

SOLIDARITY

THE PAPER OF THE "SOLIDARITY" NATIONAL GROUP.

No. 3

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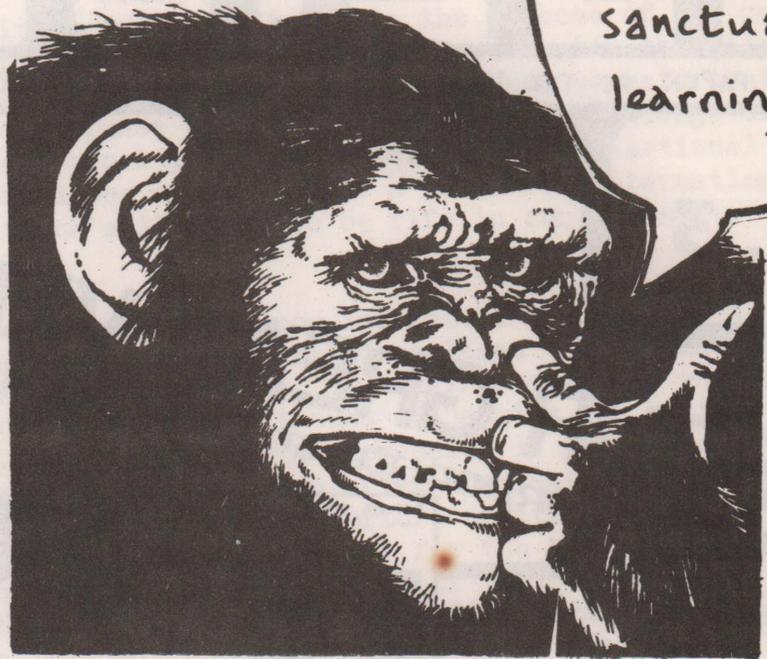
TECHNICIANS STRIKE

Birmingham University technicians have gone back to work after a gruelling 29 weeks out on strike and agreed to 'mediation' over the interpretation of a holiday agreement signed in 1974 by the University but not honoured. Even the one day's extra holiday on the pre-1974 situation as a back-to-work agreement had to be dragged out of them.

The University management, and in particular the personnel officer McCracken, has demonstrated a really 19th century attitude in the course of this dispute. Before the strike, many workers were complaining about the serf-like way in which they were treated. Any method possible has been used to break the strike, including bringing in electric fires through the picket line in academic's private cars (fuses in University buildings have been known to blow..... through overloading the circuit, of course!), and using a furniture mover, Wheatley, to bring in coal and other supplies in his van at night (the stokers refused to stoke this coal; their action was later made official). A picket was threatened with an iron bar, which resulted in the occupation of an administration building, unfortunately only for a few hours. On another occasion a picket was injured when a strike breaking lorry crossed the line. Heartfelt pleas were made by the University for 'peaceful picketing', which for them meant standing there watching the coal roll in while a scab beats you over the head.

The student attitude was at best half-hearted, at worst abysmal; at a massive union meeting 477 voted to condemn the strike, though this was later replaced by a more 'liberal' motion 'supporting neither side'. This was the line peddled by some academic staff - some of whom make their living out of writing books about the working class - who circulated petitions condemning the strike. An Iranian student, interviewed in the Evening Mail as a research student's hard luck story, said that back home by now the strikers would have been strung up - which is more than likely true! Some academic staff at the computer centre started operating a limited computer service themselves. "It is not intended as a direct participation in the dispute", they said. However, on the first morning of the resumed service the only print-out they could get was "YOU ARE A MANAGEMENT SCAB". Fancy that! Later some sympathetic computer users started operating 'systems breaks' which put the computer out of action for half an hour at a time.

Although demoralised as the weeks wore on, the strike remained solid. Boredom set in, paradoxically, because after a while lorries driven by T&G and other unionised workers no longer turned up just to be turned away again, and pickets were left to deal with scab lorries which came at night when fewest were there. National financial support from ASTMS was good, (although Clive Jenkins was busy suing Socialist Worker), but there is dissatisfaction with the way in which the union handled the strike, in particular only drawing out a part of its members and others in rotation. The vital time was in the winter cold spell



How dare they
violate this
sanctuary of
learning!

which the University managed to sit out - a concerted effort then might have done the trick. Also at an earlier stage the Union conceded a day's holiday without consulting the strikers, though they later accepted this.

The crunch came when the University put it about that it was going to replace the computer centre with computer terminals, putting the operators out of work, a bludgeoning tactic typical of its handling of the dispute. By now people had had enough, and voted by a substantial majority to go back to work. This decision was not manipulated, they were just fed up.

But the strike had its positive aspects. Despite the demoralisation many have had a good time, building braziers to warm up against, burning wood from nearby fences, and there has been a considerable change in some people's lifestyles with the leisure time gained as a result of the release from work, meaning that people could get on with things they'd always wanted to do and many new things besides. This also meant that many had better things to do than come and picket! Some didn't want to go back to work at all; many have already left or will leave now that the strike is over.

What are the lessons of this dispute? Certainly it puts a big question mark over the use of the strike in this situation, especially a partial strike like this one - many of the workers were very unhappy at the Union for not drawing everyone out. A long hard look needs to be taken at the strike as a tactic, with an eye to considering alternative forms of struggle, some of which in small ways have been used here. Whatever the tactics chosen, however, they must be firmly in the hands of the workers concerned, and directly managed by them.

It is amazing that the University has stuck to its 19th century attitude in an age when the name of the game is collaboration with the unions to discipline and control the workers (seen most graphically with the Leyland toolmakers, at the Times and at Heathrow recently), and to solicit their cooperation. Ga knows what they teach on the University's Industrial Relations course! One thing is for sure, despite this short-term victory, and whether or not they push the technicians around from one department to another as a cat and mouse 'punishment', the University will be facing a militant, uncooperative workforce from now on.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY.

One of the commonest charges levelled against all socialists is that they are dreamers. The listener responds to the socialists' grand plan for the future society by saying "This is all very well and very nice, but it bears no relation at all to reality, you're just dreaming".

This charge has more than a certain amount of truth in it - too many socialists are given to dreaming. For instance one of the earliest socialists, Charles Fourier, had everything in the socialist society planned down to the smallest detail. Under socialist society he feared that we would still be faced with the problem of how to dispose of the refuse and that this might involve unpleasant work. How could this problem be solved? Easy, said Fourier, children love dirt therefore all children will become refuse collectors.

Fourier also came up with other faniful ideas about the nature of the future socialist society. He believed that when socialism was established the sea would turn to lemonade and the lions would all become gentle vegetarian beasts.

Such ideas are obviously highly imaginative but quite worthless and yet certain of the dreams of the earliest socialists are still retained in socialist theory. For instance the majority of the early socialists had an obsession with money, which they saw as the root of all evil. They dreamed that 'when the revolution came' (read 'when our ship comes in') money would no longer serve any useful function. Miners from South Wales would send out coal to whoever needed it, fishermen from Grimsby would send out fish to whoever needed it, and writers from Kew would send out newspapers to whoever wanted them. The miner having given away her coal could simply take all the books and fish she needed from the community store.

It is my contention that if this is our picture of society immediately after any revolution then we are dreamers. There will not be an instantaneous surplus of every product available the day after the revolution. Some products and services could easily be provided without charge, like transport. After all a large proportion of the costs of running the bus and train services goes in collecting the fares (a system which is as irrational as anything dreamed up by Fourier). But there will not necessarily be instantaneous supply of clothes, books, records, grapefruits and pictures. We could decide at a central level how much of each of these products to produce and risk creating a powerful planning bureaucracy. We could on the other hand say that everyone would be provided with so many 'labour notes' and could choose what to spend their surplus money on. There is nothing fundamentally anti-socialist about such an arrangement.

There is no good reason why socialists should be afraid of solutions to economic problems which involve the retention of money. Money in itself is nothing more than a piece of paper. You can't eat it, listen to it or build with it. Equally it can't in itself enslave us. No one was ever made the slave of a piece of paper. However, when society had recognised the importance of particular pieces of paper, and when these pieces of paper were concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy men, then the pieces of paper were used to enslave millions of poor people. It was not the pieces of paper which were important in this process; it was the social arrangements which decreed that some should have large quantities of

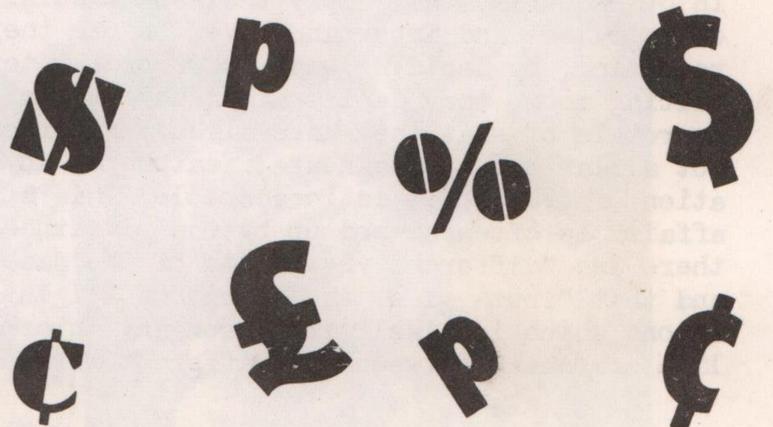


money whilst others have none. In other words it is not the distribution of money which creates oppression, it is the distribution of wealth and power.

