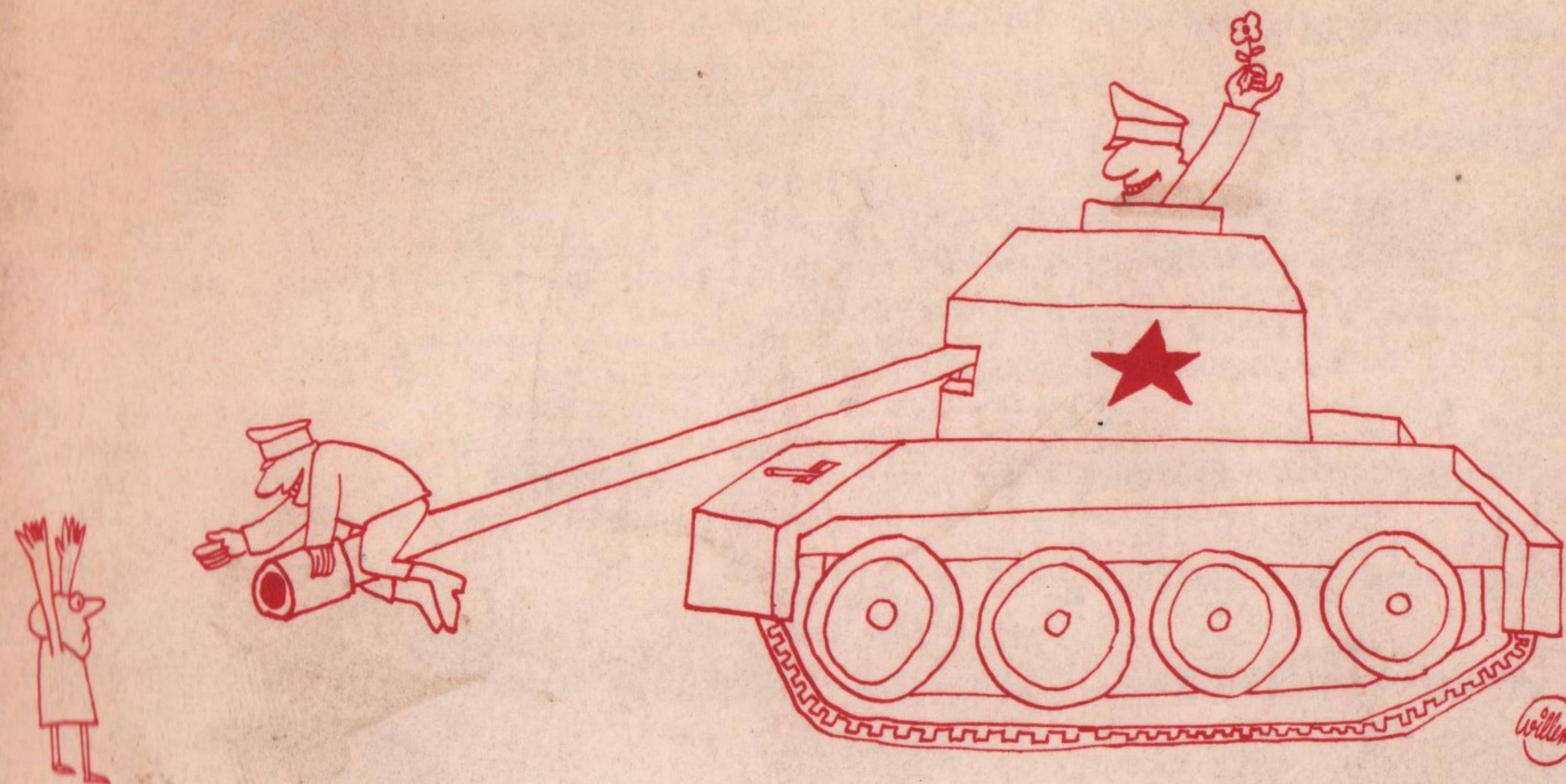


We apologise to readers for the delay in the appearance of Confrontation 2. This has been due to a series of teething troubles and frustrations which it would serve little purpose to enumerate, and not the least of which revolved about finances.

We stated in our first issue that we are, on principle, financed entirely by voluntary donations and sales, and further clarification of the principle involved has been attempted in the articles "Towards the Democratic Revolution" and "The End of the Beginning - France - May 1968" printed in this issue.

From what is written it will be clear that we will under no circumstances permit our literature to become part of the general trafficking in commodities, nor countenance the establishment of commodity relations within our organisation. We are determined that what we produce shall have the character of socialist production, that is, for the satisfaction of human needs, in this case, literary, political, scientific, intellectual, etc. Traditional sources of financing, from commercial advertisements, investments, or profit producing activity are therefore automatically excluded.

The cost of producing this magazine, including postage, etc, runs to well over £80, and readers will realise that this is a considerable sum for a small and inevitably impecunious group to collect together. We have no choice, therefore, but to appeal to our readers for help. It goes without saying that all contributions will be publicly acknowledged.



confrontation 2

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CONTENTS.

TOWARDS THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION	P. HANWELL	5
A letter to the Editor of "CIRCUIT"		
THE LESSONS OF SOFIA	P. SIEVEKING	10
MATERIAL AND DOCUMENTS		
COMMUNITY RESEARCH & ACTION GROUP		13
BIAFRA - A LEAFLET FROM SWITZERLAND		15
AMERICA - LETTER FROM ELDRIDGE CLEAVER		17
- NO VOTE FOR PEGGY TERRY		19
SOME THOUGHTS ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA	P. BRASS	21
POEMS FROM THE VIETNAMESE		26
THE END OF THE BEGINNING - FRANCE - MAY, 1968	F. LOHENBILL	28
POST SCRIPT - ON SURVIVAL		43

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A few weeks prior to the invasion of Czechoslovakia we sent the following letter to the Editor of The Times:-

Dear Sir,

25th July, 1968.

A number of your correspondents, not without justice, have queried the attitude of the "new left" in Britain towards events in Czechoslovakia. I trust you will, therefore, grant us space to express our views. The Editors of 'Confrontation' ... suffer from no inhibitions in this regard.

Our condemnation of American intervention in Vietnam is based on the right of small nations to determine their own destiny. We hold this right to be fundamental and indivisible, and thus have no hesitation whatever in branding the attempts of the Russian government, by means of bullying, intimidation, threats, and lying propaganda, not excluding the possibility of direct military intervention, to maintain its grip on Czechoslovakia, as the crassest imperialism, which should be resisted by all possible means.

While roundly condemning the actions of the Russian government, however, it is not possible to ignore the support given to them, at least by default, by the governments of the "free" world, from whom there has not been one gesture of political support, not one promise of assistance, not one resolution for the Security Council of the United Nations, in a word, nothing but the most obdurate silence which can only be interpreted as implicit collusion.

It would thus appear that the unfortunate Czechs are to be abandoned to their fate, as they were in 1938, as they were in 1948, and as were the magnificently courageous Hungarians in the holocaust inflicted upon them by the Russians with the full backing of the American and British governments just 12 years ago.

Yours faithfully,

Needless to say, the letter was not published, and it is no consolation to have seen our prognostication so thoroughly confirmed by events. The Czechoslovakian people have been forced to grapple with the problems imposed by the stark and grim reality of Russian armour and occupation barbarism alone; even the reportage seems deliberately to have played down the nature of the invasion, presenting a picture of comparative calm - we, on the other hand, have had eye-witness accounts of, amongst other things, children under the age of 10 being forced to lick slogans off walls, and then being summarily shot - for vomiting. Nevertheless, with the utmost heroism, the Czechoslovak people have managed to mount a campaign of resistance, boycott, and non-co-operation which staggers the imagination, and has so demoralised the invaders that they have been forced to withdraw their armour from the cities to the surrounding countryside. The disastrous nature of their arrogance can be gauged from the fact that they were so convinced that they would be welcomed by the Czechoslovakian people that they omitted to arrange for proper supplies and quartering. Their troops live on potato soup and are forced to plunder and steal for food, with the result that in many parts crops have been ruined prior to harvesting, while the lack of sanitary facilities and arrangements for refuse disposal has created a serious vermin hazard and led to extreme alarm regarding the possibilities of typhoid outbreaks. Such is the essence of imperialist parasitism.

Only the most naive could believe that plans for the impending rape of Czechoslovakia were not known in detail to the governments of the West, whatever their opinions may be of the competence and especially the intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency, or M.I.5/M.I.6, or whatever the British outfit calls itself, but this did not prevent the post-festum hypocritical yappings of the Western "leaders" who, forced to respond to the spontaneous waves of shock, indignation, and protest, which swept the world, pretended a vast surprise and mouthed their own condemnations for public consumption, secure in the knowledge that they would achieve precisely nothing.

The Czechs themselves had no illusions about the matter. In the words of Smrkovsky:- "We knew that the world sympathised with us but that the great powers would accept a compromised solution (i.e., the reinstatement of the iron heel on Czechoslovakia) rather than anything else I tell you frankly that, despite all the help we have had from our friends - of whom we now have many, and whom I thank

from the bottom of my heart - our country, in the situation that now obtains in the world, has no real guarantee and no hope other than its own good sense and, above all, its unity".

For 8 long months they extracted concession after concession from their party leaders in attempting to throw off the economic stranglehold of Russia - a stranglehold based on the time-honoured "socialist" premise of buying cheap and selling dear, whereby the unfortunate Czechs bought extremely dear, and could not have sold cheaper, vast quantities of goods never having been paid for at all. The once tight and flourishing Czechoslovak economy having thus been reduced to a complete shambles, it is small wonder that the achievement of the freedom associated with a straightforward market economy, including the political rights which such an achievement would carry in its train, and whereby the shoddy rubbish off-loaded by the Russians could be discarded for quality materials from the West, held such attractions, and inculcated that virus of freedom which constituted such a mortal enemy to the Kremlin, the spread of which throughout the East could well have spelt the end of the Russian slum empire, and with it, the end of the totalitarian regimes throughout the whole of Eastern Europe, as well as Russia itself.

The implications of such an outcome for the West are not hard to seek, first and foremost amongst which would have been the collapse of the Ulbricht regime in Eastern Germany, and with it the development of an irresistible urge toward the reunification of Germany, the division of which constituted the corner stone of post-war policy in Europe from the very day that the victors of World War II inaugurated their great business partnership and launched out to divide the world between them. The resultant exposure of "the soft underbelly" of Europe, the policing of which constituted Russia's special function and which America, being fully committed elsewhere (South East Asia, Latin America, etc.), is not yet in a position to undertake, could clearly have spelt the collapse of the meticulously worked out arrangements so carefully prepared at the post war conferences between the 'great allies' at Potsdam, Teheran, Yalta, etc., and undeviatingly carried out in full concert between them, friction notwithstanding (and what good bourgeois marriage does not have its built-in frictions), through public, and especially private (secret diplomatic) agreements between them ever since, and the end of which would undoubtedly constitute a mortal blow to America's compulsions towards world domination, and even American capitalism itself.

Seen from this point of view, the efforts of the Czechoslovak people to achieve for themselves the most elementary and democratic rights constituted not only a threat to the U.S.S.R. but a pistol held straight at the heads of the Western ruling classes. It was therefore no accident that they should have reacted (apart from the claptrap in the United Nations guaranteed to be no more than a talking shop by the built-in veto of the great powers designed to render it ineffective from its very inception) with immediate despatch by postponing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, calling meetings of the NATO Council, reaffirming NATO solidarity, NATO exercises, and the whole paraphernalia of cold war propaganda and hot war intensification (especially in Vietnam) and thereafter in typical fashion, accused the Russians of having restarted the "politics of the cold war". Having for years deluged us with propaganda to the effect that the whole arms race revolved about the "defence of freedom", what was really remarkable was that the discovery that the invasion of Czechoslovakia constituted "a threat to the security of the West" was made after the invasion and not before, when the carrying out of their avowed policy of "defending freedom" against "communist aggression" by guaranteeing the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia (Albania ?, Yugoslavia ?, Roumania ?) could have prevented the invasion and inspired such hope and resistance into the hearts of the oppressed millions behind the iron curtain that the barbarians in the Kremlin would have been the first to choke from the vodka in their bloody maws.

In a letter to The Times (Wednesday, Oct. 9th) Bertrand Russell, John Paul Sartre, Vladimir Dedijer, and Laurent Schwartz have underlined the importance of what is here stated:

"We have reason to believe, on the basis of prima facie evidence, that the United States and the Soviet Union are enacting an understanding which involves the reciprocal support for the crimes of each in its agreed "sphere of influence". This is at the expense of the independence and self-determination of other nations, from Europe to Vietnam. The secret diplomacy of the rulers of the United States and of the Soviet Union threatens the liberty and sovereignty of men everywhere. It is essential that this identity of interests between the rulers of United States capitalism and the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union should be fully understood and opposed in the service of truth".

A Letter to the Editors of "CIRCUIT"

We have been passed a copy of Circuit 6. In many ways we appear to be on the same wavelength, especially with regard to the article "How to Smash a System", presenting the material of the Situationists. However, while this article contains a great deal of enlightening analysis and insight, and appears at times to approximate very closely to the position which we are in the process of formulating, we have been very puzzled by what appears in its context to be an absolutely basic contradiction which runs like a scarlet thread through the whole article, and which threatens to invalidate some of the most valuable sections of the material itself.

The contradiction we are referring to concerns the role of the proletariat, and the fundamental assumption that the revolution which is required to transform society must, or in fact will, be a "proletarian revolution". Thus we read:- "The proletariat is the motor of capitalist society, and thus its mortal enemy; everything is designed for its suppression (the word 'containment' would, in fact, be more accurate) ... because it is the only really menacing force" (p. 39 - all emphases are ours unless otherwise stated). "In Britain, the revolt of youth ... could produce a total critique of the new life if allied to the militancy of the British working class. Without (this alliance) ... rebellious discharge will ignore the only forces which drive and can therefore destroy modern capitalism." (pp. 40/41) and again: "For they (the bourgeoisie and its Eastern Heirs) know only one trick, the accumulation of Capital, and therefore of the proletariat ... (emphasis original). The new proletariat inherits the riches of the bourgeois world, and this gives it its historical chance. Its task is to transform and destroy these riches ..." (p.45). While the validity of this notion is being widely questioned by the French and German movements (cf. published material - Confrontation 1), it so permeates the "new left" in Britain that the necessity for grasping the nettle firmly and attempting to explain exactly what is involved has become only too apparent.

