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Soli

solidarity

FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

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THE LEFT - WHO GIVES A DAMN?

INSIDE: French CP, nukes, life in the welfare state, statistics, world war one, left ecumenism.....

PULL OUT FEATURE ON
POLAND

EDITORIAL

With all the sixties revivalism going down at the moment, it was inevitable that some of it would rub off on the anti-nuke movement.

The anti-nuke movement today is characterised by a fantastic optimism and an unworldly naivete which would have done its predecessor 20 years ago proud. In the face of the ultimate weapons of state power we are offered the same old stale pap of resolution-mongering in the Labour party swamp. (An ironical comment on the failure of CND the first time around which seems to have gone unnoticed in the movement, was the launching by the then Labour government of a UK polaris submarine called "HMS Resolution".)

Yet once again we have the futile spectacle of a movement seeking to 'persuade' governments to dismantle the most powerful weapons in their arsenal as if the bomb's existence was some kind of aberration - a product of a hiccup in the state's 'rationality'. Once again a bag of 'famous people' 'distinguished artists', trendy vicars, union bureaucrats and labour party necrophiliacs, channel activity through organisations that are totally discredited and methods that are totally inadequate.



In response to this we get the anarchist/liberal alternative. Annual ritual confrontations - very mass (or not, as at Torness), autonomous and direct - and the rest of the time business as usual, whilst our anarcho-liberals pat themselves on the back at the wonderful event they've had. The strategy means that the most militant activists are taken out of the urban communities to isolated nuclear bases/sites in attempted occupations. It is no surprise that the state matches these 'mass' demos with mass police presences, turning nuclear sites into virtual fortresses. This form of ritual is in keeping with the pacifist/liberal CND which failed twenty years ago. This picking of symbolic targets as sites for ineffectual rituals of protest failed then and it will fail now.

In place of this discredited strategy it is necessary to take the

campaign to the urban areas - where most of us live, where the state is at its most vulnerable and where most disruption can take place. We should take the opportunity to flush out the elites who control the instruments of our life and death from the comfort of their friendly, neighbourhood bunkers. The search can begin for their institutions - exposing the reality of a 'them' and 'us' situation - and direct confrontation can take place with the masters of war on their own doorstep.

The spectacle emerging is one of tired protest and pious crusading, twenty years out of date, unwilling to learn from the political mistakes of the past.

As an alternative, we declare our political opposition to the Western and Communist militarised bureaucracies and in no circumstances legitimise them by appealing to them. The ethics and necessity of self-managed revolution against bureaucratic capitalism and nuclear incineration coincide.

ABOUT US

Habitual readers of the magazine will have noted the considerable diversity of views expressed in recent issues. Whilst this must be frustrating for those who like to receive their opinions gift-wrapped, we shall continue to refuse any commitment to a party line or dogmatic global ideology, nor do we recognise the constraints of party discipline which have shaped political thought and action for generations.

The disagreements which are aired in these pages reflect the debates and the divergent tendencies within Solidarity. It would be foolish to pretend that this lack of unanimity has not created problems for the group (or that the silence of other groups on such matters means that they have no internal dissensions). But there are many problems to which we have still to discover solutions, not least because many of those solutions can only be practical ones, and to abandon our commitment to critical (and self-critical) thinking would signify the stagnation of our politics.

From the letters and comments we receive it is apparent that some articles have given rise to misunderstandings, while others would like to make all of us responsible for the opinions of each. Once again therefore we are neither marxists or anarchists. We have no need of the kind of acceptability to be gained by attaching labels to ourselves, or by tailoring our ideas to conform to the prejudices of others.

If we are not to recount the entirety of our political experience in every issue, it is inescapable that this magazine will be largely composed of fragments, the public formulation of a dialogue through which we give shape and substance to our lives. The least of our expectations is that a few of these articles, creatively applied, may be of service as we try to make sense of a bewildered world. While the contents of this magazine generally reflect the politics of the group, articles signed by individuals don't necessarily represent the views of all members.

SHORTS -

YUGOSLAVIA'S POLITICAL PRISONERS

In my article on Tito in SfSR 13 I forgot to mention that Yugoslavia has at least a thousand political prisoners in its jails. Of these, ten at the most can be described as violent terrorists. The following cases are typical of the plight of these prisoners.

Davor Aras is a historian and former Secretary of the Historical Institute of the Yugoslav Academy of Science in Zadar. A man in poor health, he was sentenced to imprisonment for six and a half years in 1975 on a charge of terrorism. His "crime" was to protest against Tito's purge of the Croat League of Communists by writing up the slogan "down with terrorism". He is now in Lepoglava prison.

Nenad Vasic is a Montenegrin lawyer from Sarajevo. He was given the longest possible sentence (ten years) for so-called "hostile propaganda". He is now Foca prison in Bosnia.

Momcilo Selic, an architect, is a contributor to the samizdat journal Cašovnik. In mid-February he was arrested and charged with having written and distributed an article entitled "Sadržaj" ("Contents") He was put on trial in Belgrade on April 24-25. Under Article 133 of the Penal Code, which applies to "hostile propaganda", he was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment.

Adem Demaci is an Albanian writer (Yugoslavia has a large Albanian national minority). From 1960 to 1963 he was imprisoned for "hostile propaganda". In 1964 he was sentenced to 15 years for distributing leaflets. This was reduced to 10 years and he was released in 1974. However, by the end of that year, he had been re-arrested and in 1975 was sentenced to a further 15 years, accused once again of distributing leaflets. He is now in Yugoslavia's harshest prison, Stara Gradiska in Croatia.

Yugoslavia's political prisoners represent a wide range of political views many of which Solidarity readers would oppose. However, all readers will, I hope, agree that a regime which locks up its political critics can by no stretch of the imagination be called Socialist.

Terry Liddle.

MANCHESTER SOLIDARITY
presents
at the
STAR AND GARTER PUB
Fairfield St., Manchester
the following
PUBLIC MEETINGS

OCT 17 "Lessons of the
Polish strikes"
NOV 14 "Africa - Socialism
or Barbarism"
DEC 12 "The new technology"

ALL WELCOME 7.45pm
come early
UPSTAIRS

TORNESS

Eight people have now been summonsed on charges arising from the attempted anti-nuclear occupation at Torness in May, on which we reported in Solidarity No.13. 'Attempting to rescue a prisoner' and 'Breach of the Peace' are the main charges.

IN discussions in the Torness Alliance we've resolved to take an offensive attitude over the charges. We're aiming to meet the state's attack with further widespread direct action. Provisional plans are that on 20th November, the opening date of the trials at Haddington in East Lothian, people in Scotland will take action at the court in Haddington, while groups in England and Wales will mount solidarity actions in their local areas.

More information from Box 23, c/o 163 King St., Aberdeen or Torness Alliance, c/o Acorn Bookshop, The Emporium, Merchant Place, Reading.

NOW OUT

SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET No.55

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968. What 'socialism'? What human face? by P. Cerny.

A technocratic mutation within the bureaucracy? Or the distorted fulfilment of Machajski's prophecy that marxism was never to be the reflection of working class interests but the ideological vehicle for the accession to power of a new set of rulers whose 'capital' was education, whose religion was science and who spoke the 'neutral' language of efficiency, rationality and managerial expertise?

£1.00 from Solidarity (London)

OXBRIDGE RIP-OFF.

Did you read in your papers that an MP was asking questions in the House about the abysmal wages paid in Oxford and Cambridge colleges? When manual staff at all other universities had moved on to the Clegg level of £1:37 for the lowest grade, Oxbridge were still paying £1:20 six months later.

Kitchen staff at Pembroke College came out on strike and won the Clegg levels plus a guaranteed yearly rise to cover inflation. Various other colleges quickly upped their minimum to £1:40 before the union (NUPE) could get in there.

Oxford's main Trotskyite group, the Workers Socialist League, was sure enough to be found on the picket line. But the cook who recruited Pembroke staff into NUPE was quoted in the Daily Mail calling the WSL ferrets undermining the workers.

Not all Oxford colleges have yet gone up to Clegg levels. Some have been palmed off with smaller rises.

a nurse asks If State CARE is worth Fighting for

INTRODUCTION:

It's taken me up to two years to write this thing. A lot of the time my writing just changed into an incoherent scream. The Welfare State is an unclassifiable nightmare which inspires paralysis and delusions in me whenever I've tried to come to terms with it. For getting on for two years I have been in the job of "looking after" what I can only describe by the way they are treated as capitalism's waste products - old people and people in mental hospitals. Some can of course be recycled for another go on the merry-go-round of housework, wage labour, being a grandparent etc, but a lot are finished and know it.

The first part of this article is about what the Welfare State is and how it has destroyed in many people the idea of what socialism could be. With the cuts by the government, the attempt by the Left to rally round the Welfare State has led to uncritical and mindless support for it similar to their uncritical and mindless support for the IRA's of this world. In the second part I talk about resistance to the Welfare State, about the "Winter of Discontent", and about how illusions in the 'socialist' or at least 'humane' nature of, say the NHS, made it easy, for the State and the unions to smash the strike. And now I want to show how there were tendencies in that struggle and in later struggles not only towards autonomous action by the population but also towards challenging the very existence of things, such as roles, jobs, workers and non/workers, in short a development towards a revolutionary critique of everything. Why is there no mass generalized struggle against the cuts in social welfare? The unions have threatened, the leftists have demanded but the population has not responded to their clarion calls.

Could it be that the Welfare State isn't to everybody's liking? For me I see its existence like wage labour, trade unions, families etc., as an obstacle to a self-managed, conscious communist society.

It's depressing how the attacks on the institutions of welfare have sent the Left scurrying to defend any manifestation of state - run care against the awful onslaught of the Thatcher menace. If the propaganda being put about at the moment is to be believed, the new world is not one where production, consumption and service are in the hands of a population conscious of its desires and aspirations, but is in fact prefigured by any old state-run junk heap, masquerading as a 'hospital' or 'old people's home'. I'm sure the British State has no intention of 'Returning to the Thirties' but the Left it seems has never left them.

The problem is difficult especially for anyone who hopes to encourage the autonomy, confidence and consciousness of

the population against the daily conditions of life. For me there is no question about allowing our rulers to streamline the system at the expense of old people, sick people, in fact at the expense of us all, but at the same time I'm not going to lose my desires of how I want to live just to prop up the "better" things that exist today. In fact what I'm trying to say in this article is that if we keep our vision of the new world, and our criticism of everything in the old one, then we might frustrate the plans of our rulers better and maybe once and for all.

To begin: what is this Welfare State and what does it do? Here are some ideas:

It provides possible cures to all people regardless of their income. Very little is done in the way of ill-health prevention.

It provides some sort of a life for mentally and physically handicapped people, and for old people who otherwise would probably die or end up in grotesque circuses for 'entertainment' purposes.

It has cut infant mortality rates. It has abolished many fatal diseases - smallpox for example.

It was the result of over 50 years of social democratic and trade union struggle and is seen by many people as a fundamental part of 'socialism'.

It has partly broken down some of the more gross manifestations of family life ie. mother as eternal carer, everyone trapped into responsibility for people they might not wish to have responsibility for.

It has taken the business of care from the home (and therefore individual women) to the institutions (and back to women who make up the majority of NHS workers).

It is institutionalised self-help. It is the Victorian ideal made law through the appropriation of money from the majority of people in the form of tax.

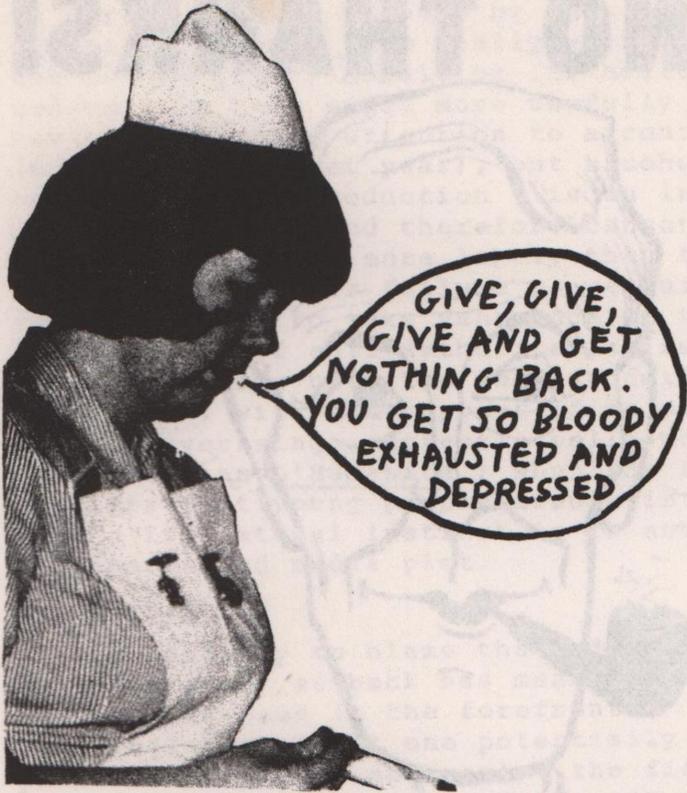
Its existence was the price our masters paid for managing to herd the population into the slaughter of the second world war.

It services the workforce* for the bosses trying to ensure there is no shortage or deterioration of producers or consumers.

It has taken away from people what control they had over looking after their old relations, sick friends etc. although this control was strictly limited by poverty and traditional morality.

It has put into the hands of the State the means of reproduction and health. A dangerous thing by anyone's standards. (In Zoe Fairburn's novel 'Benefits', the State uses its 'welfare' service to allow only selected women to have children.)

It pays low wages, has bad work conditions and uses the idea of 'women's work' to ensure that things stay that way.



It has engendered a huge bureaucracy which creams off the best nurses or other workers ('best' within the terms of the bureaucracy) into pen-pushing administrative posts.

It relies on a firm hierarchy, with strict command-and-obey relationships amongst its workers and allows patients no say in their care.

And it is, like all workplaces, a struggle and a hassle to work there. To be a nurse or a care assistant as I am exposes very directly the double edged sword which the Welfare State is.

Somewhere in our murky history our ability and desire to look after one another was crushed. Now to nurse even in a state institution there's a fight with yourself to extract even a minimal amount of solidarity and friendship with people who are so utterly defenceless. But even what you can extract is (in my experience) constantly opposed to the reality of 'care'. Nursing people is now a job, not part of living, but an institutionalised ritual going through the motions of caring always with an eye to the clock.

In most hospitals and institutions of the welfare state, there is a routine, there is a strict hierarchy. Doctor or psychiatrist/nursing officer charge nurse or sister/ staff nurse / then domestics, ancillaries, student nurses and nursing assistants and finally the patient.

I've worked and I work at the moment with old people (in psychiatric hospitals or old people's homes) but from what I've seen of general and other hospitals strictness, self sacrifice and debilitating hard work is the order of the day. Only a society as fucked-up as this one could conceive of places of care and recovery in terms of routine and the destruction of individual awareness of what is happening to them.

The Rampton holocaust (exposed by the television) is only a more extreme example of what happens every day in hospitals. It was a direct consequence of the main relationship of nursed to nurse, ill to the curer. I (the nurse) give; you (the patient) take. I get nothing from you, I am not expected to be supported or helped by you. In

an article on Nursing and Sexuality in the Nursing Times the author spoke about how liberal and progressive the nurse must be in facing patients 'sexual problems': no condemnation, no disapproval just clear sympathy and understanding. But, it continued, never discuss your feelings or your problems with the patient. Everything flows one way so it's no surprise when harassed or even bored nurses add a kick or a punch to the endless stream of service that prisoners would not, rather than accept the total and daily control which nurses exercise over patients. The Cyberneticians who 'organise' the health service demand we switch on a mystical quality known as 'caring' to order, for shorter or more usually longer time. Switched-on 'care' is nothing more than a resentful and discontented facade which can break at any time and lead to god knows what.

Conformity, uniformity, stereotyping, 'efficiency' and blandness: these are the characteristics of the nurse if you want to survive, unless of course, you can take other ways out, like drugs, drink or politics.

This is the 'caring' relationship that is also defended when we defend the Welfare State, and no amount of cant about democratising the NHS etc., will change the reality of things as long as such relationships continue. People of course, everywhere beat this system. People are looked after decently, violence is not common, but the health service operates despite its own rules and ideology. Continually people defy the routine and do express themselves and their humanity at the expense of a neatly folded sheet or something; and of course, many lives are saved, many operations concluded, many diseases cured, but this is not some sort of socialism, an island autonomous from the stress of existing, it is the welfare state, this ambivalent thing which seems to be in everybody's interest and nobody's, which everyone defends but which nobody wants to experience.

The Welfare State's ambivalence - its usefulness and its destructiveness, is not the only explanation why there is no struggle against its dismemberment. There are more obvious reasons. But to me it is the main reason why I find the present mania for 'fighting the cuts' so empty and I am sure a lot of people do as well. It's very existence is also one of things which has made the vision of a new world (clouded by such ideas as 'state control' and 'nationalised welfare') seem so bleak and alien to anyone looking in that direction.

S.A.B. (Leeds)

* By workforce I mean what Box666 mean: "It includes all those who are excluded from wealth and power whose lives are directly dominated by capital, who have to live on the left-overs of the bourgeoisie and their hangers on, it includes all these in their collective struggle."

Not just the industrial proletariat, not just the direct producers, not just women, not just men, but everyone who is at the wrong end of power in this society.

LEFT CONSENSUS? NO THANKS!

Ecumenical gatherings such as 'Debate of the Decade' and 'Beyond the Fragments' clearly express the disintegration of the 'traditional' left and the desperation of the 'new' left alternative to them. Since ecumenical movements of the traditional left only attempt to resolve sectarian differences over the interpretation of theory, rather than deal with the inadequacy of the theory-cum-dogma itself, they are bound to fail. In the case of the 'new' left, Beyond the Fragments is a different slant on ecumenism: it is an attempt to resolve the fragmentation of practice in a movement bereft of a coherent critique of society. This is why the agenda is biased towards reorganisation at the expense of a fundamental political rethink. It is a reflection of the deep troubles of the 'new' left and its inability to face up to it.

One reason is that the criticisms of leninist practice in the 'Beyond the Fragments' book were not linked to that legacy of marxist economism which can only visualise 'socialism' as emanating from a world of poverty, unemployment and war (i.e. rooted in economic misery) instead of envisaging the possibility for revolutionary change in a world of relative affluence, in which capitalism has produced 'the goods' (at the cost of privatisation, sectionalism, bureaucratisation, seduction and 'peace'). The lessons of France in 1968 have been forgotten, when a country with the highest standard of living in its history (and no economic crisis) revolted. If capitalism is to be challenged in economic terms, it is its dynamic for expansion and the real problems this brings which have to be understood, rather than waiting for it to 'collapse' due to an abstraction like the 'falling rate of profit'. (Most prophets have fallen, predicting this.)

While today's fragmented 'new' left may rightly deny a commitment to such marxist fundamentalism, it nevertheless perceives grey, mean, financially stringent periods as the take-off point for political change. This leads directly to demands for bourgeois 'equal rights', defence of social democracy, and the contagion of non-specific workeritis. And thus, like the leninists, it ends up supporting archaic forms of organisation and activity and becomes prone to outdated imagery (the 30's). The contents of the 'traditional' left dustbin (trade unionism, the labour movement, fights against cuts, right to work, anti-fascism and third-worldism) have been scavenged by Beyond the Fragments and socialist feminism. Some of their own scrapings have been added: health and safety at work, alienating expressions of anti-sexism, anti-racism and pre-figurative politics. Constantly recuperable 'oppositional' enterprises have been created. Accommodation has replaced contestation as political practice.

THE OTHER FACE OF LENINISM

Anger and fun, lacking an honest expression (there are so many swear boxes around pressurising people to be 'nice' to each other and to suppress their sexism and racism so long as 'correct' words flow like diarrhoea) are displaced by guilt-ridden, self-denying appeals to 'the masses', 'the class', 'women', 'blacks' and 'oppressed minorities' (a mixture of middle class 'concern for humanity' and moral indignation). This is the other face of leninism. Not the leninism of the revolutionary party but that of the 'enlightened witnesses of the truth'. Crusading zeal, in the battle for minds, is its compulsive activist form. In this morass, is it surprising that the dogs-bodies from these cesspits of opportunism (the CP, SWP, IMG and BF) continually look to see what radical course is on the menu?

NO KISS OF LIFE FOR THE BUREAUCRACY

The Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy are desperately trying to re-establish their credentials. They are using the ideologues of the left to exploit the radicalism and idealism of popular protest and struggle. Look at the TUC demonstration, attempting to take the credit for the



campaign to defend abortion needs. Observe the opportunism of the Labour Party demonstration on unilateral disarmament, when anti-nuclear opposition is growing. Examine the 'Day of Action' when leftists were used by the union bureaucracy to back up their appeals to return to the corridors of power in Downing Street.

Labour Party lefts, rights and moderates will compromise, in Gaitskell's words, 'to save the Party we all love'. The left of the Labour Party have always put power (for a Labour government) before principle. They are unlikely to change this time. It is therefore inevitable that the leftists, who are the only union activists who have substituted themselves as the 'labour movement', who are the soft police and managers of social concern and who occupy many jobs in the civil service and local authorities, will contribute to the legitimisation of the Labour Party and the union bureaucracy. It seems too much to ask the left to consider whether their political antics are part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Lack of insight into the exact class nature of the Labour Party and trade unions led many 'new' left activists into support for the putrefied and decomposing labour movement as soon as Mrs Thatcher started attacking it. Perhaps they

want to share a necrophiliac thrill with her. The working class deserted these institutions long ago, realising there was nothing in it for them. But the Beyond the Fragments movement, and many libertarians, want to insert an anti-leninist practice into a body which is beyond transplant surgery. Anyone who would anchor you in the past, be they priest, politician, philosopher or psychotherapist: destroy them!