Those socialists who still talk at length about abolishing money and who coin such phrases as 'Smash Cash' are in danger of launching their major attack on the pieces of paper and not upon the social system which enables these pieces of paper to dominate their lives. Furthermore those socialists who talk about doing away with money on the day after the revolution are still in the age of Fourier. They see the revolution as some apocalypse which will do away with all evil and immediately create new human beings. Personally I see any revolution as one short period in the whole process of our struggle for socialism. Such a struggle does not begin with the revolution and it does not end with the abolition of money.

A.B.

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THE RUSE OF REALISM.

Ms. Shirley Williams, the Education Secretary who just announced the closing down of 28 teacher training colleges, apparently considers herself to be a socialist of sorts. In the last Labour Party conference she defended the Callahan-Healey-IMF package of cutting public services as a condition for receiving IMF loans. Realising that cuts in education and health services cannot be described as 'socialist' by any rational argument she resorted to the age-old ruse of "realism". "We have to live in the real world, and be realistic socialists...." she stated. What a practical sensible appeal to common sense, wonderfully in line with the image of the 'reasonable and practical headmistress' which she projects, nudging towards the role of Leader of the Party (as a 'sensible' compromise between 'right' and 'left'), and - who knows - perhaps even that of 'first woman Premier' (as a vote snatcher from Big Sister Thatcher). And yet her apparently innocent admonition invites some simple questions:

- What is Ms. Williams' version of the 'real world' in which 'we' (i.e. the Callahan cabinet) 'have' (accept) to live?
- What are the 'unrealistic' policies, which she, as a 'realistic socialist' admonishes by implication?
- Is the demand of the National Executive Committee to nationalise major banks and insurance companies 'unrealistic' because it is undesirable to the IMF?
- Does Ms. Williams, as a 'realistic socialist', have any proposal to change the 'real' (i.e. capitalist) world, or does she advocate its acceptance?
- Is there any connection between her 'realistic socialism' and her closing down 28 teacher training colleges?

The naive assertion that 'we have to live in the real world, and be realistic', is, despite its innocence, doubly deceptive. First, because there are different interpretations of the real world, none of which can claim final supremacy. Second, because having accepted a particular interpretation of the real world, still leaves open the question of responding to this reality. Even those who accept that "the End is at hand" differ on the issue of repenting. The twin problems, of interpreting reality, and shaping an attitude towards a particular interpretation, can be illustrated by considering a basic problem facing the makers of a documentary film.

We are familiar these days with TV documentaries on conflicts such as in Ulster, Palestine, Vietnam, etc. We have seen vastly differing, often contradictory, documentaries. The reason is simple; the cameras cannot record everything, everywhere, all of the time. Even if they could - there would still be a problem of editing, i.e. of selecting the important parts. But who decides what is important? And according to what criteria? Usually the TV team has a preconception, a form of mental editing, which enables them to decide where to point the camera and when to start filming. In other words, they apply their particular criteria of relevance and importance even before they start recording, by deciding what to record. Later, in the editing room, they decide again what to omit and what to retain of what they have already recorded. This is not a flaw but a fundamental feature of any interpretation of events. It is inescapable. This state of affairs is often summed up by the platitude that there are "different viewpoints of the same reality" and that "Truth (i.e. the source of all interpretations which is itself free from any interpretation) lies somewhere between the different versions."

The argument, that there is a single source to all the different interpretations, and that after all the interpreted social events exist independent of their interpretation is of little use. The point is that only that which has some relevance to us figures as an 'event' (or significant 'fact') but this relevance implies a judgement, however brief, and this judgement implies criteria of significance, which, in turn, depend on our interpretation. The problem is not in the events, but in their interpretation. It stems from the realisation that there are no objective, absolute, final criteria, they are all subjective, relative, and transient. Many may find this difficult to accept, but even after accepting this, and realising the subjective nature of an interpretation, we are still faced with the problem of responding to that interpretation.

Faced with a presently incurable disease should one resign oneself and wait for the end, or commit suicide, or search for temporary relief, and perhaps even for a cure? It all depends on the personality, its character and attitudes, its emotional structure. There is no consensus response to a consensus reality. For many, even biological existence is not the supreme value. History is full of examples of individuals and societies which valued their honour, faith, or freedom more than their biological existence. To say that they were wrong is simply to assume that biological existence is the supreme criterion. How come then that for so many years so many people went willingly to fight so many wars, and many would be willing to die for freedom even today? No, biological existence is merely one criterion amongst many, and even with this criterion in mind responses differ.

Basically one can discern two fundamentally differing attitudes to consensus reality; one of submitting, accepting, and resigning oneself to that reality, the other of struggling against it in order to change it. The first is passive, submissive, the second, active, creative. In politics, those who wish to change the world must draw a sharp line to separate them from those who accept it. The dividing line between the two camps is the argument of 'realistic politics'. Revolutionary politics are no more unrealistic than reformist or conservative politics, they are not so naive as to take 'reality' for granted, not so meek as to shy away from creating a new reality..

As Balzac said to the chief of police : "Ah! I wouldn't have thought you so naive.... Come on! It is us who make reality."*

Those who wish to change reality cannot afford to accept its omnipotence.

A.O.

*Marcel Schneider, 'La litterature Fantastique en France'.



"SOLIDARITY"
all articles
reflect the
opinions of
individuals and
not necessarily
those of the group
as a whole.

JOE AND ARNOLD

As one of Joe's oldest and close friends I have been asked on this sad occasion to say a few words.

Joe was a great fighter and it was this quality which enabled him to overcome more than the usual difficulties that beset most human beings.

As a one parent child he suffered great poverty to which was added further suffering from the loss of an eye due to an infection; because of this he spent a considerable part of his young life in an institution.

At an early age he became interested in politics and joined the Communist Party. He took a leading part in the East End struggles against Fascism. He was also very active in the Trade Union movement.

He continually came into conflict with the CP as a result of his activity and boasted that he was the only person as far as he was aware who had been expelled twice from the CP. He always put the interests of the working class before the interest of any party or group.

I first met Joe during one of these conflicts where, as a shop steward, he led one of the longest and bitterly fought strikes in the tailoring trade. On that occasion, although a CP member himself, he attempted, with only the workers he had led and very few others, to expose the CP leadership of the then Mantle and Costume branch for having betrayed the strike. He was fully aware that he would suffer for his actions but this did not deter him. He was in fact victimised for a long period following this episode.

He then went through the experience of the Trotskyist movement but broke with them as soon as it became clear that they suffered from the same disease as the CP. At about this time a further tragedy struck him as a result of his wife's death at the age of 49.

For some time after this Joe was groping for answers to 'World Problems' for which in his early life he thought he had found the answers. Gradually he evolved libertarian ideas and once again became a real live wire.

True to form, he found a lot to disagree with amongst some of his comrades (particularly me) and fought vigorously for his point of view. Despite these differences everyone in the libertarian movement, both those who agreed and those who disagreed, retained a great affection for him.

The marriage of his daughters and the birth of his grandchildren bought him untold pleasure. He never tired of relating their exploits.

For some years Joe has been writing a book around his early experiences in the political movement. Steps are now being taken to publish this.

Joe will be sadly missed by all. Goodbye, Old Friend.

A.F.

Arnold Feldman died very suddenly on Tuesday April 19th 1977 of a heart attack, at the age of 55.

Arnold had been active in politics for many years. Towards the end of the war he had been active in the RAF, as an electrician, in the great agitation concerned with repatriation and demobilisation. Like his long-standing friend Joe Jacobs he was for a while influenced by Trotskyism but soon saw through it and moved instinctively to libertarian socialist ideas. He worked for a while in the tailoring trade, then as a traveller.

He played a very active and positive role in the great London tenants' struggles of the late 1960's. The experience left a deep imprint on him.

In 1970 Arnold joined the London Solidarity group and between then and the moment of his death he was deeply involved in every aspect of the life of the group. Always cheerful, always kind and considerate, (even during the most heated arguments), fond of music and a great raconteur (often of outrageous jokes), he was the sort of person everyone liked.

A year ago he underwent major cardiac surgery and his courage and cheerfulness during the whole ordeal were an inspiration to all. We shall miss him greatly.



The Extreme-Left
A bio-political organism of fast-proliferating new organisations, splinter-groups and cells. Also known as the Strident Minority.

The London groups of Social Revolution and Solidarity, and members of the Anarchist Workers' Association (London), are jointly sponsoring a series of six seminars, of which two (on Changing Society, and Fascism) have already been held.

It is hoped that these seminars will help libertarian communists to clarify their ideas on what aims and activities are best suited to modern conditions. They will be introduced by members of the sponsoring groups, who will however be speaking in a personal capacity.

The meetings will take place from 2 to 5 pm on alternate Saturdays at The Drill Hall, Chenies st., WC1 - off Tottenham Court Road (nearest tube: Goodle Street). There is a reasonably priced cafe in the basement. The remaining topics are:-

Date:	Topic:	Speaker:
May 28th	Capitalism, Bureaucracy, and the Free Society	Solid.
June 11th	Revolutionaries and History	Solid.
June 25th	Marx, Prophet of Anarchism	SR
July 9th	Revolutionary Organisation: Why and How?	AWA

SAME OLD TROT

"Why you should be a Socialist" by Paul Foot
(Socialist Workers Party pamphlet)

What is socialism? This is the central question facing any group or individual seeking to change society for, from one's answer flows one's practice both before and after the overthrow of capitalism. Despite this the question remains one of the most avoided. It is not possible to lay down a timeless and absolute blueprint according to which a socialist society will function but a clear and consistent definition (or attempt at one) is essential - to know how to struggle effectively we must know what we are struggling for. It is not enough that the rulers can no longer rule and the ruled no longer tolerate being ruled (as Lenin thought) but, if yet another historical abortion is to be avoided, people must have a relatively clear idea of what they want to replace capitalism.