The notion that the proletariat, being the special and essential product of the processes of capital accumulation, stood in relation to the bourgeoisie as its most implacable enemy because of the conflict of their class interests, and that this very class conflict would encompass the downfall of the bourgeoisie itself, arose out of the recognition and generalisation of the basic nature of the forces brought into being as the bourgeoisie themselves were in the process of establishing themselves and their own mode of production as the decisive international historical tendency, combined with the simultaneous recognition that these very same processes were developing the productive forces to the point where the solution of the social question, the satisfaction of the most urgent and basic material needs of everybody, would become possible, and thus lift the problem of establishment of a truly human society out of the realms of Utopian into what was described as Scientific Socialism.

Unfortunately, involvement in the power of the logic of this concept, as developed in the writings of Marx and Engels, leads those who still propagate it to neglect the fact that the conditions under which it was formulated differ markedly from those obtaining in this year of grace, 1968, the vital difference being that the very process stipulated in a previous era as the precondition for the revolutionary transformation of society has in fact been achieved by capitalist society itself. What was to be achieved through the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (concentration of the means of production in order to increase the productive forces) is now an empirically verifiable fait accompli. The centralisation, socialisation, and enormous development of the productive forces exceed anything that the early socialists could in their wildest dreams have imagined. One could thus say that bourgeois society itself, including both bourgeoisie and proletariat as necessary elements have, in fact, together completed their historic mission, and their continued existence beyond their

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historic necessity stamps the limit on the process of monopoly formation itself, and paralyses and diverts the progressive development of humanity, while the State in its reification manifests itself as the main hindrance to, rather than the motor of, any further progressive development. Unfortunately the reification of what appeared to the thinkers of the past as necessity, carried into the consciousness of an era for which it no longer has any function, permits us to embrace contradictions rooted in the essential alienation of the generality from the means of cognition. Thus, with the bypassing of the proletarian stage in its development, the state has deprived the proletariat of any possibility of developing its own 'mode of production' - a further task ascribed to the period of its 'dictatorship' - and thus leaves us with the question of how any class which has neither developed its own mode of production nor exercised any other leading function is at all capable of assuming leadership. In any case, the political training which, according to Marx, the workers receive through the processes of capitalist production, is far from sufficient to provide them with even a glimmering of the general connections (let alone to undertake the powerful leap in consciousness required to overcome alienation or the reification of thought processes arising out of the fetishistic nature of commodity production) - to this has to be added the theoretical/political training of the party, a process prevented by the victory of Stalinism and the succumbing of the party mechanisms themselves to the processes of reification, transforming them into a major arm of the very state they claim to be the instrument of overthrowing.

All this is, in fact, recognised in the article itself, and where the authors allow their better insights to triumph over their own ideology, it becomes absolutely explicit. They state:- "Opposition offered to the world from within - and in its own terms - by supposedly revolutionary organisations can only be spurious. Such opposition, depending on the worst mystifications, and calling on more or less reified ideologies, helps to consolidate the social order. Trade Unions and political parties created by the working class as tools of its emancipation are now no more than the 'checks and balances' of the system." (p. 42). Recognising this so clearly, it is inconceivable that we are invited to believe, in the name of the obsolete notion of the proletarian historic mission, already accomplished without the assistance of the proletariat, that those who are excluded by their very conditions of existence from attaining the consciousness required for the "total critique of the world" predicated as necessary by the authors to bring into being, in the words of the article, "the revolutionary core of autogestion" defined as "the conscious direction by all of their own existence." (p. 44) In fact, the proposition is implicitly denied. The article states (as against the students) "there are no 'special' student (and here we must add, or 'proletarian' P.H) interests in revolution. The revolution will be made by all the victims of the encroaching repression." (p. 40), and again "the revolt against an imposed and given way of life is the first sign of total subversion the revolt of those who can no longer live in this society" (a category by no means confined to the proletariat).

If we are in fact to develop a "total critique of the world" (something which must be very different from the "proletarian critique" referred to on page 41) and to learn "to expose its hidden history" (p. 42 - emphasis original), our first recognition must be to realise that in history it is exclusively a matter of what in fact has happened, not what might have, could have, should have, or even what damn nearly did happen. Thus, the first essential, especially if "revolution must break with the past and derive all its poetry from the future" (page 42) must be to look the world in the face and to attempt an answer to the question - how do things stand?

The present social order, Capitalism, presents itself as a gigantic juggernaut trampling the entire globe underfoot capable only of destroying us all. The development of colossal national and international capital concentrations, continuously

interweaving with and driving forward the geometric development of state power, with its proliferation of controls over every aspect of our lives, in politics and economics, in work and in leisure, in waking and sleeping (in which respect the totalitarian state capitalism of the East represents no more than the end-product mirror-image of the development in the West), and commanding resources for destruction and repression from genocidal instruments of mass murder to the most subtle and sophisticated techniques of mass persuasion and control, has long ago passed the configuration whereby it was possible with any semblance of justice to conclude that its overcoming could be linked with any definite class interest. The rape of natural resources; the outright destruction of fertile arable land (euphemistically known as defoliation); reckless deforestation creating the basis for widespread erosion and seriously affecting meteorological conditions; the widespread pollution of water, air, and earth alike, not even excluding interference with the stratosphere and space itself (copper needles in the Van Allen belt), from radioactivity (including waste disposal from the "peaceful" uses of atomic energy) to oil slicks and their destruction of marine life, poisonous industrial discharges to petrol fumes and the alarming increase in the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere, with its unpredictable results; the disastrous conflict between town and country, whereby vast urban megalopolises enveloped in a haze of smog, dirt, fumes and noise strangle life through all its pores and senses, and yearly destroy ever more precious acres of arable land, while the countryside is sacrificed to the chemical mass production of seriously adulterated agricultural products devoid of all nutritional value and seriously threatening the human metabolism; the profligate use of non-selective pesticides and herbicides, bringing about the mass destruction of the invertebrate organisms on which the essential decomposition processes of the life cycle depend; the endless cycle of war and production for war, of waste and production for waste as the mode of existence of bourgeois society, all draw the whole of humanity into the circle of self destruction and bid fair to render the planet itself unfit for human occupation. From the mass of material which piles up daily, we select the following report as no more than typical:-

"The United States Defence Department is investigating a report by a seven man panel of scientists and teachers who gave a warning last week that more than 100 tanks of deadly nerve gas, stored by the Army near Denver, Colorado, are a threat to the lives of those living in the area The scientists estimated that more than 100,000 million lethal doses of gas were stored in the tanks. About 3% of this amount was enough to kill the population of the world, they said. The most serious danger was the possibility of an aircraft crash, since part of the arsenal is under the main North South traffic pattern of Denver's busy international airport. Wind could carry the gas from smashed tanks to the Denver area." (The Times, 21.8.68)

The catalogue could be virtually extended without end, and makes it clear that the responsibility for the revolutionary transformation of society falls on the shoulders of the whole of mankind, a categorical imperative for humanity itself whose diverse interests increasingly coalesce as a matter of survival. On the other hand, it remains a fact, empirically verified beyond a shadow of doubt by the work of Buckminster Fuller and many others that the technological and material resources available for the solution of all material problems and the practical realisation of the old Utopias of reason are more than sufficient to render man's inhabitation of this planet 100% successful (to use a phrase of Buckminster Fuller himself. "All that is required is that the irrational motivation of present day production (profit) be removed, and the rational basis of human need be substituted.

We do not claim originality for this recognition. Listen to old" Wagner, whose insights open many doors - (Quoted by Brian McGee - Some Aspects of Wagner - pp. 61-62)

*quoted
with
Lager*

"In the progress of civilization, so inimical to man, we can at least look forward to this happy consequence: the burdens and constraints it lays on what is natural grow to such gigantic proportions that in the end it builds up in crushed but indestructible nature the pressure necessary to fling them off with a single violent gesture. This whole accumulation of civilization will then have served only to make nature realize its own colossal strength. But the employment of this strength is revolution ... It is the job of art, specifically to reveal to this social force its own noblest import and to show it its true direction. And it is only on the shoulders of our great social movement that true art can raise itself from its present state of civilized barbarity to its rightful pre-eminence."

It is hardly surprising that under the pressure of these twin poles of social antagonism the spirit of revolt is manifest throughout all sections of society, and finds its first roots taking hold in the younger generation for whom the temporary upsurge arising out of the reconstruction following world War II and the achievements of the so-called economic miracles mean absolutely nothing. The sickening spectacle of institutions whose continued existence strangles the potential for human development everywhere apparent, arouses nothing but the deepest scorn and contempt combined with the intransigent refusal to become involved. The notion of the "drop-out" reflects this refusal and delivers to the establishment its warning note:- it may be that we cannot stop you from what you are doing, but, be it known, what you do, you do without us. However much they appear to be straining after strange gods and treading infertile cul-de-sacs from apparently sterile sub-cultures, the total picture emerges of a massive rejection of the bourgeois world and all it stands for, continuously spilling out into direct and apposite opposition as the nature of the opposition to them hardens in their consciousness. Thus the orderly demonstration conducted hand in hand with the police and ending in the petition destined for the wastepaper basket gives way to the takeover of the street and the direct assault, the appeal is replaced by the demand as of right, traditional bourgeois modes of political behaviour are replaced by confrontation, individual protest spills out into social protest. It should be of the utmost importance for a revolutionary movement, instead of merely pouring scorn from the heights of their "superior" theoretical insights and pontificating regarding revolutionary programmes, etc., to understand the nature of this positive rejection, neglecting incidentals, and, above all, to learn from it in the attempt to feed its deepest need and to provide a milieu where the actual movement as it in fact develops can find soil to grow.

The authors of the article, however, in spite of their recognition of certain positive aspects of, for instance, the revolt of the Berkeley students, cannot shed their ideological trappings which must lead them astray at certain vital points. It thus appears to be a completely circular form of reasoning which decides in advance that "the proletariat is the only really menacing force" (a true example of the "opposition offered to the world from within - and in its own terms" which the authors themselves condemn) and therefore concludes that the two most militant areas of struggle at present manifest in America, the protest against the war in Vietnam and the struggle of the Negroes are "relatively accidental aspects of the American crisis" and that these therefore "lack a genuinely subversive content" (page 39). In fact the inability of capitalism to encompass the world (no tree can grow to heaven) and permit the growth of new and independent capital formations, combined with the insatiable need to plunder the resources of the world at will provides the real international basis without which the eternal cycle of useless production

for production's sake which keeps the system alive cannot function. The need to establish absolute dominance forces America, together with her acolytes, to adopt more and more the role of international policeman and involves ever more costly escalation all over the world, leading to an ever decreasing circle of restrictionism, and rendering large sections of humanity absolutely superfluous, a process reflected in the proliferation of genocidal wars of a ruthlessness and barbarity next to which even World War II appears child's play, as manifest in Vietnam, Biafra, Guinea, Angola, Latin America, etc., etc. This process was aptly characterised by Ernst Zander as long ago as 1946 as "the compulsion to secure for moribund bourgeois society an extended existence stunted and increasingly artificial by the amputation of individual members" (Concerning Germany and World Development - Contemporary Issues - Vol. No. 1, p.3) and reflects on a global scale the re-enactment of the Greek Tragedy in which Procne slew her own offspring by Tereus, and served them to him as meat. The global extension of America's imperialist imperatives stretches her lifeline to the very limit of her endurance, and shatters the image of the "great society". The myth of affluence (material abundance based on commodity production - "you've never had it so good") can no longer hide the bankruptcy of the competitive system and bourgeois institutions generally, and this is reflected in the chronic inability of America (carried as an uneven developmental feature of American capitalism from its very inception), to assimilate the vast majority of her negro population (irrespective of their class status), thus exposing all pretensions to 'poverty programmes', etc., as mere propaganda claptrap. In the words of Robert Keller-"What is at issue in the seething ghettos and desperate suburbs of the United States is the 'American Dream', what is at issue in the sweltering jungles of South East Asia is the American Peace - the 'pax Americana'". (Robert Keller, Revolution in America. Anarchos Vol. 1, No. 1, p.11) It is therefore precisely no accident that the upsurge of protest in America converges on these very issues and thus hits at the system exactly where it hurts most. In fact, the idea that the Vietnam war and the ghetto struggles are "accidental features in the American crisis" (and can therefore be solved without basically affecting the status quo) is precisely what the American establishment would like us to believe, and is at this very moment being busily propagated by politicians in America as part of the attempt to cash in on anti-war sentiment and sympathy with the negro cause for presidential vote catching purposes. There they meet with the authors of the article on the common ground of a fetishised consciousness. If the "shop steward movement and wild-cat strikes" in England can be described as "a permanent sore for capitalism" (page 40), the negro struggle and the Vietnam war must at least attain the status of gaping gangrenous wounds which could well prove fatal.

On the other hand, events have clearly shown that the process has definite limits, and has to broaden out to embrace ever wider sections of the population in real democratic solidarity. As we wrote in our first editorial "the fact must also be faced, as events in France have so clearly shown, that the leap from the abhorred "consumer society" to a new human society needs a clear definition of practical goals and intentions, ways and means, apparently beyond the range of the spontaneous and elemental explosion of the revolutionary will, however heroic, courageous, and inspiring." This, it must be stressed, is in no way concerned with theoretical disputation regarding the nature of capitalism or any supposed revolutionary programme. To use an analogy of Ernst Zander's:- "the position with regard to theoretical disputes is essentially the same as that of a practitioner who has to perform a caesarian operation to save mother and child, and no longer discusses whether historical materialism or Christianity is the correct historical doctrine". (The Great Utopia, Contemporary Issues, Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 6). Since the means for overcoming capitalism demonstrably exist, the question is the purely practical one of how these existing forces are to be utilised and of developing the adequate and necessary means for achieving the proposed aim.

Once again, the correct conclusion is drawn in the article itself. The fight between the powers that be and the new proletariat (we believe that we have demonstrated the inadequacy of this characterisation P.H.) can only be in terms of totality. And for this reason the future revolutionary movement must be purged of any tendency to reproduce within itself the alienation produced by the commodity system, it must be the living critique of that system and the negation of it, carrying all the elements essential for its transcendence" (page 43).