BLIND FAITH AND HOPE

With its limited vision Beyond the Fragments is incapable of freeing itself from the trap of traditional left thinking or the swamp of the counter-culture, where the authority of blue denim and radical chic holds sway. Either the predators of outdated leftism will use it as a recruiting nursery, or it will remain as it is, a lifestyle of comfortable pseudo-security.

In the land of the blind those who point anything out are made to feel abrasive and insensitive. But one contradiction is obvious to those who will look. The anxieties, fears and feelings of social inadequacy which mess up human interaction are the result of property protectionism, sectionalism, commodity fetishism and power relations over production (and reproduction). Yet instead of suggesting the total de-privatisation of property and the removal of production (and reproduction) from bureaucratic sanction, the traditional left proposes handing the lot over to state authority. The 'new' left advocates that all this be 'owned' (sick) by collectives, communes, cooperatives, feminist cliques, tenants' groups and the trade unions. If this is to be the new society busily engaged building its own prisons, bring on the bomb! Perhaps the old saying 'better dead than red' was correct after all.

'Making socialism' is a substitute activity for people frustrated by the fact that the population has opted for capitalism (for the time being) because it has more to offer than 'socialism'. But unless there is a conscious, mass challenge to the bureaucracy over the issue of the management of production there will be no revolutionary change. When this happens, the left should keep out of sight because 'leftism', with its outmoded jargon, its predictable responses and lack of imagination has become a hindrance to revolutionary aspirations and desires.

Nowhere on the agenda do we see any of the following questions:

- 1) Given the poverty of our experience and expectation, what kind of society do people at the conference want? (The post-survival human has an identity crisis.)
- 2) What is the class composition and division in an advanced capitalist society, now that the traditional marxist definition is known to be inadequate?
- 3) How stretched is the authority of the ruling class? (given for example the need for international collusion between Western bankers, communist apparatchniks and the Vatican to contain the Polish workers).
- 4) Is 'socialist' sexuality to be built on the backs of whimpish, sycophantic males? (Conference programme: 'The problem of men and how they will change').
- 5) What is the connexion between new technology, current expressions of culture and the work ethic? (After all, the left concur with the employers' view that the only worthwhile activity for human beings is work, and that the well-being of the unemployed should always be managed by the 'social work left'.)
- 6) Is 'building socialism' the prerogative of this movement? If not, what are you doing here? (This movement has all the signs of nascent leninism. This is bad enough, but if the participants are unaware of it, it's even worse.)
- 7) Do your parents know what you're up to this weekend? (Laugh! Oops! Sorry! Bad taste! Keep serious.)

LETTER

Dear Sir (Sic)

As a Gay Police-Person I would like to add my two ha'pence to the controversy surrounding the cartoon in SF&R 12. In the force I have come across many Officers who have had sexually repressed childhoods, being beaten or locked up by their parents as 'punishment' for exploring the sexual side of their being. This factor in their personalities, which they might have sublimated harmlessly by becoming Social Workers, is often complicated by unresolved Oedipal Hostilities and a reaction formation in favour of 'spying' which leads them to become Policemen. The criminal becomes for them a substitute Father Figure who is locked up in revenge; at the same time, the criminal is an ego-projection and they receive massive gratification by identifying with the prisoner. The deep-buried Homosexual desire for the Father's penis (present in all Policemen) is cathexed by denial of the Father. The sexual desire is repressed within the Authoritarian Institution and Solidarity's cartoon broadly reflects the true state of the Force's sexuality. I hope you will continue to publish material reflecting this sorry state of affairs.

Yours etc,

'Cop Out' (Bristol).

BUREAUCRACY

The National Secretary can be contacted via the Manchester address and the International Secretary by writing to 83, Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ. The remainder of our unwieldy bureaucracy will remain enshrouded in organisational secrecy by decree of the editorial section.

This issue of the magazine was edited and produced by group members in Oxford and the supplement on Poland was produced by members in London. Contributions to the next issue, which will be produced by the Manchester Group, should be sent to their address as soon as possible.

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This leaflet was distributed at the 'Beyond the Fragments' conference by comrades from Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, London and Glasgow.

STATISTICS can mislead you - but they can also demystify you

It has been said that economic theories and statistics are a waste of time and a distraction from the obvious political facts of life. The ruling class organises our lives and economics is part of the bureaucratic smokescreen.

I find this point of view convincing, but I must also confess to a fascination with statistics as indicators of society. And since many contributors to "Solidarity" magazine seem to think it's important to have an analysis of the current economic state of affairs, I thought I'd take a critical look at the statistics on which all economic theory is based.

I think that 'Economics Made Simple'-type books do no more than translate into popular speech the confusions and fallacies enshrined in high economics. The first problem that aroused my curiosity was the idea of GNP or gross national product. I used to read 'New Internationalist' every month and they often compared the GNP's of poor and rich nations in terms of US dollars. It occurred to me that this was a useless indicator of relative wealth, since the cost of living was so much less in poorer countries. Exchange rates are skewed by the 'desirability' of those currencies that control international trade and investment in 'development', making it artificially difficult for citizens of India to visit the States and easy for American tourists to visit India. Is it really 100 times as valuable to eat blueberry pie in Kentucky as it is to suck a mango in Kashmir?

I've not travelled much myself, but my views were confirmed by talking to West Indians about life in the Caribbean. They often wonder what the hell they came here for. But search the statistics as you like, no-one has tried to make comparisons between the real standards of living, except between the richest nations. Equally hard to find are real measures of comparison between standards of living of working people in this country over say, the last 100 years. I once read a book called 'The History of the Cost of Living' in which I was fascinated to find that in the century or so after the Black Death (1350 A.D.) the wages of the English labourer were as high as they were ever to be again until the 1880's- the reign of Good Queen Bess being the deepest trough of poverty. This same book showed the standard of living in the twentieth century continually rocketing upwards. But when I read a letter in a local newspaper last year comparing what could be bought on a take-home of £50 in 1979 with £3-10s in the '30's I decided to re-check my assumptions.

GIVE UP
STATISTICS
AND LIVE IN
THE HERE
AND NOW



The official statistics are presented so as to make direct comparisons difficult. Prices and wages are given as percentages of the levels in certain years (1974, 62, 56 etc.) so a continued use of the calculator is necessary to convert one index back to the next. And taxation levels are not considered in wages indexes, which means you have to thumb back through the pages of contemporary reports to locate complicated changes in the tax structure which economic histories show only in statistical curves.

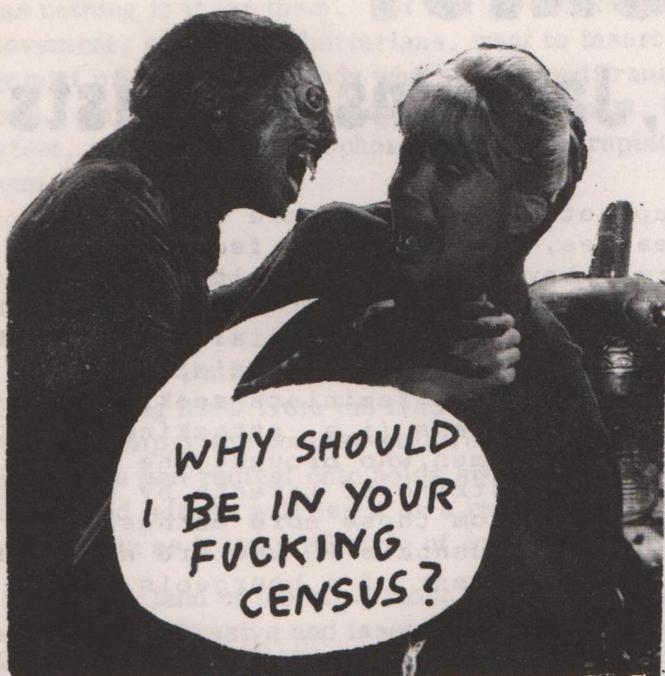
My researches showed that from 1935 to 1979 manual workers' take home pay had increased about 19 to 20 times, rather than the 14 times in the writer's letter, whose family must have come down in the world. For example, a bricklayer's mate on £1.71 an hour in 1979 took home £51 for 40 hours, to earn £3-10s in the '30's the same guy would have to work 56 hours. The normal week was 48 hours. Working this, the bricklayer (as opposed to his mate) would earn over £4 in the '30's, and take home £61 for 40 hours @ £2-06 in 1979.

I left aside paid holidays, different working conditions, social security benefits and a health service, and I compared the increase in wages (per hour after tax) with price increases. Some items are dearer in real terms since the 30's - sweets and sugar, houses, coal. About the same price are bread, meat, cheese, newspapers. Somewhat cheaper are beer, fags, butter, spuds, clothes, furniture, cars, bicycles, petrol, train fares. Two or more times cheaper are tea, coffee, eggs, whisky, shoes, gas and all modern electric devices and goods now made of synthetic materials. From which I concluded that managing to live from day to day, at least for the 'low-paid' workers, is just as hard as it was for the average working family between the wars. The last big leap in real wages was just after the first world war. Nor has the present standard been reached by any decline since the affluent 50's and 60's- there has been a steady slow increase since the last war.

Which brings me to another statistical problem, is there really a crisis? The myth is that since the '74 oil crisis when unemployment hit a million we have been in a new phase of permanent crisis and decline. Before you get bulldozed into believing this cry, as old as the hills, consider some statistics.

Industrial production: fell a little 74-5, continued its usual rise 76-9, will probably drop again in 1980 but these falls look like hiccups compared to the continuing rise. Take out North Sea gas and oil and it looks more like a plateau since 1970 with one little peak in 73. But considering the major shift in employment from industry to services (particularly professional and business services, and catering) production per head has clearly increased.

THIS ARTICLE BEGAN ON PAGE 8



And so has 'Real Personal Disposable Income' (real = adjusted for retail price rises; disposable = after tax): a small fall in 75, another in 77, but 78 is still the highest ever. 1980 could well be another fall, but there is very little chance of it falling to the levels of the sixties. The RPDI doesn't show the distribution of income, nor does it take account of capital costs, e.g. houses. But neither income distribution statistics, nor the average manual wage after tax show any evidence that the working class, however defined, is getting a smaller slice of the cake. As for capital costs, these have been rising more steeply than retail prices, but this has been going on since the war, and is closely tied up with the ever-increasing owner-occupation of houses.

One important change since the early 70's has "been the shift in "fixed capital formation" from buildings (includes houses, schools, hospitals, factories, and roads) to 'plant and machinery', and the simultaneous transfer of assets from government and national corporations to private, and indeed foreign, hands. Employment on the other hand, has continued to rise in the public sector as it falls in the private sector, where it is easier to 'shake out'. It remains to be seen if Thatcher will change this.

The outcome of this summer's redundancies hasn't yet shown on the "employed labour force" statistic. But up to 1979 it has not seriously fallen, despite the rise in unemployment. Employment figures are vague because the self-employed are hard to count, supposedly, and no account is taken of the proportion of part-timers. But unemployment figures record nothing but the number who choose to register. The job market is currently absorbing the school leavers of the mid-sixties baby boom, plus the long term trend of married women to take jobs. It's often said that women who don't register when they're made redundant are a 'hidden unemployment statistic'. If so they're more than covered by women coming onto the job market. The opposite trend, though not enough to cancel it out, is occurring among men; more each year are neither employed, unemployed or students. A brief history of the job market might put this in perspective.

Years	Working Age Population	Male Employment	Female Employment	Male Un-employment	Female Un-employment
1962-3	+750,000	+200,000		+200,000	
1964-6	steady	+600,000		-200,000	
(up to 1966 I couldn't find male/female figures)					
1967-8	steady	-500,000	steady	+200,000	+40,000
1969-70	steady	falling	rising	steady	steady
1971-2	steady	-400,000	steady	+200,000	+50,000
1973-4	steady	steady	+600,000	-200,000	-50,000
1975-9	+600,000	-400,000	+300,000	+500,000	+300,000

Over the whole period (67-79) male employment fell by a million and female employment rose by a million. Each year about 1.5% more of women have worked part-time (under 30 hours a week), which could cancel out most of the rise in female employment- that's too complicated for me to work out. Students have increased steadily over the whole period and so don't affect the rises and falls.

Statistics haven't yet absorbed the impact of this summer's redundancies, the fastest ever. Before the days of redundancy pay, this would have been a recipe for revolution. But nothing is happening now, that's not comparable to what's been going on since the last war. The labour market eventually coped with the last baby boom, it could probably cope with this one by expanding new sectors. (Millions more housewives demanding work could pose a much realer threat - and there's no sign they're being

driven back to their sinks). The 71-2 crisis could be seen as a much more serious one than the 75-9 one, if you go by employment rather than unemployment figures. You can either look on unemployment as a way of holding down the workers by making them compete with each other, or you can look on employment in exactly the same way, as a demand which our rulers are obliged to satisfy to keep us busy.

However, all statistics must be taken with a pinch of salt. The key is to believe what you see with your own eyes, and to doubt what you hear with your ears. (The statistics are available in reference sections of large public libraries, published by the Central Statistical Office, Dept. of Employment, and Inland Revenue. For tax changes etc., use the budget reports in Keesings Contemporary Archives).

A GARDENER, OXFORD.

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY 1980: Stalinists, Jacobins, Gaullists?

INTRODUCTION

The French Communist Party (PCF) is currently experiencing a crisis of readjustment affecting its electorate, membership, ideology and political press. Who cares, we might ask. But with more disillusioned ex-party members than ever before, at a time when a range of new, popular struggles shows the PCF in a minimal if not a negative role, libertarian socialists in France may derive encouragement from developments.

There are predominantly defensive economic struggles focussed, as in Britain, on the 'saving' of jobs and the defence of an, in many ways, appalling health and social security system; but we shall look here at the more innovative and aggressive campaigns outside the factory, and at the party's attitude to them.

WOMEN (ATTACKED)

In France just now the most interesting struggles are located among so-called 'soft' (or swampy) issues which cannot easily be fitted into an economic political analysis. The PCF has benefitted in the past from the support of some of the people mobilising around abortion, sexual politics, race and nuclear power. Today the party is no longer willing to make concessions to these various groups, but adopts instead an equivocal attitude. Feminists, for example, are tolerated within the party as long as they restrict their feminism to official campaigns around abortion, equal pay, and above all, recruiting more women to the party. Sexual politics as such have no place in the PCF (witness the recent sacking of a gay employee by the communist municipality of Ivry), and attempts to organise on them outside the party - worse, in autonomous women's or other groups - meet with determined opposition.

The all-women's abortion demonstration in Paris last October gave the party an opportunity to make its attitude clear. L'Humanité, the party newspaper, carried a very small grudging report about what was generally regarded as a successful demonstration, saying that in spite of the media campaign to get women to go, the demo. had attracted only a few thousand who chanted slogans (e.g. demanding for women the right to control their own bodies?) that relieved government of its responsibilities in the field of abortion and health generally. The suggestion was that the demo. had served the interests of the government. The significance of the allusion to support from the radio, in a country where government control of the radio is tight, was not lost.

Women living in Rouen, the constituency of the paper's editor, Roland Leroy, tried to see him to protest about the report. They were refused access to Leroy - their local MP, and representative of the party claiming to fight for women's rights - on several occasions, and when they were eventually allowed into his offices he refused to give them an interview about the article in question. The protesting women refused to leave, local PCF heavies moved in, and the women were forcibly evicted with blows and sexist insults (telling them they needed a good fuck, etc,etc.)

The upshot was a court case against the local heavies, including the federal secretary; they were found guilty of assault causing serious injury to at least one of the women involved. The PCF officially denies the whole affair ever happened, claiming it was invented by bourgeois feminists seeking to divide the working class (i.e. attacking the PCF). Meanwhile, the women who brought the action have received a string of threats by telephone and in person, from those more enthusiastic members of the Rouennais PC who are not impressed by the judgement of a bourgeois court.

The case provides a fairly typical example of the PCF reaction to attempts to organise outside its ranks. There is no longer even any policy of encouraging 'unity at the base' around such issues. Either you join the party or you get used to the idea that you will have to fight it.

YOUTH (AND POT)

While attempts to establish autonomous women's groups are denounced as playing into the hands of the government, the decriminalisation of cannabis lobby is treated in much the same way. It is a little hard to credit that the youth section of any organisation (except perhaps the Salvation Army) would, in 1980, launch a campaign against the liberalisation of the law on cannabis. This, however, is what currently absorbs the energies of the youth wing of the PCF. Discovering that some teachers had handed out leaflets calling for



the legalisation of cannabis, the Young Communists (JC) managed to divert their attention from the glories of socialism being brought to Afghanistan long enough to initiate a major public campaign against the evil weed. This was presented as a counter-attack to the campaign of the government and its agents (the schoolteachers?) seeking to sap the revolutionary energies of young people during the economic crisis by encouraging them to get stoned out of their minds on 'lethal' drugs. Impressive statistics were produced on the numbers of people dying each year from drug overdoses, with the government helpfully chiming in in support by declaring its opposition to illegal drug use.

It's difficult to explain just what the JC were hoping to achieve by such a desperate campaign. If they were really worried about the revolutionary morale or its health being undermined, they might more usefully have turned their attention to alcoholism (60,000 deaths last year), but alcohol - consumption and production - is an integral part of PCF life and therefore cannot be attacked. It seems more likely that the JC, driven by their failure to recruit the young, decided to take vengeance on the general wave of anti-authoritarianism and its associated drug use (the leftist daily Libération, with the support of no party, and no advertising, currently sells more copies in Paris than L'Humanité.) When the PCF realises that young people aren't interested in it, its natural instinct is to smell a government and media plot.

RADIO (PIRACY)

The tendency to blame the media for each and every setback has meant that the PCF has been in the forefront encouraging at least one potentially positive political movement - the fight for free radio. The PCF and the CGT (their Trade Union) have established through their local branches a series of local pirate radio stations to campaign around plant closures and other legal struggles. This initiative might be very welcome but for the fact that the PCF central committee is known to have doubts about the outcome of such movements. In view of the PCF commitment to maintaining the state monopoly of broadcasting, it seems that here as in so many fields the objection is not so much to state control of information as to the way the state uses its control (and to who controls the state). Local members who have suggested that pirate radio stations provide a foretaste of self-managed socialism have been reprimanded by the party leadership, the PCF-controlled municipalities should provide excellent examples of its own brand of self-managed socialism at work. In fact, they alternate between a reactionary localism backed up by militant tactics on the issues which are not central to party strategy, and a dutiful toeing of the line. In between times, party controlled local councils will use a combination of corruption and intimidation to raise money to pay for papers which are never bought and membership cards for non-existent people, in order to maintain the illusion in Paris that all is well at the grass roots. (Actuel, No. 5, March 1980, gives a good inside account of this process in the Paris suburb of Bagnolet, controlled by the PC since 1929).

RACE.

This means that the lot of women, gays, or blacks cannot be expected to be any better in a communist-controlled area than elsewhere. When words are made flesh by activists at local level, the line taken is often reactionary. On the question of race, the party is officially opposed to all racism and defends the rights of immigrant workers to stay in France with their families. At the same time, however, the PCF is opposed to all immigration into France, and (again like Britain) it is black and Arab immigration which is understood. (Since EEC membership has guaranteed freedom of movement between member states from 1957, it is even clearer that the preoccupation is with non-white immigrants). Yet in France (unlike Britain) all non-EEC immigration has been illegal for several years.

But the issue is not dead for the PCF any more than for parties of the right. It argues that the government has not enforced the laws harshly enough and that, as a result, unscrupulous employers have been able to smuggle Arabs, blacks and Turks into the country to be employed at starvation wages. The consequences of such a contradictory line at local level may be imagined. Party activists complain about the overcrowding of their once-pleasant working-class neighbourhoods by immigrants and call for their dispersal. Whilst officially opposed to the endless police checks to which all blacks and Arabs are subjected, members in areas of high immigrant concentration adopt the slogans of the right and demand 'cleaning up' Meanwhile, the demands of communists in the city centre for the dispersal of immigrants are opposed by those in working-class suburbs of Paris where communist mayors chain themselves to railings in protest against proposals to construct immigrant hostels.

There are at least 3 reasons for not dismissing such events as aberrations perpetrated by a few ill-disciplined and racist party members:-

1. The PC line on immigration is deliberately ambiguous on the question of race, in the hope that by opposing the exploitation of immigrants at work and in housing they can do a clever balancing act and win the support both of racists whites and of exploited and frustrated blacks.
2. In one respect at least the party is consciously racist - the consistent anti-Germanism of its press.
3. When the party wants to impose its line it does so regardless of how unpopular it might be at local level. This last point is vividly illustrated by the party's attitude to the peasants and workers in Brittany struggling against the proposed construction of a nuclear power plant in their region.

(ANTI-) NUCLEAR.

Acceptance of the right of local organisations to adopt their own reactionary and often popular lines on 'peripheral' issues like race and sexual politics does not extend to such issues as nuclear power, where the party's commitment to Gaullist notions of French grandeur is brought under review. After the Central Committee had, in the best tradition of democratic centralism, made a unilateral decision to support the nuclear power programme, local members were left to explain the decision in which they had played no part. This was the problem facing members in Brittany earlier this year when a Government Commission of Enquiry into the siting of a nuclear power plant at Plogoff was met with daily demonstrations of local people opposing the plan. After many livelihoods had already been damaged through oil pollution of the coast and fishing grounds, few were enthused at the prospect of having their lives put at risk by the latest product of the French nuclear industry with its appalling safety record. The anger of the demonstrators was increased by the large and active contingent of CRS riot police in the area, and for several days the Commission of Enquiry conducted its proceedings with pitched battles raging in the streets outside.