For Solidarity (and others) discussion as to the meaning of socialism has taken as its fundamental point workers self-management of society in all its aspects. This is at once our point of departure and our ultimate goal.

Paul Foot's recent pamphlet "Why you should be a Socialist" makes no significant contribution to the discussion and is a good example of the traditional left's unwillingness or inability to come to grips with the problem. The pamphlet, quite rightly, indicts capitalism for its poverty, its injustices, its waste of resources both human and material, but it does not hint at the fact that socialism, while it will certainly do away with these, will extend into every aspect of social life, presupposing new values and a totally new way of looking at things. Central to this will be workers' self-management of production which will NOT be concerned with increasing production and rationalising resources at all costs but will concern itself with questions about WHAT to produce, at WHOSE cost, and to WHAT ends. The whole (capitalist) notion of work, more and more under attack today, will be turned on its head.

Foot and his Party stand firmly in the tradition of manipulative Leninism, where the central problem is one of leadership. What is wrong with the trade unions, for example, is the full time official attracted by the perks of being bureaucrats. There is no questioning the role of the unions as a whole, their integration into contemporary capitalist society as co-managers at all levels. No mention of the fact that more and more strikes are "unofficial", that more and more fierce struggles take place not only despite the unions but against them - witness the recent disputes at British Leyland, the Times etc. But then, without the unions as they are there wouldn't be any positions for the SWP to 'capture'.

In the same vein when writing on the 'degeneration' of the Russian revolution Foot trots out the trad left 'arguments' about the isolation of the revolution and the effects of the civil war. These were important factors but Foot has nothing to say about the suppression of dissent under Lenin BEFORE the civil war, not one word about Lenin's destruction of the soviets and the factory committees, not one word about Lenin's call for one-man management of the factories, not one word, in short, on the fate of the revolution as the perfectly logical outcome of a Leninist theory which saw the workers as capable of reaching only a 'trade union consciousness', as mere

cannon-fodder in an army led by self-appointed 'revolutionary generals'.

In the light of all this it is with little difficulty that Foot reaches the conclusion which is at the same time the book's 'justification', not why you should be a socialist, but, surprise, surprise, why you should join the SWP. Help build the Party, the 'memory of the class', which can 'show the way' and to hell with autonomy, self-management and the real prerequisite for a social revolution - mass awareness of the need for it and knowledge of how it is to come about.

In the end one is left asking 'Well, why should I be a socialist?'. The real possibilities which socialism offers, the complete transformation of everyday life, the restructuring of human relations are not optional extras with the socialist deal but form its backbone and are sadly lacking in Paul Foot's book. Anyone wishing to follow up a discussion on socialism would do much better to read Paul Cardan's 'The Meaning of Socialism' (Solidarity Pamphlet No. 6).

P.G.



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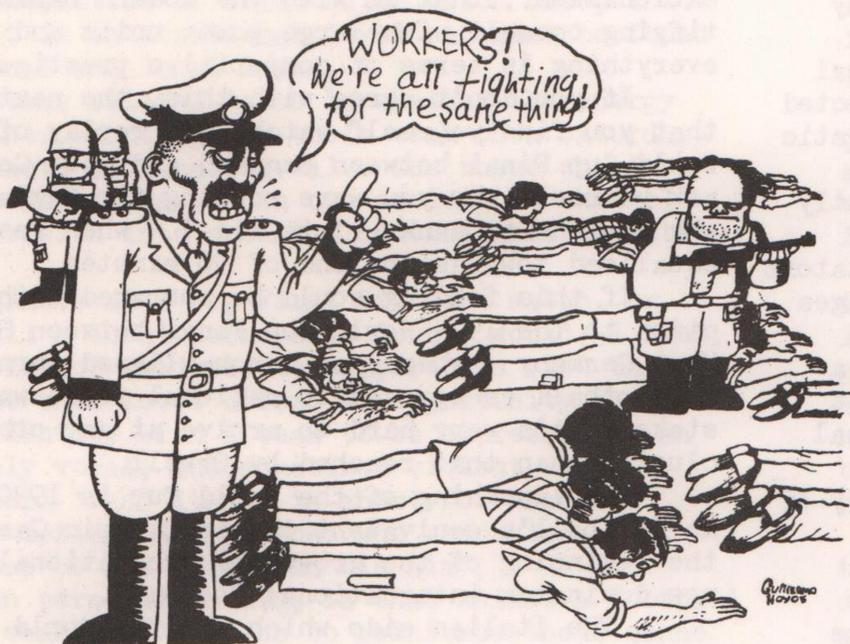
AWA supporters, c/o Flat 14, 5, The Chase, Clapham Common, SW4.

INTERNATIONAL

ARGENTINA letter-extracts

....We have little by little overcome the hardest moments of oppression and we will still try and send you our opinion on events as soon as possible. What seems urgent to us is to demystify the role of the "guerrilla". Hardly anyone here is interested in their sermons. Their terrorist attacks have only a vague sympathy. They have nothing to do with "anarchist vengeance", neither in their methods, nor in the people chosen as victims, for they massacre en masse and often people who have nothing to do with any political oppression. Their methods are very obscure and often cowardly. I repeat that they have nothing to do with the methods of social struggle used by those at work.

On the other hand, there are some very promising developments in the self-organisation of workers. They are organising secretly. This helps the guerrilla by giving it a pseudoromantic role because the armed forces don't yet know the potential of the mass of the people they want to subject. The hack psychologists and sociologists who advise the army leaders don't know the people either. All their calculations, their 'organigrammes', refer to typical cases like Chile, Bolivia, Brazil.....They have drawn no lessons from the Death Squadrons in Brazil, the mass killings in Chile, nor from the attempt at total control of communications.....



The Junta's view of the situation

In fact the European press publishes very little about Argentina, apart from the effects of the military confrontations between the army and the guerrillas and saying nothing usually about the real social movement and the real workers' struggles. Nevertheless an article in Le Monde (8/1/77) claims that the buying power of the average Argentinian has been reduced by 50% since 1974 and that the inflation rate is 34%. The author of the same article says on the one hand that "workers made no resistance to the coup d'etat" and on the other that "the struggle against subversion has been the excuse for carrying out a repression without precedent against union leaders and militants above all in the most combative sectors: engineering, automobile, mechanics, ship-building" and he goes on "despite everything, workers

at Peugeot (5,000 people) and others in the car industry went on the offensive in September. Since the right to strike has been suspended, they chose other forms of struggle: lightning stoppages on the job, go-slows, meetings and demonstrations inside the factories, sabotage etc. The government did not dare repress this agitation and the companies gave in. To get round the rules forbidding "wildcat" wage rises they granted improvements in other ways: productivity bonuses, transport allowances, food allowances, 'loans' which don't have to be paid back etc."

This item of news alone shows that the reality of the social movement in Argentina should not be identified with the confrontation between the military power (hesitating, however, and with reason, in front of workers) and some guerrilla groups, often Leninist. The recent electricians strike confirms this analysis.

echanges

Extract - letter from AMERICA

The situation in the US appears to be one of retrenchment. The big activity so far has been the Sadlowski campaign for president of the steel workers' union. He ran on the image of militancy, which evidently made little sense to most steel workers. The majority, of course, did not bother to vote at all. Of those who did, some 40% voted for Sadowski. The campaign was largely run by lawyers, students, professional leftists and some union bureaucrats. There was no rank and file movement behind them. Indeed, there is really no rank and file movement in the steel industry at all. The American 'left' was solidly behind Sadlowski, from the CP to the Trots to the New American movement. What is interesting is that the majority of those who voted preferred an established conservative leadership to a potentially disruptive one. The only real issue was the "experimental negotiations agreement" which meant that there can be no national strike of steel workers for the duration of the contract and even after the contract expires. The union defends his position by arguing that during a national strike the Japanese steel workers could move in and take over the markets of the American producers. The fact that so many could accept this argument is indicative of the degree to which retrenchment is the dominant feeling.

More than 10,000 tenants out of 15,000 in a New York housing project (Co-op City) have been involved in a rent strike since July 1975 to try and cancel high rent rises to be spread over 5 years; this struggle is still going strong despite intimidation, heavy fines, blocking of bank accounts etc.

echanges

ALL IN THE GAME...2



Today every professional club in the Football League is run on strict business lines, as the chairperson of Bradford City once testified: "Directors direct, managers manage and players bloody well play."

Though many clubs in the lower divisions are struggling to make ends meet, business and political prestige still exist.

Many directors, in any case, have other axes to grind as Peter Denis Hill-Wood can illustrate. Besides being a director of Arsenal he sits on 32 other boards including Hambros Investment Trust, River Plate and General Investment Trust, and West London Property Corporation.

In the 1890s the average wage of the top players was on a par with that of skilled artisans who earned thirty to forty shillings per week.

Most players still had very strong social and cultural links with their working class supporters and football offered them a slight, temporary improvement in earnings rather than upward social mobility and financial security.

The FA and Football League's persistent refusal at this time to recognise the players' union reflected their clear business interests and their paternalistic approach to their employees

It wasn't until 1946 that the League reluctantly increased the maximum wage to £10 for winter and £7 10s for summer. Compared to the number of spectators attending matches (35½ million in 1946-7) these wages were scandalously low

Only when George Eastham successfully fought a High Court case in 1960 against his club, Newcastle United and after a strike threat by the Professional Footballers Association, was the maximum wage finally abolished and players given the opportunity of negotiating higher wages more freely.

The development of football into a business enterprise has meant that the modern footballer is now regarded more as a marketable commodity than as a skilled craftsman. The transfer system illustrates this point.