We have designated this organisation the polis ("whereby self regulation, co-operation and liberation, can replace economic coercion, competition, and subjection to the conditions of mass existence, mass production, and mass consumption, as the springs of social development" Confrontation 1). The conscious exclusion of all commodity relations, including property ownership, market relations within itself, and formal institutionalisation provides the guarantee against degeneration, since the polis has thus no existence apart from its practice and can only influence events through its extension as the factual negation of commodity relations which reflects the new society in embryo. This it achieves to the extent that its democratic molecular growth embraces the required total "transcendence of society" whereby exploitation based on class formation is excluded from the onset. One may call this kind of democracy whatever one chooses, but to identify it with the so-called "tasks of the proletariat" and the democracy of the "workers' councils" is to set it on the road which leads to the gaping jaws of the Communist party, (whether in its Stalinist, Trotskyist, or Maoist version seems irrelevant).

We have already seen with regard to Vietnam and the Negro struggles how this mistaken ideology leads the authors astray. In the same paragraph they continue "there is an authentic whiff of democracy in their chaotic (?) organisation, but what they lack is a genuine subversive content" (page 39) thus ignoring, against their better insights, the fact that "the whiff of democracy" if projected consequently and uncompromisingly is in fact the very subversive content which is required. Once again the authors recognise this when they state "it is by its organisation that the revolutionary movement will stand or fall". We recommend to them participation in the polis.

THE LESSONS OF SOFIA'S FESTIVAL

PAUL SIEVEKING.

The youth fiasco (known officially as the "9th World Festival of Youth and Students for Solidarity, Peace and Friendship") ended with an extravagant firework display by our Bulgarian hosts. It was fifteen days before the Czechoslovak invasion, a manoeuvre carried out in the same atmosphere of perverted "solidarity" as the festival itself. The official East European press could be relied on to come out with glowing festival reports - "the Youth of the World Condemn with One Voice Fascism and Imperialism"; and also, for that matter, the western establishment standard comment could be predicted (especially in the Federal German press).

What in fact happened during those ten days is quite instructive. The "Youth of the World Carrying the Torch of the Future" today involves the slaying of the previous torch bearer. In answer to the blatant Bulgarian manipulation of every aspect of the festival, an anti-bureaucratic ultra-left international formed itself which the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS) christened "The Fourth Motto Movement" (The Cubans, who had refused to participate, had suggested the addition of the motto "Revolutionary Struggle" to the other three official ones). This

movement included among others the American SDS, the West German student organisations, Young Liberals and other English groups, Australian, Belgian, Canadian, Czech, Danish, Finnish, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish, Venezuelan and Yugoslav student groups, as well as numerous smaller deputations representing altogether over forty countries. Nothing like this could have happened in Helsinki in 1962 when the Eighth Festival took place.

The manipulation began before the festival, when some National Preparatory Committees, in particular the French, carefully screened the delegates. Many groups of delegates were held back at the Bulgarian border. Officially this was because of the lack of delegates' credentials, but these had not been issued and were still in Sofia. The official ENUF (Union Nationale des Etudiants de France) delegation, some Czech students who had hiked from Prague and others were excluded in this way. Any tourists who had long hair or beards and were not wearing nice dark suits were also excluded, even if they merely wanted transit to Istanbul. Beards register danger in the petty bureaucrat mind. I came to the Festival by train from the Yugoslav border, and saw the border police in action. Dimitrovgrad railway station looked like something out of "Dr. Zhivago" with evidence that many people had been on the platform for days. Once in Sofia all was friendly smiles, and the festival opened with a long march through the streets for which the whole city population turned out. The Czechs and Yugoslavs in their chaotic gay processions made a welcome change from the other East European delegations. We were then treated to mass dancing with flags 'a-la-Peking: Cecil B. de Mill times ten.

Strict security arrangements were made about the Czechs. They were housed in the Festival Village of Durvenitsa, far away from the other East European delegations, to avoid contamination, and visitors were barred from their building. We succeeded in meeting some of the students at night and found out that a lorry load of exhibition equipment, duplicating apparatus and copies of the Action Programme had been stolen by the border authorities. Some broadsheets of the Union of University Students had been brought in unnoticed. My copies were nearly snatched away by a security man as I was looking at them. One of them "What are the Aims of Czech and Slovak Students?" included the following:-

"..... we don't forget that our duty is to rank ourselves to the left of (the liberalising) process, to be consistent socialists and democrats, to establish conditions under which students of Czechoslovakia, after years of silence, become the real political power in our life we understand the fight of leftish students in the West, and we should like to unite our strength with theirs for the ideas of socialism should penetrate in these countries. We wish to support students and youth in the socialist countries of Europe in their creative efforts" - This last is an obvious reference to recent student activities in Warsaw and Belgrade.

Even though the young Czechoslovaks are not disillusioned (as we are) by the American consumer nirvana, they are not foolish enough to wish to emulate any established western institutions. At the end of July when I was in Prague it was filled with illuminated advertisements and young people wearing Carnaby Street gear, but there was a very strong political engagement and enthusiasm.

On the second day of the Festival the German SDS and other groups staged an unofficial demonstration, near the American Embassy. This was a significant event, as a head-on confrontation between the New Left and established "Socialism" on the latter's territory. We had to concede that the police dealt with this unprecedented explosive situation in a masterly fashion which outwitted even the SDS demo' veterans. The road past the Embassy itself had been thoroughly blockaded by vehicles and mounted police, so that we were confined to the roads around the block where the Embassy was situated. The various sitting groups and teach-ins were broken up by flooding them with enthusiastic heavyweight Bulgars, ostensibly in support shouting "Guevara, Si!", etc. A gun-belt was observed on one of them during a scuffle with an Iranian who was translating the proceedings into Russian for the benefit of bystanders. These

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men, who frequently appeared during teach-ins and other unofficial occasions, became known sarcastically as "Spontaneous Bulgarian Workers" (SBWs) after a witty remark by Philip Kelly. In any case, one man in ten in Sofia seemed to be informed fuzz. We were told that all the whores were moved out and country fuzz brought in.

"Imposed unanimity, controlled discussions, empty cries of friendship are now substitutes for critical analyses of the forces of Capitalism and the means and strategy of combatting them". This was part of a communique signed by many organisations deploring the manipulation of the festival and the bad treatment of the French UNEF members and the Iranian Students Union (CISNU), read out on 31st July by Karl Dietrich Wolff, SDS President.

Later in the day a speaker from the Greek Lambiakis Youth was physically attacked by SBWs when he tried to speak at a meeting "in solidarity with the people and youth of Greece". That evening a special policy meeting of the anti-authoritarians was held in the West German Delegation building under a state of siege by SBWs. After being violently refused entry a group of the British delegation including myself reached the meeting by climbing in through a cellar ventilation hole at the back of the building. Conditions such as these were naturally conducive to militant solidarity!

On several occasions we were told that entry to the so-called "Free Tribunes" on student and youth politics was by ticket only, but tickets were not available. Despite many empty seats we were not allowed in. However, Poles, Russians, etc., were let in without fuss.

K. D. Wolff complained in one "Free Forum" about manipulation of the speakers' lists, which prompted a Bulgarian delegate to accuse Wolff and the SDS of fascism. As Wolff approached the platform to answer this slander he was attacked by a group of SBWs, had his glasses broken, and was dragged from the hall. The Czechs issued a strongly-worded protest about this and other incidents, while the Komsomol refused to apologise. The "Stern" photographer, Montfort, filmed the struggle and left his camera in his car. His car was removed, and when he found it again the film had been exposed. During the festival many western journalists had the unpleasant experience of being tailed, and their belongings searched while they were out. Several were beaten up and had their cameras smashed when they started to film the confiscation of Chinese pamphlets from students as they emerged from the Chinese Embassy.

The final violation of open discussion occurred at the major teach-in on "Tactics and Strategy against Imperialism" organised by the Fourth Motto Movement. This was by far the most interesting political event of the festival. The International Preparatory Committee allowed us the use of one of the University lecture halls with facilities for simultaneous translations, and we provided our own interpreters. The atmosphere was extremely tense, with a large number of SBWs present. Many New Left ideas were put forward which were countered by Russian and Bulgarian speakers.

A praesidium of five had been elected at the beginning, and it was agreed that the teach-in could continue as long as was desired by the majority. At 1.30 a.m., however, after six hours, the Bulgar on the praesidium came down to the microphone and announced that the meeting was closed, without consulting the rest of the praesidium. When his speech was translated a vote was taken which clearly showed that we were in favour of continuing. The Bulgar, nevertheless, persisted in his demand, while SBWs spread round the room cat-calling, clapping and banging the tables. The microphones and lights were cut off. In spite of this, a British delegate furiously denounced the Bulgars for this "undemocratic" behaviour. A Yugoslav student followed suit. The Yugoslav students had voted previously to walk out of the festival; but the delegation as a whole had decided to remain, while publishing the fiercest and most damaging criticisms of the festival.

We voted to "close the teach-in under great protest". The constructive lesson which many of us gleaned from the Fourth Motto Movement was that much can be achieved by a motley of revolutionary groups without resort to the sterile and hysterical faction fights between groups shaking little red books, and so forth, which often bog down attempts at concerted action in this country. Towards the end groups of erst-while orthodox communists began to join us and appeared more than sympathetic. An East German, who at the beginning of the festival had been a firm supporter of Papa Ulbricht, left Sofia with the fire of recent conversion. What is very much in doubt is that another "World Youth Festival" will take place after such a display of repressive bureaucratic paternalism. On the very last day Wolff said to me - "There will be no more Festivals". What there might be, however, is an international New Left gathering with the Fourth Motto atmosphere of concerted effort.

MATERIAL AND DOCUMENTS

COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ACTION GROUP

We hope in the near future to develop ways and means of co-operation with this group and strongly urge those interested in what, for the want of a better term, might be called the field work of instigating social change, to write to David Grahame (Acting Co-ordinator), 58, High Lane, Manchester, 21, for copies of their various statements (which, unfortunately, lack of space prevents us from republishing) from whom we received the following letter:-

"Dear Friend,

Thanks for writing and for "Confrontation".

We are working mainly at the level of people on estates, and wish to link this up with the principle of control of factories as an essential part of this. We are group workers - catalysts - agitators or whatever. The aim is to form councils, groups, that will give people the confidence and knowhow of making the authorities irrelevant because they themselves will control and plan their own environment - schools, houses, co-ops

We are not political in the present day meaning of the word - i.e., attached to a particular creed or dogma. The level must be the level of appreciation of those that are directly involved, with us as the gadflies, prodders, etc. The real action must come from them. We can supply the ideas that will overcome the frustration, and the tools by which authority can be replaced by democracy.

We wish to work with as many groups and individuals as possible, and to link up these groups. But we are not concerned with "parliamentary democracy" that is really a monolithic organisation of the status quo, perpetuated by those who see what they have - material and a sort of clichish elitism - threatened by direct control and co-operation instead of a "keeping up with the Jones's" goad to join the set.

One of our aims is to build up "free states", and the new urbanisation lends itself to this. The vast agglomeration of people, dumped into this no man's land is the (or one of the) new revolutionary situations which is arising. The new opportunity is to take advantage of the healthy suspicion of people of the party system, and for them to make this irrelevant by their own groups and councils of administration. This is why it is vital that the rent issue is seen in full perspective, not as an end in itself. Otherwise we will simply be where

the trade union movement is battling for wage rises as an end in itself.

Some of the stuff we have written is fairly formal and sounds non-revolutionary. This is because we feel we have to take off from where people are at present - the teachers, other professionals and "ordinary" people. We work according to where the situation is. If the tempo from our movement causes them to drop out - then we carry on just the same. It is pretty easy to say that all that matters are the rights of people. But not many "pros" will discard their privileges, and many ordinary people have given up hope, lost sight of what can be achieved and must be achieved, or are simply frustrated. Nonetheless it is the latter that must be forged into a group and movement for the discontent is the motivating factor for change. We want this change to be outside the recognised rotten values of "society", and to abolish the new creed of the pariahs with the low I.Q.

And so on.

There is much to be done. Fortunately, many are feeling their way towards a new Libertarianism and are getting out of the rut of the permanent closed intellectual discussion groups talking about a Utopia - only.

If we can work together in any way we would be pleased.

Yours fraternally,

DAVID GRAHAME.

In presenting a prospectus of their proposed publication, "Community", they state:-

The aims will be -

- (1) non-party, serving all members of the community concerned with controlling their own environment;
- (2) working towards a federation or association of community and industrial groups;
- (3) a belief in the diversity of groups - but united on the principle of respect for others and the freedom of others to go different ways towards objectives;
- (4) that we do not engage in violence to achieve our aims. This does not mean that we believe that confrontation may not at some time take place;
- (5) but that we do not wish to maintain our ends by violent methods or replace one set of bureaucrats and authoritarians with another;
- (6) that community control and co-operation, not competition, in schools, industry, and the estate, is the principle aim;
- (7) there should be intercity as well as city solidarity;
- (8) there should be solidarity between factory and estate with a common fund to alleviate hardship whenever the need arises;
- (9) a belief that real social change will be achieved through greater social consciousness of the majority of people working through their groups and federation for the good of their neighbourhood and the community;
- (10) that international links should be formed so that liaison with other groups to further understanding and co-operation becomes more possible so that we may support ideas and actions internationally where considered appropriate;
- (11) that a strongly based community working democratically is the best safeguard against manipulation and brainwashing, and we and our children being used as potential cannon fodder.

* * * * *

The following leaflet was issued by Zurich students on the occasion of a pro-Biafra demonstration which took place before the fighting had come to the present stage of the desperate last stand for the Ibo heartland. We reprint it because we feel that we can learn from it how the progressive forces should behave in conflicts like this one - practically all conflicts are today like this in so far as there is no fight of the angels of light against the forces of darkness, but on both sides, some pretty malodorous vested interests hide behind fine phrases. The leaflet shows how we must refuse to succumb to choosing - and then whitewashing - one side as the "lesser evil" and yet not weakly withdraw murmuring "a plague on both your houses". There is, in all cases, a way of seeing through the pretences and establishing the real, progressive and humanitarian stand-point - to the dismay of self-seekers on both sides.

WHY DEMONSTRATE AGAINST

THE WAR IN NIGERIA ?

"Neither Gowan's nor Ojukwu's propagandists keep very strictly the truth; they shower accusations upon each other which rarely stand up to close scrutiny".

