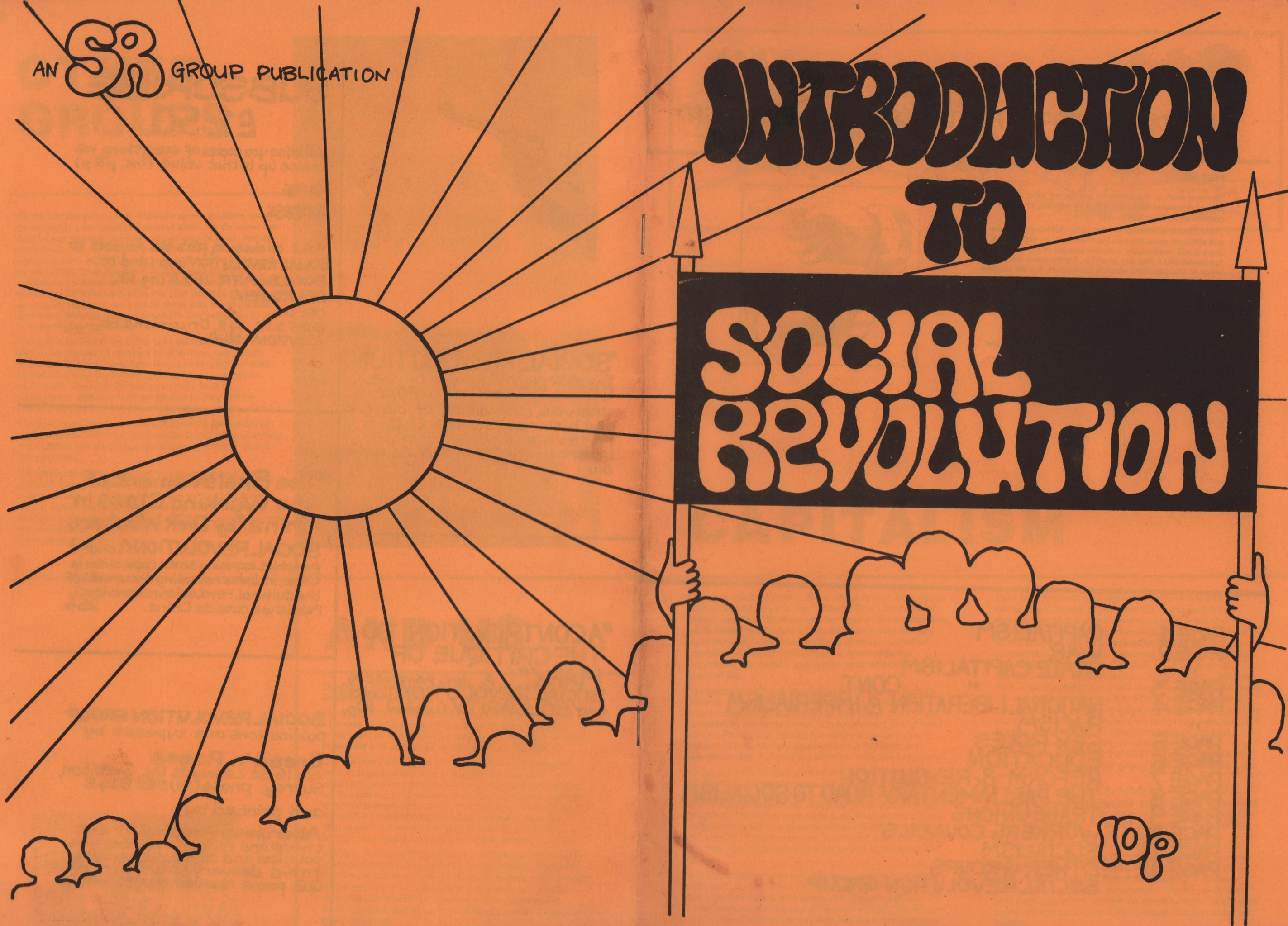


INTRODUCTION TO

SOCIAL REVOLUTION



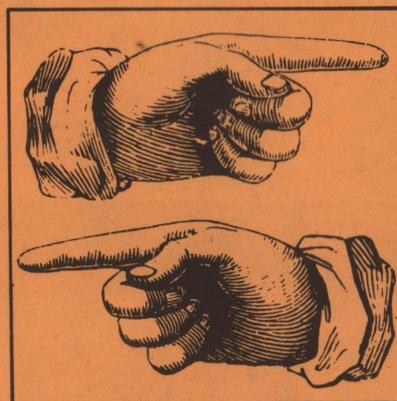
INTRODUCTION TO THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

PREFACE

The final draft of this pamphlet was agreed, after a great deal of discussion over a period of 18 months, at our conference in Aberdeen in July 1976.

The different sections were written by different members and although some attempt has been made to unify them, there is still unavoidably a certain amount of repetition of arguments and a diversity of styles. Furthermore the wide scope of this pamphlet which is fairly short, has led to some oversimplification of ideas. Readers will find an expansion and illustration of the views expressed here, in our magazine **SOCIAL REVOLUTION**. We also welcome letters of enquiry and criticism, since we do not claim to be expert in every field or to have the 'whole truth'.

Still we think the pamphlet is a fairly comprehensive introduction to our politics. If you find yourself in general agreement with the views expressed we hope you will consider joining our group and helping in our activities.



CAPITALISM

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Never has the bankruptcy of our social system been more widely realised. Even in the "affluent 60's" the need for change was clear. Workers rebelled against boring, pointless work. Students attacked an educational system training them for such work. The problems of cities multiplied regardless of a superficial affluence. Meanwhile the majority of the world's population went without the basic needs of life.

The basic similarity of the supposed alternatives became obvious. The USSR, long the hope of opponents of western capitalism, was shown to be a rather more brutal variation on the same theme. Its replacement as supposed Utopia, Red China, showed for example by its policy in support for reactionary governments in Pakistan and elsewhere, that it played the same game by the same rules.

Today even the limited gains of this period are fast disappearing. Unemployment and inflation attack peoples' living standards, and produce anxiety even amongst those not directly affected. Civil rights are under attack in many countries. The ruling class turns away from its old Liberal Democratic traditions towards either the left or right proponents of totalitarianism. Aspects of this in terms of ideology and organisation are militarism, chauvinism and racism.

It is not enough to bemoan this situation; we must try to analyse its causes. These lie, not in the faults of leaders or the formal relations of property, for these things may be varied without making any difference. Rather, the cause is the nature of capitalism, a system based on the appropri-

ation by a minority (the capitalist class) of the wealth created by the work of the majority of the people in society. Out of this economic relationship arises the alienation of people from themselves, each other and their world. Since its inception, capitalism has relied on competition, not only the economic competition between companies, nation-states and blocs; e.g. Ford against Leyland, Britain against Germany, NATO against Warsaw Pact, Russia against China; but also competition at all levels, e.g. man against woman, black against white, protestant against catholic. Look at the way workers are told that they must work harder, not because we need more cars, etc., but in order to compete with other countries. In the past, economic competition has, in human terms, been progressive in that it laid the material foundations for the transition to Socialism, but now it leads only to waste, war and slump.

