

# solidarity



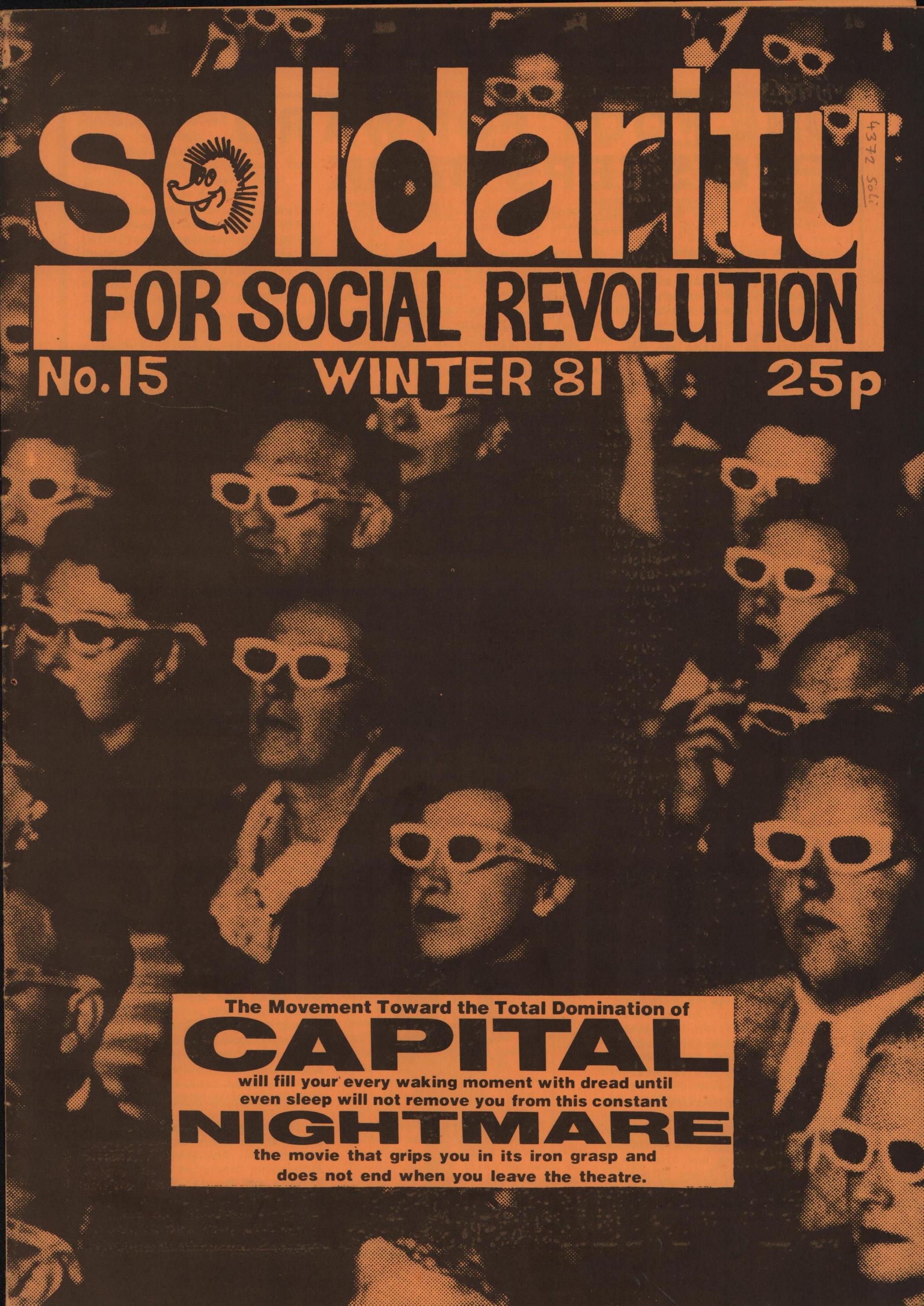
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**FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

No.15

WINTER 81

25p



The Movement Toward the Total Domination of

**CAPITAL**

will fill your every waking moment with dread until  
even sleep will not remove you from this constant

**NIGHTMARE**

the movie that grips you in its iron grasp and  
does not end when you leave the theatre.

# ONE FOOT FORWARD TWO STEPS BACK

As the shadow of permanent unemployment begins to loom over the whole of the working class can anyone doubt that we are now in the midst of a savage attack on our standard of living and our ability to organise resistance to those attacks?

Eighteen months ago, after the lorry drivers' strike and the defeat of the Labour government, the Tories were wary of taking on the working class directly. Instead they relied on their 'disengagement' strategy of cash limits on public sector industries and attacks on the social wage. This was backed up with a dose of 'market realism' implemented largely through high interest rates, to 'shake out' the small, unprofitable firms and 'rationalisation' of key industries like steel and cars. As their confidence grew they moved to the political front. The Employment Bill (the subject of much debate within the ruling class) is intended to impose restraint through legal means as faith in the unions' ability to 'self-police' their membership dwindles. Coupled with this has been the massive strengthening of the force of the police to attack picket lines. With unemployment rising over two million and the threat of the dole a very real one, the stage seems set for a very aggressive Tory offensive on all fronts, involving further cuts in welfare, massive job cuts, short-time working and reductions in real wages.

But let's not forget the Tories are only continuing what Labour started. Contrary to what some on the Left may say, it was Labour that started the run-down of state-services, the cuts in British Leyland, and the axing of jobs at British Steel. And it was Labour that brought us cuts in our social wage as a back-up to their infamous 'Social Contract with the Unions to contain our struggle against falling living standards. And it was the Labour Party and TUC that drew up and approved a set of guide-lines on picketing very similar to the Employment Bill, as part of the Concordat.

So don't be fooled by the sudden show of militancy now from the Labour Party and Trade Unions. Tony Benn and others on the Left may complain that it's not fair to ask workers to make sacrifices when the profits go to private capitalists. But under their

so-called "workers' control" the same sacrifices would be considered "fair". Schemes like the Alternative Economic Strategy represent little more than an attempt to try and shore up capitalism by a bureaucratic restructuring of the economy. None of these schemes can overcome the problems of competitive capitalism. All of them, whether they depend upon companies, nation states, economic blocs or even workers' co-operatives, need to continually increase exploitation, to effectively compete on the world market. A process which has proved to be completely unstable and unable to sustain itself without creating structural unemployment. All governments, left and right, have to implement unemployment.

If this is true why fight it? One reason is we have little choice. If we don't fight redundancies and closures it will only pave the way for even greater attacks next time round. By fighting back we can delay the bosses' plans for more attacks. But of course what we can gain is necessarily limited. Every success will force the State to reveal its true role as defender of the capitalist system.

So how can we fight it? The Unions may talk about "defending" Trade Union rights and workers' living standards, yet they themselves are a divisive force and an obstacle to any real defence against the attacks being made on us by the whole capitalist class. They are instrumental in reinforcing the sectional

divisions, the separation of 'white-collar' from 'blue-collar', the conflict between 'public' and 'private' sector workers, and the nationalist feelings that make workers at Fords see their interests as opposed to those of workers in Japan, or textile workers joining with their bosses against workers in Asia, for import controls. In practice they act as a semi-autonomous arm of the State.

Struggles must be controlled by all workers involved - not by Union Officials or shop stewards. The most dynamic example of how to organise a strike was given by the workers in Poland this summer. Organisations, like the centrally co-ordinated strike committees, were forged in the heat of the struggle. And these were ultimately accountable to the workers' mass assemblies. During negotiations delegates had to report back regularly to local strike assemblies, and tapes of the proceedings were played back to other workers.

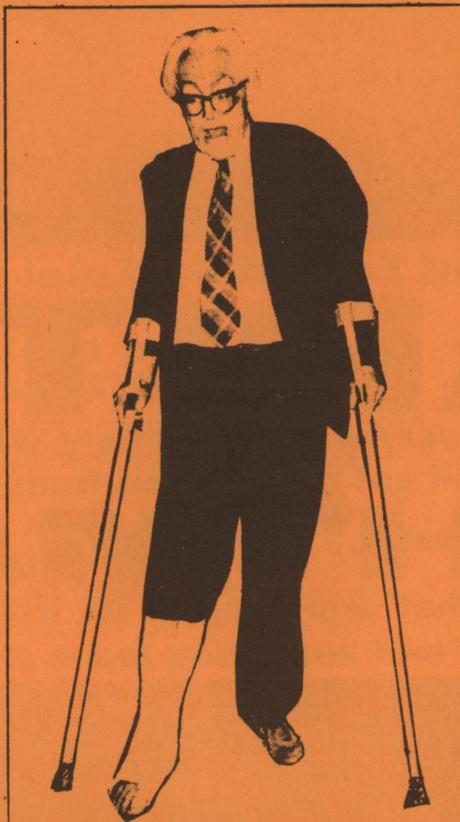
Only militant action of this kind, outside of and against the whole Trade Union structure, can transform an initially defensive 'economic' struggle against redundancies into a major political offensive for self-managed socialism. After all we don't just want more of the same, but a society where decisions in all areas of social life - work, education, health services - reflect the full, free participation of everyone.

Leaflet published by Solidarity (Manchester) and distributed on the Labour Party demonstration in Liverpool on 29th November last.

Solidarity apologises for the inclusion of what has been widely seen as an anti gay cartoon in issue 12. It was not meant as an attack on gay people, and Solidarity reaffirms its opposition to all forms of sexism and heterosexism.

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

On the basis of Proletarian Autonomy. To be held in London, Easter 1981. Initiated by Autonomous Communist groups in Britain and France. For further details send a large stamped, self addressed envelope to: Authority Box 666, c/o Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

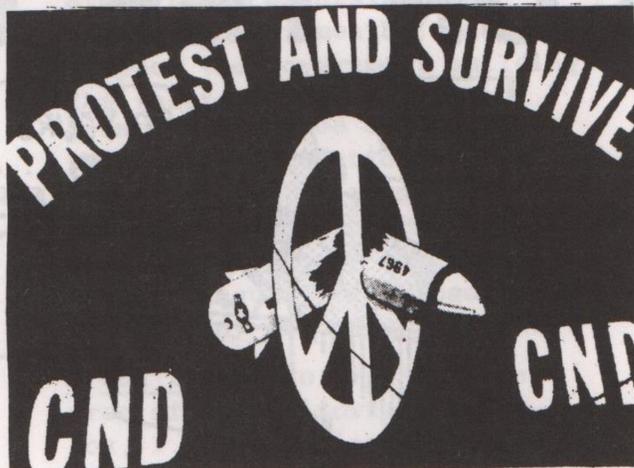


# NO BOSSES: NO BOMBS

Of course it's right that people should protest and take action against the siting of Cruise missiles in their 'back gardens' and we are right to reject the soothing phrases of governments who tell us that 'the bomb' will never be used in practice.

But any attempt to base a political campaign purely on the emotional horror which people feel towards the threat of nuclear war; any attempt to raise such a campaign above the apparently mundane struggles of everyday life - over wages and working conditions, education and sexual relations - would be a grave error.

It is not the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons as such which is the real issue - there are numerous other equally destructive replacements at the disposal of the state. Rather it is the economic and social mechanism which continually sets nations against each other in both 'peace' and 'war' and which encourages the development and use of such weapons which must be our concern. The fact that a small elite entrenched in positions of power throughout the world - in the state, big business, and the unions - is able to take such life and death decisions about us! It's the same elite, with its legitimating ideology, that



keeps us powerless in every aspect of our lives. The undermining and eventual elimination of the power of this elite and the destruction of the competitive world economy are the only guarantee of world peace and social harmony.

That undermining cannot be achieved through moral crusades, pious pleas to governments or appeals to 'humanity'. It can only grow from a movement of working class people in action, beginning to recognise their common interests AGAINST 'their' respective nation states and attempting to take control of their own lives. In this struggle we must totally oppose all governments and ruling classes, whether in the state capitalist Soviet bloc, in the 'private enterprise' West, or elsewhere.

Such a movement will not be assisted by appeals to 'forget our other differences in the struggle against nuclear weapons',

or to line up in a common front with the very institutions that keep us alienated and enslaved - the churches, political parties and Trade Unions - however sincere some individuals representing these institutions might be. To repeat the mistakes of CND in the 50s and 60s would be sheer farce. Those moving in a radical direction must not get bogged down in this swamp but make a clean break with establishment politics.

**DIRECT ACTION** - the self-managed, independent revolutionary activity of workers, is the only alternative to the useless Sunday strolls and resolution-mongering of actual and would-be bureaucrats. The only way to guarantee a world at peace, a world without bosses, bombs, armies and rival nation states, is to overthrow all ruling classes and build a new society based on the power of mass democratic, autonomous working class organisations, self-managing their own affairs at work and in the community. The choice before humanity is self-managed Socialist revolution or radioactive barbarism. Which side are YOU on?

The above article was distributed as a leaflet at several recent CND and anti-war marches, meetings etc. by Solidarity (Manchester) and Solidarity (Aberdeen).

## ABOUT US

Habitual readers of the magazine will have noted the considerable diversity of views expressed in recent issues.

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 still have 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. 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.

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The National Treasurer can be contacted by writing to: J.Cowan. 3R, I7 Cheviot Crescent, Fintry, Dundee.

The editorial production of this magazine is rotated around the country. This issue was produced in Manchester with help from comrades in Scotland.

# LIFE ON THE DOLE

## THE GREAT 'SOCIAL SECURITY' SCANDAL

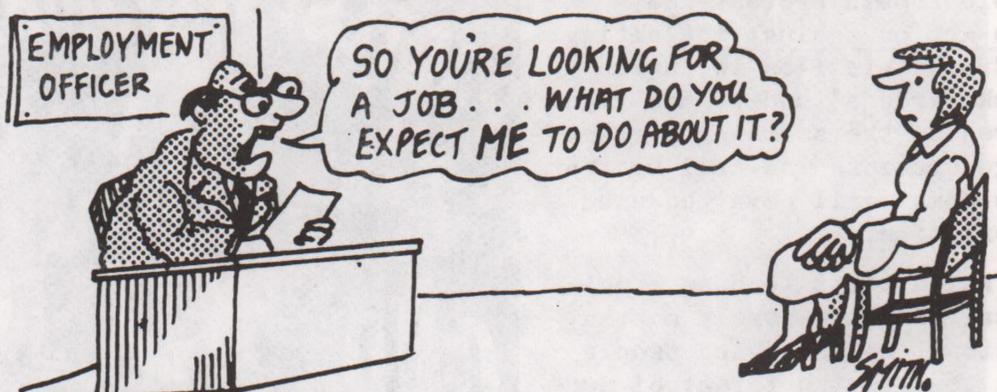
THIS ARTICLE IS INCLUDED AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE OPEN DISCUSSION AT THE SOLIDARITY FEBRUARY CONFERENCE.

