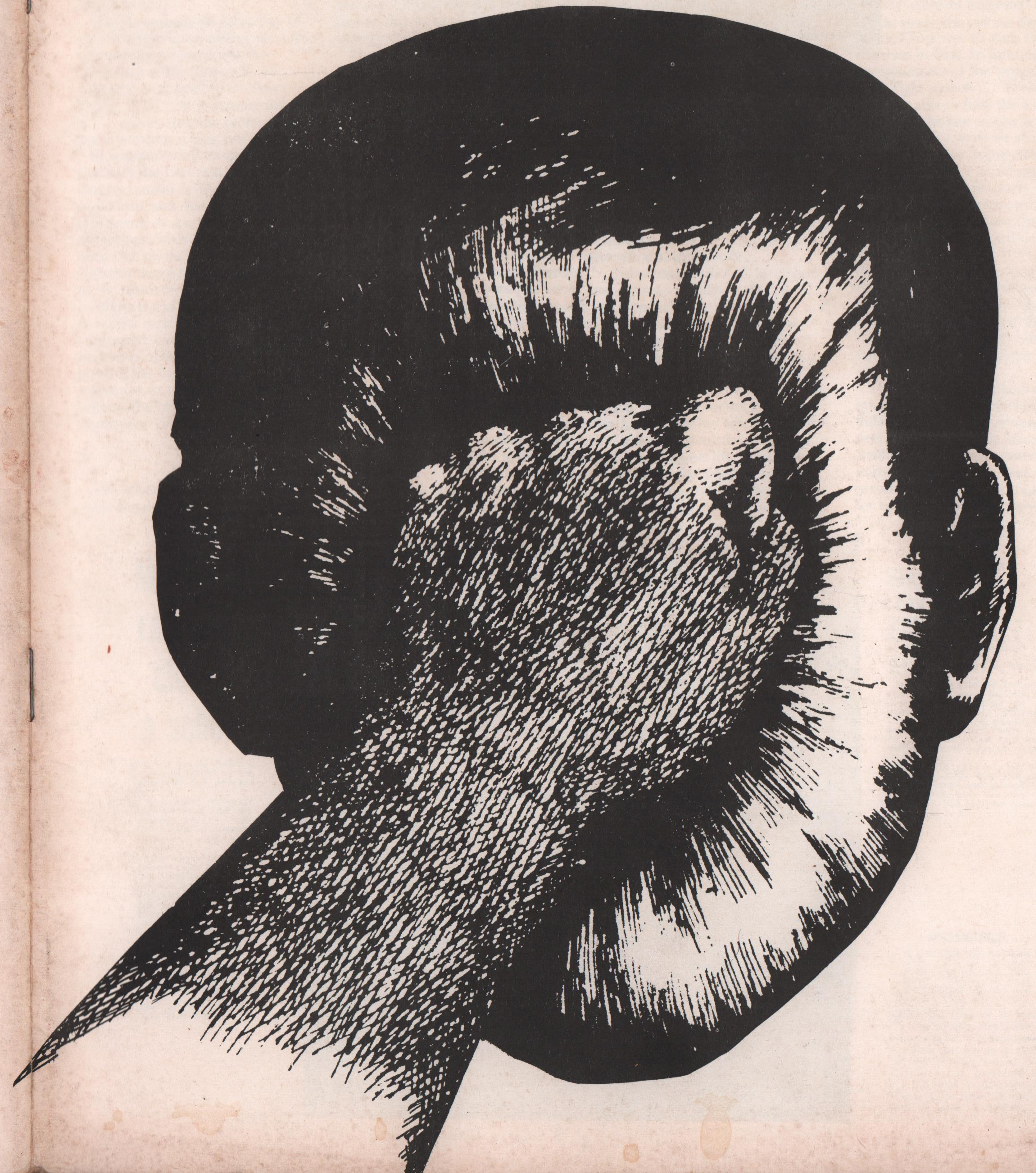


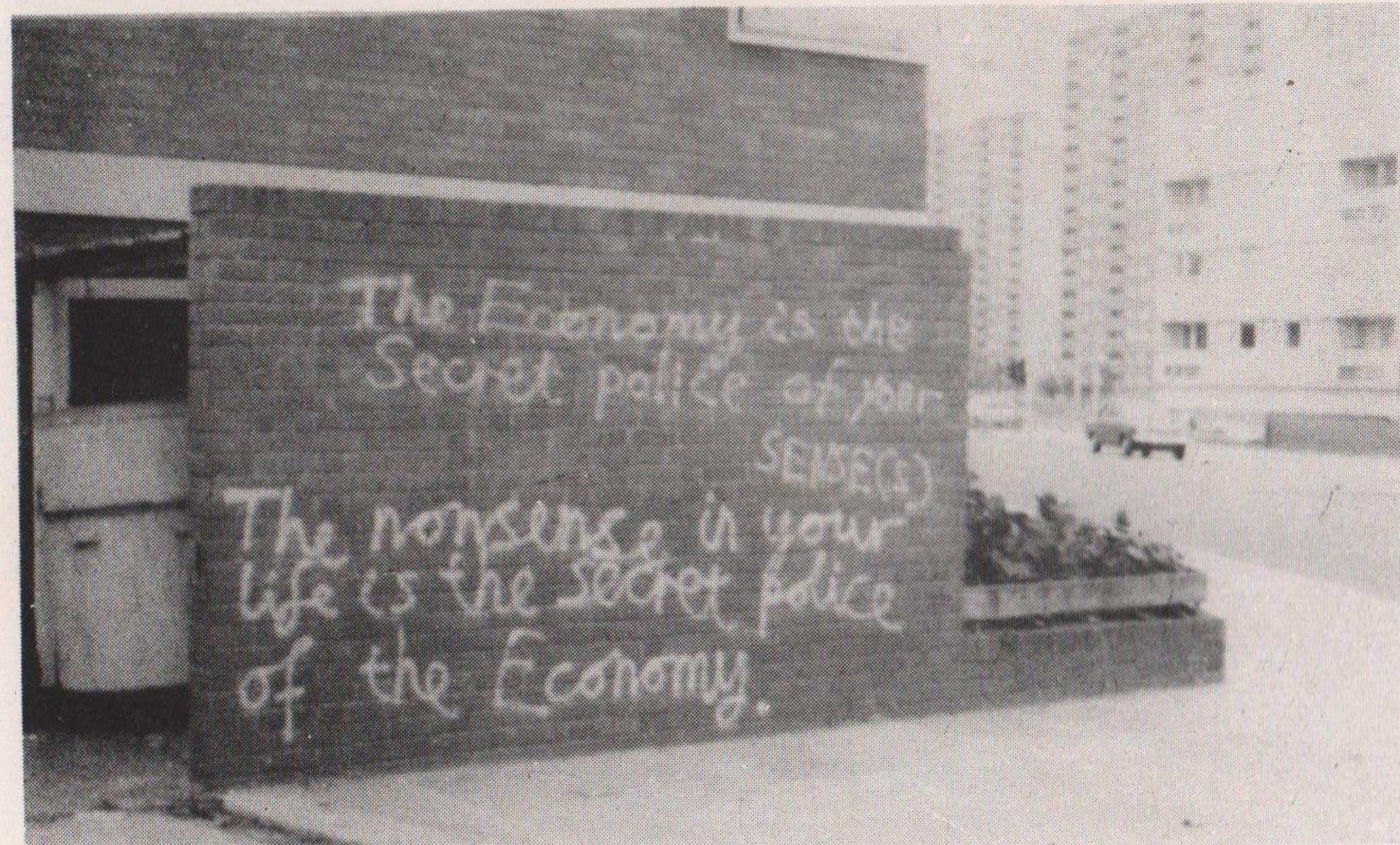
# RE-FUSE

35p

FURTHER DIALECTICAL ADVENTURES INTO THE (UN)KNOWN

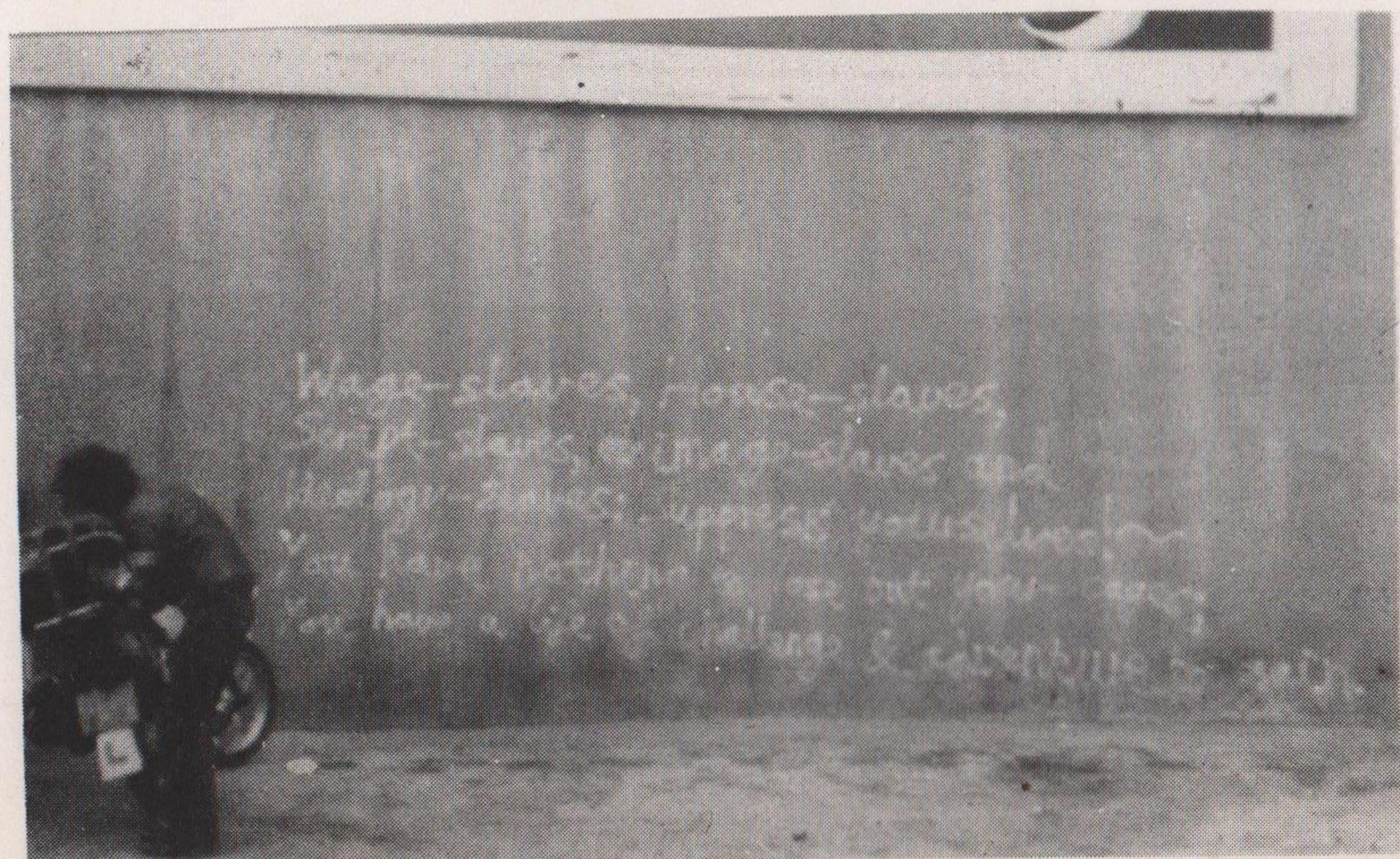






In October 1974 I published 'Dialectical Adventures Into The Unknown' under the pseudonym 'Spontaneous Combustion', which at that time was a group of individuals. In May 1975, for the re-print of 'Dialectical Adventures Into The Unknown', I published a self-critical insert 'Carry On Consciousness'. The present text includes the original 'Dialectical Adventures . . .', minus some of the cartoons and pictures, plus a few alterations. The present version of 'Carry On Consciousness' is an elaboration and up-dating of the original self-critique, minus some of its vagueries. This text also includes a few letters, plus some additional insights. Xeroxes of the original 'Dialectical Adventures . . .' and the original 'Carry On Consciousness' are available from me at 80p. Some of the critiques of particular individuals in this text have also applied to me at various times. The intention is partly to exorcise such critiques from my brain, make them public and incite others to similar publicity, and partly to cite general implications about such specific individuals. There is no unifying factor to this text: it's basically a collection of insights about some aspects of the world which are vital for the revolution, since it goes without saying that nothing will go until we say.

