





# U.W.C. GENERAL STRIKE

The general strike which completely paralysed Northern Ireland from the 14th to the 28th May was one of the most complete and total strikes the British Isles has ever seen. What happened showed the power of a mass workers' movement to bring the authorities to their knees. The inability of the government to deal with the threat only emphasises the increasing vulnerability of the system to such challenges: as the technology and complexity of production develop, military intervention appears ham-handed and becomes increasingly ineffective.

In spite of all its limitations and the reactionary character of some of its components, the struggle in Ulster also emphasised the creative potential of the working class, its ability to ensure the distribution of essential food, the organization of mass pickets, the ability to control the movement and the allocation of fuel and other supplies to essential users. Significantly enough, joint supply arrangements for both Protestant and Catholic areas began to emerge.

There can be little doubt that the strike, after a patchy start, gained widespread support from the Protestant working class. Intimidation there was: most notoriously at Larne, where the UDA left no one with much choice in the matter. But, as Brendon Clifford of the Workers' Association pointed out, 'Wouldn't it be remarkable if some groups of white collar workers were defying a campaign of intimidation that was paralysing tens of thousands of hardened engineering workers?' (Letter to The Guardian 28th May, 1974.)

Support for the strike came from housewives, old-age pensioners, whole working class families, in fact - from the whole spectrum of the Protestant working class. The 'return to work' on 26th May organized by local trade union officials, some of them CP members, and led by Len Murray, General Secretary of the TUC, was a complete flop. But perhaps it gave a useful foretaste of the role of the TUC in the event of a major class confrontation in Britain.

A similar mobilization for different political objectives, or even for similar objectives but by different participants, would probably have received the enthusiastic support of the traditional left - with marches demonstrations, resolutions and petitions. But in this case we got the SDLP and some other 'lefties' calling on the Labour government to act sternly and use troops on a wide scale against the strikers.

On the 27th May, at the behest of the 'socialist' SDLP, troops were moved into 17 petrol stations 'to ensure petrol supplies'. The response was a complete ban by the UWC on all work on electricity generation, gas, water supplies and sewerage disposal. The next day the Northern Ireland Executive collapsed. The strike had been 'successful'.

Now that workers in the north have discovered their own power they will also discover that their real conditions remain completely unchanged - 'victory' notwithstanding. We hope that they will begin to act increasingly in their own interests rather than for 'loyalism'.

The general strike in Ulster will provide us with no blueprints for taking power or redirecting society towards socialist objectives. It got nowhere near the point of running society which would include actually producing the necessities of life. It only scratched the surface of distributing available supplies according to the immediate needs of the working class community.

How different would the situation be in Ireland today if there had been a socialist movement committed to working class unity, rather than the slavish and uncritical support given to Catholic nationalism by the traditional left which over the years has actually contributed to worsening sectarian divisions?

There is clear evidence that the working class in the north of Ireland, whether Catholic or Protestant, is beginning to act as a force independent of either the British or Irish ruling class. It is beginning to show its hostility to the nationalist politicians whom for so long they have been content to follow. Even Glen Barr, a leader of the UWC, showed some awareness of this when he gave an interview to the Irish Radio on 23rd June. (See Sunday Times 30th June, 1974.) He said 'The Protestant community have shown their willingness to cast off the old style politicians who waved the Union Jack every five years. We would hope that the Roman Catholic community would now do the same and reject the Tricolour waving politicians from their side so that we can get down to proper clean politics - class politics.'

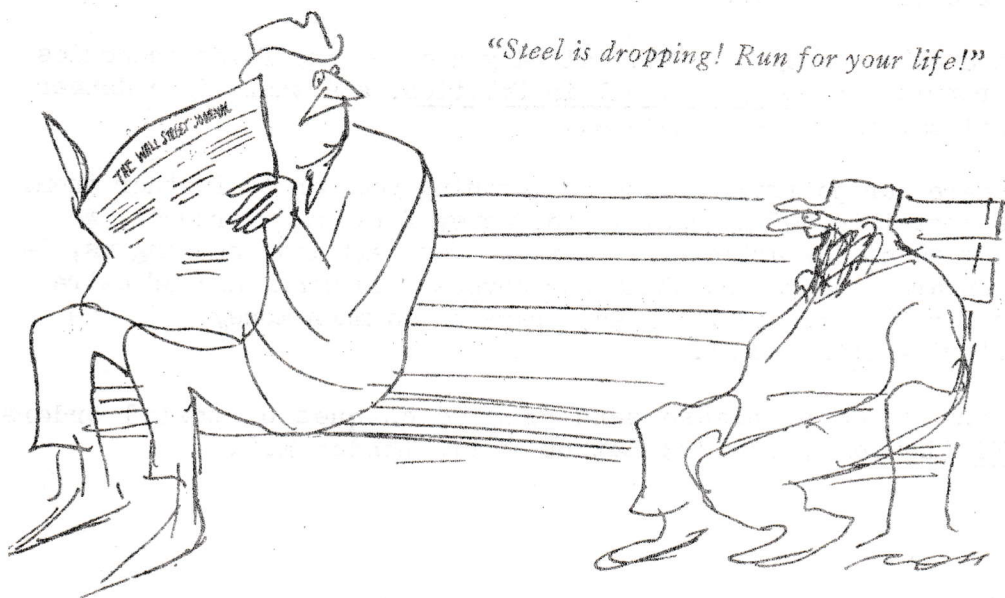
The final outcome of the struggle is still anyone's guess. But the importance of the strike cannot be ignored by any of the analysts, soothsayers, manipulators and would-be political leaders of right or left.

All those who have for so long been shouting 'Victory to the IRA' now find themselves in a difficult position. Their mindless generalizations about British Imperialism in Ulster and support for Irish Catholic nationalism have placed them where they belong: among all the other self-appointed leaderships, miles away from where the new movement is emerging, miles away from anywhere workers struggle for their own interests refusing to heed the 'saviours from on high'!



The positive aspects of the strike should not be exaggerated. The authoritarian and para-military UDA with its strong right wing connections was still a dominant force. The Craigs, Wests and Paisleys were reluctantly allowed to climb aboard the bandwagon. But the experience of active involvement in organizing the practicalities of daily life, and the demonstration of working class strength and solidarity - however limited - may not be so easily erased from people's memories. This does not mean that we should 'support' the UWC or blind ourselves to its character. We should not kid ourselves that sectarianism is not still a dominating factor in the working class on both sides of the religious divide. But it is also too easy (and is far more common) to overstress the reactionary character of the May mobilization. Certainly some reactionary features emerged, but as usual, reality is rather more complicated than slogans.

For us, workers' self-management is the necessary institutional form for a free society, but it must have a socialist content. It is therefore important to make a clear distinction between self-activity, even on a mass scale, and socialist self-management: i.e. self-management geared to the objective of creating a non-alienated, non-exploitative, non-authoritarian society in which wage labour has been abolished.





# 'THE PIMP BETWEEN MAN AND HIS NEED'

Fortunately the society which we - or anyone else - want cannot be bought, but without money it is difficult to make our ideas known to more than a very few. Solidarity believes its ideas have played at least some part in the growing anti-authoritarian climate in society and in the development of direct-action politics over the last decade or so. With society in its present state of flux and the accompanying acceleration in the break-down of traditional values, ideologies, patterns of motivation etc., we think it is particularly important to expand our work.

Over the last few months we have produced four new pamphlets: Vietnam: Whose Victory?, Redefining Revolution, The Lordstown Struggle, and The Lump: an heretical analysis (this last the first production of the National group). As well as this journal, we now produce the Motor Bulletin on a - more or less - regular basis.

Several important pamphlets have sold out and had to be reprinted. Amongst these is Cardan's Modern Capitalism and Revolution which should be out in the near future in an offset-litho edition with a major new introduction. It alone will cost us nearly £1000 and will just about clean us out. In various stages of preparation are three further editions of the Motor Bulletin and pamphlets on Greece, Poland and a new and extended edition of our China pamphlet.