The gifted player is today a real financial asset to a club. He may, however - if the club's overdraft is too large and the bank is impatient - have to be sold to realise capital. Although it seems unlikely that present day transfer fees will quickly rise to the ridiculous level of four years ago (how on earth can anyone, let alone Bob Latchford, be worth £350,000?) this is a far cry indeed from the days of the first four-figure transfer in 1905.

The constant repetition of set-piece moves in order to attain maximum profitability (i.e. goals) has caused many players to lose their flair and desire to play football. Instead they regard what they do as work.

The present contract system which ties a player to a club also means that he has no bargaining power if, for some reason, he is in dispute with the club. He may be transfer-listed, dropped, disciplined or refused a transfer request without any explanation, and - as at Liverpool under Shankly - he may even be

taken to spend the night in a hotel before a match to ensure that vital energy isn't sapped by having sex.

All this may change if, as has been hinted recently, players fight for total freedom of contract at the end of this season.

The involvement of businessmen, local politicians and the Government, via links with the FA Council, have produced a situation where football has now developed at an international level, along with many other sports, into an offshoot of political diplomacy and as a means of channelling aggressive nationalism into peaceful and controllable directions.

George Orwell once wrote that "at an international level sport is like mimic warfare. But the significant thing is not the behaviour of the players but the attitude of the spectators who work themselves into a fury over these contests and seriously believe that running, jumping and kicking a ball are tests of national virtue...There cannot be much doubt that the whole thing is bound up with the rise of nationalism...that is with the modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige."

If you don't agree with this, the next time that you find yourself watching a replay of the 1966 World Cup Final between England and West Germany, ask yourself why you were rooting for England and why your heart sank - lots did! - when West Germany equalised towards the end of 90 minutes.

If this feeling could be compared with one's reaction to the 1974 World Cup Final between Holland and West Germany - where, as a non-aligned person, a game of football as opposed to national pride was at stake - it's very hard to arrive at any other conclusion than that reached by Orwell.

The launching of the World Cup in 1930 by FIFA as football's equivalent to the Olympic Games marks the beginning of the growth of the nationalism which now dominates international football.

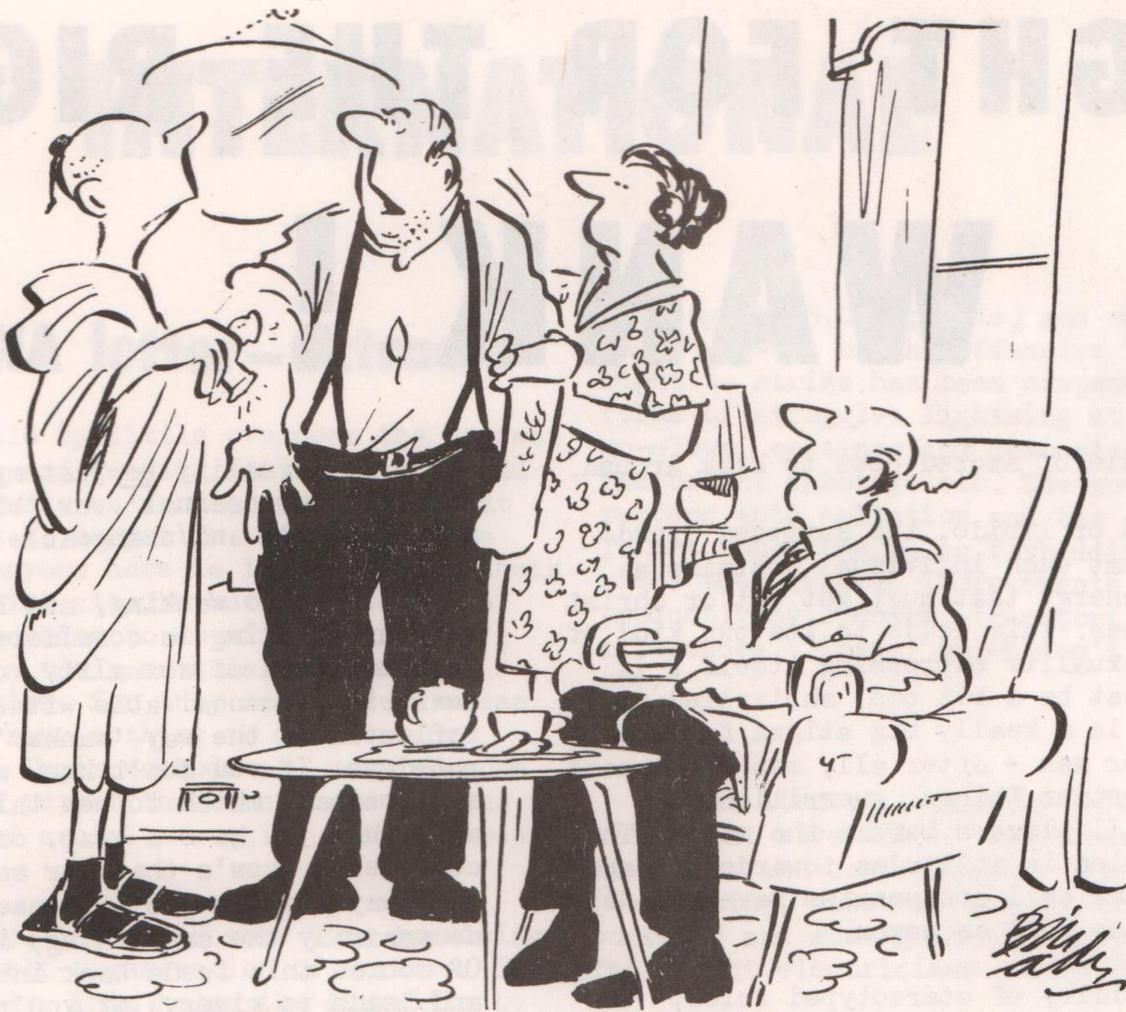
The Italian side which won the World Cup in 1934 by playing a most brutal, aggressive style of football, reflected the political atmosphere of fascist Italy which demanded success at any price.

When in the following year a German side visited England, the Jewish community, supported by the TUC, demanded that the game be cancelled.

True to form, the then president of the FA, Sir Charles Clegg, commented: "We as English sportsmen desire to express our regret at the annoyance to which our visitors have been subjected. This is the first time the TUC has interfered in football. I hope it will be the last."

As a gesture of political goodwill the German side fought bravely but lost 3-0. The England team's gesture on their visit to Germany (see photo) was a far more visible one.

On a more general level it wasn't until after the second world war that the British, along with other major imperial powers, began to actively encourage spectator sports in the colonies. They had been held back by fear of the political trouble which might arise if a large crowd 'got out of hand'.



"Don't be bleedin' stupid, Ronnie. I can't see how playing for West Ham would interfere wiv anybody's religion."

This attitude was in many respects similar to that of the nobility in pre-industrial society, who feared large crowds because a mobile state controlled policing force did not exist to quash any large scale disturbances.

Orwell's comments were limited to the international sporting scene. From the footballing point of view a more interesting point to examine would be whether the characteristics of nationalism which creep into the game at an international level can also be found at a national and local level.

A further related issue is whether the energy invested into shouting for one's team on a Saturday afternoon acts as a safety valve for those who feel frustrated and oppressed in our society to channel their aggression into socially controllable directions.

Attendance at a big First Division match, or better still a local Merseyside derby, would, I feel, provide a lot of evidence to support the view that football at this level offers an opportunity for one's sense of identity with a team to be expressed in an aggressively vocal, and sometimes violent, way.

The word 'fan' itself is short for 'fanatic', who may be defined as "someone who redoubles his efforts once he has forgotten his aim".

My own personal feeling is that whilst a football match may enable rival fans to reinforce their sense of identification with their side by, at times, totally refusing to recognise the other side's existence as individuals. The players are the collective opposition, so that to an Arsenal fan a cockney playing for Liverpool would be a "scouse bastard" whilst to an Everton fan a Liverpoolian playing for Newcastle would become a "geordie bastard". The game of football is not intrinsically connected with these attitudes - these must be located within the wider context of our society.

I stress the word game above because it is in examining how football is played in back streets, on public parks and even the battlefield that a sense of proportion is restored to the discussion.

Whilst it may be true that professional football at an international level acts as a shop window for a country's political and social system - the Brazilian government were at one time so concerned at the possibility of Pele's transfer abroad that they were prepared to nationalise him - the game of football can also be used to bring people together.

On Christmas Day 1914, for example, German and British troops celebrated the futility of their situation by fraternising in no-man's land. One of the few things they could do to express their common feeling was to play football. They later had to be ordered back to their lines to resume battle.

The tens of thousands who play football every weekend on park pitches throughout the country do so not to earn the rapturous applause of thousands of fans or millions of viewers, but merely for the peculiar pleasure they get from kicking a ball. Every one of these players has to pay subs to buy kit and pay for a referee and ground fees. At this level there are usually more arguments in the dressing room as to whose turn it is to put up the nets than about an individual's performance.

In back streets too the game of football exhibits few of the characteristics which are associated with it at a professional level. An important part of the game here is the mutual agreement as to what the rules are to be - e.g. play till 5pm, no off-side, the height of the line which needs to be drawn as a cross-bar. These rules also have to bend to allow for passing cars, the quality of street lighting, etc.

If as sometimes happens one side is better than the other then, after sufficient protests, the players often gather together to work out fairer sides to make a better game of it. Can you imagine Liverpool leading Everton 8-1 at half-time and the players getting together in the dressing rooms to reshuffle the sides to make a better game?

A.W.



FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WANK!



Here are a couple of sacred cows to kick around.