No Solidarity reader should need to be reminded that there are now over 2 million registered unemployed, yet many may not know that there are more than 14 million people on or below the poverty line. Of these more than 3½ million are children. On November 24 the Government introduced new social security regulations. These regulations are nothing less than a cut in the already grossly inadequate rates of benefit on which ever increasing numbers of people have to eke out a miserable, impoverished existence.

Changes resulting from these new regulations include no payment of supplementary benefit for unemployed school leavers until the end of the school holidays after they leave school, cutbacks in grants for clothing and shoes, refusal of supplementary benefit to those with £2,000 or more in savings, cuts in benefit for the families of workers involved in strikes or lockouts, reductions in earnings related benefit and its abolition by 1982, increases in benefit to be 5% or more, less than the rate of inflation, no help with home help charges. To add insult to injury this year's increase in benefit was delayed by 2 weeks thus depriving claimants of £150 million.

Furthermore, under these new regulations a new grade of bureaucrat called Special Case Officers has been brought into being. These officers will deal with "difficult" claimants such as those who can't make ends meet and get into heavy debt and those who cause trouble in D.H.S.S. offices. The S.C.O.s are being sold to the public as a kind of benevolent social work, but whatever the intention in practice their function will be no different to that of the fraud officers, whose numbers Reg Prentice was so keen to increase, - the intimidation and harassment of claimants. Part of the function of the S.C.O.s is the detection of symptoms of insanity in claimants! It may well be that the Government has plans to railroad difficult claimants, especially those that try to organise and fight back, into the madhouse.

According to the Government's own figures under these new regulat-



ions over 1½ million claimants will be worse off. All claimants are suffering from the Government's policies, but it is the children who are suffering most. The amount given to provide for the needs of a child under 10 is just £1.04 a day! Increases in child benefit have also been cut.

The Government also plans to stop paying national insurance sickness benefit to those unable to work because they are ill and to make employers responsible for sick pay during the first 8 weeks of sickness. The rate of sick pay will be £30 a week. This means that those off work sick would have to claim supplementary benefit although it is by no means certain that they will be able to do so.

Indicative of the workhouse mentality of the social security system is the fact that claimants have now been renamed assessment units. The assessment unit is to be filed, questioned, abused and intimidated but never, ever enabled to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Nor will it end there. It seems likely that the next budget will include yet more cuts in social security. Even the Supplementary Benefits Commission, a body not noted for its progressive views, has said that such cuts would be "unjust, ineffective and politically inept." Part of the Government's motivation in making such cuts is its obsession that many workers are better off on the dole than at work. As the S.B.C. has stated: "cutting the real value of benefits as an incentive to the unemployed to find jobs would be a cruel waste of time - like encouraging people to jump into a swimming pool with the water being drained away."

As the real value of benefits continues to decline and yet more cuts are made the situation of the growing numbers of poor will continue to grow worse. Suicide, mental breakdown, the break up of families will increase by leaps and bounds while the super-rich,

the money-lenders and commodity speculators laugh all the way to the bank.

In discussions on the social security system much has been said about the Beveridge Report which laid the foundations for the present welfare (sic) state and which has been held up by some as a paradigm of Socialism. The fact is that Beveridge was nothing more than an attempt by the ruling class to defuse the social unrest which they felt sure would break out when the world war ended. In his report Beveridge wrote: "it is to the interests of employers as such that the employees should have security, should be properly maintained during inevitable intervals of unemployment or sickness, should have the content which helps make them efficient producers."

When the report was first published even Labour "Lefts" such as Aneurin Bevan attacked it as being a far cry from their state-capitalist vision of welfare state "socialism". However, their reformist, social-democratic politics prevented them from working out an alternative which, then as now, could only have been the total destruction of capitalism. And so, with varying degrees of enthusiasm they gave their support to Beveridge and soon another Labour "Left", Sidney Silverman, was claiming that the report expressed "the basic principle of this Party." Nor should we forget, despite Foot's recent tub-thumping rhetoric at Liverpool, that past Labour governments have cut benefits and are likely to do so in the future.

Apart from the obvious effects on those made redundant, unemployment is having a mixed effect on the working class as a whole.

On the one hand, it has led to a decrease in militancy, workers fearful of losing their jobs accepting wage rises well below the rate of inflation or even taking wage cuts. This has led in some industries to a weakening of shop floor organisation and a strengthening of the position of manage-

ment and the TU bureaucracy. On the other hand, the threat of the sack has led to direct action such as the occupation at the Gardeners' engine factory, an occupation against redundancies and for work-sharing. This is the kind of response to unemployment Libertarians should encourage.

What is needed now is a mass, direct action organisation of unemployed and claimants. The Socialist Workers' Party's Right to Work Campaign and the Militant dominated Labour Party Young Socialists' Youth Campaign Against Unemployment will prove useless in this task. Their aim is not to help the unemployed organise to fight for improvements in their condition; much less is it to aid them question and challenge the alienated, exploitative social relationships of capitalism. The aim of these organisations is the recruitment of "cannon-fodder" for the self-appointed Leninist vanguard.

On the credit side, a number of claimants' unions and unemployed action groups have been revitalised or started from scratch. Many of these, it must be said, are not the initiative of the unemployed themselves, but that of the social work, community politics "left". Despite the often valid criticisms of trad Left ideas and practices made by this breed of philanthropists their politics are often just as reformist. Most of them still the unemployed as objects in need of help rather than subjects in need of the resources to organise themselves. Yet many of the unemployed in these groups, having discovered their ability to think and act collectively, are starting to question not only the poverty inflicted on them by the capitalist system, but the very system itself. It would be a mistake for Libertarians to write off these groups as just another variety of reformism. Instead, Libertarians who are on the dole should work

in these groups aiding in the slow and often difficult process of developing political consciousness and guarding their autonomy from both those who would use them as yet another pressure group on the Labour bureaucracy and the "body-snatchers" of the Leninoid sects.

While the endless references of the trad left to the '30s are a symptom of their mental paralysis, there are things which can be learnt by today's unemployed from the struggles of those days. In particular the methods of direct action used. In Woolich, for example, the unemployed occupied the workhouse imprisoning the guardians in their board room until they granted improved benefits. In other areas empty property was occupied so that the unemployed would have meeting places. Factories where overtime was worked would be invaded by squads of unemployed who would halt production and explain the need for the unity of employed and unemployed against a system which meant excessive toil for some and enforced idleness for others. Where work schemes, which were often slave labour schemes, were held militants would organise strikes until the rates of pay were raised to those in industry. When the unemployed were on the march they would eat in the best restaurants, telling the owners to send the bill to the PAC - the 30s version of the SS. Already, the Unemployed People's Union in Barnsley is talking of sit-downs on roads and railways. Such ideas which transcend the official channels of tame protest need to be developed and extended.

It is vital that the media mythology about scroungers be countered and the unity of employed and unemployed be built and maintained. In Greenwich, the local unemployed action group has tried to do this by developing links with the trades council, members of both groups attending each

others meetings. In the near future a joint bulletin will be produced. The group has also forged links with rank and file militants in the civil service unions who administer the SS system and a meeting has been held at which a CPSA militant explained the workings of the new SS regulations to the unemployed. It is also hoped to forge links with militants in other industries, in particular those facing mass redundancies. The group is also aware of the special problems facing women who work or who want to and has held a meeting and produced a leaflet written by working class women for unemployed women. Such efforts represent a small, but never the less meaningful, step in the right direction. The next step is to link up the struggles of the unemployed with those of other claimants (pensioners, one-parent families, the disabled, etc) people fighting cuts in education and social services, tenants fighting rent rises, etc and build mass, autonomous Councils of Action in the workplaces and working class neighbourhoods. Libertarians must aid this process while pointing out the desirability and viability of our alternative to capitalism and state-capitalism.

In any event, the poor and unemployed can't be ignored, they are going to be here for a while yet and their numbers are going to grow. If libertarians refuse to help the unemployed organise then the trad left and/or the far right will, already the British Movement and the various National Fronts have held British jobs for British workers marches gaining a number of young unemployed recruits. If libertarians don't start to build the mass autonomous direct action movement of both employed and unemployed then our visions of self-managed socialism will remain just another pipe-dream.

A.N. Assessment Unit

## MANCHESTER STRIKE

For over two weeks in November the whole of the City of Manchester Housing Dept was on strike to achieve the reinstatement of 10 workers sacked for refusing to cover for unfilled vacancies.

It became clear during the course of the strike, for those who doubted it before, that the Housing Management with the backing of the Labour Council had decided to take on this section of workers in an effort to

smash or at least weaken the 'no cover policy' officially sanctioned by all the Public Service Unions and applied with some effect in a number of the more militant sections of the Council's offices.

There were some advances in the organisation of the strike which occurred more by accident than judgement, but which were valuable despite this. Workers in the Housing Dept belong to three different unions - the majority

in NUPE and NALGO, with a small number of senior officers in MATSA and a further separation of NALGO into two divisions. From the beginning, with the 10 disciplined workers including both NUPE and NALGO members, there was a mass meeting of all the workers (with the exception of the much smaller Nalgo division) which unanimously decided to strike. This was rapidly followed by the other NALGO division and within a short space of time the two had merged

- with unitary mass meetings and a joint strike committee. An early attempt to have the strike committee elected directly by the meetings was unfortunately not treated seriously, a factor which made it easier, as the strike progressed for numerous other 'external' union officials to get involved, largely to our detriment.

The inexperience of the local union officials was not as some might expect, a weakness, but in fact allowed the more active strikers to develop ideas and initiatives themselves. A small number of us, for instance, decided to 'invade' some of the offices in other departments not on strike, to explain our case and seek support, an activity quite outside accepted union practice. Much of the most useful and interesting material was produced outside official union channels, in particular by myself and a few friends and also by the local NALGO Action Group (despite their attachment to working for reform and control of the unions). Despite consistently repeated denials by the Unions, the Council and its henchmen insisted that their "right to manage" was at stake. Few, unfortunately, even among the more active strikers, were willing to admit that, at least in a small way, this was true. As a result there was a tendency for arguments to get side tracked over this issue.

Whilst the divisions within the Housing Dept had been largely overcome during the strike, it was a different story when we tried to extend the dispute. Here, divisions between departments and Unions combined with a terrible fear of authority amongst many workers who'd never been on strike before, made our task an uphill struggle. For the most part we failed to get over the significance of our struggle to other Council workers or to in-

spire them with confidence against an unprecedented barrage of propaganda from the Council. An all-out strike in these circumstances was rejected as premature. A call for a one-day strike by all Council white collar workers and a demonstration was fairly enthusiastically supported and turned out to be the climax of the struggle. Following this the Strike Committee recommended and obtained a 2 to 1 agreement on a poor settlement of the dispute, which got the 10 reinstated but left the whole 'no cover' policy up in the air and the old divisions in the department re-emerging.

A period of frightened reaction seems to have set in amongst those not directly involved in the strike, but many valuable lessons have been learnt by the strikers themselves.

The main lessons are similar to those of other recent strikes:

1. That organisation must be across trade union boundaries.
2. That strike committees must be directly elected by and under the control of the strikers.
3. That we can't rely in any way on the Labour Party or Labour Councils.
4. That in the current economic climate important issues cannot be won by isolated groups of workers.



Pickets on duty during the recent strike of Manchester housing staff.

A participant in the strike.

# PATRIARCHY, CAPITALISM & FEMINISM

Since the advent of WLM in Britain in 1968, distinctly separate theoretical groupings have evolved. Through the development of a variety of feminist theories it is arguable that the early revolutionary potential of the movement has been dissipated. Certainly it no longer meets with the hostility it did in the early days, and its hardly conceivable that you could be refused a place on a social work course for putting Ms. on your application form. Yet there remains one faction in the movement with the grim determination that:

"Feminism should be threatening if it is to be revolutionary, and if we aren't revolutionary then what are we doing? We want men to find us frightening because surely our aim is to take power away from them".

The Radical or Revolutionary Feminist (RF) faction, though not

large is probably the most vociferous faction, and provides the caricature for the stereo-type feminist, scissors clutched in beefy hand.

The Socialist Feminist (SF) faction, must be the largest, treated with respect on the Left and seriously by the GUARDIAN. The two factions have much in common, not least the shared theoretical roots in Marxism. The relationship of RF to Marxism is parasitic, it feeds of the theory it purports to negate, while SF relationship to Marxism is symbiotic, it attempts to graft feminism onto Marxist-Leninism. In the past this has resulted in SF groups being dominated by members of the SWP and IMG, with papers like WOMENS' VOICE and SOCIALIST WOMEN putting the emphasis on working class women at the point of production, female versions of SOCIALIST WORKER. This position

has now given way to the concentration on patriarchy and the relations of reproduction, as a supplement to Marx's theory of capitalism and the relations of production. As a result some very interesting discussion has come out of SF, and although I would agree with some of them on the nature of patriarchy, their conception of both capitalism and communism remains consistent with that of the traditional Leninist Left. (See SCARLET WOMAN). They still end up making demands of the state such as "Workers' control over both production and reproduction".

Both RF and SF have used Marxism to develop their own theories of patriarchy to counterpose or complement the theory of capitalist development as espoused by the traditional left. In this article I want to concentrate on The RF

theory of patriarchy as counterposed to the traditional Marxist-Leninist theory of capitalism. Both RF and the Left's theories have their origins in a crude interpretation (is there any other) of Marx's 'Materialist Conception of History'.

From the continuing debate within the WLM on patriarchy, 3 questions arise.

1. Are patriarchy and capitalism separate systems of social organisation?
2. If so is one more important than the other?
3. Can one exist without the other?

#### THE TRADITIONAL LEFT

The Left's answer to the first question would be that the two are separate and that capitalism is more fundamental to the organisation of society and contains the seeds of its own destruction. Patriarchy will fall when capitalism is overthrown and so needn't concern us now. This view rests on the Base/Superstructure idea, that the means that society adopts to organise its survival, production, (the economy) determines the social organisation of society i.e. ideology, culture, institutions etc. Only the economy qualifies as a material force and it is only within the economic base that the dynamic for change is possible. It follows that social revolution can't be achieved without economic revolution first. This view has led to a concentration on the working class at the point of production and a justification for neglecting all other aspects of life. Feminists have developed the theory of patriarchy in an attempt to correct the economic determinism of the Left which totally ignored the oppression of women. But SFs have simply answered the questions without really challenging the assumptions of the Left underlying their determinism: "Our task as socialist feminists (as distinct from our tasks as female revolutionary socialists) is not to build a vanguard revolutionary organisation to help the working class overthrow capitalism, but to infiltrate every organisation whose activities impinge upon the lives of women, from revolutionary groups to tenants organisations, in order to spread our subversive ideas amongst women so that patriarchy will be overthrown at the same time as capitalism".

