man', the prime virtue as far as Church and Fascism are concerned, is from the standpoint of socialism his greatest fault, one of the many elements which militate against his class consciousness." "We are heading up a dead-end", Reich writes, "if we consider class consciousness an ethical quality" and hence compete with the bourgeoisie and its agents on grounds of their choosing. It would not only be futile but harmful to condemn, for instance, "adolescent sexuality, the character of prostitutes, the depravity of the criminal and the immorality of the thief". (Reich clearly differentiates this attitude from any "romantic admiration for the world of crime".) He points out that "everything which goes by the name of morality and ethics today stands unequivocally in the service of the oppression of working humanity". "Everything that supports and strengthens the bourgeois order and attaches people to it (is) an impediment to class consciousness". On the other hand "everything that is in contradiction with the bourgeois order, that contains the seeds of revolt, may be regarded as an element of class consciousness".

Reich warns that the right will exploit these "amoral" conceptions in its propaganda. This doesn't matter he says, for the right has anyway always considered the left as thieves (who want to expropriate the means of production). Failure to deal with these matters, or "holier than thou" attitudes on the part of the left will only drive the frustrated and misunderstood masses into the arms of reaction.

We have touched on this subject in previous issues of Solidarity, perhaps without appreciating its full significance. In industrial struggles for instance there is nearly always a very strong urge among workers, to "make the dispute official", to project an image of being moderate, sensible people, acting constitutionally and within the framework of a procedure 'agreed' by both sides.* Instead of defending a sacked steward as being a good militant, doing things that the trade union bureaucracy will not and cannot do, he is defended as 'only implementing official union policy', etc.

From where do these conformist attitudes stem? Dealing with inhibiting influences, Reich stresses the importance of the early rebellion against the parents. "Sexual inhibition, the fear of sexual activity and the corresponding feelings of guilt are always either reactionary or at least inhibit revolutionary thinking. Sexual oppression is so immediately perceptible for the child - and class problems for the most part so alien to its thinking - that there is no question of a choice in this matter. Early, correct sexual knowledge does not merely create a lively attachment to the person giving it, does not merely destroy all the child's usual mistrust of adults, but constitutes in itself the best foundation for irreligious thinking and hence for class feeling". The ideological struggle

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* See, for instance, "Stalemate at Halewood", Solidarity, Vol. VI, No. 10, p. 3.

against "being good" is seen by Reich as "one of the most important tasks on the ideological front". Attachment to the parents, on the other hand, is "a powerful, inhibiting element, which can never be exploited by revolutionaries in the interests of social revolution". Reich points out that these are class questions, not personal matters. The Church was well aware of all this, even if the revolutionaries, permeated by bourgeois inhibitions, were not. The Church was not afraid to discuss "these so-called taboo subjects. As far as it was concerned, children masturbating was a political matter". It required care and sensitivity to discuss these subjects with children. "Revolutionaries should at least not get in the way, by chiming in with the Church."

Reich then discusses such things as "parades, uniforms and military music", all seen as factors damaging the development of a critical consciousness. The Right would always be better than the Left at the game of pagentry, at creating myths and in mobilising people around them. The task of the Left was to blend natural emotion with real understanding. This required patience and some insight into what went on in people's minds. It required understanding their unarticulated fears and doubts, the pressure to which they were submitted in the home or more generally outside of the work situation. "A worker can never be brought to class feeling by simply being called on to strike, as those obtuse individuals demand who do not know what goes on in a worker's mind." The message, here, is as relevant today as when first uttered nearly 40 years ago. Honest discussion about all aspects of life will, on the other hand gain workers to the revolutionary cause, "if not immediately for a strike, certainly for later, when such islands of comprehension of the psychology of the masses come together in suburbs, towns and provinces, and the feeling that there are people who know exactly what is pre-occupying one, arousing one's indignation, holding one back, driving one on and at the same time restricting one begins to gather people like an avalanche".

In a passage of deep relevance to what might happen tomorrow Reich writes "that in the course of the last ten years adolescents, adults, men and women, people from every walk of life have passed through the revolutionary organisations without becoming attached or committed to the revolutionary cause". What drove them in, in the first place? "Not uniforms, not material advantage, merely vague socialist conviction, revolutionary feeling". Why did they not stay in? "Because the organisations failed to develop this revolutionary feeling". Why did people lapse into indifference, or go over to the Right? "Because there were bourgeois structures in them that were not destroyed." Why were they not destroyed? "Because nobody knew what to promote and what to destroy." The desired objective could not be achieved by appeals to discipline not even "by music and marching, for the others (the Right) could do that a lot better". Nor could it be done with slogans "for the political clamour of the others was better and more powerful". "The only thing which the revolutionary organisations could, without competition, have offered the masses and which in reality they did not offer . . . would have been the knowledge of what the uneducated, oppressed children of capitalism, hankering both after freedom and after authoritarian protection really wanted, without themselves being clearly aware of it". The revolutionaries should have put all this into words, and said it for the masses, in their own language, "but

organisations which dismissed all psychology as counter-revolutionary were not up to such tasks." Underlying these formulations of Reich's are a number of very important matters (the role of intellectuals in the revolutionary movement, the importance of knowledge as a basis of self-activity, the growth of 'consciousness' etc.) which we cannot here go into.