We do need extra money. We have already had to make false economies with a small reprint of The Irrational in Politics, and there is a danger that other publications will be delayed.

If you share our politics please do anything you can to further them. Although this appeal is, of necessity, for money first and foremost, we would also be glad of any articles or letters you felt like sending us, particularly on areas where you think our coverage is weak, and of extra subscriptions for friends etc.. Please spare us as much money and time as you can afford - it's urgent.

If you want to help, please send crossed cheques or postal orders to SOLIDARITY (London), c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E.6.



# MONKEY BUSINESS

We don't publish this article simply out of sectarian pleasure at the difficulties of the Workers' Revolutionary Party. Industrial struggle is too important for that. What happened in the ACTT was paralleled by similar events at the British Leyland plant at Cowley (which we hope to document in a future issue of our Motor Bulletin). The collapse of the industrial policy of the WRP raises serious questions - far wider than the particular incidents involved - about the whole mode of the industrial work of the traditional left, from the Communist party to the trots and maoists, which has done untold damage to job organisation.

We hope in this article to initiate an examination of the role of the traditional left in industry and we would welcome further contributions along these lines.

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The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, with 18,500 members is Britain's largest and most vociferous film union. It is also the union in which, until recently, the Workers' Revolutionary Party had had their strongest foothold, having altogether 6 to 7 members and fellow-travellers on the 26 member Executive Committee, two of the WRP members being vice-presidents of the union. Until it was ousted the WRP totally dominated the Freelance Shop Committee.

The British Film Industry, particularly since the end of the Second World War, has been in a continual state of crisis. There was a short respite in the mid to late '60's when virtually every major American company were producing films in British studios such as Elstree, Pinewood and Shepperton and there was, to a large extent, full employment for members of the Film Production Branch. However, with some heavy losses the American honeymoon was soon over. Today the attraction for investors in the British Film Industry is not in producing films but in the property value of studios like Shepperton with its 40 valuable acres, and the high street cinemas squatting on prime sites up and down the country. Inevitably ACTT members began to find the available work diminishing.

It was against this background that the WRP gained a foothold - largely through the apathy of the rank and file, rather than through any con-  
-niving. Once in, they rode roughshod over the rank and file, pursuing what was seen - once the rank and file woke up - as dogmatic, inflexible, partisan policies which were at variance - as they saw it - with their needs and interests.



One of the major planks of WRP policy was defence of the British Film Studios, and resolutions along such lines were passed at Annual Conference.

Things came to a head in the latter part of last year. Last October General Council were at the receiving end of a demonstration of one hundred ACTT members at the Unions' Soho office. They were protesting against the Executive Committee's decision that a Euston Films production - a four-waller ie. a location made film - at Colet House and one on a site at the Salvation Army citadel should be blacked and that the productions should be made instead at EMI's Elstree studio. The reason given for the blacking was that the sites were unhygenic and unsafe. A move to exclude three representatives of the Euston Films shop from participating in the discussion was defeated when the majority on the General Council allowed them to put their case. The move to bar them from the discussion - which affected them directly - came from the WRP members of the General Council.

Feeling was running high when a Special Meeting of the Film Production Branch was held at Central Hall, Westminster a fortnight later, November 12, 1973. Over one thousand - yes, one thousand! - film production members turned up to voice their feelings. The main business of the meeting was to discuss a series of resolutions sharply critical of ACTT internal policy and specifically those policies with regard to the studio and features production crisis. To a major extent these were the policies pursued by the WRP.

To quote from the November 1973 issue of the union journal, Film and Television Technician: "The main target of the majority of members at the meeting was the Freelance Shop Committee and Film Production representatives on the Executive Committee who were attacked by many speakers. Speakers who supported the record and activity of the Freelance Shop Committee were howled down and were frequently prevented by barracking and abuse from defending current policies."

Motions were overwhelmingly passed expressing total loss of confidence in the majority of the Film Production Branch representatives on the Executive of the union. Another resolution passed called on the Film Production Branch to convene a special meeting of the Freelance shop to discuss the status of its Chairwoman, Yvonne Richards, a WRP member, and the Freelance Committee, dominated by WRP members such as Roy Battersby and Irving Teitelbaum.

This meeting followed a month later, on December 13, when just over 800 members turned up. Fighting to the last to retain their positions on the Freelance Shop Committee the WRP membership caused what has been described as a 'near riot', when the Chairwoman, Yvonne Richards, attempted to refuse to put the motion that was the object of the meeting, to the meeting. It read: "This Freelance Shop meeting calls upon the officers and committee to resign forthwith and to hold elections for new officers and a new committee at this same meeting."



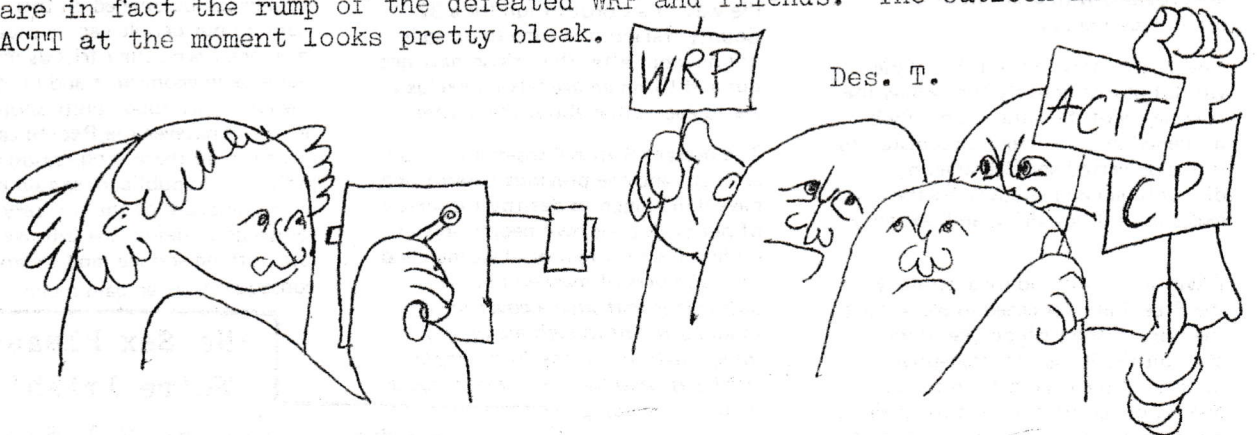
On her refusal to allow the constitutional motion an attempt at a vote of no confidence in the Chair was proposed and seconded, but again she refused to allow it. At this point a free for all developed, fists flying, with various struggles to gain control of the microphones, which had all been commandeered by WRP members. Eventually the tiny WRP faction - which estimates put at no more than 20, including the WRP union officers - were physically ousted and the motion put to the floor. It goes without saying that it was overwhelmingly carried, and a new committee was voted in with the scriptwriter Robert Bolt as chairman and producer Stuart Freeman as vice-chairman.

This defeat for the WRP was reiterated at the recent AGM of the Freelance Shop, 17 June, 1974 when their candidates for office were overwhelmingly defeated. But the final, inevitable crunch had come for them earlier at the Union's AGM in April of this year when, except for one fellow-traveller, they were voted off the Executive Committee.

I've purposely avoided discussing the merits or demerits of the policies pursued by the WRP in regard to the film production and studio crisis. The important issue is not what the policies were, but how they were pursued. The total contempt shown by the WRP for the rank and file must have surprised even the Communist Party members, who are the major political force in the Union. When it came to the crunch the WRP could not even summon a minimum of rank and file support.

However, the demise of the WRP, ousted for the time being from the Executive of the Union is no real cause for gloating. They have left in their wake, and are by their methods responsible for a Freelance Shop Committee now dominated by a ragbag of individuals who are to a greater extent management orientated (ie. producers), and the overall strength of the CP has, if anything, increased.