Amid this manifestation of indignation, both by local people and anti-nuclear activists, the PCF locally chose only to

reiterate its support for nuclear power in the most cynical way. Ignoring the fact that the plant is to be sited in Brittany precisely because its potential dangers require a sparsely populated area, communists earnestly argued that a region short of natural resources should welcome the nuclear plant as a first step on the road to greater Breton autonomy! With communists at the local level willing to engage in such perverse reasoning to justify the official line, it's no wonder that the one regret of Government officials responsible for the nuclear programme is that there is no current plan for citing a plant in a communist municipality. No doubt protesters in such a case would be swiftly dealt with by communist 'activists'. The party's attitude to the struggle against nuclear power sheds further light on its current position. The experience of the 'union of the left' of the 1970's has made a difference. The chic concept of that time, autogestion, is still in vogue in the party; into it is subsumed the nationalist essence of the communist position, with support for Soviet foreign policy and the rhetoric of revolution providing the necessary exclusion from the political establishment at home, to allow the PCF to appear as a credible socialist opposition. Today the PCF is engaged in opposition on a nationalist platform. Its business is the defence of France against the multi-nationals, against the USA, against Germany. Defence of the USSR is its socialism abroad, while building the party fills the role at home.

Meanwhile politics goes on, but no longer in the Communist Party.

IMPLICATIONS.

The behaviour of the PCF cannot in fact be pressed into either of the moulds sometimes suggested for it in the model of a re-run of the 1930's in reverse, with 'Popular Front' giving way to 'Class against Class'. Certain aspects are reminiscent of class-against-class Stalinism: rejection of the Socialist Party as allies of the Government; exaltation of socialist 'achievements' in Eastern Europe; total support for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; elevation of George Marchais as both the figure-head (and the real head) of the Party in France; the attempt to polarise all opinion into pro- or anti-party, swiftly translated into pro- or anti-working class, anti- or pro-imperialist; and finally the new emphasis on the language of revolution and on the role of the working class.

Putting history into reverse is never easy, however, and the PCF is not wholly committed to the task. After being so close to Government power, party rhetoric now, while decrying bourgeois institutions, demands the respect due to the great national party it desperately desires to be. In the aftermath of Afghanistan, a party poster stated: 'That's enough lies. Let's win respect'. The contradictions of this position are shown, for example, in Marchais' refusal to comment on

articles written by dissident members of the PCF, on the grounds that they have appeared in the bourgeois press - at the same time as he and other members of the Central Committee are very pleased to be interviewed and published in the same paper, Le Monde.

The party no longer believes it is the vanguard; it is the nation instead, a 'loyal opposition', its revolution placed in a firmly national and nationalistic tradition combining Jacobinism and working-class Gaullism. The authoritarian and nationalist elements of Gaullism are assimilated to a traditional working-class culture as mediated by the party, the dominant role of which, plus revolutionary rhetoric, is the only distinguishing contribution the PCF has to make. (And in France every party has claims to be revolutionary, whether by reference back to 1789, 1792, 1848, 1870 or 1917, or by expressing some hope of change - royalist, fascist, communist or nationalist - in the future.)

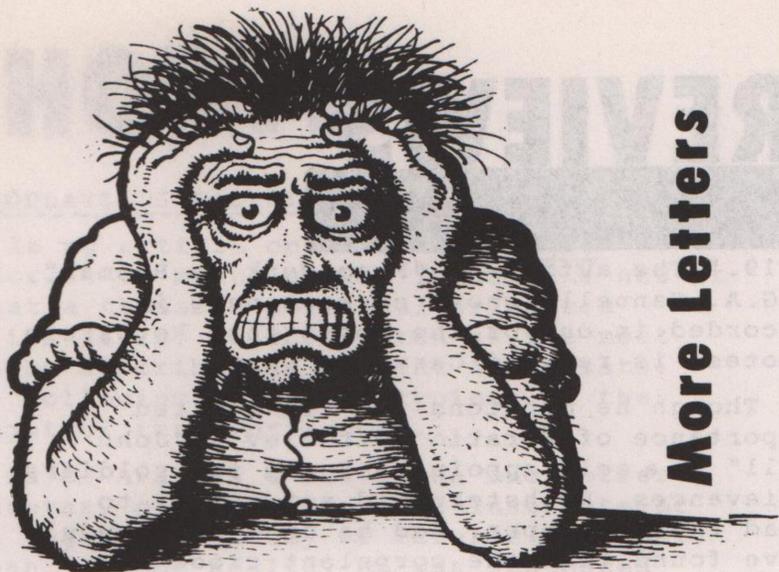
Even at that, the nationalist pretensions of the PCF are rooted in a contracting part of the population, the traditional working class. The middle class is still frightened of it; the intellectuals have, for the most part, been insulted and rebuffed too many times to remain; and the rhetoric of revolution now wins fewer and fewer people while dissent breaks out all over the party itself. Government economic policy helps the PCF, but to people with anything more than predominantly defensive economic demands it has nothing to say. To women, gays, immigrants, unemployed and over-qualified youth, the party can only offer its membership card. The construction of a bigger and better PCF is seen as the solution of all ills.

But as we have seen, the party has very little interest in the problems of these groups as such. Their demands are at best expendable, and if articulated outside the party are liable to be crushed with all the force of the apparatus. Anything at variance with the PCF vision of the glorious France of the future with its population of happy (white) workers is treated as emanating from agents of the establishment.

It should now be apparent that current PCF policies, tending to assimilate the party more closely to the existing authoritarian set-up, leave the field wide open for others. In France at any rate, libertarian socialists would be well advised to learn how to swim in the 'swamp'.

Hérisson





More Letters

Dear Sir/Madam,

Your editorial in the May-July issue is savagely intelligent enough in condemning the "fights against the cuts" campaigns, but is itself abstract and a bit beside the point. You shouldn't dissociate yourselves from efforts because part of the design of the trad revs and others in promoting such campaigns is to return Labour to power. You refer to yourselves as Libertarians yet that word is extensively used by the most reactionary forces in our society (vide NOW, April 18-24 no 32, "How the New Right Gained its Power" by Paul Johnson.) I'm sure that Solidarity householders would not refuse the £50.00 rebate for loft insulation, a form of social wage, even if they wouldn't fight to retain or increase it. Nor, in another sense, that her labour contributed to reformist work. It seems to me that the matter is one of consciousness, that Solidarists make their compromises in this world fairly conscious of what they are doing and have a duty, not to rail at such lengths against "fights against the cuts", but to help those who are vitally affected by the cuts to understand what it's all about which many of them do, and to point out, maybe by example, alternatives. The editorial does mention that "periods of insurrection" are the alternative. But until Solidarists are doing things, things like the worker priests in industry, like leading (sic) assaults or instigating (sic) them against DHSS offices, Solidarity remains out of this world,

Yours,

B.T.

Dear Comrades,

The editorial in SfSR 13 may have been a bit too hasty in dismissing 'the resuscitated ban-the-bomb movement.' Even the bourgeois press concedes that Armageddon is as close now as at any time since the early 1950s. A senile cowboy in the White House? another broken rubber band in the Pentagon's computer? the replacement of Brezhnev by the strategic genius behind the invasion of Afghanistan? a pre-emptive Israeli strike against Cairo, Damascus, Islamabad and Jakarta? Any one of these, and we can - as Tom Lehrer once put it - pick up our agendas and adjourn (permanently).

Small wonder, then, that CND has risen, Dracula-like from the grave (with a real Catholic Monsignor as the Prince of Darkness, instead of boring old Canon Collins). The way things are, yet another generation of well-intentioned but politically innocent young people will be turned into election fodder for the Labour Party (if they live long enough). The prospect of ten more years of 'making the Left MPs fight', etc., etc., ad nauseam, is really too horrible to contemplate (to quote J.B.Vorster).

Now many people in and around Solidarity were actively involved in the first ban-the bomb movement, whether as opponents

of CND's Parliamentary cretinism, or militants of the Committee of 100, or even (so it's rumoured) as Spies for Peace. In its early days Solidarity published several excellent pamphlets on these questions, which served to open the eyes of many people (including yours truly).

I think the time is ripe for a re-telling of the early history of CND, as a service to those too young to remember Aldermaston, the RSGs, and the 1964 Labour manifesto and what happened to it. Public meetings and pamphlets on this theme would be extremely useful, and perhaps some coherent and original ideas for direct action against World War. Three might emerge from the ensuing discussions. But act now, before E.P. Thompson is beatified.

One last (unrelated) point: why no cartoons in issue 13? Please don't let the cartoonist be castrated at the behest of humourless morons in bookshops.

Yours fraternally (whoops),

John King.

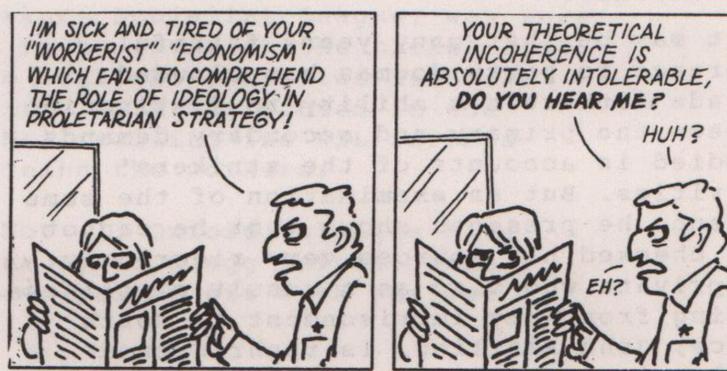
To Solidarity:

Only someone "educated" in modern economics could have written the leading article in SfSR No.13. In fact the jargon is almost complete, and can be found in most copies of the daily press. Here too we can find the cause of unemployment as "lack of spending power" instead of the quite simple fact that workers are employed only when they can produce a surplus product. Here too we can find reference to the "cure for inflation" when even the writer partly recognises that it is governments who create inflation by increasing the number of notes in circulation. This policy of deliberately pushing up prices is part of a general policy of trying to keep workers real wages as low as possible. Here too we can find that "wages must be, in part at least, one cause of inflation" when in fact they are simply another price, the price of labour power or that which is necessary to maintain the worker capable for work. To say that wages cause price increases (inflation) is to say that price increases cause price increases, an incredible circular argument that modern economics is indeed fond of.

The criticism could be extended, but I have no desire to create hostility, only enlightenment. Perhaps the writer, and all your readers, could gain from the occasional perusal of a copy of the "Socialist Standard", writers of which have an understanding of both Marxism and modern economics.

yours,

M.J. Double.



REVIEW OF 'THE SOLDIERS' STRIKES'
BY ANDREW ROTHSTEIN. MacMillan, (1980).

For anyone who has read Dave Lamb's stimulating pamphlet about the soldiers' strikes in the British Army during and immediately after World War One, Andrew Rothstein's latest book is likely to prove a deeply moving experience. The first emotion that it should generate is profound anger - at having paid £12 for a hundred and seven pages of indifferently researched material about the strikes. It may also conjure up a feeling of despair, for "The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919" is tangible proof that the patently bankrupt Stalinist interpretation of History still manages to stagger on with the aid of Capitalist publishers.

Utilising many of the same sources that Dave Lamb and other writers have consulted, Comrade Rothstein comes to the conclusion that the demobilisation strikes of 1919 amounted to the rank and file "paying an effective, if belated and unconscious, tribute to the October Revolution." Even allowing for the qualifications that he introduces by way of diluting the mind-boggling significance of his claim, it's still pretty staggering.

In spite of my best efforts I have been unable to find any latterday effective, belated or unconscious crypto-Bolshevik ex-soldiers to confirm or deny the veracity of Rothstein's assertion. But a cursory examination of the evidence that Rothstein has cobbled together in support of his contention swiftly reveals that his long sojourn in the grubby depths of the Marx Memorial Library must have had an adverse effect on his critical faculties.

Out of the fifty or so cases of collective indiscipline that Rothstein found time to disinterr, at least seven did not involve soldiers at all, but consisted of protests by sailors and airmen. In only one of the incidents he cites, at Park Royal, does any mention by the strikers about opposition to service in North Russia occur in the demands that they present. Could it be that there is at least one band of stalwarts who could be pointed to as right-on Leninists, out of the thousands who went on strike? Alas, a glance at a photograph of the deputation that represented the men, reveals the banners under which they marched to be the Cross of St. George and the Union Jack!

What the vast majority of these incidents shared in common was a demand by the rank and file that they be demobilised. It would be a gross oversimplification to insist that this was the only preoccupation expressed in the lists of demands that they submitted to the Authorities, but it was well-nigh universal. Other grievances generally included demands for better rations, fewer or no parades, Trade Union rates of pay, improved accommodation, and no postings overseas (i.e. anywhere overseas, and not just Russia).

It may be that many years faithful adherence to party dogmas has clouded Comrade Rothstein's ability to distinguish between the primary and secondary demands embodied in accounts of the strikers' activities. But an examination of the same evidence he presents shows that he cannot have checked his sources very rigorously. The private who died as a result of illness arising from Army imprisonment in North France, John Pantling, is rechristened Pantley in "The Soldiers' Strikes of

REVIEWS

1919." The author of "From Monk to Busman", B.G.A. Cannell (whose correct name is recorded in one of the books that Rothstein quotes) is renamed Carvell.

Though he mentions the ill-merited importance of Horatio Bottomley's "John Bull" as a self appointed forum for soldiers grievances, Rothstein did not bother to read the newspaper. Had he done so, he would have found that the corpulent crook of an editor had taken a hand in the Folkestone mutiny during January 1919. If the strikers at Folkestone were as radical as Rothstein intimates, why did they wave Union Jacks, sing the National Anthem, and call for the most rabid jingo of all to communicate their grievances to Lloyd George? Should Rothstein, or anyone else, wish to examine the reports about the Southampton mutiny of January 1919, they would do well to ignore the big deal mystery that is made about it in "Soldiers' Strkes...". The relevant documents are located in the Trenchard Papers in the RAF museum, Hendon- and, with prior permission from the Museum staff, may be read by visitors.

Rothstein's preposterous assertion that, with the exception of the Southampton Mutiny, no repressive action was taken against soldiers in Britain, further reveals the lack of attention he devoted while researching his book. At Chisledon Demobilisation Camp, Belmont Labour Depot, Victoria Station (London), Durrington, Curragh, Plymouth, Borden, Epsom, Kinmel Park, Witley, Bramshott and Ripon Camps (to mention a few!) the strikers were either threatened with the use of force, or force was actually used by the Authorities to cow and imprison dissidents.

Suffice to say the shortcomings exhibited by "Soldiers' Strikes..." in its accounts of developments in North France and Britain are more than duplicated in Rothstein's hopelessly inadequate references to strikes by British and Imperial Soldiers overseas. Strikes over the issue of demobilisation broke out in Egypt, India, East Africa, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Salonika, as well as in the ranks of the North Russian Expeditionary Force.

Any hopes that Comrade Rothstein may entertain about his meagre effort fulfilling the longstanding need for a substantial and detailed evaluation of the Soldiers strikes of 1919= are ill-advised. Though Dave Lamb's pamphlet badly needs revising, it is an unpretentious and far better overview of the subject than Rothstein's "Soldiers Strikes..."

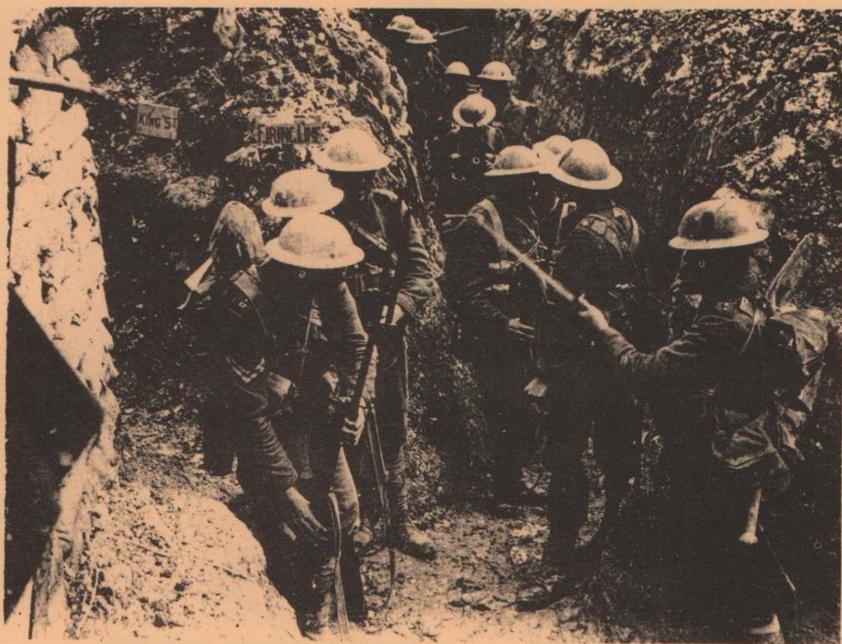
Though the authoritarian Left has seen fit to pay attention to issues that have been raised by Blacks, Gays, and the Women's Movement- the vitally important issue of autonomous activism by the rank and file of the Military and Police has been almost totally neglected. The sensitivity that attaches to such modes of struggle has long been recognised by the State in its codes of discipline and the penalties inflicted on convicted mutineers. This is hardly surprising - for any element of uncertainty in the reliability of the State's coercive apparatus directly threatens the continued existence of all other parts of its structure. The sensitivity of the State in respect to mutiny is also reflected in the lengths to which all States go to censor and suppress information about such occurrences. Amongst other reasons, it's clear that such information could be used by political activists to indicate precedents for disaffected soldiers wishing to draw attention to grievances.

REVIEWS

Even a brief consideration of the 1919 Soldiers Strikes suggests that the British Left failed dismally to capitalise on the major internal crisis that developed in the Forces. In part this may have been because a clear and precise perspective on these events was denied the mass of the population. However it could equally be argued that the soldiers demands were not "political", in that they concentrated on demands that the State could accommodate without any major diminution in its coercive power. It was certainly true that in accelerating demobilisation, the State effectively divorced the ranks from the technical instruments (including weapons) that would alter the balance of power in any popular insurrection by working people.

It may not be necessary to secure the active co-operation by the rank and file of the Forces in order to secure the overthrow of the State. But without at least securing the neutrality of the Forces, the State will always be able to confront all threats to its hegemony by recourse to armed force. I would suggest that the wider dissemination of information about the rich tradition of collective action by Britain's squaddies and a sustained examination of such phenomena would be of considerable value in the tactical deliberations of the left during the present economic and political crisis.

EX-COLOUR-SERGEANT GUFF.



REVIEW OF "SOCIALISM AND HOUSING ACTION. THE RED PAPER ON HOUSING". Published by Socialist Housing Activists Workshop, Gateshead.

This 72 page pamphlet has emerged from a team of "activists engaged in housing struggles in major urban centres throughout the country - covering amongst other things the vital issues of clearance, improvement, rents, repairs and modernisation" as their introduction puts it. Having been involved to a minimal degree in a centre concentrating on such issues, in Govanhill, Glasgow, I imagine that most of them are paid and working in "voluntary organisations" receiving urban aid grants or as "free-lance" community workers.

"The social work left", as J.F. (Leeds) has characterised them, also includes species¹ of welfare rights advisors and "radical" social or youth workers, and must be added to the A.P.E.'s (architects, planners and

engineers) which inhabit the universe of social democracy. The name of the game is "deprivation" and the radicals play it too, except that the object is to build collective responses to attacks on living standards and to counter "the social distribution of knowledge" as modern sociologists would describe the process whereby the mass is dispossessed of information as to how the capitalist state functions.

The recipients of such knowledge, which coincides with the target audience of the pamphlet under review, is the "local activist" whose ranks have been swelled by leftists 'going to the people'³ Depending on whether the local activist is libertarian/authoritarian inclined he/she will seek to transmit this information on say modernisation to the wider network of potential "activists" in the area/use the information to legitimise a leadership position where dependency is encouraged, as in many C.P./broad left dominated Tenants/Residents Associations. The 'scientific' application of politics to the situation means for instance that there is a lot of committee manipulation to ensure lobbies of councillors at the appropriate moment and that use is made of the channels of communication to the authorities.

Anyway, having explored this target group for such publications what about the content itself? There is a detailed examination of HOW the market intervenes ("the chaotic system that rules our lives") according to what is most profitable as well as a historical summary of changes in housing patterns in the industrial epoch, and WHY the public sector/council housing must be defended from Tory designs to sell the best properties to the tenants.

The authors are 'libertarian Marxists' of some sort (like 'Big Flame') and continually re-state that "State control and intervention ... isn't socialism" but merely Labourism/State Capitalism. There is also a critique of "the family and private life" which presents an adequate description of how most working people are trapped in the working/private reality. They also challenge the separation of community/industrial struggle, BUT there a problem emerges. For the authors the labour movement reluctantly remains the central reference point. The socialist movement has the task of combatting this "separation" and "to develop within community action an approach similar to that used by the rank and file movement within industry" (here they forget about 'autonomy' and seem to have overlooked the current malaise of the S.W.P.'s strategy regarding the "rank and file")

A good antidote to such crap would be to read "The Refusal of Work"⁴, while "Modern Capitalism and Revolution", even 20 years on, remains a more accurate analysis of modern western capitalism, its core dynamic, than one which states "the system needs to re-invest most of the wealth it creates simply to survive. In the mad panic to survive, there's never enough left for the needs of the workers." Judge for yourself.

K.M. (Glasgow).