First, the idea of libido, the supposed 'need' for sex, the idea that each individual contains a quantity of sexual energy that must get out or christ knows what will happen. This leads to its own kind of hang-up - is your sexuality expressing itself? If it's not then you must be a bit odd, shrivelled up, crippled inside. It is a really big stigma for women; It may be less so for men - after all, men can expend their energy on Important Things, guerrillas don't screw, nor do football players before the match. This is where the revolution in attitudes towards sex and recuperation in sexual sell consumerism have got us, and it fucks up men as well as women.

Second, the rigidity of stereotyped roles, including how those who are stereotyped see themselves. At the moment I am classed as 'a heterosexual'. If in the future I were to be attracted to someone of the same sex, I would then be classed as 'turning' queer or bisexual in the language of straight society (I would probably be put down as a closet queen for even considering the possibility), and as 'coming out' in the language of gay society. It's from one all or nothing category to another.

It is easy to see how this static classification arises: it's defensive. Now I go along with gay groups (like women's groups and black groups) when they exist in a supportive way against oppressing society, but the problem arises when an 'us against them' develops into an in-group chauvinism: for example, "kill the fascist straights" (graffiti). This tendency is quite understandable but it would be sycophantic and patronisingly sexist to hold back from criticising it.

In this context one of the demands of the women's movement is very significant, taken literally: the right to define your own sexuality. (Taken literally, that is, apart from the phrasing in terms of a 'right': who do you demand it from? who grants it?). Why

can't my sexuality be just my sexuality, not 'heterosexual', 'homosexual', or 'bisexual'; mine and like nobody else's and changeable over time.

Now on to wanking, and back to the supposed need for sex. Wanking is considered at best a feeble or inferior form of sexuality, or at worst non-sexual, sex being inconceivable without a partner. This is reflected in the way 'wanker' is used as a general put-down. If you don't know what I mean, then go to any football match to see this in action, read the wall when you have a crap, or come to any Solidarity conference (how's that for self-criticism?). In the same way someone who is nonsexual or celibate (not necessarily the same thing) is somehow deficient. Of course this feeds back into a person's self-image and leads to misery; if you're not heterosexual you must be homosexual, otherwise there's really something wrong with you. Celibacy need not be for the left overs, stigmatised, but could be a positive alternative, and once this is recognised a lot of the pressure on sexual relationships will be relieved.

It is time to do away with this hierarchy of fixed sexualities, each putting down the next, or putting the boot in, or chauvinistically condemning all those outside 'your' category. It is time to put about the idea of really defining your own sexuality, instead of attaching yourself to some readymade category.

* * * * *

Some of these ideas come from an article, 'On Celibacy' and a poem, 'Coming out celibate' printed in 'Catcall' No. 3, a feminist discussion paper. The article is written though from a purely feminist angle, is anti-men, and doesn't consider the implications of the ideas it raises for men as well as women. Catcall is available from 57, lucas avenue, London E. 13.

Nicky Nurk

REVIEW

"State of Revolution" by Robert Bolt

A play in the good old M-L mould, reinforcing the myth of the discontinuity between the ideas, practice and personality of Lenin and Trotsky on the one hand and Stalin on the other; Lenin tough, arrogant and ruthless, but a Really Loveable Guy underneath; Trotsky, a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do - and Stalin a moronic thug. This guy really bugs our heroes - how Lenin pines when he realises that Stalin is going to take the helm.

Anarchists get a look in, represented by a little nurk complete with black cap (like the ones fashionable year after year at Mayday anarchist picnics and the like) who jumps up and shouts, "Long live violence,

long live death, long live anarchy!", to the mild amusement of our party in the audience.

Kronstadt features largely in the play, and the guilt of the massacre tortures the souls of Lenin and Trotsky (aaaaahhhhh!) - but then, "history is hard".

The apotheosis of Lenin is completed (before the play we have to sit watching a sodding great screen with the bastard's head on it) when his doctor tells us that medical science can't explain where he got his fantastic energy from after his cerebral palsy/stroke, and with the apocalyptic line "He was an amazing man". (exit stage right).

But a trace of historical reality was injected during scene changes, when it was the workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors who humped props and scenery back and forth, while the superstars nipped smartly offstage. All the same I enjoyed it.

N.V.

AUTHORITARIANS ON THE RAMPAGE

It is not at all unusual for working class people to find that their living standards and the limited but important freedoms which they have won in the course of past struggles are under attack from the powers that be. What is most alarming about the current situation is that the attack is taking place on so many fronts at once. The Labour Government's economic policy is to hold down wages while prices soar, create mass unemployment and cut back on social services. A criminal trespass bill, making factory occupations and squatting criminal offences for the first time, and William Benyon's bill making it even more difficult for women to get a safe legal abortion are now going through Parliament. Asians and black people are menaced by racist violence, and fascist groups like the National Front have grown to be a serious threat. The need for a powerful mass movement of the working class to fight for libertarian socialism and self-management, to beat back the attacks of the master class and regain control of our own lives, becomes more urgent every day.

One important aspect of the authoritarian offensive is the erosion of free speech. The paper Socialist Worker has been ordered to pay £10,000 in damages for libel and legal costs, for publishing an article satirising union bureaucrat Clive Jenkins. Gay News faces a prosecution for blasphemy, for printing a poem about Christ and homosexuality. Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball are being deported from Britain 'as a risk to national security' because of their work in exposing the CIA. Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell are being prosecuted under the official secrets act for their efforts to bring to light some of the activities of the British secret services.

Thanks to Agee, Hosenball and others like them, we now know how the CIA advances US capitalist interests all over the world, by methods ranging from bribery and corruption to assassinations and coups d'etat. The Labour Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, is using his powers under the 1971 immigration act to throw the two men out of the country. This act, devised by the Heath government as a racist measure directed against Commonwealth immigrants, empowers the Home Secretary to deport non-Aryans (whoops! I mean non-patrials) simply because he decides that it is 'not conducive to the public good' for them to remain in Britain. The fact that Rees has sided with the CIA in this matter is hardly remarkable although the openness with which he has done so is mildly surprising. The Labour Party is as much a part of the western sector of world capitalism as the Pentagon itself, and it is only natural that it should come to the defence of any bastion of the existing order.

Berry, Campbell and Aubrey have all taken an active part in the campaign to defend Agee and Hosenball. Aubrey and Campbell are radical journalists who have been investigating the electronic spy devices used by the secret services. The Special Branch alleges that Berry, who used to work in army communications, provided them with 'secret information' although in fact he left the army seven years ago. By these arrests and prosecutions, the state security forces are trying to intimidate any journalists from carrying out invest-

igations which might result in some of their dirty tricks being exposed to public scrutiny.

As well as the repressive agencies of the state various right wing pressure groups are taking part in the drive to curtail civil liberties. One example is the outrageously misnamed National Association for Freedom, which has gone to the courts for injunctions forbidding postal blacking in support of the Grunwick's strikers and a planned postal boycott of South Africa. Another is Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association. After the failure of her ludicrous attempt to censor that wonderful TV programme Dr. Who, Whitehouse has come up with another fine scheme - the blasphemy prosecution against Gay News. (The law of blasphemy was devised in the middle ages to get rid of religious heretics. Luckily it no longer carries the original penalty - burning at the stake. Disappointed, Mrs. Whitewash?)

Whitehouse is the mouthpiece of a backward section of the ruling class. Generally speaking, puritanism has been a loser ever since the bosses discovered that sex was commercially exploitable. In this case, however, there is some danger that her Victorian ideas will prevail. The open expression of homosexuality remains anathema to those in power, because it challenges some of the most important pillars of authoritarian society: the monogamous nuclear family and stereotype male and female behavioural roles. Besides which, queer-baiting, like racism, is a strategem which the bosses can use to sow division within the working class.

Over the last two years, vigorous campaigns have won the release of the BWNIC 14 and the Iran 21. We need to do the same for the victims of the present wave of political trials.

D.A.



LINTON VICTORY RANDOLPH PUNCH-UP

A mass picket was called to try and stop Self Help entering the hotel. About 150 people attempted to block off the front entrance, but the police forcibly cleared a way for the scabs and fascists, arresting 38 of the pickets on charges of obstruction, breach of the peace and assault.

Two members of the Oxford Solidarity Group took part in the picket; although we believe that in principle it was absolutely right to try forcibly to exclude Self Help from the hotel (and the same goes for all scabs), we feel that in the circumstances the picket was not strong enough to do so, and that the repeated attempts to push back the police were a mistake which resulted in a lot of comrades getting arrested unnecessarily.

D.A./G.J.