Apart from the schizophrenic nature of 'our task', the traditional role of revolutionary vanguardism, that has been instrumental in the defeat of working class revolutionary potential

since 1917, is accepted without criticism. The answer to the 3 questions would be that the two systems are separate, women's dual role implies the importance of capitalism to all workers regardless of sex, while patriarchy only concerns women. Thirdly, patriarchy will not fall with capitalism unless SFs take action to ensure that it does, and this is the only point of diversion.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY FEMINISTS

Much of the theoretical discussion has gone on in conferences and publications not available to the general public. However papers produced for discussion at the RF conference in 1977 are available through reprints in SCARLET WOMAN No.5, from which I have drawn quotes. RF theory is based on the concept of women as a class. Thus using Marxist theory whilst at the same time rejecting it as the aberration of the male mind. This is not economic class but sex class and it is at once apparent that economic determinism has been replaced by biological determinism. "The material basis of our oppression comes from the biological fact that there are two sexes and all other material and psychological aspects developed thereafter". The base is biological sex and the superstructure everything else. From this premise there are only two choices for women:

1. That reproduction becomes the function of machines, as suggested by Shulamith Firestone in the DIALECTICS OF SEX, and by Marge Piercy in WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME.
2. That women subjugate or destroy men.

It is the second proposal that RFs seem to be adopting. Lesbian separatism is a tactic in this revolution not its conclusion!

Although on the one hand they seem to be stating quite unequivocally that men dominate due to the biological fact that women reproduce, yet on the other they contradict themselves by suggesting that male superiority is in fact ideological.

"It is not that women have inferior status from bearing children that causes our inequality, it is the superior status accorded to men in the function(s) they do alone, it can be a thing of as little apparent significance as playing musical instruments.... it must be regarded as more important than anything else in that society, by women as well as men. It is from the sole performing of this function that their power derives. In our society men have elevated and appropriated production and put it in opposition to reproduction. They have developed a whole political theory around

the view that production is the basis of society".

They go on to correctly point out the ideological aspect of Marxist theory, but the implication here is that Marxist ideology is itself responsible for the domination of capital over everyday life. Is the answer in the realm of ideas or biology? The reason why men rather than women are accorded superior status remains something of a mystery, but men are able to maintain their control of women through the exercise of male sexuality. The penis, according to RFs: "...is important because it is the symbol of the ruling class, i.e. men. It is that which distinguishes one class from another and to males it is a badge of office". Flashing is compared to the flag-waving of British imperialism; the mind boggles; never the less I for one would be a far happier person if the number of flag-waving fellow workers I've encountered was as few as the flashers and other 'little rapists'. RFs urge us to break male power by concentrating our fight against "penile imperialism". Freud may have had a point, or is it more likely that the RFs have themselves elevated the status of the penis from biology to ideology.

Biological determinism is as mystifying as the economic determinism of the Left. Anyway, if we are all victims of our biology, there seems little point in fighting it. This contradiction has not to my knowledge been discussed. The RFs answer to the 3 questions would be, yes the two systems are separate, patriarchy is more important because it predates capitalism and would remain if capitalism was overthrown, on the other hand they assert that capitalism will fall if patriarchy is overthrown, but quite how this would happen isn't clear.

#### SOCIAL RELATIONS OF REPRODUCTION

Both the SFs and RFs have attempted to reinterpret Marx's theory of social relations of production, as the social relations of reproduction, the RFs, as the following quote shows have simply not understood the theory, but also it proves to be a bad analogy. (I've added the words in brackets) "In the sex class (class) system men (capitalists) have power over women (workers) because they control the means of reproduction (production) which are women's bodies (factories etc). The product of reproduction (production) are children (goods) and these also males (capitalists) have always controlled." Just continue the analogy to see how absurd it really is. 'Children/goods are sold on the

labour market/market by men/capitalists for a profit ....' gives a new meaning to alienated labour! The reduction of children to objects in this RF analogy does precisely the same thing to children, that women objected to men doing to them. Children beware! But of course they are right that women do not have control over their own bodies, and they go on to assume that if women controlled their own reproduction, by controlling their own bodies, hospitals, families, contraception and abortion, that patriarchy would cease to exist. I agree in theory, but is it possible in practice? An alternative health service like 'Well Women' clinics, can only hope to reach a tiny minority of feminists, doctors and nurses are workers they can't work full time for nothing, you could have womens' clinics on the American womens' bank model, or through state financing, but they would still be capitalist organisations and control in the last two alternatives would certainly not belong with the patients. It really makes no difference whether the boss and bureaucrat is male or female, the nature of control is fundamentally the same. Liberation can't be gained peacefully, womens control of their own reproduction will remain an illusion while economic power remains under the control of the ruling class.

in the way that we are socially defined in relation to our reproductive function. (Like the term production, reproduction does not simply refer to biology, but incorporates the institutions and ideology of the family and its function in the organisation of society as a whole.) Women are oppressed in the family not by men per se, but by their role as fathers and husbands, it is their economic and ideological power historically as breadwinners that gives superior status to the role of father and husband. Traditionally (at least in capitalism) women have been solely defined in terms of wife and mother, a role which contains within it the concept of work, but which lacks the production of a commodity from which surplus value can be realised. It is the separate role as breadwinner that gave men domination in the family through sex-roles, but this domination has and is being eroded precisely because the role of breadwinner is no longer exclusively male and this has a concomitant effect on sex-roles. If these roles were biologically determined there could be no change and history itself would be negated.

#### AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

In practice patriarchy and capitalism are not separate but the same. Engels ORIGINS OF THE FAMILY .. hasn't helped by dividing

veloped form of that organisation. Capitalism can be defined in many ways but it must include production for profit, accumulation of capital, competition, wage labour, surplus value, commodity production, money and the market. All of these existed either separately or in combinations, albeit weak, since the advent of private property. As an abstract concept the base/superstructure idea is misleading because it treats only the economy as material and motivating force in history, change the economic base and the rest follows like night follows day, but day also follows night and if this model is to be of any use in understanding the dynamic of history it needs to be seen as a two way or circular process.

Prior to the industrial revolution a separate economy didn't play a major role in the social organisation of society. Society was almost totally dependent for survival on agriculture, which in turn was dependent on the vagaries of climate and geography. The instability of the economy was compensated for by the predominance of what appeared as the 'natural' order, which was rigidly hierarchical and patriarchal. The family, tribe, village, kingdom etc., was an integrated organic unit. While men on the whole were considered superior, every one had a necessary part to play. The individual didn't exist as we know it, though seeds of bourgeois individualism and the ideological base essential for the 'take-off' of industrial capitalism were present from at least the 17th century.

The industrial revolution represents a watershed in the economy. The economy has become far more important and has actually developed a semi-autonomous existence as a dynamic effect of increasing competition. It appears out of control of both individuals and climate. This autonomy has made patriarchy less important ideologically. Capitalism has shown in boom its ability to operate outside of traditional ideological considerations if they aren't in its interest. Thus in the post war boom of the 50s and 60s, women (and immigrants) were substantially drawn into the labour market. As a result the economic independence women gained encouraged them to push for greater equality. For middle class women to have careers and to seek satisfaction, status and power, through employment. The state influenced by the demands of middle class women and the needs of capital, responded with the Abortion Law Reform in 1967 (before the WLM existed), the Sex Discrimination Act and finally the



As people we are defined as capitalists or workers as a result of our relationship to capital and the means of production - it is a socially defined relationship. It is because of their role as capitalists or bureaucrats that they oppress us not because they are a particularly nasty breed of humans. Likewise we are oppressed in our role as workers, and not because we are inherently masochistic. The same goes for men and women

history into separate economic periods: primitive communism, barbarism, chattel slavery, feudalism, capitalism. This compartmentalism has encouraged RFs to use Marxism to prove that patriarchy predates capitalism and so claim it as more fundamental. Such an approach is basically a-historical. Economic organisation of society can really only be understood as a continuum of class society, with modern capitalism representing the most de-

Equal Pay Act in 1975 when the recession had already started. This could be claimed as evidence of the effect of changes in the economic base on the ideological superstructure, but it was war that made those changes in the economy possible in the first place, and the effect of two wars that helped destroy the 19th Century ideology on where a woman's place was. Today the introduction of microprocessors can be seen as an attack by the capitalist dynamic on the patriarchal relations of the office (boss/secretary). So the secretary's skill, status and more importantly her psychosocial familiarity with the boss, which characterised the old patriarchal/paternalistic relations of production, are effectively destroyed, in precisely the same way as it was between master and artisan in the 19th century.

Both the first and second waves of feminism (both predominantly middle class in origin) can be identified with certain phases of capitalist development. However capitalism is equally capable of reinforcing certain aspects of patriarchal ideology in a crisis, but only as far as people are willing to accept it. What gains women have made are now under

attack. It is no coincidence that feminists who espoused the myth of motherhood in the early days of the WLM, are now extolling the virtues of the uniqueness of the female experience of childbirth. Unemployment and the birth rate generally show a close correlation.

Industrial capitalism destroyed paternalism why not patriarchy? It is theoretically possible that capitalism could exist without patriarchy, but highly unlikely because of the internal instability inherent in the system. Anyway, even capitalism cannot escape history and the ideology of which patriarchy is a part, is itself a material force, not separate from, or secondary to economic factors. Neither the economy nor ideology are static, and both are thoroughly integrated with each other, to talk of patriarchy as if it had remained unchanged since the Old Testament days, is both dishonest and ludicrous to an extreme.

#### IN PRACTICE

It is totally pointless to attempt to fight patriarchy and capitalism as two separate systems. The RF separatist tactic is not a solution for the majority of women as a sex (or as workers) as it requ-

ires a large measure of sexual repression. Most of us have already had this perpetrated upon our psyche from external sources, without consciously inflicting it upon ourselves. Whilst the conclusion of such a revolution, whether it be subjugation or destruction, (if the analogy is continued presumably the dictatorship of the women will follow) is merely role reversal, the prisoner may change places with the jailer, but neither are free.

The economic determinism of the Left is equally barren, both sides offer just a partial critique of the causes of our oppression and the means of our liberation. It is imperative for women and men together to develop a total critique which recognises the material basis of both economics and ideology on all aspects of our lives, and to fight together on all fronts, even if this does mean some time is spent on internal wranglings that may well become heated at times. If we can learn anything from history at all, it must be that the working class as a whole will never capture the means of production while remaining imbued with the dominant ideology.

Luciente

# MICROELECTRONICS

## THE TECHNOLOGY OF MANAGERIAL CONTROL?

Technological change is often presented, by the Right and Left alike, as the unquestionable basis for our future prosperity and synonymous with social 'progress'. The consensus may occasionally be challenged of course, particularly when blatant instances of the 'misuse' of technology occur, like the use of defoliants by the U.S. government to cause massive crop destruction in Vietnam, or attention is drawn towards the existence of ever-growing stockpiles of nuclear warheads, enough to wipe out intelligent life on this planet many times over. But, ironically, technological determinism and a belief that such 'misuses' are somehow unplanned and accidental (consider the term "missile madness"), exist side by side to compound a widely accepted image of science, and its technological consequences, as largely unaffected by the pressures, priorities and interests that are fed into the social process of decision-making under capitalism.

Recent speculation on the possible implications of the advent of the 'chip' (TV pro-

grammes on which can at best be recommended only for their frivolous, 'entertainment' value) has again revealed the extent to which the mystique surrounding (micro-) technology fulfills the ideological purpose of preparing us psychologically for its seemingly 'inevitable' introduction. Yet decisions were presumably taken at some point to research and develop microelectronics and divert resources away from other maybe more labour-intensive technologies. What remains hidden is the basis upon which such decisions were made. What, for example, were the universally agreed scientific rules which decided that research into solid state physics was a more viable, cost effective avenue? And at what stage did profoundly political judgements as to whose interests were best served by information of this kind enter into the decision making process?

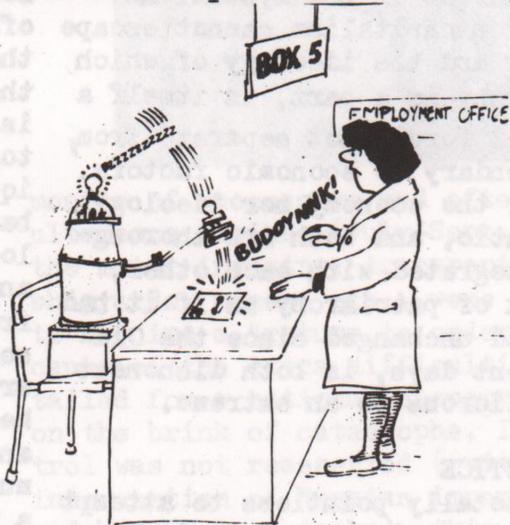
The following account aims to make one point clear: class politics and interests will determine not only the 'use' microprocessors will be put to, but they have already entered into the very formulation of problems related to the development of

microelectronics from its more basic science. Not surprisingly, therefore, the technology will be well suited to its major task: the capitalist solution of the economic crisis at the expense of the working class.

Cost reduction in the production of standardised commercial circuits has spelt the success of the electronics industry since the first ones were put on the market in 1961. This has been achieved partly through investment in newer processes, but particularly because the American and Japanese-based multi-nationals have been able to make huge inroads into the great pool of low cost and heavily disciplined labour in Third World countries, where chips are assembled. The same however, can't be said of the 'applications' side of the chip industry. Whether one is considering software (instruction programming) or the application and design work necessary to overcome the 'interface' problems in adapting chips to their potential range of uses, the high level of skill and training necessary has so far prevented capital from making gains even remotely comparable with those achieved in hardware.

The ways in which management have attempted to cope with this reflects a more general problem which has confronted capitalists since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution: how to break the control exerted by skilled, craft labour over essential tasks in production? In boom periods workers' resistance to the various organisational METHODS (e.g. techniques of scientific management) that the capitalists have used to regain control of the labour process could be 'bought off', to some extent, with large wage increases. However it is no coincidence that the current drive towards full automation using microprocessors is happening in a context of deepening economic crisis. Central to the argument is capital's inherent inability to permanently halt the decline in the rate of profit. Partly to offset this, new forms of technology are developed to restructure the economy. But these forms must be such as to overcome the dependance upon sections of the working class who have used their skills and strengths as 'bottlenecks'. This is particularly relevant to employment of a clerical or service nature. Despite the myth that technological change will eliminate boring, unskilled work, the implications today for the working class of the introduction of the new technology point in the opposite direction. Cheap, unskilled labour may still be employed if it is not economic to automate. And previously highly-skilled jobs will be taken over by machines, placing the precious, craft knowledge, built up over generations in some cases, firmly in the hands of management and enabling them to further subject the living worker's actions to the control of dead labour. Technical developments in microelectronics now mean that even small batch production can be automated. If this is taken together with the advances made in computer aided design, where a computer can draw up manufacturing specifications and prepare tapes for numerically controlled machine tools the need for the skilled labour of the draughtsman would be almost totally eliminated. This was the kind of offensive adopted in the Times dispute where management designed a system which would get rid of the job of typesetter, and thus crush the resistance of a potentially powerful group of workers. Probably the furthest advance by a microelectro-

nic-based product towards complete managerial control is the IBM 370/50 Telecommunication System, suitable for office buildings. It not only carries out the usual switchboard tasks, but in addition can say prevent a particular extension dialling particular numbers, or determine which areas of a workplace any particular person may enter, or record telephone numbers dialled and conversations made. The political dimension to these kind of devices doesn't need to be spelt out.