The struggle takes place for control of wealth, material resources, land, population and markets. Those who do not compete simply go under: therefore capitalism imposes its rule upon the whole world and it cannot be transcended except on this basis. It is this competition — cold, impersonal and ruthless — which is the real master, and keeps us all in slavery, both economic and social. However, in all parts of the world capitalist system, there are those who are in a position of power and privilege — whether businessmen, generals or bureaucrats, together with those who own capital but perform no social function at all, who as the ruling class have a vested interest in maintaining the system.

STATE

CAPITALISM



WAR

The capitalist system is divided into nation-states, blocs and alliances. These, generally speaking, exist to support and defend their own local sectors of capitalism against the interests of rival sectors. As markets become saturated, or raw materials scarce, so the rival sectors of capitalism must seek new outlets for commodities they produce, new sources of raw materials and inevitably new trade routes to utilise them. They increasingly find that their rivals have the same objective or that the local ruling class does not wish to be dominated. From this situation the outbreak of a trade war is likely as nation-states, blocs or alliances step in to assist their interests. Trade wars have a tendency to hot up into real shooting wars as the problems facing the capitalists become too severe to be overcome by negotiation.

Thus, wars are fought over capitalist interests — capturing new markets, sources of raw materials, or defending or capturing trade routes. Inevitably, it is not the bosses who get themselves killed in these disputes, but the workers who have been duped by talk of "national interest", patriotism, defence of the "fatherland", etc. But the workers' real class interests lie not in supporting the efforts of one ruling class to wipe out their competitors, but in the success of the social revolution to destroy social classes which are the cause of war.

Revolutionary socialists, therefore, do not support the wars of capitalism, but urge class unity between workers of all lands against their common enemy — the world's ruling class. Instead of inter-imperialist war we urge class war and social revolution, solidarity of the world's workers and the subversion of the armed forces. Therefore we urge rank and file soldiers to see their identity of interest with the working class against the top-ranking officers who form part of the ruling class and to eventually form soldiers' councils which will act together with the workers councils. To this end we are prepared to work with soldiers for full trade union and political rights.

Capitalism is a social system in which productive enterprises employ wage and salary workers in order to realise a profit by selling goods and services on the market. The basic relationship between the enterprise and its workers (exploitation), and the basic relationship among different enterprises, or capitals (ruthless competition to expand) remain the same, no matter who owns or controls the enterprise. In different situations, private entrepreneurs, shareholders, managers, State or "Communist" Party bureaucrats, or even the workers of an enterprise (acting collectively as their own boss in "workers' cooperatives") have directed the process of capital accumulation — that is, have represented the dominant social relationship of capital.

In the nineteenth century capital took the form of small units, directly controlled by the factory owner, which competed in local, regional or at most national markets, for the main part. Thus social revolution seemed to theorists such as Marx mainly a task to be carried out within each country separately, the international aspect being important but secondary. The national State seemed the most convenient instrument for this purpose.

In the last part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, capital became more and more concentrated in the hands of gigantic industrial empires — corporations, trusts and cartels — controlled by industrial and banking interests remote from the workforce and connected to it through vast hierarchies of managers and supervisors. These international concerns compete (and still compete) on world markets, as capitalism developed into a single inter-connected system dominating the whole world.

The other unit, in the capitalist competition on the world market, which came into at least as great a prominence as the multinational corporation, was the nation-State. The nation can be viewed as the alliance of the capitals based in one geographical area, which is defined in the course of continual conflict between its ruling groups and the ruling groups of other nations. The national State developed essentially as the central organisation promoting the interests of this alliance — against other national units, against the working class, and against "unpatriotic" sections of the capitalist class — that is, those whose interests were asserted in opposition to the perceived interests of the national capital as a whole. Thus Marx called the State "the executive committee of the capitalist class as a whole".



To the extent that the national State takes upon itself some of the tasks involved in directing capital, we can speak of "State capitalism". However, while private capital still dominates its partnership with the State, this is a weak form of State capitalism.

- The capitalist functions taken on by the State in this weak form may include —
- regulation of international trade, control of the currency;
 - provision of health, welfare, insurance and education services for the upkeep of the workforce;
 - collection of statistics;
 - control of essential services, such as post, rail and coal, to provide private capital with cheap reliable support;
 - centralised police, security forces;
 - increasing military backup to national commerce.

These functions became substantial in the industrially developed countries for the first time in the decades leading up to the First World Imperialist War.

When this weak form of State capitalism comes to include the nationalisation of large areas of industry — that is, their control through State bureaucracies — we have the "mixed economy". The next logical step in the development of State capitalism is for the State to take direct control of the major part of the national capital — what we can call the strong form of State capitalism.

- The advantage of strong State capitalism to the national unit is that it can help make the nation more competitive on the world market and in the fight for expansion by:—
- enormously reducing the resources and energies spent on competition *within* the nation;
 - eliminating "unpatriotic" and unproductive capitalist interests;
 - possibly reducing the private consumption of the capitalist class in the interest of accumulation;
 - strengthening the centralised control of the State over the working class and reinforcing nationalist ideology.

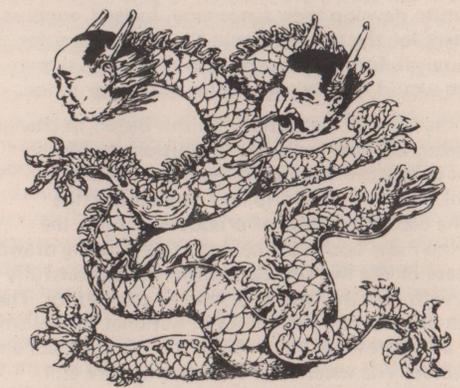
However, the replacement of weak by strong State capitalism is a difficult task, requiring radical reorganisation of the national life, and in particular the replacement of "private" capitalists as the ruling group personifying capital by State and Party bureaucracies. The social system and the position of the working class in it remain basically the same as before, but the change concerns the life and death (even literally) interests of the existing and the aspiring ruling groups.

