

solidarity

FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

No.7 March/April 1979

15p

INCLUDING

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

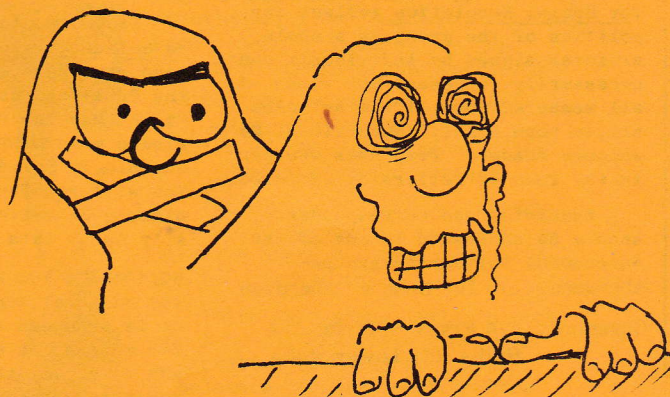
We have ways
of making you



.work till
you drop



.commit
mass suicide



.confess

for 'socialism'

LETTERS

Dear Friends,

Whilst I agree with most of the 'Anti-Sexism' article in Solidarity for Social Revolution no. 6, there are 2 points with which I strongly disagree.

Firstly, the language of depersonalised abstractions, not only in this article but prevalent on the 'left'. Looking at capitalist society in this way reminds me of establishment explanations of capitalist economics, in which 'consumers' and 'producers' behave in 'perfectly rational' ways in order to 'maximise satisfaction/profit'. But as we all know real life ain't like that. To claim that 'the ending of oppressive sex roles in many areas of social life is a conscious and major aim of modern capitalism' assumes that such a creature as 'modern capitalism' exists with a homogeneous radical consciousness and a progressive ideology of its own. State bureaucracies have accepted this false premise and attempted to organise capitalist economies rationally, without success, because a 'perfect' economy can only function in the absence of people. This view of capitalism with the irrational lumps removed (i.e. the capitalists, private or state) is very misleading for revolutionaries. We are not really fighting a system, it has no logic or cohesiveness and cannot be destroyed by a single, well directed revolutionary assault. Therefore, while

it might be easy for revolutionaries to 'distinguish between necessitated reform', what constitutes a 'social revolution' (without the benefit of hindsight) is more problematical.

By reducing the world to abstractions it is also possible to claim that 'men (although historically placed in the position of oppressors) are themselves exploited'. History does not do things to men. Men placed themselves historically in the position of oppressor, with women's collusion, no doubt. It is not merely a question of semantics, but fundamental to the struggle for social change. The idea that we are up against an immutable system only encourages impotence and apathy. This does not mean that we cannot generalise or categorise when this benefits our analysis, only that we must guard against such generalisations and categories assuming a life of their own and actually obscuring reality.

Secondly, where does revolutionary consciousness come from? Does it spring from nowhere and suddenly zap us on the bus, going to work? This view seems implicit in both the 'Anti-Sexism' and 'Miniaturisation' articles in the last issue. For me it came from my own experience of life, my own struggle against 'partial oppression'. Through frustration, disillusion and depression

came the realisation that the fight against 'partial oppression' was not enough. But nor would it be enough to remain pure but aloof from the struggles of everyday life that all working class people are involved in. To become a revolutionary and fight the 'total' oppression doesn't make it any easier to live in a hostile world, or make 'collective casualty stations' any less necessary to the maintenance of our sanity. Our theory and practice must always go hand-in-hand if our own lives are not to be wasted in hypocrisy or futility.

Sheila R., Manchester.

In Solidarity for Social Revolution no. 6 S. Dawe suggests that Solidarity should join Socialist Challenge, a venture launched by the IMG and supported by Big Flame and the Libertarian Communist Group.

What staggers me is that anyone could believe we have anything in common with them. I can think of no major issue on which we would agree: from the analysis of capitalist society to the meaning of socialism, from the Trade Unions to the Labour Party, from 'national liberation' struggles to the role of the Party. On all these issues we are poles apart.

The problem is not simply one of Trotskyism but of Leninism (or mindless leninoidism). In this respect the participants of Socialist Challenge are just made for each other. We inhabit a different universe.

K. W.

ABOUT OURSELVES

While the contents of Solidarity for Social Revolution reflect the politics of the group as a whole, articles signed by individuals don't necessarily represent the views of all members. Some of the articles are, we hope, highly contentious. We welcome readers' responses whether in the form of letters or articles.

Enquiries and correspondence should be addressed to one of the autonomous Solidarity groups:
Aberdeen: c/o 167 King St, Aberdeen

Coventry: c/o Frank N. Stein, 124 Hollis Rd, Lower Stoke, Coventry.

Dundee: c/o N. Woodcock, 74 Arklay St, (Top Right), Dundee.

London: c/o 123 Lathom Rd, E.6.

Manchester: c/o 109 Oxford Rd, Manchester 1.

Oxford: c/o 34 Cowley Rd, Oxford.

If you would like to subscribe to Solidarity for Social Revolution send your name, address and £2.00 to the Publications Secretary, 23 Solar Ct., Etchingam Park Rd, London N.3. Please make cheques /postal orders payable to Solidarity Publications. You will receive the magazine and any other publications produced nationally up to this value (less postage).

SOLIDARITY FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION is the national magazine of SOLIDARITY. It is produced approximately every two months. To maximise involvement and democracy, the production of the paper rotates among the different autonomous groups. Issue No 1 was produced by the Aberdeen group; 2, 4 and this issue by London; 3 by Oxford; 5 by joint effort of Scottish groups; and 6 by comrades in Manchester and Leeds.

The next issue will be produced by the Coventry group and material should be sent to them before the end of March.

If you live outside Britain please write to the International Secretary through the Aberdeen group. If you want to contact people in other areas, please write to the General Secretary also through the Aberdeen group.

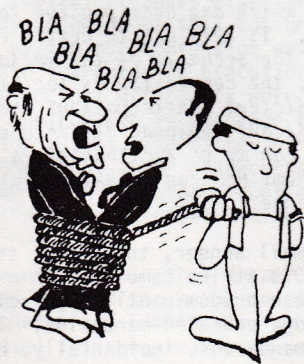
A wide range of pamphlets is available through the London group (list available on request) and new ones are being prepared. If you send £2 (cheques and postal orders payable to Solidarity London) you'll receive their new pamphlets and issues of the national magazine to that value. Let them know if you don't want the magazine.

EDITORIAL

Five years ago Ted Heath steered the Tories on a collision course with the miners. This led to an early election under the banner 'Who rules: the government or the unions?'. Forget for a moment the silly identification of 'unions' and 'workers'. To everyone's surprise Heath lost the election. The conclusion was clear: no government can rule without the consent of working people. In confrontations, political authority is no match for industrial action. Ministers can make speeches and take decisions - but they can't dig coal, drive trains or run power stations. If those who do these things refuse to, no one - neither the Law nor the Army - can do much about it.

Today the Labour Party, voted in because of its ability to 'handle the unions', is having its pay policy smashed to smithereens by Ford workers, lorry drivers and public sector employees. No Tory government could implement a pay policy. A 'national unity' government could do no better. Only with difficulty can even a Labour government control the unions, and the unions can barely control the rank and file. Heath & Co. were outraged by the miners' flying pickets; Callaghan & Co. are outraged by the lorry drivers' secondary pickets. In both cases the entire power structure is challenged by the direct action, initiative and solidarity of people in struggle. Threats to use the law against pickets are theatrical gestures. In 1973, when the 5 dockers were arrested, the government had promptly to unearth a legal device from the distant past to free them, or risk massive solidarity strikes in addition to the strikes over pay.

The positive aspects of the recent wave of strikes are the massive involvement of the rank and file and the solidarity shown by non-strikers. These have set off a storm of hysterical demagogy in the media and in the speeches of politicians and em-



ployers, both private and public. What is new is how very little effect all this is having. The solidarity of non-strikers has been shown by massive refusal to cross picket lines, despite the encouragement of Jim Callaghan and the practical example of his wife.

The weak points have been the lack of imaginative tactics and the general insensitivity to the problems of other working people. Unions and government have been content to fight their battles by interposed person. The unions are prepared to blackmail 'their' government, threatening to erode its electoral base (by continuing industrial action) unless the government gives way on wages. The government in turn seeks to channel the hostility of voters against 'free collective vandalism'. Meanwhile it is working people who suffer most. Public wards may be closed and ambulance services curtailed, but the rich still easily get to thriving private clinics by taxi. Expensive restaurants organise their own refuse collection, while rubbish piles up elsewhere. A million working class housewives have to boil their drinking water, while those who can afford it drink other things. Private education continues in the 'public' schools.

Neither union bureaucrats nor the rank and file have so far exerted themselves to devise new tactics that would hit the employers while winning the sympathy and support of ordinary people. This lack of imagination reflects the fact that neither have any real desire to change the social or political system. Their industrial power is seen (and used) for exclusively economic ends.

The most debilitating effect of this, as far as the unity of working people is concerned, is the creation of a vicious circle of strikes followed by counter-strikes in defence of 'sacred' differentials. ASLEF and NUR clobber one another, using frozen commuters as battering rams. Many unions (and - unfortunately - many of their members) would support a form of state-guaranteed inequality, enshrining into law the divisions within the class.

Economism in the trade unions both creates and is created by economism among their members. But if this integument is ever to be broken it will not be by the union bureaucrats. They have too much to lose. It can only come from the workers themselves. When 'left' trade union officials publicly proclaim that 'workers' self-management

and trade unionism are irreconcilable', it is futile to look to the unions for progressive initiatives. It is now openly seen and cynically admitted by everyone (from Margaret Thatcher to Moss Evans) that union officials only join struggles in order to control them. But their authority is brittle. It has to be 'salvaged' anew in every confrontation. Authority is no longer consecrated by parliamentary or union elections and is crumbling throughout society. This process cannot be reversed. Even the sticks of inflation and unemployment won't make people work who don't want to.

This is not to say the unions are moribund. The battles they were created to fight have not yet all been won. 7 million people still earn less than £70 per week. In the government's own words they are 'poorly paid'. There is still no guaranteed minimum wage. The government, whose members earn five figure salaries, can't dismiss the claims of those who only earn £40 per week as exaggerated. If the government still insists that pay rises must be kept within 5% it should not be surprised that no one accepts its advice - or that many are insulted and angered by it.

It has been said that the number of unemployed today is the highest since the 1930's - and that the number of strikers is the highest since 1926. This has led some Trad Revs to believe the Storming of Parliament is around the corner. We don't share this euphoria. The economy will absorb the pay claims without collapsing. But even if it did collapse this would not, of itself, create the different social attitudes which, alone, would ensure an advance towards socialism. As long as motivations remain privatised, we're stuck with capitalism. Even if the means of production are taken out of private hands. Even, in fact, if they are self-managed.



'Boss - you shouldn't have DONE it! A 5% rise! This means EVERYTHING ... Paris ... Vienna ... winters in the South of France!'

CIVIL SERVICE EXPOSED

SENSATIONAL SCOOP

On January 24 The Guardian carried a front-page story about a government document (presumably leaked) now circulating in Whitehall. The document makes specific threats against civil servants who may want to take part in their unions' proposed selective industrial action.

A few quotes from this text are shown above. They demonstrate vividly how a Labour Government reacts to the claims of workers who, according to the Pay Research Unit, are due wage increases of 30% and more. Civil servants are particularly vulnerable because of the directness of their relationship to authority and state power.

The attitudes revealed are by no means just a response to the current situation. We have been sent an earlier document, which details government reactions to the Civil Service strike of February 1973. This provides many interesting insights into managerial thinking (at the very heart of the bureaucratic state) about the maintenance of authority and the resistance to challenge.

Following the strike, a working group of top officials was set up to consider "the acceptance of authority in the Civil Service". We present a part of a discussion paper prepared for this group, and extracts from the records of the discussions associated with the group.

The strikes of 1973 were studied closely as possible precursors of future civil emergencies: "In the troubled times that may lie ahead, it will be essential to have a loyal and contented Civil Service." The minutes of the September Establishment Officers Meeting (EOM) indicate the concern of top officials and Ministers.

A paper prepared for the EOM of 9 April 1973 gave figures for strike turnout (See tables 1 & 2) and concluded:

"Support for the strike was generally greater in the provinces than in the London Headquarter Offices; it varied by region, being greatest in West Scotland, NE and NW England. It was especially great in Customs & Excise, DHSS and Department of Employment, which all have extensive networks of local offices".

As a result most Civil Service organisational policies were re-examined and evaluated according to how conducive they were to encouraging 'loyalty' and 'obedience'.

A management view:

" I feel that the variation in response to the recent strike call - from 5% in London to 40% in Norwich - is a function of closeness to the centre, a greater identification with their public position of those nearer to Whitehall. Dispersal might therefore lead to more militancy."

" Industrial action is probably an inevitable reflection of what has happened elsewhere in the past few years ... What can be done about it? In the sort of situation where a large Government office is set up in the provinces and a very large number of clerical staff are recruited to work there, one cannot reasonably expect them to feel any loyalty to the Civil Service traditions. To these people it is just a job like any other ... Some method of fostering identification with, and commitment to, the job is needed to minimise any further discontent and industrial action."

"A serious view will be taken of disorderly picketing, and intimidation may be treated as a disciplinary offence. Interference by pickets is no excuse for non-attendance at work."

"Unauthorised absence from work carries no entitlement to pay, travel and subsistence allowances... A strike or sit-in during which work is not done is the equivalent of unauthorised absence."

Such absence (see box above) "does not reckon or qualify for superannuation, or count for increments, annual leave, probation, seniority."

"Paid sick leave is not allowed to commence during a period of unauthorised absence even if covered by a doctor's statement."



...Would staff identify if they were broken down into smaller units... to give a focus for allegiance?... Research is needed on the way people identify with their work, and how this identification can be increased."

The Establishment Officers Meeting not only concerned itself with the obedience of staff inside the Civil Service but actually saw fit to comment on the whole of society at large.

" There is evidence in society at large of growing resistance to authority, especially among young people in large impersonal organisations which are unresponsive to their views. Is this due to better education, the security of the welfare state, the complexity of society, insufficient participation? Are there significant regional differences and if so can we protect ourselves against them? How can we extend our knowledge?"

Small wonder, therefore, that the 1973 strike came as such a shock to these predominantly upper-class, Oxbridge educated mandarins! These same mandarins, incidentally, have

also been plotting how to safeguard the status quo.

Planning for civil emergency - to ensure that, whatever happens, the Civil Service and military machines will continue functioning - is one of the most extensive of secret Government activities. The provisions are similar for emergencies due to different causes - natural (fire, flooding etc.), military ("Civil Defence" in case of nuclear attack or foreign invasion) or civil (widespread or general strike, or insurrection).

Large numbers of "politically clean" civil servants are invited at some stage of their careers to train for a shadow administration which would take over in any of these situations if considered necessary. This reserve State, based on Regional Seats of Government controlled by Regional Commissioners with dictatorial powers, was revealed by the "Spies for Peace" and in the suppressed film "The War Game". Its nervous system would be a heavily protected telecommunications system centred on GCHQ in Cheltenham.

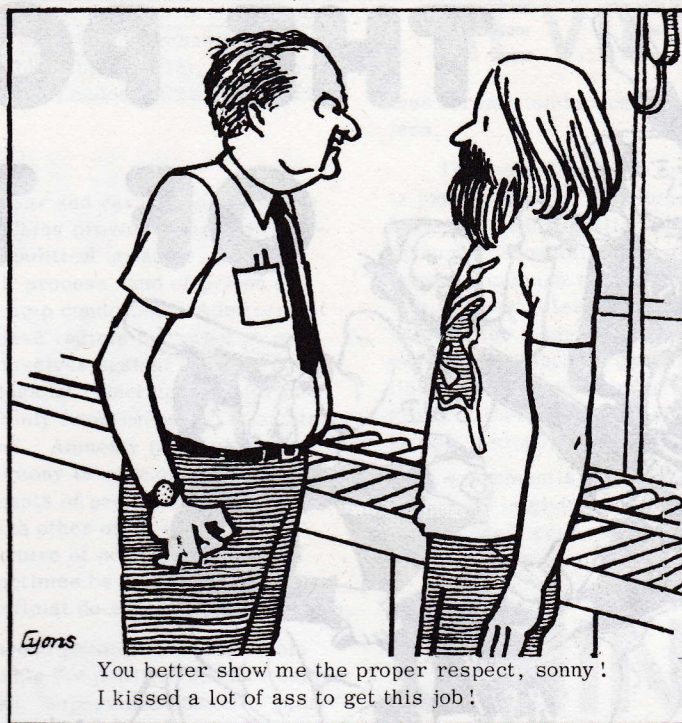
Other plans have been prepared to ensure that the State machine can function in less extreme situations such as power strikes. We can mention:

- plans to redeploy staff "to provide reinforcements for hard-pressed Departments in emergency situations"
- the Whitehall District Standby Power Supply System (WDSPPS), set up to provide Whitehall with 'essential services' (lighting the suites of Ministers and top officials, central heating, essential office equipment and one lift in each building) in the event of a power cut;
- the independent Whitehall telephone system now almost completed: the Central Branch Exchange (CBX) described in "Management Services in Government" (August 1974). Of 18 area exchanges in the system this article gives the access codes for only 13 and the location of only 15.
- secret petrol outlets available to senior Government and military personnel

Such planning is conducted in liaison with the Civil Emergency Planning Directorate of NATO in Brussels, Belgium.