'MICROELECTRONIC DEVICES WILL NOT CREATE MORE JOBS'

The effect microprocessors will have on areas 'outside' of production i.e. on 'our everyday lives is not to be neglected. The offensive on the cultural level, in the form of video games, has not escaped the attention of marketeers who point to the way micro-chip based electronic toys are an aid in overcoming workers' initial resistance and other so called 'psychological' barriers to using video screens. Increasing pressure will be applied on us to buy the various electronic gimmicks and gadgets that will come on to the market, soaking up those chips not used on guided missiles. And with unemployment widespread, microtechnology will only serve to consolidate and further extend the inherent elitism of our society which reserves the chance of creative activity for a very small minority, leaving the rest of us to gaze on passively in front of our wall video screens.

It could of course work out differently, with the effect of power being concentrated in the hands of the few skilled workers who are still employed leading to a greater potential for disruption on their part. Similarly the de-skilling of software (where one could simply talk to a computer rather than programme it), could bring benefits in terms of working class access to information. But the question

is will it? The answer depends crucially upon struggles going on now. If workers follow the unions' policy of 'selling' jobs for short term increases in wages and thereby losing control over key aspects of the labour process, then indeed the future looks bleak. However more hopeful demands have been made, ranging from guarantees (over Jobs and skills) to be made 'in advance, before the technology is brought in, to calls for workers to re-design equipment thus eliminating some of the managerial authority and control functions which have been built into it. Some, in a mood reminiscent of the Luddites, have called for a flat 'No' to the introduction of microprocessors, though arguing that its not technology per se they're against, but the way the ruling class have control over it. Clearly the latter response has some hidden dangers, but ultimately all of them will involve a struggle of some kind, which, to be at all successful, will have to spread far beyond the immediate plant affected. Since the introduction will be by stealth, (rather than all in one go) this raises the issue of coordinating the power workers in different sections of, say, local government, may be able to exert. Whilst the strike has, traditionally, been the weapon for defending wages, other methods of struggle may have to be considered against this kind of offensive. Lastly the importance of building up a political analysis of the new technology, from a working class perspective, can't be stressed enough, if we are to show how technological advance could really be used to create a world without poverty and hardship, instead of leaving us defending the existing unpleasant conditions of work.

G.T.

#### NOTES

1. Input, output, central processor and memory - the basic components of any computer- is known collectively as 'hardware.' 'Software' refers to the production of computer programmes.
2. Small batch production is used in almost every part of the mechanical engineering industry to produce machines or machine parts i.e. a variety of complex components in relatively small numbers.

CONTINUED ON PAGE II

See also 'Automation for the small man' Economist 276: 74-5. September 13, 1980

3. See for example 'who's afraid of video screens?' Economist 274: 98. Feb, 16 1980.

4. A recent U.S. report recognises this much:

"By providing ready access to information and assistance of all kinds, the home communications-information system could improve the quality of life for the majority of people; but it could just as easily become a force leading to the break up of society."

(my emphasis)

For more details see U.S. National Research Council Telecommunications for metropolitan Areas: Opportunities for the 1980's.



black marketeering affect both the urban and rural masses causing undernourishment, malnutrition, starvation, and disease. These circumstances breed individualistic self-survival - dog eat dog - rather than any ideas of collective activity, so that cheating, petty theft, armed robbery, black marketeering, crimes against ordinary people (as opposed to crimes against capitalist property) are the order of the day. It is a depressing picture of imminent barbarism.

Africa since 'National Liberation'

What has been happening in Africa in the past 10 or 20 years? With the demise of the Portuguese Empire in Africa in the mid 70's, and the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the era of national liberation is over (1). Nationalism and 'nation-building' however are unfortunately very much alive. With the help of the Eastern and Western blocs nation states have been formed throughout Africa. Their bourgeoisies and bureaucracies have entrenched themselves and are busy plundering 'their' populations (2). Some of

in the colonial era are workers employed by the state in the industrial, administrative and service sectors. Also there are a small number of workers employed by the multinational corporations which often operate in partnership with the state. Thirdly, there are workers employed by African capitalists - in addition to the small bourgeoisie these are often bureaucrats, civil servants, or military men going into private ventures. They are invariably subsidised, officially or unofficially, by the state.

In all but the last category, the conditions in production are much the same as in 'advanced' capitalism - Scientific Management was introduced in the mines and other industries in the colonial period, and factory production is widespread. Consequently the same kind of struggles are in evidence as in 'advanced' capitalist countries, not just over wages but those which contest managerial authority the power of the unions and so on - in short those struggles which contest control over work. These struggles often involve defying the most vicious repression by the state. Also in evidence are manifestations of

## AFRICA: SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

The prospects in the 1980's for millions of African workers and peasants are to say the least not very bright. For the second time in ten years famine and starvation threaten huge populations in both east Africa and the Sahel region of west Africa. Tens of thousands of people have died in the Karamoja region of Uganda, and the livelihood (cattle) of another half million has been destroyed. The failure of the grain crop in Mozambique threatens thousands in the south of that country.

On top of all this, areas with impoverished agricultures are being inundated with refugees from war - most notably in east Africa (the rump of Amin's army, the secessionist wars in Ethiopia etc), but also in Zimbabwe where some 250 thousand are returning, mainly from Mozambique. Another 800 thousand are returning from the bush to their home areas in Angola, areas devastated by war between the MPLA and UNITA and South Africa.

Areas not in the theatre of war nor directly affected by these disasters are only a little better off. Shortages of food and essential commodities, breakdowns of electricity and water supply, inflation, corruption, and rampant

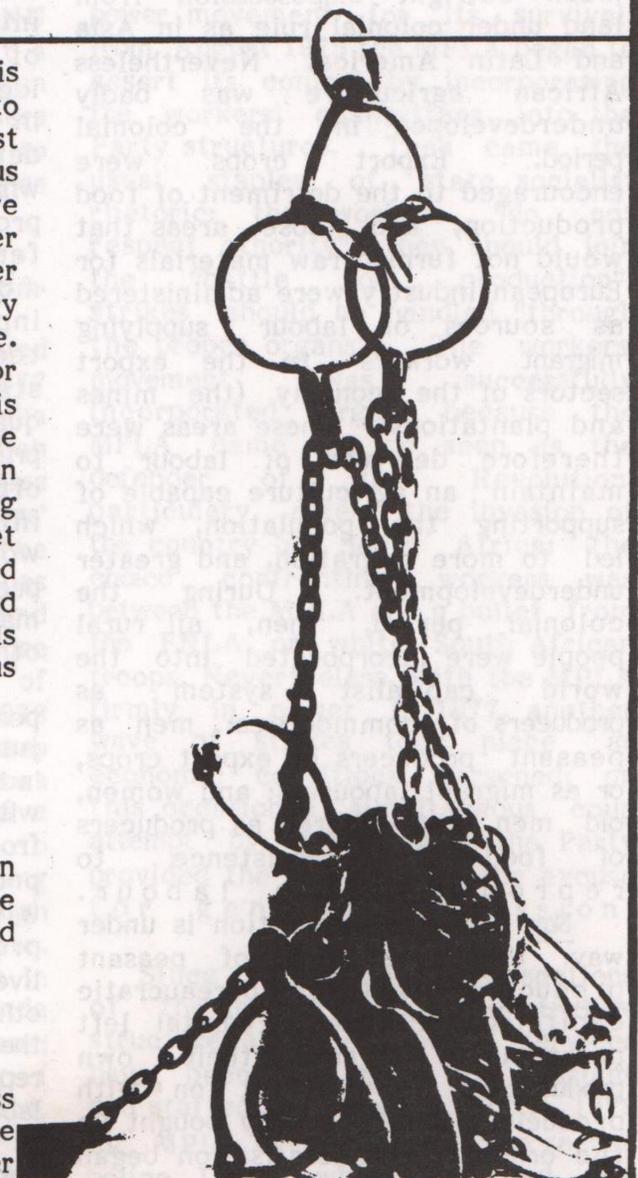
the capital accumulated from this exploitation has gone into state-sponsored capitalist development. Some of the surplus goes on the military-repressive apparatus to consolidate the power of these ruling classes. Another part is squandered on the luxury consumption of the bourgeoisie. And in each country a greater or lesser portion of the surplus is exported and accumulated in the West, as it has been since European capitalism started penetrating Africa 500 years ago. (The Soviet Union and China are more concerned with their strategic interests and access to strategic raw materials than with the extraction of surplus as such.)

### CLASSES

The most important change in Africa in the last 20 years is the emergence of classes that could transform all this.

### Workers

First, the African working class has greatly expanded. Added to the workers in the mining and other extractive industries established



CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

resistance to work - absenteeism, go-slows, sleeping on the job etc.

The expansion of the working class has been accompanied by the expansion of other urban groups - the unemployed, the petty traders (mostly women), roadside fitters, shanty town dwellers, hustlers. This so-called 'informal sector' has been penetrated by the World Bank, U.N. and other agencies in an attempt to 'solve' unemployment by promoting intermediate technology packages in small businesses. These service the bigger outfits - the state enterprises and the multinationals - with cheap 'appropriate' products, and they mean for the worker low pay, long hours, tedious and arduous work: in short the intense exploitation that characterises sweat shops.

Finally there is another significant group: the school students. The black and coloured students of South Africa are the most well known, but revolts by school students against corrupt headmasters, against mismanagement and over other issues are commonplace throughout Africa - again in the face of vicious repression.

#### Peasants

Changes are also taking place in the rural areas among Africa's peasants. Apart from in eastern and southern Africa, there was not so much outright dispossession from land under colonial rule as in Asia and Latin America. Nevertheless African agriculture was badly underdeveloped in the colonial period. Export crops were encouraged to the detriment of food production, and those areas that would not furnish raw materials for European industry were administered as sources of labour supplying migrant workers to the export sectors of the economy (the mines and plantations). These areas were therefore deprived of labour to maintain an agriculture capable of supporting the population, which led to more migration, and greater underdevelopment. During the colonial period, then, all rural people were incorporated into the world capitalist system as producers of commodities: men as peasant producers of export crops, or as migrant labourers; and women, old men and children as producers of food and subsistence to reproduce this labour.

Now a new incorporation is under way: the penetration of peasant production itself by bureaucratic capitalism. Previously capital left peasants to organise their own production and to get on with producing. Capital simply bought up the crops. Bureaucratisation began during and after the War when colonial administrations set up

state marketing boards to which peasants were to sell their crops. The surplus accumulated in these boards from the exploitation of peasants was a major source of capital for both the colonial power and later the post colonial states. The tendency towards bureaucratic management of peasant production has since accelerated. There has been a proliferation of rural development schemes (settlement schemes, irrigation schemes) instituted by the state, often in partnership with the World Bank, U.N. or other 'aid' agencies. Such schemes have several aims. Firstly they are designed to shore up areas ravaged by colonial and post colonial underdevelopment; then they want to provide the export-oriented sectors, principally the towns, with food so that export production can continue. Thirdly they aim to provide an infrastructure to facilitate exploitation by MNC's in profitable agribusiness - luxury foods for export or for upper income classes. Finally they want to create a market for agricultural technology - either conventional (tractors, fertilisers etc) or 'appropriate' (like small ploughs, bullock carts). There is a recent tendency for whole regions to be handed over with carte blanche to the World Bank or U.N. to be administered as 'integrated schemes'.

What do these 'schemes' mean for the peasant? They mean direct intervention into the organisation of production itself, so that the idea of an 'independent' peasantry is now nonsense. Production is determined by an outside management which supplies the means of production (seeds, tools, fertiliser, pesticides - invariably more expensive than traditional inputs), dictates cultivation techniques, provides technical staff to supervise production and quality control, and determines the price of the crop. The schemes often mean for the peasant greater intensity of labour, a longer working day. Outside of direct production, the scheme management may control education, health and other services.

In short, the lives and work of peasant men are being penetrated just like any other worker in 'advanced' capitalism, although without being completely separated from ownership of the means of production. As such they fall within our definition of the proletariat, i.e. those whose lives and work are managed by others. Peasant women, outside these schemes, continue to have to reproduce the men with their labour, or they may be incorporated as wage labour on state farms, on those of multinationals, or on the farms of the bureaucratic

bourgeoisie going into business as private capitalist farmers.

It should be made plain that this bureaucratisation of peasant production is only a tendency and is far from complete.(3) In some states, by contrast, individual private tenure of land by peasants is developing. Moreover, bureaucratisation is obstructed a) by the failure of bureaucracies to function through inefficiency and the appropriation of inputs by bureaucrats for their farms, and b) because of peasant resistance, the class struggle between them and their managers. The latter is manifested in a number of ways.



as "peasant conservatism")

- strikes, refusal to grow certain crops, or cutting back on their production
- evasion of crop grading regulations and pricing by the management by smuggling or illicit marketing
- violence against the agents of capital.

In short it is a struggle over control of production and disposal of the product, an assertion of autonomy. Similarly where rural wage labour is employed we find strikes, arson, sabotage and theft.

So, in the sphere of production the same kinds of struggles are being fought out in Africa as in the advanced capitalist countries.(4) The failure to inculcate a work ethic, to instil labour discipline - usually by appealing to 'revolutionary' or nationalist sentiments - is a major problem facing all the ruling classes of all African states.

#### THE FATE OF 'SOCIALISM' IN AFRICA

The developments and struggles described above apply just as much in so called 'socialist' states as in 'capitalist' ones. Below, three 'socialist' states are considered: Tanzania, feted by the left, including many libertarians and

Third Worlders, and Angola and Mozambique, the two ex-Portuguese colonies independent in the mid 70's, also much vaunted by the left.

## T A N Z A N I A

Let's take Tanzania from Nyerere's Arusha Declaration in 1967, when ujamaa became official policy: this was the idea that development should be based on supposed traditional African social organisations and attitudes that rural people should come together in co-operative villages to produce communally. Other documents published at this time, such as the 'Leadership Code', set out how party cadres and bureaucrats shouldn't be authoritarian and so on. In 1969, a year after the circulation of these 'libertarian' texts, the Ruvuma Development Association, an early peasant initiated settlement scheme which had helped to inspire the ujamaa policy, was banned by the ruling party, TANU, partly because a political opposition was developing there and partly because the Association was too autonomous. The banning was endorsed by Nyerere. From now on bureaucrats were to initiate ujamaa.