Whilst there now seems to be a healthy suspicion by the rank and file of any union policy emanating from Soho Square, there is, at the same time little evidence of any genuine rank and file activity in the wake of the ructions in the Union. In the Freelance shop there has arisen a loose alliance of people calling themselves socialists, opposing the notion that politics and bread and butter issues can be separated. These socialists are in fact the rump of the defeated WRP and friends. The outlook in the ACTT at the moment looks pretty bleak.





# REPUBLICAN NEWS

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## CONTRACEPTIVE BILL

(THIS ARTICLE is written by a member of Sinn Fein in Dublin. While these are his own personal views and do not commit the Republican Movement, all good Irishmen and women should give them serious thought. - Editor).



Republicans should throw in their weight where they can, to see that the Robinson Contraception Bill does not become law. They should do so for two reasons.

On its merits the Bill should be rejected. As well as that, there are special reasons why Republicans more than others should fight it.

The thesis of Wolfe Tone that the British connection is the principal source of all our ills is as true today as it was two centuries ago and it is as true of our morality as it is of our economy. It is only when the British connection has been finally smashed that we can hope to foster and safeguard our moral and cultural heritage and develop our economy effectively. There will be little point in Irish freedom and unity if we have proved ourselves more British than the British before we win it.

It is essential to the Free State parties if they and their British masters are to defeat the Provisionals that people in the 26 counties, especially the young, are provided with a surfeit of drink, drugs, fags and sex.

The politicians won't put it in these words but instinctively they know the conscience of the nation can only be deadened in our present circumstances if it is perverted and degraded by a diet of bread and circuses, by the excesses of drugs, drink and sexuality.

It will suit British political strategy if the Free Staters succeed in weakening the fibre of the Irish people. It will also suit the British contraceptive industry if they can help to create and supply an Irish market for their easily produced and highly profitable products.

At present, Leinster House, R.T.E., and many commercial Irish newspapers are virtually run by British interests and are completely subservient. This is the ideal time, in their view, to remove all restraints upon high pressure techniques in advertising, advocacy and sales of contraceptives.

The Irish people never asked for contraceptives and have never been consulted about them in an election or referendum. The British contraceptive lobby in Dublin is convinced that given a good send off now by Leinster House it won't matter in a few years whether the people are consulted or not.

It should be noted by all Republicans that in personnel, financing and G.H.Q. the British contraceptive lobby are most intimately related with the Irish Humanist Ass., The Language Freedom Movement, "Women's Choice," the teenager's "Nikki," "Sunday World" and indeed with everything "liberal" in Dublin.

If there is anything to be discussed in the way of a Constitution for a 32 County Ireland, the time to do so is not now but after the British have got out and Irishmen are talking exclusively to each other about the matter.

The present British Conservative Government and the previous Labour one, have done much to destroy the virtue of purity in their own people and to undermine the dignity of women and the happiness of married life. *It is outrageous that such a government should attempt to legislate on anything whatever for the Irish people and be assisted by the Leinster House parties in so doing.*

Apart from helping to safeguard today the values of the Irish people, Sinn Fein has something to gain politically from opposing the Bill either as a Movement or through individual members. We in Sinn Fein know it is the only Nationalist party or movement in Ireland today which stands sincerely for those things that are still close to the hearts of the majority of Irishmen (no matter who they may vote for), the unity and freedom of our country and its development, culturally and spiritually, as a place for Irishmen to live in.

We know that the British-oriented parties control the media and that most Irishmen vote for their enemies. The Robinson Bill is an unmistakable issue. The Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour, Official S.F., and S.D.L.P. parties have all publicly and strongly supported the lobby to legalise the advertising, advocacy and sale of ever sort of contraceptive. Only the Provisionals have not; only the Provisionals stand where the Irish people do.

The eyes of many Irishmen and Irishwomen can be opened on this issue; many of our people can be shocked into seeing who their friends might really be in economics and politics as a whole. This opportunity should not be lost. Whatever the Republican Movement can do there is no reason why individual Republicans should not be in the vanguard of the still very small campaign to defeat the Bill. We can lose nothing and we (and Ireland consequently) can gain much.

'No Sex Please,  
We're Irish'

is brought to you by Solidarity.



# review

# CONNOLLISM

James Connolly : Selected Writings, ed. P.Berresford Ellis. Pelican Books, 1973.  
(Price 50p)

"The great only appear great because we are on our knees: let us rise!" This statement, attributed to Connolly, (although Camille Desmoulins apparently said it first) used to appear among the banners in Civil Rights marches in Ireland. It is perhaps ironic that Connolly himself should be so much the "great man" among Irish political thinkers, something like Marx among leftists as a whole. At least this new selection of his writings provides, in the absence of a complete Collected Works, a useful guide to the sort of things he actually said.

## RELIGION

The longest single item in the book is "Labour, Nationality and Religion", pp.57-117, written in 1910 to refute a clerical attack on socialism. Here Connolly is strongly critical of priests' attitudes and the record of the Catholic Church as an institution, and applies materialist analytical methods to religious history. His personal position on religion, however, remained at best ambivalent (1). He maintained that "Socialism is neither Protestant nor Catholic, Christian nor Freethinker, Buddhist, Mahometan or Jew; it is only HUMAN" (p.117), and that personal religious beliefs were not relevant to politics.

This is to ignore the function of religious ideology, as a reactionary social force and a factor in the individual's repression and authoritarian conditioning. Anyone who denies, either from a mechanistic materialist outlook or from concentration on "politics" as such, that such psychological influences are highly significant, runs the risk of perpetuating all sorts of ruling class assumptions. Connolly was not alone in falling into this trap. The results are apparent throughout his writings (2).

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(1) See Connolly in America by M. O'Riordan, Irish Communist Organisation, 1971; and Mind of an Activist by O.D. Edwards, Gill & Macmillan, 1971.

(2) "As a rule the socialist men and women are ... immensely cleaner in speech and thought ... devoted husbands and loyal wives ... industrious workers..." from Workshop Talks, quoted in Voice of the People, vol.2, no.6.



## WOMEN

A good illustration of how received ideas can operate simultaneously with revolutionary intentions is provided by Connolly's attitude to the emancipation of women. In the section on "Women's Rights" the editor presents us with (pp.189-195) an excerpt from "The Reconquest of Ireland", 1915. In it Connolly follows Engels' explanation of the "Origin of the Family", describes the specific economic oppression of women in society, and in Ireland in particular -not without perception and sympathy-, and expresses support for the women's movement. "But", he concludes, "whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working class alone can raze it to the ground", which assumes a separation between women and the working class, and accords only marginal status to women's struggles. A similar attitude was apparent in the controversy with De Leon over August Bebel's book Woman: Connolly was not under the illusion that economic revolution would bring the solution to all women's problems, but neither did he see sexual and psychological questions as having a direct bearing on the revolution itself. (3)

It would be a mistake to think that nothing more could be expected, even from conscious socialists, in the first decade of this century. Already the long tradition of sexual repression was meeting fundamental challenges, not only in theoretical works like Bebel's but in the life styles of women and men (4). Even in Ireland we have an example of a more genuinely radical approach in the life and writings of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington (5). Connolly, however, continued to make assumptions about "morality", "duty" and the desirability of monogamy which have quite counter-liberatory implications (6).

## SYNDICALISM

What Connolly did regard as vital to the struggle for socialism was industrial organisation. He ascribed the weakness of the existing trades unions, as weapons of defence and as means of raising class consciousness, to their organisation on a craft basis, and became a strong advocate of industrial unionism. (pp.147-185) For this reason he is often described as a syndicalist, especially by syndicalists. But his ideas were in many respects different from those of anarcho-syndicalists.

For example, although he saw the conquest of economic power, through industrial unionism, as primary (p.163), even considering that "the Socialism which is not an outgrowth and expression of that economic struggle is not worth a moment's serious consideration" (p.165), he also considered it "ABSOLUTELY

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(3) Connolly in America, pp.16-17. For Solidarity's views on "The Irrational in Politics" see our pamphlet of that title, price 15 p.