Getting back to the Civil Service strike itself, it is also plain from these documents that the mandarins have a very clear view of the role of union organisations and would be only too keen to help the executives of these unions to fulfill their function.

"To some extent the militant action of union members has been opposed to the authority of their own executives, and we might try to see if we could help them to look at this. Would it be practicable to offer resources to explore the attitudes of union members to the authority of their



executives? The recent militancy of DHSS Staff Side was in resistance to their executive, for example. Results would have to be private to the unions concerned, but it could be a useful first step to obtaining their cooperation in looking at the wider problems of staff-management relations and staff representation. The benefit for the Civil Service Department would be that National Staff Side Executive might become more aware of prevailing feelings among its members and thus better informed when it came to negotiate."

"It is desirable that the goals or objectives should be shared by the controllers and controlled. We should therefore welcome the National Staff Side desire to share in the process of achieving Departmental objectives."

To most readers of 'Solidarity' the mentality of the people who drafted these 'Confidential' notes is indeed difficult to imagine. The mandarins are so used to 'knowing' they are right that they cannot see how demented their views on authority are. They realise, for instance, that the situation has changed somewhat since the heyday of unquestioned allegiance, but rather than question their belief in authority (which is in fact a belief in their one and only role) they desperately scrape around for ways

out of the dilemma.

"Small amounts of liberalisation could make things very much worse. Management needs to be strong - not necessarily autocratic, but able to weather the storm."

"A proper hierarchy is in the interest of the individual, and is not in conflict with participation. There is a need to question the propriety and effectiveness of control systems."

Finally, it is clear that people as such don't exist but that 'subordinates' do, and that these 'subordinates' will now only accept moderately authoritarian management. "Most subordinates are willing to accept the authority of their superiors within certain limits, even if they do not like the instructions they receive. This zone of acceptance varies between different situations and different groups of staff. Most managers are capable of intuiting the boundaries of the zone, and avoid overstepping them. Highly authoritarian management is unpalatable to most employees - if it is imposed, some may resist it or even sabotage it, while others become passive or unproductive. There is also a generation gap due to the change in educational methods."

Let's all wish these "chaps" increasing "anarchy and chaos"!

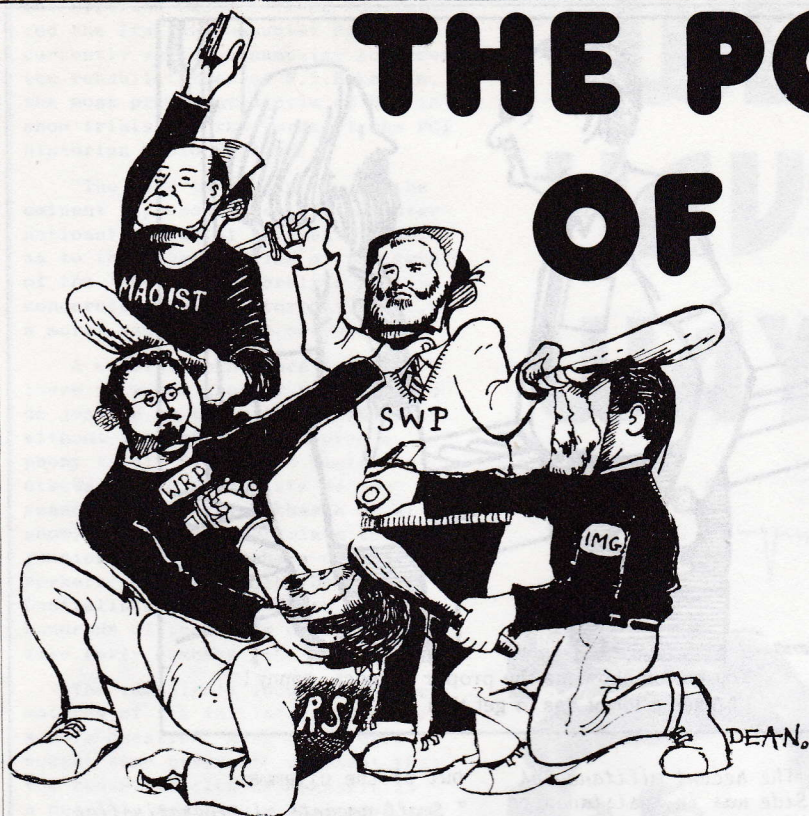
TABLE 1: Numbers on Strike by Grade

Senior Principals	6
Principals	54
Senior Executive Officers	773
Higher Executive Officers	4205
Executive Officers	22427
Clerical, secretarial, typing and machine grades	96785
Miscellaneous	4181
Total	128431

TABLE 2: Numbers on Strike by Region

London and South East	39348
North, Yorks. and Humber	24768
Midlands and East Anglia	15101
South West	6806
North West	18193
Wales	8566
Scotland and N Ireland	15621
Abroad	28
Total	128431

THE POVERTY OF THEORY



'The Poverty of Theory' by E.P. Thompson. Merlin Press. £3.90.

QUESTION: 'Why do you drag us back into all this old stuff? The sins were committed long ago, in another country. They have all been confessed. And Euro-Communism is a thoroughly reformed character. Why should we, of a post-stalinist generation, be haunted by your memories?'

ANSWER (brief): 'You are not a post-stalinist generation. You are a generation amongst whom the reasons and legitimations of Stalinism are by means of "theoretical practice", being reproduced every day'.

This is not a book to review after one, even close, reading and the purpose of this note is not to offer any preliminary exposition, analysis or criticism, only to draw attention to the publication of this important and exciting work of political and philosophical enquiry, and urge all comrades to obtain a copy, one way or another.

That Thompson finds occasion to refer, in the most positive terms, to Castoriadis (Cardan) is of less relevance than the fact that both men, from different, but hardly antagonistic viewpoints, share a common preoccupation: the Hungarian Revolution and its historical resonance. 'Until the "agenda" of 1956 is completed ... any pretences as to the self-reform of Euro-Communism can rest only on the insecure

pledges of electoral opportunism', Thompson concludes, adding, 'no doubt my critics are right; the return to that moment in the past has been, with me, obsessional'. 'Over the coming years', runs Cardan's counterpoint, 'all significant questions will be condensed into one; are you for or against the action and program of the Hungarian workers? ... Today, 20 years later, I stand by these lines more firmly and more savagely, if possible, than when I wrote them'. (Telos, no.29, Fall 1976).

Thompson will be known to most of us as the author of the seminal 'The Making of the English Working Class'. While using some of the concepts of historical materialism this major work also sought to break with the mechanistic way these had been applied in the past. It stressed the extent to which the English working class (and in particular its consciousness) was self-created, not the product of some inevitable and blind historical 'process' grinding remorselessly on. Thompson should also be remembered as one of the founders of the New Left, now a term of derision in revolutionary libertarian circles, but in earlier days both honest and charged with energy and hope.

Today, when a crisis in the CP - such as the 'tankies' (New Communist Party) split last year - raises a storm of apathy, it is hard to conceive that it was once the party not only of Thompson but of Christopher Hill, E.J. Hobsbawm, Doris Lessing, John Saville,

Hyman Levy and many others without 'names' but an equal commitment to socialism and truth; a roster unmatched by any British political organisation before or since. They were the 7000 who quit the Party in 1956-57, and of whom John Gollan could say: 'they are not our best comrades, otherwise they would not have left'.

This hermetic complacency can best be appreciated in its context:

February 1956: 20th Congress of the CPSU. Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech'.

April 1956: 24th Congress of the CPGB. Pollitt's own 'secret speech' gives general idea of Khrushchev's, but offers no initiatives.

May 1956: Reshuffled Party Executive (Gallacher now 'President', Pollitt Chairman, Gollan Secretary) admits that 'on the basis of false information we, in all good faith, made a number of mistakes'. 'A certain dogmatism, rigidity and sectarianism' conceded. Commission on Inner Party Democracy set up. British Road to Socialism to be revised, with safeguards against 'abuses of socialist legality'.

June 4, 1956: Daily Worker publishes letter from E.P. Thompson pointing out that 'false information' was not enough to explain 20 years of 'uncritical and inaccurate propaganda about the Soviet Union'. On the same day US State Department publishes text of Khrushchev's Secret Speech.

June 22, 1956: CP Political Committee accepts US version of Khrushchev's speech as accurate, thereby initiating new technique for conveying basic information to Party members!

June 30, 1956: CPSU Central Committee resolution attacks Togliatti of the Italian CP for referring to the 'degeneration in the functioning of Soviet democracy and Party democracy', thus defining the 'limits of permissible discussion'.

July 11, 1956: Pollitt and Gollan visit Moscow. On return, refuse demand for Special Congress. Concede a 'National Conference'.

LETTER

'The point is that Marx is on our side; we are not on the side of Marx. His is a voice whose power will never be silenced, but it has never been the only voice, and its discourse does not have limitless range. He did not invent the socialist movement, nor did socialist thought in some way fall into his sole possession or that of his legitimate heirs. He had little to say (by choice) as to socialist objectives, as to which Morris and others said more - and more that is pertinent today. In saying this little he forgot (and at times appeared to deny) that not only Socialism but any future made by men and women rests not only upon "science", or upon the determination of necessity, but also upon choices of values and the struggles to give these choices effect.'

July 1956: E. P. Thompson and John Saville publish first issue of 'The Reasoner', strongly attacking working of democratic centralism in CPGB. Much support attracted. Yorkshire District Committee tells them to cease publishing. They refuse. Matter referred to London.

September 1956: Second issue of 'The Reasoner' appears, coinciding with Political Committee instructions to desist.

October 23, 1956: Hungarian Revolution begins. Described on October 25 as 'counter-revolution' by Daily Worker, which refuses to publish its Budapest correspondent's despatches; one third of staff resigns.

November 1956: Jack Grahl and Leo Keely (Fire Brigades Union) and Les Cannon (ETU) call for dissolution of Party and resign, joined by Jack Horner (Fire Brigades) and Alex Moffat (Scottish Miners). Executive Committee agrees to call a special Congress, but suspend Thompson and Saville after third issue of 'The Reasoner' appears, condemning the Russian invasion of Hungary. Thompson and Saville resign.

April 1957: CPGB Congress overwhelmingly rejects all reform proposals. Thompson describes this as 'a shambles of intellectual disgrace and moral decline'.

'The Reasoner' became 'The New Reasoner'. This merged, in 1960, with the 'Universities and Left Review' to form the 'New Left Review'. The 'old' NLR had a readership of some 8000, 40 associated Left Clubs and groups, a coffee bar (The Partisan, treasured memory of this writer's youth) and a

Book Centre. Today the circulation is half what it was. The clubs, coffee bar and book centre have vanished. The journal's founders are banished from its pages.

The causes of this are still obscure. Tenacious investigation would doubtless bring them to light, but whether the old New Left 'evaporated' (the Trot version) or was forced out by Perry Anderson (as Thompson implies), the unhappy result has been that the New Left has become, if anything, less comprehensible and more doctrinaire than the Communist Party it sprang from. 'The Poverty of Theory' is in large part a deliberate counterblast at the rigidity and inhumanity that characterise the dominant trends in current left thinking and theory.

It consists of four essays: 'Outside the Whale' (1959) is a study of Orwell, Auden and pessimistic disengagement; 'The Peculiarities of the English' (1965) a polemic against Perry Anderson and others of the 'new' New Left, and their rigid schematics; 'An Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski' (1973), a defence of the marxist tradition against the former dissident; finally, the major portion of the book, 'The Poverty of Theory', a new essay, is a sustained onslaught against Louis Althusser and his disciples. It is a defence of History (and of humanity as the creative and active agent in it) against their mechanistic 'Theory'.

'The Poverty of Theory' is intelligent, informed, passionate, lucid, and in places extremely funny. It's very obviously an IMPORTANT book, and it's a pleasure to read. What more do you want?

J. C.

The national 'Solidarity' magazine has little to differentiate it from other good anarchist publications. It seems reluctant to challenge the fashions of the Left, e.g. NF obsession, etc. The old 'Solidarity' magazine was at its best when being heretical.

I like your publications because of their serious consideration of the problems and possibilities of work-place struggles. The Trots are uncritically opportunistic in relation to the unions and are really only interested in gaining leadership positions within the bureaucracy. Unfortunately some anarchists are eager to dismiss all union activity - indeed, all real struggles involving the real concerns of real people - as futile reformism.

I think your best pamphlets have done much to stimulate the much needed discussion amongst revolutionary union militants about what we are trying to achieve, the obstacles placed in our way by the 'official' union structure, and the way in which workers are confused and intimidated by it.

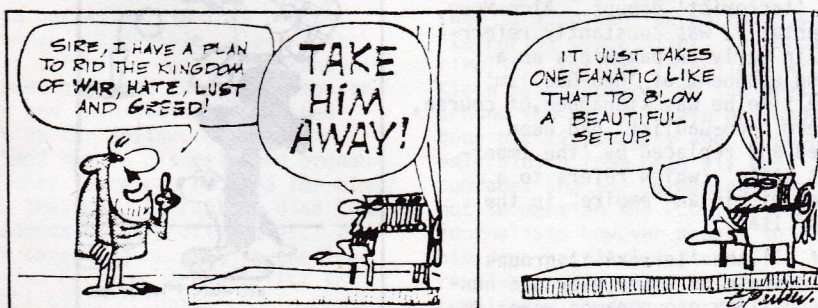
I like the style and analysis of your Motor Bulletins but why do you limit yourselves to the motor industry? Is it deliberate or coincidental? Is it because you are active in the industry or have contacts there? Do you see it as particularly in need of or ripe for agitation? Or - if it doesn't sound too pretentious - do you see it as an extreme and significant symptom of modern capitalism?

I think there is great scope for an organisation and publication which provides a forum for communication and cooperation by non-party union militants. What is needed is not a general vision of Utopia but detailed analysis of work-place struggles in different industries from which we can all gain insights.

Frankly, I cannot understand why you decided to merge with such an unremarkable and superficial group as Social Revolution. I assume it was the result of a desire to become more 'agitational' and to grow in numbers. Time will tell, but I suspect that the merger will only hinder or distract you from bringing out the kind of publications which have been greatly appreciated by anarchists like myself.

Anyway, keep up the good work!

T. P., Corby.



ARMED STRUGGLE AND TERRORISM

MOST revolutionaries have an opinion on what is called 'armed struggle' by its supporters or 'terrorism' by its opponents. Unfortunately these opinions are usually based on very little fact. Rarely is any attempt made to try to understand what the various groups involved in these activities say and do. I feel that several comrades who have been involved with putting certain issues of this magazine together have been allowed to get away with uninformed comment.

In some cases this has appeared like Solidarity taking a premature and ill-informed position on cases involving people who have been arrested, charged and even condemned for various offences. This is not to say that a 'good' comrade is one who blindly gives total support to any arrested person, no matter what they say or do (or more importantly fail to say and do). However it can also be regarded as irresponsible to allow some members of Solidarity to make premature judgements on cases which we naturally know very little about and so commit the group to a 'position'.

This article is an attempt to introduce some factual material into a debate which is too often conducted with arguments based on hearsay, clichés, antiquated ideas and political manipulation of information by those powerful interest groups (police, secret service, etc) which require an 'enemy within' to justify their existence.

In the last issue of Solidarity there was a small item on the penultimate page regarding 'Persons Unknown'. This item not only bordered on suggesting that the six comrades concerned may have done what they are accused of doing but also started off with extremely ignorant, neo-Grauniad comments on what the author chose to call 'terrorist' activities.



"Whilst 'Solidarity' repudiates the 'terrorist' activities which anarchist groups have sometimes engaged in", it began, "it is clear that the six anarchists charged with 'conspiracy to cause unknown explosions with persons unknown' are the victims of state terror." In fact the main ideological basis of late 20th century 'armed struggle' groups is no longer 'anarchism' but marxism-leninism. Groups such as the Red Brigades, for instance, argue that as the crisis of capitalist society deepens, the space for the application of reformist policies becomes ever more limited and so the ruling class will inevitably resort to militaristic solutions. The 'working class' must organise to combat the militarisation of the State and to help it to do this the 'armed party' of the proletariat must be formed.

The tasks of this 'armed party' include the fight against imperialism, solidarity with the forces of national liberation in third world countries, and the spreading of this type of struggle amongst wider and wider sections of 'society'. Owing to various 'crises' (e.g. the collapse of various M-L work-place organisations, and so on) experienced by European M-List groups, various changes have taken place in the 'ideological' formulations used by the urban guerrilla groups. The terms 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie' have been replaced by the terms 'society' and the 'State'. The biggest danger, the Brigade Rosse (BR) have argued, is not from the restoration of the traditional form of - fascism, but from the rise of "neo-Gaullist" fascism, which whilst it is still a variant of fascism still manages to maintain the facade of 'bourgeois democracy'. "White shirted fascists" is a term often used in connection with this type of analysis and in the Italian context usually refers to leading elements of the Christian Democrat Party. The Communist Party has now associated itself so emphatically with the Christian Democrats that they are also targets for the BR and other 'terrorist' groups. Aldo Moro, incidentally, was constantly referred to in early BR pamphlets as a leading exponent of 'neo-Gaullism'. By the time he was kidnapped, of course, the term 'neo-Gaullist' had been dropped and replaced by 'the Imperialist State' (which refers to a "state" within an "empire" in the case of Italy).