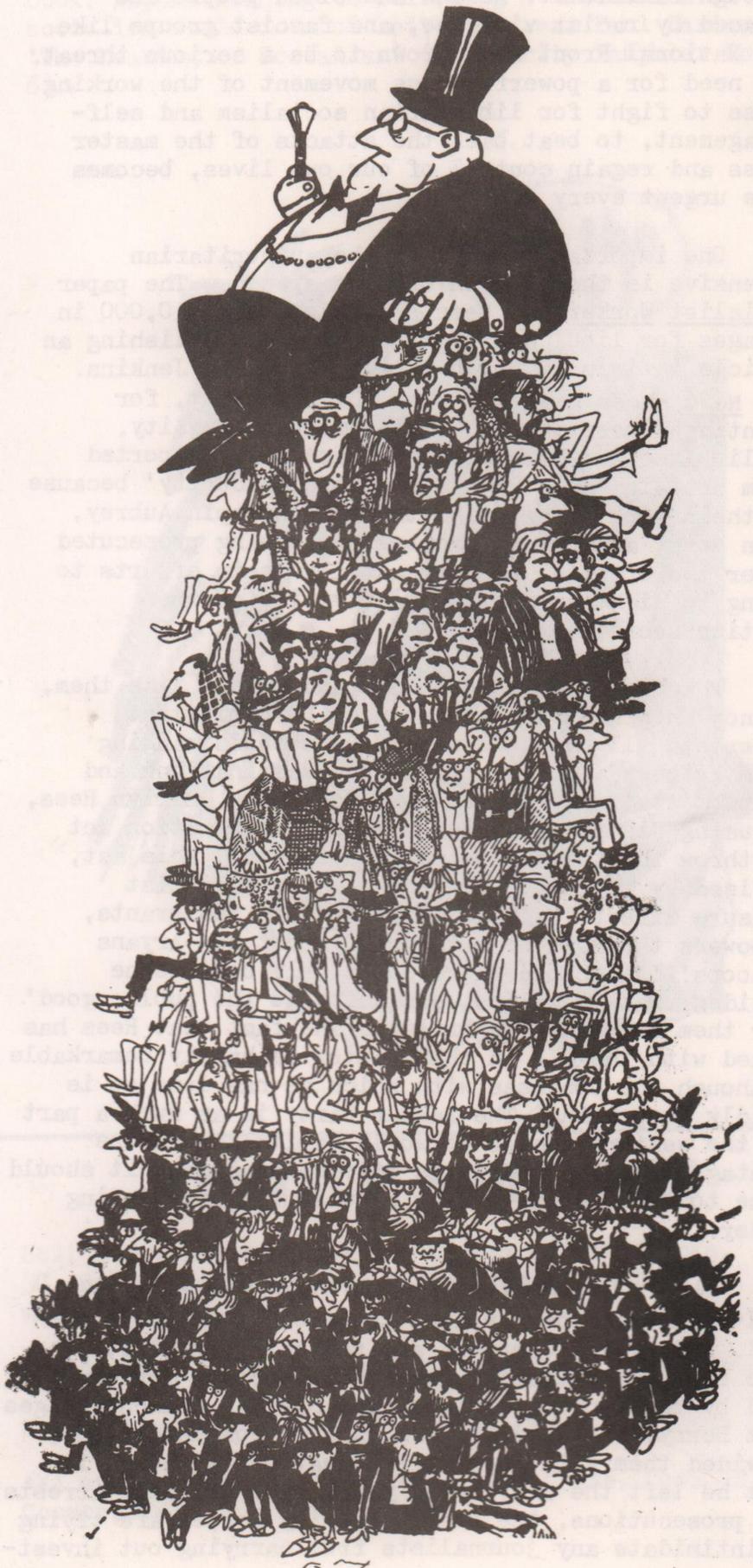
The strike at the Linton Lodge Hotel in Oxford (see Solidarity no.2) has ended in victory after 23 weeks with all the demands of the strikers being won - contracts of employment, reinstatement for those who wanted to return, and compensation for the others. The strike was won only by the determination and self-reliance of the strikers, who half the time had to fight their union as well. The strikers picketed the regional committee, occupied Transport House, and most importantly established links with other hotel workers - for instance, at the Night Out in Birmingham and the Grosvenor Hotel in Sheffield. Hopes of a similar victory at the Randolph (where the upper crust stay when they visit Oxford) may be nearer now that regional blacking of Trust House Forte, who own the hotel, has been introduced. (About time too - the strike has been going on for nearly six months)



"We Conservatives have always believed in home-ownership - I personally own over a hundred and fifty."

Meanwhile, THF have intensified their campaign against the strikers. They have spent thousands of pounds on full page adverts in the national press saying how wonderfully they treat their workers and how they are determined to uphold the freedom of the individual. Six Tory MP's have issued a statement accusing the TGWU of gangsterism and blackmail. Increasingly, pickets at the hotel are being violently assaulted by scab workers.

On Friday May 6th an extreme right wing anti-labour organisation held a conference in the hotel on the subject of 'the closed shop and picketing'. The chairman of Self Help is the Dowger Lady Birdwood, who is also deeply involved in the Nazi League of St. George, which acts as a sort of co-ordinating bogey between the various fascist groupings in Britain.



Confronting the Front

On Saturday 23rd April the National Front held a 'St. George's Day March' in Haringay. Between 1000 and 2000 NF members paraded their bigotry and race hatred through the streets to the blare of military music from a loudspeaker van. They carried Union Jacks, Rhodesian and South African flags, and racist placards showing hideously dehumanised pictures of black people

The police had tried to stop anyone from demonstrating against the Front by placing a ban on the use of Duckett's Common for an anti-fascist rally. 3000 people gathered there in defiance of the ban.

45 Labour and Tory councillors, including the Mayor in his chain of office, turned up to pledge their commitment to good race relations. Nobody was very impressed. Both the Labour and Conservative Parties support immigration controls which discriminate against Asians and blacks and reinforce white racist attitudes. Both parties, in government, have allowed police harassment of racial minorities. Both are capitalist parties, responsible for unemployment and cuts in real wages and welfare expenditure, aggravating the hardship and insecurity that so often drive people to racism. Yet there they were, posing as the opponents of racial prejudice.

As the National Front began their march, the police blocked off the road to prevent any anti-fascists from going after them. However, by dodging through side streets we were able to make our way round the police lines and position ourselves on both sides of the fascist march. The NF were jeered and harassed every inch of the way. At one point they were pelted with smoke bombs, water bombs, bags of flour, rotten fruit and eggs.

The demonstration involved a good number of young local working class people, both black and white, as well as members of left wing groups (principally the Socialist Worker's Party and the International Marxist Group). A group of black teenage girls, armed linked together, shouted "fuck the National Front!". A Cypriot family gave clenched fist salutes from the windows of their house.

There were 1000 police on the scene, many of them on horses. They behaved as police have always behaved in confrontations between fascists and their opponents ever since the 1930's. They acted, in effect, as an escort for the NF, and arrested about 50 anti-fascist militants.

The National Front displayed their now familiar gangster-style brutality. One comrade, who had unfortunately become isolated from the main demo, was stabbed in the face with a knife. After the demonstration, several comrades were trapped in a tube train carriage between Wood Green and Turnpike Lane by a

gang of fascists who viciously attacked them with broken bottles and an umbrella with spikes nailed in it. At Turnpike Lane other anti-racists managed to stop the train and hold the fascists inside while they called the police. For once, the cops had no alternative but to arrest the fascists.

Although the demonstration involved a heavy cost in terms of injuries and arrests, it was vital not to allow the NF march to go unchallenged. We cannot allow them freedom to stir up race hatred, or to build a Nazi street army. We need to build a powerful mass movement against racism and fascism, capable of driving them right off the streets.

D.A.

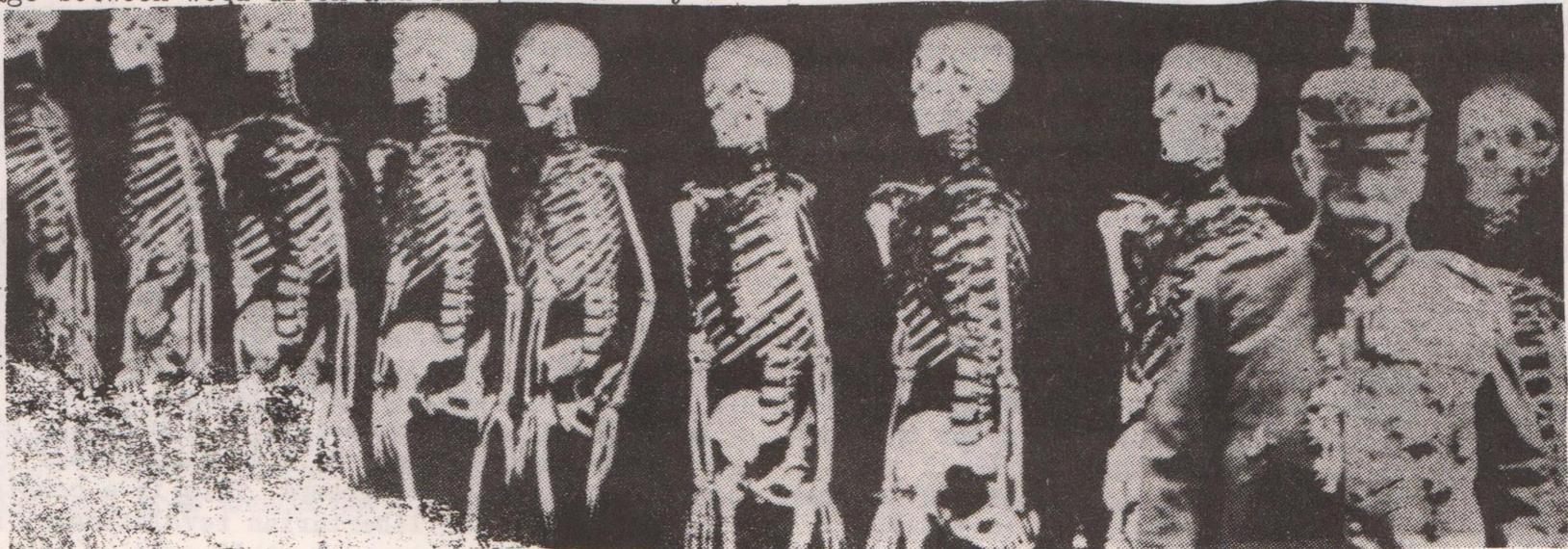


In the past, Solidarity has argued that the classical response of the left to fascism is inadequate. We have argued that the practical implications of 'smashing the fascists in the streets' is that instead of getting at the confused and frustrated rank-and-file youth of the fascist organisations, misguided by the anti-capitalist rhetoric of their leaders, one goes out for a punch-up. At the same time, we believe in the right of self-defence against fascist authoritarian attack.