1. See "Urban Devastation: The Planning of Incarceration". (Solidarity).
2. See especially the journal "Community Action" or in Glasgow "Clydeside Action".
3. See "Solidarity and the Neo-Narodniks", (Solidarity Discussion Bulletin).
4. See the 1979 pamphlet by 'Echanges' on absenteeism and sabotage etc.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOULD-BE LIBERATED HETEROSEXUALS IN MIXED POLITICAL GROUPS.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

HOW YOU SCORE:

	<u>IF MALE</u>	<u>IF FEMALE</u>
1. AT MEETINGS, DO YOU USUALLY:		
a) Sit quiet without saying very much?	4	0
b) Speak when you have something to say?	1	2
c) Talk a lot and interrupt others frequently?	0	4
2. WORKING ON PUBLICATIONS, DO YOU FIND YOURSELF:		
a) Deciding editorial policy?	0	4
b) Writing lots of articles?	0	3
c) Typing?	4	0
3. AT CONFERENCES, DO YOU SPEND MOST OF THE TIME:		
a) In the discussions?	1	2
b) Criticising the structure and organisation?	2	4
c) In the pub?	0	3
d) Looking after the creche?	4	0
4. IF YOU FEEL SEXUALLY ATTRACTED TO A COMRADE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, DO YOU:		
a) Fight it, using cold baths, yoga, etc?	4	4
b) Make a tentative approach to the person in question?	1	2
c) Trip her/him up and beat her/him to the ground?	0	4
5. ON BEING SUDDENLY TRIPPED UP AND BEATEN TO THE GROUND BY A COMRADE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, DO YOU:		
a) Relax and enjoy it?	4	0
b) Fight her/him off using more violence than is absolutely necessary?	0	3
c) Charge her/him with attempted rape?	0	4
6. YOUR LOVER MAINTAINS A PERVERSE INTEREST IN CONVENTIONAL (GENITAL) SEX. DO YOU:		
a) Close your eyes and think of England?	1	1
b) Find you quite like it really/take pleasure in it?	0	0
c) Try to enlighten her/him by means of alternative practices?	2	2
d) Leave her/him and work at becoming homosexual?	3	3
e) Get thee to a nunnery/monastery?	4	4
7. HAVING SUSSED THE SCORING SYSTEM USED ABOVE, DO YOU CONSIDER IT:		
a) A deplorable example of double standards?	0	0
b) A splendid example of double standards?	3	3
c) Not going far enough in the application of double standards?	4	4

HOW YOU SCORED:

LOW: If male, that's only to be expected. Your only hope is to join a men-only consciousness-raising group. If female, you see what comes of staying in a mixed group. Join a women-only consciousness-raising group before it's too late.

MEDIUM: You may be struggling along the right lines, but being in a mixed group can only hamper you. Join the separatist movement immediately.

HIGH: You're obviously wasting your time in a mixed group. Apply your correct thinking and heightened consciousness in the real struggle, where men are men and women are women (and never the twain shall meet.)

Tail of the expected

Even though in our country homosexuals are not persecuted or harassed, there are quite a few of them in the Peruvian embassy, aside from all those involved in gambling and drugs who find it difficult to satisfy their vices here...
 ...We are not ashamed to say that we still have lumpen elements, declassed and anti-social individuals and even opponents of the Revolution. But even so, our country has the lowest rate of crime, drugs, gambling, prostitution, unemployment, begging and vice in this hemisphere. Some of these evils which are inherent to capitalism have practically disappeared in Cuba. And none are tolerated. Our society is austere, rigorous and disciplined, as a society of workers should be.

From 'Cuba's Position'



SOLIDARITY SUPPLEMENT



SUMMER IN GDANSK

Gdansk. - Not a single militiaman, except at the crossroads, still less tanks; a fine quiet town, completely serene, that you could go through without being surprised by anything but the absence of buses. This conurbation of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopol is nevertheless in the middle of a general strike. One of the most profound crises in the history of the People's Democracies is hatching out here. Not a violent explosion, to be quickly repressed, but an overwhelming vote of censure on established authority - as simple and calm as the evidence and certainty of strength.

The increase in the price of meat, the initial cause of the wave of strikes, is now just a memory, a tiny element with no greater importance than the match which set the gunpowder alight. The question now is not money, but a unanimous affirmation that 'things must change'.

On Sunday, August 17, in the middle of the night after hours of negotiation, the bus drivers of Gdynia are offered a rise of 2100 zlotys on condition they resume work immediately. This sum represents almost half the average monthly

wage in Poland, say what 1500 F would be worth in France or £150 in Britain. The answer is a categorical No. No, because the whole of Gdansk must win the day first, and because the authorities must, above all, satisfy the political demands which the workers in all factories have put at the top of the list.

But let's retrace events. On Friday morning, at daybreak on August 15, the strikers in the Lenin shipyards, at a standstill since the day before, rejected their management's proposals. At the same time, public transport stopped. 8000 of the 12,000 workers in the Paris Commune shipyard in Gdynia occupied their workplace; and most of the factories downed tools. No demand was formulated at once: today everyone explains that it was a matter of supporting 'the folk in the Lenin' and pouring into the breach which they had opened, with the feeling that victory was possible.

The Strike Committees are flourishing. Here the management falls over itself to negotiate; elsewhere they barricade themselves in. Everywhere two decisions of the

workers are taken first : a formal ban on drinking a single drop of alcohol and no street demonstrations, whatever happens. The memory of December 1970 is in everyone's mind : they don't want to smash anything, still less to be mown down by gunfire. They want to win.

FROM DEMANDS TO SOLIDARITY

At 5 pm the talks with management are resumed at the Lenin yard. In the big conference room, under the neutral gaze of Vladimir Ilyich on his pedestal, the Director and a few assistant directors face 110 delegates representing 17,000 of their comrades. Twenty of them are members of the strike committee and known militants of long standing. The others were elected in their own shops and are novices. Outside, with benefit of loudspeakers, the rank and file do not miss a word, and since the amplification works both ways their comments are heard in the negotiation room. Disagreement is soon established : the management refuses to grant more than 1200 zlotys and the workers want the 2000 they asked for. A few moments later, the appeal to reason launched on the ether by the Prime Minister is not even listened to. ('I've better things to do than to listen to all this twaddle again', mutters one worker.)

Saturday, 7 am. A new round, the third. Management takes a hard line. The shop-floor delegates, after the hardships of the night, are not at their best. The strike committee will not give in. From outside they hear chants of '2000! 2000!' and also the name of the man who has emerged as leading the movement, 'Walesa! Walesa!'. Management asks for an adjournment - during which the factory's free trade union will be set up - and returns at 11 am with the offer of 1500 zlotys, conditional on an immediate end to the occupation. Against the strike committee's advice the majority of the shopfloor delegates accept. Lech Walesa holds out for a guarantee signed by the First Secretary of Gdansk that no one will be victimised in the aftermath. The document arrives an hour later. It seems to be all over. But it's all just starting. Coming out of the conference room, Walesa is cheered wildly by several thousand workers who want nothing to do with compromise. He is lifted shoulder high with the traditional shout, 'May he live 100 years, 100 years!'



Full meeting of MKS (Interfactory Strike Committee)

Delegations from the other factories in the town arrive at the yard. They react with consternation : 'If you go back', says a representative from a bus depot, 'no one anywhere else will get a thing'. They applaud him. Walesa takes the floor and, speaking quietly, this 40 year old man, pleasant-faced with a flourishing moustache, practising Catholic and father of 6, member of the December 1970 strike committee, sacked after the 1976 strikes and since then an opposition militant, sacked again from a new job because of this in January, and reinstated at the Lenin on Thursday at the behest of the workers - this man, then, turns things upside down. 'We must respect democracy', he says, 'we must therefore accept the compromise, even if it's not great. But we haven't the right to rat on the others : we must continue the strike, in solidarity, until everybody wins'.

And since Lech Walesa is politically conscious, he adds that this strike is different from the first, that new shopfloor delegates must be elected, and that those who want to go home can. About half the strikers leave the yard, most of them scared, some in disagreement. The others stay on, knowing that what they are going to decide is to keep going to the end.

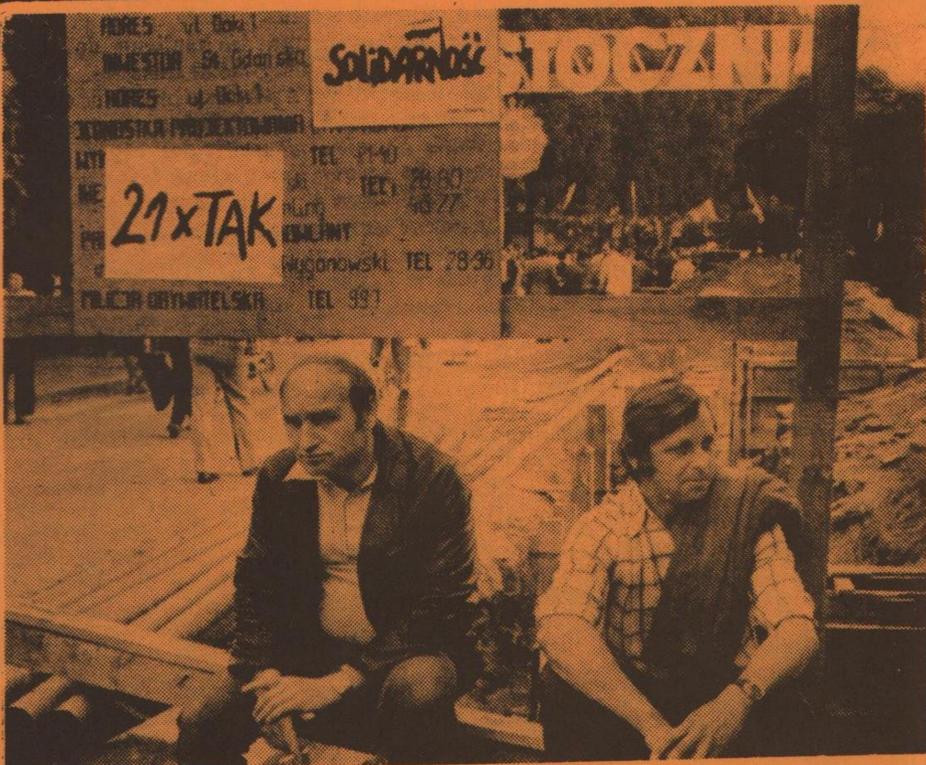
AN INTERFACTORY STRIKE COMMITTEE

From all the other plants they come to hear the news. 'All over? Still on? Is it true what the management are saying, that the Lenin yard is now only occupied by oppositionists?' No, unless all those people meeting them have become opposition militants, which would not, now, be all that far from the truth. But there is no time to lose : since 20 enterprises are represented, let's set up a co-ordinating group! No, let's do more than that : a common platform to be defended vis a vis the authorities by a Central Strike Committee, the M. K. S.

It's midnight. There's a woman bus-worker there, a 50 year old matron, old gnarled workmen, a boyish-looking engineer, unbeatable on the subject of trade union life in the West; young engineers, young office staff, and rosy-cheeked young workers, smartly dressed and as serious as the Pope whose portrait - of course - adorns the yard gate.

Within three hours they will have drawn up a list of nearly 20 'integral' demands which, if fulfilled, would mean the end of the communist regime in Poland. The





The aim of the strike? A 'yes' to each of the 21 demands.

demands emerge, one by one, as the most natural things in the world: guarantee of the right to strike; freedom of opinion, expression and publication; application of the international conventions on trade union liberties ratified by Warsaw; representation of 'all the socio-political currents' in the elections; 'liquidation' of the commercial shops and of the privileges enjoyed by police and party apparatus; independence of the judiciary to be respected; free access to the media for the churches; a national debate on the means of getting out of the economic morass 'so as to re-establish the confidence indispensable to this enterprise'; only food surpluses to be exported; etc. Only two demands relate to money: the 2000 zlotys, and a sliding scale of wages.

The formulations are clear. Their authors are delighted with them. Around them, petrified militants of the opposition group look at each other in consternation. Lech Walesa tries to make it understood that this list cannot constitute the indispensable preconditions for ending the strikes. They listen to him: yes, that's true, but we'll see; let's ask anyway. And besides, that is what we want, isn't it? The worker delegates don't want to push their luck. But they want plenty, and new delegations are arriving, proud, and greeted with applause. 'It's going to be like Budapest in 56', a militant of 'Young Poland', a liberal Catholic nationalist group, murmurs in a strained voice.

A WAY OUT FOR THE AUTHORITIES?

Small, frail, eyes puffy with tiredness, Bogdan Borusewicz, historian and moving spirit of KOR in Gdansk, makes a frontal attack: 'Asking for pluralist elections is maximalism. If the Party gave in, Moscow would intervene. There must be no demands which either force the government to resort to violence or lead to its collapse. It was the ending of censorship that led to intervention in Prague. We must leave them some exits'. One delegate comments innocently, 'They have a way out, because they're still the government'. Borusewicz continues, 'We need more economic demands and negotiable political ones. For example, the liberation of political prisoners, giving their names'.

This line of reasoning seems plausible without carrying conviction. For the opposition it is only the beginning of a hard-fought battle. They know that here is a unique

opportunity to snatch irreversible political concessions - especially free trade unions - and don't want to let the chance slip. But they also know that this movement can lead Poland to disaster if everyone does not take the necessary steps towards a national compromise. The coordinating group decides to meet again, after discussion in the different plants, at noon the same day. It's Sunday morning.

At 9 am, at an open air altar, the priest of the parish which includes the Lenin yards celebrates Mass before an enormous crowd in which those still in occupation and their families rub shoulders with those who are not. A giant wooden cross is propped up on the railing of the entrance gate. The priest speaks forcefully of the cross erected a year ago in the middle of Warsaw, during the Pope's visit; about the one which will soon be stuck in the ground here, and about the power of Polish catholicism. For the rest, the sermon gets lost in mystifying and far-fetched allusions. 'Sickening' comments a woman who lives nearby, who has nevertheless followed the sacrament with faith and respect. A woman dressed in black (? a widow of 1970) is sobbing, alone. Everyone is serious except the children, dressed in their Sunday best, who are delighted with the show.

During the second inter-factory meeting, Bogdan Borusewicz sums up: political prisoners have replaced free elections; duration of maternity leave and retirement age have appeared on the list of demands; there is no longer mention of a single set of negotiations between the coordinating committee and the authorities, and factories will be able to resume talks after consultation with the other plants on strike. In the evening, at the third meeting, the list of grievances will be modified further. But the text is still very strong. And, above all, the movement has organised and structured itself: it has settled into the strike. A test of strength is still basically what is in preparation, with from now on one precondition for all negotiation: the lifting of the communications blockade which has cut Gdansk off since Friday from the rest of the country, and the factories on strike from one another.

Gdansk shipyard workers reading first issue of their paper 'Solidarnosc'.



A VISIT TO THE GDYNIA SHIPYARD

Hundreds of women with their backs to us, baskets on their arms, who've come to bring food to the men. They go forward to the first picket, one after another, and give their names. Their husbands are called by loudspeaker and go out one by one to take delivery. Behind the first picket is the padlocked gate; then a rope, then a wall, and about 100 workers standing shoulder to shoulder, as still as if on guard, looking proud and as if they were posing for a socialist-realist picture. And behind them rows of seats, 20 m. across, for the general assemblies/mass meetings... but barricade building-blocks as well.

Maintenance of Machines Guaranteed. The teams of volunteer cleaners are busy. The kiosk is selling sweets and cigarettes as usual. The strikers have taken over the yard radio and the printing press is working non-stop. The machines are being watched over. 'Tell them we're not hooligans', says a worker. 'Everything's being looked after'. He is 23, the average age of the strike committee to which he belongs, self-assured and with an impressive knowledge of international politics: 'I listen to the BBC's broadcasts in Polish'.

He and his comrades on the committee have a perfectly clear vision of their goal. Like the opposition - several of them are members - they have no hope of winning all the political demands, but want them to be put forward in large numbers to raise the consciousness of the population. For them the key thing is that the workers' autonomous organisations should survive after the strikes.

Will order be re-established by force? A wave of strikes cannot be repressed and 'they' will not dare to take the workplaces by storm. What about Soviet intervention? They have enough to do with Afghanistan and we're not - get this down - saying a word against the USSR. Why so few economic demands? 'Because, with the country's external debt and all, they really can't give us very much, but we can get changes in the regime'. Is the suppression of censorship really so important to the average striker? 'Do you know what it's like to live in a country where you don't know anything? Go and talk to the people and you'll see if they're willing to sell themselves, even for 300 zlotys.'

Talking to six strikers sitting in the sun, we soon gather a crowd. When one of them answers, they all voice their approval. 'Why are you on strike?' 'When things are going that badly, you have to. Meat queues, unions that never do a thing for us, the government always lying and deceiving us - that's enough! We're not allowed discussion, we have no information, if we're active politically, we always have to suffer for it'.

'What do you hope to achieve?'

'Concrete improvements'.

'What would be the most important?'

'First the free trade unions, then the question of food and wages. We must have unions that are prepared to defend us'.

'If the government refuses the political demands and satisfies the financial ones, what will you do?'

'If we don't get anywhere politically, it'll start all over again. We must be able to influence the government's policy'.

'You realise that your demands could unleash a government crisis?'

'Yes, we are aware of that. We're right in the thick of it'.

'And you think that changes of regime are possible in a socialist country allied to the USSR?'

'It's difficult to imagine. But we have to try at least once. It's got to end some time. 35 years is already too long'.

There is a pause, then an old worker says, 'And you, as a Frenchman, what do you think of all this?' 'The situation could become dangerous'. Surprised silence from the group. The old worker speaks again: 'No, no, don't worry'.

Bernard Guetta

From Le Monde, August 19, 1980. Translation: L.W.



'In these events, there has been neither winner nor loser'.

Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski, after signing the Gdansk Agreement.

'Oh, yeah?'

'When the official negotiator, Deputy Prime Minister Mieczslaw Jagielski, claimed that "free unions" would threaten the official unions Walesa - keeping his cool but smiling slyly - insisted: "Please, Mr Minister. We have nothing against the official unions. You keep them. You will have your unions, and we will have ours. In that way, everyone will be happy...'

After the historic signing of the Gdansk Agreement on August 31, 1980, Lech Walesa said: 'We are now co-masters of this land'.*

This statement could mean one of two things. It could imply awareness of a state of dual power, with the working class on one side and their rulers (sheltering behind the Party) on the other. This path leads to prolonged struggle and possible victory.

Or it could imply an aspiration to abdicate autonomy and to become incorporated in the existing structure of society. That way lies certain defeat.

On which it means could hinge the fate of the Polish Summer.

* BBC, September 1, 1980.

GUIDE TO THE
RUSSIAN N.H.S.

Those in principled disagreement are declared insane. Those in political hot water are declared physically ill. The physically ill are kept on. Klebanov, Gierek, Brezhnev.

POLISH JOKE

A man is sent by his wife to look for meat. He goes round a number of butchers' shops but finds only long queues and empty shelves. In the last shop he explodes. He curses the butchers, the Communists and the Russians, and then storms out.

He hasn't gone far when he feels a hand on his shoulder. He turns to see a blank-faced man who says: 'Citizen, you said some dangerous things in that butcher's shop. You know what would have happened in the old days? Bang! Bang! and it would have been all over. But we do things differently now. This is a warning. Don't be so stupid again.'

The man rushes home where his wife asks him if he found any meat. 'My dear, it's far more serious than that. Now they've even run out of ammunition'.



HEADLINES TO REMEMBER

POLAND: THE DISCUSSION CONTINUES
(L'Humanité, August 19, 1980)

NEW UNION POLL TO BE HELD
(Morning Star, August 25, 1980)

ANALYSIS CONFIRMED: POLISH STRIKERS WIN NEW CONCESSIONS ON TRADE UNION REFORM (on inside page, under coloured pictures of Notting Hill Carnival).
(Newsline, August 27, 1980)

'Workers must take power into their own hands through a social revolution. Instead, the most known dissident group, the KOR, with its workers' paper Robotnik (The Worker) urges a mere reform of the existing system'. *

Sounds strange in the mouths of these particular leninists, one of whose papers once said (from a safe distance) 'our support for a Labour government is not dependent upon its having left wing policies' (Young Guard, November 1962).

* Socialist Worker, August 23, 1980

WHAT WAS AGREED

On August 31, after an 18 day sit-in strike that had shaken the Polish regime to its foundations - and whose echoes will long be heard - a protocol was signed by workers' delegates, assembled in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, and representatives of the Polish government and Party.

What did the authorities concede? Both a great deal (the image of their legitimacy) and very little. For the first time in history, one of the so-called 'workers' states' had been coerced, in public, to negotiate with the very class it claimed to represent. On the other hand the exact wording of the text shows that the Party has allowed itself every possible chance to block the promised reforms, and to provide itself with excuses and loopholes for doing... nothing. There were also dangerous ambiguities and veiled threats. And, anyway, behind the government signatories stood the full coercive powers of the Polish ruling class and of its state.

Only very abbreviated versions of the Agreement appeared in the Times, Guardian and other British papers. The Morning Star (September 5, 1980) succeeded in publishing a remarkable and allegedly 'full' version of the Agreement which managed to suppress almost all mention of the actual demands of the strikers - and in particular the trifling demands (in points 3 and 4) that there should be no persecution of independent publications and no repression for mere opinion! We are therefore pleased to publish the full details of the first five points of the document. They deal with the political demands of the Inter-factory Strike Committee.

It is no accident that the workers put these political questions (autonomous organisations, the right to strike, access to the media, the release of political prisoners and the dissemination of the text of the Agreement itself) at the very forefront of their demands. In so doing they were inflicting a crushing retort to all those (from Polish apparatchniks to traditional marxists) who think that all the working class is ever concerned with is the price of food. As Walesa said on August 27 (Libération, August 28, 1980) 'we may be forced back to a dishful of soup a day. But we want the right to make our own decisions concerning problems relating to where we work'. The previous day he had even stated, pan-faced: 'We may make concessions to the government which is in a parlous economic state. We may modify our claim to the 2000 zloty increase. But on the question of our own independent self-managed organisations, we'll make no compromises whatsoever...'