Nick Brandt, September 1978  
BM Combustion, London WC1V 6XX



## the work of negation [& the negation of work]

Struggles, whose unconscious, essential reasons are qualitative and subjectively generated (lack of control over one's life, boredom etc.) are expressed in quantitative terms, the terms the commodity permits (more money, equal pay etc.) — demands which, although arising out of the struggle with real needs, have already been superseded in acts, and thus ensure that consciousness remains false (e.g. 'Defend the Unions' = 'Defend the recuperators').

The left ignores the radicality of the acts (unofficial strikes, etc.) to concentrate on justifying the reformism of the demands. All demands, in appealing to others — bosses, Trade Union bureaucrats etc. — ensure that the proletariat never becomes a class for itself.

In concentrating on quantitative demands the Left ensures that strikers remain defined by capitalism, and that they accept the framework of spectacular definitions, where relations between men take on the form of relations between things (i.e. the quantitative). In the realm of the quantitative, individuals and groups can no longer recognise each other, nor be recognised. Only the qualitative enables people to see the possibilities for their own self-realisation in the self-activity of others. The following is an attempt to examine the qualitative . . .

★

The official miners strike of 1972 went dangerously out of the control

of the officials who gave it their blessing. Against their orders, the miners stopped doing maintenance work — closing down the pits completely. The contempt for work, and the bosses' violence, was articulated in a TV programme, when the miners were asked if they realised that by refusing to do maintenance work they were putting the future of the pit in danger. One replied, "So what — who wants to go down the bloody pit again anyway?". Another said that in closing down the pits they had already saved several lives.

The rank and file organisation of the whole 'community' (a community based on defending itself, rather than individuals realising themselves in common, which can only exist on any large scale from the revolutionary moment onwards) against the police at Saltley Coke Depot shows the inability of the bureaucracy to contain the struggle within legal limits. And the, albeit temporary, refusal of some sections of miners to return to work, despite a 20% wage rise, shows as much a resistance to forced labour as contempt for the union hierarchy that negotiated the rise. Clearly Heath's fear that the 'traditional British way of doing things' was being undermined was a justified expression of the growing refusal to submit.

★

The refusal to submit is manifested daily in the unpublicised

ways workers avoid work, both individually and collectively — sabotage being the most obvious example of this refusal. Whilst the playfulness of spanners in the works rarely reaches the imaginative creativity of the guy in a Blackpool rock factory who, given notice to quit, substituted the words 'Fuck Off' for the usual 'Blackpool Rock' motif (resulting in the management having to destroy half that year's products), sabotage *always* inverts the rules of productivity before pleasure and the power of things over men.

Likewise, vandals show their disgust for a disgusting world by smashing up the housing estates and schools which oppress them . . . and in the act of smashing something up they are united with the world and with their own actions. However, a lot of vandalism is purely cathartic: vandals purge their frustrations without changing the social relations which create the frustrations in the first place — most gangs, for instance, have a strong hierarchy.

Shoplifting, although an almost exclusively individual act, can be seen as similar to sabotage etc. in its assertion of the individual above things (and their price). Beyond being a refusal of bourgeois property relations, it is also a rebuttal of the use of both product and productive force. The sociologists and store detectives, neither being noted for holding a particularly playful attitude towards life, have failed to spot either that people enjoy the act of stealing or that they are beginning to steal *because* they

enjoy it.

★ The 1972 wildcat dock strike against the Tories' Industrial Relations Act, whilst demonstrating the strength of the direct power of workers against the forces of law and order, remained firmly in the grip of the CP, whose stewards effectively policed solidarity demonstrations outside Pentonville prison: when a bus was used to barricade the street the stewards ensured its removal, when an 'unruly' element suggested the crowd storm the jail the stewards handed him over to their opposite numbers in blue. In limiting the consciousness of the struggle to a mere fight against the Tories, the CP were able to hide the irony of hitting at the law on one level, yet doing its dirty work on another.

However, even Bernie Steer, the freed CP steward, could glimpse the contradictions of his party's position: "The workers will not be treated like sheep when they have nothing to look forward to but a change of sheepdog". With the violent jostling of bureaucratic sheepdog Jack Jones, whose job it is to herd the flock into capitalism's stockades, it is clear that the sheep's tattered clothing hardly serves to cover the wolf-men baying to get out.