Among other interesting insights of Reich's one might mention his observations that organisations which saw themselves "the preordained leaders of the coming revolution" repelled people and would be swamped in the revolution itself. Reich also repeatedly stressed that revolutionary propaganda should be positive. It should not be frightened of discussing the future, as concretely as possible. Fear of revolution was partly the product of ignorance. The broad 'apolitical' masses would have a decisive effect upon the fate of the revolution. Revolutionaries should therefore find them where they were. They should 'politicize private life, fairs, dance halls, cinemas, markets, bedrooms, hostels and betting shops'. Long before the Situationists (or Solidarity) came on the scene Reich had proclaimed that "revolutionary energy lies in everyday life".

This synopsis can only give a partial insight into the sort of problems Reich is dealing with. It should be enough, however, to cause serious revolutionaries to ask themselves a few questions about what they are really doing, about the emphases and priorities of their work, about the 'triumphalist' myths some are so busy concocting and about the lasting content of their 'interventions'.

The introduction to Reich's text (by Socialist Reproduction) although intelligent and percipient, is marred by a few factual inaccuracies and other minor defects, which we hope will be corrected in the future editions their publication certainly deserves. It is incorrect that the KAPD (Communist Workers Party of Germany) was formed in 1920 "by a group of anarchists, syndicalists and libertarian marxists". Although anti-parliamentary, the KAPD was also consciously anti-anarchist, from its inception.* The subsequent history of the KAPD is not really "less accessible" . . . if one is seriously seeking access.** The KAPD delegate to the 1921 Comintern Congress did not "find common cause with the Russian Left Opposition" (for the very good reason that the "left opposition" did not exist in 1921, only appearing in 1923). The KAPD delegate contacted the representatives of the Workers Opposition, as reported in Solidarity,

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* See Zur Geschichte der KAPD, by B.Reichenbach in "Archiv für Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung". (Grünberg, Frankfurt am Main, 1928.)

** An excellent bibliography of texts relating to the German Council Movement, to the KAPD and to similar tendencies was published last year by Prometheus (Postbox 61, 2880 Bagsvaerd, Denmark) under the title La Gauche Allemande et la question syndicale dans la Troisieme Internationale. See also Hillmann's Selbstkritik des Kommunismus (Rowohlt, 1967, Syndikalismus und Linkskommunismus von 1918-1923 by H.M.Bock (1969) and Die Rätebewegung (Rowohlt, 1971).

Vol. VI, No. 2. Finally Reich's essay on class-consciousness was not written "in Denmark, in 1933". It was written in Austria, in 1934* and published by the Verlag für Sexualpolitik later that year, in Copenhagen, Prague and Zurich.

M.B.

IRELAND, DEAD OR ALIVE? An analysis of Irish politics. Produced by the Belfast Libertarian Group. Obtainable from: Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 - 10 p + postage.

Something different from the usual run of publications on Ireland is promised by the introduction to this new pamphlet. The viewpoint is libertarian socialist; the aim "to analyse, and where necessary attack, those areas of our society which unbelievably always seem to escape the attention of all other 'revolutionary' groups in this province."

The first section of the text, on "Ulster - the Fundamentals", confronts "the brick wall of Ireland's festering history" and attempts to give a demystified account of the development of European capitalism as applied in Ireland. Disposing of many centuries in a few pages inevitably makes for some very over-simplified history. There is a tendency to assert as fact what are actually dubious or debatable theses. The overall interpretation is economistic, with other factors accorded only secondary importance: "So we had Catholic, near-feudal Ireland and Protestant, capitalist Ireland, with no future but economic opposition between the two..the 'religious problem' had arrived!"

But the latter two sections make it clear that the author is well aware of non-economic aspects of false consciousness. In the discussion of "Myth and Reality" we might dispute, philosophically, some of the terms used, but not the basic message: that the validity of accepted ideas and existing institutions is open to question and challenge. In particular, the inherent irrationality of certain prevalent myths is pointed out - not only of nationalism and religion, but also of terrorism and left-wing delusion.

The phenomenon of nationalism is attributed to the need for an assumed identity and raison d'etre in present-day society; religion is linked with sexual repression and the externalisation of inner yearnings. The conditioning process reinforcing these tendencies is further examined under the heading "Division and Repression". In the different ghetto environments, the forces of pulpit and state militate against united action on social and economic issues.

Yet it is on these issues that the pamphlet contends, struggle is required. Nationalism - both nationalisms - must be excluded from politics; the role of the I.R.A. and its allies is exposed.

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* See M.Cattier, La Vie et L'Oeuvre du Docteur Wilhelm Reich (La Cite, Lausanne, 1969), p. 182.

The Belfast Libertarian Group is frank in its denial that any short-term solution is possible in N. Ireland. It can only hold out a vague hope of beneficial influence from radical youth groups throughout the world. Perhaps subsequent pamphlets may give us some indicating of how such influences express themselves in Ulster - there are some manifestations of non-sectarian youth culture. In the meantime, the publication of this far from optimistic pamphlet is in itself a hopeful sign.

L.W.

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