Meanwhile in the towns a working class upsurge erupted, especially in Dar es Salaam. This was fuelled (though not initiated) by another Declaration in 1971: the TANU party guidelines, or Mwongozo, which asserted the primacy of the Party while at the same time railing against authoritarian managers and bureaucrats. Workers apparently had taken note only of the scound of these exhortations, and a widespread movement of strikes and lock-outs of managers took place in the early 1970's. Workers' committees managed production, sidestepping the state Trade Union, NUTA. Political meetings were held everywhere. This upsurge culminated in the occupation of Mount Carmel Rubber factory in 1973 during which the government came down on the side of management; the workers were sacked, although later reinstated after a public outcry. Frightened by the unleashing of the workers' activity, the Party revised its guidelines in 1974. Nyerere declared 'Uhuru na kazi' (Freedom is work) in his May Day speech, and tirades against lazy workers, 'saboteurs', and 'waywards' were stepped up. Workers were played off against the peasants, strikes were made illegal, and NUTA suppressed the workers committees.

In the rural areas, frustrated by the slow progress of the ujamaa policy, the authorities intensified

the bureaucratisation by compulsory 'villagisation': "To live in villages is an order," Nyerere was quoted as saying. Most of the rural population was moved into new or existing villages in 1974-5. Colonial laws on forced cultivation were revived and peasants were given quotas to meet. A few extracts from the government paper, the Daily News:

1.8.74 Every family in Dodoma rural district will cultivate not less than three hectares of food crops from this year onwards, the Party's district working committee has ruled. Heads of families with more than one wife will be required to cultivate three hectares for each wife. To enforce this, identity cards will be prepared and given to all chairmen of village working committees. Nobody will be allowed to use buses, trains or planes without producing an identity card showing he has cultivated three hectares. The committee said that villagers who will not comply with the order will not be allowed to attend cattle auctions, enter pombe shops nor participate in ceremonial dances.

13.8.74 222 peasants in Mafia district, Coast Region, are to appear before a primary court magistrate charged with neglecting their shambas (farms).

19.8.74 The Musoma district TANU secretary said yesterday that a task force of about 50 militiamen and TANU Youth League members will be set up in each village to ensure that each family reaches the target.

This was Nyerere's Tanzania.

These tendencies have continued since the mid 1970's. In 1977 Nyerere published 'The Arusha Declaration 10 Years Later', which admitted the country's difficulties ... and railed against workers' indiscipline and "slackness". The bureaucratic bourgeoisie has further consolidated itself, and the regime become even more authoritarian, with liberal use of Preventive Detention. In 1978 workplace Disciplinary Committees were set up, and new Labour Laws instituted which deemed "excessive political activity harmful to industry": 820 thousand working days were lost in 1976 through processions, public meetings etc. Meanwhile a disastrous harvest in 1979 and the invasion of Uganda have hastened economic chaos: shortages and black marketeering (magendo) are now rampant. Tanzania, despite its 'Self-Reliance' policy, is the biggest recipient of World Bank aid

in Africa.

## ANGOLA

The nationalist movement that took power in Angola, the MPLA, was based in the capital, Luanda, and drew its support from the working class there. The workers engaged in a large scale strike movement in 1974 when Caetano was overthrown in Portugal by the Armed Forces Movement. The workers' movement, known as poder pover (popular power), involved the formation of workers' committees to defend the workers against die-hard settlers; factory and neighbourhood committees seized control of the property and enterprises of the fleeing whites and managed them. The MPLA influenced this movement, but in 1974 it was largely outside its control, and the first task was to bring the workers' movement into line.

In 1974 the new Transitional Government issued a Militarisation Law which empowered government to mobilise workers under military discipline - this was used to suppress strikes of dockers and other workers. Nevertheless poder pover survived. It was principally the mass movement that drove from Luanda the rival nationalist movement, the South African-backed FNLA, in the course of the civil war that followed independence from Portugal. The MPLA was dependent on the popular power movement for its survival: from August 1975 the MPLA began to assert its control by incorporating the workers' committees into the Party structures. Then came the usual staples of state socialist rhetoric: the workers "do not respect authority", they should join the "battle for production", strikes should be handled "through the proper organs". The workers' movement was successfully incorporated largely because the MPLA came to be seen as the defender of the Revolution, particularly after the invasion of the country by South Africa: the choice confronting workers was between the MPLA and a bullet from the FNLA or white South African troops. Nevertheless, with the MPLA firmly in power in 1977, another wave of strikes took place as economic conditions worsened; on this occasion a simultaneous coup attempt by a faction of the Party provided the regime with the excuse for general repression.

Since independence vast sections of the military and administrative structure and the social services have been built up by the Russians and staffed by Cubans. Until 1979 the MPLA even had their own secret police, DISA, which replaced the hated Portuguese PIDE. At the same

time Angola is still firmly entrenched in Western capitalism with the multinational, Gulf Oil, extracting oil from the north of the country. This review of 'socialist' Angola will conclude with an example of one of the regime's latest schemes. To deal with hundreds of thousands of refugees returning from the bush after the defeat of UNITA (the third nationalist outfit) by the MPLA, it is proposed to build a new town of ten thousand people who will work on a state farm and quarry complex: labour will be recruited on a "voluntary basis". Individual peasant production is to be phased out. To quote Commissar Petrov (sic) in charge of the area:

The aim is to turn peasants into proletarians, to show the old UNITA supporters that the government can give them good homes, jobs and security. The regressados (returning refugees) form an available and ready landless workforce; we hope that other people seeing the success of the project will be inclined to move into it. (West Africa 11.8.1980)

It's depressingly familiar.



"transmission lines" of party policy. There were to be "dynamising groups" of cadres who would "activate the masses". Health workers were to be elected by each village although literacy, spoken Portuguese and "political experience" were requirements. Peasants were to come together in communal villages.

development. Or they will say that the vanguard party failed to mobilise the workers and peasants. Or that workers have only 'populist consciousness' - the stage before 'trade union consciousness' or 'revolutionary consciousness'. Or that petty bourgeois elements or reactionary bureaucrats in the party or the state obstructed and defeated the progressives - i.e. the leaders were not good enough.

Never is leninist ideology itself questioned: the party and state structures themselves. Independent working-class or peasant organisation and activity outside of these structures is never conceived of, except as something to be 'mobilised' by a revolutionary party.

The domination of bourgeois reactionary elements in the party and the state together with continued foreign domination is the explanation of some leftists for the obstruction of socialism in Tanzania and Mozambique. Similarly a recent analysis of Angola by a French Trotskyist (Claude Gabriel: 'Angola, le tournant Africain?', 1978) speaks of the independent activity of the Luanda masses as a momentous event, but blames its incorporation into the MPLA on the weakness of the far left which lagged behind the workers' movement and failed to challenge the MPLA as

an alternative leadership for the working class. One shudders to think what might have happened if the 'far left' had been stronger.

Part of our job as revolutionaries is to continue to ruthlessly expose these bogus 'socialist' regimes, and to contest the marxist-leninist ideology and practice which is moulding so many of them ... and the opposition to them.

But come the revolution, the conditions of barbarism described at the beginning of this article will still be left. The raising of living standards, the

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique is now eclipsing Tanzania in the 'socialist utopia' stakes. During the Liberation War the nationalist movement, Frelimo, gained control of a large part of the north of the country from the Portuguese. Organs of popular power, which were dominated by Frelimo, made considerable progress in raising agricultural production, improving health conditions with rural barefoot doctors, and eliminating illiteracy. Women played a significant part in this.

When, in 1974, the country was handed over to Frelimo by the new Portuguese government, the white settlers tried a putsch in the capital, Lourenco Marques, later named Maputo. Workers formed commissions to defend themselves. These were organised on the instigation of Frelimo but once the threat was gone Frelimo, with the Portuguese, took steps to control the workers' organisations. There were the usual tirades against workers' indiscipline in 1975.

In 1976, in a speech at Maputo Central Hospital, Machel asserted that workers should run the hospital through their committees, all the Portuguese skilled staff having left. This workers' management, he said, was to be a model for the rest of the country. From the start popular power in Mozambique was penetrated by the Party. It was based on popular assemblies at the workplace or the neighbourhood, with elected delegates. These were to be

These were some of the features of the new regime that have attracted sympathetic attention. What is less well known is Machel's model for Mozambique ... East Germany! And that the 'strategic hamlets' (caged-in villages) utilised by the Portuguese in the war are now used as resettlement camps to control the urban unemployed.

Mid 1980 saw a 'turnaround' by Machel. In another speech at the Central Hospital he attacked 'leftism' and 'ultrademocracy'. Workers at the hospital were condemned for challenging management and taking control. There was to be a return to rigid hierarchy and authority: no more 'comrade' but 'Senor Doctor' from now on. Workers were to stand up when their superiors entered, and there were to be special wards for people in 'responsible' positions ... so much for 'popular power'.

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Most of the left will continue to eulogise these anti working class and anti peasant regimes as 'socialist' or 'progressive'. However, as they collapse into barbarism, or when their anti working class nature becomes blatant enough for even those with blinkers, the left will fall back on their stock explanations for the failure of 'socialist' strategies.

One is to blame neo-colonialism, dependency, underdevelopment - i.e. that structures of foreign domination prohibit socialist

revolutionising of the productive forces, old fashioned economism are very much on the agenda in these conditions. Just how are the problems of refugees, starvation, mass famine to be solved? People's livelihoods have been destroyed for the foreseeable future. Can the productive forces be revolutionised without exploitation? Would these immense problems be dealt with in a self-managed socialist society?

A strong current in Solidarity clings to the position that socialist revolution is possible only in the conditions of advanced capitalist countries. For a group that eschews determinism, this seems remarkably deterministic. It has been shown here that there are

classes in Africa (as in Asia, Latin America - see N.T. in SFSR 10 & 11) which undergo similar (though not identical) experiences to workers under advanced capitalism, and which engage in significant similar struggles - struggles over who controls their lives and work, against their ruling classes.

We must also ponder the tendency of multinational capital to close down its operations in the advanced countries and to re-site them - in pieces - in the Third World, so that the proletariat of 'advanced' capitalism is being relocated. The core and peripheral areas of world capitalism are constantly shifting.

Finally it is not being argued

that revolution will necessarily come from Third World workers. Simply that we shouldn't write off that section of the international proletariat as a possible source of world revolutionary upsurge.

### Nick V.H.

1. South Africa's situation is different from the rest of Africa, and is excluded from this discussion.
2. as was predicted in "Third Worldism or Socialism"
3. In the mid 70's the World Bank stated that its programmes would reach 100 million rural people, many in Africa in Sudan, Upper Volta, Kenya, Mali, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana.

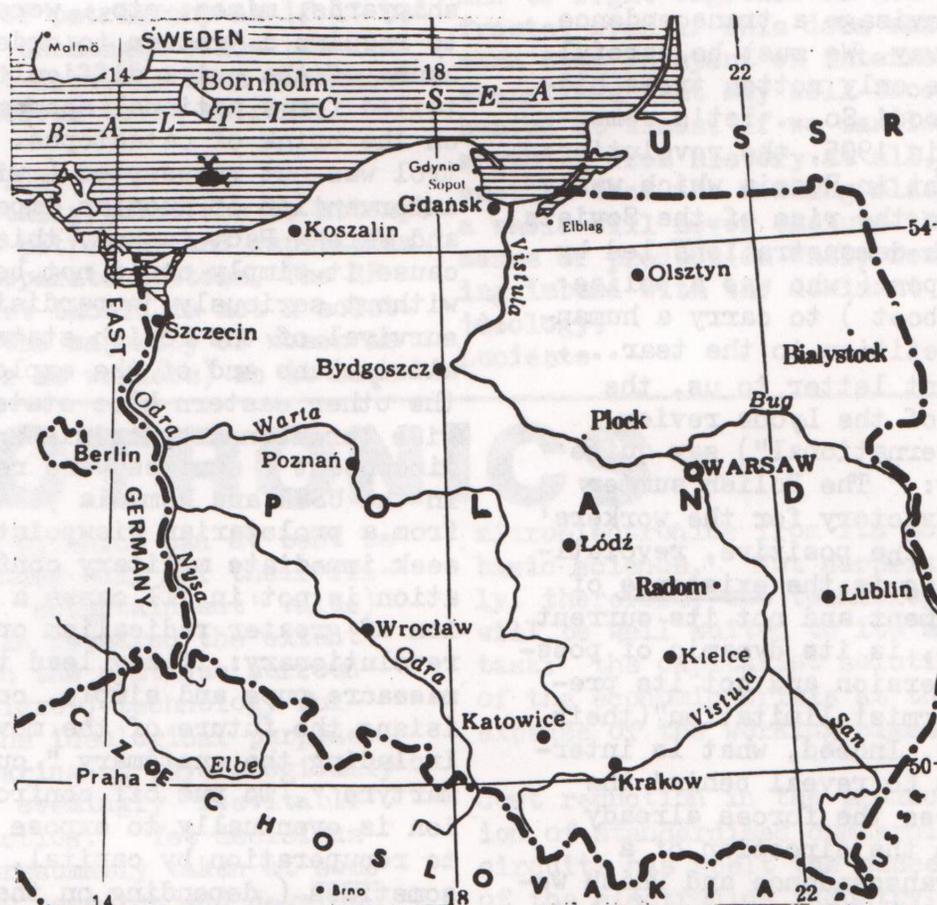
# POLAND

## Translator's note:

This text from a tendency within the French (PIC) group, Pour Intervention Communiste, has relevance to the discussions taking place in and around Solidarity (UK!) since the events of the summer and the publication of the Supplement 'Summer in Gdansk' with SSR no14. Probably none of us would agree with everything it says, but many of the most important points are at least given an airing, and (in my view) some sort of balance struck between the positive and negative reactions to what has been and is going on.

L.W.

The 1980 struggles in Poland do not "show us the way" any more than those of the Longwy/Debain steelworkers in 1979. In fact, the spectacle of workers brandishing nationalist flags, going to open-air Mass (if not to confession and communion) under the portrait of the Vatican pontiff, accepting a new bureaucracy in the form of a strike committee which has transformed itself into an allegedly "free" or "self-managed" trade union structure (complete with branch offices decorated with the crucifix), tolerating new leaders like Walesa or the Liberal-democratic advisers from KAO, and above all confining themselves to making reformist demands - inside occupied factories - for fear of imperilling the national economy: this cannot be an "example to follow" from a revolutionary perspective of the destruction of capitalism. So the finder had to be pointed unhesitatingly at the great weakness of this movement, and the influence of all the ideologies (nationalism, religion, democracy, economism) denounced along with that



of all the counter-revolutionary forces propagating them in the movement so as to keep the struggles at a level of accommodation and so of conservation of the system of exploitation.