(4) see Hidden from History by Sheila Rowbotham, Pluto Press, 1973.

(5) 1916: the Easter Rising, ed. O.D.Edwards & F.Pyle, McGibbon & Kee, 1968, includes "Francis Sheehy-Skeffington" by O.Sheehy-Skeffington, and "An Open Letter to Thomas McDonagh" by Francis Sheehy-Skeffington who expresses the opinion that the exclusion of women from the Volunteers was deeply significant

(6) Connolly in America, pp.16-17



INDISPENSIBLE FOR THE EFFICIENT TRAINING OF THE WORKING CLASS ALONG CORRECT LINES THAT ACTION AT THE BALLOT BOX SHOULD ACCOMPANY ACTION IN THE WORKSHOP" (p. 159, his emphasis). Later, of course, he chose to make the bid for political power by means of insurrection instead, considering that revolutionary action was appropriate to extraordinary times.

In considering the future society, Connolly envisaged "social democracy" proceeding from the bottom upwards, but "administered by a committee of experts elected from the industries and professions of the land" (p.151). This was intended to avoid bureaucracy, and extend the freedom of the individual, blending "the fullest democratic control with the most absolute expert supervision" (p. 152). In fact, as subsequent history has shown, reserving a special role for "experts" invites a new bureaucracy to create and perpetuate itself.

The same idea that certain people, whether called leadership, vanguard or experts, have a special function is present in Connolly's strategy for struggle. He endorsed (p.167) the statement of the Communist Manifesto that "the Socialists are not apart from the Labour movement, are not a sect, but simply that part of the working class which pushes all others, which most clearly understands the line of march". In the industrial organisation he eventually suggested a form of Cabinet, with "the power to call out members of any union when such action is desirable, and explain the reasons for it afterwards". (p.184)

Admittedly this is not the whole picture. Connolly also wrote in favour of the retention of officials "only as long as they can show results in the amelioration of the conditions of their members and the development of their union as a weapon of class warfare" (p.180). He contended that "the fighting spirit of comradeship in the rank and file was more important than the creation of the most theoretically perfect organisation - which could indeed be the greatest possible danger to the revolutionary movement if tending to curb this fighting spirit" (p.176). He was aware that the "Greater Unionism" might serve to load the working class with greater fetters if infused with the spirit of the old type of officialism (p.180).

All the same there are enough signs that his ideas on organisation left the way open for the domination of a minority group of leaders (7). And the record of a "great Industrial Union" such as the American U.A.W. (8) shows that the creation of "One Big Union" only gives such a group more scope for exercising bureaucratic power.

## NATIONALISM

Perhaps the aspect of Connolly's thought most relevant to the present time is his concern with Irish nationalism. He was concerned with it despite socialist internationalism, despite the effort to continue emphasising the class struggle, despite the ability to see through the aims of straight Nationalists.

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(7) e.g. Labour and Easter Week, ed. Desmond Ryan, 1949, p.114: leaders have a right to confidence, "let them know that you will obey them...let them know what the rank and file are thinking and saying." They are to be challenged but not rashly.

(8) see Solidarity Motor Bulletin No.2, "U.A.W. Scab Union". (price 5p)



It has been observed that the sense of Connolly's writings is the sense of revolutionary movements in the underdeveloped world today (9); certainly they have a lot in common with the ideology of "national liberation" as supported by so much of the left. We can find most of it here: emphasis on the "main" - imperialist - enemy and his foreign-ness, on the specific oppression of the natives and their assumed common interest in liberation, on the importance of this conflict along with the claim to be engaged in class politics.

Even the well known statement "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain" continues: "England would still rule you..." (p. 124). The text in which this is contained, from "Shan Van Vocht", January 1897, is all the same a more convincing attempt to get to grips with socialism and nationalism than many of Connolly's later efforts. It is a long way from the emotive nationalist rhetoric with which he celebrated his own hoisting of the green flag over Liberty Hall in April 1916 (pp. 143-5), but the progression is not accidental. The supposedly saving clause about the cause of labour being the cause of Ireland and vice versa is still present.

The point is not whether Connolly continued to believe in class struggle and had some sort of vision of a socialist future, but whether the tendency of his thought and action was consistent with this. In fact the Irish dimension led him into tortuous paths which are now familiar. Although in an ideal society states were to be mere geographical expressions (p. 152), the validity of the concept of a nation is assumed to be self-evident, and "peoples" are entities capable of autonomy. The notion that "the enemy of my enemy must be my friend" is made explicit in Connolly's pro-German stance during the First World War - p.259 "the instinct of the slave to take sides with whoever is the enemy of his own particular slave-driver is a healthy instinct and makes for freedom". The German Empire is also represented as being more "progressive" (10).

But socialist ideas about progressive development were not followed uncritically. "North East Ulster" (p.263) is described as being contrary to all Socialist theories, "the home of the least rebellious slaves in the industrial world" while "Dublin, on the other hand, has more strongly developed working class feeling than any city of its size in the globe". In practice, the "least rebellious slaves" were to be denied the right to opt out of Connolly's "United Ireland - an Ireland broad based upon the union of Labour and Nationality" (p. 279); the project of letting them vote on the question of partition was denounced (p. 283).

Connolly tended to get exasperated with British and other socialists who called critical attention to his nationalism (11), asserting the need for

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(9) by Conor Cruise O'Brien in 1916: Easter Rising

(10) Solidarity has discussed this type of theory in "Whose Right to Self Determination?" and "Thesis on Ireland", in vol. 7, no. 1.



an indigenous Irish socialist party with its own literature. Perhaps he would be better pleased with some of their present-day counter-parts on the left. At least he had the excuse of lacking the evidence we now have of what "national liberation" regimes mean in practice, and how far they are from leading to socialism.

## INSURRECTION

In 1897 Connolly regarded "the unfortunate insurrectionism of the early socialists" (p.125) as having been abandoned by modern Socialism in favour of the "slower, but surer method of the ballot-box". He continued to advocate the parliamentary road, although ideally the socialist vote was to be directed by a revolutionary industrial organisation. But he believed that in Ireland independence was a pre-requisite, so that the Irish Nationalist was seen as "an active agent in social regeneration" (p.126) "even when he is from the economic point of view intensely conservative".

The method of physical force, while not to be favoured for its own sake, was not excluded from the "party of progress". There were, however, certain conditions which should precede its adoption; first, perfect agreement on the end to be attained, then presentation of the demand for freedom through elected representatives. Discussing street fighting, Connolly assumes a large scale rising with the support of the populace (pp.228-30). The implication is that success will justify the method.

In the event the Easter Rising of 1916 was put into effect by a group of leaders with differing ultimate aims, united by nationalism and the intention to turn the opportunity afforded by the First World War to what they saw as Ireland's advantage. Connolly was a prime mover (12), committing the Irish Citizen Army despite his reported conviction in the end that there was no chance of success and they were "going out to be slaughtered" (Introduction, p.30).

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- (11) Many British socialists may of course have been chauvinists. But Labour and Easter Week provides an example of Connolly describing British draft-dodgers in Ireland as "cowardly runaways" and "shirkers", and defending this against criticism from a Glasgow reader.
- (12) The editor's introduction to 1916: Easter Rising, p.19, states that the I.R.B. Military Council was forced to establish an alliance with Connolly lest he should start his own insurrection.



It was no monstrous aberration that he ended his career as a martyr for old Ireland and is often remembered as such, however unjust it would be to claim he was no more than that. He has a place in labour history as well as in the history of socialist thought. The Selected Writings are divorced from the context of action and controversy in which they were produced, but it is useful and legitimate to judge them on their own merits and see where the ideas tend.

Perhaps, after all, it is to Connolly's credit that his writings are not fully and exclusively compatible with any one of the theoretical traditions claiming affinities with him -- less so, that they endorse sentiments and ideas present in so many of them.