Neue Züricher Zeitung (N.Z.Z.) 4.2.68

Since the first oil was found in 1956 at Oloibri, but above all since 1960, Nigeria has risen to the position of one of the world's most important oil suppliers. Production rose from 0.9 m. tons in 1960 to 20.5 m. tons in 1966; this put Nigeria in the 13th place among world producers. Nigeria is, after Libya and Algeria, Africa's third largest oil producer. Accordingly, the N.Z.Z. reported on 12th March, 1967: "In Nigeria, too, important developments are foreshadowed."

The war in Nigeria takes place between various tribal units. But this does not make it a purely tribal war or even a religious one, as we are continually informed.

Two-thirds of the oil produced come from the fields in the eastern region. Important strikes were also made in the mid-west region; from there the oil is taken through the Trans-Niger pipeline to the eastern region where existing pipe lines carry it further to the coast. The eastern region, and particularly the Niger delta, is therefore of an economic importance hardly less than that of Katanga in the Congo.

The eastern region consists of the tribal land of the Ibos and of the land of various other, smaller tribes among which the oil-rich Niger delta deserves particular mention.

"The civil war there (in Nigeria) is, in the first instance, a fight of the tribes for power and for a share in the richness of the Federation (oil)."

Frankfurter Allgemeine, 12.2.68

BUT IS THIS CIVIL WAR INDEED PURELY

A CIVIL WAR ?

"If the origin of the conflict can be traced to purely internal political reasons, above all tribal antagonisms, yet Nigeria's enormous economic potential made it unavoidable that external interests became gradually involved. All this contributed to a hardening of the fronts which made it ever more difficult to arrive at a compromise solution."

N.Z.Z. 4.2.68

"For big stakes are involved. The mere extent of oil holdings which have been prospected so far, is gigantic. The chief geologist of Shell-B.P. stated in confidential conversation that the oil companies did not dare to admit to the Nigerian government how much oil has been found."

N.Z.Z. 28.4.68

WHERE DO THE FRONTS RUN ?

Shell-B.P. (British-Dutch) owns approx. 80% of the Nigerian production. "Until now, Great Britain has obtained from Nigeria approx. 10% of its annual requirements of 40 m. tons of oil, and lately, i.e., after the Arabian boycott, this share may have increased to 15%."

N.Z.Z. 8.7.67

Arms supplies from Britain and Holland are generally known. So is the support, politically motivated, which the USSR and Czechoslovakia give the Central government.

"It is generally admitted that the main part of French economic interests is situated in the Eastern Region. There the French oil company, SATRAP, acquired the prospecting rights for a territory of nearly 25,000 square km."

N.Z.Z. 4.2.66

"British and Americans have had no doubts during the last few weeks that Biafra was supported by France; they reported that the chief of the French mercenaries in the Eastern Region had cultivated close contacts with the Secretary General for African Affairs in De Gaulle's government."

Jeune Afrique No. 371, 1968

WHY IS BIAFRA BEING SUPPORTED ?

"British publications build up from these facts the hypothesis that certain French circles, possibly with their government's approval, not only support the Biafran cause but also have hopes that, in the case of a victory of Ojukwu's, they would have a better chance of prevailing against the British and American giants like Shell-B.P. and Mobil Oil."

N.Z.Z. 4.2.68

"General Ojukwu who, on his part, is in financial difficulties, has moreover discovered that the value of the existing oil - apart from its production - can be realised by simply allotting exploration rights and concessions."

Jeune Afrique No. 385, 1968

"... applicants for the Biafran oil are already standing at the door who, by discreetly assisting the war effort, have acquired some good will."

These connections make it difficult for the British government to follow a possible change in public opinion in Great Britain.

Biafra's defensive fight is therefore a struggle to gain time."

N.Z.Z. 28.4.68

HOW IS BIAFRA BEING SUPPORTED ? BY:-

- obscure wangling
- public opinion being influenced through:-

"The Public Relations Agency of H.M.W. Bernhardt in Geneva which makes propaganda all over Europe in favour of Biafra" (Neue Presse, 26.6.68)

the World Council of Churches and other religious institutions, Caritas and other welfare agencies.

and "the students" who DEMONSTRATE TODAY

With this, we join the international tug-of-war of the Imperialists. We finance medicines and food for the Ibo refugees and are convinced that the funds so collected are not used for buying arms, financing the adventurous flights of the American arms dealer Wharton of Lisbon or for paying the Geneva agency. For one thing, the proceeds of our collections would be too modest for these purposes, for another, the necessary funds are being raised by people who know exactly what they are after.

That is why we, too, must know what we want when we demonstrate for Biafra and mobilise public opinion in favour of Biafra:

- An immediate cease-fire in Nigeria
- Effective aid for the suffering population of the whole of Nigeria
- Humanitarian support for the Ibos - without serving foreign oil interests as catspaws.

Fortschrittliche Studentenschaft Zurich

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LETTER FROM ELDRIDGE CLEAVER

In our first issue we published an appeal on behalf of Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information, Black Panther Party. Readers will no doubt be aware that he has been released on parole, and is offering himself as a political candidate in the forthcoming election.

Eldridge Cleaver is distinguished from other influential Black Power leaders insofar as he is the first, to the best of our knowledge, to propose an alliance with radical white elements, and to recognise such an alliance as essential to the achievement of radical social change in America. These elements have formed themselves into the Peace and Freedom Party, and it is to them that the following letter is addressed.

Dear Peace and Freedom Delegate,

As you know, the Black Panther Party is organising and arming black people across this country so that we can put an end to police brutality and murder, gross unemployment, indecent housing, inadequate medical care, brainwashing and whitewashing, miseducation, and the exploitation of merchants, factory owners, loan sharks and the other aggressors in our communities. As a result of our work in California, black people all over the country are demanding that we establish a branch of the Black Panther Party in their area.

At the same time, we are very concerned with the development of a strong radical movement in the white community, because we recognise that the total liberation of black people - the power to determine our own destiny - can only be won when the colonial apparatus in the white mother country is destroyed and replaced by a truly human system. We also recognise the Demo-Republican Party as our overt enemy: we aim to pull black people out of that oppressive framework and, working with white radicals, to break the hold this one-party system has over the American people. For these reasons we have formed a working coalition with the Peace and Freedom Party in California and a number of other states. Despite certain predictable difficulties, we are proud of this coalition and we want to see that it has dissipated much of the cloud of racial hostility that hung over the heads of people in the political movements in California.

Our coalition has been successful not so much because there are good people in the Peace and Freedom Party and dedicated people in the Black Panther Party; but because, for the first time in the history of this country, a black organisation, the Black Panther Party, was in a position to initiate a principled relationship between blacks and whites. We were in complete control of our own organisation, and we had built a solid base among ordinary people in the black community who trusted us, even when we started dealing with white folks. Our analysis that black people constitute a dispersed colony within the white population of the "mother country" has enabled us to seize upon the mechanism of coalition - foreign relations between forces, within separate nations, which are moving in opposition to the same white power structure that exploits and manipulates many whites at the same time it oppresses, brutalises

and murders black people. And because we have succeeded with our coalition, black people - and many white people - throughout the country are asking us about it and looking to us for leadership in establishing this kind of working relationship in their communities.

I am seeking the Presidential nomination of the Peace and Freedom Party because I believe that it will provide us with a very important vehicle for spreading our coalition and projecting our analysis and program on a national scale; and for bringing new people, both black and white, into the coalition. I believe we have two tasks before us in the immediate period. We must pull together the disparate elements of our movements and raise the level of their political understanding, organization and work. And we must present the American people with a truly radical alternative, clearly independent of the power structure. We must give them straightforward explanations of the crises affecting them and provide solutions that strike at the root of these problems. We must not only demand that all U.S. forces withdraw immediately from Vietnam; we must go beyond that to show that U.S. aggression in Vietnam is not an isolated atrocity, but part of a policy of imperial domination and exploitation of the resources and the people of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even Western Europe and Canada. We must make clear the connection between this international imperialism and the colonial oppression of black people and other people of colour in this country. We must raise the fundamental question of whom the land and the means of production rightfully belong to; we must declare that the people have the right to enjoy the wealth created by their own labour.

I think it would be a very serious mistake for Peace and Freedom to get hung up in the illusion of winning power or accomplishing basic change this year or even in the next four years - especially through the electoral process. We should not try to compete with the Demo/Republican Party (or George Wallace's American Fascist Party) for votes. Instead we should use the electoral campaign to lay the foundation for a serious movement; and then build on that foundation after the election. We are fighting to win power for the people; this means that our movement must not only speak and act for, but actually involve, millions of ordinary people. In short, it must be broad-based. But we must broaden our base by fighting over the long haul for a programme that speaks to the real needs of the people; not by capitulating from the start to the manipulation of the power structure and the confusion it spreads among the people.

When we first approached people about supporting our effort to free Huey P. Newton, the founder and leader of the Black Panther Party, many of them told us that we should water down our demands, stick to a "Fair Trial" position; that the demand, "Free Huey!" would narrow our base of support. But, because we stuck to our guns, the cry of "Free Huey!" is raised by black people across this country (and other parts of the world) and echoed by increasing numbers of white people. We believe that the same principle will hold true for Peace and Freedom Party in choosing a Presidential candidate as its national spokesman.

I ask your support for the Presidential nomination so that we can move as fast as possible, together, to sweep aside this racist and imperialist capitalist system of exploitation and replace it with institutions that provide security, justice and a decent life for everyone. The stakes are too high and time too short for us to start out in the wrong direction or waste time chasing illusions. I hope you will consider this question very seriously and decide to work with us for true peace and freedom.

Sincerely yours,

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER,

Minister of Information.

Unfortunately, Eldridge Cleaver's hopes were soon to be dashed, and the following leaflet distributed by the Editors of the American Magazine "Despite Everything", 1937½ Russell Street, Berkeley, explains why, and pinpoints the essential weakness of Left (also in Britain), for whom the events of May, 1968, (the lessons of which are so clearly drawn by Lohenbill in his article printed on page 28) just did not happen.

NO VOTE FOR PEGGY TERRY

Berkeley,
November 4, '68

"Movement circles were surprised and disappointed at the announcement of the marriage of Jacqueline Kennedy to Mr. Aristotle Onassis. There had been considerable hope that Jerry Rubin would be the lucky bridegroom." Liberation News, NY, Oct. 18.

Like Jerry Rubin, Mrs. Terry does not aspire high enough. If she had run for vice president on the P & F ticket as a woman, she would have been worth voting for -- women are in motion. She runs instead as a "worker" and poor-white, invites us to the arid, dismal task of organizing these people, plays on our guilt that we have neglected them, and all that. The only use her womanhood is put to is to make criticism a little awkward, and soften the blow -- but it doesn't. You know, she does not have, as she pretends, what is called a "base" among the "workers" or poor whites, for politics is (at the very least) process, motion, and there is no sense in speaking of a base or following among the motionless, the politically non-existent. Her only real base is among the old radicals, who have the traditional hobby (it's a rich country, few radicals are hungry or in jail, they can still afford hobbies) of believing there must always be "workers", against all the evidence of contemporary history.

If Mrs. Terry hadn't been there, they would have invented her. Come to think of it, maybe ... -- no, more likely she invented herself, dreaming, as a girl, of Mother Bloor. Today the communists are friendlier to Peace and Freedom Party than at any time in its short life; the "People's World" approvingly mentions Mrs. Terry twice on one page without ever mentioning Presidential candidate Eldridge Cleaver. That figures: Cleaver does unexpected things and is dangerous to them, so it is often best to treat him as an un-person, but Terry is a familiar element, a living cliché, a sort of short prayer before the meal where somebody's bones get picked. For forty years and more this cliché has been pasted over well-meant, middling, and filthy politics without ever making any difference one way or another.

Vote for that and you label yourself a fool, and of course you will be treated as a fool by the radical politicals -- the ISC trots, Maoists, "radical caucus", followers of Stalin -- of Peace and Freedom Party, whose usual mutual fratricide is momentarily interrupted for bows before the common cliché. Oh yes, Terry seems harmless, and doubtless is so, personally. Yet her sponsors sense that people who could be bulshitted into thinking there is some meaning in her candidacy could be led anywhere. It's an odd fact of nature: the operations of the collective unconscious mind of the old left tell them you are a fool if you believe them, even while they think they have the strongest of faith in the same stuff themselves -- that's the way these things work.

Like Ernest Mandel, or the Pope (as Stew Albert puts it) they are full of profuse "explanations" and justifications for the "worker" stuff. They are even ready to argue and rebut, though they never listen. The Pope by his gracious dispensation has always permitted, even encouraged men to fart as much as they please as long as there are no streaks on the blankets. But all talk touches the central fact and bolus, the non-existence politically of the

American proletariat, as little as "explanations" touch an illegitimate pregnancy. After the long years of the greatest social turmoil and awakening in the country's history, and answering silence and quiescence, the matter becomes its own explanation and comment becomes nonsense. Observations about "conjunctural" circumstances (Mandel) or the Second Coming deserve not counter arguments but a kick in the tail. Moreover, America is further along the general line of world development as to its proletariat along with the other things, and holds up to France and all advanced nations the mirror of their future. In any case Eldridge Cleaver, who on other grounds has demonstrated himself the most talented political man America has produced for decades, broke from Peace and Freedom Party and from his closest former allies on this question of "the workers". He understands about the kick in the tail -- he showed contempt for the entire old political crew. They deserve it; their ideas are retrogressive, representing organized error and backwardness, that puts them below the level of people without any information or education at all.

He made one mistake -- he was too generous. He allied with the Yippies and the "cultural revolution" in preference to Terry, and that was surely an inspired, progressive, and liberating choice in the circumstances, even if all values are comparative and the cultural revolution has failings. But he earlier opined: "... by November I expect the people involved in the cultural revolution to constitute a majority of the party". It did not happen. The P & F has become demoralised, it could hardly have kept alive but for the Panthers propping it up for the sake of their candidates, but internally there hasn't been a trace of rebellion. In this manipulated outfit the rank and file which was sympathetic to Cleaver just dropped out. Much of the reason for these lines is that I, who have been slightly involved in the P & F cannot bear to let the impression remain that no one at all in the whole bunch understood how deeply justified was Cleaver's choice.

Those of us who knew the failings of the old radicals still greatly underestimated them. Perhaps it was the total lack of response and the defeat of his hope that induced Cleaver to make his position still more emphatic and resign, on Nov. 1, as P & F presidential candidate, in favour of Pigasus III, rather than run on one slate with Terry.