Of all the 'terrorist' groups which operate in Italy (over one hundred and fifty group names were ide-

ntified last year alone) only one group has been identified as being anarchist. This group is called "Azione Rivoluzionaria".

Italian armed-struggle groups can be roughly categorised into two groups according to ideological origins. The BR are, of course, the leading exponents of the 'marxist-leninist' variant. The second type can be called "workerists" (post-68 marxist groupuscules) and they tend to be more temporary organisations floating in and around the "area of autonomy". They share the M-List belief that the increasing lack of space for reformist policies will lead the State towards increasing militarisation but strongly disagree with the BR over the emphasis to be given to "building the armed party". The 'workerists' argue that the wider political struggle is far more important and look on armed struggle as only a part of this wider struggle. The BR, on the other hand, argue that "it is around guerrilla warfare that the resistance movement and the area of autonomy can build itself and organise and not vice versa." (from 'Risoluzione della direzione strategica' dated April 1975, and reprinted in the book "Brigate Rosse" by 'Soccorso Rosso', Feltrinelli editors, Milan).

The most outstanding element in Azione Rivoluzionaria's (AR) analysis is its rejection of the "myth of the industrial proletariat as the revolutionary class". Rampant workerism, they argue, even in the most 'revolutionary' of groups, almost inevitably leads to incorporation by the system's political parties (e.g. the PCI).

AR's analysis emphasises many political issues which anarchists and libertarians have supported and still support - the anti-nuke struggle,

cont'd p.9 (after colour supplement)





the struggle against increasing bureaucratisation and centralisation, the need to enter into struggle without 'intermediaries', the struggle against the family and patriarchy - and they propose a 'project' involving the establishment of a balanced decentralised society with direct democracy and a humanitarian technology. They see this project as not only desirable but as a necessity.

They also share the view, along with all the other similar groups that as the crisis deepens the 'statist forces' (parties and organisations which depend on the State for their existence) will increasingly tighten their ranks in preparation for the final struggle (King Arthur and Tolkien revisited?). However, this is not their main reason for choosing to embark on this form of struggle. In order to build the sort of society we all need, they argue, *"a critical and constructive presence is necessary, but it must be accompanied by a negative and destructive one."* (see 'Freedom's' Anarchist Review of the 9th November 1978).

Most of AR's actions in 1977 were directed against property and 'special prisons' under construction. There were also attacks on German car showrooms, 'La Stampa' newspaper office in Turin, the IPCA factory just outside Turin (where many of its workers have been consistently dying of cancer), and the electronic instruments firm 'Kalle Infotex'. Two people were shot in the legs in 1977. One of these was Alberto Mammoli who was the prison doctor at Pisa in May 1972 at the time of the death of the young anarchist Franco Serrantini in that prison and hence responsible, along with others, for his death. Serrantini had been arrested during a demonstration and then seriously smashed about by the police. Mammoli examined him in his cell and pronounced that there was no need for him to be treated. Serrantini died from his wounds shortly afterwards. The other person to be shot in the legs was Nino Ferrero, a journalist for the PCI daily 'L'Unita'.

What the Persons Unknown case highlights is that there is throughout Europe a new type of McCarthyism, but instead of McCarthy's traditional 'enemies of the American Way of Life' the new 'enemies' are 'terrorists' and 'terrorist sympathisers'. In both Germany and Italy, "terrorist sympathisers" include anyone who tries to rationally analyse what these various groups are doing, what their various arguments are, and so on. When one of the founders of a now defunct post-68 workerist group (Oreste Scalzone of 'Potere Operaio' in Italy) wrote an article in which he said that the BR are not part of an 'international conspiracy' aimed at overthrowing the Italian Republic (the PCI's favourite argument) but are, in fact, a home grown by-product of 1968, he was accused of being a 'terrorist' himself and the Communists publicly urged the police to immediately arrest this man who obviously must know more than he is letting on.

With this kind of orchestration going on it was particularly displeasing to see how the Scottish comrades presented (or rather failed to present) the Mahler document in SFSR 5. As it stood this document was nothing more than a blank reiteration of the views of whichever party Mahler joined while still in prison.

Another interesting but more spectacular example of wicked 'terrorist' turned sympathetic persecuted 'saint' is the case of Joachim Klein - an ex-member of the rapidly disintegrating 'urban guerrilla' movement and purportedly close friend of Jean-Paul Sartre (who is also considered to be a 'terrorist sympathiser' in certain circles). Various interviews with Klein have appeared in the press around the world. Klein has undergone plastic surgery and is supposedly hiding from both his ex-comrades and the German authorities, not to mention the PLO. Piss-artist journalists however manage to track him down regularly. Klein's revelations in these interviews completely condemn 'terrorism' and

confirm the delirious accounts that appear in papers like the Daily Express and Daily Telegraph aimed at proving KGB, PLO and even Satanic involvement in all 'terrorist' groups.

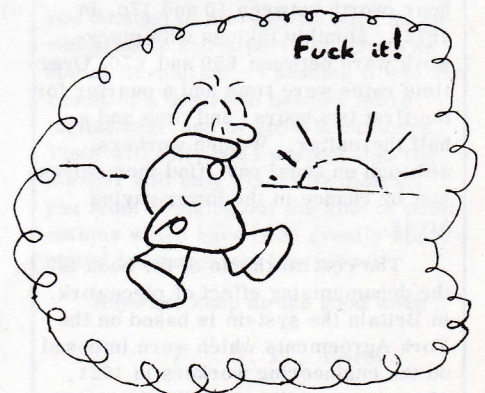
These groups, furthermore, appear to hold regular international meetings, the transcripts of which fall regularly into the hands of these brave reporters. These meetings are also claimed to be held between representatives of groups including the BR, RAF, IRA (with no mention of which faction, Provo or Official), PLO, Japanese Red Army, Nicaraguan Sandinistas, Monteneros, etc., etc....

Will 'terrorist' activities by - isolated groups of individuals lead to the revolution? Of course it won't! However, although it is never specifically said, there is an underlying hint that there is only one path and only one valid type of activity which can bring about the revolution, and Solidarity knows what it is. This attitude also betrays a certain amount of unhealthy 'workerism'.

In fact Solidarity's manifesto 'As We Don't See It' makes it quite clear that there is not one single way of achieving 'socialism' though the requisites of 'socialism' are, quite rightly, well defined.

Another argument which is often used is that such things are part of the past and so not worth any attention now. However, in an increasingly bureaucratized society, in which 'private property' as a basis of power becomes more and more irrelevant and the 'working class' (they don't make 'em like that any more!) becomes increasingly difficult to define, the same arguments do not necessarily still apply. It is clear in fact that 'armed struggle' or 'terrorism' is a by-product of the struggles of 1968 and is a growing phenomenon in some countries often involving young people, and not so young people, who have experienced a wide range of political activism over many years. In my opinion, therefore, it merits at least informed attention. Let's avoid falling into self-managed ignorance!

N.S.



REVIEW

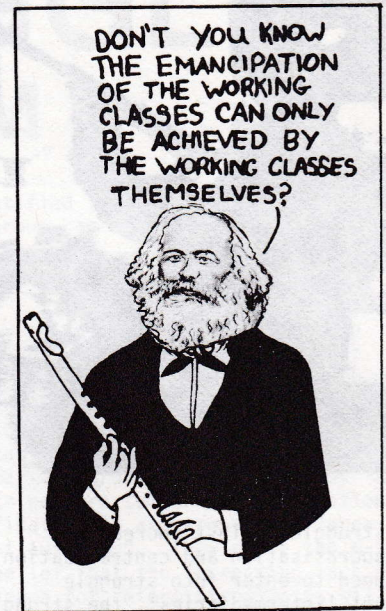
'A Worker in a Workers' State' by Miklos Haraszti. Penguin, 85p.

The author of this book was already famous in Hungary as a poet and song writer. He had already twice been jailed by the stalinist authorities for his opinions. After being released following a hunger strike, he went to work as a milling machine operator at the Red Star Tractor Works in Budapest, and it is his experiences there which are the subject of this marvellous book. As a result of this text he was arrested yet again.

The situation described inside the plant will be painfully familiar to any -

is far, far worse. For example there is no mutuality clause, which means that no agreement is needed before a price is established. Piecework is used as a carrot to increase production. And increased production is used as an excuse to reduce rates. Talk about Catch 22! As a result piecework prices can be, and are, continually reduced.

Aside from its penetrating description and analysis of a particular plant in a particular country, the book is full insights which have a much wider relevance. I quote a reference to football: 'Football, a competitive sport. Only rarely, when a sportsman falters, does it cross our minds that we finance this planned world of artificial competition, and that we keep it going in ways of which we are unaware.



A WORKER IN

one who has ever been on piecework in an engineering shop. It is permeated with the smell of cooling fluid and hot metal. Everything is there: the bitter struggles with the rafterixers, the jokes, the graffiti, the tension. But things are just that much worse than their British equivalent. For example, the role of foremen. 'The foremen fix our pay, our jobs, our overtime, our bonuses, and the deductions for excessive rejects. They decide when we go on holiday, write character reports on us for any arm of the state which requests them, pass on assessments of those who apply for further training or request a passport. They supervise trade union activities in the section. They hire and fire, arrange transfers, grant leave, im-

By identifying with a particular team each of us trains himself for competition. We believe the press and television when they incessantly plug the idea that competition - within sport and outside it - is itself a magnificent aim of life, and that the victorious are a marvellous breed. Factory slang is dominated by the language of competitive sport: 'to deliver a K.O.', 'to run into the ground', and so on. In short, we accept the fact of competition and its spirit, and so cannot even pose the question of whether it could be replaced by cooperation in life and work, or why competition has come to dominate our conditions of life'. (p.69) The association of mass spectator sports with the rise of capitalism is no coincidence; it is there-

production. One last quotation from Haraszti which could apply to any factory:

'They don't even need to admit what everyone knows, namely that they cannot count on any information coming from us, who actually operate the machines. On the contrary, the whole of their "science" is aimed at overcoming our instinctive, unremitting sabotage. Perhaps in some places this enemy science really does have the means of escaping sabotage, and of reckoning what we are capable of, here and now, as wage workers implementing an alien will. But it has no idea of what we would or could do in its place, on our own account. Our sabotage is nothing other than a refusal to

A WORKERS' STATE

pose fines, give bonuses'. (pp.86-87)

Basic rates were appallingly low. The author received 8.50 forints an hour (worth between 10 and 17p. in 1972). Monthly takings with piecework were between £50 and £70. Overtime rates were time and a quarter for the first two hours, and time and a half thereafter. Women workers, although on equal pay, find themselves just by chance in the lower paying areas.

The central theme of the book is the dehumanising effect of piecework. In Britain the system is based on the York Agreements which were imposed on the engineering workers in 1921, after the most disastrous defeat ever. Yet in 'socialist' Hungary the system

fore not surprising that the regimes of Eastern Europe should place such emphasis on sport.

Perhaps the sole saving grace of the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe and elsewhere is their grotesque 'inefficiency'. In spite of the appalling regime at the point of production and throughout society, and in spite (or perhaps because of) an ever increasing army of administrators (even here the parallels with the West are close) productivity is very low: about half what it is in the West. This puts the finger on the real problem: the ruling classes of both East and West can oppress and regiment the working class but they cannot obtain their unconditional cooperation in

give away our knowledge and experience: the form which it takes is to falsify them. But can one still talk of being scientific when the workers see science as their enemy? We haven't the slightest interest in the possibilities of rationalisation and if we ever become aware of them, we conceal the fact. We reduce the effectiveness of new technology as much as we can and we sabotage its further development'.

One of the weaknesses of the book (perhaps understandably in view of the fact that the text was circulated openly in Hungary itself, and of the low level of production actually achieved) is that workers' resistance may go much further than described. I feel that there



is an area of 'diplomatic silence' here, although there is an excellent chapter dealing with 'homers', i.e. work which workers produce unofficially in the plant for their own direct consumption.

Another fault in the book is the suggestion, both explicit and implicit, that the situation described is in some way an aberration, that good old Lenin would be rotating in his mausoleum if only he knew about the introduction of piecework and Taylorism. In view of the widespread smokescreen emitted in this area by latter-day Leninists, it is worth reiterating that it was Lenin who was, from 1918 on, mainly responsible for introducing Taylorism and all its ramifications (and so was Trotsky for that matter). (See Lenin, 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government', Selected Works, vol. VII. For more information on this crucial subject, read 'The Bolsheviks and Workers Control' by Maurice Brinton, Solidarity, £1.)

There are a few technical translation faults. I found the constant use of 'warf' instead of 'swarf' particularly irritating, but this is just carping. The book should be read by socialists. But, more importantly, it should be read by workers, especially those who still have any illusions that the 'socialist' regimes have anything whatsoever to do with socialism. Not only is it a useful antidote to this nonsense but it also gives an insight into the life, work and struggles of that large - and often forgotten - section of the international working class which has already shown - for example in Hungary in 1956 - its revolutionary potential. We shall hear from them again.

K. W.

'Political Imprisonment in the People's Republic of China'. Amnesty International Publications (1978), 10 Southampton St., London WC2E 7HF. £2.

A clear and careful report of the laws in China providing for imprisonment on political grounds, of the 'judicial' process, and of prison and labour camp conditions. Admirers of the Chinese regime may want to protect themselves against knowing about such things by rejecting the information, mainly from refugees' accounts, as biased. Amnesty point out that the testimony is convincing because the accounts of people who do not know each other often present the same picture of penal practice, and can sometimes be further corroborated by official documents or statements.

A broad panoply of punishments is available for political and ordinary offences: 'supervised labour', 'rehabilitation through labour', 'reform through labour', life imprisonment, death penalty suspended for two years, immediate execution. Some 'crimes' really happen - like people keeping 'revisionist' diaries, or the 13-year-old boy jailed for three years for shouting 'Long live Liu Shao-chi!' despite his father's attempts to shut him up. Cases are more often fabricated by cadres under pressure to show results, in campaigns to 'root out the hidden class enemy'. The accused almost always pleads guilty: refusal to admit guilt is an aggravating circumstance which can mean death.

China is covered by a net of prisons and camps - from the village cowshed to big detention centres in

GANG OF 4 MILLION

the towns, from the prison-farms to the railway construction camps of tents on the icy steppes of the Great North Wilderness. A medium-sized city like Tientsin has several execution sites.

Many details will be familiar if you've read 'Gulag Archipelago'. As in the stalinist camps, prisoners are called 'enemies of the people' and 'counter-revolutionaries'. The layout of the camp watchtowers, the lining-up routine, the ration scales which keep prisoners always hungry: all the same. So is the really vicious circle in which, as you become weaker and produce less, your ration is cut, making you weaker still... Only geographically is the situation different from Russia: as there is

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less forest, lumber camps figure less.

The main difference from Russia is psychological. The Russian rulers have long been satisfied to exploit prisoners economically without bothering too much with indoctrination. The Chinese rulers obsessively monitor the thoughts of each and every inhabitant. In daily reeducation sessions prisoners are expected to admit their guilt, inform on one another, support Party policy, praise the Government's leniency (so little deserved) in giving them the chance to expiate their crimes and become 'new people'. Each cell of prisoners demo-

CHINA



cratically fixes its members' rations, under the leadership of the activist, taking into account each person's output and ideological progress (i.e. degree of submission).

It is not easy to understand this system of despotism. We may recognise important aspects - the determination of a bureaucracy to retain power, its faction fights, the exploitation of the labour of the masses to build up the industrial and military might of the national State. But do political and economic motives fully explain the quasi-religious mania which may not be under the complete control even of the priesthood? And how then can such a system be fought?

Stefan.

The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the Italian Communist Party are currently waging a campaign to secure the rehabilitation of N.I. Bukharin, the most prominent victim of Stalin's show trials. In the words of the PCI historian Paolo Spriano:

"The need to do justice to the eminent representative of the international communist movement, as well as to the other victims of the trials of the '30s, is not merely a problem concerning their historical merit, but a moral and political necessity."

A crucial point here is that there is a far greater necessity to do justice to the millions who died without the privilege of even a phony trial. Even if we limit the discussion to Communists we may reasonably ask why Bukharin et al should have a greater claim to justice than the members of the Workers' Opposition, the Democratic Centralists, Workers' Truth or the hundreds of thousands of rank and file Party members who perished.

The campaign's focus calls the motives of its initiators into very severe question. Even if we were to accept some pragmatic argument that the rehabilitation of Bukharin is a possibly achievable objective and would open the door to a more substantial recovery of Russian history, the PCI has yet to examine the role of its former leader, Palmiro Togliatti.

In 1956 Togliatti quite rightly pointed out that in attributing all that was evil to Stalin's faults "the true problems are evaded, which are why and how Soviet society could and did reach certain forms alien to the democratic way, even to the point of degeneration."

The short answer is because men like Togliatti were prepared to serve Stalin, and condemn those they knew to be innocent of any crime.

In 1927 Togliatti and Silone, the Italian representatives on the Comintern Executive refused to denounce a document of Trotsky's without having read it. Silone later resigned, but Togliatti must have decided to trim his sails to the prevailing wind.