We have historical experience of this false "revolution" occurring in three different ways:—

- 1) As the end result of an unsuccessful attempt at socialist revolution which remains hopelessly isolated in one country. The only example of this type of attempt which was not brutally suppressed by reaction is the Russian revolution of 1917. Here material, social and cultural backwardness combined with isolation and the elitist bureaucratic methods of the Bolsheviks to crush the working class element in the upheaval, and eventually install the totalitarian Stalin regime. Within this regime a privileged bureaucratic class directed the modernisation and industrialisation of the country in often insane haste and brutality.
- 2) As the consequence of military conquest of a nation by the armed forces of an existing State capitalist power — East Europe, South Vietnam etc.
- 3) In underdeveloped areas where private capitalism never strong enough to overcome imperialist domination by the great powers, and native feudalism, despotism or tribalism. Here national capital is represented by nationalist intellectuals using the State machine (China, Third World countries).

Two powerful factors which work in favour of a nation becoming State capitalist are:—

- 1) War. When the rivalry among nation-States takes on its most ruthless and all-out form, the forces representing State capitalism become stronger and the need for Statist rationalisation of the national economy is felt most clearly. For example — the Bolshevik economy of Russia was based on that of World War 1 Germany; the Welfare State and mixed economy in Britain grew out of the Second World War.
- 2) The weakness of a national economy relative to others also makes the advantages of State capitalism more compelling. The US, for example, at most times a very strong power, is one of the least Statified.



The important differences between private and State capitalism — in social structure, in internal economy, in ideology etc — should not be ignored or minimised. At the same time, the State capitalist regimes are an integral part of the world capitalist system, based on capital accumulation by competing enterprises and wage labour. A State Capitalist country, like a multinational giant corporation, can be regarded as a single vast firm. Thus we cannot accept the theories that Russia, China and so on are socialist, communist, or "Workers' States", or that they are based on a new non-capitalist mode of exploitation called (say) State-bureaucratic.

Bitter experience shows that State capitalism in the twentieth century is not a step on the road to socialism. This is the most fundamental point at dispute between genuine socialists and the left wing (of capitalism). Unfortunately many workers in private capitalist countries who are critical of their conditions of life see the leftist programme of State capitalism as a way out. Similarly, working class discontent in State capitalist countries often takes the form of admiration for private enterprise and the West. In this confusion about the nature of possible alternatives to the existing way of life, it is up to socialists to make the real choice clear.

NATIONAL LIBERATION AND IMPERIALISM

Around the turn of the century, capitalism became the dominant social system in the world. This necessitated a change in the outlook of revolutionary socialists to the question of national liberation struggles. Prior to 1900, capitalism had been a new social system; moreover, was fighting to secure dominance over other, reactionary systems such as feudal and despotic societies. Capitalism then had a useful role to play in as much as it was developing the productive potential of abundance necessary for the establishment of socialism and brought into being the class whose interests lay in the overthrow of capitalism — the workers.

At this time, socialists could still postulate the theory that workers could support local capitalist revolutions and still maintain autonomy as a class. The theory was probably correct, though it never seems to have been applied in practice. Nonetheless, at this time the capitalist system could still expand outwards, and as a result the workers could make real, permanent gains from the system, which allowed them to develop their autonomy. Indeed, support by the workers for the system was at times necessary for their own survival, for conquest by one of the reactionary social system would have brought their class destruction.

But around the turn of the century all this began to change. Either by means of local capitalist revolutions or by the importing of capitalism through foreign investment (imperialism), most of the world had come under the control of the capitalist mode of production. Even the peasants of the most backward countries were being drawn into the sphere of the market. Capitalism was successfully established, with no other social system as competitor. The world became divided into rival blocs of national capitalisms; today these are represented by NATO, the Warsaw Pact and the Chinese bloc. The local units of capitalism are still expansive, but in the process they came into conflict with the other blocs — this is the reason behind the two world wars of this century; they were essentially inter-imperialist

wars. Moreover, with its dominance of the world, capitalism had established the conditions necessary for the successful establishment of a socialist society, whilst at the same time becoming a system based on the positive *destruction* of social wealth through its internecine rivalries and conflicts, as well as the 'normal' workings of the system in boom, with the destruction of food; waste production; armaments expenditure; etc. No longer can local proto-ruling classes set themselves up outside the influence of one or other of the imperialist blocs. For the working class there is only one alternative — socialism. We no longer have any interest in supporting one or other ruling clique.

However, in some "third world" countries there exist movements claiming to be struggling for "national liberation". They seek to make their state independent but in practice they are forced from the sphere of influence of one imperialist bloc to that of another. These "liberation" forces derive their support either from the military might of some other power, or by channelling the grievances of the local peasants and workers in their own direction. Experience has taught us that whenever these workers and peasants attempt to assert their own class interests, then the forces of "national liberation" reveal their true class interests by brutally suppressing them.

Many leftists argue that the workers should support such struggles for "national liberation"; this in practice means that they want the workers to support one side or another in an inter-imperialist war. In doing so they reveal themselves as the left agents of Soviet or Chinese capitalism, and therefore as the enemies of the world's working class and peasantry. The workers and peasants of the "third world" countries will play their part in the world revolution by forming their own revolutionary socialist organisations. In the meantime, we will aid them by struggling to overthrow capitalism in our own situation, and we will attempt to provide whatever practical solidarity is possible — (for example by blacking armaments or other commodities during particular struggles).

In periods of expansion highly industrialised nation-states reach a point where there exists a 'labour shortage' either in the economy as a whole or in sections of the economy (e.g. amongst unskilled workers).

To overcome this 'shortage' the countries attempt to encourage unskilled foreign immigrants to enter their country to fill the shortage (e.g. London Transport's recruitment campaign of the fifties in Jamaica). In times of crisis there appears again a 'labour reserve army'. Then the presence of ethnic minorities can be used by sections of the ruling class as scapegoats for the workers' problems. Racism is used to head off class struggle.

In modern society most immigrants are worst off in every respect — housing, education, unemployment etc. At the same time, they are let down by the official working class organisations even more than are white workers. Consequently they are forced to organise themselves. In the attempt ideas of inverted racism naturally occur, such as those of Malcolm X.

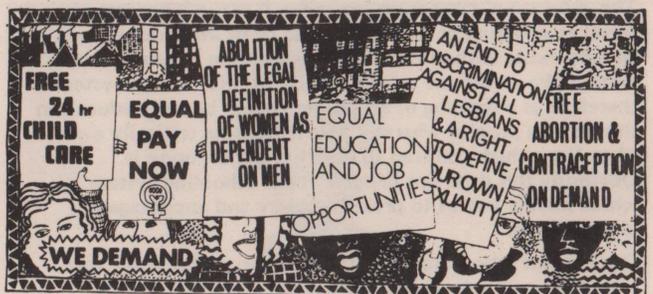
Being proud of being black and re-asserting black culture is a definite step forward but blacks cannot go it alone. Black racism is no answer. However it cannot be overcome by pious lectures from white 'revolutionaries', it can only be overcome in the development of the class struggle.