L.W.

#### QUOTES FROM SELECTED WRITINGS

"... this is what Father Kane said: 'Divorce in the socialist sense means that women would be willing to stoop to be the mistress of one man after another'. A more unscrupulous slander upon womanhood was never uttered or penned. Remember that this was said in Ireland, and do you not wonder that some Irish women -- some persons of the same sex as the slanderer's mother -- did not get up and hurl the lie back in his teeth, and tell him that it was not law that kept them virtuous, that if all marriage laws were abolished tomorrow, it would not make women 'willing to stoop to be the mistress of one man after another'. Aye, verily, the uncleanness lies not in this alleged socialist proposal, but in the minds of those who so interpret it ... "

James Connolly, Labour, Nationality and Religion, 1910

"...The frontiers of Ireland, the ineffaceable marks of the separate existence of Ireland, are as old as Europe itself, the handiwork of the Almighty, not of politicians. And as the marks of Ireland's separate nationality were not made by politicians so they cannot be unmade by them.

As the separate individual is to the family, so the separate nation is to humanity..."

J.C., Workers' Republic, 12-2-1916.

"The Council of the Irish Citizen Army has resolved, after grave and earnest deliberation, to hoist the green flag of Ireland over Liberty Hall, as over a fortress held for Ireland by the arms of Irishmen.

This is a momentous decision in the most serious crisis Ireland has witnessed in our day and generation. It will, we are sure, send a thrill through the hearts of every true Irish man and woman, and send the red blood coursing fiercely along the veins of every lover of the race ... "

J.C., Workers' Republic, 8-4-1916.



# letter from ford's

I liked both the 'U.A.W. Scab Union' Motor Bulletin and your Lordstown pamphlet. More power to your elbow. I read the piece about the Ford convenors ('From the Workshop into the Corridors of Power' Solidarity vol.7 No.10) but I thought it overlooked two relevant points. Unlike union officials who are usually in office for five or seven years,\* convenors at Ford are subject to annual election and often a few shop-stewards can oust a convenor.

To be a convenor or Works Committee man one must first be elected a shop-steward. When they grow away from their members it is not unknown for them to be deposed as shop-stewards. I know that when this happened to one so-called 'militant' Joint Works Committee member at Dagenham he was obligingly transferred by management to a shop-stewardless department to keep him on the J.W.C.; but when this was attempted recently in the foundry the convenor concerned was too honest to accept it.

I take it you are following the Con-Mech fiasco. Speaking as a foundry worker I could tell you of a half-dozen cases throughout the country where foundry workers have been handling castings only to discover that they were for Con-Mech. They promptly blacked them - as any trade unionist would black castings made by scab labour. When the executive of the foundry section of the A.E.F. heard about this, the men were told "take it easy, old boy, we are in enough trouble already". So the rank-and-file are told that they mustn't dare black scab castings unless the Executive tells them to.

This puts the rank-and-file in the position that until the Industrial Relations Act is repealed they must not fight the employers. Should a Tory government be returned again we can have no doubt that they will put another Industrial Relations Act on the statute book and union executives will again be pleading with their members to do nothing to get them fined. This puts us in a position where the workers can fight when there's a Labour government but not when there's a Tory one. This is making our branch members scratch their heads a bit.

F.W. (Dagenham).

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\*The majority of trade union officials are in fact appointed or elected for life or until retirement. - Eds.



# proletarian man

The whistle blows its piercing call and for five minutes in a sticky after-noon

Your sit and stare at the factory's parquet floor.  
Tea close at hand, Daily Mirror dog-eared on the table near the wall.  
You look up at the clock, the foreman's only friend, two minutes already gone

Oh! how that time flies when you have to do sod all.  
Dig the grime out from underneath those unmanicured finger nails, sniff and spit reflectively,

Thinking of all those pools and Bingo castles that have crumbled into dust with each day's futile toil.

But you are needed, the P.M. said on T.V. last night -  
You and your kind can get the country back on its feet once more.  
Ah! but you're also the first poor bum who gets called up if there's a war.

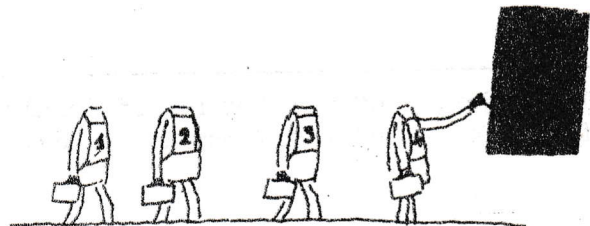
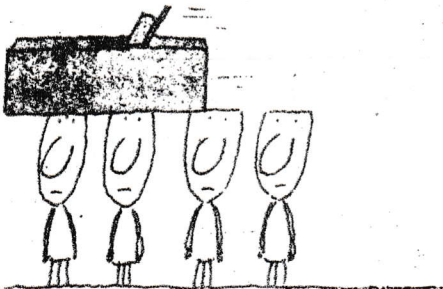
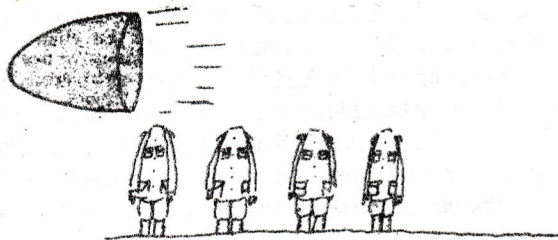
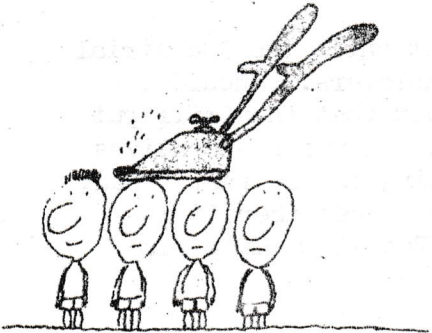
Your Union Leader tells you of the wicked Tory plan to undermine you,  
But who can you believe, 'cause in the main he's just a bourgeois of a different hue.

Finish your tea with a disgruntled sigh and send the dregs skimming across the floor.

The whistle once more rends the air, and your finger jabs the button that starts your robotic toil.

Up! Down! Round! The machine spins, churning out its nuts and bolts  
Filling your life with its hum-drum whine,  
What a lucky Proletarian man you are to do this all your life.

- Russ.





# Revolutionary Bureaucracy

The October 1917 revolution in Russia was recognized by friend and foe as a major historical event. It was clear that this was not just the overthrow of a government and a regime, but that an entire social order collapsed and out of its ruins something genuinely new was about to be constructed. The debates about the nature of the new social order and its origins have been with the revolutionary movement ever since and split it up into mutually hostile camps. What is the political basis for this hostility ,

§ § § § § §

As early as November 1918, while Lenin was in full command with Trotsky at his side and Stalin was hardly heard of, Rosa Luxemburg, a comrade-in-arms of the Bolsheviks, wrote a sympathetic but critical appraisal of the Bolshevik revolution. Her criticism contained an ominous warning on the possible consequences of Lenin's restrictions on the authority, and freedom of expression, of the workers' councils (soviets).

' Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously - at bottom then, a clique affair - a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is, a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the rule of the Jacobins (the postponement of the Soviet Congress from three-month periods to six-month period).

Yes, we can go even further: such conditions must INEVITABLY cause a brutalization of public life, attempted assassinations, shooting of hostages, etc. (Lenin's speech on discipline and corruption.) "

('Rosa Luxemburg speaks', Pathfinder Press, New-York, 1970, p.391.)



The warnings of Rosa Luxemburg were ignored by most revolutionaries during the first years following the revolution. Even her own party in Germany did not publish them. This can be understood when one considers the tremendous enthusiasm for the first successful breach of the Bourgeois world. However, as the years passed, and the regime of the Bureaucracy in Russia produced unprecedented 'brutalizations of public life', Rosa Luxemburg's warning acquired a new significance.