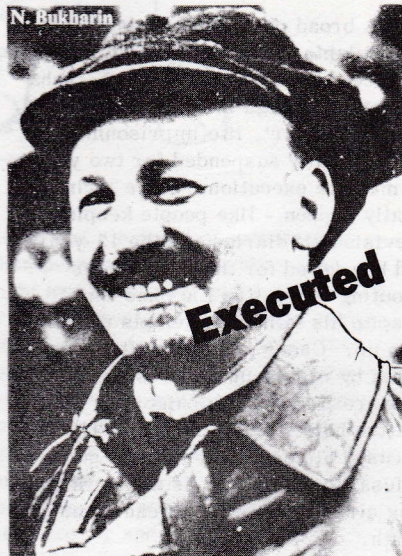
Sometime between 1928 and 1933 (Serge is vague about the date) Rossi (Angelo Tasca), then still a member of the Comintern Executive, planned to win over a majority of the PCI Central Committee and offer support to Bukharin. He was betrayed by Togliatti and expelled.

At the time of the 1936 Trial Togliatti wrote of "bandits" plotting "sacrilegious crimes". To him the trial was "a touchstone of our class vigilance".

During the next few years about 200 Italian Communists in Russia were to vanish. Togliatti's brother-in-law Paoli Robotti was one of the lucky ones, he was eventually released with permanent injuries to his spine. Evgenia Ginsberg tells of an Italian

WE HAVE WAYS

John Bergin



woman Communist being beaten and hosed down with ice water in the Yaroslavl isolator.

Togliatti went well beyond mere connivance however. As 'Ercoli', the Comintern representative in Spain, he was responsible for the suppression (by firing squads) of the Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (POUM) and, in particular, the brutal murder of its leader, Andras Nin.

Whether the PCI's new found passion for justice will extend to acknowledging its own part in this hideous crime remains to be seen. But even in 1956 Togliatti was still trying to concoct a formula that would enable the show trial verdicts to survive Khrushchev's revelations:

"...there existed simultaneously two elements; the conspiratorial attempts of the opponents against the regime to commit terrorist acts; and the application of illegal prosecuting methods, censurable on a moral basis."

Even if we allow Togliatti's complicity to pass unchallenged, the Bukharin campaign still raises major

problems; it may perhaps be over-cynical to see it as being intended for domestic effect - establishing the PCI's independence vis-a-vis Moscow and making intellectually respectable noises - rather than its ostensible purpose.

The fundamental problem of the campaign, as the PCI must appreciate, is that the legal forms were, however superficially, complied with in the trials, and Bukharin's confession was made in open court before witnesses from the 'fraternal' parties.

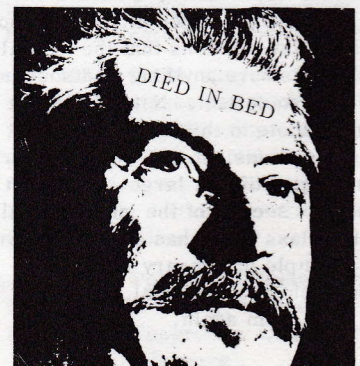
This was the aspect that so disturbed Maurice Thorez of the French CP that he flew to Moscow in 1956 specifically to request the Russians not to discredit the foreign CPs by reopening the cases. In any case Khrushchev appreciated the problem and confined rehabilitation to minor figures in the trials and those who had not appeared in court at all.

Since 1964 there have been no rehabilitations even in these categories. The extraordinary case of Raskolnikov, rehabilitated under Khrushchev and de-rehabilitated since, has already been mentioned in this paper and indicates the degree of unwillingness of the present Russian leadership to move forward in this area, even in relatively unsensitive cases.

The rehabilitation of Nikolai Bukharin, pointing as it does to the rehabilitation of all the other show trial victims and even (dare we say it?) of Trotsky himself, is clearly unthinkable in this context. The sticking point is his confession which was a dilemma for Khrushchev and is an iron-clad excuse for inactivity for his successors.

This article addresses the problem of the confessions. It must however be borne in mind throughout that, although such discussion sheds light on the nature of Stalin's regime, the focus is very narrow. We are talking here of a few dozen men some, if not all, of whom had real crimes to expiate.

The point is that it was not for these crimes that they died. God must exist, concluded Yagoda, the former chief of the secret police, because from Stalin he deserved nothing but gratitude, but from God the fate that had actually overtaken him.



CONFESSION AND SURVIVAL

The most extraordinary aspect of the Stalin Terror was that men like Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Radek, internationally famous revolutionaries, the most senior of the Old Bolsheviks, admitted openly that they had been conspiring against the Revolution and publically repented their crimes.

Espionage, wrecking, undermining Soviet military power, provoking a military attack on the USSR, plotting its dismemberment and the overthrowing of the social system in favour of a return to capitalism; these were the charges against Bukharin and the "Bloc of Rights & Trotskyites".

They, the "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre" and the "Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre" had been agents for Germany, Japan, Britain and Poland, Tsarist agents in the underground, had actually assassinated Kirov and Maxim Gorki and plotted the deaths of Stalin, Kaganovitch et al.

It goes without saying, now, that none of these charges had any basis in reality, not even "objectively", in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist cant. Even at the time this was obvious to some observers. There was not a shred of evidence against the accused, and, as Radek pointed out in his examination, without the confessions there could have been no trials.

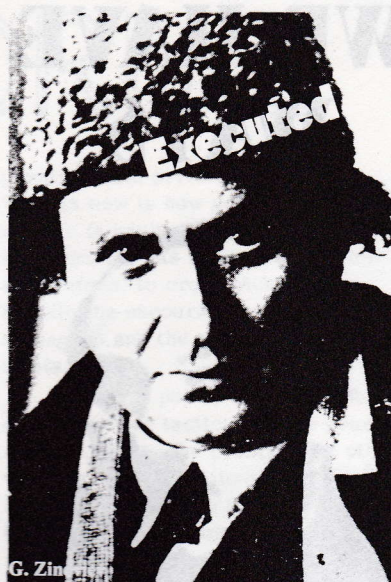
This is not, of course, to say that the trials were in any way necessary. Men of comparable importance, Chubar, Kossior, Tukhachevsky and Ordzhonikidze for example, were executed without such formalities.

However the trials were seen by Stalin as desirable, and, clearly, cases in which there was no evidence and the accused denied their guilt would seem weak by any standards.

Why then did so many, Party and non-Party, Russian and non-Russian alike, confess to crimes that they had not committed, which had never even existed except in the imaginations of their accusers, or, as with the Kirov assassination, had actually been perpetrated by Stalin himself, thus legitimising their own deaths?

A basic reason for confessing was self-preservation. Admitting one's guilt to capital offences might seem an odd way to go about this, but under Stalin's system not confessing was the certain guarantee of execution. All the principal defendants were promised their lives in exchange for cooperation but as, after Zinoviev & Co, each knew that their predecessors had in fact been executed the offer can, in itself, have carried little weight.

A few men did win this desperate gamble and escaped the death penalty. But they, Radek and Sokolnikov for example, died in labour camps anyway.



HOSTAGES AND THE CONVEYOR

The use of hostages was a major feature of the Terror. A section of the infamous Article 58 of the Criminal Code made it an offence, carrying a 5 to 8 year sentence, to be a Member of the Family of a Traitor to the Fatherland. This covered wives, parents and siblings, and, since a 1935 decree which lowered the age of criminal responsibility to 12, children.

Kamenev, among many others, made special reference to his family in his final plea and many of the major confessors, Bukharin, Rykov and Krestinsky for example, are known to have been extremely attached to their children, while some at least of the non-confessors had no families. It might be noted in passing that the Tsarist regime never took reprisals against revolutionaries' families.

Physical torture was used long before 1937, though technically against

regulations, but was officially, though secretly, authorised in late 1936. It produced very quick results, but can hardly, on its own, have effected the self-negation required for a major role in the trials.

Slower and more certain, but just as unable to guarantee the necessary reliability in court, was the Conveyor - continual interrogation for days on end, with complete deprivation of food and sleep. The average time needed to produce a confession was 2-3 days. The anarchist Eisenberg is reputed to have resisted the Conveyor for 31 days, after which he was given up as a bad job and sent to a lunatic asylum.

Both torture and the Conveyor suffered from the defect that, though able to break most men, they could only bend the weaker of them. This was clearly demonstrated in the early show trials. The Metro-Vickers Trial is characterised by the lack of importance the accused attached to their own or anybody else's confession. Thornton, one of the 6 Britons in the dock, particularly annoyed the judges by treating his confession as an irrelevance, hardly worth withdrawing.

Several of the defendants in the 1928 Shakhty Case denied the charges to the end, and the whole business is notable for the shoddiness of the stage management. As Eugene Lyons observed:

"Every so often... some casual statement or incident would light up the depths. Sometimes these flashes left us limp with the impact of horrors half-glimpsed. What had driven the man to madness? What had transpired in the GPU dungeons and interrogation chambers in the months since the men were rounded up? How did men like Krylenko, who sneered and snarled while the world looked on, behave when there were no witnesses and no public records?"

THE LONG INTERROGATION

A more sophisticated method was found that solved these problems - the long interrogation. This lasted 4-5 months on average, though 2 years and more were not unheard of. The key factors were insufficient sleep, which produced psychological disorders, inadequate diet, which induced debilitation, scurvy, etc, and relays of interrogators working on an irregular schedule. Sooner or later prisoners became disorientated and very few came through this process without surrendering.

Among those few were old revolutionaries, such as Shlyapnikov, the man who actually ran the Bolshevik Party inside Russia while Lenin played emigre politics, and Bundists, hardened by years in Tsarist and Soviet jails and invariably better Marxists than their interrogators. One Bund veteran is reputed to have worn out several teams of

investigators before being shot out of hand.

The long interrogation is depicted in detail in 'L'Aveu', a film by Costa-Gavras which is based on the definitive account of show trial mechanics, 'On Trial' by Artur London, one of the two survivors of the Slansky Trial held in Czechoslovakia in 1952.

The confessions have been seen as a peculiarly Russian phenomenon, and the confessors' self-abasement explained in terms of the Slavic psyche. Bukharin specifically repudiated the notion of the "âme slave" and it is definitely unsatisfactory. Adequate, indeed exemplary, confessions were obtained in the Bulgarian Pastors Trial of 1949 and the Slansky Trial. However it must be remembered that 4 of the 5 Politburo members who did not appear in court were non-Russian, and that although the Party in Georgia suffered disproportionately, because of Stalin's personal vendettas, no Georgian was produced.

DESTRUCTION OF THE SELF

For the motley group of Party confessors, the unifying factor was that for them confession and self-abasement was simply the final step in a series of submissions to the Party. Trotsky made a very precise formulation of the ethic that inspired them:

"None of us desires or is able to dispute the will of the Party. Clearly the Party is always right... we can only be right by and with the Party, for history has provided no other way of being in the right... and if the Party adopts a decision which one or other of us thinks unjust, he will say, just or unjust, it is my Party and I shall support the consequences of the decision to the end." (1924)

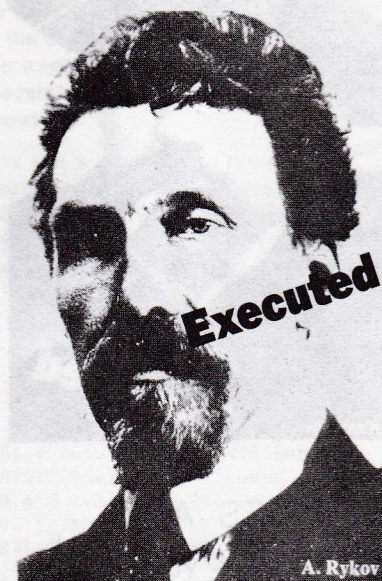
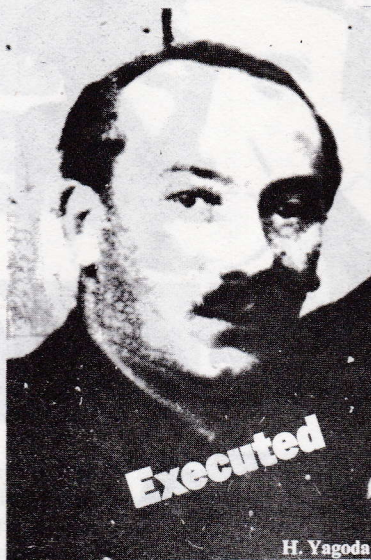
In his own case "the end" proved to be an ice-pick.

This moral and intellectual abdication, admittedly in varying degrees, typified the confessors. They had all been subjected to, and swallowed, specific indignities prior to their trials. Zinoviev had three times accepted the most humiliating conditions to gain readmission to the Party, finally assuming political responsibility for the assassination of Kirov, a position that led quickly, and indeed logically, to criminal liability.

Though Zinoviev was the readiest to grovel, all his fellow accused had at one time or another capitulated to the will of the Party and renounced, or, rather, denounced, their own views and begged for forgiveness. In many ways their behaviour in court was merely consistent.

The idea that the confessors were serving the Party by sacrific-

WE HAVE WAYS



K. Radek



ing themselves when it required their trials and executions gained currency from Koestler's "Darkness At Noon". That such a rationale did exist seems at least credible. The men who confessed were trapped in a web of their own making. Unlike the Ryutin group, whose members, despite Stalin's express wishes, could not be brought to trial, they accepted the legitimacy of Stalin's leadership. As Bukharin put it, in 1935: "It is not him we trust, but the man in whom the Party has reposed its confidence."

Stalin's Party was, clearly, very different from Lenin's, but the oppositionists had no grounds for criticising the methods he had used to transform it; they themselves had used similar methods in the past and had been out-manoeuvred by a more skilful manipulator. As Mikoyan remarked: "While Zinoviev is in the majority he is for iron discipline... in the minority he is against it."

More fundamentally they had assisted, even in Lenin's time, in creating the means of their own destruction. As Shlyapnikov bitterly pointed out, Trotsky and his followers had supported the action taken against the Workers' Opposition in 1921, so their claims to stand for Party democracy were simply hypocritical.

Nor did the oppositionists have much to offer. Again unlike the Ryutin group, they had no coherent political programmes and, in the last analysis, merely represented alternative leaderships which, with the possible exception of Bukharin, had little to recommend them. Anton Ciliga quotes a Trotskyite as saying: "No doubt Trotsky would have done it with more go and less brutality, and we, who are more cultured than Stalin's men, would have been at the top. But one should be able to rise above these ambitions."

Men so compromised by acceptance of the Party mystique and their own pasts that they could not even oppose Stalin's leadership, are men who can be credited with the words attributed to Pyatakov:

"There can be no life for me outside the Party, and I would be ready to believe that black is white and white is black, if the Party requires it. In order to become one with this great Party I would fuse myself with it, abandon my own personality, so that there is not one particle left inside me which is not at one with the Party."

The confessors were physically and morally exhausted men; 30 to 40 years of conspiracy, imprisonment, exile, civil war, of struggle, brutality and expediency, of fighting History itself, had drained them of energy. They lacked the strength and the will to fight a new campaign, to take on another enemy. Mdivani, a man of undoubted courage, said: "I belong to the opposition, that is clear. But if there is going to be a final break... I prefer to return to the Party I

helped create. I no longer have the strength to begin creating a new party."

Even so the confessions were not spontaneous, any more than previous submissions had been. It took three months to persuade Bukharin to confess, so he was not simply obeying the Party's orders. However he told the court that he hoped his execution would be "the last severe lesson" to those who wavered in their support of the USSR and its leadership.

Zinoviev made what was perhaps the best (Stalinist) case for total loyalty: "My defective Bolshevism became transformed into anti-Bolshevism, and through Trotskyism I arrived at Fascism. Trotskyism is a variety of Fascism, and Zinovievism is a variety of Trotskyism."

THE OTHERS

Party loyalty was, obviously, not a consideration that applied to non-Party accused such as the doctors in 1938 or the Bulgarian Pastors, and had little obvious influence on some Communists, such as Ryutin and his comrades. Ter-Vaganian's view, as reported in Orlov's 'Secret History of Stalin's Crimes', seems much more to the point:

"In order to sign the testimony which is demanded of me, I must first be sure that it is really needed in the interests of the Party and the Revolution..."

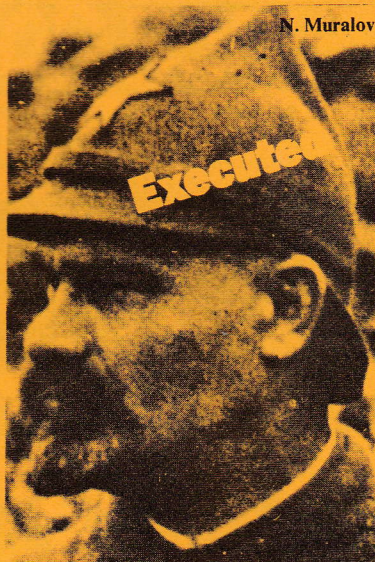
"You suggest that I do not think and rely blindly on the Central Committee (which) sees everything more clearly than I. But the trouble is that by my very nature I am unable to stop thinking. And when I do think I come to the inescapable conclusion that the assertions that the oldest Bolsheviks have turned into a gang of murderers will bring incalculable harm not only to our country and Party, but to the cause of socialism all over the world..."

"If now the new programme of the Central Committee deems it necessary to discredit Bolshevism and its founders, then I don't agree with that programme and I no longer consider myself bound by Party discipline. And besides, I am expelled from the Party, and for that reason alone am not obliged to submit to Party discipline."

Ter-Vaganian confessed anyway, persuaded that, since the far more important Zinoviev and Kamanev had, he might as well try and save his own life. As he signed he said: "Today I envy the most ignorant non-Party man." There were others who could not be shifted from such views.