In many ways, however, the recent St George's Day 'confrontation' between the National Front and the left in Wood Green, North London was of more interest than usual. One of the most positive aspects of the day was the fight back by local black and white kids to the NF, almost spontaneously emerging from their homes, side streets and parks to resist the racists, yet at the same time more than a little suspicious of, and detached from, the left counter-demo.

None of this, however, can be a substitute for fully understanding the significance of the authoritarian upsurge. We must grasp why people, insecure and frustrated in present-day society, fed up with the corruption and double-talk of its Labour and Conservative establishments, turn to right-wing groups rather than the revolutionary left. To do this we need to make the revolutionary 'ideal' less remote and less abstract and start a new kind of politics, which one might define as the fulfilment, starting here and now, of people's own independent lives.

G.J.



POSITIVISM AND SOCIALISM

Those of us in the Solidarity/Social Revolution milieu have a reasonably clear idea of what 'Socialism' is - and perhaps a clearer idea of what it is not. What is 'Positivism'? And, whatever it is, is it important? Positivism can be defined as 'the view that social phenomena can be reduced to observable, "objective", universal laws.' Such a view, however, is not restricted to social affairs. Indeed it takes its primary force from its basis in the natural sciences: positivism underlies the sciences of Physics, Chemistry, etc. But in the last 30-40 years, this view of the world has increasingly come to dominate what are known as the Social Sciences - Psychology, Sociology etc. As critics of capitalist society, we often dismiss these subjects as 'bourgeois'. What is frequently not recognised is that both Marx and Marxism are heavily positivistic. The argument can be looked at 3 ways; (a) Is the natural-scientific world-view an appropriate one for social life? (b) If it is, can the Social Sciences and Marxism measure up to its criteria? and (c) Do the natural sciences themselves measure up to their own criteria? We shall mainly be concerned with (a) and (b).

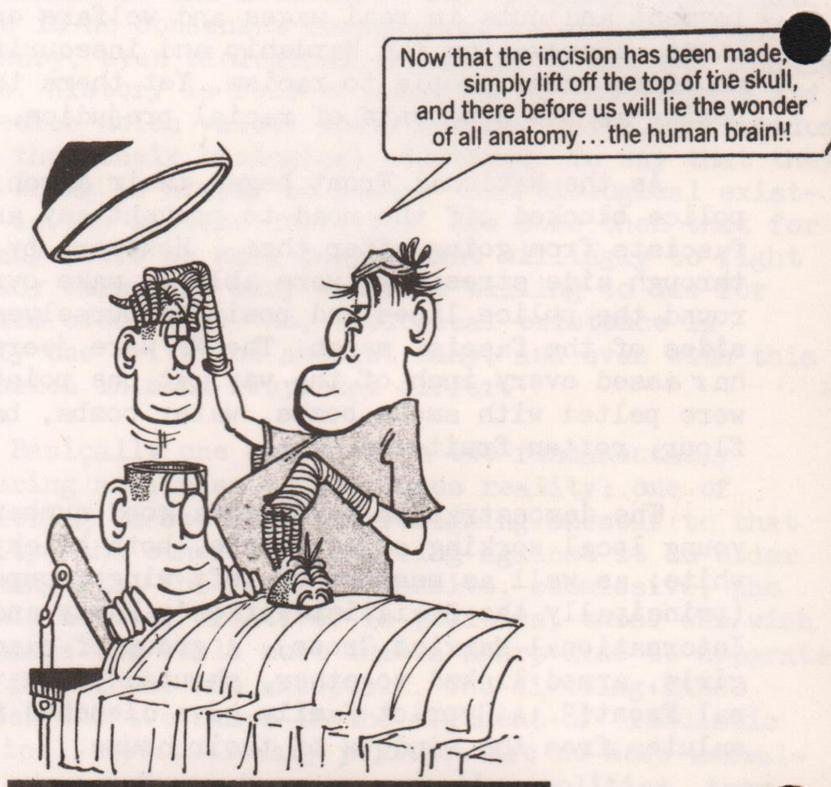
What is the essence of Science? Generally it is held to be that form of enquiry, of ordering knowledge, which conforms to what is known as the 'Covering-law Model', of which there are two forms. The common feature of these two forms of explanation is that both explain an event by showing that, in view of certain particular circumstances and general laws, its occurrence was to be expected (in a purely logical sense) either with deductive certainty or inductive probability. Whether the natural sciences can measure up to this model of explanation in their practice, is one question. More pertinent are (a) whether the so-called social sciences can do so, i.e. are they sciences? (b) Can Marxism do so, i.e. is it the science of society? and (c) Ought either of them to be trying?

The answers to (a) and (b) seem, to me, quite simple. The answer is 'No' in both cases. The state of social enquiry, at present, in no way permits us to claim the status of 'Science' for either Marxism or Social 'Science' - despite the claims of 'scientific socialists' on the one hand, and the Behaviourists et al on the other. It may be painful for many to admit it (although no longer do I find it so), but bourgeois analytic philosophy has done a thorough-going hatchet job on the claims of Marxism to be a super-science of society.

But a further question arises. Should socialists want a science of society (as distinct from their enquiries being 'scientific', if this is an acceptable synonym for being 'rigorous')? Do we wish to be judged on the canons of the Natural Sciences? Are they appropriate? Men and women are not atoms, molecules, or even ants - the observation of which may lead to 'Laws'. The rationale of Science is 'Technique' i.e. the understanding of natural phenomena, with the ultimate goal of modifying and controlling them - subordinating them to human agency. Such a view applied to social affairs seems to me to be highly dangerous.

If Marxism has no claims to scientific status - as I believe it has not - then it follows that there can be no question that social phenomena, and their course, are in any way more clearly perceptible to one group of people than to any others, or the rest of humanity. Where then does that leave all the vanguards of the masses? Up shit creek and jobless, hopefully! Their self-conception of themselves directing the Struggle for Socialism on behalf of the

masses, purging themselves of 'Objective Class Enemies' etc. ad nauseam, is a total sham. I leave aside its disastrous consequences in practice. What it boils down to is that these (usually Leninist) groups/groupuscules have a positivist - and therefore bourgeois - conception both of reality and socialism. They, and they alone, can understand and interpret reality, for they have seen the 'Objective' Truth behind the Ideologies. But there is no 'Truth', and there are only Ideologies. Values are inherent in all aspects of human affairs, and there is no ultimate 'Truth' to be found. No 'facts' to be appealed to, except in a purely trivial sense. The Leninist conception of socialism has been neatly summarised: "The freedom of individuals living in this kind of emancipated society would not be the freedom of autonomous individuals in a humanised history, but the free time of 'domesticated farm animals' and 'laboratory rats' in the 'controlled life system of a controlled environment'".



We have to face the idea that socialism is a value-position amongst other value systems. An ideology among ideologies. This seems to be hard for many on the left to accept. The question then arises, "why socialism?". Is socialism equal to, and no better than, liberalism, labourism, conservatism, even fascism? Well, is it? I'm personally not sure. At present - and I throw the question open to debate - the only reason I can adduce for saying "Yes, socialism is better" is a recourse to Kant - a good old fashioned bourgeois philosopher - and his Categorical Imperative, which states: "I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law". The universalisability of its maxims, if you like, is the only thing that makes a socialist society superior to a liberal, conservative or fascist society.

What, then, is the role of the revolutionary? Vanguards, and claims to Deeper Vision than mere mortals and the 'unscientific', are definitely out. But there is an alternative: "The revolutionary libertarian seeks to convince working people of their ability to organise and manage their own affairs, to foster a critical spirit towards external groups claiming to be on their side (including his or her own) and to expose the illusions spread by such (mainly Leninist) groups. This is a constant, everyday task which the libertarian revolutionary sees as his or her main concern....this role of the revolutionary

never ceases". This is a statement of Critical Social Theory (CST) (for which we are indebted to the "Frankfurt School") freed of its usual jargon. The problem is how to actualise it - for each one of us. CST makes no bones about its values: "It ties its knowledge claims to the satisfaction of human purposes and desires". But "The truth of critical social theory is a verité a faire; in the last resort it can demonstrate its truthfulness only by successful liberation". In a sense, we are all critical social theorists. But, in another sense, the evils of vanguardism may reappear - in two ways. Firstly, some writers on CST do not envisage a point in time when the "masses" can ever do without their critical social theorists. Such writers have therefore elevated themselves into a cryptoleninist position while rejecting Lenin. They will pass down their wisdom to the masses in various formulations, until one such formulation strikes a chord, and the masses act. Then the process goes through another such cycle, etc. etc. The second point is not necessarily exclusive of the first. Most writing on CST is unbelievably abstruse. Perhaps the same could be said of this small essay, though I have tried hard to prevent it being so. The Frankfurt School seem incapable of writing for anyone other than academics. Therein lies the treat of elitism. It is no part of CST to remain the preserve of a few academics, by virtue of its incomprehensibility. Perhaps, then, it is our task to demystify it, and refuse to conduct the debate in terms that cannot be understood by the person-in-the-street. If we do not do so, then, to quote Wellmer (himself one of the sinners) "we cannot reproach (them) for being content with something less than the commonwealth of freedom".

S.C.