It's clear: P & F will be useful, at this writing, for about 24 hours more, to promote the Panther candidacies. Nobody takes its other candidacies very seriously (Savio, Jacobs, etc.). After that, with any luck, it will pass into movement history -- I mean if we have any luck. It deserves this death. Whether we should say that the choice of Terry for vice-president killed it, or that the choice was a sign of a mortal disease, doesn't matter. The party was part of something important, earlier -- through the Panther-P & F alliance the inestimably important idea of a new black-white alliance got its start. But it has proved no fit vehicle to carry the idea on.

So forget it.

P.M., "Peace and Freedom Party",
Alameda County Area 6.

SOME REMARKS ON THE EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

PAUL BRASS.

There is in the world today a strong feeling for freedom and against the oppression of "authority" of all kinds. This feeling was outraged by the military invasion of Czechoslovakia. Some of those, however, who protested were hardly entitled to the indignation they pretended to feel. This includes the United States government which had been called into Vietnam on rather doubtful authority and had sent not only tanks but also bombers which proceeded to bomb the civilian population not only of that country but for good measure also that of the neighbouring ones; the British government which supports with arms supplies the "integrity" -- so convenient for oil production and other business -- of the ex-colony Nigeria; and General de Gaulle who had just squared his colleague Massu in order to obtain tanks to be sent against his own discontented people.

The Russians could have asked these critics to imagine that Czechoslovakia was a university occupied by students -- surely then they would have understood the sending of tanks? But that was unnecessary: as usual, the seemingly hostile parties understood each other perfectly. They even said, in their different languages, the same thing: One lot that a bid for (capitalist) freedom had been thwarted, the other that socialist achievements had been saved from the threat of counter-revolution. They had one thing more in common: Both were lying.

The Economic System

If any good is to come from the Kremlin's heavy-handed "police action", then it will be the dispersal of illusions regarding the so-called "socialist" countries under which even large sections of the youth movement for freedom are still labouring. This can be seen, for instance, in the German weekly "konkret" which is close to the student movement. Its issue No. 10 of 9th September, 1968, is devoted to a number of interviews on the events in Prague. Oskar Negt sets out to show up as lame excuses the two main pretexts for the invasion, the safeguarding of the threatened socialist foundations and the re-establishment of the ideological control over the masses which the Czechoslovak Communist Party allegedly had lost to counter-revolutionaries. Yet Negt implies -- and the two poets Peter Weiss and Erich Fried who discuss the question in the same issue, speak it out -- that military intervention would have been justified, if socialism had really been threatened. This brings into the limelight -- and thereby, it is to be hoped, to the point of remedy -- an inconsistency in the anti-authoritarian movement, namely, that it was prepared to accept oppressive and undemocratic measures if they were resorted to by "socialist" countries in their quest for 'socialism'.

But where do we, in fact, learn that there is any socialism in these countries? Only from their own propaganda, aided and abetted, as usual by the propaganda of the capitalist countries. If we refuse to be swayed by the establishment labels or irrelevant considerations of state ownership of industry, but rather concentrate upon the question of whether production is for the use of man, or man for industrial production, we will not be able to find any trace of socialism. Nor should this surprise anybody, for all the countries in question are economically backward, and Marx had already demonstrated beyond doubt the futility of "socialising poverty" which could only make the state omnipotent. Real socialism needs the high productivity of fully developed capitalism just as much as this development, if it is not to smother the whole of society in the "wealth" it produces, needs the transfer to an economy run for use rather than profit.

This shows that, up to now, no socialist economy exists anywhere, in Mao's China (which disapproves of the march into Czechoslovakia) and Castro's Cuba (which tries to justify it) no more than in Russia. These backward countries were made desperate by their backwardness and the impossibility of achieving capitalist development as the more advanced countries had done - precisely for the reason that the advanced countries blocked the way. They achieved a revolutionary overthrow of their semi-feudal tyrants and may honestly have believed that they were going to build socialism. But the results everywhere prove that, in spite of the sacrifices made both voluntarily and compulsorily by their peoples, these countries could on the basis of their backward economies arrive only at a form of capitalism akin to that which the inability of making rational use of their wealth imposes upon the rich nations. Empirically, the convergence of the economic development in the alleged antipodes, U.S.A. and Russia, had already become only too apparent to the naive observer who is now being told by the mass media that the tanks which rolled into Prague refute all similarities. But the observer would be too naive if he did not realise that these semi-colonial police actions only complete the likeness.

The "Socialist" Empire

There is one difference, however. Bureaucratic state capitalism, even if it has nothing to do with socialism, is still a step forward for backward countries - Castro is preferable to Battista. In the advanced countries, on the other hand, this regime falls short not only of what the productive apparatus could make possible but is even felt as regressive and reactionary in comparison with social standards achieved earlier. This contrast bedevilled the semi-colonial empire containing fairly developed countries with which Russia was endowed in Yalta in 1944. Yalta, long forgotten, has come back into the news. Harriman defends it as harmless. De Gaulle who, at the time, to his chagrin, was not invited, attacks it as the cause of the world being split into two hostile blocks. In reality, it was a division of the world between the two super powers which, far from being hostile, went about their business in touching harmony. This is why the assertion, indignantly denied by Rusk, that Russia had previously cleared the invasion of Czechoslovakia with the U.S. Government, is absurd: The right - nay, the duty - to such actions was implicit in the Yalta agreement.

When Russia took over eastern Europe, it arranged the economies of the satellite states to suit the Russian economy, just as the colonial empires of the past used to do and as the United States are doing now with their semi-colonies in South America, Asia - and Europe. No wonder that the smaller countries soon felt themselves exploited. The "Economist" of 31st August, 1968, gives figures for Czechoslovakia under the significant title "The Czechs stay tied to the East". In the same issue, the importance to Russia of the satellite countries in general and Czechoslovakia in particular is discussed ("The Russian Economy: Czech Medicine Needed") and linked with the introduction in Russia of a market economy for which a programme is said to be going ahead "absolutely on schedule", though the "Economist" thinks it a very timid programme because the proportion of prices determined by market forces envisaged for Russia was still below the 17% reached in Czechoslovakia even under Novotny. Official Russian announcements which (without advertising the turn to market forces!) underline the importance to the Russian economy of the eastern block countries, are mentioned in an article by W. Wettstedt in the German weekly "Neue Politik" of 12th October, 1968. He quotes from the directives for the Five-Year Plan 1966-70: "For the first time in the practice of international economic relations, a whole group of countries adjusted the supply of goods to one another to such a large extent for a period of five years". The article also recalls that, during the negotiations with the "socialist brother states" in December, 1965, which preceded the launching of the five-year plan, the East German negotiator, Apel, shot himself rather than sign the agreement.

Czechoslovakia, second to East Germany in industrial importance among the satellites, had to contribute as much as any of them. Quite apart from jugglery with import and export prices, the satellites had the whole direction of their economies dislocated in a way that fitted in with the plans of the Kremlin bureaucrats, at the cost of the domestic consumer. The popular discontent with this was particularly strong in Czechoslovakia with memories of independence from 1918 - 1938 and with close connections to countries like Austria where conditions had then been comparable but now were infinitely better.

Free Market without Free Speech ?

This contrast between the more and the less advanced part of the eastern block brings into relief the contradiction that Russia, and with it the whole block, is moving more and more openly towards a market-oriented state-capitalist economy but is still governed by a bureaucratic clique which does not dare to grant that modicum of democratic rights that is essential for such an economy. With their experience of the past, the Czechoslovaks realised the connection; not only were they in the forefront of the approach to the market economy, but they were also conscious that this demanded the corollary of freedom of speech, of the press, of discussion generally.

These demands were first raised by the intelligentsia, not by the workers who are supposedly the ruling class in a "socialist" state; but they followed willingly enough, and thus the bulk of the population moved towards the democratic demands. They came up against the old leadership which, in Czechoslovakia, had hardly changed since Stalin's death. It is surprising how easily these blood-stained tyrants were got rid of: "Liberal" elements within the ruling Communist Party came to the fore under the leadership of the Slovak party official, Alexander Dubcek, and quietly collected the most influential posts in both party and state, until in April President Novotny resigned without trouble. People living in parliamentary democracies might well reflect that here under a dictatorship, the will of the people brought about a decisive change whereas they, wherever they put their cross every few years on the ballot papers, are always left with the same miserly penny-pinching where social needs are concerned combined with wild extravagance in military and industrial adventures.

The arrival in Prague of the Russian tanks overshadowed these progressive moves but could not erase them, and no amount of military hardware will turn back the wheel of history. Inevitably, this resort to military force against an unruly satellite, recalled the crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. In actual fact, the differences between the two are more remarkable, and not merely because of the gratifying fact that large-scale bloodshed could this time be avoided. Even more important is the half-hearted and unsure way in which the Kremlin acted. The military machine went like clockwork but the political apparatus failed to work at all. Having occupied the whole country without meeting resistance, the occupiers could have installed any government they wanted - if they had had a Quisling government to instal. To this day we do not know who the "sincere" "Czechoslovak" socialists" were who are supposed to have called in the Warsaw pact armies. In consequence, the identity of the counter-revolutionaries, too, remained a secret - it could not possibly have been any of the Messrs. Dubcek, Svoboda, etc., who were at once taken to the Kremlin (with handcuffs removed) for comradely negotiations!

The fact is that the liberalising tendencies in Czechoslovakia went with the current of the development towards state capitalism whereas the panic action of the Kremlin bureaucrats ran counter to it. And as time always works for those who move in the direction of economic and social developments, there is hope that things in other states of the eastern block and, above all, in Russia itself, will change in favour of the Czechoslovaks if they can hold out long enough.

Although the difficulties cannot be overestimated, the splendid way in which the people of Czechoslovakia have taken up their struggle, is highly promising. Military action came as no surprise - or only in the sense that it is a surprise when a threat that has hung over one for a long time, suddenly materialises. Armed resistance had been rejected from the start, not only because the Czechoslovaks had no hope of victory but also because they did not want to fight the Russians who they considered as fellow Slavs and as liberators in both 1918 and 1945.

Yet surrender to the Kremlin bureaucrats was even further from everybody's - literally everybody's - thoughts. The Czechs are famous for their art of passive resistance embodied in their hero, the good soldier Schwejk; they also know that the days of the Austro-Hungarian empire are over. It is to the problems of today that they apply the full force of Schwejk's realism.

The attitude of the entire population of Czechoslovakia deserves not only admiration but also serious study. This must extend to both the spontaneous popular resistance and to the organisational framework. Democratic countries which use the threat of an "emergency" mainly as a pretext for putting all democratic rights and processes out of action, can learn from the experience of occupied Czechoslovakia. There, all preparations - which must have been fairly thorough - aimed at enabling the people to act for themselves. Exhortations "from above" were mainly confined to reminders, necessary in the face of provocations, of the general consensus that violent resistance against the occupation troops had to be avoided. Otherwise, the well-prepared transmissions of radio and even television were devoted to keeping the population correctly informed. Parliament was kept in session and even a party congress could actually be held in a factory building, unknown to the invaders, against incredible odds. It looks as if popular information and representations, in "democratic" countries considered a luxury with which one must dispense as soon as things get dangerous, is just what dictatorship resorts to in an emergency.

It has been rightly admired how well the people justified the trust set in them. The entire population of Czechoslovakia formed a united front and held out in unspectacular but tough and resilient resistance. The difference between the more numerous and advanced Czechs and the economically more backward Slovak minority - which had proved a dangerous weakness under the Nazi occupation - has so far shown no signs of causing a breach. Political differences, too, were pushed into the background and even those who had misgivings about liberalisation measures, refrained from using the occupation for their political ends against their countrymen.

Limits of Freedom

But if the difference of political groupings were put aside, that does not mean that the whole people unquestionably followed its rulers; on the contrary, the bulk of the population displayed wide-awake vigilance. At every negotiation with the Kremlin, including the signing of the treaty providing for the withdrawal of occupying troops, the leading group around Dubcek were closely scrutinised lest they should sell out. The populace proved to be well aware of the vested interest of governing groups to keep popular liberties in check. There would have been a clash of interests even if no Russian tanks had come. For a market economy needs a certain measure of freedom - but only a certain measure. Moreover, Dubcek and his allies were, by origin and training, bureaucrats who firmly believed in the necessity of "discipline and order", whereas the Czechoslovak people were permeated with anti-authoritarianism.

One question which clearly showed up the difference was that of press censorship. When the Czechoslovak people, fed up with a gagged press, demanded press freedom, the "liberal" leadership agreed; but when this led to attacks on the bureaucrat-controlled Russian press, the desire of Czechoslovak journalists

to reply ran counter to the policy of restraint by which the government hoped to preserve relations with the Kremlin. Having foresworn censorship, the government could only appeal to the journalists in the national interest - and behind that appeal, the shadow of Russian tanks could already be discerned. Now the reality of these tanks has temporarily solved the censorship question in a way that fulfils the demands of government though certainly not in the way Dubcek and his friends would have wished.

How, in any case, should a completely free press function? What we are accustomed to regard as a free press in the "democracies" is an advertisement business which uses reports and comments on public affairs in order to keep the advertisements apart and gain them readers. Journalists pride themselves on the strict separation of editorial from advertisement parts - but even they cannot deny that, without advertisements, there would be no editorial part. But in eastern block countries, the advertisement business is not yet sufficiently developed to bring forth the necessary newspaper tycoons - Hearsts, Thompsons or Springers - for the running of so capital-intensive a business. Newspapers there used to be run by the state or the party and were concerned only with putting over the official point of view. Nobody cared whether the readers were bored - they had to take the paper in order to find out what they would get on their ration books. This no longer works - but how is one to run newspapers that give the information, ask the questions and supply the answers which their readers want?

If people in the "western democracies" still believe they know the answer, as they did at the end of the second world war when they dispatched their experts into Germany to build up a free press there, then one glance at the result should suffice to undeceive them. One can understand only too well that the Czechoslovaks had not the slightest desire for an invasion of such experts. What can really be called a free press has only existed for short times after upheavals like the October revolution in Russia or the liberation of Paris when the newspapers that had collaborated with the Nazis were simply "taken over" by the various resistance movements; very soon, these attempts were stifled by big business or bureaucracy.

These problems - and the press is only one example for all social institutions - are yet to be solved. The people of Czechoslovakia, if they are victorious in their non-violent struggle against the reactionary bureaucrats who send them tanks and the liberal bureaucrats who want to ration their freedom, will contribute an important share towards their solution. Those in other countries who long to help them, apart from demonstrating their abhorrence of such police actions, do best to continue energetically their own struggle against the limits set to freedom in a market economy. Once it has been understood, and proved in practice in a technologically advanced country, that true democracy can only be socialist, it will also be apparent that true socialism must be fully democratic.