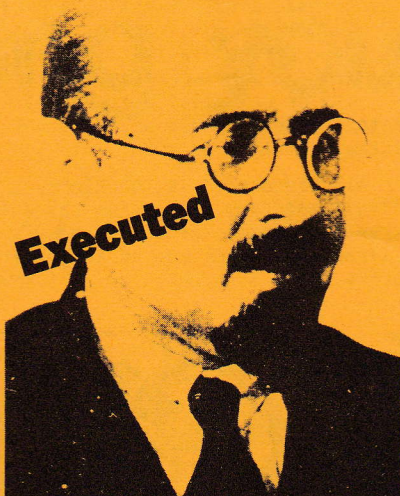
When a man has been offered his life, had his family threatened, been subjected to months of deprivation and interrogation and, finally, been appealed to in the name of the cause he has served all his life, we can hardly hope to determine which

WE HAVE WAYS

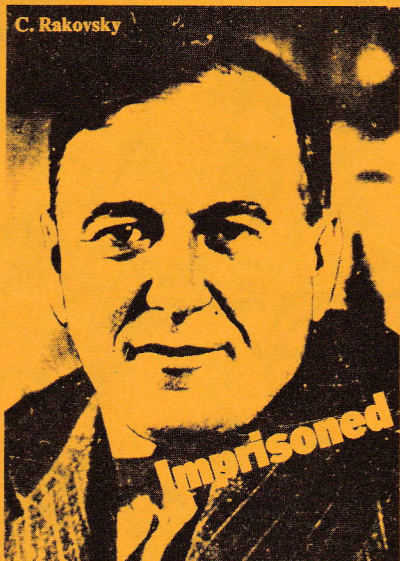


N. Muralov

N. Krestinsky



C. Rakovsky



consideration was the most important to him.

But there were those who did not confess at all, even under torture, the Spaniard El Campesino for example. Such men were, however, rare; one ex-prisoner asserts that of the 1000-odd men he had shared cells with at various times, only 12 had not been brought to confess.

Even so there was a qualitative difference between those whose capitulation was incomplete, who would not make reliable witnesses against themselves, and those who surrendered entirely. Usually this distinction was academic; most cases were never intended to be made public. Nonetheless confessions were required of all prisoners.

However, of the several hundred men reputedly intended to be tried in public, only 70-odd were actually produced. Of the 69 implicated in the Zinoviev case, 3 committed suicide and 43 simply disappeared. In the Pyatakov Trial only 17 men were in the dock, but their dossier numbers ran up to 36, and many of the low numbers, men presumably of comparable importance to Pyatakov (I), Radek (V) and Sokolnikov (VII), were missing. The implication, clearly, is that there was a very high failure rate.

PROBLEMS

There were also occasional errors of judgement; men who seemed to have been completely broken would recover themselves in court. However a single overnight session was invariably sufficient to deal with those who, like Krestinsky, tried to withdraw their confessions or make protests about their treatment.

A borderline case is that of Smirnov who only agreed to make a partial, and not very helpful, confession to avoid secret execution and save the lives of his ex-wife and his family (and is reported to have said, just before his execution: "We deserve this for our unworthy behaviour"). He was however exceptionally privileged; a genuine Trotskyite had been urgently required for the "Zinovievite-Trotskyite Terrorist Centre" and Smirnov was the best available, despite the minor problem of his having been in jail throughout the period concerned.

The discovery that ex-Trotskyites would do just as well eliminated the need to give so much leeway to a defendant.

There were, also, limits to what could be required even from more cooperative confessors. Bukharin absolutely refused to accept the charges that he had conspired against Lenin's life in 1918, and Yagoda, the former chief of the secret police, similarly stood out against confessing to espionage. At one point Yagoda told the judge: "You can drive me, but not too far."

I'll say what I want to say...but do not drive me too far." This was no bluff; Yagoda was one of the very few men who knew the truth about Kirov's assassination, and was thus uniquely qualified to ruin Stalin's plans, if not Stalin himself.

On a subtler level, that the prosecutors were never able to handle satisfactorily, were the intrusions of personality into the evidence. Yagoda's enigmatic evasions, Pyatakov's vague reservations, Bukharin's minutely studied phraseology are particular examples of the ways in which some of the accused were able to signal their innocence without significantly deviating from their confessions. So esoteric were these means of communication however that they were all but imperceptible to the uninitiated, so that non-Russians and non-Communists were, if anything, the easier to persuade of the authenticity of the trials.

Victor Serge, when asked to explain the mystery of the confessions, would give "the threefold Russian explanation, through selection of the defendants, their devotion to the Party, and the terror." So various were the pressures brought to bear upon the men (and women, though none appeared in court) that is impossible not to sympathise with them. Bukharin's widow is, or was recently, still alive; can we condemn such a bargain out of hand? By and large the promises about hostages were kept.

The alternatives were to die uncompromised in secret or to try and salvage something by taking part in Stalin's charades. In the abstract

the answer to this dilemma is easy, the human reality somewhat different.

The problem of the confessions is, of course, still with us. Of the principal defendants only Krestinsky, who tried to withdraw his confession, has been rehabilitated; the verdicts on Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Rykov, Rakovsky, Yagoda and, principally, Bukharin still stand, and no positive reference can be made to them, or to the arch-villain Trotsky whose henchmen they were, in the Soviet version of Russian and socialist history.

THE MYTHS

Millions of people therefore, not only Russians, are absorbing a version of history which is not only totally false, but which is periodically rewritten to accommodate the latest political developments. In the last 15 years there has been not the slightest effort to make this version correspond better with reality and indeed much of the truth conceded by Khrushchev has since been reclaimed.

The confessions are a problem because they teach a very significant lesson; that disagreement is, and can only be, treason. 'History' teaches that even Old Bolsheviks could, and did, become counter-revolutionaries, actually or objectively, it hardly matters which. Should anyone doubt it, they admitted as much.

All discussion is, therefore, illegitimate, any dissension can only serve the enemies of the revolution. Failures cannot be due to any fault in the Party line, which is always

correct, but to sabotage by hidden enemies.

The ideology based on this version of history is, obviously, of such immense value to Stalin's heirs that there seems virtually no prospect of their abandoning it for the sake of doing abstract justice to men 40 years dead.

As long as the Russian political system remains unchanged there is only one likely situation in which such justice will be done. Just as Khrushchev used 'violations of socialist legality' to destroy the older generation of Stalinists, so a post-1953 generation in the leadership may use the trials to destroy the older cadres. But like Khrushchev they may find it hard to define the limits of permissible discussion. Then perhaps we may see real justice being demanded for the real victims.

'The whole conduct of the (Left) Opposition was to be governed by this principle: "With Stalin against Bukharin? - yes. With Bukharin against Stalin? - never!'"

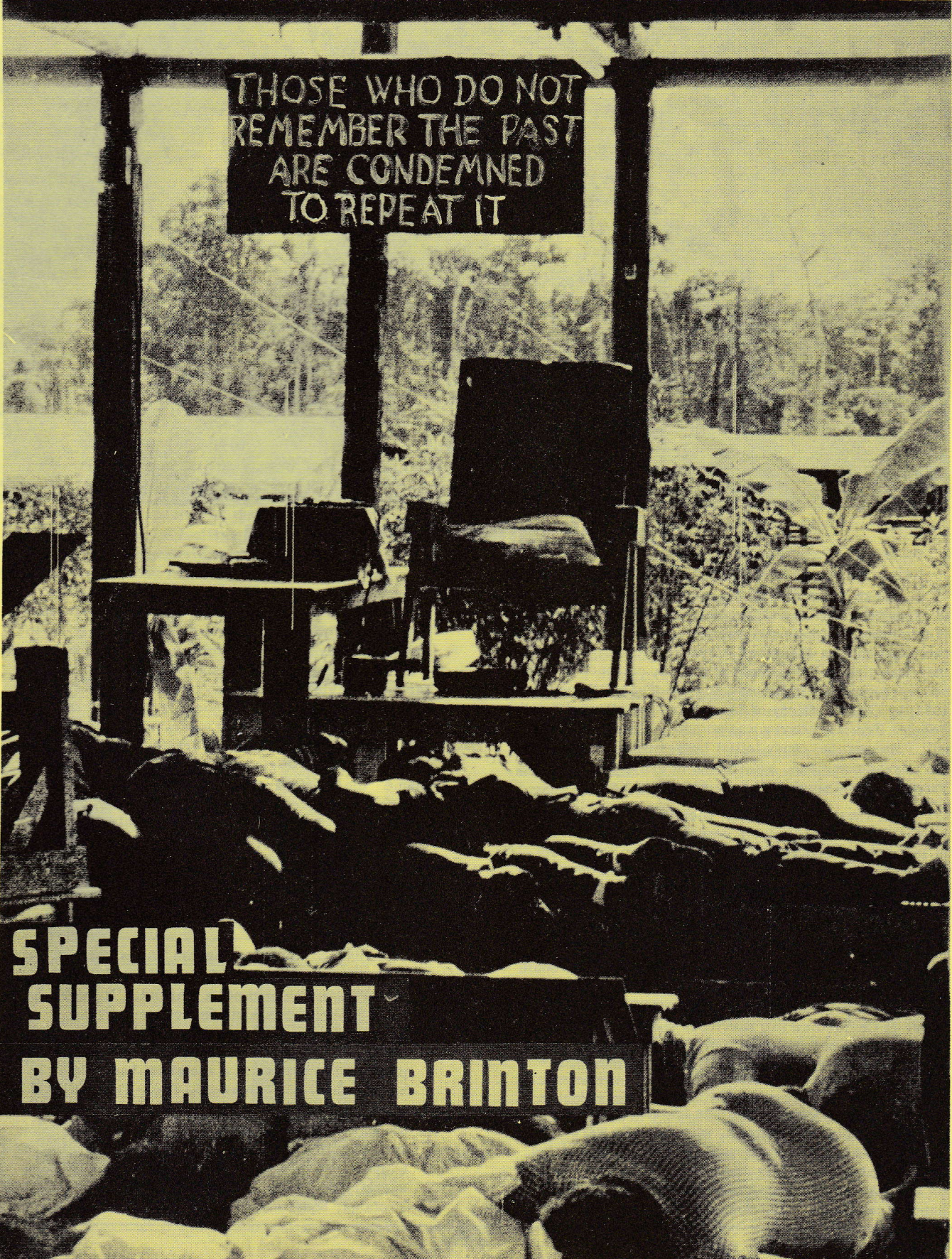
Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed (The Decisive Contest, 1926-7), p.315. OUP, 1959.

'A confession thus extracted leaves the guilt of the accused uncertain, while the barbarous means by which such evidence is obtained places beyond doubt the criminality of the judges.'

Sismondì.



SUICIDE FOR SOCIALISM?

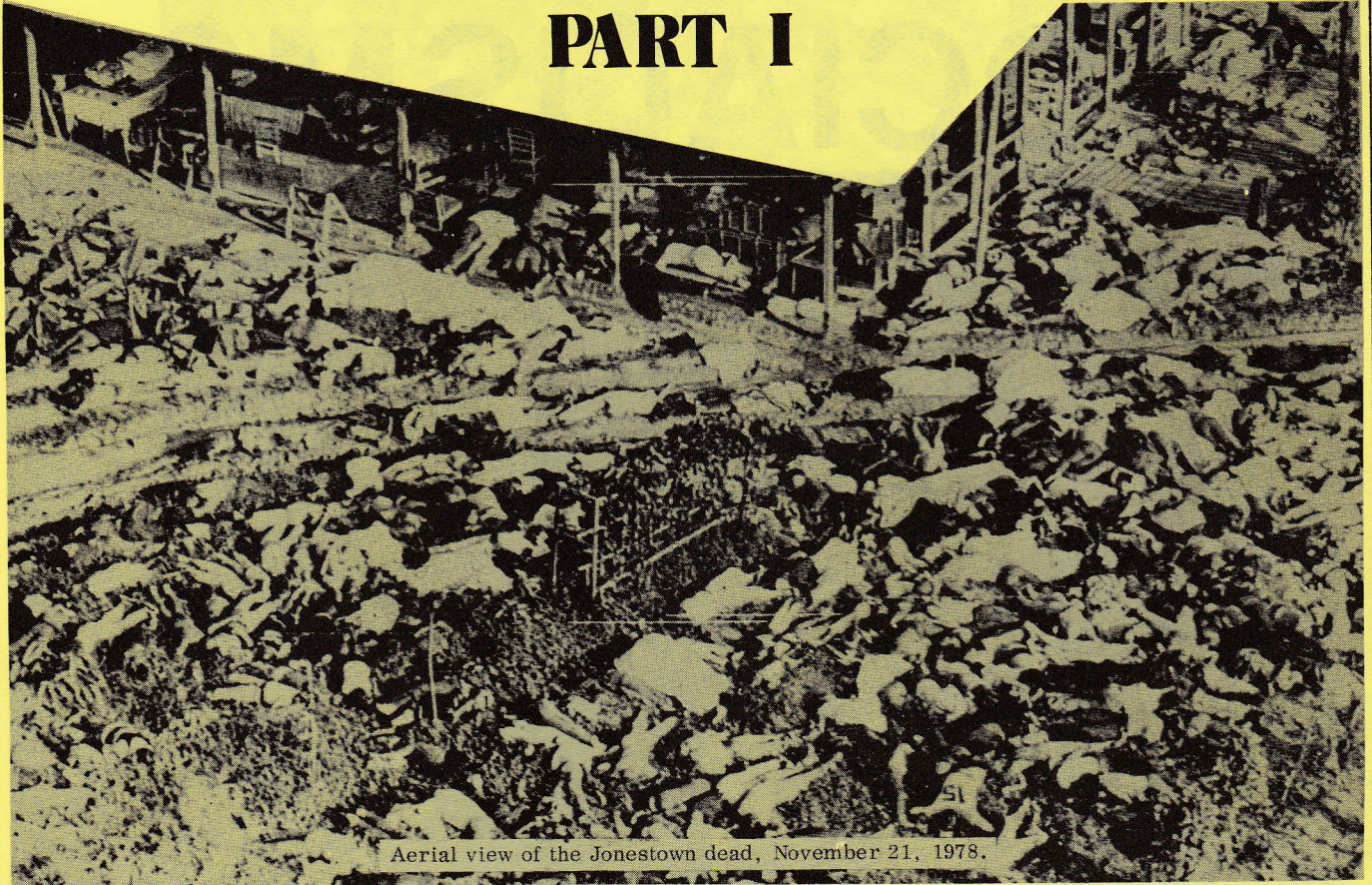
A black and white photograph of a room, possibly a study or office. A sign is mounted on the wall, reading "THOSE WHO DO NOT REMEMBER THE PAST ARE CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT". In the foreground, there is a desk with a chair. The room has large windows in the background, showing a view of trees and a building. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

THOSE WHO DO NOT
REMEMBER THE PAST
ARE CONDEMNED
TO REPEAT IT

**SPECIAL
SUPPLEMENT
BY MAURICE BRINTON**

SUICIDE FOR SOCIALISM?

PART I



Aerial view of the Jonestown dead, November 21, 1978.

The relevance of Jonestown

'We're gonna die for the revolution. We're gonna die to expose this racist and fascist society. It's good to die in this great revolutionary suicide'. The words uttered by two young men in Jonestown (Guyana) a few minutes before they, together with hundreds of others, poisoned themselves were reported in the Los Angeles Times (November 26, 1978) by Charles Garry of San Francisco, attorney for the Peoples Temple. Garry was no critic of this particular cult. He was the trendy leftist lawyer who, referring to the Guyana commune, had written in the Peoples Forum, journal of the Temple: 'I have seen Paradise'.

For those who think that socialism is about life and reason (and not about giving cyanide to babies... whether in Paradise or elsewhere) the event of last November are deeply disturbing. Let's not quibble about how many died. The latest reports put it at 921 (912 in the Jonestown commune, 5 at Port Kaituma airport, and 4 in the Peoples Temple in Georgetown). Or about the complications (both in the USA and in Guyana) which led 900 American 'socialists' to this particular part of the South American rain forest. Or about the relations of the Jonestown commune with Soviet Russia (to whose Embassy in Georgetown two survivors sought to hand over a vast amount of money). On all these matters a lot more information will come to light in the months to come.

What is of concern to us as libertarians is how the monstrosity of Jonestown, where people were drugged and beaten, brainwashed and forced to indulge in slave labour, sexually manipulated and annihilated as individuals, ever came to be associated with the name of socialism. Jim Jones' own 19 year old son,

Stephen, said of his father after the mass suicide: 'I now see him as a fascist'. It would be easy to forget it all, as most of the 'left' doubtlessly will, or to sweep it all aside as some trivial or insignificant event: a lot of religious nuts bumping themselves off in some far away jungle. But this isn't good enough. Nor is it enough to comment, as did Socialist Worker (Dec. 2, 1978) that the tragic end of those who followed Jim Jones was 'a reminder of the irrationality and ultimate hopelessness of religious forms of protest'. Or to blame 'the oppressiveness, brutality and mindless profiteering of the society from which they fled'. All this is true. But what it needed is to relate these truths to the specifically 'socialist' content of the Jonestown rhetoric and to the 'socialist' support which the Temple movement mobilised, from Angela Davis to the self-proclaimed 'socialist government of Guyana. (1)

(1) According to the Los Angeles Times (Dec. 14, 1978) 'Burnham described himself five years ago as a socialist but not a marxist. Today he calls himself a marxist who does not yet lead a marxist administration'. According to a veteran member of Georgetown's diplomatic corps 'Jones professed to believe in a socialism based on a multiracial kind of communal life. That's what Mr Burnham is aiming for. That's what may have drawn the Peoples Temple to the 'Cooperative Republic of Guyana'. (Whether Forbes Burnham was a 'marxist' or not, it did not prevent him speaking on an SLL - now WRP - platform in Trafalgar Square in 1958.)