It would nonetheless be a mistake to consider these limitations from a static point of view, without understanding them to be part not of a national but a world wide process in which revolutionary transcendence is still more than ever possible. There is no question of waiting, like the 19th century sects Marx criticised, for a "pure, hard" movement to appear with positions corresponding to some supposedly communist programme. We must beware of applying our analyses in such a way as to reduce or negate the real import of class struggles, as for example the Bordiguists of "Bilan" did with reference to the

revolutionary events in Spain between July 1936 and May 1937... To adopt the attitude of a magistrate pronouncing sentence from a position of complete detachment from living reality leads to a way of seeing things purely as a spectacle and, to say the least, to a constricted view of social contradictions.

We need on the contrary to try to be aware of the global implications of a situation, and consequently to contribute to an integrated theoretical approach which takes care not to lose sight of what is essential, to wit the internal dynamic of a mass strike! Did the PIC in the heat of the moment (its editorial is dated 4 Sept.) grasp the whole significance of the movement in Poland? On the whole we think so but at the same time we consider

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

its analysis inadequate in some respects, in particular: 1) on the question of the movement's potential for transcendence in view of the real limits within which it has developed up to the present; 2) with reference to the context of general crisis of capitalism, and in the first place of all the state-capitalist countries of the eastern bloc, which is right at the root of the outbreak of workers' struggles and which, as it deepens permanently, can only reinforce at the same time the whole system's difficulties, and social discontent. That is why this text expresses a Tendency position, trying to refine our comprehension of what has happened and is happening in Poland. Far from being content to make statements of principle, we will try to distinguish the elements that allow us reasonably to envisage a transcendence not far away. We must be careful not to see only rotten trees hiding the wood! So... let's remember that in 1905, the revolutionary movement in Russia which was to lead to the rise of the Soviets, began with demonstrations led by Father Gapon ( who was a police agent to boot ) to carry a humanitarian petition to the tsar.... In a recent letter to us, the comrades of the Lyons review ("The International") say quite correctly: " The Polish summer is not a victory for the workers' movement. The positive, revolutionary thing is the existence of this movement and not its current programme, is its dynamic of possible subversion and not its present reformist limitation"(their emphasis). Indeed, what is interesting is to reveal behind the appearances the forces already moving in the direction of a future transcendence and which were not solely clandestine or left in the shade simply because they did not fit in with the themes that the western media wanted to air ( democracy, dissidence, free unions, role of the catholic church.....)

(a) The extension of the strikes to all sectors and into all the regions of the country, which had not occurred before, established a conjunction of forces favourable to the working-class. That explains why the State-Party did not use its means of repression: it would have been taking too many risks, unlike 1970 when the Baltic strikers were isolated from the workers as a whole. As for the claim that it didn't resort to guns because the workers were less radical and it could withdraw and wait for the return to work - this is to forget how long the mass movement lasted. Certainly the party HQ was not attacked and then set on fire to the singing of the International, the shops were not even looted, but the three



months of successive and often simultaneous strikes (July-Sept.) in the motor industry, transport, steel shipyards, mines, etc., were enough to require a "return to order" because of the extra difficulties entailed for a national economy already on the brink of catastrophe. If control was not reasserted ( with the intervention of Russian imperialist and Warsaw Pact tanks), this is because it simply could not be done without seriously jeopardising the survival of the Polish state-capitalist class and of the exploiters in the other eastern bloc states, likewise threatened by crisis and social discontent ( strikes were reported in the USSR and Romania ). Anyway, from a proletarian viewpoint, to seek immediate military confrontation is not in all cases a criterion of greater radicalism or of being revolutionary: it may lead to a massacre pure and simple, compromising the future of the movement, including the customary " cult of martyrs ". To put off confrontation is eventually to expose oneself to recuperation by capital, but sometimes ( depending on the maturing of consciousness ) it is to aim at being better prepared, on the basis of a consolidation of the established combination of forces, to embark later - with a better chance - on the inevitable trial of strength. This extension of the strikes from Dec '70 to summer '80 is not a chance phenomenon, its origin lies in the deepening of the world crisis of capital, the determining nature of which for the generalisation of the struggles of the proletariat some people persist in minimising.

(b) The generalised use of the mass meeting ( Assemblies ), with the setting up in each enterprise and then on an inter-factory level, showed once again the working class's capacity spontaneously to develop its own self-organisation. Thanks to the experience gained in its previous struggles ( 1970, '76 ), the proletariat was able to make its determination felt: " We only trust ourselves ", " We will hold

out!" Even if the Gdansk MKS, especially its presidium around Walesa, constituted a new bureaucracy vis-a-vis the masses ( culminating in the formation of the "free" unions the day after the Accords ), the latter managed to exert significant control over the evolution of their movement. Thus there were not only strike pickets ( often armed with sticks ) to ward off the provocations of the state militia, but also loudspeakers enabling all the workers to follow directly their delegates' negotiations with the government ( note too that one of the essential conditions for opening negotiations was that telephone communications with the rest of Poland should be restored. Through this insistence on breaking down isolation and so posing their problems at the general level, the Gdansk strikers showed a degree of consciousness which was not negligible!). But the proletariat's determination was also demonstrated by their total indifference to what the Party (POUP) was saying and doing. Threats, attempts at recuperation, changes of minister (PM Babiuch getting the push), and then Gierek's 'heart attack' and replacement with Brezhnev's blessing, none of this induced the workers to deviate from their class positions or from their objectives, even if limited. They remained impervious to all the politico-ideological speeches and manoeuvres. This loss of illusions about everything coming from the party ( unlike 1970, when in spite of setting fire to party HQ, the workers still believed in the man of providence who would solve the problems: Gierek, the bureaucrat with calloused hands, ex-Silesian miner ) goes on being confirmed by events: the new secretary, Kania, is very careful not to make promises, and confines himself to making the rounds locally in certain factories, where he still gets heckled! The crisis in the Party, within which divisions are sharpening around the various gangs who are trying to settle their racketeers' accounts,

is also a consequence of economic and social convulsions and goes to exacerbate the system's difficulties on the political level.

(c) The immediate material needs of the proletariat (in the first place not to die of hunger! Let's remember that as long ago as June '56 the slogan of the Poznan rioters was 'We want bread!') are less and less easy if not to satisfy, at least to 'calm down' with a few crumbs, in the present state of crisis in Poland, and everywhere else. This is what needs to be understood across the barrier of the strictly reformist formulation of those needs. They determine, then, a mobilisation of and pressure from the workers, increasingly constant and intolerable in the short term for the state capitalist regime, its party- and the 'free' unions themselves! This may easily be judged from the sequence of events from the end of September through October. In order to check the dynamic of offensive struggle of the workers as a whole in the face of the non-application of the Gdansk Accords (first and foremost, the fact that wage increases have not come into effect, but also because the authorities are trying to recuperate the movement by presenting it as a 'renovation' of the old unions - this is what is going on behind the delay in official registration of the statutes of the Solidarity unions), the new bureaucrats, headed by Walesa, do like their 'democratic' counterparts in the west. They let off a little steam by organising 1 hour stoppages, peaceful mass meetings (like the one -after Mass- in Gracow Stadium), and by brandishing the threat of a general strike - of 24 hours! Above all they are afraid of being outflanked. Scarcely a month after the end of the summer strike movement, those creatures can be said to be already 'exposed', and illusion in them is no longer complete. Moreover they had already begun to be called into question at the height of the struggles (end August) when Walesa, at the government's request, launched an appeal against extending the strikes. In fact, a considerable number of sr strike committee members opposed and denounced that appeal. In the face of the near-impossibility of reformism in the present situation of general crisis, these 'free' unions can fulfil no real function of reconciliation like those of the 19th century or of periods of reconstruction in the West in the 20th; they will have at most a role of adding to ideological mystification. Their utterances, 'different' though they may be will lack power to resist the dynamic of the proletariat's needs/experience which, given its global character, will sooner or later make it stop respecting the national economy. So they cannot even represent a temporary life-raft for the state-capitalist systems.

Finally, it is logical to imagine that other forces - more clandestine or more minority-orientated in their level of expression - will undoubtedly have been working at transcending the present limits of the movement. We must wait until we have, directly and not through the biased media, more concrete information (writings, leaflets) about the strikes of the summer, before we proceed to a more thorough analysis. But we can judge here and now that 'groups of workers' were certainly not content to swallow all the religious, nationalist, democratic and trade-union concoctions.....

(A second part will follow in J.T. 35, analysing the crisis in Poland and more generally.....)

Tendance Everhard.

Jeune Taupe No.34 Nov- Dec 1980.

Translated & (slightly) edited., L.W.

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# LETTERS

Dear Comrades,  
I am a visitor to Britain from San Francisco area, where I have been active in various libertarian communist groups for most of the last decade. During the early '70s, when the present "restructuring" of world capital was initiated through the first oil crisis, there were about a dozen tiny groups of my (our) general persuasion in the U.S, many of which would not even speak to each other for fear of ideological contagion, and which had little practice beyond publishing the odd obscure and ill-designed pamphlet. In the last two years, however, there has been a welcome reversal. The debates continue informally (perhaps less than they should!) but former members of various grouplets - the Red-eye editorial collective, A World to Win, Point-Blank, and other less affiliated people of both "anarchist" and "marxist" tendencies have been able to cooperate in a variety of endeavours. These include sustained interventions into the anti-nuclear and anti-draft movements, a street theater troupe, etc. while an early attempt to write a "Minimum Basis of Association" proved a near-disaster and is now a running gag in the group, we share a considerable common ground in theory and practice. ("Practice" here means not only our outward-directed activity, but also a real if often turbulent community of mutual aid, drinking, doping, quarrelling and making love.) Elsewhere in North America, Toronto's Red Menace and Boston's Root and Branch have been pursuing an intelligent, undogmatic dialogue on

the relationship between "anarchist" and "marxist" ideas.

In general the libertarian communist milieu our side of the Atlantic is showing some signs of growing up, a fact in which I can't help but feel a certain cautious satisfaction. All the more depressing and annoying, then to come upon "Editorial 1" in your May-July issue. I was particularly disheartened by the cartoon which showed "Marxism" and "Thatcherism" as two identical dinosaurs battling it out in the slime-pit. This is a crude slander worthy of the likes of Conor Cruise Missile O'Brien or Filchbag Peeper.

In the first place, as the editors know perfectly well, there is no such thing as "Marxism". Even if we accept (which I don't) Castor-Adis' position that all of Marx's theory is so irredeemably poisoned by positivism and scientism that there is nothing useful to be learned from it, this is a sleazy way to treat comrades with the same social goals and organisational principles as your own who derive some of their ideas from Marx or who (gasp!) even dare to call themselves "marxists."

In the second place, just as there is no one "Marxism", there is no one "crisis theory" either. The Editorial attempts to lump together (unnamed) adherents of a "pure" falling-rate-of-profit model with (also unnamed) advocates of a "class-struggle" view of crisis, then dismisses both of them in a few curt sentences. If I were an upholder of the "saturated-markets" or Luxemburg theory, I should feel rather slighted at being left out.

Actually you will have trouble finding a "marxist" these days who defends a "theory of automatic economic crisis". Even Paul Mattick Sr., who is one of the most hard-line exponents of classical falling-rate-of-profit theory, never asserts that the crisis is "automatic". He merely says that as time goes on, the system's increasing capital-intensiveness combined with its ever-growing need for unproductive expenditure makes it extremely vulnerable to crisis -- much as an old man with hardened arteries and brittle bones, however vigorous his mind and limber his muscles, is extremely vulnerable to thrombosis and compound fractures. Nor are this theory and the class-struggle model mutually exclusive, as Ron Rothbart does an excellent job of showing in "Economic Law and Class Struggle" (Red-eye 1) which I was glad to see reprinted in a recent issue of Solidarity.

I would go even further and say that the Editorial's ideas about "difficulties in restructuring industrial production and technology" are not incompatible with such a synthesis either properly worked out. The problem is not that one theory is "abstract" and the other not-- "production" and "technology" are just as much abstractions as "organic composition" or "surplus value"-- but that levels of abstraction are being confused, muddled together, in the debate. (This is one of the main points of Ron's article.)

The "difficulties" you refer to have been a feature of every capitalist crisis since the industrial revolution, and even a cursory reading of Marx will show how much he was aware of this. If technology looms larger in our thinking than it did for revolutionaries of sixty years ago, it's for several reasons. These include the sheer power of the new technologies, their complex mix of destructive/authoritarian and creative/literary potentials, as well as how essential technological developments of a radical kind have become to capitalist productivity.

From the standpoint of the system as a whole the "difficulty" is this. How will it shift on a world scale away from excessive dependence on increasingly costly (because hard-to-get) fossil fuels and heavy metals, and on bloody-mind-



ed industrial workers, to a new technological base in renewable or inexhaustible raw materials and an industry so automated that its most strategic sectors can be run by a handful of technicians? On the one hand, if it does not accomplish this shift it will continue to suffer a more and more serious crisis of profitability and eventually a vast slump. On the other the obstacles are numerous. They include:

- (i) the cost of the new technologies themselves, though these costs are diminishing;
- (ii) the demands of displaced workers for new jobs or financial compensation, and the general social dislocation involved (cf. Denain/Longwy, South Korea)
- (iii) the enormous amounts of sunk capital (in obsolescent plant, equipment, raw material stocks etc) which stand to be summarily depreciated by the shift, or are being depreciated already;
- (iv) the amount of new capital required to cover (i)(ii) and (iii) simultaneously.

At present this amount is still prohibitive, especially since the rapidly rising cost of key raw materials like oil is cutting deeply into profits in many of the most heavily-capitalised industries.

One result is a withdrawal of capital from productive investment and its deployment instead in what the Left press likes to call "an orgy of speculation". Another result is a vast and ever-more-fragile network of credit which must constantly be extended further to cover the shortage of "hard" investment funds. A third result is a desperate scramble for such funds wherever they can be come by. The state assists in this scramble by cutting the "social wage" to release revenue that would otherwise be funneled through it into public services and benefits. It also does its best to prop up the capital-intensive sectors via subsidies and military spending (including "civilian" nukes.) until their old plant can be run into the ground and squeezed dry of profit.

Actually, most of the world capitalist class does not see things this way being divided into innumerable factions and interests along both sectoral and national lines. Some still imagine that the old industrial base could be expanded indefinitely, with a few minor modifications, if only they could cut taxes, and real wages enough. Others dream of a "no growth" capitalism, a contradiction in terms. Still others simply defend their own parochial interest in an obsolete sector or firm. Moreover, no-one



has proved that the shift is in fact possible without a "short sharp shock" of devaluation on a scale that would make even Uncle Miltie wince. Such a devaluation may occur willy-nilly if the petrodollar circuit is broken in too many places at once, i.e. if (say) Brazil, Poland and Zaire default simultaneously on their outstanding loans. The resulting depression would take more than a New Deal to get us out of. Imagine the entire world reduced to the economic condition of Germany in 1931.