POEMS FROM THE VIETNAMESE

THE ROAD TO BEN HOA

Many times I have come and gone on the road that leads to Ben Hoa.
I have known the dragon and the lizard
on the road that leads to Ben Hoa.
Knives rifles boots rice blood
tins meat fruit vegetables tea
ammunition mortar bombs and women's laughter
all come and go again on the road that leads to Ben Hoa.
Many days again they will pass to and fro
when the clear and treacherous morning has crept up on us.
Suns moons new seasons and the shoots of bamboo
disfigured children and our own dead bodies
black tides, white tides, oil and alcohol
drifting and eddying around Ben Hoa.
Until the great monsoon of our people
blows at last along the road to Ben Hoa.

Anonymous

COURTSHIP

One night I came to your village,
looked carefully over your hut,
and imagined you sleeping there.
I came by night, in the friendly night.
The monsoon was with me when I came to you.
and searched out your hut from all the others, breathless.
I make do with little, oh my life, my gazelle.
One day you may learn that I came
bearing no gifts, expecting none,
simply to gaze at your door.
Will you laugh at me, and whisper behind closed fingers;
'Oh mad love, my own mad love?'

Anonymous

(Vietcong officer, body found at Tay Ninh on the main road to Saigon,
on the night of January 11 to 12, 1966, by Capt. Roberts. Map found with it.)

DEATH OF A WASP

Hit at last the helicopter howls
screeches, moans with the buzz of a maddened wasp
raking the air with breaking wings
clawing at the wind,
grey-green insect straining to live!
The white star of war plunges desperately
and here it is: stinging death-wasp
its wings torn off by one small rifle,
belly upwards to the sun
a fresh and bloody bait in the green maw of the jungle
Oh wasp, come again, come again wasp!

Nguyen Thien

(Vietcong guerilla, body recovered after battle four kilometres from
Cholon town, May 6, 1966.)

A WHOLE LAND

I see your hands once more, Tinh, as you planted rice
under water. The quick hands vanish,
only the fine green tips break surface.
Like the rice, under water, I am sowing my years
and only the future of a whole land will return to the surface.

THE SEASONS

The sky holds a myriad burgeoning silver buds
in store for us, in this new season of
liquid fire and phosphorus.
A rain against nature will shrivel leaves and grass
again, and my peasant's eyes
see only still-born flowers
in white fields of death.
What hailstones the sky has in store for us,
oh my people, what a seedtime lies behind us.

Anonymous

(Body found in the Ben Cat district, Province of Thu Dau Mot, by
Sgt. Chaip, February 4, 1966.)

Found on Vietnamese bodies, brought to Saigon by the Americans, and filed
with the help of an 'impartial computer'. Footnotes give the name of the
American officer responsible for the find, not necessarily the kill. In
Saigon they have special files for 'poetry', side by side with the docu-
ments, letters, photographs and other small items that are found on the
bodies.

Someone stole the sheets from a drawer in Saigon; he chose poetry, for
political reasons. They were sewn inside someone else's jacket and
brought to Europe. For the record: the thief was an American, and so
was the man who carried them to Europe. In Paris, two copies were made,
one of which was sent to the States; this is the other.

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During the spectacular and splendid events of May France revived its famous, but almost forgotten, tradition of being the pioneer and pace-maker of revolution. After more than a hundred years, having turned full circle, history returns to its starting points. France, which created the classical model for the bourgeois revolution now brings forward the forms of struggle for the revolution to end all rule. The expectations of the old masters of revolution seem to come true, and, in the light of the events in France, it becomes clearer than ever that the October Revolution in Russia was the last in the chain of the great bourgeois revolutions.

In a negative sense this insight found its reflection in an interview which the American economist Galbraith gave to the German weekly "Die Zeit" (No. 17) of the 5th July. We quote:

"Do you believe, Professor, that you have perhaps contributed to the present student unrest with your book "The New Industrial State" ? "

Galbraith: I hope so! I should, of course, not have believed that this unrest would set in so quickly. In any case, my sympathy is with the students, in particular with the Paris students, and I feel compelled to defend them, although I don't believe that they will achieve much. Yet with their demonstrations they have at least created a climate which will make for speedier reforms."

"Do you consider a revolution - in contradiction to reforms within the existing system - as an admissible and suitable instrument ?"

Galbraith: I do indeed consider revolutions as suitable means to bring about changes - in any case under certain circumstances, although I prefer personally to work at the margin of our social and economic system, in order to influence the existing order ..."

..."In your much discussed book "The New Industrial State" you ask for a larger degree of State planning in economy and society. Don't you see the possibility of a conflict between planning and freedom? Don't you think that the personal leeway of freedom will become restricted with the growth of State control ?"

Galbraith: I am not particular about freedom and I don't give it so much importance. I don't believe that man can be completely free in any industrial society. This is also one of the reasons for the present discontent. In the West freedom is not less threatened than in the East. In the West the masses are manipulated by television and illustrated papers; in the East the individuals are controlled. I cannot see that there is much difference. In general I cannot see a big difference between socialism and capitalism in a modern industrial society. Whether we have, as in the West, big enterprises in so-called private possession, directed by managers, or, as in the East, big State enterprises, also directed by managers, this amounts basically to the same thing. In any case, what are now decisive are not so much the different planning methods but rather the planning aims. It is against these boring planning aims - in contrast to ideal aims - that the protest of the students and of others in East and West is directed."

"Professor, we talk here facing the Berlin wall, built by a state which has written socialism on its banners. Don't you think that this expresses an essential difference between the two systems ?"

Galbraith: "I think the wall is good, after all it has preserved peace. I don't think, however, that it is very well built. It reminds me of constructions of the organisation Todt. Moreover, it would not be fair to blame the socialist system for the wall, it is the responsibility of Soviet imperialism."

"Thus you would go and fight for socialism - in spite of the wall ?"

Galbraith: "No, not any more. Twenty years ago perhaps. Then it was still worth while; but meanwhile the two systems have adapted to each other so much, that I don't think it worth while to fight for one of the two systems."

The contradictions and confusion apparent in Professor Galbraith's replies will, we hope, become clear during the course of this study, especially with regard to his notion of freedom. The essential identity of East and West is, however, recognised, and we may note in passing that in reality the capitalist countries have not, of course, become more "socialist", but the so-called "socialist" countries have simply revealed their true character, as well as the actual content of the revolution which took place in Russia (and, for that matter Cuba and China). The social and economic changes in these countries merely created the necessary preconditions for their eventual transformation in modern capitalist states. For Galbraith, however, there is no other choice - he sees only the two sides of the same coin and, from this point of view, it would indeed be foolish to go to the barricades merely to establish a replica of the existing capitalist system.

The French students and workers certainly did not do so. In their minds there existed from the beginning an alternative to the existing system which revealed itself clearly during the course of events; and in spite of the eager attempts of the French communist party and trade union bureaucrats to present the struggle of the workers as a mere claim for more wages and shorter hours, the truth about the real content of the struggles could not be kept from the world.

Thus Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville write from Paris in "The Observer" of 7th July:-

It was a crisis outside the conventional bounds of politics or economics. The insurgent students, the striking labour unions, the dissatisfied professional men, never set out to topple the Government. That they nearly did so between 27th and 30th May was an accident, due as much to the internal disintegration of the regime as to any positive effort on their part.

They were groping for something much more intangible than power: something like the complete reorganisation of French society. These are notions difficult to put across in a language other than French. Two key terms thrown up by the revolution give a clue to what it was really about. They are contestation and structures. The first means to challenge, to cast doubt upon, to strip naked with criticism. Structures means organisational framework, chain of command, the relationship between the man who gives the orders and the man who carries them out. In May the French did not rise against General de Gaulle; they were 'contesting their structures'.

Every sort of power - and not particularly political power - was challenged and in some cases overthrown. It was a thirst for liberty at every level, an urge to throw off the cramping cant and petty tyranny of fossilised institutions. All sorts of people felt it in all walks of life.

Intellectuals were the first to rebel. Whatever the Government might have said, this was not a movement of a handful of enrages or troublemakers. The rebels were doctors, men of law, churchmen; radio and television journalists; artists, musicians, painters and writers; social scientists and statisticians; archivists, librarians and astronomers; atomic scientists and museum directors.

They were the intellectual backbone of the country, and in their thousands they rose to challenge the structure which governed their work. They rebelled, that is, against excessive centralisation, poor delegation of power, against the mandarins, satraps and grands patrons, who until May ruled over French professional life."

Similar thoughts find expression in the "Conversation" with Sartre published under the title "The New Idea of May, 1968" in the "Nouvel Observateur" of 26.6.68:-

"There is something very new in the crisis of May: the movement did not, as used to be the case in the past, come about as the result of an economic, social or serious political crisis, but was the expression of deep-rooted "libertarian" aspirations on to which material demands were grafted only afterwards."

J. P. Sartre. "The old driving force of revolution which had been dire need, is indeed followed by a new aspiration, that for liberty. There was a period when the problem was the collective appropriation of the means of production, because property and the management of enterprises were not clearly separated from each other. This was the period from the birth of capitalist family enterprises until the coming into being of stock-holding companies and monopolies. This was the period of the creation of the great socialist doctrines. These were all based on the necessity of being in possession in order to direct.

Today the middle class has undergone a transformation to the effect that it can now direct without being in possession. It is the reign of the technocracy: the property owners on the condition of receiving dividends delegate to specialists and competent managers the task of directing enterprises. At the same time the demands put forward change their character: in the foreground no longer stands the problem of property - although, of course, we shall encounter it again later, as it remains fundamental - but that of power. In the consumer society one does not in the first place demand to possess but to participate in the decisions and to control.

What I reproach all those with who have insulted the students, is that they have not recognised that they express a new demand, that of being sovereign, that means of being able to decide, not each of them on his own in his own little corner, but together, what they are going to do. In the Western countries this sovereignty exists on paper: all Americans, including the blacks, are sovereign as they have the right to vote. But it is refused in practice and therefore the demand for "power" is put forward - black power, student power, workers' power.

It is the same in many socialist countries, where the individuals remain subjected to the necessities of production. I remember a propaganda poster that could be seen everywhere in Poland in 1956 after Gomulka's return to power, which said: "Tuberculosis slows down production" It was guided by good intentions for it wanted to say "Take care of yourself". The formulation was, however, revealing. There was only talk about one thing - tuberculosis - and the production of things. The consumptive

person and the producer were non-existent. Against this dehumanisation the students and the young Polish, Czech, Yugoslav, French and German workers, who live under different systems, come out in revolt. They no longer want their existence to depend on the things they produce and on the function they fulfil, but want to decide themselves what they are going to produce, the use to be made of those things, and the role they are going to play in society.

The students have felt and formulated this first, and, in spite of everything, they have enough contact with the young workers so that they, too, are saying to themselves: "Why not us? If these people refuse the life that it cut out for them, why should we not refuse the one cut out for us?" I have the strong feeling, that this rejection of their proletarian condition by the young was the most important innovation of everything that happened in May."

Apart from the fact that Sartre still insists on calling the "Eastern" systems "socialist", a distinction also made by Galbraith, although he cannot see a qualitative difference between the two, we can fully agree with the main tenor of this statement. Let us also take note in which sense Sartre uses the term "power" - student power, black power, workers' power - are to him merely synonyms for the autonomous, sovereign control of their own affairs by these various social groups. The attainment of their sovereignty or the gaining of power by them is in reality the negation of all power and the administration of their affairs by themselves. The unique and distinguishing characteristics of the movement is its universality, the contestation of the existing powers by all layers of society. For the first time in history we encounter a situation where the unity of action of the majority of the people can bring about a transformation of society which also really benefits the majority of the people. In other words, the tearing down of all power structures and the creation of self-administering communities is an immediate practical possibility. The still prevalent one-sided and "equivocal" stress on workers' power is therefore very much out of place. In the same "Conversation" Sartre, referring to the argument of a "communist" that "only the workers can make the revolution" says: "I reply that no political minded student has ever said anything else. All never ceased repeating: "We can give the impetus, but the revolution will be made by the combined labouring classes, the workers and the peasants." Here Sartre denies his own better insights, and while this looks almost self-evident on the surface, it is nonetheless incorrect. Without the participation of the "labouring classes" a revolution is of course unthinkable - the success of this revolution is on the other hand equally unthinkable without the participation of the students, the specialists, the intelligentsia and all other layers of society. There is still much too much stress laid on the specific role of the working class in modern revolutionary movements. The exciting new element which revealed itself during the French events is precisely the complete unity of interests between the workers and all other layers of society against the oppressive apparatuses and bureaucracies in all spheres. The workers are no longer in a distinct position in relation to the other groups. Modern capitalism subjugates us all to a senseless empty routine of life and deprives us of the liberty which the existing means and wealth could give us. It is a conspiracy of a small minority against the majority of the people and not merely the oppression of one particular class by another. The French events revealed above all that the notion of "class struggle" belongs to a bygone age.

This was theoretically foreseen by Joseph Weber (alias Ernst Zander, Eric Ericson and Wilhem Lunen) who, during the first decade after the Second World War formulated many ideas similar to those put forward by the new opposition, but did unfortunately not live to see this day. We shall quote Joseph Weber on this question extensively as his remarks on the role of the working class are still relevant and until now have not been formulated in this way by

anyone else. Thus he writes in "The Great Utopia" in Contemporary Issues No. 5 :-

The development of capitalist society was, in general fully anticipated by Marxism in all important respects and - with a painful certainty - especially in its negative or destructive aspect. But the moment that this negative side predominates, and thereby brings about the alternative effect (and this would happen when the proletariat for whatever reason was unable to achieve or maintain the social revolution), it signals that Marxism is broken up on so far as it represents a political system and bases itself upon the working class as the fulcrum for development and as the force for the accomplishment of the positive solution.

There is no longer any possibility of doubt in this direction: the classical workers' movement has perished through the betrayals of the Second and Third International, and will never rise again. As a political organised class - symbolised by a party, capable of action which intervenes in the struggles of the masses and leads them purposefully with its own tasks and aims - the modern proletariat has already suffered the threatened 'penalty of destruction' or (as in America) has never achieved political organisation. The conception that the organised workers would overcome the capitalist system and would, in emancipating themselves, emancipate the whole of society is at least historically obsolete.