We also need to relate all this to many phenomena and tendencies we see daily in the 'socialist' movement around us. We mean the systematic cult of leadership, the manipulation of information, the abdication of critical judgment, the substitution of rhetoric for argument and of slogans for the serious discussion of complex issues. We mean the belief in 'activity' at any cost - with little questioning as to its content - the mythologising and the voluntarism, the intimidation of dissidents, the almost universal application of double standards, the systematic generation of paranoia and the retreat, on a very wide front indeed, from rationality in general.

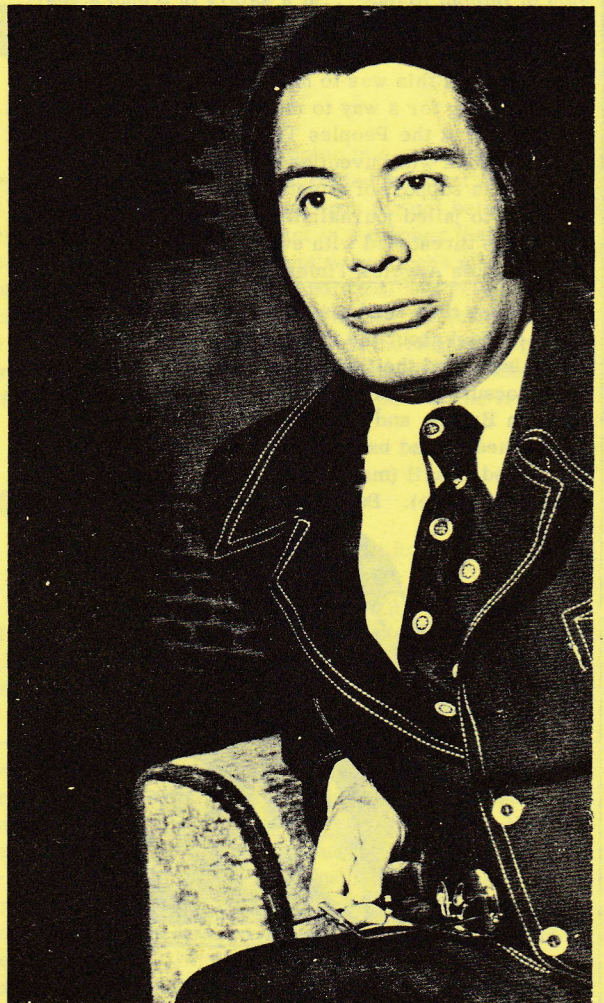
The Jim Jones story bears so many similarities to what we see around us that it is worth telling in some detail. Not out of any necrophiliac concern but as an elementary gesture of socialist sanitation. We hope this will help some of those who find themselves bewildered (or trapped) by their experiences in the unreal world of various marxist sects.

Jim Jones, religion and power

James Warren Jones (JJ) was born in Lynn, Indiana, in 1931. His father, gassed in World War I, was unemployed but an active member of the local Ku-Klux-Klan. His mother worked in a factory, at below average wage rates. When Jim later became involved in the struggle against racism he claimed he was 'biracial', his mother being a Cherokee Indian. Other members of the family dispute this contention. The relevant records are unavailable.

At a very early age JJ became interested in religion. Erstwhile schoolmates have confirmed that this interest centred more around the pomp and ceremonial, the banners and songs, than around questions of doctrine. JJ would 'play church games' with the other kids, games in which he always landed the role of preacher. As an adolescent he went in for social work of various kinds, organising sporting competitions. He apparently never indulged in any sport himself. Bill Morris, one of his classmates, says JJ was never interested in anything of which he was not the center, the organiser. So racist was the Lynn environment that JJ claimed never to have seen a black until he was 12 years old. He realised there was something very wrong and became actively interested in the issue of racism.

In 1949, while working as a medical auxiliary in the Reid Memorial Hospital in Richmond, some 15 miles away, he married Marceline Baldwin, a nurse 4 years older than himself. About this time he was already critical of all the churches he had come up against and was already talking of one day forming a Church of his own. He moved to Indianapolis where he experienced many difficulties in finding a racially-integrated religious environment. He kept ends together by selling monkeys imported from Latin America and Africa, at 29 dollars a piece. Although not ordained he started systematic work in penetrating 'progressive' and 'Christian' circles. His dynamism and charisma made him many friends. By 1956 he was influential enough to found his own Church: the Peoples Temple. It was a converted synagogue in a run-down section of Indianapolis. He adopted several black, white and yellow children as tangible evidence of his deeply felt views.



A turning point in JJ's career was his meeting with Father Divine, the legendary black pastor from Philadelphia. Jones was vastly impressed both by his spell-binding preaching techniques and by the total control he still exerted on his congregation (which consisted mainly of elderly black women). From Divine Jones learned all about 'organising congregations', about how to use an 'Interrogation Committee'. He saw the Committee as the logical extension of his grip on his flock. In Indianapolis Jones started to surround himself with a group of 'totally loyal' men and women, black and white. They would watch and report to Jones on the other parishioners. This was probably the first instance in history of a totally integrated, 'non-racist', 'non-sexist' Secret Police. Thomas Dixon, one of the early members of the Temple, broke with JJ on this issue. 'The Committee' he said, 'was primarily to deal with those who disagreed with Jones. Whoever was summoned by the Committee was grilled for hours on end with questions such as "Why are you against the Reverend?". 'For all his socialist talk' Dickson concluded, 'Jones will end up like Hitler'.

JJ's uphill struggle for racial equality in Indianapolis earned him many enemies. They called him 'nigger-lover', broke his windows, spat on his wife, threw dead cats into his church. Jones, whose physical courage was indisputable, was not deterred. In liberal circles, his image began to harden. He was the protector of blacks and orphans. His influence increased. He is given space in the local paper. In 1960 the mayor of Indianapolis, Charles Boswell, nominated JJ 'President of the Indianapolis Commis-

sion of Human Rights'... at a salary of \$7000 a year. The Peoples Temple began to distribute free soup. Several survivors of the later mass suicide stressed the impact all this was to have on their lives. They were 'looking for a way to make their lives meaningful and found it at the Peoples Temple, with its communal kitchen, work with juveniles and senior citizens, and activism in support of a plethora of causes ranging from aid to jailed journalists to picketing for elderly Philipinos threatened with eviction by a large corporation'. (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 10, 1978.)

Jones then read a satirical article (in Esquire, of all places) about the threat of nuclear war. The magazine listed the 'ten surest places for escaping the holocaust'. Among them were listed Bello Horizonte in Brazil, and Ukiah (north of San Francisco). JJ claimed he had had a similar divine revelation. He visited Brazil (making his first acquaintance with Guyana en route). But he finally opted for California.



Jones, at 22, with the monkeys he sold for his church

Miracles and the Long March

At this stage of his life JJ discovers he can resurrect the dead, treat cancer and heart disease by the laying of hands, promote the healing of wounds, etc. In 1963 he organises the 'exodus' of his followers to the Promised Land. Like Moses or Mao, JJ too has his Long March... through the southern regions of the Mid-West. His congregation moves in a convoy of small buses. There is much proselytising and faith-healing en route. The 'flock' enlarges. 'Deceived' disciples later described how bits of chicken innards would be used to simulate the tumours he would 'extract' from suggestible women on the way. In 1965 JJ is eventually ordained among the 'Disciples of Christ'.

The 'Chosen People' eventually settle in Redwood Valley, north of San Francisco. The locals are alarmed at the proportion of blacks in Jones' following. The liberals are impressed by his 'sincerity' and by the number of orphanages, convalescent homes and other 'good works' the Temple is involved in. Big money begins to come in. The local conservatives are more sceptical, especially in view of the increasingly socialist verbiage now being used. In 1970, at the height of the Vietnam war, JJ reassures them. He organises an important collection 'to help the families of policemen killed or injured during the exercise of their duties'. He stresses that 'those who are against this war and who are fighting for social justice aren't - by that very fact - enemies of the police'. This is

music to the ears of the local bigwigs, who favour a well organised police force. Donations double within months. Membership increases. Jones is elected President of the Grand Jury of Mendocino County.

The Inner Staff (a kind of Central Committee) was meanwhile being systematically 'consolidated' through the incorporation of individuals whose loyalty to Jones seemed beyond doubt. Ex-cultist Linda Dunn gave a graphic account of events in the Los Angeles Times (Dec. 15, 1978). Between 1966 and 1973 she had been a member of the Inner Staff. She had spied for Jones and kept files on fellow cult members. 'Members had to give up 25% of their wages to the Peoples Temple'. 'Jones surrounded himself with intelligent but gullible white women as his chief assistants. He built them up with praise, telling one she was "Harriet Tubman" reincarnated, while at the same time keeping them isolated and spreading rumours about each of them to break down trust'.

At Temple meetings the same thing took place, although in a much cruder way. People had to 'confess' to patterns of sexual behaviour that were not theirs... and would be publicly upbraided for it. Their self-confidence was being systematically sapped. Children were often beaten, for minor misdemeanours. After the beating they had to say 'Thanks, Father' into a microphone.

Below the Inner Circle there was a Planning Commission comprising about 100 people. Within this group there was a closed of 'secretaries' and 'counselors' directly responsible to Jones. Although 80% of the members of the Temple were black, two thirds of the membership of the upper echelons were white.

From printshop to 'real politics'

Later in 1970 the cultists left Redwood Valley and moved into San Francisco itself. For \$122,000 the Temple acquired an 'auditorium' (at 1859 Geary Boulevard). The congregation now numbered 7500. The Temple again purchased a disused synagogue (at 1366 South Alvarado St.). JJ bought a printshop and published a periodical called the 'Peoples Forum'. He claimed a circulation of 300,000. Others put it at 60,000. It was no mean achievement. The miracle cures meanwhile continued. Advertising material was distributed in the streets. In September 1972 the San Francisco Examiner eventually took up the issue of the Temple. In a series of articles its 'specialist in religious affairs', Lester Kinsolving, expressed doubts about the '43 resurrections' and 'surprise at the fact that this performer of miracles should have his church constantly guarded by men with revolvers and shotguns'. Jones sent some of his henchmen to picket the Examiner.

But these things blow over. JJ is soon in the big time again. Having burnt his fingers with the Examiner he tries a new tactic. He makes money gifts to a dozen local papers and to a local television station for the defence of a 'free Press'. The recipients included the San Francisco Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times. He travels by air all over the country, with an escort of bodyguards. He creates a company to sell 'Brotherhood' gramophone records. He then enters the vote-trading business. During the

mayoral elections of December 1975 he mobilises 800 Temple members to work full-time for George Moscone. No Trot has ever done as much for the Labour Party. Moscone won easily. During the 1976 Democratic presidential primaries Rosalynn Carter takes the chair at a Temple meeting. JJ's 'socialism' melts. He promises that his flock will vote 'to a man' for the Democratic Party. He packs the meeting with

750 of his supporters, brought up in specially chartered buses. Mrs Carter's bodyguards are impressed by the size of the audience. But they are also alarmed at the fact that they don't seem to be the only ones with weapons. Several 'lambs of the flock' seem to be carrying sawn-off shotguns. In September 1976 Jones organises a great Festival in his own honour. Among the guests are Mervyn Dymally, Governor-General of the state, Congressmen John and Phil Burton and Mayor Moscone. Congressman Willie Brown of the state of California declared that 'San Francisco needs 10 more Jim Joneses'. Tom Hayden, a radical, commented that Jim Jones was 'no ordinary populist. When I came to address a Temple meeting I was searched with metal detectors. Then I understood the crowd was there for Jim, not for Tom'.

One good turn deserved another. After Carter's election Moscone appoints JJ President of the San Francisco Housing Authority Commission. Yet despite the increasing influence rumours begin to spread. There is talk of disciples being terrorised and of a great deal of sexual manipulation of his entourage. Jeannie Mills, Mike Cartmell and Deborah Layton Blakey, all ex-devotees, claim that JJ would 'boast for hours of his sexual exploits while forbidding all sexual relations between members of his flock'. JJ had learned from Father Divine the importance of himself becoming the object of sexual desire of the whole congregation. But the Temple meetings are well attended. They provide a platform for stalinist hatchet-woman Angela Davis (see *Solidarity London*, vol. VII, no. 4) and for Allende's widow. Together with Dennis Banks, leader of the American Indian Movement, they gave rousing talks about 'liberation struggles' being waged both near and far away. The third worldist rhetoric flourished. Religion was now playing a lesser role in the cult's ideology. Two survivors, Clancy and Silver, stated

that for Jones 'the Church was the means, not the end'. Asked if Jones gave primacy to Marxism or Christianity Silver answered 'Jim was a socialist first and an atheist second'. Silver also stated (and, I believe, without cynicism) that the holocaust had made him aware of 'how tenuous life is for most people who don't have an organisation to depend on. The Temple proved it could take care of people from the cradle to the grave'. (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 10, 1978.)

The Guyana commune

The decision to move to Guyana and create a 'commune' had first been mooted towards the end of 1973. Temple documents reveal that Jones was impressed by the 'socialist' nature of the regime there. Other considerations seemed to have been the need to move from San Francisco where things were hotting up, the favourable exchange rate (sic!) and the fact that the 'local people spoke English'.

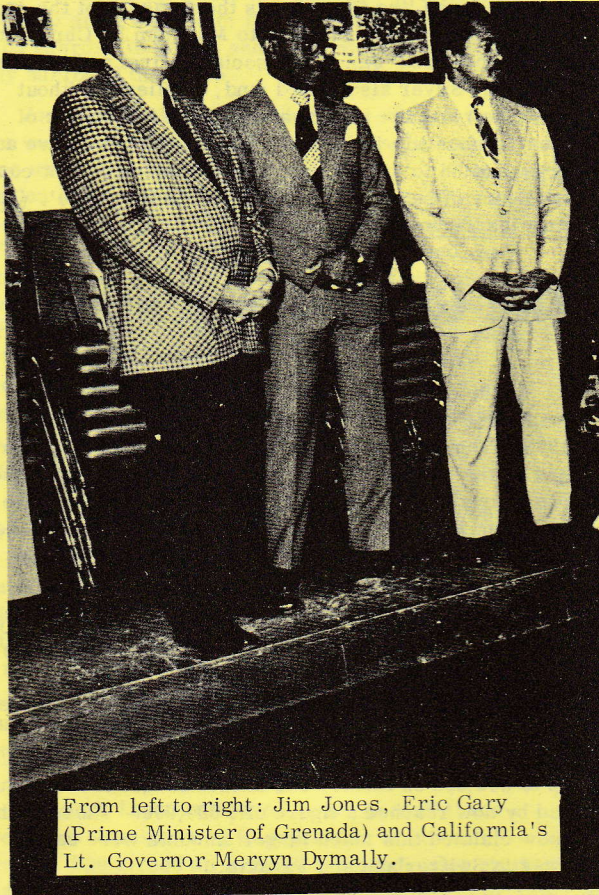
The financial and legal arrangements have not yet all come to light. Few of the transactions took place through orthodox channels. Jones was suspicious of official mechanisms and preferred to resort to trusted messengers. Members of his inner circle would fly from San Francisco to Georgetown, carrying sums of up to \$50,000 on them. The annual budget of the Temple had by now reached a figure of \$600,000. Those in the know claimed that much larger amounts were salted away in Switzerland and Panama.

Dan Phillips, who accompanied Jones when he and twelve of his top committee visited Guyana in December 1973, stated 'We each of us had \$5000 on us in notes. We also had a bank draft drawable on Barclays Bank (Canada) for \$600,000. This was deposited with the Bank's branch in Georgetown'.

After initial parleys Jones and his colleagues flew over the jungle in a plane provided by the Guyana government to choose a suitable site for the new 'agricultural colony'. Jones insisted it be remote. The



Peoples Temple congregation singing 'We shall overcome'. On the left: Angela Davis.



From left to right: Jim Jones, Eric Gary (Prime Minister of Grenada) and California's Lt. Governor Mervyn Dymally.

Guyanese stressed it should have development potential.⁽²⁾ A site some six miles from Port Kaituma was finally selected. It spread over 5000 acres (with an option for a further 27,000 acres) and was to be rented to the Temple for ... \$300 a year (sic!). There was a small airstrip at Port Kaituma. The little town could also be reached by a long journey up river. Port Kaituma was 140 miles from Georgetown and about as isolated a spot as could be wished. It was only a few hundred miles northwest along the Atlantic coast from the site of the old French penal colony of Devil's Island, where the French used the jungle and isolation as a deterrent to escape by criminals and political prisoners.

There were immediate problems. Some were due to climate, others to the pilgrims' almost total ignorance of the first principles of tropical agriculture. The first to arrive denuded slopes of trees, allowing heavy rainstorms to wash away important areas of fertile land. In the jungle the local trees proved so hard that planks had to be imported. In November 1974 the Reverend Jones arrived with 50 members of the inner set (by turbo-jet from Mexico) to christen the

(2) Despite these differences of emphasis, agreement proved possible among these 'fellow socialists'. When important visitors later visited the commune (such as California's Lt. Governor Mervyn Dymally), they and Jones were often greeted by Guyana's Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and his Deputy Prime Minister Ptolemy Reid. And it was Viola Burnham (the President's wife) and Ptolemy Reid who transported the Jonestown treasure (amounting to more than \$1 million in currency, gold and jewelry) 'back to government headquarters in Georgetown' as early as November 20. (International Herald Tribune, Dec. 26, 1978.)

place 'Jonestown'. To impress the representatives of the local government Jones arranged for one of his followers, Timothy Stoen, to simulate a severe attack of gastric pain. Stoen complied but later declared: 'I've never had much taste for this kind of game. The Reverend proceeded to "cure" me through a laying of hands'. The visitors seemed sceptical.