The Government Commission and the M.K.S., after analysing the 21 demands of the striking workers in the coastal region, have reached the following conclusions:

Point 1

'Acceptance of free unions independent of the Party and of the employers on the basis of Convention 87 of the I.L.O. (International Labour Organisation) ratified by Poland, concerning trade union liberties'. It was agreed that:

a) The activity of the trade unions in People's Poland has not corresponded to the hopes and aspirations of the workers. It is considered that it would be useful to create new, self-managed unions which would be an authentic representation of the working class. The right of workers to continue to belong to the old unions is not being called into question, and the possibility of future cooperation between the two types of union will be studied.

b) In creating new, independent, self-managed unions the MKS declares that the latter will respect the principles defined in the Constitution of People's Poland. The new unions will defend the social and material interests of the workers and do not intend to play a party political role. They are founded on the principle of social ownership of the means of production, the basis of the existing social system in Poland; they recognise that the Polish United Workers Party plays a leading role in the state, and are not opposed to the existing system of international alliances. They want to ensure that the workers have appropriate means of control, of expression, and of defending their interests. The Government Commission declares that the government will guarantee and ensure full respect for the independent and self-managed nature of the new unions, both in relation to their organisational structures and to their functioning at all levels.

The government will ensure that the new unions have every possibility of fulfilling their basic functions as far as the defence of the workers' interests is concerned, in order to satisfy the workers' material, social and cultural needs. At the same time, it guarantees that the new unions will not become the object of any discrimination.

c) The creation and functioning of the independent self-managed unions are in accordance with Convention 87 of the I.L.O. concerning trade union freedoms and the protection of union rights, and with Convention 97 concerning the right of association and collective negotiations, these two conventions having been ratified by Poland. The plurality of professional trade union representation will require changes of a legislative kind. This is why the government undertakes to take initiatives in the legislative sphere with particular regard to what concerns the laws on trade unions, workers' councils, and the labour code.

d) The Strike Committees have the possibility of transforming themselves at plant level into an institution representing the workers, whether as a workers' council, factory council or founding committee of a new self-managed union. The MKS, as founding committee of these unions, is free to choose the form of a union or of an association at regional level, for the coastal region. The founding committees will function until the statutory elections for the new union bodies. The government undertakes to create conditions which will permit the registering of the new unions outside the Central Trade Union Council.

e) The new unions shall have the real possibility of intervening in the key decisions which determine the living conditions of the workers, with regard to the principles on which the national revenue is distributed between consumption and accumulation, the distribution of funds for social consumption between various objectives (health, education, culture), the basic principles of remuneration and the orient-

ation of wages policy, particularly with regard to the principle of automatic wage increases to keep pace with inflation, the long-term economic plan, orientation of investment policy and modification of prices. The government undertakes to ensure the necessary conditions for the fulfilment of these functions.

f) The MKS will create a centre for socio-professional research whose aim would be objectively to analyse the situation of the labouring classes, the workers' conditions of existence and the means of correctly representing the workers' interests. This centre will also make assessments concerning the indexing of wages and prices and will propose forms of compensation. This centre will publish the results of its research. In addition the new unions will have their own publications.

g) The government will ensure observance of Article 1, Point 1, of the law on unions dating from 1949, which guarantees to all workers the right of free association in unions. The new union being created will not belong to the association represented by the Central Council of Trade Unions (CRZZ). We agree that the new law on trade unions will respect these principles. At the same time, the participation of the MKS or of the Founding Committee of the self-managed union and of other workers' representatives in the elaboration of this law will be guaranteed.

Point 2

'Guarantee of the right to strike and of the security of strikers and persons who help them'.

It was agreed that the right to strike will be guaranteed in the new law on unions. The law shall define the conditions under which the calling and organisation of strikes will be allowed, the methods by which conflicts should be resolved, and the penalties for violating the law. Articles 52, 64 and 65 of the Labour Code (forbidding strikes) will not be used against strikers up to the time the new law is adopted. The government guarantees personal security and no change in their conditions of employment to the strikers and to persons helping them.

Point 3

'To respect the freedom of expression and publication guaranteed by the Constitution of People's Poland, and therefore not to proceed against independent publications, and to give access to the mass media to representatives of all religions'.

It was agreed that :

a) The government will introduce in the Diet - within the next 3 months - a Bill for control of the press, publications and shows, to be based on the following principles : censorship must protect the interests of the state. That means the protection of state secrets and economic secrets as they will be more precisely defined by the law, the protection of the security of the state and of its international interests, the protection of religious convictions and at the same time of the views of non-believers, as well as the forbidding of the distribution of publications, the content of which is an affront to public decency.

The draft Bill will include the right to bring a complaint before the Supreme Administrative Tribunal against the decisions of the institutions controlling press, publications and shows. This law will be included in the Administrative Activities Code by an amendment.

b) Utilisation of the mass media by religious associations in the domain of their religious activities will be brought about by means of agreements between the state institutions and the religious associations, as much with regard to problems of content as of organisation. The government will ensure the radio broadcast of Sunday Mass in the framework of a particular agreement with the episcopacy.

c) The activity of radio and TV as well as of the press and publishing houses should serve to express a variety of thoughts, points of view and opinions. It should be subject to social control.

d) The Press as well as the citizens and their organisations shall have access to public documents, especially to administrative records and socio-economic plans, etc., published by the government and its administrative institutions. The exceptions to the principle of openness in administrative activity will be defined by law in accordance with Point III, section a).

Point 4

'Re-establishment of the rights of those dismissed - after the strikes of 1970 and 1976, and of the students excluded from higher education for their opinions. Liberation of all political prisoners (including Edmund Zdrozinski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Kozlowski.). Cessation of repression for holding opinions'. The following was agreed :

a) Immediate analysis of the justification for the dismissals after the strikes of 1970 and 1976, in all the cases presented, and immediate reinstatement in the event of an injustice, taking account of new qualifications if the interested persons so desire. The same principle to be applied in the case of students.

b) Presentation of the cases of the persons mentioned to the Minister of Justice who shall, within 2 weeks, require his department to study the files. In cases where the people mentioned are imprisoned, the serving of their sentences will have to be suspended pending the new judgment.

c) Analysis of the motives for temporary arrests, and liberation of the people mentioned in the Appendix.

d) Full respect for rights to free expression of opinion in public and professional life.

Point 5

'To publicise, through the mass media, the formation of the MKS and to publish its demands'.

It was agreed that this demand will be satisfied by the publication in the media, nationwide, of this Protocol.

Signatories for the Inter-factory Strike Committee (MKS) : L. Walesa, President; 2 Vice-Presidents; and 15 workers (2 of them women). For the government : M. Jagielski, Deputy Prime Minister; Mr Zielinski, a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PUP; T. Fiszbach, President of the Party Council for Gdansk; and the Prefect of the Gdansk district.

The coverage of the Polish events was a lot more detailed in the French and Italian press than in the British - and repercussions on the left far deeper. We here give excerpts from 4 interviews first published in the liberal weekly Les Nouvelles Littéraires, which had Polish-speaking correspondents in Gdansk and Warsaw at the height of the struggle. The interviews illustrate the thinking of two KOR militants, of a Polish Catholic and of a long-standing French Communist Party member, who had worked in Warsaw for L'Humanité.

INTERVIEWS

Adam Michnik is one of the activists of the Polish Opposition and one of its most original thinkers. He has been repeatedly arrested and persecuted by the authorities. In this interview with Jan Aduski, Warsaw correspondent of Les Nouvelles Littéraires, Michnik expresses views very similar to our own.

N.L. You've just been let out of prison. What are your immediate reactions to the events of the last few weeks?

Adam Michnik I believe that what has happened in Poland will probably prove to be a key event in the history of communism. For the first time, and on a vast scale, we have challenged the principle of the monopolies of power of State, Party and official trade unions. The system which will emerge from the events will probably be some kind of hybrid: there will be a totalitarian component of leninist type, and another of democratic type, provided the censorship is eventually relaxed.

N.L. Is it a compromise or a victory?

A.M. What has been achieved as a result of the compromise is a victory to which nothing can be compared in the history of post-war Poland.

N.L. Beyond Gierek, wasn't it the whole regime that was being questioned?

A.M. The problem wasn't Gierek at all. What was being challenged was a whole pattern of organisation, a whole social order.* We have understood for several years that under a totalitarian dictatorship there is no point relying on 'good tsars'. One can only base oneself on a society that seeks to implement its own self-organisation.

N.L. Would it be right to say that the opposition is now recognised in Poland?

A.M. I don't know. But what is now certain is that the opposition is recognised by society. For any thinking Pole, it should be obvious that the opposition is now an ingredient of everyday reality. But has the opposition been 'recognised' and to what extent? That's a question you should put to the authorities!

N.L. What will be the consequences for all the illegal tendencies and in particular for KOR?

A.M. Again, I don't know. But what I feel certain of is that we will be moving around in a different Poland. We will be confronted by new tasks. I can't predict to what extent the authorities will realise that in persecuting us they will be carrying out propaganda on our behalf; or that they will not be able to destroy us by 48 hour arrests, searches, passport refusals or the confiscation of our books. Our tasks are clear: to exploit every free area, every opportunity, to re-establish social links, to start creating social freedom...

N.L. The people seem divided between hope and fear. Can the authorities take back with one hand what they have conceded with the other? Or will they allow a situation to persist which risks proving an example for all East European countries?

A.M. Examples, to be sure, are always contagious. I learned a lot from reading Czech texts relating to the Prague Spring - or those of Russian dissidents. We can't doubt that other East European countries will want to study our experience. The future? That's the million dollar question and black market dollar prices, as you know, are on the high side here. I'm a historian, not a prophet...

N.L. How do you explain the political maturity of the Gdansk workers?

A.M. To be quite sincere, I would call it a miracle. To answer you politically I would say that it was the result of four years of hard work by KOR, around the journal Robotnik.

N.L. You've spent the last 2 weeks in prison. What were you thinking about? Could you imagine the events taking place outside?

A.M. I felt convinced the authorities would capitulate. It was rather characteristic of this particular governmental team - which came to power 10 years ago - to act in this way. They knew one couldn't shoot workers down as easily as the last government did. There was no shooting in Radom, in 1976, when shops were looted, crowds were in the streets and there were 'uncontrollable elements'. So when, in the shipyards, everything turned out to be so well organised, it was unlikely they would move. It is hard to pressurise people with such a high level of political consciousness..

* When will our trad trots realise that Polish revolutionaries aren't speaking of a political revolution to change the bureaucratic superstructure, but of a social revolution, to challenge all the existing authority relations, at work and in social life at large, which form the basis of exploitation, manipulation and alienation? (Translator)



Adam Michnik

Konrad Bielinski is a member of KOR. He was in the Gdansk shipyards for the whole duration of the strike. He was editor of the illegal paper Solidarnosc (Solidarity), of which originally 5000 copies were being printed but whose circulation reached 50,000 during the strike. Solidarnosc appeared daily. According to the Sunday Times (August 31, 1980) reporter in Gdansk 'the paper is eagerly read by the workers for its mixture of jokes, leaks of confidential official documents, and straightforward reporting'.

K.B. It's not on. The authorities tried to get anti-strike leaflets printed and dropped by aircraft over the shipyards. But the printers came out on strike too, threatening to destroy the machinery. For the time being the authorities are too weak...

Andrzej Micewski, historian and writer, is a member of Poland's catholic intelligentsia. In devoting space to his opinions we are only seeking to provide readers with as full a view as possible of all the varied social forces involved in the Polish events. That religion ('the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world') should have retained its grip in Poland - and influenced a whole new generation - is a terrible indictment of nearly 4 decades of 'communist' rule. During this period religious life provided small areas of relative autonomy within which - if they could stand the smell of incense - Polish people could breathe, survive, organise and perhaps prepare for future struggles...

N.L. To what do you attribute the massive nature of the working class upsurge in Poland? To what extent was it spontaneous?

K.B. At the onset of the strike and while the demands were being drawn up, the most active section of the shipyard workers were those grouped around Robotnik, the illegal KOR paper. But soon everyone became mixed up and the Gdansk All-Factory Strike Committee came to represent 500,000 workers. The onset of the strike was, in one way or another, helped. But it very soon became a widespread, self-managed movement. The Executive of the Strike Committee was comprised of 18 people, of whom only 5 or 6 were close to KOR. In the course of the talks with Jagielski, the government negotiator, the KOR people weren't the most radical. Activists would emerge spontaneously, day by day. After a while, the preliminary work wasn't important any longer.

N.L. Did you feel, from the onset, that the struggle was deeply rooted in people's consciousness?

K.B. I came to the shipyard on the third day, the day the M.K.S. was organised. It then represented 20 important enterprises. One sensed already that what was happening was important, even critical.

To start with, 3 people made the posters - and stuck them up, at 6 am, in the locker room. Then, after discussions, they convinced their colleagues that they should demand the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz, who had been sacked for political activities. But for quite a while the atmosphere had been ripe for strike action.

N.L. Were the workers aware of the fact that their struggle was of relevance to the whole country?

K.B. Of course! They were fully aware of it. They knew that the shipyard was such an important enterprise that it could decide the fate of the whole country. Ten years earlier the workers had struggled up to a certain point - but were then conned. At the same time we were always aware of the fact that the Army could surround the shipyard and enter it by force. But I never heard anyone suggest we should back-pedal. The workers were convinced they were right and that free trade unions was the minimum worth fighting for. It wasn't desperation but the conviction that both right and might were on their side. Two days later 120 strike-bound enterprises were affiliated to the MKS. Later the figure rose to 150.

N.L. And after the Agreements had been signed?

K.B. It was not euphoria, for the simple reason that the strike, although very interesting for us all, was also exhausting. It was a sort of ephemeral republic. The return to everyday reality was less exciting. And the signed Agreement, after all, was only a piece of paper. In three months' time we will meet again.

N.L. Will there be victimisation?

N.L. People are saying that the Church will be the main beneficiary of the Polish events. Do you agree?

A.M. Religion played an important role during the strike. Walesa's personality contributed to it... But the Church isn't too enthusiastic about things just now. During the events it stood on the sidelines, fearing external reactions that might put the country in danger. The Council of Bishops was both calling for calm and supporting the demands.

I wouldn't say that recent events were a triumph for the Church: they merely showed that religion is still a deeply rooted social force in the country. But the events revealed other forces too: a well organised working class made very conscious by its experience, and an intelligentsia expressing its solidarity with the workers. Those currently in power in Poland are confronted by three social forces: the Church, the working class and the intelligentsia. What unites these three forces is a certain recognition of common values, what one might call a common struggle for human rights.

Both West and East materialism has first proved victorious. Here, a doctrinal materialism has been imposed on society for 35 years. In the West a practical materialism has flourished. The personality of John Paul II, the depth of his relationship with the masses, his quasi-magical influence over them derive from the fact that he fulfils a need for well defined moral values: what is good and what is bad, what is true and what is a lie, what is beautiful and what is morally distorted.

'KOR, with its leaders Kuron and Michnik, is making loud and arrogant anti-socialist statements... The aims of KOR are sinister, anti-national in character and sense, and directed against our political alliances and *raison d'état*. KOR is seeking to "politicise" and prolong the strikes, in the hope of forcing "a total transformation of the political structure of our country'.

Trybuna Ludu, August 30, 1980.

INTERVIEWS

(cont.)

Pierre Li was, for 4 years, the Warsaw correspondent of the French Communist paper L'Humanité. This interview with Nouvelles Littéraires bears testimony to a certain honesty, if not to a great intelligence for Li remained a Party member until a few weeks ago. We publish his comments because they provide fascinating insights into the psychological make-up of a 'modern', 'post-stalinist' intellectual.

N.L. How did you come to be correspondent for L'Humanité in Poland?

P.L. I joined the staff of the paper in March 1971, without previous experience in journalism. It was I who asked to be sent to a socialist country. I felt it would be basically interesting. What we were publishing in the paper about these countries didn't strike me as very convincing. I didn't know why. I felt it was we who were unconvincing.

N.L. What were your first impressions?

P.L. I arrived in October (1972). My first impressions were rather favourable. 1972 had been a year of economic expansion. And we were only two years on from 1970. One still felt the 'wind of change'. I found that interesting. The fact that my interpreter - for, to begin with, I couldn't speak any Polish - would often make critical comments struck me as rather encouraging.

N.L. When did you start asking yourself questions?

P.L. When I noticed the gap between reality and the official rhetoric... In 1973 the Party weekly Politika had published a major story of a miner's life, his difficulties, his problems with his own union, his relations with the Party. In this article there was a certain coming to grips with reality. Moreover it confirmed my own impressions. I translated the whole thing and brought it to L'Humanité. It was a way of showing them that in Poland things weren't going all that well.

N.L. And how did they react?

P.L. In a rather woolly way. Phrases like: 'Yes, there's possibly that aspect - but it isn't the whole story'. I felt I wasn't exactly being encouraged to delve into that particular aspect of reality. I had done a piece on education in Poland. Its publication kept on being put back. I was finally told that it wasn't in our interests to publish it, for it showed education in Poland to be behind what we communists were asking for in France. I felt they didn't wish any of the negative aspects (of life in Poland) to appear (in the paper).

N.L. And yet you weren't unaware of those aspects?

P.L. I wasn't. Take health for instance. French communists are led to believe that painless childbirth comes from Eastern Europe. But in Poland there are no facilities

for painless childbirth. And most women are delivered in wards. What I was becoming aware of was that they were lagging behind what the French working class had already won. Through official statistics one discovered frightful things. For instance that state revenues from alcohol sales were nearly equal to the combined budgets for health and education.

N.L. All that didn't appear in your articles. You just relayed official hand-outs?

P.L. Right. I wanted to keep a certain equilibrium: not to lie; not to falsify. But not to surprise our readers either...

N.L. And you probably knew your reports wouldn't be published anyway?

P.L. Sure.

N.L. Did you try?

P.L. No. But in 1976 I decided to write to the paper's management to draw attention to the depth of the crisis and to the dangers it contained. I had already alerted them to several curious events. For instance in Poland the Shah's regime in Iran was being presented as entirely progressive.

N.L. You never mentioned that in the paper?

P.L. To begin with I didn't really believe the criticisms of the opposition. I tacitly accepted Party discipline. I wasn't sure enough of myself. Despite everything I wanted to believe that I was wrong. And I didn't want to sow despair in Billancourt (a working class Paris suburb, containing the Renault motor works). * I didn't believe it was my responsibility to say certain things. That was up to my superiors.

N.L. And why, in 1976...?

P.L. The economic situation had greatly deteriorated: queues in front of shops, poor distribution, complaints everywhere. At the end of May 1976 I wrote letters (to two leading Party members in France). A few days later I had a phone call (from Paris) summoning me to return immediately. In Paris, Roland Leroy (the editor-in-chief of L'Humanité and a member of the Central Committee) told me I had been very careless in writing in that way. He didn't discuss what I'd said in the letter. He didn't even put any questions to me. I felt he knew very well that I was right. I was told off for the contacts I had had (in Poland) with a semi-dissident communist intellectual.

N.L. And what happened next?

P.L. I became involved in South African affairs. It was the time of the Soweto riots. There, at least, I would have no soul-searchings. In 1978 I had thought of resigning from the Party. It was when the PCF was refusing all discussion on the causes of its electoral defeat. But it is hard to resign in a country where there are a million and a half unemployed. And where would I go? There were no chances of work elsewhere...

* The patronising nature of this comment is quite nauseating. Who is this middle class Party creep, deciding what is fit information to put before the workers? Is he afraid of what conclusions they might come to, if given real facts? But then Lenin didn't think much of the working class either. They 'could only achieve trade union consciousness'. In Poland they have - and with a vengeance!

SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS

THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY: PRACTICE AND THEORY

THE BOLSHEVIKS AND WORKERS' CONTROL 1917 - 1921 (The State and Counter-Revolution) by M. Brinton. 'Workers' control' or workers' self-management? The story of the early oppositions. An analysis of the formative years of the Russian bureaucracy. £1.00

THE WORKERS' OPPOSITION by Alexandra Kollontai. A fully annotated account of the anti-bureaucratic struggle of 1919 - 1920 within the Russian Bolshevik Party. £1.00

THE KRONSTADT COMMUNE by Ida Mett. The full story of the 1921 events. The first proletarian uprising against the bureaucracy. Contains hitherto unavailable documents and a full bibliography. £1.00

KRONSTADT 1921 by Victor Serge. An erstwhile supporter of the Bolsheviks re-examines the facts and draws disturbing conclusions. 10p.

FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY by Paul Cardan. Bolshevik theory and practice in relation to the management of production. An introduction to the French translation of Alexandra Kollontai's 'The Workers Opposition'. 10p.