All this leads to a very volatile (in the most literal sense) world situation. Already the enormous strains imposed by the crisis on the NATO and COMECON alliances, not to mention within every nation, are provoking a revival of the Cold War, nationalist and regionalist movements of all sorts, stepped-up "hard-cop" repression, and in some places a ferocious class struggle.

The question is not so much whether general slump or general war are the "necessary" closure to the present cycle of accumulation, from some abstract standpoint. It is rather whether the system will succeed in restructuring itself without accidentally triggering slump, war or both. Imagine somebody tiptoeing across a totally dark room littered with set rat-traps. Now and again he springs one, and it's all he can do not to jump or fall into other rat-traps, which, sprung, would spring still more. Imagine further that the number of rat-traps is constantly increasing, so that in places they are piled three or four deep, and you will see what I mean.

The system may succeed in making the transition to the new cycle without disaster. However: the U.S. business press is already worried about the steepness and depth of the current recession, which they fear may get out of control; Ronald Regan the new President may move closer to a face-to-face confrontation with COMECON forces in Africa, the Middle East or elsewhere; Regan's election may combine with the workers' revolt in Eastern Eur-

ope to give Kremlin hard-liners a definitive edge; computer malfunctions in the U.S. early warning system have caused three nuclear "Red Alerts" in the last six months; the total mass of world debt....need I go on?

In the face of all this, your attitude seems to me one of curious smug "pessimism" which is actually optimism in disguise. I say this because I'd far rather try to make a revolution under the relatively comfortable conditions you envisage than under those I actually expect. I hate being driven back to the defence of the most minimal civil rights and conditions of survival. You conclude that the most "rational" capitalist programme will eventually win out (though I'm by no means convinced that this programme is in fact possible,) thus disposing of the "crisis". You don't offer a great deal of evidence for this, whereas I can point to a great deal for the opposite case. Your insistence that further bureaucratic rationalisation of the economy is inevitable seems to me a good deal more "mechanistic" than the views of most libertarian marxists—especially given the glaring failure of this type of administration in the so-called "socialist" countries.

So where does this leave us in practical terms? As this letter is already far too long, I'll skip a discussion of the relationship between "private" and "social" wage, or of the relative merits of fighting to keep your job or being paid off handsomely. (These are, incidentally, questions we think about a lot at home.) In general, I think our job is not to put forward demands, however "radical", on behalf of other people. Instead we should try to nudge any promising struggles beyond "demands" altogether into a generalised revolt against existing conditions. When this is not possible and it's merely a question of defending some aspect of our physical and mental existence, we should try to combine imaginative but realistic tactical intelligence with an insistence on non-hierarchical direct-democratic forms of organisation. This further implies fighting for the maximum possible autonomy of the movement from parties, unions etc.

I imagine the above is pretty close to your own views. Which is exactly my point. Whatever you or I believe about the nature of the crisis, we are all being forced into action along with - to some extent

ahead of- the rest of our class.. Our action will be shaped both by the situation we face and by our commitment to libertarian revolutionary politics. In due course, this will make much of the debate about "crisis theory" academic. As it is, its only interest is what it can tell us about the conditions we are likely to face in the medium and long term future. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for debate, But the debate has to be dogma-free, straightforward, precise, where possible amiable, and in all cases fraternal. I refuse to go back for all the old sectarian shit - the sneering, the namecalling, the outright lies. It's taken us eight years, on the West Coast, to climb out of that swamp. We are learning painfully, to direct our negative energies more at the society we hate than at each other. In the process, our creativity and imagination are stimulated and our practical effectiveness increased. Solidarity whatever my disagreements with it, has always seemed to me to operate in the same spirit. For all our sakes, please don't march back into the muck!

Communist greetings,

Louis Michaelson.

P.S. Needless to say, this letter represents no-one's views but my own.

## LEFT CONSENSUS?

Dear Comrades,

These comments are in criticism of the views of the people who wrote 'Left Consensus? No Thanks' (Solidarity No14). I realise the views of Solidarity supporters vary.

The article criticises the book 'Beyond the Fragments' and the workshops at the conference we held in Leeds for a bias toward the re-organisation of the Left rather than a 'fundamental political rethink'. This is a fair comment on the emphasis in the book. We realised from writing it that we'd opened up much wider questions than organisation. It is not true however of the conference. In fact we quite consciously tried to maintain a balance between these two.

None-the-less I think there is a very real political difference between the approach of the writers of 'Left Consensus' and the

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

people who organised the conference about how political rethinks come about. It is one thing for small groups of people to sit down and after some discussion come up with criticism of existing socialist activity and ideas. This is obviously a useful thing to do. It was infact how Lynne, Hilary and myself came to write 'Beyond the Fragments'. But eleven years of being in the womens' movement means I would never mistake particular initiatives like this for the much more complex shifting growth of ideas within a movement.

I am not pretending all feminists agree. There are different political strands in feminism like any other movement. I am not invoking feminism as a moral absolute but describing an historical experience which has shaped how we approach politics. 'Left Consensus' gives no signs of any understanding of a position which is not simply stating the correct line.



It became clear there was a really deep desire among scattered groups of people, industrial workers, community activists, Young Liberals ecological groups etc - the list is endless - to talk to one another about the actual problems of day-to-day organising and the kind of society we want to come from our efforts. We also found that there were people from within left groups who were also seeking to communicate with other people and were not put off by the attacks which the trotskyst groups printed in their papers.

I do not know what organisational forms this feeling will take, but I do know that once such a desire becomes self-conscious, finds some air and space, it moves and it develops. For although it is fragile and fragmented it is coming from a real source. Socialist theory has failed to be born again from within the changing relationships of capitalist

society. People affected by the impact of these changes are beginning to ask why and insist on finding some answers for themselves. I should have thought the politics of 'Solidarity', given your origins, would have been sympathetic to this process.

The second fundamental difference appears to be with the past. The past can hold you in a fixed stare. Not only the old past but the recent past can become a ritual incantation. 'The lessons of France in 1968 have been forgotten...' The lessons were learned differently for events are open to many interpretations. One element of the May events was the ferocious contempt for all institutional forms of earlier struggles. In 1970 many people learned it was not so simple. The process you call with such facility 'accommodation' is in fact the growth of a much more sophisticated understanding of the need to change many aspects of the labour movement, while having respect for the strengths and struggles of people who came before and realising that we too need to learn from them, just as we must make something which will mean a new generation need not learn everything anew.

It is true we have to break with forms sometimes. It is also true that historical continuity is vital. For the socialist movement is not just a contest of correct ideas, it is made up of living people now and in the past and they carry culture and values. It is right to show how these can become distorted and overwhelmed in capitalism. But it is wrong to simply express arrogant contempt because they have been contained and defeated. New understandings do not pop out of people's heads. The language, the idiom of what is taken for granted must come from existing circumstances and our past inheritance. The very process in which a movement takes shape is one in which future possibility begins to overcome the present. In its shaping people reach out to a new version of the past to contest the present.

It is just a dead-end of self-satisfied sectarianism to call people you disagree with 'dog-bodies from the cess-pits of opportunism' and slaver over 'a putrified and decomposing labour movement'. You attack leftists for outmoded jargon and use it yourself. You invoke an abstract working class and sneer at people in particular tenants groups or trade unions. You are contemptuous of feminists and caricature men who try to take feminism seriously. As for the simplistic confidence that all state and community

workers are soft cops, 'In and Against the State' criticises this one sided view better than I can here.

Don't you think in your concern to expose everyone else that you perpetuate elitism and vanguardism? I don't mean that you should not hold your views passionately but that they might be more convincing if you expressed yourselves with less sanctimonious rhetoric and recognised that we all learn by listening.

The people who wrote about the Solidarity meeting on Poland say, '...participation in any sort of united front or concerted action with other tendencies requires extra care in clarifying not slurring our particular views. Otherwise the dominant ideology prevails by default and we find ourselves being used for ends we do not support and ultimately playing false to those we do.'

Isn't this a very real political problem which keeps on dogging networks and organisations of anarchists and libertarian socialists? I think in the womens movement we have found some ways of partially struggling through this dilemma in practice, though not without much pain and many perilous encounters. In the rest of the left it is still an enormous problem. Simply doing nothing with anyone else just avoids the problem. This over simple polarisation was one of the dead ends we were trying to work our way through and beyond when we began writing 'Beyond the Fragments'.

We are still trying!

Sheila Rowbotham.

Comment:

We have unfortunately had to heavily edit Sheila's very long letter but we hope we have preserved her main arguments.

I think Sheila makes some valid criticism of the political style and approach of 'Left Consensus', but it is clear that our disagreement with both the authors of the book and the conference organisers go much deeper. Unlike them we do not regard the dominant groups and ideas on the Left as having anything in common with ourselves. The state capitalist left may well be fragmented, we have no desire to unite it. This doesn't prevent us from recognising and valuing the contributions to our understanding of particular issues and events which individual left wingers might make, but it does prevent us from promoting alternative brands of capitalist ideology.

Mike Ballard  
Solidarity(Manchester)



Dear Solidarity for social revolution,

Oxford Solidarity, in their editorial in Solidarity no.14, are right to attack the revived anti-nuclear war movement for believing that its' possible to 'persuade' governments to disarm through the traditional methods of demos, working through the Labour Party, etc.. But there's more people involved in the movement than Party hacks and dogmatic pacifists. In and around CND there is already some interest in direct action against the warfare state. Where it seems likely to be productive we could be involved and encouraging such actions.

The Oxford editorial group also condemned what they called 'the anarchist/liberal alternative' to the CND's reformist politics, arguing that 'annual ritual confrontations' at nuclear bases and sites in the country are a discredited strategy and that instead direct action should be taken in urban areas. Yes, we must act in the cities and yes, we must avoid direct action degenerating into a ritual which offers no real threat to the functioning of the nukiller state.

But it's daft to argue that actions in rural areas are always useless and reformist and that only actions in urban areas are effective and revolutionary. The editorial completely ignores the many massive occupations and actions, some of them very successful, at rural nuclear sites in Europe. In 1976 at Why1, West Germany, 28,000 people occupied a proposed nuclear reactor site, drove

off the police who came to evict them, maintained the occupation for months, and stopped the government building the reactor. The Malville, France, attempted occupation, the actual occupation at Gorleben in W. Germany, and the mass attacks on the vans housing the phoney nuclear 'public enquiry' in Plogoff in Brittany are other examples.

I don't want to argue the reverse of the editorial's position, I don't believe that we should concentrate exclusively on nuclear sites and military bases. We should act against the sites and against targets in the cities. It all depends on the particular situation. If there's a lot of active local opposition to a nuclear site, action against it is much more likely to be effective than if almost all those involved have to be transported from miles away. Then again, it would normally be easier for the police to defend a building in a city than for them to protect a huge site like Torness.

It's true that reformist 'leaders' in the anti-nuclear movement have tried to turn site occupations into rituals involving only symbolic protest. This need not be the case. The Why1 occupation was not a ritual, it stopped the reactor being built. Smaller-scale occupations such as those at Torness at present should not be seen as ends in themselves, but as steps towards creating the strength for a permanent occupation, or at least for such frequent occupations that work is seriously disrupted.

An argument in favour of physically trying to stop the construction of, or close down military bases and nuclear sites is that this action is in fact more direct and less symbolic than, say, occupying Electricity Board offices in a city and demanding that the government stop building Torness.

Oxford Solidarity are of course right to say that direct action is ineffective if it only consists of set-piece confrontations once a year, and the rest of the time business as usual. But why the hell do they arrogantly assume that those involved in site occupations spend the rest of our time 'patting ourselves on the back'? Since last May's attempted occupation at Torness there has been a considerable amount

of activity in resistance to the trials of those arrested. This has included, at the time of the five trials on November 20th, a sit-in at the South of Scotland Electricity Board showrooms in Dunbar and the 'super-glueing' of the locks of SSEB premises in the Glasgow area.

There's many forms of direct action we can take, in urban and rural areas, all year round. Government bunkers, recruitment offices, Electricity Board showrooms, nuclear reactor sites, military bases, civil defence premises, nuclear waste transport, electricity power lines, machinery used for uranium mining and nuclear waste dumping surveys, the offices and sites of nuclear power and military contractors - all are potential targets. We should encourage workers to refuse to transport nuclear material, to refuse to supply or build military bases, nuclear reactors, etc.. There's growing possibilities for significant direct action against nuclear waste dumping surveys. In Wales members of the Madryn group have surrounded geologists doing such surveys, detained them for up to nine hours, confiscated their documents, and so on.

In our involvement we should encourage the attitude that these actions are part of the struggle to totally transform society, to reach the situation where people collectively act to seize control of all of society's resources.

Discussing the issues raised by the editorial in Solidarity no. 14 could be valuable. But only if it leads to us doing something. Revolutionary rhetoric yelled from the sidelines is useless, we need to develop a revolutionary politics that involves a coherent strategy and practice of direct action.

M.V. (Solidarity, Aberdeen)  
The trials of those arrested in the Torness anti-nuclear action last May continue at Haddington, E.Loathian. On Nov. 20th and Jan. 9th 6 people were fined a total of £525 for Dunbar. Planning is underway for an anti-nuclear week of action from May 9 - 17th. Among the many activities planned are actions against nuclear targets in cities and an occupation of the Torness site on May 16th. Info from, and donations for the 'Torness Charges Fund' to, Box 23, c/o 163 King St., Aberdeen.

## LETTER FROM IRELAND

## IRELAND

Dear Solidarity,

There has been a deafening silence on your part as to political and social upheaval in this part of the world - not more than a hundred miles away from one of your favourite holiday spots on the Scottish coast.

I know it must be difficult for you, being tied up with what's going on in Poland, and the complication that it is not simply an anti-statist or anti-capitalist struggle - but an anti-imperialist one.

There are two ways of looking at what is happening now. Firstly the social forces involved in opposing this sectarian state (with Republicanism as the most influential ideology); and secondly how the British state first created, then reinforced this sectarianism as a basis for maintaining its power here. It is true that a 32 County state with a cooperative bourgeois, as is the case down south, would not threaten Britain.

But a break-up of the northern state under the present conditions would not only destroy Britain's influence in the north but also the south, and even the credibility of the government in Britain itself. To make sure this doesn't happen the British government has set up a system of counter-insurgency which has set up the special interrogation centres, the special holding powers, the special juryless courts and the brand new prisons (such as the H-Blocks). I am sure you have read elsewhere of the details of torture, beatings etc .