In May 1977 there were only 70 'communards' in Jonestown. An idealised recruitment poster was produced, showing Jones kneeling among trees heavy with bananas, grapefruit and oranges. An intensive recruitment drive was started among the politically (and botanically) naive members of the congregation in San Francisco. They were urged to make over all their worldly goods (houses, furniture, cars, etc.) to the Temple, and to take part in the 'great work of building socialism' in Jonestown.

Rosemary Williams was one of those who followed JJ. She gave up her job as a clerk in a San Francisco bank. Her husband Harry, a plumber employed by the San Francisco municipality, was about to go with her, but at the very last minute changed his mind - 'so as not to lose his pension'. The decision not only saved his pension - it almost certainly saved his life.

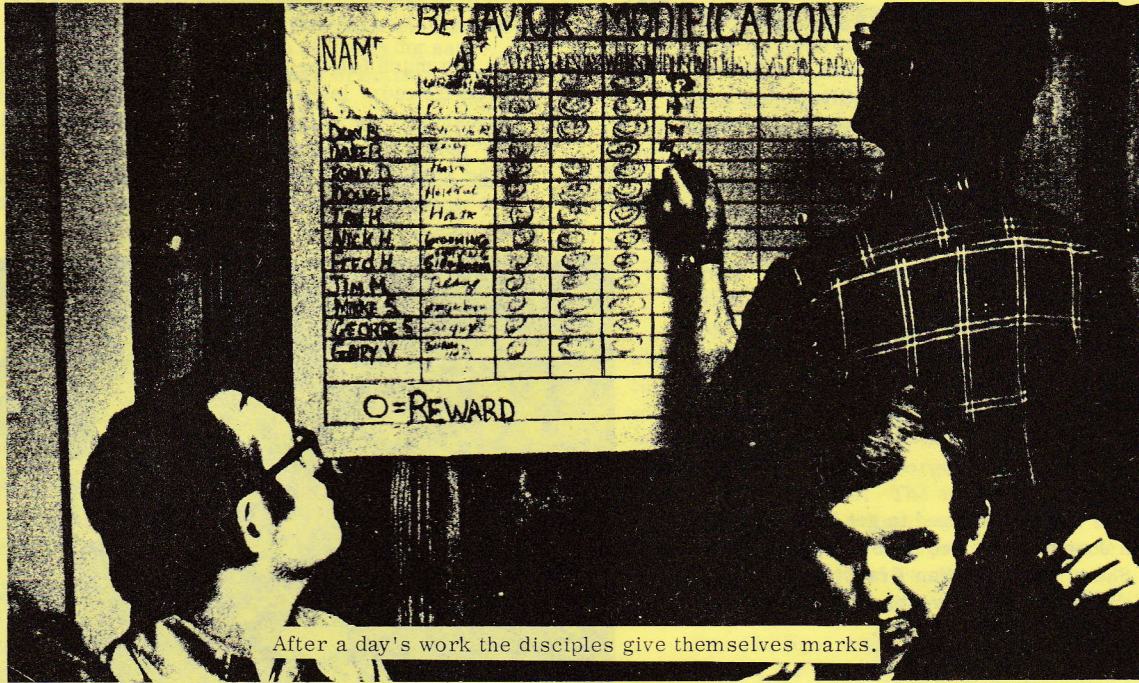
Self-criticism and 'behaviour modification'

Within a short while of reaching Jonestown Rosemary discovered 'the place was a living hell'. People worked from 12 hours or more a day - after which they had a right to 'self-criticism' sessions. Whoever expressed doubts as to the success of the enterprise - or whoever had failed to fulfil norms - was punished. He (or she) either had the head shaved, or had to wear a yellow hat or a special badge to signal 'dishonour'. 'Culprits' would not be spoken to for several days. Damage or loss had to be 'repaid' by those found guilty. As money had been abolished the 'repayment' took the form of deprivation of food until the 'debt' had been settled. 'Behaviour modification' charts were put up on the walls and everyone's 'progress' was duly monitored. Even after the disaster, some of those who had escaped were still trying to justify the methods used. Jean Brown, one of the survivors, had once worked with Jones as an aide at the San Francisco Housing Authority, when Jones was its Chairman. She had been 'politicised as a graduate student at Berkeley in the late 1960's'. Asked about reports of harsh internal discipline, Ms Brown, a former schoolteacher, said 'the Temple used criticism/self-criticism, a technique advocated by Mao Tse-tung and others to raise questions about the way a group is functioning. People need discipline if an organisation is to function effectively'. (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 10, 1978.)

There certainly was an all-pervading and very rigid discipline. Children who wet their pants were submitted to 'reconditioning' with electric shocks administered through cattle prods. A 16 year old girl was made to clean out a septic tank from 10 pm to 6 am as punishment for having taken some corrugated metal in an attempt to seek some privacy. Meanwhile the diet in the commune was grossly inadequate (mainly rice and beans) despite the Temple's now obvious wealth. People slept in noisy, dirty dormitories.

There was never any hot water, even for washing purposes. The enclosure was 'guarded' by armed men. The loudspeakers were on for hours on end, exhorting the faithful to greater efforts, talking of the 'fascist threat from America', of the numerous enemies of the Temple, keen on destroying 'this socialist experiment' and of the terrible fate that awaited anyone who sought to return to America. 'Every defection', he stressed, 'would only be used by the enemies of the commune'.

On arrival in Georgetown Kataris was handed a letter by the American Embassy to the effect that Maria no longer wanted to see him. To 'justify' the letter Paula Adams, a Jonestown spokeswoman, had apparently 'revealed' to the American authorities in Georgetown that Maria's father was a child-beater, that he had sexually abused Maria throughout her childhood, etc. Kataris also learned from ex-members of the Temple that his daughter had signed a predated suicide note.



After a day's work the disciples give themselves marks.

Complicities in 'socialist' Guyana

Jones meanwhile was consolidating and manipulating his external political contacts. In September 1977 Sharon Amos, Jones' top aid in Georgetown, sought to get former Guyana Cabinet Minister Brindley Benn to drop proposed Guyanese police investigations about what was going on in Jonestown. But Jones went even further. A memo dated March 7, 1978 was found among the dead bodies. This said that 'at the request of the Peoples Temple the Cuban Embassy (in Georgetown) has asked Prime Minister Forbes Burnham to reinstate fired Foreign Minister Frederick R. Wills, who was a cult confidant'. (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 3, 1978.)

There were soon some alarming developments. Maria Kataris, one of the inner circle and one of Jones' girlfriends, wrote to her father in the USA asking him to come and visit the commune. She enthused about Jonestown and spoke of the threats confronting the place. 'A society based on economic inequality cannot allow an organisation such as ours, which advocates racial and economic equality to exist. They will seek to destroy us', she said. As the father, a psychologist, was preparing to come, he received a number of letters from his daughter, putting off the visit. Worried, he wired Jones, via the San Francisco Temple (with which Jonestown was in constant short wave radio communication) telling him he would be coming all the same.

JJ was also deeply involved throughout this period in legal disputations concerning the return to the USA of a boy called John Victor Stoen. JJ claimed to be the father of the boy, a statement Mr and Mrs Stoen (former cult devotees) rigidly denied. The haggling went on for months. Exasperated, Jones eventually sent an extraordinary message to the Guyanese authorities in Georgetown. 'Unless the government of Guyana takes all necessary steps to put an end to the judicial action undertaken concerning the custody of John Victor Stoen, the whole population of Jonestown will commit mass suicide at 17.30 today'. The Guyanese authorities capitulated, feeling it unwise to test whether Jones was bluffing. In March 1978 Jim Jones also sent a letter to every senator and congressman, complaining of the harassment of the commune by various government agencies. It ended ominously: 'I inform you that it is preferable to die than to be persecuted from one continent to another'.

'Socialist' paranoia

JJ's speeches over the loudspeakers were daily becoming longer - and more strident. He would denounce the 'traitors' who were abandoning the Temple. Threats were now openly being made: 'there is only one punishment for treason: death'. 'Enemies of the Temple' were being rooted out everywhere. Equivocations would not be tolerated. 'Whoever is not with us is against us'. Paranoia and delusions intertwined. He (JJ) 'was the reincarnation of Lenin and of Jesus Christ'. He had 'friends and contacts' throughout the world, including 'the leaders of the USSR and Idi Amin'.

Several times he broached the theme of 'a collective suicide to bring socialism into the world'. Meanwhile, armed guards (30 by day and 15 by night) would constantly surround the camp.

Jones was nothing if not logical. Once a week there was a dress rehearsal for the mass suicide. These were on the so-called 'white nights'. 'The situation is hopeless', he would proclaim. 'Our only choice is a collective suicide for the glory of socialism'. The congregation would then line up and each be given a glass full of a red fluid. 'In forty minutes', Jones would entone, 'you will all be dead'. 'Now empty your glasses'. Everybody did. Describing the night she first witnessed this ritual, Deborah Layton - a 19 year old member of Jones' Inner Circle (and one of the eventual survivors) - said: 'we all went through with it without a protest. We were exhausted. We couldn't react to anything'.

People who have been through the harrowing experience of life in some of the 'left' sects at times of 'crisis' will know exactly what she meant. Emotionally and physically exhausted people can vote that black is white without batting an eyelid. Nor is such irrationality necessarily confined to small groups. The manipulated 'confessions in the long term interests of the Revolution' of some of the old Bolsheviks during the Moscow Trials contained several similar ingredients.

Deborah Layton managed to get herself transferred from Jonestown to Georgetown, where she defected. She turned up in San Francisco. Her stories, initially disbelieved, were eventually listened to by Leo Ryan, congressman for San Mateo.

The climax

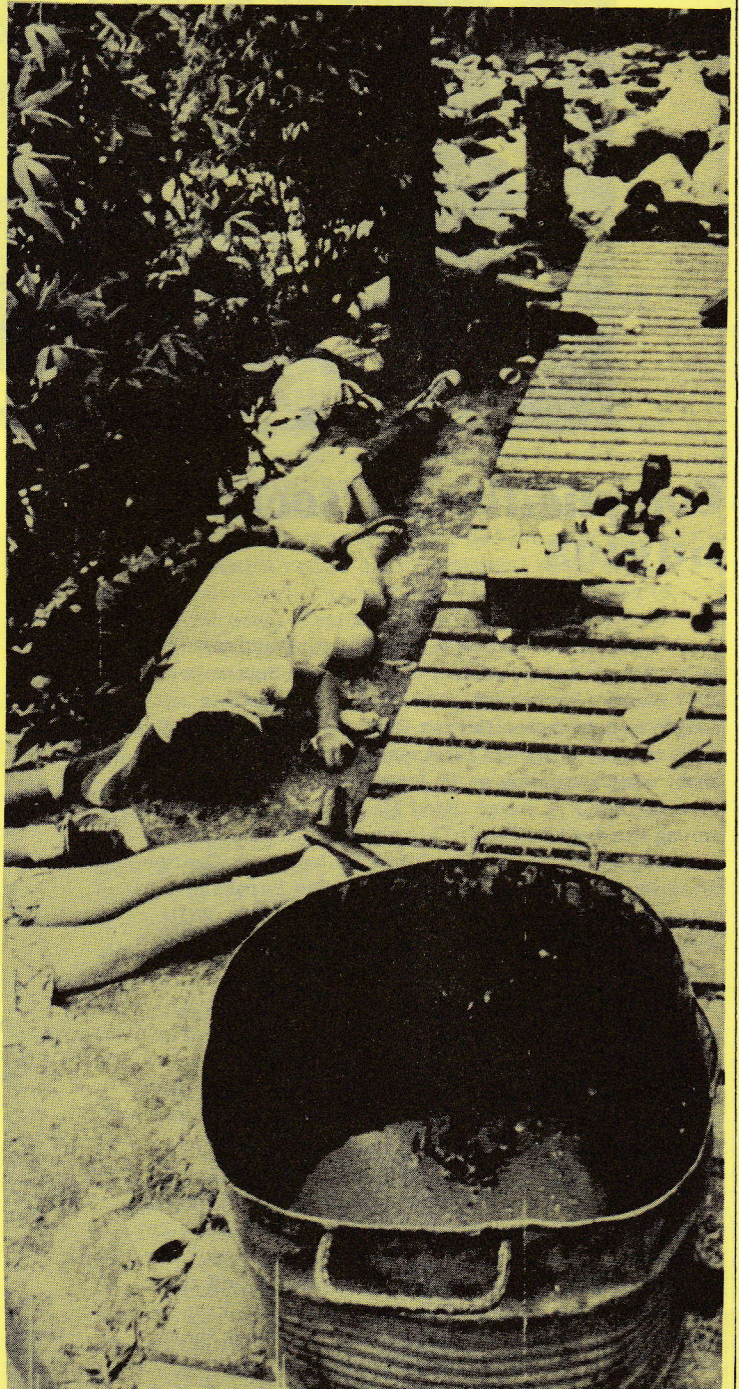
We are now approaching the climax. Ryan wrote to Jones saying that some of his (Ryan's) constituents had 'expressed anxiety' about relatives in the colony and that he intended to visit the place. Back came a testy letter from the Temple's attorney Mark Lane, implying that Ryan was engaging in a witchhunt. If this continued, Lane said, the Peoples Temple might have to move to either of two countries that do not have 'friendly relations' with the USA (he meant Russia and Cuba). This would prove 'most embarrassing' for the USA. Ryan decided to go to Guyana all the same, with eight newsmen. After much humming and hawing Lane eventually joined the group.

The rest of the story is fairly well known: the arrival of Ryan's party at the commune, the 'show' put on for them, the messages slipped surreptitiously into the hands of the visitors, Jones' fury when 14 of his congregation asked to return to the USA, the unsuccessful knife attack on Ryan by cult member Don Sly, the journey back to Kaituma with an impostor planted among the 'defectors', the hastily conceived and partly botched up attack on Ryan's party at the airstrip (Ryan and four others were killed, but one of the two aircrafts got away), and Jones' final decision on the 'mass suicide' when news reached him that the attack had failed and that a major crisis now really confronted him.

The deaths themselves were well described by Odell Rhodes, a survivor, in the Los Angeles Times of November 25. 'Generally there was no panic or emotional outburst. People stood in line to swallow

the poison ... a lot of people walked around like they were in a trance'. The camp's doctor and nurses brought out several large plastic vessels containing fruit-punch laced with cyanide. 'They would draw up an amount into syringes. Babies and children went first. A nurse or someone would put (the syringe) into a person's mouth and the people would simply swallow it down'. Rhodes escaped by slipping through a ring of armed guards into the jungle. Asked why the cultists had meekly gone to their deaths, Rhodes said 'some of these people were with Jimmy Jones for 10 or 20 years. They wouldn't know what to do with themselves without him'.

So much for the story itself - which had to be told. Even if sundry leftists or third-worldist do-gooders scream! Even in the context of contemporary 'socialist' political scholarship where, in the words of Revel (The Totalitarian Temptation, Penguin, 1978) 'to suppress evidence seems to be the normal way of showing which side one is on'.



PART II

What do sects provide?

Throughout history religious or political faiths have exercised great influence. They have moved armies and motivated people to build both cathedrals and concentration camps. Their success had had very little to do with whether they were 'true' or not. The fact that thousands (or millions) believed in them made of them real historical and social forces.

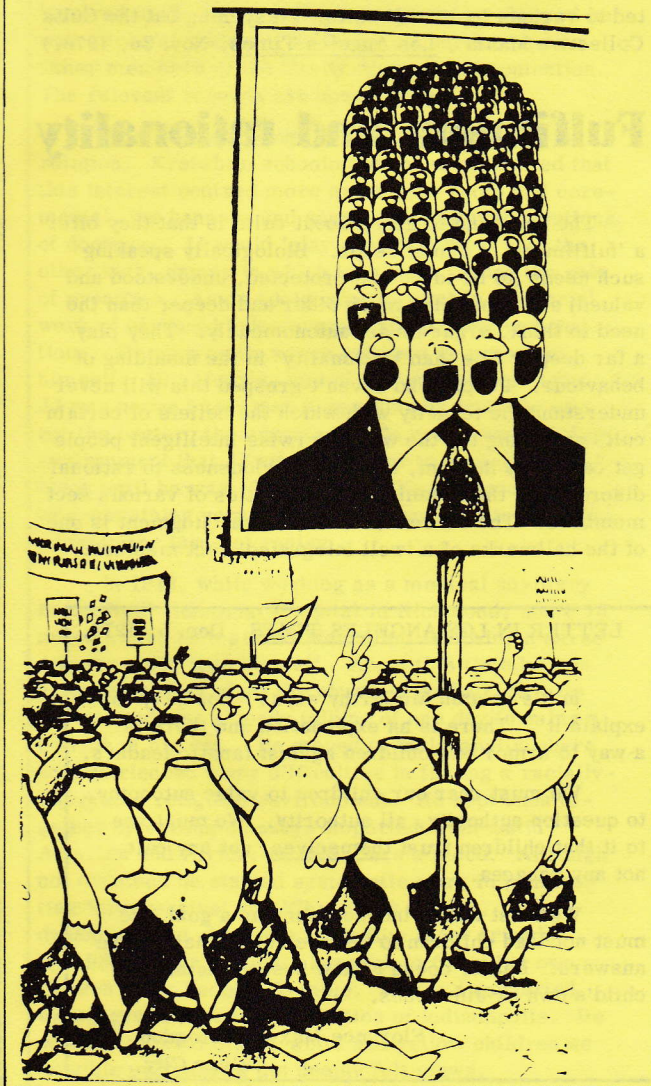
Religious or political faiths (and the Jonestown events show that the boundaries may be hard to define) have several things in common. They can provide, for the emotionally or materially deprived, the lonely, the rejected (or - less often - the culturally alienated or intellectually confused) the security of human contact, the satisfaction of an activity that seems socially useful, and the self-generating warmth of knowing all the answers, i.e. of a closed system of beliefs. These beliefs diminish, in those who hold them, the awareness of 'failure' or of rejection - or the feeling of being useless. They are potent analgesics. And they offer positive objectives, either through instant political solutions in this world, or through solutions in the hereafter (pie in the sky). In a society which either callously disregards (or just bureaucratically forgets) the very existence of thousands of its citizens, claims to make existence meaningful evoke an echo. Sects (i.e. groups based on cults) may come to fill an enormous vacuum in people's lives.