HUNGARY '56 by Andy Anderson. The anti-bureaucratic revolution. The programme of the Workers' Councils. £1.00

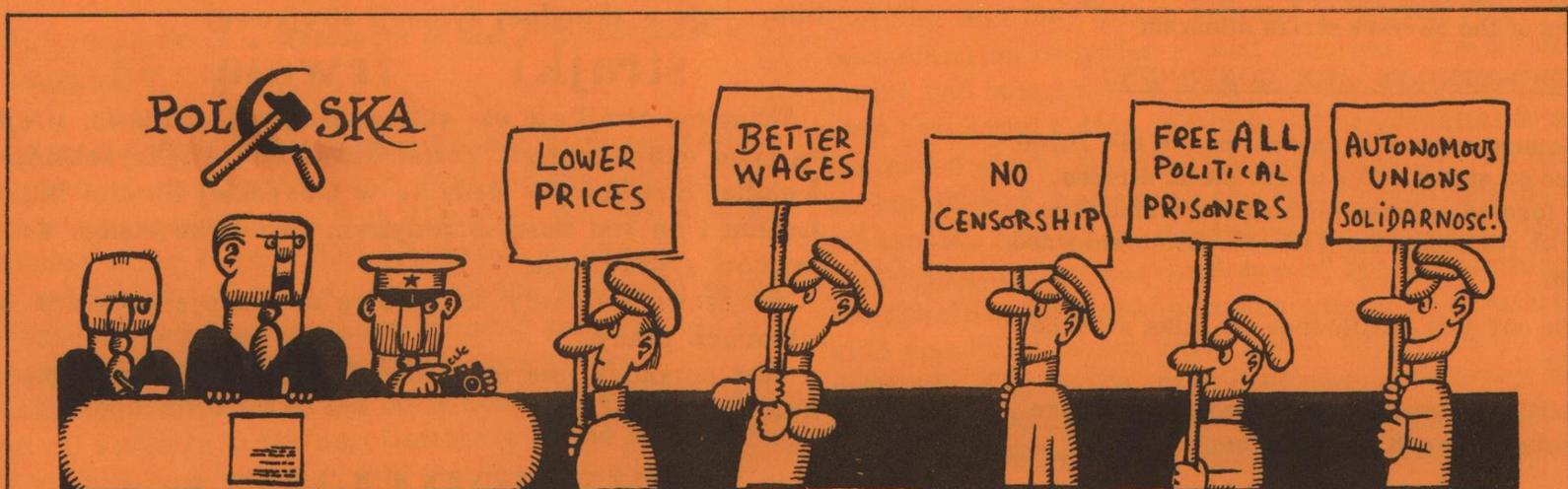
CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968: WHAT 'SOCIALISM'? WHAT HUMAN FACE? by P. Cerny. A technocratic mutation within the bureaucracy? With postscript: 'What is Makhaevism'? by Paul Avrich. £1.00

HISTORY AS CREATION by C. Castoriadis (Paul Cardan). A critique of the notion that History is the unfurling of a dialectical process which leads inevitably 'forwards' to a particular brand of 'socialism'. Revolution as a conclusion which exceeds the premisses, or leads to a positing of new premisses. 40p.

* * *

ZNACZENIE SOCJALIZMU by Paul Cardan. A Polish translation of Solidarity Pamphlet no.6 (The Meaning of Socialism). Several hundred copies of this text were distributed in Poland in 1970. Together with Retour de Pologne (by Claude Lefort) and La voie polonaise de la bureaucratisation (by Pierre Chaulieu) which were published in issue 21 (March - May 1957) of 'Socialisme ou Barbarie' - and also smuggled into Poland - these documents have undoubtedly influenced the thinking of the KOR dissidents. 10p.

(Obtainable from Solidarity London, c/o 123 Lathom Rd., E.6. - Postage Extra)



Your demands, in our arse, are a pain
The first two, we'll concede, and regain
The last three, we can't read
And will never concede
For the Party would go down the drain.

SOLIDARNOSC

We have had access to copies of the rank-and-file paper produced by the Gdansk shipyard workers during their occupation of the Lenin yard. Here is an excerpt of Solidarnosc No.2, leaking an internal PUWP document to a wider audience.

'We have obtained a copy of a letter sent out by the Secretariat to all Party members. It concerns the attitude of the Party to the present wave of strikes. We quote from it without comment. It displays a blinding obtuseness of approach.

"...the anti-socialist elements amongst the Gdansk shipyard workers made political demands and hostile stipulations in order to seize control of the strike. Their demands threaten the essential security of the country. They put in danger our national survival, our common achievement and our unity built at such a high price and in such difficult conditions, at the cost of so many sacrifices. The most important of their demands are those concerning free trade unions, changes in the electoral law (there is no such demand on our list - Editorial Committee), removal of media controls and freeing of political prisoners.

"Those demands have one purpose only: to give to the anti-socialist campaign directed against us and against the vital interests of the working class and the state at least a jumping off point, if not complete freedom of action ... those political enemies demand the establishment of free trade unions not for the sake of a better representation of the workers' interests but in order to obtain a platform for activities aimed against our Party and the people's democracy ... They demand the release of political prisoners but there are no political prisoners in this country ... this is accompanied by acts of terror and intimidation against anyone who is not with them, against anyone who dares to question their demands. The anti-socialist forces aim at introducing their own system in the factories under their control ... We must support the public services, the police and the security services who are in charge of law and order ... Our party is a party of struggle and of toil. This indeed is the time for toil but we have been also called to a battle. This battle we have to win..."

From Solidarnosc No.3: Statement of the Joint Strike Committee, August 23, 1980.

'The whole country awaits genuine and accurate news from the strike-bound Baltic coast. But the news in the press, radio and television is both distorted and incomplete. The existence of the Joint Strike Committee in Gdansk, Szczecin and Elblag is ignored. Nothing has been said about the fact that the strike action is coordinated and directed by the democratically elected Joint Strike Committee. The plant committees empowered the Joint Strike Committee to represent all strikers in the negotiations with the authorities. The public have not been told that the governmental commissions, although they arrived, refused to talk with the Joint Committees which are the only representatives recognised by the body of strikers. The full solidarity of the strikers with the Joint Committees, on which all the striking units are represented, is being concealed from the public.

'All the attempts by the authorities to break the solidarity of the workers by trying to negotiate with unit committees or even with individual workshops have failed. The

list of strikers' demands submitted by the Joint Strike Committee to the authorities as early as August 18 and containing the crucial stipulation of free trade unions has been kept from the public. The attempts to negotiate with individual plants and to buy off small groups of workers with offers of large pay increases are presented in the media as negotiations likely to satisfy the whole workforce and to settle the strike. A false impression is being created that the workers in public services have not joined the strike. In fact, they joined us very early but continue to maintain essential services with full consent of the Joint Strike Committee in order to provide for the basic needs of the community and to safeguard public property.

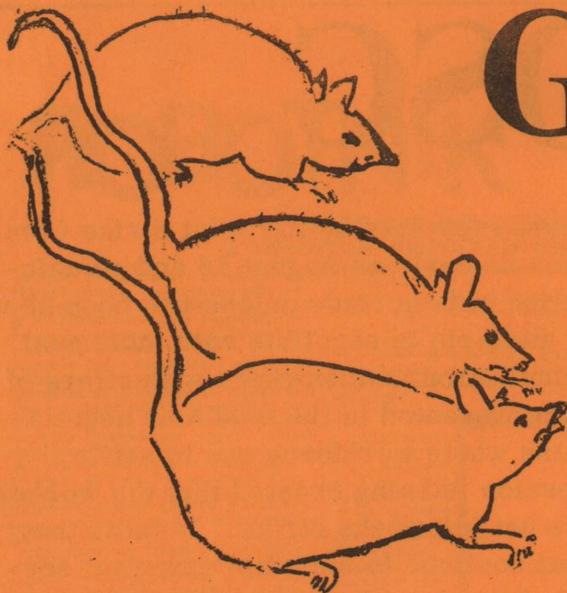
'We point out that the lies about the situation and the intentions of the strikers destroy all remnants of confidence in the official press, radio and television, and they do not lessen public disquiet. We demand that all Poles be given full and accurate information about our demands, about everyday conditions on the Coast and about the whole situation.'

WHAT TO DEMAND AND HOW TO CONDUCT STRIKES

'It is important to demand an increase in basic wages and not in the bonus, which can easily be withdrawn by the management in a month or two. It is better to ask for an increase of a definite amount, say 1000 zl. and not for a percentage increase, which would benefit most those who already earn more. Claims should be made for cost of living allowances to be related to price changes and to be made an integral part of family allowances. When pay claims are put forward it is the workers' advantage to discuss the over-complicated pay system as a whole. There are so many tables, groups, classifications and special allowances for this and that that it is difficult to see what the rate of pay is. This makes it possible for the management to cheat on pay. The rates should be made uniform, simple and easily understood by all.

'The analysis of previous strikes shows that the working conditions, transport to work and housing have not been subject to negotiations. Despite the fact that the living conditions are often extremely difficult and that solutions to those problems are possible, people have got so used to their lot that they fail to demand improvements. The transport situation provides a good example: the timetables of trains and buses are at odds with the works timetables, both buses and trains run late. It is essential to demand improved social amenities and to negotiate definite dates for action on such matters as the badly organised in-factory transport, lack of air conditioning, lack of anti-noise and anti-vibration devices, absence of special clothing, lockers, the appalling sanitary arrangements and the failure to provide special meals to which some categories of workers are entitled. The strike committee should insist on seeing the accounts. Demands should also include a condition, to be acknowledged by the management in writing, that no one involved in the strike would be victimised.

'The organisers should put demands in writing and make them known to all the workforce. If everyone is in agreement that they should be submitted to the management, every shop and section should proceed to choose a delegate. The elected representatives then confront the management with the demands and request answers. If the management delays or refuses to talk, further steps must be considered'.



GNAWING AWAY

AT THE AGREEMENT

An important problem now facing the Russian rulers is how to get the Polish leaders to rescind, whittle down, 're-interpret' or renege on the concessions extracted from them by the Gdansk strikers. An open repudiation of the Agreement would, in the present climate of opinion, only trigger off even more widespread strikes.

There are several techniques available. The Bolsheviks mastered this particular art many years ago. Between 1918 and 1921 they succeeded first in incorporating the autonomous Factory Committees - thrown up during the 1917 upsurge - into the trade unions, then in totally subordinating the unions to the state. The Party, of course, totally dominated both. 'Independent trade unions' were declared by the Bolsheviks, as early as the first Trade Union Congress of January 1918, to be 'a bourgeois idea ... an anomaly in a workers' state'. (1)

What the Polish workers are up against are the leninist norms of what the relationship should be between workers and unions, and between unions and the state. Both reflect the leninist conception of the Party as the only legitimate spokesman of the working class.

The PUWC can be expected to fight every inch of the way. It will seek to block the implementation of those specific aspects of the Gdansk Agreement that threaten its monopoly of power. Here are some of the steps - both crude and more subtle - that are being tried, alone or in various combinations. For all who can read, the writing is already on the wall.

METHOD I : VIOLENCE

'At the Ursus tractor factory, outside Warsaw, a new trade union committee for 18 firms in the district has been formed. 80% of the workers have registered with the new trade union.

'Yesterday the new union leaders tried to hold a meeting in the management office but were unceremoniously thrown out. The old trade union's leaders there accused the new trade union's leaders of being "dissidents in disguise". (2)

METHOD II : NEW ELECTIONS TO THE OLD UNIONS

'It is our opinion that the Central Council of the Trade Unions should immediately consider the holding of elections for new positions in the unions in all those enterprises where employees want this. These elections should be democratic, secret and with an unlimited number of candidates.

'There is no doubt that if the authority of the representatives spontaneously constituted in some (!) enterprises turns out to be lasting and well based, then their members are sure to find themselves in newly elected union positions'. (3)

METHOD III : CREATING 'WIDER' BODIES, EASIER FOR THE PARTY TO CONTROL

'In Warsaw the organ of the official trade unions Glos Pracy published on September 17 a plan for the self-management of enterprises in which the organs of self-management would be composed of 1/3 management representatives, 1/3 Party nominees and 1/3 delegates elected by the unions'. (4)

Where have we heard all this before? Ah, yes, The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, pages 21-22.

METHOD IV : BRIBERY

Many workers are asking what will happen to their insurance contributions, already compulsorily deducted from their pay by the old unions. The old unions 'owned' holiday resorts, sanatoria, convalescent homes ... and provided a variety of other facilities. The new unions start here at a tremendous disadvantage. (5)

METHOD V : SPLITTING WORKERS FROM INTELLECTUALS

'Some sort of coherent Party policy is beginning to emerge. It is two-fisted. One hand offers tolerance and respect to the new trade unions as they emerge ... the other, the mailed fist, fiercely attacks the opposition groups like KOR as 'anti-socialist' and 'anarchic'. There is clearly going to be an effort to root out the dissident intellectuals from the founding committees of the new independent trade unions'. (6)

METHOD VI : SOWING ORGANISATIONAL CONFUSION

'Official sources recently indicated that 8 unions had seceded from the Central Council of Trade Unions within the last 3 weeks and have declared themselves "autonomous unions". But, as a leader of the new autonomous unions put it, 'their status is quite different from ours. Those set-ups are still run by the same people. New labels have been stuck on old bottles. It's a mystification'. (7)

(1) See The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, 1917-1921 by M. Brinton, for a detailed and documented description of how it was done. (£1.20 post free from Solidarity London)

(2) Evening Standard, September 9, 1980.

(3) Morning Star, August 26, 1980, reporting Gierek's broadcast two days earlier.

(4) Le Monde, September 19, 1980.

(5) Rouge, September 12, 1980

(6) Observer, August 14, 1980.

(7) Libération, September 19, 1980.

METHOD VII : SOWING TERMINOLOGICAL CONFUSION

'The Founding Committee for Autonomous Trade Unions concluded its deliberations in Gdansk on September 22. It proposed the creation of a federation of "professional, independent, self-managed unions". Mr Walesa proposed these should be called Solidarity organisations so that they should not be confused with the CSZZ (Central Council of Trade Unions) which was itself in the process of rechristening itself "an independent and self-managed union". One of the statutes of the new unions was that one couldn't belong to two unions'. (8)

METHOD VIII : OBSTRUCTION

'Application delayed : Warsaw District Court has queried the first application for registration by an independent trade union, citing objections to the group's charter, membership and financing.

'The application was filed last week by an organising committee in Katowice which claimed to represent 14,000 members. Sources said the court questioned, among other things, the committee's plans to operate nationally, to admit members from unrelated professions and the unemployed,

and to finance its operations partly from donations.

'Efforts to contact the court for clarification were unsuccessful'. (9)

METHOD IX : CAPTURING THE NEW UNIONS

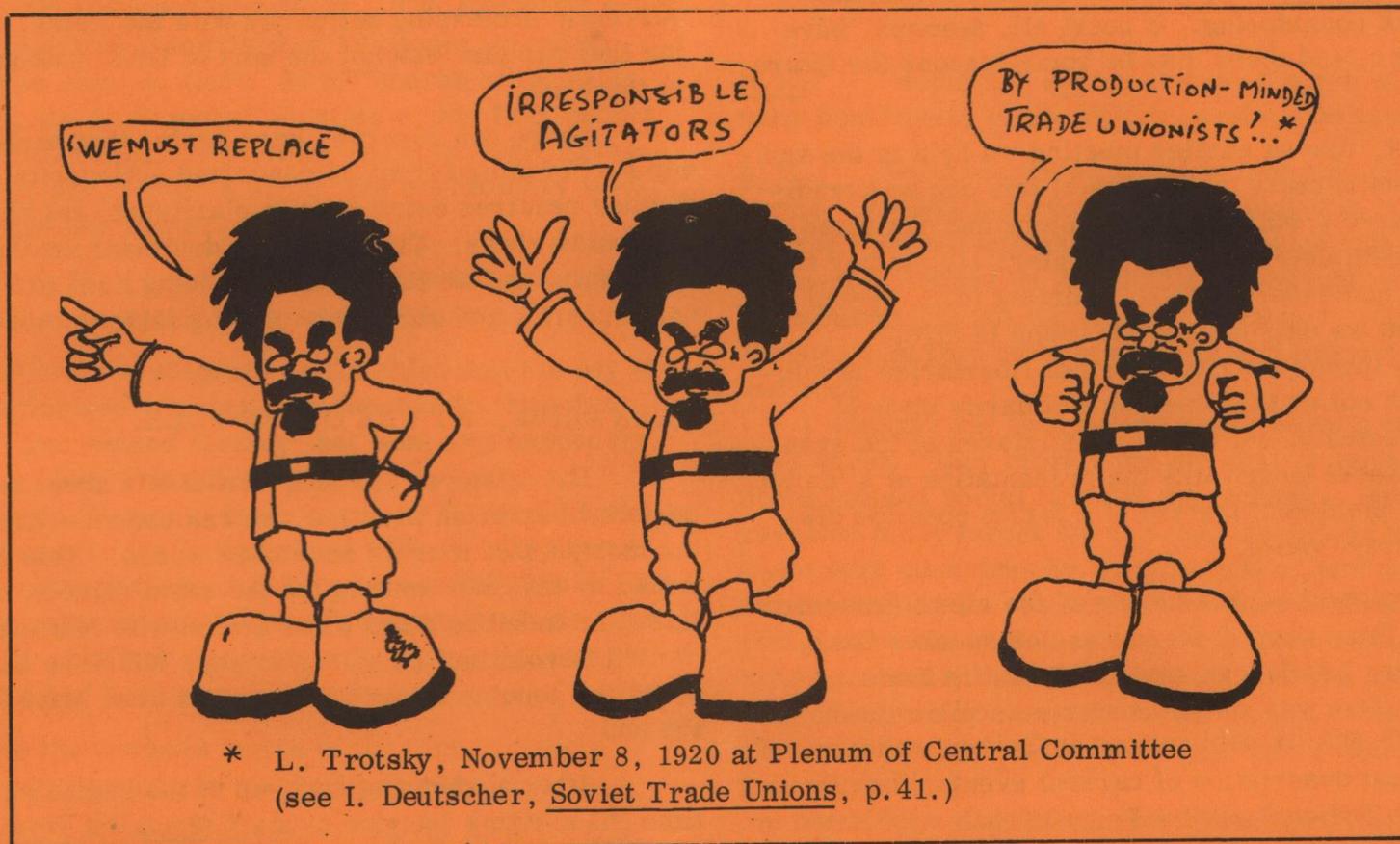
'Among the recruits to the new unions are many Communist Party members who face a difficult personal decision on where their loyalties lie. Officially the Party has not banned its members from joining the new unions but there have been attempts to dissuade them from doing so'. (10)

Tomorrow, if other methods fail - or in conjunction with other methods - the Party could just as easily encourage its members to join the new unions... with a view to 'capturing' them.

(8) Le Monde, September 24, 1980.

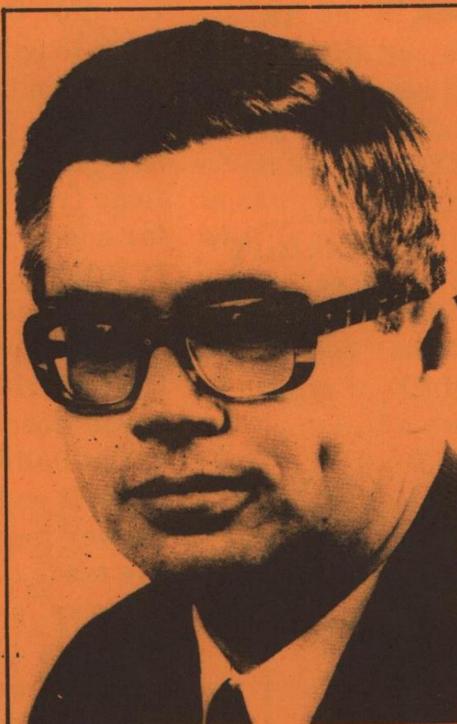
(9) The Times, September 24, 1980.

(10) Guardian, September 19, 1980.



In the middle of September the sulphur mines of Tarnobrzeg, on the middle Vistula, were still occupied by their workers. The miners have 28 demands for improvements like danger allowances (sulphur fumes ravage their health), and equal status with coal miners. With an average wage of only £75 - £85 a month they want an extra £25. 'You have to work for a day to earn 2 lbs of sausage'.

Observer, August 14.



Marciej Szepanski, one of Gierek's closest pals, was Director of Polish Television, a people's television, in the service of the people. Comrade Szepanski owned a farm, a palace, a 23-room house, a villa with sauna, a glass-bottomed swimming pool, a residence in Nairobi, a few blocks of flats in town, a yacht, three aeroplanes, seven cars, a Siamese 'massage' parlour, a personal porn cinema with 900 blue video cassettes... and an untarnished class consciousness. Marciej Szepanski has just been fired. Why? Because the films, you see, had been shot in the capitalist West. Mustn't overstep the mark...

MEANWHILE, IN BRITAIN...

TWO MEETINGS

A meeting was held at the Conway Hall, on Tuesday August 26, to discuss events in Poland. It was called under the auspices of the London Solidarity group, in cooperation with other tendencies and individuals. The widespread interest aroused by the Polish workers' struggle was shown by the numbers who attended, in the holiday season and at very short notice. The Small Hall was packed to the door, standing room only. At the end of three hours we went away feeling that something had been achieved: the setting up of a Polish Solidarity Committee, planned intervention at the TUC Conference with the aim of stopping the proposed delegation of fraternal bureaucrats, and the sending of two telegrams, one expressing solidarity with the strikers through B, in Paris, and one to the Polish government supporting the workers' call for the establishment of free trade unions.

Success, then? To a considerable extent, certainly, and well worth doing. But there were some dissenting voices (as readers of Freedom may have noted) and criticisms which are worth considering. It could all, perhaps, have been done better, and there may be some lessons for future occasions.

For a start, like an earlier meeting we held in the same place (on the anniversary of Kronstadt) this one was traditionally structured: platform of speakers and chairman behind a table complete with jugs of water, etc, facing the rest of us, the audience. Without claiming (c.f. 'World Revolution') that we only have to sit round in circle, seance-like, to invoke the true spirit of libertarian revolution, it is worth noting that this non-Solidarity style of meeting accentuated one of the worst mistakes of the evening: the fact that it looked like the presentation of a 'united front' from the platform, instead of a forum open for discussion of different views.

This is important because some of the views presented differed widely from ours: there was one speaker from Solidarity, Terry Liddle; an anarchist, Philip Samson; and two Poles. One was an ex-Labour councillor (in close contact with KOR and its publications in Polish) who gave an interesting factual description of current events, the other a member of the Polish Socialist Party in exile, affiliated to the Second International, who went on and on about what he had said to Willy Brandt the last time they met. If the traditional structure of the meeting was inevitable, all the more care should have been taken to emphasise the open, un-'fixed' nature of the set-up (the organisers had not met all the speakers and certainly did not know what they would be

saying. (Those who think that meetings should only be held if the organisers do know who will be there - and what they will be saying - should say so explicitly.)