And again, in "The Campaign against Remilitarisation" in Contemporary Issues No. 27 :-

"Proletarian socialism with its stratification of the means of production and the erection of a new centralised state power is indeed a 'false doctrine' which has been disproven by the historical development itself. With Marx, Engels, Lenin, etc., nationalisation and the impossible dictatorship of the 'proletariat' had been at least mere passing stages of the development which should lead (this is suppressed by the swindlers and not understood by the epigones) to the direct opposite, namely, the decentralisation of the means of production (overcoming of the antagonism between town and country and formation of economic 'communes') and to the complete dissolution of any state power. The controversy between Marxism and anarchism was in the main a political-methodological controversy; in their aim both tendencies agreed (self-administering communes) and it is interesting to note that Bukharin, whom Stalinists are not allowed to mention any more, has written, even after the Bolshevik revolution, in the lifetime of Lenin, a popular brochure in which he dealt with the concordance in goal and the difference in political methodology with anarchism! Historically Marxism, as against the anarchists, was in the right; with the level of the productive forces at that time the direct jump into ruleless community-communism was a Utopia and could produce in the political sphere only sectarian and adventurism. Marx has indisputably proved that every "socialisation" of poverty could only lead into barbarism and make the state which one wanted to abolish, omnipotent. In the meantime, however, political Marxism also has been put into the wrong: The 'concentration' of capital has surpassed its economic stage and has presented the direct decentralisation of the means of production in all highly developed countries as a necessity which has pushed the political concept of Marxism, now for its part, into the historical junk-room.

What was to be achieved through the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (concentration of the means of production into the hands of the state in order to increase the productive forces) has been achieved by the capitalist development itself."

Once it is understood that the conquest of state power and the establishment of a new government under whatever progressive label is in reality nothing else but the perpetuation of bourgeois oppression in a different shape, then it becomes clear that it is entirely futile and academic to pose the question whether the students are a new revolutionary class. They are playing an important role as initiators of the revolutionary struggle and carry the intellectual ferment into society - but the success of the movement can only be achieved if all other layers of society join in the struggle. They all enter into it on an entirely equal level. The workers are not essentially different from all other groups which combined with them and all are aiming at the breaking up of the authoritarian structure and the creation of self-administering communes. Each group makes its contribution according to its specific position in society.

Marcuse happened to attend a conference in Paris at the time of the first student clashes with the police and in "Le Monde" of the 11th May he published an interview with him just before the spread of the revolutionary movement over the whole of the country. In this interview he emphasises that he sees no qualitative difference between what he calls the "socialist" and the capitalist countries. He is convinced that "it is now possible to build up a real socialist society without passing through a period of Stalinism". A genuine socialist society must in his opinion be based on solidarity and genuine co-operation, and it seems to him that Cuba is going in this direction.

By holding up Cuba as an example for a "genuine" socialist development, Marcuse aids in spreading the mistaken ideas intentionally fostered by certain ruling groups and thoughtlessly repeated in the ranks of the "left". By what criteria does he determine whether a country is "socialist" or not? Like Galbraith he will still call certain countries "socialist" although he sees no qualitative difference between them and the capitalist countries. It is doubtlessly convenient for the rulers of these countries and their counterparts in the West to maintain the false pretense of socialism; it is also understandable if Galbraith, a bourgeois economist, who comes so near the truth still "follows suit", but that Marcuse, who was built up by the bourgeois press as the great revolutionary thinker and spiritual rector of the student movement, cannot draw the simple and obvious conclusions that countries which are "qualitatively" not different from capitalist countries are themselves capitalist, shows how far ruling bourgeois ideology has succeeded in spreading its confusion. The fact that Cuban statism is less bureaucratic and authoritarian than its forerunners in the "East" does not endow it with the qualities of a "genuine socialist society". Even if we assume that the development in Cuba is pursued with the greatest moderation and humanity (a doubtful proposition which would probably not stand up to further investigation), it would merely mean that Cuba is developing towards capitalism in a more humane manner than the etatistic countries of the East.

The right evaluation of this factor is of vital importance for the revolutionary movement in the advanced countries and has no little bearing on revolutionary struggle in France.

A passage from the speech which Marcuse gave on 23rd May before students and faculty members of the University of California in San Diego (published in Liberation News Service of the 11th June) is therefore in this connection of great interest:-

"I think one thing we can safely say is that the traditional idea of the revolution and the traditional strategy of the revolution are out. They are out-dated; they are simply surpassed by the development of our society. I said before, and I'd like to repeat, because I think in this situation nothing is more seriously required than a sober mind,

that the idea that one day or one night a mass organisation or masses of whatever kind march on Washington and occupy the Pentagon and the White House and set up a government is utterly fantastic, and simply in no way corresponds to the reality of things. If there ever were such masses and this happened, within 24 hours another White House would be set up in Texas or in North Dakota and the whole thing would quickly come to an end.

So we have to forget this idea of the revolution, and that is why I believe that what is taking place in France today is so significant and may well be decisive, and that is exactly why I stress the spontaneous nature of this movement and the spontaneous way in which it spread."

How are we to understand these remarks? What does Marcuse mean when he says that the traditional idea and the traditional strategy of revolution "are out"? Has he at least seen the "light" and understood that the whole political structure of Marxism is outdated? When he says that the masses will not march on the White House or the Pentagon does he then want to indicate that the erection of any new state power should not be the aim of the revolutionary movements in the advanced countries? Or does he want to imply that there is no point to march on the White House or the Pentagon as the powers that be are much too powerful and cannot be driven out as they will simply establish themselves elsewhere? The powers that be certainly have always done so in all great revolutions, but this did not prevent their eventual final defeat.

For if no new state power is to be established, the power of the ruling minority will still have to be broken, and this may well imply marching on the seats of power, as the students nearly did in France.

To be sure, the rulers had little power left during the peak of the May events. Almost unnoticeably it had slipped out of their hands. Not that the factory occupation was a new invention as Marcuse in the same talk seems to imply. It had made its historical appearance in the Italy of the twenties and during the strikes in 1936 in France. But never before was it so widespread and never before did it occur so much in unison with all other layers of the people. The people did not have to conquer power, power was in its hands. This is the real great lesson of the French May events: The ease with which the existing power structure is undermined from within, simply by taking control of what one is doing.

The "Cahiers de Mai" of 15th June, 1968, describe this situation in the following words:-

"There is no example to be found in the entire history of such a big percentage of the active population of a country having gone on strike - 10 million strikers out of 17 million active people, according to the census. Until last month one could not believe that such a strike was possible.

Neither can any example be found to equal a situation in which the bourgeoisie has been deprived simultaneously (in such a clear and simple way) of all its means of production, communication, information and even of its warehouses which were occupied by the workers, in other words, in their hands.

During several days in May one could see how the Ministers, the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister had lost within hours their substance. They became shadows. They threatened to dissolve themselves

at any moment into the thin spring air. One could not believe one's eyes. This seemed to be, however, the only logical outcome.

What could they do? Ban two or three demonstrations, but not ten or twenty. The police was on its knees, itself began to waver. Some tanks from Germany could have been brought to this or that place, but would the trains have started to run for them? In spite of all the money spent on the army during the last years, there were not enough tanks or railwaymen.

This was the forbidden spectacle of May. This was the secret of the month of May. During several days the State was moribund, the bourgeoisie had practically lost power.

In spite of the fact that the power of the rulers had practically evaporated there were relatively few attempts by the people to create their own independent organs of administration. There were, however, some moves in this direction.

Action Committees were formed in Paris and in many other towns of France. The role which these Action Committees played during the May Revolution will still have to be investigated. At the time of writing we can only quote some examples in order to show the direction of their activities. Thus, the "Cahiers de Mai" of 15th June, 1968, write in an article entitled "From self-organisation to self-administration" :-

"As during the days of the Paris Commune the town of Nantes had organised itself without relying on the intermediary institutions of the state. In order to cope with the situation the workers and peasant unions took the destiny of the town into their hands.

This exemplary action showed to the popular masses one of the most important things, namely, that they are capable of organising themselves. An element of socialism realised itself concretely in Nantes and surpassed many of the democratic reforms demanded by the political parties of the left. On Sunday, 27th May, the Central Strike Committee which united the unions of the peasants and of the workers, installed itself in the Town Hall, and only one porter was still at the disposal of the Prefect.

All had started at the end of the second strike week (24th May) in a quarter in Nantes with a 95% worker population, in Les Batignolles, where the wives of the strikers, organised in family associations (A.S.P. and A.P.F.), decided to organise the supplies themselves. The wives of the strikers went with loudspeakers through the residential quarters and called the population together for an information meeting.

The first meeting was a very heated and militant assembly. Everybody was aware of the political character of the action envisaged. After the meeting a delegation of some hundred wives of strikers went to the nearest factory in order to contact the Strike Committee.

Then a Supplies Committee was formed This Committee entered into contact with the unions of the peasants of the nearest village: La Chapelle-sur-Erdre. A meeting of 15 organised peasants, a workers' delegation and students decided to establish permanent contact in order to organise a direct distribution network without intermediaries.

At the same time, on 26th May, at trade union level, the creation of the Central Strike Committee was envisaged, which had been demanded for a week by the UOFO of the Loire-Atlantique, which took a revolutionary position and had broken with the national Confederation of the FO.

For the trade unions this choice meant that they had to decide between a complete blockage of all production or the use of the means of production by the producers in order to go over to the introduction of the autonomous power of the people. The Central Strike Committee was composed of seven trade unions: the three workers' unions, the two peasant unions (ENSEA? CNSA) and the two student unions (FEN? UNEF). Two delegates for each union were represented.

This Central Strike Committee mistrusted the local Committees and reproached them for not having directed themselves to it in the first place.

In reality the local committees proved themselves to be much more efficient in the organisation of supplies and their action will have much deeper effects than those of the unions. Being part of the creation of a direct market for the products they become cells for the politisation of the workers' quarters.

During this time the Central Strike Committee co-ordinated the organisation of the various forms of distribution. The occupied "Chamber of Agriculture" assured the contact between the various local committees and the Central Strike Committee. The local committees were spreading in all workers' quarters. On Wednesday, 29th May, the Central Strike Committee opened six sales outlets in the schools. On 23rd May, the agricultural unions launched an appeal to the solidarity of the workers and peasants to organise the supplies in practice. Workers and student groups were formed to aid the peasants, to put the potatoes into bins, and to help them to harvest the new potatoes.

Transport was from the beginning assured with the help of little vans and the cars of the municipality.

The prices equalled the cost price, milk was reduced from 80 to 50 centimes, potatoes from 70 to 12, carrots from 80 to 50. The big merchants had to close. Every morning the trade unionists were making sure of the prices in the markets. From their microphones they launched their appeals: "Traders be honest!" Flying squads, armed with a price list as "guideline" visited the markets. Those who exceeded the guideline were asked for explanations. Posters with the following text authorising them to sell goods, were supplied to grocers shops: 'The trade unions, having to care for the supplies of the population, authorise this little shop to open its doors, provided it keeps to normal prices.'

The workers say to it that the dairies were provided with the necessary current. The necessary fuel and petrol were supplied to the peasants in the normal way, they also received passes for their vans, which were collecting fuel and petrol. The necessary industrial goods for the cattle were supplied by the strikers to the peasants.

The mutual help between peasants and workers manifested itself in practice in each action with complete awareness of its political character. The transformation of the agricultural mode of production and the proletarianisation of the peasants are in process of creating a new peasant class among the young generation in agriculture, which links its destiny closely to that of the workers.

The Central Strike Committee with the agreement of the Strike Committee in the petrol industry also took into its hands the distribution of

petrol through the supply of vouchers ... This decision in no way affected the strike in the sectors concerned. This action was limited to priority services under the control of the unions.

The care for the children of the strikers was undertaken by union teachers and guardians of holiday colonies.

Baby sitting was organised in the faculties.

For the families of strikers who were in a very bad financial situation food vouchers were distributed by the unions."

Nantes seems to be the only example where some form of self-administration was achieved, although there are reports of imaginative measures by the Action Committees in all parts of the country. Thus Michele Descolognes writes in the May Special of the "Tribune Socialiste", the organ of the PSU:-

"The first action committees which, beginning with the 5th May, were created in some districts of Paris decided that two of their main tasks were to inform the population and to encourage it to participate in the movement which was forming itself. The time of secret poster sticking and of random distribution of leaflets had passed. What was necessary from now on was confrontation, regular contact, discussion. Each person had to become aware of the fact that politics were made in the street, that everybody was able to take responsibility and should do so.

"To us it is clear that, from now on, counter-power had to be created locally. "We want to be like a fish in water, that means in the midst of the population, receivers and distributors of their reactions to the events and creators of the local events' said the members of a local A.C.

The main meeting place is more often than not at some poster hoardings at a traffic crossing.

"We had chosen a very busy street crossing, but there was no place to put posters. Two cafes, a pharmacy and a Prisunie formed each an angle. We went to the strike pickets and asked them if we could stick anything on their windows. They did not seem to like this idea too much, but in the last analysis the decision had to be made by the director, they told us. Thus we used the windows ..."

Posters composed and made by the art students are generally put on the hoardings. (By the way, the text and the composition of each poster are discussed in the general assembly of the CA in so far as the detailed political contents is concerned, their technical execution is then left to voluntary groups.)

If there are many manuscripts on the hoardings then their contents are never the same. After an analysis of the actual situation, the committee members try to explain it on the poster. Everybody does it according to his personality: by slogans, statements, questions and explanations...'

"This is the kind of newspaper organised by us. In the morning we stick big blank sheets on the hoardings on which everybody can write if and when something happens. - Everybody ?

Yes, that is an idea which comes from another action committee. They are in the habit of saying to the people: Here is a felt pencil, in

case you want to write something. This we have learned by practice. With the exception of very long explanations we write mostly directly on to the hoardings, the people see how we stop and think during the sentences, they comment and we propose to them, to write themselves.".."

Few are now in any doubt as to why the magnificent French movement finally remained confined to the "revendications" and did not succeed in breaking up the existing social structure. Viz: the execrable role played by the French Communist Party and the Communist Trade Unions (the bourgeois nature of which was summed up by the student slogan - The Communists want to take over the state, we want to smash it), whose influence was still strong enough to permit them to emerge as de Gaulle's saviours, while the entire bureaucracy of the left, whose opportunism knew no bounds, gladly joined them in grasping at the final straw of containing events within the electoral framework while the revolutionary forces were still not strong enough to tip the scales of the development.