SEX ROLES

How often have you heard things like this? *Women are 'natural' mothers, home-makers, domestic, passive, helpless, subjective, emotional, soft, romantic, responsive, dependent, clothes-conscious, empty-headed, etc. Men are 'natural' businessmen, decisive, independent, active, strong, hard, brave, adventurous, objective, dependable, etc. None but the most blatant male chauvinist would maintain that adjectives applied to women suggest her inferiority to men. Yet many people believe that these adjectives correctly describe the characteristic differences between the sexes and that these differences are both natural and desirable. However although people naturally must sleep, eat, reproduce, etc, how we carry out these functions and how we live generally is not inevitably and naturally determined.*

We start to learn our role in society from the moment we're born, our sex and our class determine what our role shall be. A few will move from one class to another and some women will 'conquer' male preserves and be looked on as unnatural. The socialisation process starts first with our parents in the home, then the school, the church and finally the workplace then back to the home with our own children and so on. This process of socialisation or of learning behaviour acceptable to societies' dominant class, has been laid down year after year, century after century, so that indeed certain behaviour patterns do appear 'normal' even 'natural' and such beliefs are encouraged by the dominant (economic) class. However the dominant class moulds society in its own interests. As neither the dominant class or its interests remain static, so neither does the socialisation process; though the subjective response to these changes tends to lag behind.

Capitalism's necessity for economic growth required the absorption of an ever increasing workforce utilising female labour along with the rest, and in so doing undermining the previously accepted concept of a woman's place being in the home. But just as easily in times of economic crisis for the dominant class, women can be the first out. Besides women have another role which can be emphasised or ignored depending on economic boom or slump, that of reproducing and servicing the labour force. This is woman's most important role to capitalism, though it is not afforded much economic recognition. It is at the point of child-rearing, where the socialisation of women into the role of mother; childminder, teacher, domestic, and economic dependent; pays off for capitalism. Mother does her duty without question, without financial incentives. From birth girls are trained for this role, employment is only incidental. It doesn't matter if she gets a good education or a good job, her role is to reproduce and serve the male worker, while his role is to make her role possible by working. Also capitalism has another role for him apart from worker. Boys especially are taught to repress their fears and emotions and adopt an aggressive attitude. This serves its purpose in both work and war time. Working class men are expected to do their duty, in the role of soldier and are thus encouraged from childhood to play war-games. The division of workers into sex roles causes them to think mainly of their own sex and makes women and men undermine each others' struggle. Today some people are questioning these roles. Homosexuals have never fitted into sex roles. Even those into role-playing demonstrate how flexible and therefore how pointless these roles are. Because of this homosexuals are oppressed. Though most of the laws and violence are directed against gay men, it's perhaps lesbians who most undermine sexism, many lesbians are active in the Womens Liberation Movement. Though the Gay Liberation movement has lost impetus, and never included more than a small number of gays, its existence has gradually affected the rest of the community. Gay men are often still male chauvinist but the militancy of lesbians has forced them to challenge this to an extent heterosexual men do not usually have to. It is now far more than just the GLF who see gay oppression as



part of the wider oppression of women. Action has been organised against specific cases of discrimination and the Gay Trades Union groups are directly affecting people who the movement has not previously included in the whole century of its existence.

The womens liberation movement has grown firstly among women who have been through higher education and who are bored by their role of mother. They miss the 'freedom' that economic independence allowed them prior to marriage. Secondly by poorer-educated women both encouraged by and resentful of their better-off sisters. It is important that we strive to achieve as great a measure of sexual equality within capitalism as possible. Demands for equal wages, equal job opportunities, free contraception and abortion facilities, free creches in every locality, and so on, should be pushed as much as we can. But if we stop at achieving these demands we will only have substituted the oppression of women in the nuclear family by the more direct oppression of the state and commodity society in general. Authoritarian sexual relationships in the family which reflect and reinforce authoritarianism in other aspects of life, can and must be broken down, but capitalism will only co-operate in allowing this to the extent that it can substitute other means of authoritarian conditioning, through its control of the state and the media in particular.

Capitalism is capable of accommodating many of women's desires for equality with men, without harming the interests of the dominant class. It would not be especially difficult for a state-capitalist country to allow mothers some economic independence from men by paying them a 'wage', as indeed some womens liberationists are demanding. Fathers could equally apply for the job without in any way undermining the economic organisation of society. Attitudes that have taken centuries to congeal take time to break down, meanwhile capitalism is quite capable of co-opting attempts to break down repressive sexist relationships. Socialists must encourage those who are questioning their role to link up their struggle with the struggles of other workers, to see the oppression of workers by capitalism as a whole and to seek to counter that oppression by revolution. However we can't show workers how they are oppressed or how they oppress others unless we consciously fight sexism in ourselves and the group. Socialism is only possible when most workers become conscious of the oppressive nature of capitalism, not just how we're oppressed but also how we oppress others.

Sexism cannot be explained comprehensively in purely economic terms, economic independence from men will not alone liberate women. Only the complete overthrow of capitalism through social revolution will free us all from the repressive roles we are socialised into. Then we can make our own decisions to live as we desire. By producing what we need, the way we want, taking what we want. Women won't need to be dependent on men, restrictive sex-role training will lose its function and be made redundant.

RACISM

The ruling class has always tried to divide the workers, in order to maintain its control over us. This is demonstrated in the strategy of 'divide and control' so often used in colonial conquest, but it applies equally at home. In a workplace, for instance, management often tries to play off skilled workers against 'unskilled' in order to defeat the struggles of both. Racism and other attitudes alleging the superiority of one group of workers over another are particularly vicious weapons used by the bosses all over the world to set us fighting amongst ourselves.

From its earliest days, capitalism has relied upon the exploitation of people all over the world. The slave, colonialism, the appalling conditions of British workers during the industrial revolution, all helped to build up the modern industrial economies. In order to maintain this system of exploitation, the ruling class have tried to persuade each group of workers that they are threatened by the others. When Jewish workers began to come to Britain from East Europe at the end of the last century to escape oppression there was a massive anti-immigration campaign, resulting in the Aliens Act.

Today there is massive immigration into all industrial nations in Europe. In all of them there have been strong movements against it, which have served to divide workers in many industries.

EDUCATION

The 'education' system we see today is really a process of social engineering or training people to fit into society as it already exists without criticising or wanting to change that system. We would more accurately refer to this system therefore as a training or schooling system because education should be a process whereby people become critically aware of reality, which can lead to effective action upon it. Obviously this does not happen in our schooling system, which merely ties us to present society and encourages its prolongation.

Our present schooling system is based on compulsion, not free choice — by law we are forced to attend. The school system holds a monopoly on knowledge and the student has little choice in what is learned. Youth is crammed with what it does not want at a time when it cannot appreciate it. Enquiring minds are often dulled by this process (very necessary, of course, if we never want effective changes in society). Young children learn many things without formal teaching because they have enquiring minds.