By the time the collection was taken, and the gist of the proposed telegram(s) mooted, time for discussion from the floor was limited to just under an hour, so that the chairman had to be firm in trying to ensure a maximum number and variety of contributions. Nevertheless, the adverb 'ruthlessly', applied to the chairing by Freedom's correspondent is not inappropriate. This appeared to some extent in the debate, although quite a number of opposing views were heard. It became more obvious when the final wording of the telegrams was discussed. There was no chance to do this properly, the formula 'supporting the struggle for free trade unions' being assumed to express the feeling of the meeting. A proposed amendment, from the only Solidarity member to speak from the floor, that the words 'independent class organisations' replace the words 'free trade unions' was not accepted. And it was only thanks to a quick-thinking and persistent anarchist that 'All power to the workers' was added at the end of the first telegram, thus differentiating us from the wide range of right-wingers and social-democrats currently professing solidarity with the Poles, and suggesting that our aim was not the sort of trade unions prevailing in the West.

So we can observe, once again, that participation in any sort of united front or concerted action with other tendencies requires extra care in clarifying, not blurring, our particular views. Otherwise the dominant ideology prevails, by default, and we find ourselves being used for end we do not support - and ultimately playing false to those we do.

MEANWHILE, AT THE OTHER POLE...

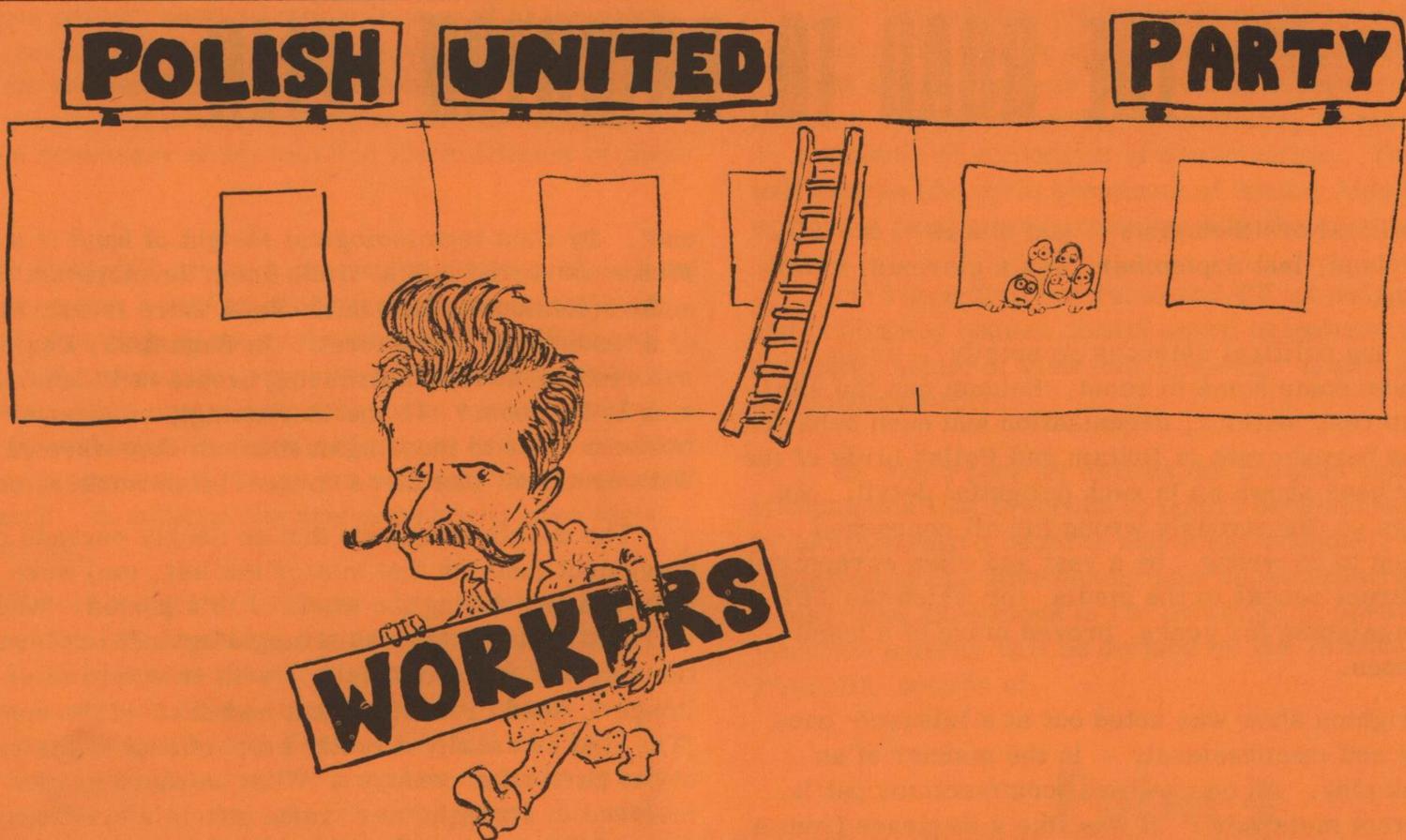
But whatever our self-criticisms about failures of perfect libertarian practice, we can console ourselves with the thought that it could have been worse. This was demonstrated by the SWP meeting on the same subject, three nights later, attended by a few of us armed with leaflets, doing a 'World Revolution' (needless to say, WR were also there, doing the genuine thing!). One of us even stayed till near the end.

After a cheering cock-up at the beginning over what time the meeting was due to start (Socialist Worker had said 9 pm, Time Out 8 pm, so they made it 8.30) the meeting (smaller than ours) swung into the familiar routine: two quite lengthy speeches, the first more narrative in style, the second giving the line; collection ('Let's not hear the clatter of coins, comrades, nor yet the rustling of paper, but the squeak of pens writing substantial cheques'); questions from the floor to the platform, answered in batches for added glibness; and final summings-up with exhortations to build the revolutionary party (at this point our reporter made no excuse and left). Of course experienced questioners took the opportunity to put a few points across. The lad from World Revolution did his stuff, about the counter-revolutionary nature of all unions, and two people involved in the Polish Solidarity Campaign gave some information about it and asked for a statement of the SWP position. The answer was that the SWP supported the 'existing rank-and-file trade union movement of solidarity with the Polish workers' and would not ally itself with the right wing in the unions by calling for withdrawal of the delegation. The SWP evidently preferred, even at this time, to maintain its alliance with the stalinists on the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

L.W. and M.B.

WE STAND FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROLETARIAN SOCIETY BY THE CLASS CREATIVITY OF THE WORKERS THEMSELVES, NOT BY THE UKASES OF THE CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY ... THE STICK, IF RAISED AGAINST THE WORKERS, WILL FIND ITSELF IN THE HANDS OF OTHER SOCIAL FORCES. SOCIALISM (AND) SOCIALIST ORGANISATION WILL BE SET UP BY THE PROLETARIAT ITSELF OR THEY WILL NOT BE SET UP AT ALL. SOMETHING ELSE WILL BE SET UP: STATE CAPITALISM.

OSINSKY - 'Kommunist' - April 1918



LEAFLET DISTRIBUTED AT TUC CONFERENCE BY POLISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

ROUND ONE TO THE POLISH STRIKERS

BUT - doubts persist :

- * Will the Agreement apply to all Poland?
- * Will the Strike Committees be allowed to form the basis of independent, self-managed unions? Can they remain free from Communist Party manipulation and control?
- * Will all those gaoled for supporting the struggle now be released?
- * Will workers be free from such harassment in future?
- * What is to happen to the old company unions?

These - and other questions - continue to worry and divide Polish workers and their elected representatives at Gdansk. How they are answered greatly depends on :

- * The support Polish independent trade unionism wins from workers in countries such as Britain.
- * The response Poland's struggle for genuine trade unionism evokes in neighbouring countries where it is still outlawed.

DITCH POLISH COMPANY UNIONS

The TUC can :

- * CANCEL the visit - by trade union chiefs in office for life - as the guests of Gierek's company unions.
- * ELECT, instead, a delegation to Gdansk, the birth-place and center of Polish independent trade unionism.

Polish workers have won their first gains in an heroic struggle, against blatant threats of a 'fraternal' Red Army 'intervention' - as in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968. The General Council - which has developed obscenely intimate links with Soviet and Eastern European company unions - has been one of the few labour organisations in Western Europe not to support the Gdansk workers. Even the Polish government - after the token sacrifice of a few bureaucrats - has been compelled to bargain with and finally recognise Gdansk. If such an intransigent employer can recognise a union, why not the General Council?

WHY THE DOUBLE STANDARDS?

TUC can also :

Show the door to its 'guest' Boris Averyanov, representative of Russia's company unions. Together with his KGB colleagues, Averyanov is hounding Russian fighters (like Borisov and Klebanov) for the very freedoms fought for in Poland. Polish workers have already ousted Jan Szydlak, the union boss who invited the General Council to send the delegation. For ten years Szydlak - as head of a commission set up to 'investigate' them - suppressed the facts of the 1970 Baltic massacres.

POLAND IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Workers all over Brezhnev's creaking empire will take inspiration, courage and not a few lessons from the Poles' example. The least we can do to help them is to pledge that henceforth our trade unions and the TUC will only recognise and collaborate with genuinely independent workers' organisations. This principle should apply to Eastern Europe and the USSR, no less than to Chile and South Africa.

- * Break all links with these company unions.
- * Recognise Polish workers' main gain : 'independent self-managed unions'.
- * Go to Gdansk as guests of the workers, not to Warsaw as fig-leaves for Gierek.
- * Kick out KGB 'unionist' Averyanov.

Zycie Warszawy has just published an account of an aggregate meeting of Warsaw Party branches at which a certain Marian Bulski stated that 'if the First Secretary had only held his job from one Congress to the next, and if he had given a regular account of his activities, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in...' *

Gently, gently, Comrade Bulski! You can't treat the Party leader as if he were a mere shop steward. You'll end up as another of those 'anarchist', 'anti-socialist' elements.

* Le Monde, September 18, 1980.

THE ROAD TO BRIGHTON PIER

For political ornithologists - and others - the TUC debacle on Poland, last September, was a glorious, unforgettable affair.

Rarely can political chickens so noisily - or so messily - have come home to roost. Seldom can the similarities of interest, outlook, organisation and even behaviour between union bureaucrats in Britain and Polish birds of the same feather been shown up in such delightful detail. Not only did things go disastrously wrong for all concerned ... they were seen to go wrong - by a vast and often enraptured audience. Direct access to the media, for which the TUC had been campaigning for years, proved more of a boomerang than a boon.

The Brighton show was acted out at a leisurely pace - predictably and remorselessly - in the manner of an ancient Greek play. As one political commentator put it, using a different metaphor: 'it was like a sequence from a silent film, with the heroes walking inexorably towards an open man-hole'.

The Economic Committee of the TUC had, of course, wangled its invitation to Poland much earlier in the year. Detailed plans had been drawn up. But that was in those halcyon days, before the realities of class conflict in Poland had so crudely crashed to the forefront. Before hundreds of thousands of Polish workers had started demanding 'free, self-managed trade unions'. Before they started asserting (rather than asking for) the right to strike. By their actions the Polish workers were questioning (in the sharpest, rudest and most relevant way possible) the whole legitimacy of those who had issued the invitations to the TUC.

Who on earth were these obscure, grey-suited, non-elected, non-striking, heavy-jowled, rather frightened and totally unrepresentative individuals who called themselves the CRZZ (Polish Central Council of Trade Unions)? For what services rendered - or to be rendered - had the Polish United Workers Party appointed them 'the authentic representatives of the Polish working class'?

From their collective anonymity one name stood out: Jan Szydlak, head of the 'official' Polish trade union apparatus. He was the man who, for over a decade, had presided a Commission of Enquiry into the massacre of Polish workers carried out by the Polish militia outside the gates of the Lenin shipyard in 1970. 'Trade unionists' of his ilk 'represent' the workers about as much as Hitler 'represented' the Jews.

Once upon a time such men may have been proletarians. Now they were privileged state functionaries as remote from shipyard or coalmine, factory bench or railway workshop as their prospective guests, the TUC delegation. After all, 'brothers' Basnett, Jenkins, Moss Evans and Gill had also made it. They were in office for life, more firmly entrenched perhaps than even their Polish kinsmen. (For all their recent enthusiasm for the regular re-selection of MPs, they had no cause to worry about the regular re-selection of trade union general secretaries!)

During late August, as the struggle in Poland gained momentum, not a twitter of support could be heard from the aviary in Congress House. Just dollopfulls of double talk. On August 19 the TUC issued a statement that their proposed tour would 'give them the opportunity to inform themselves about recent trade union developments in Pol-

and'. By what terminological sleight of hand is a mass strike converted into a 'trade union development'? From understatement to stab in the back there is only the thickness of a trade union bureaucrat. On August 22, David Basnett referred to 'recent distressing events in Poland. Distressing? To whom? To the increasingly successful Polish workers? Or to those against whom they were revolting? With 'brothers' like these do the Polish workers need enemies?

The double standards that so deeply pervade our labour movement (and for that matter the left, too) were shown up very sharply during the whole of this period. When workers in Third World countries struggle against intolerable conditions sundry union officials - with an eye to their 'left' image - shed crocodile tears on behalf of the oppressed. (The flow is usually directly proportional to the remoteness of the particular country.) When workers nearer home are involved in struggle 'our' union officials are more parsimonious with their (largely verbal) support. But when tens of thousands of workers in Eastern Europe arise and challenge the intolerable conditions of their life, all we get from the TUC - including its 'lefts' such as Scargill - is an obscene and deafening silence.

What is this disease which can only see real flesh-and-blood workers (exploited, mutilated, humiliated, alienated human beings) this side of the Iron Curtain - and on the other side only sees philosophical or economic abstractions: 'the difficulties of socialist construction', 'the regrettable effects of bureaucratic mismanagement', 'the threat to socialism itself'. What a harvest of political and moral decay. The concept of socialism as just the nationalisation of the means of production plus political power exercised by a 'working class Party' was taking its biggest political pasting ever. Rarely can the 'left' have appeared so stripped (so rightly stripped) of its last shreds of credibility.

The 'left', of course, had no monopoly of double-think. The 'right' wallowed in it, too. The media and conservative press supported this particular resort to 'unconstitutional action', the physical challenge to this particular establishment. They applauded this kind of law-breaking. They enthused about these particular factory occupations. At the theoretical level (see The Times, September 1, 1980) they opted for the forceful positing of these particular individual interests against the collective interests of the State. Imagine their howls of outrage had a British Cabinet Minister been coerced into noisy public negotiations with a Committee of rank-and-file workers! For years before 1984 double-think is endemic. Only those who say 'a plague on both your houses' seem capable of talking straight on anything.

But back to Brighton where the 'right wing' now had the bit between its teeth. Frank Chapple of the EEPTU had long-standing reasons of his own for wanting to settle accounts with the stalinists and their stooges. The 'left' provided him, of course, with all the weapons he needed. It is a lasting indictment of the 'left' that its record is little better than that of the 'right' when it comes to bureaucratic manoeuvres and manipulations in the unions - or to selective myopia on civil rights issues.

All this enabled Chapple to don his democratic dungarees and make some very telling points about foolish people 'going to a place where they are going to be told nothing, see nothing and learn nothing'.

Let's honestly admit it: the 'right' had a field day. As

anyone would, who proclaimed that two and two make four... amid a mass of shifty shysters pretending the arithmetic was beyond them - or of middle class marxists 'explaining' that the question had to be looked at 'dialectically', and that the answer might differ depending upon which side of the Iron Curtain you did the totting up on. Chapple called on the TUC to cancel the proposed visit, rightly saying it would be seen in Poland as legitimising the authority of those trying to suppress the strikes. APEX (the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff) also put forward a critical resolution, commenting on 'the restriction of trade union liberties in Poland' which had 'led to the demands for basic rights'. The CPSA (Civil and Public Services Association) tabled a similar emergency resolution.

At this stage, and from a very different plane in political space, enter the Polish Solidarity Campaign (PSC). This 'subversive, irresponsible, anarchic, anti-socialist group' (Mr Gierek's words... describing KOR) had been publicly launched a week earlier in London. It grouped a number of revolutionary libertarians and unaffiliated lefts. Half a dozen of us went down to Brighton on the first day of the Congress. There we distributed over a thousand copies of our leaflet (published elsewhere in this Supplement) to the assembling delegates. After some rather traditional cock-ups (which deprived our action of much of its potential impact) we unfurled our banner proclaiming 'DITCH THE POLISH COMPANY UNIONS'. We successfully antagonised quite a lot of people.

It saddens us to note that such autonomous actions still seem to arouse so many objections. The traditional viewpoint dies hard that 'one has to line up with one side or the other' - or, in more sophisticated jargon, that 'independent interventions are essentially utopian'. Deafened and obnubilated by the 'right' hullabaloo, many 'lefts' fell back on their old conditioned reflexes: 'whether I like it or not the enemies of my enemies must, somehow, be my friends'. 'If the right wing is supporting the strikers, better censor my dangerous thoughts'. How easy the step from there to the ridiculous position of the SWP which refused to support our demand that the TUC cancel its visit to Poland... on the ground that 'this would be lining up with Chapple'. Various other leninists, in their fear of organisational or ideological autonomy, also ended up where they belonged: on the side of the stalinists.

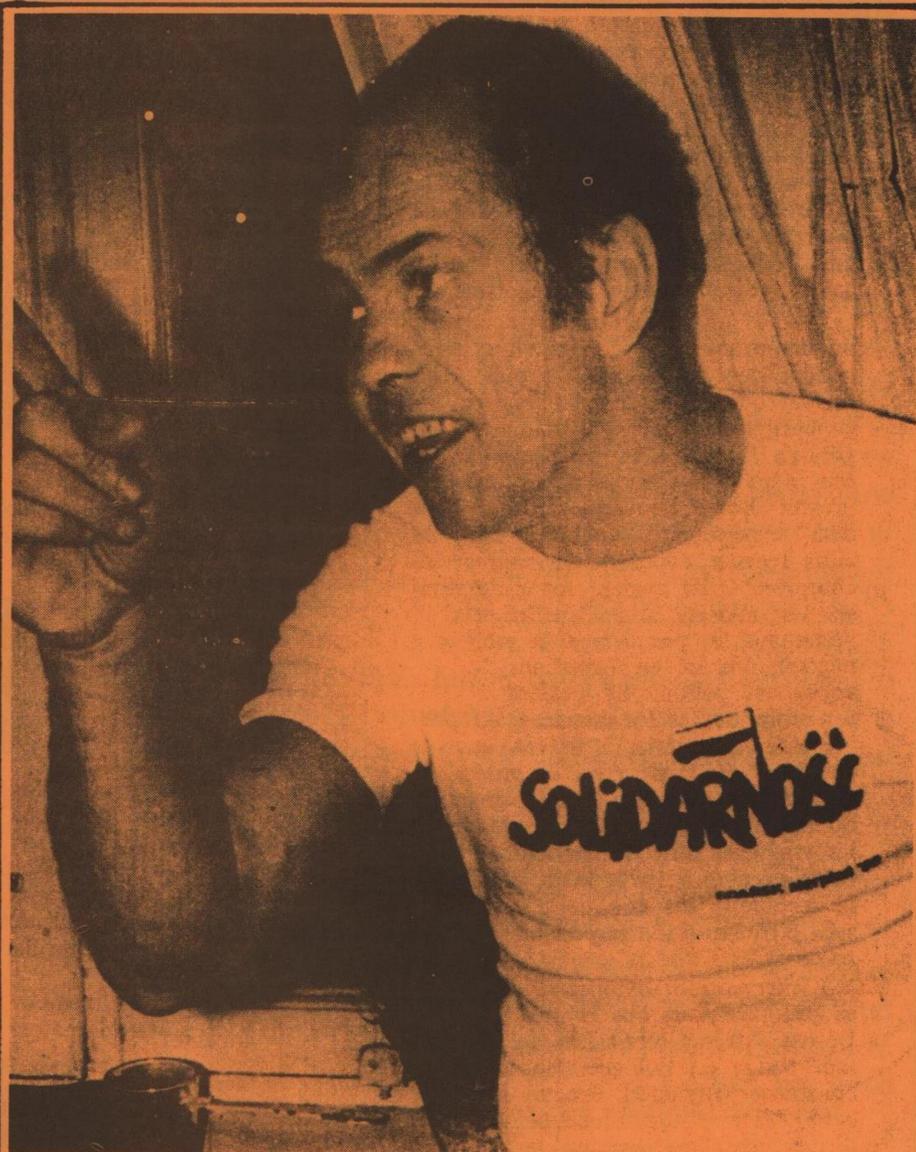
By Wednesday, September 3 the General Council was really getting the feel of the ants in its pants. Supported by the Morning Star - but bashed from both 'right' and 'left' - it huffed and it puffed to get the various critical resolutions withdrawn. To achieve this it even produced a 'clear statement of its own'. We would have loved to witness the conception of this document, the squirming, behind the scenes, of these compromised men as they burned the midnight oil in search of a formula that would 'build bridges' between those who'd been shot down... and those who'd done the shooting. Was the demand for free, self-managed trade unions still 'patently anti-socialist', as declared in Warsaw by Miroslav Wojciechowski, editor of PAP (Morning Star, August 20.). Or had it only been 'anti-socialist' last week? Today, you see, free trade unions were 'necessary for the democratisation of society'.

With elephantine grace the General Council finally produced its document. The statement, let it never be forgotten, was extracted from these creeps not during the struggle, but after the Polish workers had resoundingly - and through their own efforts - won the first round. Basnett and Co. now hypocritically and grudgingly welcomed the 'advances of the Polish working class towards trade unionism'. Advances? In the land of Rosa Luxemburg? In the country that had maintained an illegal trade union structure under Pilsudski and illegal communist nuclei after the 'official'

Party had been decimated by Stalin in 1938-39, prior to the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact? The TUC leaders, in their 'impartial' sympathy for oppressors and oppressed alike, even pledged themselves to visit 'all those concerned' during their forthcoming visit to Poland.