Most people are much happier in a situation where they are needed, wanted and accepted for what they are, not condemned and looked down upon for not being what they are not. We all like to act in a manner that is rational and that fulfils both one's own needs and those of others. The tragedy is that political and religious sects may convert these positive human attributes into their opposites: manipulation and authoritarian dogmatism on the part of the leaders, submission and the abdication of critical faculties on the part of the led.

Sects in history

Historically, cults and sects have usually flourished at times of social crisis, when old value systems were collapsing and new ones had not yet asserted themselves. They usually start as small groups which break off from the conventional consensus and espouse very different views of the real, the possible and the moral. They have attracted very diverse followings and achieved very variable results. Christianity started as a religion of slaves. In *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, Norman Cohn shows how, many centuries later, 'the people for whom (the Medieval Millenium) had most appeal were neither peasants, firmly integrated into the life of the village, nor artisans integrated into their guilds. The belief in the Millenium drew its strength from a population living on the margin of society'. The New England Puritans conformed at one time to the norms of a harsh age by imprisoning and torturing their own dissidents. They later became respectable. So did the Mormon followers of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Marxism arose as a theory that would liberate a proletariat that had 'nothing to lose but its chains', and has ended up imposing chains on the proletariat. The followers of the Peoples Temple (mainly poor blacks and alienated young whites) have made history by inaugurating the 'mass revolutionary suicide'. Cults can clearly mature into mainstream institutions. Or disintegrate into jungle horror stories.

A detailed analysis of cults would require an analysis of their rhetoric and ideology, and of the culture matrices in which they are embedded. The present appeal of cults is related to the major upheaval of our times. This is not primarily economic. Referring to the Jonestown events an American sociologist has written: 'The US consensus of values has broken down. There is, in some respects, an undermined authority in philosophy and theology. There is the demise of metaphysics... there is no "rock in a weary land" that gives people something certain to hold onto. So people reach out and grab at anything: an idea or an organisation. When traditional answers seem inadequate, people are ripe for cults that promise prescriptions for a better life. Most cults offer three benefits: ultimate meaning, a strong sense of community and rewards either in this world or the next. When those prescriptions are linked to the authoritarian style of a charismatic leader you have an extremely powerful antidote to the cultural malaise of what sociologists call anomie (rootlessness, aimlessness). (*Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1978.)



Specific ingredients to disaffection from established society had welled up in the 1960's and early 1970's. There had been the expansion of an unpopular war in South East Asia, massive upheavals over civil rights and a profound crisis of values in response to the unusual combination of unprecedented affluence on the one hand, and potential thermonuclear holocaust on the other. Revolutionary socialists - the whole axis of their propaganda vitiated by their erroneous analyses of capitalism and their distorted vision of socialism - had proved quite unable to make any lasting impact.

Black separatism

Predominantly black organisations such as the Peoples Temple have, moreover, deep roots in the very fabric of American society and of American history. Before the Civil War there had already been 3 separate attempts by US blacks to flee racial persecution. The first was initiated by a black seaman, Paul Cuffee, in 1815; the second by a black physician, Martin Delaney, in 1850; and the third by a black minister, the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, in 1855. All were designed to lead blacks to a world of peace and freedom by inciting them to make a mass exodus either to Africa or to the West Indies. The appeals proved most attractive to the most exploited and dispossessed. This separatism was often cloaked in religious cloth. But it was the bitter racism and socio-economic oppression experienced by the black masses in the post-Reconstruction South, rather than religious exhortation, that led so many blacks to support the cause of emigration.

This was also true of the largest mass black separation movement of this century, Marcus Garvey's 'Back to Africa' movement of the 1920's. Calling his movement 'Black Zionism', Garvey skillfully used symbols (flags, uniforms and other regalia) and highly emotional rhetoric to fire his followers. In the end thousands of enthusiasts lost money, suffered broken promises and became victims of outright fraud. Father Divine had been inspired by Garvey. And Jim Jones was inspired by Father Divine.

As Earl Ofari points out in an article in the International Herald Tribune (Dec. 9, 1978) 'the willingness of a sizeable segment of blacks to embrace movements that have run the gamut from "Back to Africa" to Peoples Temple stands as a reflection of their utter desperation. The lesson, surely, is not that cults hold a particular fascination for blacks but that the most deprived members of US society - those who see the least hope of making it within the system - are the easiest prey for charlatans preaching that Paradise lies just over some falsely technicolored rainbow'. This is clearly true: oppressed whites have also sought refuge in 'solutions' of this kind. And it is a powerful rebuke to those trendy radicals (usually guilt-laden middle class individuals) who seem to think that oppression is good for you, that it somehow guarantees revolutionary purity.

The Californian background

The state of California was also part of the cultural matrix of the Peoples Temple. It has established a questionable claim to fame as the cult centre of the world. Richard Mathison (author of 'Faiths, Cults and Sects of America') points out that 'as the tide of seers, prophets, mystics and gurus came to this natural haven for the dis-

enfranchised and the uprooted, they grew to be accepted as no less a part of the landscape than eucalyptus or foot-long hotdogs'.

Over the years California has spawned nearly every variant of cultic fraud. Between the wars it produced the 'Mighty I am' movement. Guy Ballard (an unemployed paper hanger) claimed he had been visited on Mt. Shasta by a vision of the legendary Count of St. Germain, an 18th century mystic. The Count gave Ballard a sip of 'pure electronic essence' and a wafer of 'concentrated energy' (the religious symbolism, in modern garb, is here very clear) and told him to get rich. It worked! By the time the dust settled in the 1940's Ballard claimed 350,000 followers and the Internal Revenue claimed he'd bilked his disciples of some \$4 million.

Joe Bell, a post-depression dandy, founded Mankind United by preaching that a race of little men with metal heads who lived in the centre of the earth would tell cultists what to do through his revelations. Bell ended up claiming a quarter of a million gullible followers who mortgaged homes and sold other belongings before he was grounded in a maze of legal problems.

In more recent times there have been the (not specifically Californian) examples of Ron Hubbard's Church of Scientology, of the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, of Chuck Dederich's Synanon, of the Divine Light Mission, of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness ... to mention only some of the 'religious' cults. Recent estimates claim that more than 2 million Americans - mostly between the ages of 18 and 25 - are affiliated to cults. And this doesn't include those affiliated to various 'political' cults. ('Psyching out the Cults Collective Mania', Los Angeles Times, Nov. 26, 1978.)

Fulfilment and rationality

The key thing to grasp about cults is that they offer a 'fulfilment' of unmet needs. Biologically speaking such needs (to be loved and protected, understood and valued) are something much older and deeper than the need to think, argue or act autonomously. They play a far deeper role than 'rationality' in the moulding of behaviour. People who haven't grasped this will never understand the tenacity with which the beliefs of certain cults are clung to, the way otherwise intelligent people get caught up in them, their imperviousness to rational disproof, or the organisational loyalties of various sect members. The surrender of individual judgment is one of the hallmarks of a 'well integrated' sect member.

LETTER IN LOS ANGELES TIMES Dec. 5, 1978.

In his column McCarthy says: 'Don't try to explain it'. There is an explanation and there is a way to armor our children against fanatic leaders.

We must rear our children to value autonomy, to question authority, all authority. We must see to it that children trust themselves, not any cult, not any panacea.

We must foster independence as a goal, we must not lead children to believe anyone has all the answers. Father doesn't know best - whether the child's own or Jim Jones.

Florence Maxwell Brogdon,
Culver City.

Jim Jones was called 'Father' or 'Dad' by his devotees. The poor blacks of the Jonestown commune hadn't just 'given up their self' to their charismatic father. Such were the physical, emotional and social deprivations they had grown up in that they had very little 'self' to surrender. And that 'self', such as it was, seemed to them of little relevance in changing their circumstances or the world they lived in. Some young middle class whites in the commune were prepared to surrender their 'self' in exchange for an emotional feedback they had lacked in earlier life. Others had already surrendered their 'self' to their parents. In joining the Temple they had merely found a new repository for it.

But the twisted and manipulatory demagogues who lead various fascist and leninist cults are also - at least to begin with - pathetic individuals. They too are often the products of distorted backgrounds. They seek to blot out the intolerable parts of their life, first through the manipulation and later through the control of the lives of others. The needs of follower and leader feed insatiably upon one another. The relationship is symbiotic: each needs the other. Both seek instant, effortless, ready made solutions, rather than the achievement of understanding, which is a pre-condition for real action for change. Human beings often feel vaguely guilty about not knowing THE TRUTH. When a gifted, persuasive leader comes along who says he has it - and who presents it in a simple and easy manner (even if it is a delusional system) people will listen. They will accept some things about which they have reservations, because they perceive that the Leader has 'good' answers about other things.

Arthur Janov, author of 'The New Consciousness' and of 'Primal Man', points out that 'the surrender of the self, of judgment, of feeling, has taken place long before the outward appearances of a cult become bizarre'. In an otherwise excellent article on Cults and

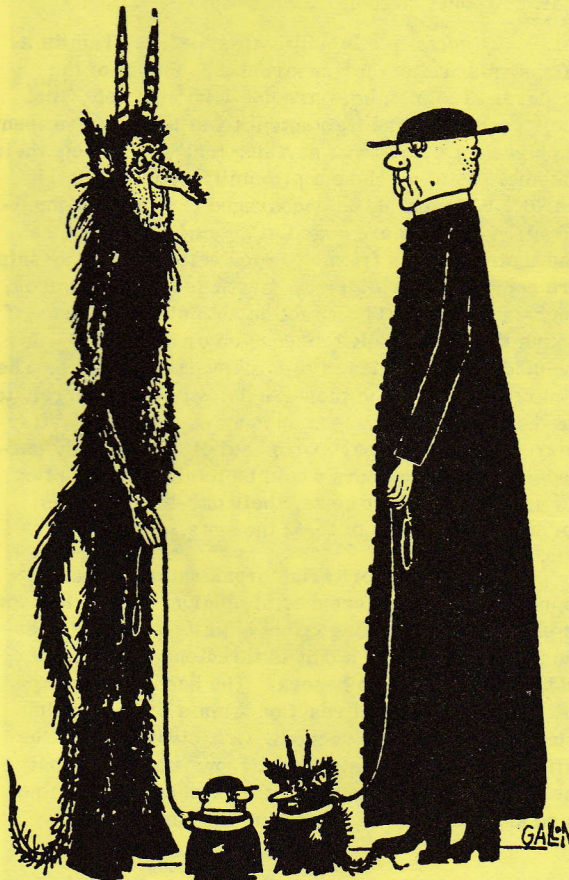
the Surrender of Judgment' (International Herald Tribune, Dec. 2, 1978) he fails however to stress the specificity of the Jonestown events. This wasn't a rational decision like the mass suicide at Masada. (3) It was not culturally motivated like Saipan. (4) It didn't even resemble the fate of the Old Believers. (5) What happened during those last grizzly hours in the Guyana commune was something historically new, a typical product of our time: the era of propaganda and of the loudspeaker, of brainwashing and of totalitarian ideologies.

On Temples: religious or revolutionary

Sects like the Peoples Temple - or certain revolutionary groups - offer more immediate solutions than the more abstract religions, or than the more rational and self-managed forms of political radicalism. They don't only offer a new super-family, a new group of people to hold onto, to support one. The main attraction is that the cult leader is real, visible, tangible. He may promote you - or shout at you, abuse you, even spit at you. His sanctity or political omniscience (and I say 'his' deliberately, for most popes or general secretaries have almost universally been male) provide a spurious antidote to the malaise of rootlessness. 'Join me' the Leader says (for most sects are actively proselytising agencies) 'for I am the one who knows. 'Come to my Church (or become a member of my revolutionary organisation). For I am the one and only interpreter of the word of God (or of the course of history). Find with us a purpose for your useless life. Become one of the Chosen People (or a Cadre of the Revolution)'.

We are not saying that all revolutionary groups (or not even that all those we disagree with most strongly)

- (3) In 73 A.D., after a prolonged siege, 960 Jewish men and women besieged by the Romans for over a year decided, after full discussion, that mass suicide was preferable to surrender. This decision was taken despite the fact that it constituted a transgression of the Jewish religious code. Another Jewish leader (Yoseph ben Matatyahw, later known as Flavius Josephus) had been trapped on another hill, some years earlier. He took the opposite decision... and lived to record the Masada events.
- (4) During the US invasion of the South Seas Island of Saipan during World War II, Japanese officers used their Samurai swords to behead dozens, if not hundreds of their compliant troops. Other soldiers obeyed orders to jump off cliffs into the sea. This event was an integral part of a culture where dishonour was deemed worse than death.
- (5) During the second half of the 17th century the Old Believers broke from the Russian Orthodox Church and were later threatened by the official Church with reconversion by decree. 'Thousands burned themselves alive. They assembled in log huts, churches and other buildings, mostly in the northern regions of European Russia. They would ignite the buildings and perish. They felt it was far better to die in flames than to burn eternally in Hell by accepting what they perceived as an heretical church'. (see Frazer's 'The Golden Bough').



July 1972: Trotskyists (SLL brand) under canvas at St. Lawrence Bay, Southminster, Essex.



are like the Peoples Temple. But who - in all honesty - can fail to see occasional disturbing similarities? Who does not know of marxist sects which resemble the Temple - in terms of the psychological atmosphere pervading them? (6) Surviving members of the Japanese Red Army Fraction or ex-members of the Socialist Labour League (now WRP) who got out in time need not answer these questions!

'The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for his own self, the more ready he is to claim it for his Nation, his Race or his Holy Cause'.

Eric Hoffer in 'The True Believer'.

P.S. Same, no doubt, applies to women!

In such organisations the Leader may become more and more authoritarian and paranoid. If he has achieved institutional power he may kill, torture or excommunicate (Stalin, Torquemada) increasing numbers of his co-thinkers. Or he may order them 'shot like partridges'. If he is a 'leftist' authoritarian devoid - as yet - of the state power he is seeking, he will merely expel large numbers of his deviant followers. Deviance - above all - cannot be tolerated. Such men would rather live in a world peopled with heretics and renegades, and keep the total allegiance of those who remain. One even wonders whether (unlike most of their supporters) they still believe in what they preach - or whether the maintenance of their power has not become their prime concern. Jim Jones' rantings about defectors and 'traitors' is not unique. It is encountered in a whole stratum of the political left. Many radical 'leaderships' boast of how they have coped with previous deviations. But however 'unreal' the world they live in, the core of followers will remain loyal. The Leader is still the shield. Even in Jonestown anything seemed better than the other reality: the painful alternative of deprivation, material, emotional or intellectual.

(6) All they lacked was the dedication to mass suicide!

Why didn't more people leave Jonestown? It was because they would again be left without hope. This was at least as potent a motive for staying as were the stories spread by Jones and his inner clique that there would be no point in seeking help in Georgetown, for the Peoples Temple had its agents there too... who would 'get them'. Even when Ryan and his team visited the commune, only 14 out of over 900 members said they wanted to leave. To many, the figure seems trivial. To Jones it spelt catastrophe.

Many sects live in political isolation. This is a further mechanism for ensuring the control of the leaders. The members are not only 'rescued' from their past, they are 'protected' from their own present. Such sects refrain from anything that would bring their members into too close a proximity with the outside world. Recruitment is encouraged, but closely monitored. Members are urged to give up their hobbies and their previous friends. Such external relationships are constantly scrutinised, questioned, frowned upon, deemed suspect. United action with other groups - of a kind that may involve discussion or argument - is avoided, or only allowed to 'trustworthy' leaders. The simplest course is to move, lock, stock and barrel, to the jungles of Guyana. In such an environment, after surrendering their passports and all their worldly possessions, the members would be totally dependent on the leaders for their news, their day-to-day needs, for the very content of their thoughts.

Open, non-authoritarian organisations encourage individuality and differences of opinion. But criticism impairs the pain-killing effect of cults - and the cohesion of sects. When a cult is threatened both Leader and followers may go berserk. The best analogy to this is the withdrawal reaction from a drug on which someone has become hooked. Criticism impairs the efficacy of such drugs. So does any suggestion that the Leader doesn't know, or that perhaps there is no hard and fast answer to certain questions.