This so-called 'education' system is completely institutionalised (education is seen as taking place within four walls at set times for set ages). The system is also identified with hierarchy and privilege and exclusion as in wider society, educational institutions become dominating institutions rather than opportunity networks. Here the young are concentrated on with parents pushing for the prizes they have been socialised into wanting for their children.

This institutionalised system then helps to perpetuate and foster the type of society we have at present. This involves fitting individuals into certain roles and putting over only socially approved values, those of conformity, hierarchy, leadership, and authority being prime examples, (this is not done in a conspiratorial way but nevertheless the result ensues). If education did help people to be critical about society and through this to make improvements, we would not be educated to maintain the status quo by the indoctrination of the socially approved values of an unjust society. If education is to be a major instrument in developing a 'just' world then a basic objective should be an understanding of the world in which we live and the one we hope for. Why does the schooling system avoid linking together crucial present day problems eg. starvation while food is destroyed, pollution amidst advanced technology.

Of course we only have to look briefly at the history of education to see the links it has with industry. Mass education developed along with the production line and the mechanical age. As industry became more developed so more schooling was needed. At first only basics were necessary; as industry advanced so did schooling eg typing was introduced into the curriculum when needed by industry.

Specialisation and standardisation in industry seem to be mirrored in the educational institution at all levels. Of course the competition in industry is also prevalent in education, whether it's competition in exams or sports or

collecting for charities.

There is a marked similarity between a forced 9am to 4pm school day and a forced work-day in an office or boring job. We cannot help but see schooling as a 'good' training for later work.

Of course in mirroring society the education system helps perpetuate sex roles. There are still boys' and girls' subjects and jobs in schools. How can the young develop as they wish if they have roles forced on them at an early age?

For the sake of morale everyone is made to think there is equal opportunity in the school system. It is not hard to see however that social class is maintained even through the system — and this is no accident. Finance, parental pressure, aspirations, different values and expectations all contribute to this.

Education should be a life-long experience of critical development. It can be gained from many sources; maybe one of these could be a teacher/student relationship with students having choice in what THEY want to learn. The world itself has much to offer, and education through experience is surely vital to all and not to be dismissed as it tends to be today. The education system we have needs radically altering, but the structures of wider society try to prevent this. Both need changing as both bolster each other up.

Today we see the beginnings of a desire for change. Not everyone involved in education accepts it in its present form. Students for instance in the class room often rebel against authority and the work they are forced to do, or they miss lessons, lectures, etc.. A school students' union exists to try to fight for better conditions and more rights for young students, as unions exist for older students. Teachers too, both individually in their places of work and collectively in teachers' action groups, through magazines, etc. try to initiate changes to the system both on the academic and the personal side of the system. Some disillusioned teachers have set up free schools to experiment with alternative educational systems.

We believe that both fighting within the state educational system and trying out alternatives outside it, are valuable as starting points for the creation of a socialist form of education. We consider this struggle to transform education to be part of the wider class struggle to change relationships throughout society.

If people are trained to obey, to distrust their own decisions, and robbed of their initiative, confidence and ability to criticise and try out alternatives by the schooling process, then it will be all the more difficult for them to take part in the transformation to a socialist society.

We encourage these trends in education because they contain elements of what we think education in a socialist society will be trying to do; but also, we welcome them because they bring a socialist society closer.



REFORM & REVOLUTION

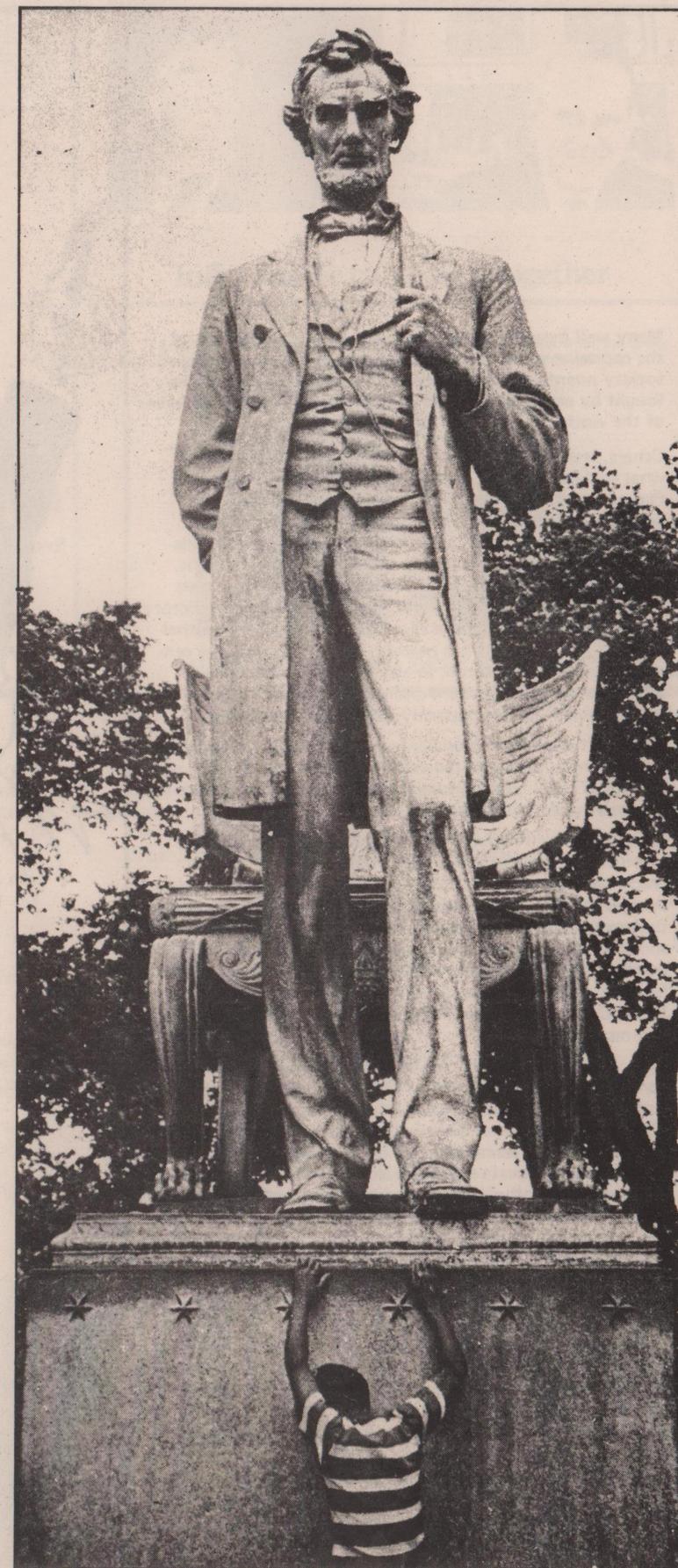
By reforms we mean changes in society, whether or not achieved by legislation, which leave the basic structure of capitalism intact. We describe ourselves as revolutionaries not because we consider all reforms worthless and to be opposed, but simply because we think that most of the major problems afflicting working people are incapable of solution within the framework of present day society. This society cannot be made to work against its fundamental nature by a straightforward accumulation of reforms. Islands of socialism cannot exist within an ocean of capitalism. Thus, although we may be involved in organisations, campaigns and experiments of a predominantly reformist nature, our activity is guided by a set of priorities different from that of the majority of participants.