The climax was now imminent. The issue had achieved an international dimension. Of all the non-stalinist trade union federations the TUC alone had maintained a 'low profile' about the 'difficulties of their colleagues in Poland'. In outlook the TUC brass clearly had more in common with the Polish apparatchniks than with the young people wearing 'Solidarnosc' T-shirts in the Lenin shipyards. Office had tried to speak to office. But somehow, at the Warsaw end, the rooms had all suddenly gone empty. So, to gain time, on with the face-saving declaration.

To the amazement of the TUC, their bland platitudes had cataclysmic repercussions. Delay multiplied by innocuousness somehow generated explosive impact. Moscow and Warsaw reacted very sharply to the news that the customarily 'fraternal' TUC had voiced verbal support for workers in struggle in Eastern Europe. The patient spadework of two decades was now crumbling before Moscow's eyes. All those free 'good will' tours! All that wasted vodka! With a suddenness that belied the need for any lengthy debate on the matter, the CRZZ (i.e. the trade union faction of the PUWP) 'withdrew' its long-standing invitation to the TUC. David Basnett didn't quite grasp what had hit him. He stood there with a handful of air tickets to nowhere, some hotel reservations of dubious validity, and invitation for a later one-day trip to Warsaw (which just added insult to injury)... and a lot of explaining to do. The Polish trade union bureaucrats - with nothing as embarrassing as delegates or members to clutter up their field of action - had just pulled the lavatory chain. They had learned the hard way that they had to treat their 'own' workers rather gingerly. But a few foreign bureaucrats? And who had turned nasty to boot? Why bother about them? After all, who would lament them?



Jacek Kuron giving a press conference on his release from prison

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

How did the Trotskyists respond to the Polish events? Despite their much-advertised differences, with remarkable uniformity. Like an earlier generation of authoritarians they have forgotten selectively and learned nothing, least of all from Polish workers.

The neo-Healyite, 100-person WSL's Socialist Press captured the style, crowning its ten-point programme for despatch to Gdansk with the instruction for a 'revolutionary Marxist party to lead the struggles of the Polish workers as part of a reconstructed Fourth International'. (August 20.)

Programmatic listings varied in length and detail. But they all linked off-key rooting for Polish workers to re-affirmations of the Leninist party and state property. The Spartacist tendency spelt out the conditions the others would rather gloss over: support for unions in Poland depends on their siding with 'socialised property', the 'workers' state' and the Red Army. Meanwhile, in Gdansk, the first mass union to escape Leninism got organised with a picture of the Pope on one wall and Pilsudski on the other...

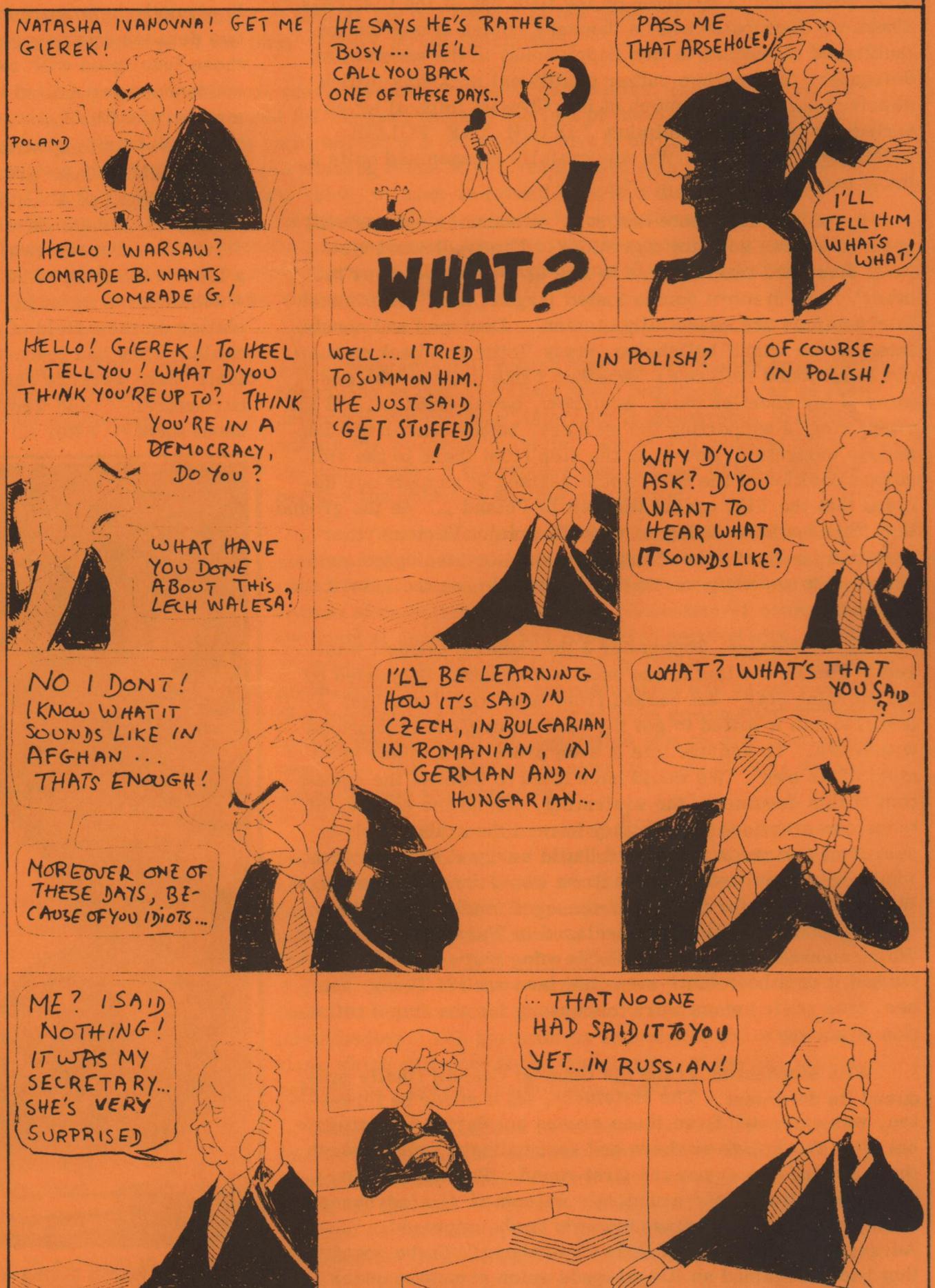
It would be naive to think that the editors of Socialist Challenge, Socialist Worker, Socialist Press, Spartacist Britain, etc, etc, are not well aware of the 'classic' leninist attitude towards trade unions in a 'workers' state'. Lenin called them 'transmission belts'. Trotsky saw them as organisations 'not for a struggle for better conditions of labour' but to 'organise the working

class for the ends of production, to educate, discipline, distribute, retain certain categories and certain workers at the post for fixed periods', so that 'hand in hand with the state' they would 'exercise their authority to lead the workers into the framework of a single economic plan'. (Communism and Terrorism, p.143). An unsuspecting reader might also suppose that the claimants to the 'Fourth International' were not just keen trade unionists, but political pluralists. Socialist Challenge solemnly notified its readers on August 28 that in 'no theoretical document of ... Lenin or Trotsky ... did ... a defence of the one-party system ever appear'. Such a categorical tone, and such a sweeping claim, intimidate the doubter, and indeed they are intended to. And yet statements abound - especially in works of Trotsky advertised by Socialist Challenge. Let just one suffice: 'We are', he wrote in December 1923 'the only party in the country, and in the period of the dictatorship it could not be otherwise'. (The Challenge of the Left Opposition, p.78.) 'Could not be otherwise'... We agree. And if the vanguardists were a little less dishonest, so would they.

R. B. and A. W.

'Could recent events in Poland in fact be due to the impressive improvement of living conditions in Poland, which could well have been too rapid?'

L'Humanité
August 6, 1980



SUDDENLY THIS SUMMER

For those who see themselves as revolutionaries, two attitudes are possible to the events of the Polish summer. The first seeks to minimise their significance. It points out that there is nothing very radical in the demand for 'free trade unions',* particularly when voiced by nationalist reformists, and religious ones to boot. The demand is dismissed as a gigantic diversion, fraught with all the dangers inherent in illusory projects.

1 Rooted knee-deep in their analyses of the past, people who hold such views will argue that trade unions are no solution to the problems of the working class. The unions, by their very essence (i.e. independently of time and place) are 'organs of class collaboration' and 'prisons for the proletariat'. 'Free trade unions', such people would stress, will readily be recuperated by the Polish state. Such an attitude (for it is an attitude as much as a reasoning) reminds one of Marx's initial timidity in relation to the Paris Commune - and of Lenin's initial myopia in relation to the Soviets of 1905.

Such an approach contains some seeds of abstract truth (a union is indeed just a broker of labour power, under any circumstances). But it also shows a great poverty of imagination and a total absence of feeling for living reality. It fails to grasp all that is new in the Polish experience. It seeks, instead, to interpret this experience in the categories of the past. It doesn't feel revolution as a creative act, as 'a conclusion that exceeds the premisses', as the entry of thousands of people onto territory uncharted on anyone's political atlas. Not to sense all this shows the chasm between old-time revolutionaries (whose thinking is always rooted in past revolutions) and people in action (who are always seeking to make the next one).

2 The second attitude to the Polish events would say: 'forget the words (trade unions) and look at the content' (autonomous self-managed organisations, controlled from below, and involving all areas of social life). It would

* It is worth pointing out that this label was devised by sections of the media in the West. The demand of the Gdansk MKS (Inter-factory Strike Committee) was for 'independent, self-managed unions'. The term 'free' trade unions is a crude attempt at pre-emptive recuperation. It quite wrongly conveys associations - if only of the verbal kind - with the 'free' world, the 'free' enterprise system, Radio 'Free' Europe, etc. The MKS - and the Polish Solidarnosc movement which has grown out of it - has repeatedly stated that it is not seeking the restoration of the means of production to private ownership.

Of all the papers in the West only Le Monde has correctly conveyed the full nuances of what the Polish workers are trying to create: 'des syndicats indépendants et auto-gérés'. To translate this as 'self-governing' unions, as The Times and Guardian have intermittently done, is also misleading. Countries (or institutions) may be 'self-governing', jealous of their frontiers, extremely autocratic. (It all depends on who the 'governors' are.) 'Self-managed' on the other hand implies that the locus of power is at the base. And it doesn't preclude even very close association with similarly structured bodies.

stress the specific geographical, historical and cultural contexts in which these demands were now being voiced: societies in which every area of autonomy had been ruthlessly colonised, societies in which the Party leaderships believed they had already achieved their objective: the social atomisation of the population.

The Polish summer, in this perspective, would be seen as the first mass movement of a self-conscious working class against the institutional legacies of leninism (i.e. against societies in which unions were conceived of as 'transmission belts between the Party and the masses'). The Gdansk strike would be an example of a tremendous upsurge of the 'class for itself' (as Marx would have said) - and the action in question would be the repudiation of marxist-leninist objectives, even by the generations which the 'marxist Party' had itself brought up!

In this approach the whole focus shifts away from weeping about the crucifixes or sniggering about the carnations.** Central to it would be Walesa's statements that, in the new organisations, delegates would not be separated from those they represented (and would in fact remain at work, at least part of the time); that the organisations would seek to break down the barriers between intellectual and manual labour; that representatives would receive working men's wages 'or even less' (Libération, September 13); that 'the journals of the new unions would publish whatever they wanted, whether anyone liked it or not' (Guardian, September 1).

A sympathetic (not sentimental) approach would emphasize the almost unbelievable capacity for organisation and coordination shown by the strikers, which rendered the task

** And, even here, the new approach would be both more charitable and more open. It would remember that Anna Walentynowicz who had worked all her life in the shipyard (initially as a welder, later as a crane driver) first got into trouble with the authorities when she organised, not a strike over wages, but a collection among her workmates to put flowers on the graves of her fellow workers shot down ten years earlier. Such apparently 'trifling' episodes should teach us more modesty in seeking to understand what drives human beings to action, and to unravel the strange matrices of identity in which such autonomous action is now embedded.



of the state power infinitely more difficult. It would admire their tactical skill, rather than denounce them for some of the things they have been compelled - tongue in cheek - to say.

The Polish summer is a challenge, at all levels, to the dominant ideology in Eastern Europe. As such it is sure to have enormous repercussions. It questions the basic doctrinal postulates which underpin these societies. These are seldom honestly stated. They are that the main demands outlined in the Communist Manifesto ('to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State') somehow ensure the 'socialist' nature of the regimes that follow. They ensure no such thing - even when dished up with a 'sauce tartare': the rule of the vanguard party.

If revolutionaries are unaware of the challenge posed by any autonomous organisation (trade union or flying university or what-have-you), Russia's rulers certainly aren't. Islands of autonomy, in societies such as theirs, are potential bases of dual power. The dyke of the official lie once breached, a whole ocean of people just seeking the truth could come pouring through. How else can we explain Russia's desperate attempt to circumscribe the focus of infection, the omission of all serious reference to the Polish events in their own press, the sudden disappearance of even 'Eurocommunist' journals from their libraries and reading rooms, their talk of 'dividing socialism from within' (The Times, September 29) and their constant calls for 'the restoration of a democracy which conforms to leninist norms'.

(FOR ORDER TO BE MAINTAINED TOO MUCH SHOULD NOT BE ASKED. TO STRIKE IS A COSTLY WAY OF ARGUING. DEMANDS, EVEN IF IN GENERAL CORRECT, CANNOT BE IMMEDIATELY SATISFIED...)



This hardly concealed call to resume work - which could have been uttered by any Tory or Labour government - was broadcast by His Eminence Cardinal Wysinski, Primate of Poland. It was republished, undoctored, by L'Humanité (August 27, 1980).

For Poland's rulers things are even more bleak. We note the frightened statement of a leading Polish Party member (Observer, August 24) that 'the opposition is now inside the working class'. Comrade, it is even worse than that! After the events of 1970 the workers can no longer be coned by reshuffling your Party leadership. They have understood that confidence - like matches - can only be used once! The main opposition to leninism, in Poland, is not just 'inside the working class'. It is the working class ... and what spells your doom is that the workers know it.

The situation is fraught with danger and ambiguities. Our admiration is not an admiration of voyeurs - and our support is not uncritical. But the things that worry us are not those that worry the crypto-stalinists - or those who like their revolutions 'pure'. Jan Litinski, the editor of Robotnik, describes (Libération, September 9) a visit to the miners of Wazbrzych. 'The men would come to the founding committee of the new union as to a new power, of which they expected both instructions and protection. Having lived for 35 years in a totalitarian state it was hard to learn that one could defend oneself without seeking refuge behind authority'. Here lies the main danger. Here, and in an excessive reliance on their new charismatic leaders who may turn out to have feet of clay. 'To be radical', according to Litinski, 'is to work to change all that'.

Polish workers are already deserting the official unions in their hundreds of thousands. They are joining the Solidarity network. The old unions were indeed 'transmission belts' ... to the comfortable corridors of power. To join the new organisations, on the other hand, is to be catapulted in the opposite direction, to the very front line of contestation and political strife. It is quite naive to believe that the new unions will somehow be able to avoid finding political answers to the political onslaught that is sure to be launched against them.

How seriously, in the last analysis, do we take the prescription that 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves'? Is it just rhetoric? Or do we really mean it? And if we mean it, why can't the class be granted the autonomy to choose its means - as well as its ends - and to label them as it wishes?

M. B.

THE 'ANTI-WORKING CLASS ELEMENTS'

(alias the Executive of the Gdansk Joint Strike Committee)

Lech Walesa, Gdansk shipyard Zremb, electrician;
 Joanna Duda Gwiazda, Ceto, shipbuilding engineer;
 Bogdan Lis, Elmor, labourer;
 Anna Walentynowicz, Gdansk Lenin shipyard, welder;
 Florian Wisniewski, Elektromontaz, electrician;
 Lech Jedruszewski, Paris Commune shipyard, mechanic;
 Stefan Izdebski, Gdynia Port, docker;
 Henryk Krzywonos, WPK, driver;
 Tadeusz Stanny, Refinery, electrician;
 Stefan Lewandowski, Gdansk Port, crane driver;
 Lech Sobieszak, Siabkopol, metal worker;
 Jozef Przybylski, Dubimor, metal worker;
 Zdzislaw Kobylinski, PKS, storeman;
 Andrzej Gwiazda, Elmor, engineer;
 Jerzy Sikorski, Repair shipyard, mechanic;
 Jerzy Kmiecik, North shipyard, hull-building mechanic;
 Andrzej Kolodziej, Paris Commune shipyard, welder;
 Wojciech Gruszewski, Gdansk College of Technology, chemist;
 Lech Badkowski, writer.

Leninism vs free trade unions

'Socialist Worker' (August 23, 1980) has come out in full support of the working class in Poland, in its magnificent struggle against the totalitarian bureaucracy that dominates and controls every aspect of Polish life. In particular the SWP supports the struggle of Polish workers for independent trade unions.

This belated (and possibly unwitting) break with an essential part of Leninism is welcome. But it would be more credible if it was accompanied by an honest analysis of who originated the concept that State or Party-controlled unions were an integral part of 'socialism'.

The issue of 'independent trade unions' was first heatedly discussed in Petrograd, in January 1918, at the first All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions. The Bolshevik viewpoint, supported by Lenin and Trotsky (and voiced by Zinoviev) was that 'trade union independence was a bourgeois idea ... an anomaly in a workers' state'. 'The trade unions' the Bolshevik resolution stressed, 'would inevitably become transformed into organs of the socialist state'. The Bolsheviks defeated a resolution supporting the right to strike under a 'workers' government'. The timing is important. It was several months before the outbreak of widespread civil war and the 'Allied' intervention (May 1918). It can't be explained away by 'special circumstances'.

Two years later, in July 1920, Trotsky took things further. He argued that 'the young socialist state requires trade unions not for struggle for better conditions of labour ... but to organise the working class for the ends of production'. Lenin did not dissociate himself from this statement. This only happened later, in November 1920, when Trotsky (having arbitrarily sacked the elected leaders of

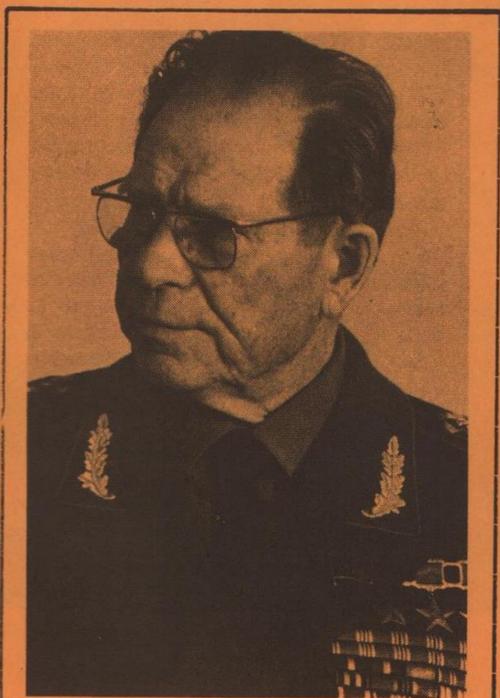
the railwaymen) proposed 'to replace irresponsible agitators (in the leadership of the unions) by production-minded trade unionists'. Lenin had the resolution reworded - in more tactful terms. Trotsky (who had only carried Lenin's views to their logical conclusion) was made a sacrificial goat.

The SWP holds that Russia became a state-capitalist tyranny during the Stalin era. But the seeds of the totalitarian bureaucracy had been sown long before Stalin's accession to power. Where does the SWP stand on what happened under Lenin and Trotsky? Or on the role of Bolshevik ideology in the state-capitalist transformation?

It is high time Leninists and Trotskyists understood the Leninist and Trotskyist roots of the bureaucracies they now say they oppose. Their theory of the vanguard party has caused incalculable damage to the socialist cause. This theory legitimises 'the Party's historical birthright' to speak on behalf of the class ... and ultimately, if necessary, to shoot workers down ... in their own long-term interests, of course (as happened at Kronstadt in 1921, and in Hungary in 1956).

Does the SWP really support the workers in the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk? Does it know that one of their first actions was to call for the melting down of the Lenin statue at the gates? And for the erection of a monument to their comrades massacred by the Party militia in 1970, at that very place? Can't present-day Bolsheviks see the connection between an authoritarian and hierarchically-structured party and the kind of society such parties have always introduced - and always will?

In the absence of a serious and conscious attempt to purge itself of its leninist heritage (a heritage it still proudly boasts of) the SWP's support for 'independent trade unions' in Poland sounds like just so much opportunist twaddle. They are riding a band-wagon. Workers should beware of such new-found (and somewhat selective) converts to the theory that 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves'.



Marshal Dimitri Ustinov, Minister of Defence of the USSR - one of the 'friends' who (in Mr Gierek's words) are 'preoccupied by our difficulties'.

'The strikes in Poland were at first welcomed as a 'proletarian revolution' by Albanian communists (including Kazimierz Mijal, a former Polish leader who had defected to Tirana in 1966 disguised as an Albanian trade delegate). But the line soon changed. The strikers are now 'the tools of the western bourgeoisie and the Roman Catholic Church'.*

Slightly enlarged trade delegations are one thing, massively enlarged trade unions called 'Solidarity' quite another!

* Sunday Times, August 14, 1980.

In Budapest, five Hungarian dissidents seeking to go to Gdansk had their passports confiscated at the airport. They were the philosopher György Bence, the physicist György Goendoer, the mathematician Miklos Sulvok, the architect Balint Nagy and M. Rajk, son of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs executed in 1949 during the stalinist purges.*

To reassure dissident Polish communists that even if they get temporarily shot, they might still be 'posthumously rehabilitated'?

* Le Monde, August 8, 1980.



*A spectre is haunting Leninism :
the spectre of 'trade union consciousness'...*