Already in the mid-1920's and throughout the 1930's many in the revolutionary left started a critical reappraisal of the Russian revolution, regime, and the relation between these two.

' What went wrong ? '

' When did things start to go wrong ? '

' Why did things go wrong ? '

§ § § §

One of those who attempted to answer these questions was Trotsky, whose role in the revolutions of 1905, and October 1917, makes him second only to Lenin. Trotsky produced many analyses of the new society that was taking shape under Stalin's rule. Stalin did not merely establish the dictatorship of the Politburo and the Secret Police, but moulded an entire society to go with it. New property relations, new social roles, new motivations, new personality types, new authority relations, new legitimizations, new social classes and strata, new attitudes to production, life, sciences, arts. Whether one liked this society or not - it came into existence as an accomplished fact and had to be dealt with.

In the new Russian society there was no private ownership of the means of production, no free market economy, and no profit motive, so that it could hardly qualify as 'Capitalism'. However, since 99.9% of the population in that society had no influence on the political decision-making process and were reduced to the permanent status of an audience 'invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders and approve proposed resolutions unanimously' it was not was most revolutionary understood as 'Socialism'.

The essence of Trotsky's answer was that Russia was still a 'Workers' State' due to the fact that there was no private ownership of the means of production, but the Party's apparatus (i.e. the full-time officials), though not a 'class', established itself as a cancerous 'growth' on a basically healthy political system. The rule of the Bureaucracy was, said Trotsky, 'a temporary relapse'.



Trotsky's answers calmed the gnawing doubts of many revolutionaries by invoking historical analogies: 'just as it was too early to appraise the French Revolution and the post-revolutionary society during the period of Napoleon, so was it too early to appraise the Russian revolution and society during Stalin's period'.

How 'temporary' must a social system be before it is recognized as a viable historical phenomenon ?

What conclusions must revolutionary socialists draw once they recognize the rule of the bureaucracy as a viable historical entity?

§ § § §

Again it was Trotsky who dared to touch these ideologically explosive questions. In September 1939, shortly after the start of the second world war, but well before Russia was attacked, he expressed his views clearly with an ideological courage most of his followers lack:

" If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and the regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918. In that case the question as to whether the Stalinist bureaucracy was a "class" or a growth on the workers' state will be automatically solved. To every single person it will become clear that in the process of the development of the world revolution the Soviet bureaucracy was only an EPISODIC relapse.

If, however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not a revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative: the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the state and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained, by a totalitarian regime. The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead under these conditions to the growth of a new exploiting class from the Bonapartist fascist bureaucracy. This would be, according to all indications, a regime of decline, signaling the eclipse of civilization.

An analogous result might occur in the event that the proletariat of advanced Capitalist countries, having conquered power, should prove incapable of holding it and surrender it, as in the USSR, to a privileged bureaucracy. Then we would be compelled to acknowledge that the reason for the bureaucratic relapse is rooted not in the backwardness of the country and not in the imperialist environment but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class. Then it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor of a new exploiting regime on an international scale.



We have diverged very far from the terminological controversy over the nomenclature of the Soviet state. But let our critics not protest: only by taking the necessary historical perspective can one provide himself with a correct judgement upon such a question as the replacement of one social regime by another.

The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society.

If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognize that the socialist programme, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia.

It is evident that a new 'minimum' programme would be required for the defense of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society".

(' The USSR in war', from 'In defense of Marxism', Merit publishers, New-York, 1965. p.9.)

In the decades that passed since these words were written Stalin's Russia fought the bloodiest war in human history and emerged victorious. The society created by Stalin proved viable and the political bureaucracy ruling it emerged entrenched in its dominant role beyond its own expectations. Moreover, the same type of regime spread to Eastern Europe, and later - to China. Trotsky's wondering as to whether the bureaucracy was an 'episodic relapse' or 'a precursor of a new exploiting regime on an international scale' received an unambiguous answer by the development of history over the last thirty years. The rule of the bureaucracy is a viable historical phenomenon in its own right. The bureaucracy can develop and manage a modern industrial society and become a world power in the political, economic, and military sense.

Once the bureaucracy is recognized as a viable historical entity it must be treated as such, that is: its own history must be treated not as some accidental diversion from the mainstream of human history, but as a major feature. What is the life cycle of this new ruling caste ? Where was this bureaucracy before it established itself in a dominant role? What is the embryonic, pre-revolutionary, phase of the bureaucracy like ? What is the self-image of the bureaucracy ? How does the bureaucracy legitimize its role to its followers before it becomes a ruling caste? How does the bureaucracy reproduce, and legitimize, its role to new generations ?



History is not a magician's hat out of which ruling castes and new societies are conjured by snapping fingers. The Bourgeoisie emerged and developed long before the Bourgeois revolution established it as a dominant class, Christians were crucified for centuries before the Church became the most powerful institution in Europe. Doesn't the bureaucracy exist before it takes over power?

The standard answer to these questions, accepted by most marxists, locates the origin of the bureaucracy in the backwardness of Russia and its isolation by hostile imperialist regimes. These specific circumstances no doubt created conditions favourable to the ascendance of the Bureaucracy, but in history, as in crime, it is not the circumstances but the motivations that account for the act.

The motivations of the Bureaucracy in its pre-revolutionary phase must not be judged by its post-revolutionary face. The revolutionary bureaucrat is not a power-hungry political careerist, seeking to further his own interests, nor is he an adventurer seeking 'a place in history'. Lenin and his followers were willing to pay with their lives and careers for their convictions - and many of them did so. Most of them could choose a different life and gain success in Bourgeois society - some did. Those who chose to remain revolutionaries were amongst the most intelligent and sensitive in their generation. They had the courage to face external perils as well as inner doubts and temptations. Many despaired after the failure of the 1905 revolution, others succumbed to the pressures of 'normal' family life. Those who remained were neither organizational fanatics nor theoretical doctrinaires which today, alas, swell the ranks of most marxist organizations. Their motives were totally unselfish, they were appaled by the suffering of workers and peasants in Bourgeois society and were determined to bring about a fundamental change in society so as to put an end to this suffering. Lenin did not rule by personal authority or by disciplinary regulations. He was often outvoted in his party and never advocated expulsions. It is doubtful whether a sincere and sympathetic investigation, from a revolutionary viewpoint, will reveal any overt flaw in the personality or motives of most pre-revolutionary Bolsheviks, including Stalin and associates like Molotov. And yet it was this party which carried within itself the potentialities of developing into a regime which inflicted unprecedented cruelties upon those whose suffering it sought to alleviate, and unprecedented humiliations upon its own disciples.

It is often argued that Lenin's organizational concept of 'Democratic Centralism' is the root of the bureaucratisation. Clearly, this organizational structure enables those at the centre to dominate the entire organization indefinitely.



However, even if ' only a dozen heads at the centre do the leading' it is up to them to decide how to use the organizational apparatus which is at their disposal. Why choose to abolish the national Congress of the Workers' councils ? Why choose persistently to oppose shop-floor management in industry ? The organizational structure cannot account for the nature of the political decision.

A penetrating analysis of the Russian revolution reveals that Lenin had to choose between a policy of 'All power to the workers councils' and one of 'All power to the revolutionary party'. As long as the party had a majority within the workers councils this painful choice was not apparent, but how was a revolutionary to choose if the two came into conflict ? The answer is known to every marxist: only those aware of the historical, rather than the immediate, interests of the working class, can take the right decision. It is therefore their duty to put their understanding of history into action. The revolutionary bureaucrat's self-image is that of ' a specialist in the science of History'.

Could it be that the potentiality of bureaucratization in the socialist revolutionary movement reside not only in Lenin's concept of Democratic Centralism, but in Marx's concept of the dynamics of history ?

§ § § §

All revolutionaries share the conviction that the existing social evils cannot be cured by reforms, but only by changes in the foundations of the social structure. This shared view often blinds them to the fundamental differences within their own ranks.