Many "left" groups, who see themselves as vanguards, get involved in or promote campaigns even when they know that the aims are unrealistic in present circumstances — for example, while we urge people to resist the present cuts in our living standards and in public services, it would be hopeless in a recession to demand reforms which would involve vast increases in public expenditure. The leftists make such demands in order to recruit, or with the idea that people will have their eyes opened by hitting their heads against brick walls. We only get involved if the objectives of a campaign are on the whole worthwhile and realistic and we have a genuine personal interest in them.

Since socialist ideas do not spring up from nowhere, but develop through a complex process of personal and learned experience, advances in the class struggle will inevitably be linked, to a greater or lesser degree, to demands for reforms. The working class has emerged from the early stages of capitalism tied to the ideology of the ruling class, but has through experience, gradually become a more independent force. Now, however, the organisations such as co-operatives, trade unions, and labour parties, created by workers as an expression of their growing power within the system, have become integrated into the administrative structure of capitalism. The major reforms and material improvements achieved through these organisations have strengthened workers and enlarged their vision of what to expect from life, but continued attachment to the decayed shells of these organisations now acts as a barrier to further advancement.

Increasingly, groups of workers are acting independently and directly through occupations, squatting etc to take what they require and institute themselves the changes they consider necessary. "Demands" made on supposedly authoritative bodies, such as Parliament, trade unions or religious and political hierarchies, are receding into the past, although these two kinds of activity are not yet completely distinct. An example is legalised squatting. So our activity in other campaigns and organisations is aimed at strengthening these trends towards democratic forms of direct action. We also seek to break down the isolation of different struggles by developing links between them, both theoretically and practically. So long as these struggles remain isolated, their victories will be very short-lived — it is essential that their participants develop an awareness of the need to aim at a simultaneous transformation of the whole of society, and not simply chip away at its parts.

Workers gained major reforms during capitalism's periods of expansion, precisely because these also helped in capitalism's own development and modernisation. Today, with each recession, even these basic reforms come under attack. Reforms of benefit to workers are not impossible now, but they are certainly hard to come by. The old merry-go-round offers less and less; revolution becomes more and more obviously the solution.



THE PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Many well meaning people who advocate the abolition of the capitalist system and its replacement by a free socialist society maintain that a successful social revolution can be fought by capturing seats in the various parliamentary bodies of the world.

Others, less naive, but also having no clear conception of what socialism means, maintain that by gaining seats in Parliament the working class can materially improve its position, indeed through a process of reforms can make capitalist society "just" and "fair" to all. Leninist groups either advocate supporting the Labour party in elections, or putting up "working class" candidates from their own sects. Indeed they often follow the apparently contradictory policy of doing both at the same time. These groups either follow such a policy from naivety, or by following the out-moded concepts of Lenin, in assuming such action will allow them to use elections and parliaments as "revolutionary tribunals", or for blatantly manipulative purposes.

The result of all these policies is to aid reaction and counter-revolution, to put back the day of socialism. SOCIAL REVOLUTION GROUP categorically rejects such a basis for activity. We do so because :-

- 1) Parliament can never serve as an organ for socialist revolution. Based on a nebulous "representative" democracy, calling on people to hand over their power to others once every few years, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the revolutionary democracy of the working class during social revolution. Socialist revolutionary democracy will be based on the direct power of the working class. It will function through democratically elected, mandated and REVOCABLE DELEGATES, based on workplaces and communities.
- 2) Success in revolution will require majority communist consciousness AND preventing the expropriated ruling class from crushing it. Such work requires the conscious subversion of the armed forces, and the willingness where necessary to counter force by force, whether by sabotage, disruption or in the last resort armed resistance. Nominal control of Parliament and other elected bodies is no substitute for such action, indeed to advocate such control serves to weaken the workers by spreading confusion about the nature of the state. Today the state consists of the monarchy, both Houses of Parliament, the local authorities, the church, the State mental hospitals, the media, the education system and the political organisations of the bourgeoisie - from the fascists through the Labour Party to the factions of leftist State capitalism (CPGB, Trotskyists, Maoists, etc) - in short, all those institutions which make us conform to the norms imposed by the ruling class.
- 3) Parliamentary activity hinders the development of majority communist consciousness. Such consciousness requires self-activity and confidence in our own ability to change society. By handing over power to others these important requirements are not achieved, rather it leads to docility, inactivity and cynicism.



TRADE UNIONS

'It's not worth fighting for more money if the money's worth less and less.'



'As a housewife inflation affects me as much as anyone.'



Inflation. We can beat it together

'The miners are determined to help the country recover from inflation.'



'Those of us who can, must do everything possible to control prices.'



Inflation. We can beat it together



'Inflation will destroy us if it cannot be controlled.'



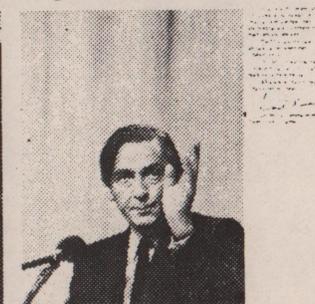
'We can beat inflation and unemployment if we are united.'

Inflation. We can beat it together

'I know companies will do all they can in the fight to bring inflation down.'



'The need to beat inflation is one thing we all have in common.'



Inflation. We can beat it together

With the growth of industrial capitalism and the transformation of the majority into wage labourers, there arose, in the first instance mainly amongst skilled workers, trade unions whose aim was to defend the economic interests in this or that trade against the interests of the employers. Later, trade unionism grew among unskilled workers. In Britain, this began in the 1880's, in some cases with the help of socialists such as Eleanor Marx.