The Lincoln bus strikers were quick to learn that unofficial industrial action can reverse court decisions. The worker jailed for stealing was released almost immediately without even presenting his case in his application for bail — so his mates went on to

## Mini-mob rampage closes a school

FOUR young children went to school at the weekend — and wrecked it. In a two-day rampage they smashed and vandalised their way through classrooms, staffrooms and stockrooms. Damage was so bad that parents were warned last night to keep their children away from the school — Wickham Junior and Infants, at Hornchurch, Essex — today. "It is unbelievable," said headmaster Hugh Croucher. "In two days these four have turned the school into a mess of broken glass and furniture. None of the wreckers was aged over ten."



"Our quarrel is not with the unions . . . Our quarrel is only with the extremists who want to destroy the moderates in the unions — who want to destroy the unions themselves as they exist in this country". — E. HEATH (Sunday Times 10/2/74)

## Shoplifting 'for fun'

CHIEF London Magistrate Sir Frank Milton described shoplifting as "an additional tourist attraction" when told today how an Argentine couple laughed their way through a thieving spree. Miss Marie Vila, 66, a teacher, and Hector Jose Bualto, 31, farmer, both staying at the Horseguard Hotel, Whitehall Court, Westminster, admitted in Marlborough Street Court stealing two nightdresses, four briefs and a suitcase from an Oxford Street store. Sir Frank said as he fined them each £100 with £10 costs, "Some people steal because they are in need, some because they are ill, but you steal because you think it is fun."

## IRRESISTIBLE

A DRIVER who rammed sixty cars in Calumet Park, Illinois, told police "It felt so good after hitting the first one I couldn't stop." SCHOOL truancy is leading to industrial absenteeism and handicapping Britain's future as a competitive trading nation, Mr Harold Atter, president of the National Association of Chief Education Welfare Officers, said yesterday.



"It is the organisational form itself which renders the proletariat virtually impotent and which prevents them turning the Union into an instrument of their will. The revolution can only win by destroying this organism, which means tearing it down from top to bottom so that something quite different can emerge." - Anton Pannekoek.



Gripes: Militant dockworkers beset union leader Jones

"Bawling and bustling won't deflect Jack Jones or any other leader. This kind of behavior is contemptible and has nothing to do with trade unionism." - Vic Feather, former general secretary of the T.U.C., TIMES, 17/8/72.

reverse the management's decision to suspend a driver for allegedly smoking in his cab.

The CP's reaction to the jailing of the Shrewsbury 3 is in obvious contrast to their reaction to that of the Pentonville 5. The building workers organised and co-ordinated their flying pickets and fight with scabs without the interference of the CP bureaucrats. "Kill, kill, kill! Capitalist bastards - this isn't a strike - it's a revolution!" was one of the slogans chanted by pickets during the '72 strike (quoted in *The Sunday Times*, 7/10/73).

Despite their industrial power, the CP has predictably made only half-hearted solidarity gestures to free the 3. Their token demonstrations and one day strikes are an attempt to appease their rank and file without antagonising UCATT or the TUC, towards which all their trivial 'hopes' and 'aspirations' are directed.

★

Despite their right-to-work (read: 'right to be bored'/'right to be exploited') sloganising, the wildcat factory work-ins and occupations concretely pose the question of the self-management of the means of production. However, even those which maintained full participation in decision-making, in contrast to those subjected to bureaucratic manipulation by the CP (UCS, Bryants, the Manchester AUEW sit-ins) and even management (*Solidarity* vol.7, no.5 reports of a factory in which the manager called and ran a work-in in order to prevent the liquidator taking over the factory; the slogan of the bosses' work-in was, inevitably, 'the right to work'), have accepted the return of the old bosses or the rule of the new as the price for their survival.

Whilst the return of the normal conditions of wage slavery is hailed

as a victory, the radical meaning of the experience is lost in the reformist definition of the struggle. However, the activity of the women workers of Fakenham, despite its limitations, represents a qualitative change from the normal trend of occupations. In taking over the factory they were not merely rejecting the passive role assigned to women, but went beyond the partial critique of Women's Liberation: they could be identified with all those who act to seize control over their lives. The usual subservient role of women in strikes was reversed: it was the husbands who made the tea whilst the women decided strategy.