- (1) Firstly, "Statements to the effect that in all cases where a certain complex F of conditions is satisfied, and event or state of kind G will come about". (Hempel) An important element of this is that the explanation must, if taken account of in time, have been able to serve as the basis for prediction. Also included is, secondly, a logically quite different form of explanation, viz. that "under certain conditions of a more or less kind F, a result or event of type G will occur with statistical probability i.e. roughly with long term frequency q". (Hempel)
- (2) In this connection, Isaac Asimov's 'Foundation' trilogy has many interesting implications. How many of the trad left would love to be Hari Seldon?
- (3) See for example Phil Mailer : Portugal: The Impossible Revolution ?, Solidarity (1977)
- (4) e.g. that 'Jim Callaghan is Prime Minister' or 'There are 635 MPs'. So what?
- (5) Albrecht Wellmer, Critical Theory of Society, quoting Herbert Marcuse, p. 118
- (6) Immanuel Kant, Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics, transl. T.K. Abbott, p. 21 (10th edition, Longmans 1969)
- (7) Phil Mailer, op. cit. p. 25
- (8) Brian Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice 1975, p. 95
- (9) Wellmer, op. cit. p. 72
- (10) One could wish that more writers would take the refreshingly unambiguous view of the German Philosopher J. G. Herder (1744-1803) whose 'aristocrats' had the specific task of assisting the emancipation of the people to a point where they put themselves out of a job!

FRANLAB FRACAS

Franlab is a branch of I.F.P. (Institut Francaise du Petrole) concerned with the computer section. Franlab deals with data for several clients and has computer terminals in several places in the Paris region and in several provincial towns. One of their major terminals is Framatome (which is involved in the construction of atomic power stations), famous for having forced into bankruptcy two smaller computer firms. Franlab, now in the red, was to be taken over by C.I.S.I., the computer section of C.E.A. (Centre d'Energie Atomique), which would have meant the virtual dismantling of the plant and widescale redundancies.

To fight this, the personnel went on strike with the exclusion only of the highest management. The strike spread to other parts of the I.F.P. There were daily mass meetings.

In order to spread their strike the computer workers used the instruments on which they work every day. On the initiative of one department an information leaflet was passed through the computer. It was thus diffused to all other terminals. A second of a computer's time costs about 1,500 FF (about £175). The "treatment" of the leaflet took about 8 minutes. Franlab has not been dismantled. All new hiring has been suspended for two years. The I.F.P. are to remain majority shareholders. 30% of the capital is to be bought by a consortium of the French petrol concerns C.F.P. and Elf-Aquitane, plus S.G.Z., which is the computer branch of the French bank "La Societe Generale".

exchanges

(Our French comrade's estimate of the cost of c.p.u. time is somewhat exaggerated, but the essential point remains the same).

FANTASIES OF SMOLNY!

'Russian Civil War' - a Power Politics Game by Simulation Publications Inc.

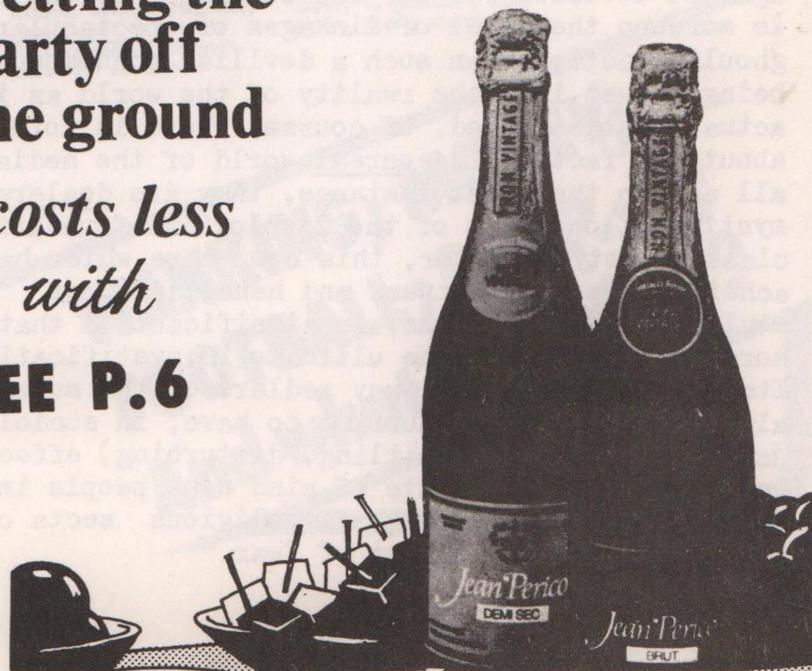
Those who liked Trotopoly will be interested to know of a new game reconstructing the Russian Civil War. You too can play at being Trotsky hurtling all over the place in his armoured train or Yudenich marching on Petrograd. Or you could even be Makno attacking Reds and Whites alike. For those who like their revolutions bloodless and who are only free at weekends, you can conduct purges, execute the Czar, try to assassinate Lenin, all by throwing a dice. All the same, it's no substitute for the real thing. Oxford Solidarity have been playing it at weekends as a form of cadre training.

G.J.

Getting the
party off
the ground

costs less
with

SEE P.6



SAVED FROM THE GALLOWS

"Solidarity" readers will be pleased to know that the Dublin government's attempt to reintroduce the death penalty in Eire has failed miserably. The death sentence was passed by the Special Criminal Court (which has no jury or other unnecessary encumbrances) on Noel and Marie Murray for the murder of an off-duty policeman, following a bank raid in September 1975. However, after a massive campaign on their behalf in Southern Ireland, Noel's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on appeal to the Supreme Court. More recently, following a retrial, Marie's sentence was also commuted.

A third "suspect", Ronan Stenson, has been released, and all charges against him dropped. This news is especially welcome, as Stenson is almost certainly innocent. No real connection between Stenson and the Murrays has ever been established; his only real "crime" appears to have been being a pacifist active in the Prisoners' Rights Organisation, which has frequently embarrassed the government by revealing bad prison conditions. In fact he was never well enough to stand trial after his "interrogation" - with a hammer and a knotted rope. The government has now admitted that evidence was extracted from him "illegally", and the case has helped to expose the "heavy gang" of torturers who, it has been widely alleged, have been very active in the Republic in recent years.

It would be nice to think that the campaign in Britain had contributed to the outcome of the case. Unfortunately, this was not so. Despite the stirring efforts of a few stalwarts, it must be said that the response of libertarians to the challenge of the death penalty was pathetic. Anti-organisational prejudices and a lack of a practical international outlook still seem to be rife in our movement.

The question now is, should we continue to campaign for the Murray's release? My feeling is that we should not. The original campaign was worth supporting on the issues of hanging and torture, as it highlighted state repression in Eire. However, to continue the campaign after the death sentences have been quashed and the torture admitted would be to declare political support for the Murrays, in the absence of strong evidence of their innocence. It is surely impossible for libertarian socialists to lend political support to "anarchists", who by acts of terrorism not only attempt to substitute themselves for the working class as the creators of socialism, but in fact tend to drive working people to support repressive measures by the state. Of course, I don't believe that imprisonment cures anything, either. But from now on the Murrays cease to be a special case.

B.H.

A NEW LINE IN MYTH-TAKING!

From time to time the media throw up new forms of style. Often one trail-blazing venture will precipitate a spawning of other ventures similar in stylistic form. This is apparent in the different cultural realms of fashion, pop and rock music, magazines, TV, film and so on. To use trendy jargon, a genre comes into being.

One such example has developed from "The Exorcist" into similar style films such as "The Omen" and "Carrie". Obviously, "The Exorcist" itself did not develop in a vacuum, however, this new grouping of films have, in an extreme manner, illustrated a tendency within modern film production which is also having a spin-off into TV, paperback and other media.

Having only seen "The Omen" personally, I will draw my observations from this source. Thematically, The Omen draws its plot from the prophetic biblical "Revelations" and attempts to establish a credible contemporary setting for the pre-Armageddon period. This theme of the Anti-Christ is however interwoven with for me an extremely irrational course of events with an even more mechanical than usual Gregory Peck plus various select others in an isolated struggle against devilish forces. The coherence of the plot is more on the level of linkages of spectacular ghoulish action than such a devilish phenomenon being thrust into the reality of the world as it is actually constituted. Of course, there is nothing new about the fact of the unreal world of the media, after all and in the first instance, they are dealers in mystification, part of the ideological foundations of class society. However, this new genre which has achieved its most extreme and hence distinct stylistic form in films, is significant in that it more or less charts the ultimate in mystification. Its Absolute Myth in a way peddles of the supernatural always are. It is disturbing to have, in sociological jargon an amomic (unsettling, disturbing) effect on the recipient. In this state of mind some people immerse/negate themselves into quasi-religious sects or follow rules/commands out of fear.

If there is any credence in the Hypodermic theory of media effect these films are surely the testing ground (for adults). On the whole there is ground for optimism here. Recent media research shows that profound effect on anything but a handful of recipients is highly unusual (it is the exception rather than the rule). People have and will go to this type of film (and straight naked propaganda films such as "Victory in Entebbe") and this fact itself shows us the revolutionary problem. The same people may of course be militant in their workplace, but, again using sociologese, there exists a significant "value stretch" among the mass of working people in which apparently contradictory modes of thought and action coexist, often in apparent harmony despite underlying contradictions as we see it.

To conclude on a more generalised note, modern capitalism has an enormous capacity for adaptation to its ever precarious state. In all spheres of activity, not just the cultural realm, new forms are rapidly recuperated and dehumanised or at least depoliticised in content. In liberal-democratic systems the velvet gloved facade allows an occasional radical message to get through, allows apparently working class institutions such as trade unions and political expressions of the labourist ideology (from social democratic, Communist to Trotskyite) to channel dissent and control upsurges of militancy. The rigidity displayed to the cultural and other realms in centralised State Capitalist and repressive capitalist regimes is hence avoided. Capitalism by nature doesn't stand still yet increasingly the process of antagonism surrounding recuperation is becoming acute. What the Marxists relegate as 'superstructure', including all the diverse cultural forms on national and local level, has to become an arena for contestation (total revolt) in the same way as the struggles against recuperation in industry and communities. Self-activity and the struggle for autonomy involves throwing off all ideology!

K.M.