Often today, at the workplace, trade union activity still forms the workers' front line of self-defence against capitalism. This struggle, however, the vague commitments to a new society in the constitutions of some TU's notwithstanding, is not for Socialism but for more within capitalism. Because they have to mediate between workers and capitalism, trade unions contain within themselves contradictions. Whilst they can represent the interests of workers against capital, often they work the other way round and become tools for the control of the workers. We see this occurring in many disputes where the unions sell out and sabotage the actions of the workers in dispute. We see it also in the way that unions divide the working class, cultivating sectional interests and craft-consciousness. For example, there exist separate unions for manual and white-collar workers in local government. We see it in the collaboration of unions with management in running industry, and therefore exploiting workers, by agreeing to lay-offs, productivity deals, etc., and in co-operation with governments (particularly Labour governments) in wage control policies; rationalisation programmes and import controls which only hinder the development of world working class unity. In many countries the trade unions are completely integrated into the state machine (as in the state capitalist regimes of Russia and Eastern Europe) or act quite openly as policemen in the workplace (as in the USA). These factors result in workers having to fight the union bosses as well as the employers and the state. Indeed, often the union bureaucracies only intervene to give 'support' in order to defuse the situation and channel protest along easily-controlled respectable paths - thus

attempting to keep the struggle within the bounds of the system. To counter this, workers have developed new organisations such as shop stewards committees. In recent years, many strikes have been organised on this level against unions and bosses together, but even the shop stewards' organisations are now being co-opted in many cases.

The class struggle occurs not only through trade unions but within them. This is a result of their social role, rather than faulty leadership. Thus the manipulative use (as by Leninist groups) of 'rank and file' groups to try to capture the union apparatus or change the leadership is futile from a socialist point of view, as are attempts at setting up alternative unions (eg. the Glass and General Workers' Union after the Pilkington strike). The extent to which individual unions are co-opted differs but the trend is the same.

As libertarian communists, we participate in all the struggles of our class, and so in the trade unions. We do so, not with any illusions, but in order to assist the class struggle. Revolutionaries should not, in our opinion, become full-time, paid union officials or take up any trade union post which carries any substantial privileges. We do not seek to become leaders and manipulate workers; instead we support the fights of workers against both bosses and trade union leaders. We also seek to develop an awareness of how each individual dispute is part of an overall class struggle, and how this struggle can only be resolved by the creation of a socialist society. We attack the undemocratic manipulations of both the right and the left and do not pretend that revolutionary motions passed by tiny meetings are the real voice of our class. Campaigns, strikes and occupations should, where possible, be run by general assemblies of the workers involved, and by directly elected and immediately revocable rank and file action, strike and occupation committees, which we see as the forerunners of genuine workers' councils in industry.

We recognise that trade unions of their nature cannot be used to destroy capitalism. This is the task of the workers' councils.

WORKERS COUNCILS

The revolutionary transformation of society from capitalism to socialism is not simply a change of political power, or even economic organisation, but involves a conscious effort to revolutionise all the relationships of every day life — to humanise the way we relate sexually; the way we educate ourselves; the way we work and live together; and simultaneously to alter the physical layout of society.

Such a task is incapable of achievement through any of the existing governmental forms or permanent working class organisations within capitalism. It is no parliamentary party, or trade union affair, but requires forms of organisation which allow maximum involvement of the entire working class, unleashing the huge reservoir of creative energy that is bound within each of us.

There is no detailed blueprint that can be drawn up to suit the varied historical, geographical and technological conditions that exist throughout the world, but there are numerous examples that can be drawn from the experience of working class struggle at its height, which can be used as a guide to the immediate future. In Russia 1905 and 1917; Hungary 1919 and 1956; Germany 1918-1919; Italy 1920; Spain 1936; France 1968; Chile 1971-1973; Portugal 1975-76; and in thousands of other more localised struggles workers have established their own organs of power. These factory committees and workers' councils have been made up of directly-elected delegates,

immediately revocable at the will of their electors and accountable to general assemblies of the workers involved. It is these simply understood and easily organised democratic forms which workers themselves have created to extend their struggles against capitalism which we think offer the greatest possibilities for revolutionary change. Extended to cover the whole working class through a network of workplace and neighbourhood councils, linked nationally and internationally, these organisations will enable both the overthrow of the old order and the practical reorganisation of the new.

However, the workers' councils, originating in capitalist society, inevitably embody the occupational and territorial divisions of capitalism. As socialist society matures, it will gradually break down such divisions — between city and countryside, between industrially overdeveloped and industrially underdeveloped regions, between 'intellectual' and 'manual' functions, between what are at present industrial, agricultural and domestic production, between labour and leisure and so on. The replacement of alienated wage labour by freely associated effort allows people in socialism to overcome the needless over-specialisation and division of labour. Men, women and children will develop all faculties of human personality in an integrated social life.

Councils, then, will certainly be superseded by more advanced types of organisation as the new conditions become established.

SOCIALISM

Workers in capitalist society struggle in many ways to assert their needs as human beings against the profit-making motives of capital, to defend their conditions of life and work, and to contest the total control over production and society exercised by the capitalist class. To make advances in these struggles, especially during a period of crisis, workers have to develop the capacity to organise in a democratic and autonomous way, and unify struggles in different industries, areas, nations and aspects of life (work, neighbourhood, personal relationships, ideas). This requires that understanding of the nature of these struggles, as connected parts of a general movement against capitalist domination, grow and spread.

This process, of which the activity of socialist groups is a part, leads to a clearer view among increasing numbers of workers of a new classless society (socialism or communism) as the aim of the struggle. The experience of democratic organisation (eg. workers' councils) makes the possibility of a fully democratic society more apparent, while the growing understanding of capitalism emphasises the urgent necessity for socialism in order to solve working class problems and to safeguard the future of humanity.

Socialism has nothing to do with nationalisation or the state capitalist set-up in the USSR and China. SOCIALISM IS A SOCIETY IN WHICH THE WHOLE WORLD COMMUNITY OWN IN COMMON AND CONTROL THROUGH AGREED DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES THE MEANS FOR PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING WEALTH — such as factories, laboratories and telecommunications. The aim of productive effort and of all other democratically administered social affairs (education, health, design of the environment, planning), is the satisfaction of the real, self-determined needs of human beings, and the fullest possible development of individuals and society. Thus goods and services are produced solely and directly for use, instead of for profitable sale on the market as commodities.

During the revolution, we see the workers' councils taking responsibility for continuing socially-useful production and re-organising it on a socialist basis. Wide areas of useless or harmful work required by capitalism will become unnecessary — the armed forces and armaments production; the protection of private property; advertising; banking and other financial work; most of the state bureaucracy; mass motor production; and so on. Where possible, productive machinery will be adapted to useful purposes. Useful work will be re-organised to gear technology to human needs by automation of boring and dangerous tasks, by making goods to last much longer than at present (ending built-in obsolescence) by eliminating wasteful packaging, by conserving energy, etc..