In all past revolutions one section of the revolutionary camp established itself as a new dominant class revealing horrifying potentialities to their former comrades. The Levellers, Danton, Bukharin, and Trotsky suffered worse than eventual assassination by their former comrades, they suffered the belated realization that they helped create regimes they abhorre.

Is this the inevitable fate of most succesful revolutionaries ? Even if the answer is yes it would not deter many from joining the revolutionary camp. Those who do so in full awareness of this terrible possibility will have only themselves to blame if they play down the fundamental differences between the various revolutionary ideas and organizations.

Social revolution is, possibly, the most profound act of creation; Its products are not creations outside our selves, but new patterns of selves. We do not know if it pays to be careful with that mysterious process called History, but we know what one pays for being uncareful.

A.O.



# A NEW MOVEMENT?

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BOULOGNE APRIL 1974

About twenty comrades from seven countries gathered in Boulogne over Easter to hold an international conference. Although this was fewer people than at the previous such conference last September (see the report in Solidarity 7/8), the quality of discussion was very high and many new arguments and ideas were put forward and old ones sorted out and discussed.

The sessions were conducted without either a chairman or an agenda as those present believed that the ideas of self-management began with the self-management of their own discussion. Instead the form of the discussion was agreed at each stage by the participants although much of it followed suggestions made beforehand by London Solidarity. As it turned out neither a chairman nor an agenda were necessary. The first day was dominated by a group-by-group presentation of reports on what had taken place in the individual countries since the last conference. After this presentation, a Dutch comrade said that he had been satisfied by only one of the reports, the French one. This report had stressed new forms of struggle such as locking bosses in or sequestration of materials from the factory to finance the struggle, such as at Lip. The Dutch comrade suggested that what needed emphasising was precisely these new forms of struggle, and he went on to make the generalisation that there had been the development of a 'new movement' which, in contrast to the 'old movement' of parties, unions, and 'revolutionary' groups, consisted of workers struggling by themselves, often against 'their' organisations and for goals determined by themselves. In the 'old movement' the struggle was seen as some kind of recruiting appendage to the body of the union and the party. In the 'new movement' this was not the case, instead, self-organisation was becoming increasingly important.

This formulation, or variations of it, was to determine most of the rest of the conference. Discussion centered around a more accurate description of the phenomenon of the new movement, a concept that no one denied was becoming more and more real. A German comrade believed that the new movement was more 'concrete' than the old one, and added that it was a movement struggling more through self-active forms and less through unions and parties. He suggested that the terms 'official' and 'unofficial' could better express this change of activity. The Dutch comrade replied that 'future' might better describe what he had in mind. However, most of those present decided that 'old' and 'new' were the



best terms and these were used throughout the conference. A Swedish comrade **intervened** to say that we were discussing in 'ideal type' terms: there were negative features in the new movement as well as in the old movement.

At this stage a French comrade suggested that the deliberate breaking of the anti-abortion law in France by the self-declared practice of abortion by women's groups was an example of the new movement. Others thought that since this accounted for only 1% of abortions and that there had been no significant increase in abortion for at least twenty years, this change was not as significant as might be thought. This conversation carried on for some time until it was proposed that a discussion of revolutionary organisation would be more fruitful. This was accepted.

This section of the conference was perhaps the most interesting. The basis of the previous day's elaboration of what had been called the new movement was used as a starting point. Although there was no agreement on the concept or the activity of a revolutionary organisation, many points were made, for instance that the presentation of leaflets could be just the same as the passive reception of ideas at a meeting, that there was no way to make people think for themselves and attempts to do so would have an entirely negative effect. This discussion took up most of the second day.

On the third day it was decided that the previous day's discussion should be resumed but from the point of view of how we visualised social change and particularly change in people's consciousness. An English comrade presented a short introductory thesis; that those present believed that they produced various tracts and pamphlets to change people's ideas. The problem of revolutionary activity ( in our meaning of the term ) was therefore mainly a question of consciousness and how it changed. A French comrade added that collective, not individual, consciousness was the real point. After some further development of these considerations, a Dutch comrade gave his interpretation. He said that, in terms of the old movement, class consciousness had and would never exist, that consciousness is always consciousness about something, that there is no division between individual and collective consciousness, and that consciousness comes from everyday life and not from revolutionary groups. Our role, he added, was to help provide information. The Australian comrades disagreed, if we did not fight capitalism when asking others to do so we would be struggling by proxy. A German comrade disagreed, he believed that real change in consciousness was not the product of the group's own activity and that no group can raise consciousness. Exchanging experiences, however, was a positive way of developing new ideas. This continued into a consideration of vanguardism. There were difficulties of definition, but all those present were unambiguous in their rejection of vanguardist forms of organisation. Finally, the Australian comrades stated that we should intervene with an understanding of experiences. An English comrade stated that experience was not



built up brick by brick - experience was only a part of the problem.

In the afternoon of the final day, the last session decided to produce a symposium of the discussions, which had been taped, for distribution to the participants and to a wider selection of any interested people.

Everyone agreed the meeting was useful and that a further series of meetings should be arranged when those interested indicated the time and place considered most suitable. That the subject matter would arise from a consideration of the report in the context of what was happening in the world during the ensuing period.

The main conclusion was that we should adopt a modest view of what we could do, and that each situation that we felt was of interest which we might wish to comment upon needed a close examination. We should not act as though one could know in advance what precisely we might wish to say. There could be no 'theory' which would fit neatly into a total view of what was often regarded as 'revolutionary practice'.

If self-management was the basis of our view of the new struggles as well as the basis of an alternative society, then we could not deny those who manage their own struggles the right to determine their own perspectives - i.e. 'theory'.

D.B. and J.J.

## IF YOU WANT TO CONTACT US

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Southampton.



# eco-politics at Leeds

About eighteen members of Solidarity attended the Saturday morning meeting to discuss the "crisis". There were contingents from London, Manchester and Coventry as well as individuals from Liverpool, Lancaster, Leeds itself, Sheffield and other places. In some ways the discussion carried on the topics of Southampton. Main questions were whether there was a crisis or had been one at all, whether it was international or confined to Britain, and whether it was a crisis of capitalism or simply a shift of power between capitalists. The attention then moved, without a firm conclusion being reached, on to the action which individual groups took at the election, and how one should intervene in such a situation, and the need for the national working group to get together quickly and produce material when faced with events of such importance - if indeed the election had any major importance at all.

The afternoon saw a much larger gathering packed into the same room for an open meeting on "The Politics of Ecology" and this was led off by four invited speakers, only two of whom in fact got the chance to make formal statements of their views. The first set the tone of the meeting, for Solidarity members anyway, by attacking the equation of overpopulation and poverty. The world, she argued, and specifically Britain, was capable of supporting many more lives, given a different kind of social organisation, and socialists should have no truck with the capitalist rhetoric of population control, designed, more often than not, with a view to forestalling the dangers of revolution. If overpopulation wasn't the problem, everyone seemed tacitly agreed nevertheless, that the natural environment was being polluted. The tendency to talk as if "we" were the cause of it, instead of seeing the true class nature of the problem, was by and large rejected, although, because of the wide range of opinion represented, it was necessary to argue about such matters as whether the working class as traditionally defined had any interest in ecological issues and if not, whether this could be held against them. The Solidarity members in the meeting seemed united in the feeling that the priority should be the question of who has the power: until the ruling class had been divested of it there seemed little that could be done to save the environment. The representative of the "People Party", an ecological group which campaigned at the last election, was very much out of tune with the mood of the meeting when he urged us to vote for a party like his and let them try to do something that way. There was some question whether the issues of ecology were central to revolutionary thinking (in the way that those of sexual liberation were) i.e. did they imply only a revolutionary solution? The meeting drifted finally towards a practical discussion of the relative merits of small scale versus large scale technology, with Solidarity members generally arguing that there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the latter and that it could be run by the workers themselves. It was,



all in all, a meeting to provoke further discussion rather than one which answered any major questions.