An interview of a contributor to the German magazine "Konkret" of June, 1968, with the SDS students Schirmbeck and Rauch, who returned from France, and with Cohn-Bendit, throws light on the changing attitudes of the French people:

Rauch: The regime finds itself in such a difficult situation that the only power it can fall back on is the police, and politically it resuscitated from the scrap heap of propaganda anti-German and anti-semitic resentments. What is important, however, is that the students succeeded in revealing the real face of Gaullism. Previously it pretended to be liberal, progressive and anti-imperialistic; now it became clear for the whole population to see that this system could only maintain itself with the help of a police which was endowed with unlimited power. Because of the unequivocally hostile attitude of the population towards this group of protectors, the regime is now trying to calm the mood of the people with elections and the return to subtler forms of rule.

Schirmbeck: Meanwhile, the political attitude of the citizens has changed again. In Rouen, for instance, the citizens first supported the movement. Collections were made for the strikers, the directors made big concessions, The tables turned, however, when the police successfully reconquered one bastion after another. Another example for this is also the editor of the liberal paper 'Le Monde', who in the beginning supported the students without reservations, but who in his last editorial is warning against "Congolese conditions". Now, he lectures the students to the effect that the university reform cannot be gained by action in the street. He entirely forgets that two weeks of street battle have achieved more than 15 years of discussion.

Rauch: I believe the change in the mood of the citizens is mainly due to the fact that a political alternative is being considered as impossible in the near future. This is, however, not the fault of the workers and students but of the left parties, who immediately fell for the Gaullist trick and participated in the entirely hopeless game of parliamentary elections. Since then they have not only ceased to participate in the movement, they have even started to vilify it.

Schirmbeck: The attitude of the Communist party was a typical tight-rope dance. If it did not want to accelerate even further the rapid decline of its membership in the youth organisation, it could not

completely stand aside from the demands and actions of the students and the young workers, therefore it resorted to the tactical manoeuvre of bringing its masses on to the streets after the night of the barricades. As soon as the tension had eased it returned to its old course of the rejection of direct action and concentrated on elections for the parliamentary conquest of power by the party. An example is the fact that the communist trade unions had posters affixed in the factories, which warned against discussions with students, as they were allies of de Gaulle. That the students were the real adversaries of the regime is revealed by the fact that their organisations are now banned, probably with the agreement and to the satisfaction of the Communist Party.

Menne: The breaking up of the strike front has, however, shown that the brakes put on by the party and the trade union bureaucracy have met with success, that their influence on the mass of workers was still strong enough. It was to be expected that the actions of the students would not break the influence of the established organisations from one day to the other.

Cohn-Bendit: It was not expected that they would have so little control over the masses in the beginning and that they would be forced from below to support the strike and even to continue it after the first negotiations with the government. After this the question arose, however, as to whether they could regain control at all, and it became clear that they did succeed at exactly the right moment. This was after the speech of de Gaulle, when they had theoretically the opportunity of rejecting the bourgeois order and demanding the taking over of production by the workers. This step was, however, not strongly enough enforced by the rank and file and thus the CP had again the possibility of preferring the bourgeois order to a revolutionary order."

This last remark is certainly correct. The question is, however, how such a development can be prevented in the future. The heroic action of the French students gave the impetus to the marvellous movement of the people but without some kind of revolutionary organisation all efforts by the students will in the final analysis remain in vain, an organisation which functions as the collective brain of the movement - the process of education and discussion with the population which started in the Sorbonne must be continued - their experiences and lessons of the struggle must be preserved. The French regime has now reached some form of temporary stabilisation, but it is obvious that it will not be able to solve any of the problems raised by the May revolution.

The actual problem which arises is clearly how the rank and file can learn to "enforce" their will when the next opportunity arises, and it is now clear that this cannot merely be left to the spontaneity of the masses. If anything can be learned at all from the revolutionary movement of the masses in the past five decades it is that, in spite of the fact that they have frequently risen against the existing order, always with inspired devotion and selfless heroism, they have ultimately always been betrayed by their so-called revolutionary leaders. For this reason "leadership" is today for many students and radicals a dirty word. They cast their eyes back to the past and shudder at the sight of what pretended to be "revolutionary", although we have good reason to think that they are far from realising how great and disastrous the betrayals really were. If organisations and their ossified ideas became stumbling blocks to a progressive development then this was not due to their "elitarian" conceptions, but to the fact that they had become institutions within the establishment and had vested interests to defend, as was so clearly demonstrated by the Communist Party and the CGT during the French events. It is useful to recall in this context what Cohn-Bendit said

in his conversation with Sartre:-

"But now our aim is the overthrow of the regime. Whether this aim will be achieved does, however, not depend on us. If it really were also the aim of the Communist Party, of the CGT and of the other trade unions, then there would be no problem: the regime would fall within a fortnight because it cannot oppose anything to the strength of the workers' organisations.

This was right, the situation was classical. The only stumbling block in the way of the aspirations of the French people were the "communist" bureaucrats. Those who never tire of talking about the mass media and the new manipulative powers of the rulers, should ponder this. In the hour of their dire need the rulers stood empty-handed and had no choice but to place their hopes in the "communist" saviours.

In the same conversation, Cohn-Bendit rejected Lenin's idea of a "directing" avant-garde and stated that it would be simpler and more honest to talk about "an acting minority" which could be called an agent of permanent ferment, which pushes the action forward without intending to guide it. He then went on to explain that the Bolsheviks were not really directing the Russian revolution but were carried by the masses. We agree with Cohn-Bendit's rejection of the Leninist concept of an avant-garde as it is closely bound up with the fact that the Russian revolution was a minority revolution. For the very same reason it would also be wrong to discuss the French events in terms of the Russian revolution, for in France we encountered for the first time in history a situation where a majority revolution was a practical possibility. The problem was, in other words, not to take power but to pass over directly to the administration of society. Cohn Bendit is himself on record as having stated in the London School of Economics that the students advocated that the workers should take over production, but were not strong enough to make their influence felt. In addition at the same meeting we were informed that such a course was actively opposed by the Communists on the grounds of its - illegality. Could anything more clearly demonstrate the willing entanglement of the Communists in the preservation of the status quo - as if the legality they would not transgress was anything other than bourgeois legality, on which their existence depends.

This alone shows that the problem of leadership is very much with us. The conditions of existence in capitalism are such that the great mass of the people, to whatever layer they belong, cannot on their own achieve a real understanding of the conditions in society. Such an insight can only be gained by a free intercourse of all social groups and an open discussion about the shortcomings of society and the ways of overcoming them, as was begun with such unerring instinct during these glorious days in the Sorbonne. An acting and pushing minority is obviously not a substitute for this. What is required is an open revolutionary organisation without ideological barriers and institutionalised leadership, which continues the contact with all people who participated in the May revolution: scientists, technicians, workers, peasants, students, etc., and actually becomes the organism of the people for the transformation of society. (The prototype of the organisation we called in the first issue of our magazine - "The Polis", the nature of which we have developed further in our letter to the Editors of Circuit - Towards a Democratic Revolution See page 5.)

The "Nouvel Observateur" of 3rd July published in its "free tribune" a document of three young professors: Pierre Coulomb, Jeanne Favret and Jean-Pierre Peter under the title "The Happiness of Liberty", from which we shall quote extensively, as it has much to say that is relevant in this connection:

"The order which tries to restore the regime appears to us all as a real, ancient and continuous disorder which wants to perpetuate itself.

An essential change manifested itself. A continuously growing number of minds radically and with sudden insight grasped the fraud and deception which lie at the root of most of the powers that be. The established institutions were nothing but the result of unjust decrees. By a permanent repression, put into operation by the school, the social milieu and the connivance of those who have position and power, order and institutions are maintained. These reveal themselves today to be murderous, oppressive, empty shells. Every day our eyes get a new glimpse of the fact that the Emperor has no clothes.

In this ossified world, contrary to what the established powers say, the students did not study any more, the teachers did not teach anything and the workers worked in vain. Therefore the police had to re-open the factories; and our culture revealed itself as having had as its main support the truncheons of the police. It had been locked up in museums. In order not to let it spread it had been isolated in 'houses' of culture. We have made it enter the streets, spread in the universities, and in the factories. Culture was actually lived every day.

The disorder which seemed to reign during one month had been the fruit of life. The daily life, the work done from day to day, have shown that in this great movement of denial a new "deal" was in the making, something real was being created. In other words, the people had become sensitive to the phenomenon of politics, to the profound political dimension of each act and each situation, considerable energy, large numbers of men and quantities of intelligence had been mobilised; creative imagination made its appearance; a concrete revolution is discussed and prepared; a sensible programme, although still confused has at its centre the positive liberation of men and women who had been until then tied to their milieu, their ideas, their actions, their life. From this stems our conviction that this movement is profound and irreversible; that it is not confined to the student milieu. All signs indicate that not only other social milieus are touched by it (workers, peasants, employees, middle management and technicians) but also the old institutions, whose role should not be neglected, in particular the Church.

At the time of the Concile the Church, too, made its first experience with the contagion of liberty. Therefore one need not be surprised that priests and laymen who, thanks to the Concile, occupy positions of authority in the Church or in the eyes of Catholic opinion, immediately grasped the meaning of this movement. They totally engaged themselves in it and on their own responsibility, and for the first time in the history of the Church, they completely forgot to use this new America as a terrain for their missionary work. Even better, they have already undertaken everywhere to gain from it benefits for their institutions, by attacking openly the most repressive aspects: even the seminars as institutions and the recruiting of priests without consulting the laymen are openly put into question; every day parish meetings are organised where discussions take place as in the Sorbonne: the Church becomes its own missionary territory and the energy of the Catholics is at last devoted to the political struggle. There are more members of the clergy in key positions than one would realise, who think that the collusion of the Church with capitalist society must cease because it distorts the evangelic message and that socialism would be the first step towards the liberation and rebirth of the Church. Perhaps also its last chance.

This movement of politisation extends also to the peasant. For a long time deceived by the notables who "represented" them in Parliament and in the professional organisations, they believed it possible to solve their problems by a strict syndicalism. They know today - their demonstrations during the last days have shown it - that there exists only a political solution to their problems.

They declare that all progressive solutions which are tried within the framework of capitalism can only increase the social and regional disparities.

They have, however, not worked out a complete programme although they know that it is possible.

Thus hope is born. This hope must not die. Therefore the movement must neither be limited nor canalised. At this point the enormous responsibility of the left is revealed. It must offer the means of political expression which it still lacks if it wants to assert itself. From an imaginative approach on the left which will enable it to succeed in this depends more than the future of the left alone. This change concerns this country, a whole continent and even more.

The left would, however, commit a grave error if it misunderstood the character of the movement. The tendency towards Marxism, anarchism, and socialism are all elements of the movement. But it hits hardest against the apparatuses. The partition line which it draws before all others, even more than the one between classes, is the one between oppressors and oppressed; those who have authority and those who have to submit themselves to it; those who have the power and those who reject the power. Parents, teachers, union officials and politicians, hierarchs, mandarins, princes of all sorts and rulers are on one side; on the other side are all the rest. In this sense every political expression of the movement which on the intermediate or long term runs up against the traditional apparatuses would become the subject of a new contestation. A short-term transition which, without changing them, would make use of the old formulas and men, which gave the traditional power their stamp, would be received as a fraud and deception. It would not solve any of the problems posed. The political structures, the personnel and the organisations of the old system must give way. Nobody of those who are ready to act and settle accounts are ready to identify themselves with them.

For this reason one should not simply speak of a crisis. A definite break has occurred..... Even if the political problem can at the moment only be solved by a small "deal" it is necessary that this form should develop quickly into something else. This is the warning signal for the left to beware of itself. If it is tempted to perpetuate its own apparatuses and attitudes then it can only do harm and harm itself, if it does not change itself.

This is indeed the law of this movement that one can only enter and participate in it after one has made one's own revolution....."

All these attributes of the movement, so lucidly described by the professors, its universal, anti-ideological, anti-institutional and almost classless character, are the very elements indicated above as the necessary preconditions of a revolutionary organisation, which is really the movement in its germ form. The May revolution as the first real majority movement against capitalist minority rule has not accidentally brought forward the organisational forms of the liberatory struggle of the whole people against the oppressing minority.

It has shown in practice the obsolescence of all minority and class parties and demonstrated that the revolutionary organisation and the movement are basically one. This is the really great lesson to be learned from the May revolution.

POST SCRIPT - ON SURVIVAL (See page 7)

BOTANIST SAYS MAN MAY VANISH SOON

Los Angeles

Man, along with the blue whale, is high on the list of animals that biologists fear are doomed to almost immediate extinction, a botanist said here yesterday.

He said the extinction of man as one of these "endangered species" is not quite so imminent as that of the blue whale, which may disappear entirely this year, but that man may have as few as 50 more years on earth.

The danger isn't so much that man will blow himself up with the H-bomb, according to Richard Felger, as it is that he will poison himself out of existence with chemical wastes and residues.

COMMITTEE

Dr. Felger is senior curator of botany at Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. He recently was appointed to the Population Crisis Committee, a group of scientists working to expand government interest in improving the environment.

"Life will probably persist on earth for millions of years" Felger said in an interview.

"But as things are now, it is not likely that man will be among the surviving species. If he continues poisoning the environment at the present rate he won't have more than half a century left."

He said man is his own most effective and dangerous natural enemy, more of a threat to the species than any bacterium or insect pest could possibly be.

DESTRUCTION

"Man is destroying his life environment by making water unfit to drink, air unfit to breathe, and by clearing away plants and plastering the earth with concrete and asphalt" Dr. Felger said.

One of the most serious hazards is that created by long-lasting chemicals and insecticides. Dr. Felger said agricultural chemicals are pouring into the oceans through drainage channels creeks and rivers.

Studies have shown that the phytoplankton of the oceans, the tiny plants that are a major source of the oxygen in the earth's atmosphere, are extremely sensitive to some of these poisonous chemicals.

CONTROL

Felger said the natural means of population control has always been war and famine, and these will be exerted again unless man takes himself in hand and accomplishes intelligently what nature will otherwise accomplish catastrophically.

Unless population growth is controlled and man's wastefulness curbed, Felger foresees the decades beginning in the 1970s as dominated by starving masses of people and the repressive governments that will try vainly to keep events under control.

San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, 24th October, 1968.