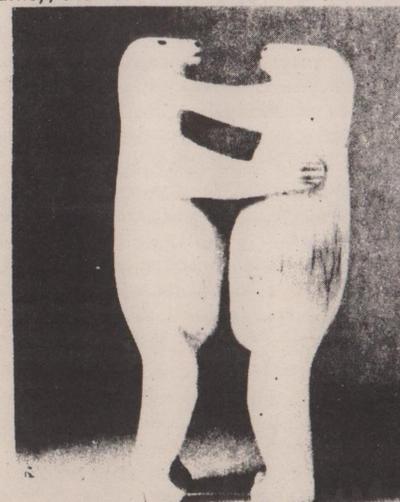
As the working class abolishes all classes, including itself, and integrates their members into a single human community, the need for armed forces (for example,



workers' militias to be used against violent anti-socialist minorities) disappears. We see workers' councils transcending the division between work and the rest of life, and co-ordinating by congresses and councils at industry, area, region, continent and world level.

The councils will use whatever aids are available such as computer and statistical systems through which the community can plan, assess and monitor its needs and productive efforts, discuss and make decisions on social issues; though not indiscriminately, taking into account the possible dangers of a specialist elite in control of advanced technology. Decisions about production will take into consideration peoples desires and needs as voluntary producers, as consumers and as residents, and short and long term environmental and social consequences. Different types of decision will be made and different types of activity co-ordinated at different levels, with the aim probably of arranging matters at the least central level consistent with the effective use of technology. For example, although broad energy policy may be decided at world level, the use of local energy sources (solar, wind, geothermal) could enable local communes to satisfy many of their own needs.

The councils will rapidly overcome during the revolution the division of the world into nations and blocs, and establish a world community. The community will face enormous problems left by capitalism. It will have to co-operate with the inhabitants if the underdeveloped parts of the world to relieve their impoverishment as rapidly as possible, and enable them to participate fully in social administration. It will have to salvage and protect the ravaged natural environment, re-build the worlds' cities and integrate city and countryside. It will have to reconstruct transport and energy systems, and provide better facilities for children. Priorities will have to be set for concentrating resources on the most urgent problems first — for example, the first problem is to guarantee basic necessities to the whole world population. Although money becomes obsolete when socialism is established, democratically agreed rationing of some goods and services may be necessary for some time until free access to everything becomes possible. In socialism, people will be able to experiment with a great variety of ways of living, working and playing together, and society will develop in ways we cannot now foresee in detail.



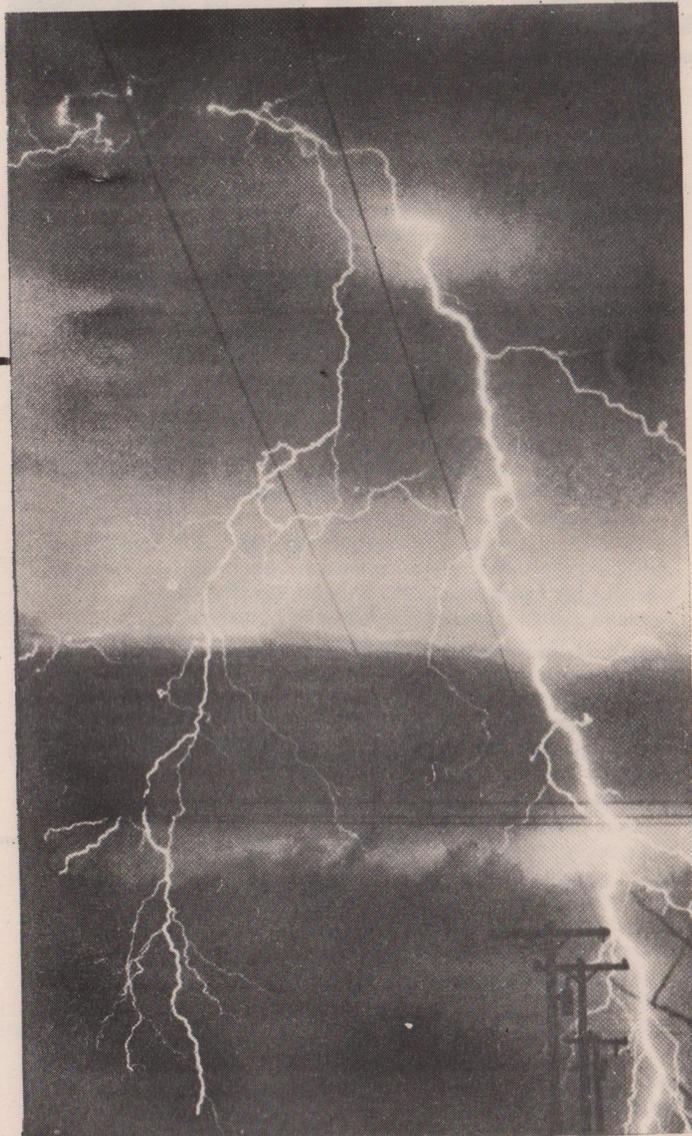
OTHER GROUPS

We are not the only which claims to want socialism, and we do not claim a monopoly of correct ideas. We do assert our right to put forward our views in our own manner, and do not believe that suppressing real differences for the sake of supposed unity of any benefit to our class. On this condition we are willing to co-operate with any other group or individuals on issues on which we agree. Also we are willing to discuss our ideas with others to find possible basis of agreement. However, we urge all those who are in general agreement with the ideas expressed in this pamphlet to join us in furthering our aims.

The points on which we differ with others will generally be clear from the rest of what we have written, but certain points can be made here. Leninism is an ideology of state capitalism and so those who claim to be revolutionaries must break, theoretically and practically with its authoritarian and reformist tendencies or they will be forced into a position of opposition to the working class.

The anti-organisational and anti-theoretical tendencies of traditional anarchism not only render it incapable of serious intervention, but encourage the elitism to which it claims to be opposed.

The dogmatic approach of certain left-communist groups, and their perpetual production of theoretical jargon, conceals a lack of any theory relevant to the class struggle to-day, and an inability to develop one. Likewise their sectarian approach reveals a lack of a serious account of the real development of consciousness and an inability to understand their own situation.



AND US

Our group exists to assist the class struggle and the destruction of capitalism.

We reject both the bureaucratic conceptions of Leninists who seek to lead the working class into what they think is socialism by bureaucratic manoeuvres, and the traditional anarchists who oppose all serious political organisation.

Our members participate in the day-to-day class struggle, both in organisations such as trade unions, tenants', squatters', and womens' groups, and independently where we live and work. The aim of our work is to encourage the democratic organisation and understanding necessary for the working class to achieve its own emancipation. We fight against the division of people into theorists and activists and leaders and led, within and outside the group.

SOCIAL REVOLUTION is itself a democratic organisation composed of local groups acting autonomously, but within the framework of an agreed policy. We believe that socialism in one country is an impossibility; therefore we seek to encourage the growth of libertarian socialist groups in other countries and to work with them towards the goal of world socialism.



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