The business meeting the following morning ranged over a number of topics, and the question of our activities vis a vis the trad. left groups was discussed. The new pamphlet on the Lump, available here for the first time, was felt to be the kind of touchstone that was needed in this respect, presenting a new challenge on new ground. There was talk of the formation of a Sheffield group and possibility of a national meeting there but it was decided that the next conference would take place in Liverpool, 22-23rd June.

M.S.O.

# solidarity FOR WORKER'S POWER

This sub-title has headed our journal for a long time. There have always been some objections, not least from members of the Solidarity group itself. The time has come to look at it in the light of current thinking, with a view to being more specific, less ambiguous, in the presentation of our views.

We still think that 'workers' power' is a cornerstone of an alternative non-exploitative society, based on self-activity and self-management of the members of that society.

The term 'workers' power' is used by others (Leninists, Marxists, Trotskyists, Anarchists, of all kinds) who do not share our view of the meaning of the term and, even less, our view of the way in which the objective might become a reality. Hence our need to differentiate. The difficulty lies in finding a 'slogan', form of words, whatever, which will be suitable as a sub-title to follow 'Solidarity' - as the heading of our journal.

Those who feel they know and share our views are invited to offer suggestions which might help us over the difficulty. It is easy enough to express our ideas clearly at length, but so far a short 3-4 word 'statement' which clearly defines what we are for, which will be less open to misrepresentation, has not emerged.

Do you think you can contribute?  
What do you think about it?  
Let's hear from you.



# WOT? NO CONTRADICTIONS?

In August 1971 SOLIDARITY (London) published 'History and Revolution'. This was a translation of part of a text by Paul Cardan ('Marxisme et Théorie Révolutionnaire') which had appeared several years earlier in the French journal 'Socialisme ou Barbarie'.

Our publication was preceded by an extensive and prolonged discussion within the group, in the course of which an Aberdeen comrade took issue with some of Cardan's basic ideas, namely the notion that there was no insuperable internal economic obstacle to capitalism's development of production. We here publish excerpts of Cardan's reply which, in our opinion, raise a number of interesting theoretical points.

When you say 'it is true that the present economic system is a barrier to adequate production, in spite of its expansion in the last 25 years (arms production, production for waste, etc.)' you are, I am afraid, victim of a current confusion.

What is 'adequate' production? Adequate for whom, for what purpose, from what point of view? We are talking about capitalism and the (imaginary) 'incapacity' of the system to generate the conditions for its own continued expansion, qua capitalism. We are not speaking about the 'adequacy' of this production with regard to human needs or values. Production is adequate from the point of view of the capitalist system if it goes on expanding at 5 per cent per annum, producing junk, atom bombs or soap bubbles,\* thereby expanding the market for the same commodities. This is the true meaning of the term 'commodity' in Das Kapital and in political economy in general: use value is not discussed - it is just assumed.

There is no internal economic barrier to capitalism's functioning. That humanity may at the same time be starving, living like wild beasts, be persuaded to buy soap bubbles, etc., is totally irrelevant from this point of view. That a starving humanity might explode and destroy the

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\* Or - as Keynes seriously suggested - digging holes in the ground and filling them in again.



system would be the result of socio-political human actions and reactions, not the effect of 'intrinsic economic contradictions'. The logic of capitalism - and here I am only quoting Marx - is production for the sake of production. Not production of something definite. Just production. Of anything. Of shit. It would even be wrong to say ('ultra-left moralistic confusionism') that the nearer production is to shit, the more capitalism approximates to its own essence. Shit or books, bombs or penicillin, pollutants or anti-pollutants - they are all gold. The point is: can they be produced and sold for a profit? This is the only point as far as capitalism and its economic functioning is concerned.

Sure, for them to be sold there must be a 'market' for them. This means two things: first, money (the incomes of those who would buy them). This capitalist expansion generates ipso facto. Secondly, 'social want', i.e. the belief of the potential buyers that they 'need' or 'desire' the commodities offered (this has nothing to do with 'natural', 'genuine', 'normal' wants and desires!). Capitalism ensures that these 'needs' exist through various mechanisms which do not need to be described again.

There is a theoretical-historical movement here which is - to my mind - the essence of the matter. I do not know whether I will be able to convey it clearly without being too long. In the first place - in the first 'moment' as Marx would say when flirting with Hegel - capitalism embodies the absolute divorce between use-value and exchange-value. This is both its foundation and the foundation of the marxist analysis. What is produced does not matter in the least. To forget this is the usual sin of present day 'marxists'. This separation manifests itself in at least two ways:

- production is for profit, not for human needs. If production of soap bubbles is more profitable than production of food, soap bubbles and not food will be produced;

- production is for sale, not for human needs. If millions of tons of food, clothes, etc. are accumulated in the warehouses and cannot be sold, they will not be given away to the millions of unemployed, the starving, etc.

It is the second aspect with which Marx was mostly concerned in his economic analysis proper. It is here he thought he found an 'internal contradiction' in the mechanics of the capitalist economy. He believed it would be organically impossible for capitalism to generate the necessary purchasing power for its goods to be sold. This I have shown to be wrong.\*

As for the first aspect Marx of course knew of it and mentioned it on several occasions. At times (especially in his earlier works) he emphasized it very strongly. But this is not an 'internal contradiction' of the economy. Rather should it be seen as a (very profound) criticism

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\* See 'Modern Capitalism and Revolution'.



levelled against the economy as such (more precisely against capitalism as the historical system which has tended to subordinate, and finally reduce, all human activities to 'economic' activities). Awareness of this is one of the reasons for the title A Critique of Political Economy, which remained a subtitle of Das Kapital.

In a sense Marx, the great politician, is against the economic universe as such, because this universe only exists (strictly speaking since before capitalism) on the basis of the separation between production and wants - a separation created by the fact that exchange-values necessarily interpose themselves between use-values. In a sense, for Marx, the only type of 'non-alienated' human work is the work of the savage, producing a tool or a weapon to fit his own body and skills and ways of doing things. It is Siegfried forging Nothung, or Ulysses and his bow - which nobody else can handle. It is this sort of relation, on another level, between the working collectivity, its work and its products which Marx envisages as the 'superior phase of communism' (about which I allowed myself to add, in the 'Meaning of Socialism', that it necessarily entails the destruction of capitalist technology and the conscious creation of a new technology. Present-day technology is precisely the embodiment of this estrangement of man from his own working activity).

Of course, in relation to the first and more profound aspect, the separation cannot be taken 'absolutely'. But then nothing ever can. Some food would have to be produced under any conditions. Machines have to be manageable by bipeds, even at the price of monstrous contortions of their bodies, etc. But all this is, in the economic sense, peripheral and secondary. And this is precisely the monstrosity.

Now all this, the absolute separation of use-value and exchange-value, what I called the 'first moment' with its two forementioned aspects, is truly only a first moment. It is the first moment both logically-theoretically and really-historically. It is an abstraction. Not only cannot the separation be absolute; it has to be very relative indeed. Because the goods have to be sold, and because 60 or 70 per cent of final demand is 'consumer demand', the goods must have a use-value (in that proportion) for the population at large. This would not be a problem if society were at subsistence level (though this expression is hardly meaningful). But an ever-expanding economy ceases, after a while, to be at subsistence level. Thus the separation between exchange-values and 'use'-values has to be overcome. Modern capitalism seeks to achieve this precisely through the manipulation of 'use'-values, i.e. by creating consumption to fit the needs of production and of the disposal of the product.

It follows that in contemporary economies one cannot speak about the separation of 'use'- and exchange-values sans phrase. But then the question arises: what are 'use'-values? This question, ignored by Marx and the classical economists, cannot be handled within political economy. It requires another type of analysis and leads to the concept of the social imaginary which I tried to define in the final part of 'Marxisme et Théorie Révolutionnaire' (Socialisme ou Barbarie, no.40, June-August 1965).