As a discussion journal for libertarian socialists (and a good one) I'm disappointed that you have not touched upon the role of the British government in the north of Ireland.

While appreciating Terry Liddle's concern for 'political prisoners' in Yugoslavia, I think it's high time some member of your organisation took up the issue of Irish 'political prisoners'.

Belfast Anarchist Collective.

## Solidarity Response:

Although the predecessors of our present magazine contained a great deal of discussion on Ireland and the role of Republicanism, Unionism and the British state, it is true that we have not devoted any space to dealing with these issues in the current series.



As internationalists, we have no need to justify the attention we have given to the magnificent struggle of the Polish workers, but we are glad of this opportunity to, at least briefly, outline some of our views on Ireland and comment on what the BAC are saying.

Firstly, we must state our emphatic opposition to the Army and police, especially in their systematic use of arbitrary arrest, conviction, imprisonment, and torture against their opponents in northern Ireland. Despite our small numbers we could probably have done more in recent times to expose the army's role in Ireland and oppose its recruiting activity in this country.

The confrontation between the forces of the capitalist (which happens to be British) state and sizeable sections of the working class in Northern Ireland is, however, only one component to the overall war being fought there. There is also the murderous intra-working class feud between 'protestant' and 'catholic' workers, as well as a number of actual or potential 'national liberation struggles' which seek to establish alternative capitalist (32 county 'Irish' or 'Ulster-Unionist', as the case may be) states to replace British capitalist rule in the north.

The overall situation is extremely complex and confused as these various struggles interact and overlap. When the British Army invades and brutalises working class districts, we see resistance by working men, women and (especially heroically) children to the forces of the capitalist state. Yet very often those best equipped to fight the invading troops are the local underground armies, such as the Provos in some of the 'catholic' districts. Just as with the British Army's soldiers, most Provo soldiers are workers

and in many cases their first motivation as individuals may be the self-defence of the areas where they live against intolerable oppression mounted by the British Army. Yet the Provisional IRA is not a working class defence force. On the contrary, it is a national liberation army as emphatically pro-capitalist as the other national liberation armies we have seen in operation in Vietnam and elsewhere. Behind the standard socialist rhetoric, lies an aspiration to put the whole of the 32 counties under the unified control of a single state representing the interests of Irish capital. Towards this objective the Provos have killed and maimed British (not just those in uniforms), 'protestant', and 'catholic' workers and will no doubt continue to do so. At different times and places a member of a 'protestant' para-military formation can be involved in working class struggle against the (British) capitalist state, can be part of the machinery of the state itself deployed against other 'catholic' workers or - independently of the state, can engage in the vicious intra-working class feuding between 'catholic' and 'protestant' workers. Similar situations may arise equally with the Provos.

In clashes between workers and the capitalist state we do not need to think twice to know which side we are on. But this is not at all the same thing as unreservedly approving all working class actions - an impossibility anyway, when different sections of the working class spend part of their time murdering each other. In northern Ireland, as elsewhere, we support all struggles of the working class which are directed against the capitalist class and its state, just as we do all developments which enhance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

thinking has evolved in the last decade and a half'. Alas it is clear that most of the details are still to be worked out. Who precisely are the new ruling class? Just how do they wield power, to what ends, and under what constraints? What are the relative strengths of the economic/managerial, political and military elements of this class, and to what extent do they come into conflict with each other?

How far is class privilege transmitted from generation to generation, and - in a society where the inheritance of wealth is unimportant - by what mechanism is this accomplished? (This question is of special significance, since the transmission of privilege is what distinguishes a 'class' from a 'stratum'.

Sweezy's answer to these questions are either extremely sketchy or non-existent. He is silent, too, about the antecedents of his ideas. The concept of a new ruling class actually precedes the Russian Revolution by several decades, and is almost a commonplace in modern literature on the Soviet Union. Sweezy is surely familiar with the nineteenth century writings of Bakunin and Machajski, and has certainly come into contact with the arguments of James Burnham, Max Schachtmann, Milovan Djilas, John Kenneth Galbraith and Cornelius Castoriadis (Paul Cardan) - to name just a few. It is odd that he says nothing about any of them, neither to acknowledge his intellectual debts nor to claim originality for his own contribution.

These are by no means the only omissions. With the solitary exception of the chapter on Poland (which credits the Polish working class with a rather basic trade union consciousness), there is nothing about workers' resistance to the new rulers: nothing on Kronstadt or the Workers' Opposition, nothing on Hungary, nothing

on the Polish rising of 1976. (The book went to press in February 1980, well before the events of last summer). It is almost as if the class struggle in Eastern Europe has to be fought by proxy, waged by Messrs. Bettelheim and Sweezy on behalf of a working class too demoralized and depoliticized to be able to intervene of its own accord.

This remarkable substitution follows inexorably from Sweezy's political perspective. Despairing of revolutionary struggle by the Western (and especially the U.S.) working class, Sweezy is a Maoist. His Third Worldism confines working class combativity to backward countries, and allows neither Hungarian, nor Polish, nor (since 1917) Russian exceptions. As a Leninist he is forced to reject any suggestion of proletarian revolt against the great man himself. As a vanguardist, he must deny the workers' ability to fight back in Eastern Europe, since they have no party to lead them into battle.

Sweezy's treatment of China is insubstantial. He never poses, still less answers, the really critical question: if the Cultural Revolution really was a serious challenge to the new ruling class, how was it possible for comrade Deng to sweep it all away with so little opposition (and even, apparently, with considerable mass support)? There is a rather obvious parallel here with the isolation and defeat of Trotsky in the late 1920s. In both cases the masses regarded their professed revolutionary saviours with apathy, suspicion, cynicism, even outright hostility - and in both cases they were right!

In fact Sweezy says almost nothing about the real nature of social relations in China during the Cultural Revolution, as opposed to Mao's claims about those relations. He ignores the continued party dictatorship, the atmosphere of manipulation and hysteria, the cult of personality, the condesce-

nsion and the crassness of the Little Red Book. The simple fact that Chiang Qing rose to power as Mao's wife speaks volumes for the sexism and nepotism of Chinese society with 'politics in command'. Even the Marxist Curia at New Left Review now have their reservations about the Mao era. Sweezy, it seems, does not.

He is also remarkably reticent about the nature of communist social relations in general. True, there are occasional references to the virtues of egalitarianism and the suppression of the market, but these fall far short of a full specification of a society without a new ruling class (as the gruesome experience of Pol Pot will forever serve to remind us). It is entirely possible, on the evidence of this book, that Sweezy believes such a genuinely communist society already to exist somewhere in the world, if not in Albania then perhaps in North Korea or Vietnam. It is surprising, too, that the author of two books on Cuba omits Arthur Scargill's favourite holiday resort from his discussion of Post-Revolutionary Society.

Paul Sweezy is certainly no advocate of social self-management. All the same, this is a valuable and provocative book. Unlike many Marxists Sweezy writes in English rather than in Althusserian, so that the reader can follow the argument without having to translate every other word. He is also refreshingly undogmatic, and the book really is a 'search for answers' rather than the elaboration of a party line. At £6.75 for 156 pages not many people are going to buy this book, but it's certainly one to ask for at your local library.

John King

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

the democratic self-activity of the working class as a force in society fighting for itself. That means supporting class against nation and opposing the fraudulent diversion of so-called 'anti-imperialist' struggles. We oppose all attacks by groups of workers on other members of their own class in sectarian battles; that means opposing both 'catholic' and 'protestant' para-military groups as well as the Army.

An important part of the activity of a revolutionary group involves demystifying capitalist history and ideology. In the Irish con-

text we must start by explaining the origin of partition and the opposing ideologies of Republicanism and Unionism in the unequal development of capitalism in the north and south, in the different interests of the big and small capitalists. We must go on to explain the changes that have made these divisions, even in capitalist terms, outdated and irrelevant. In this work we can have no use for the rigid, outdated theories of left-wing hacks. In more general terms we need to expose the dangerously reactionary nature of all nationalism and all religion. Unfortunately the phrases used by the BAC in their letter and in other material

suggest they are succumbing (in admittedly desperate circumstances) to the ideology of nationalism and Republicanism.

Returning to the immediate issue of the H-Block prisoners, we are opposed to the treatment they are receiving at the hands of the state and support the efforts of all prisoners to improve their conditions, we will not support campaigns which plead for special political status from the state.

Unlike the BAC we are clear that in this case our enemies' enemies are NOT our friends.

Solidarity(Manchester)  
16.12.80.

# REVIEW

POST-REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY :

ESSAYS BY PAUL SWEEZY

(MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS 1980, £6.75).

This book is a collection of ten essays, written between 1967 and 1980 either as articles for the U.S. Maoist journal Monthly Review or as public lectures. They deal with two important questions : what went wrong with the Russian Revolution? and what sort of society is the Soviet Union today?

The first essay, dating from 1967 and entitled 'Lessons of the Soviet Experience', stresses the substantial and growing inequalities in material consumption exemplified by the spread of private car ownership in Russia. The second chapter deals with the Polish workers' rising of 1970, when Gomulka was replaced by Edward ('heart attack') Gierek. The conflict between the party apparatus and the working class revealed, Sweezy argues, a clash between proletarian and capitalist ideologies very similar to that which underlies the class struggle in the West.

Chapters 3 and 6 eulogies the Chinese Cultural Revolution, contrasting it with the 'cultural counter-revolution' which Sweezy believes to have taken place in the Soviet Union after 1928, and praising Mao's supposed discovery of the necessity for class struggle in socialist society. Three further chapters (4, 5 and 7) pursue this theme. Here Sweezy reviews the first two volumes of Charles Bettelheim's Class Struggles in the USSR, with their emphasis on the emergence of a 'state bourgeoisie' in the USSR in the early years of the Stalin era.

In chapter 8 Sweezy attacks the weary old Trotskyist catechism according to which Russia is a deformed or degenerated workers state comprehensively demolishing Ernest Mandel in the process. (He might have included Mandel's reply, published in their debate in Monthly Review, if only to demonstrate its utter emptiness). The ninth chapter concludes that Marxist theory is in a state of Kuhnian crisis because of the anomalies posed by the failure of proletarian revolutions to give rise to a genuinely socialist society.

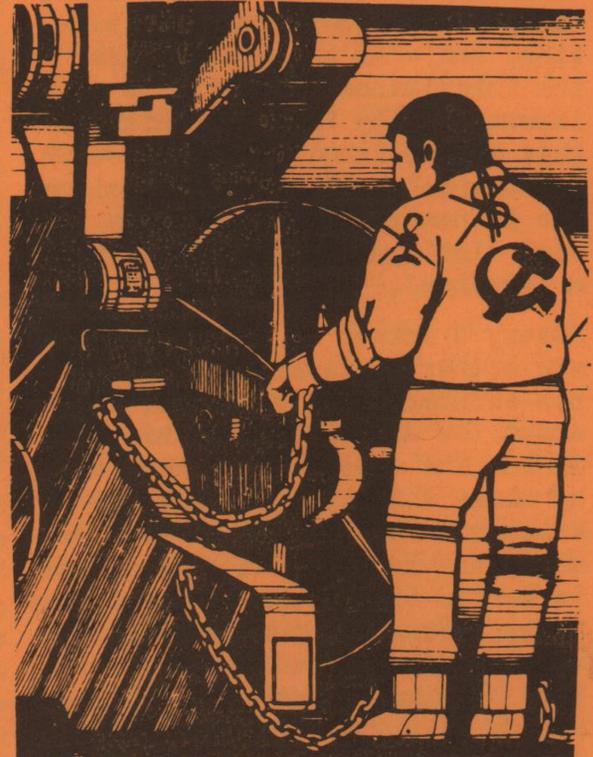
In the final chapter, which provides the book with its title, Sweezy maintains that the Soviet Union is neither socialist nor capitalist, but is a new form of class society different from eit-

her, with a new ruling class of a unique kind. This final chapter is the most interesting and important part of the book, and I will quote from it at some length : "The starting point is capitalism, which gave rise to all the social sciences with which we are familiar today. The economic foundation of capitalism has three determining characteristics : (1) ownership of the means of production by private capitalists; (2) separation of the total social capital into many competing or potentially competing units; and (3) production of the great bulk of commodities (both goods and services) by workers who, owning no means of production of their own, are obliged to sell their labour power to capitalists in order to acquire the means of subsistence. In Soviet-type societies, two of these three determining characteristics have been eliminated. Most of the means of production are owned by the state or, in the case of the collective farms which are formally cooperatives, closely controlled by the state. And the units into which they are divided for managerial and administrative purposes are not autonomous and do not relate to each other in the manner of competing capitals. Instead they form parts of a hierarchical structure of decision-making and control which reaches its peak in the top political organs of the state. The guiding force in this system is therefore an overall plan which, however well or badly articulated, is a set of directives having the force of law and not merely, as under capitalism, indicators designed to help the autonomous units of capital to act more rationally in their own interest....."

"The point to be emphasized is not that all manifestations of capitalist behaviour patterns have been eliminated from Soviet-type societies - far from it - but that these have ceased to dominate the functioning of the economy and hence, indirectly, to shape the objectives and tasks of political power. In capitalist society the state is the servant of the economy; in Soviet type societies it is the master....."

"...the most important difference between capitalism and post-revolutionary society is that this overwhelming dominance of capital has been broken and replaced by the direct rule of a new ruling class which derives its power and privileges not from ownership and/or control of capital but from the unmediated control of the state and its multifarious apparatuses of coercion. This means that the utilization of society's surplus product - which as under capitalism

and some forms of precapitalist society, is produced by a propertyless working class - is no longer governed by the laws of value and capital accumulation but instead becomes the central focus of a political process and of course of political struggles, including (but not exclusively) class struggles. In this respect post-revolutionary societies are unlike capitalism but similar to precapitalist societies which also lack an autonomous economic foundation."



I find this all rather convincing though I suspect that Sweezy greatly exaggerates the differences between the positions of the Soviet and Western working classes. Considered as a whole, his analysis seems to me to be no less plausible than the argument that there is a single world capitalist system, with nothing but geography distinguishing the American from the Soviet bourgeoisie. If 'global state capitalism' is too glib a description, however, Sweezy's alternative is much too vague. The book itself is full of ambiguities about the precise nature of the Soviet ruling class. It opens with the concept of a 'ruling stratum of political bureaucrats and economic managers'. There are several later references to Bettelheim's notion of a 'Soviet state bourgeoisie' and to a 'modernized state capitalists system' in Eastern Europe. Sweezy also writes of a 'managerial stratum' which is not a bureaucracy in the Trotskyist sense 'but rather an incipient ruling (and exploiting) class.... based not on private property but on control of an all encompassing repressive state apparatus'.

These various formulations appear to be mutually inconsistent. Sweezy's excuse is that his book is 'a sort of record of how my