Initially a struggle over redundancies, they soon confronted the State and the bureaucracy which no longer dared to represent them - by occupying the social security offices and those of 'their' union (not, unfortunately, going as far as the Pilkington workers who, over 4 years ago, smashed up their local office of the notorious scab union - the GMWU).

Ignoring suggestions from the Leftist organisation, the International Marxist Group, to run their work-in through a hierarchy of committees and sub-committees, they managed their struggle by means of regular meetings of all the occupiers. Despite their industrial isolation and numerical weakness, and with no history of struggle, in a matter of weeks these women were able to cut through almost all the hurdles of illusions, exposing the Left's undialectical ideology of 'stages of consciousness' for the absurd lie that it is. However, unable to extend their struggle, they were forced to legalise their work-in in order to survive. Whilst authentic self-management can only exist in areas where the tyranny of the market has been overthrown, there are aspects of the Fakenham take-

## Battle at Butlins as staff

By NED GRANT

A **run riot** erupted into violence when fifty staff went on the rampage early yesterday.

They battled with security officers on an anti-noise patrol outside staff chalets at Butlin's camp at Minehead, Somerset.

Police from three nearby towns were called as the guards were beaten up.

The workers, some chanting "We hate security," were armed with iron bars and one carried an axe, the guards claimed later.

A chalet occupied by two security officers had

its windows and doors damaged.

Two officers were taken to hospital and others were treated in the camp sick bay.

Camp manager Tony Crosby said that the trouble involved "some staff who object to discipline."

He added: "None of the camp guests was inconvenienced in any way."

fire engines, and tyres let down.

**Smoke bomb:** At Woburn Abbey fire station, Essex, striking firemen hurled a smoke bomb and shattered glass in the front door. The action was cheered by a 150-strong mass picket. The station has had several mass pickets since 10 non-union firemen returned to work at Christmas.

**Panels:** Angry at finding no one there, some of the twenty windows in the eastern wing of the building were smashed. The windows were broken and the building was damaged.

**Challenge to a Carnival:** SOME of the happiest faces at the Notting Hill Carnival this year were those of the youths throwing bricks and bottles at police on Monday.

But ordered society depends so much upon the voluntary acceptance of certain restraints that it is alarming whenever it is seen that external disciplines alone are acknowledged, because external disciplines by themselves can never be enough. Keynes once wrote of the thin crust of civilization. In New York on Wednesday night the crust must have seemed very thin indeed.

over which represent a qualitative change from the dominant form (though not use) of production: mutual teaching and sharing of skills, and, consequently, interchangeability of tasks, fortnightly meetings with decisions made collectively, no wage differentials, and a 20-hour week. Equality here has been based not on some abstract concept, nor on a mere quantitative assessment, but on the destruction of hierarchy (including the specialist hierarchy of knowledge, but not the fundamental hierarchy - the subordination of people to the laws of commodity production) and an inevitably concomitant, albeit partial, step towards the destruction of the barriers separating the workers from each other. Its logical extension, which cannot exist under capitalism, is the equality of masters without slaves. Only by becoming conscious of the possibilities engendered by their self-activity can the Fakenham workers generalise their struggle to others and escape the boredom of their

new routine and the isolation of running their own alienation in a 'self-managed' enclave.

★

Whilst sporadic rioting abounds in Her Majesty's Prisons, the sit-downs of 1972 were the first co-ordinated expression of the fight against the concentrated hell existing behind the barbed wire and metal bars. However, the insurrection was largely run by the reformist organisation, Preservation of the Rights (sic) of Prisoners, whose main aim is to get union rights for prisoners. Trying to look respectable and influence (top) people, they limit their demands to more humane treatment for the prisoners - which is a bit like asking the Gestapo to use slippers to kick their captives in the balls. Humiliation can never be humanised, despite the efforts of the humanists. Dick Pooley, former head of PROP, admitted containing the anger of the prisoners: "In Gartree, for example, we have 100% support, and when we call for a

## FORD MEN GO ON RAMPAGE IN GAR PLANT

By PETER PRENDERGAST

A **run riot** erupted into violence when fifty staff went on the rampage early yesterday.

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sit-down, they do it. But there are people in there who'd bum the place down. Luckily in Gartree there are responsible blokes behind us, who will not let the violent element get out of hand."

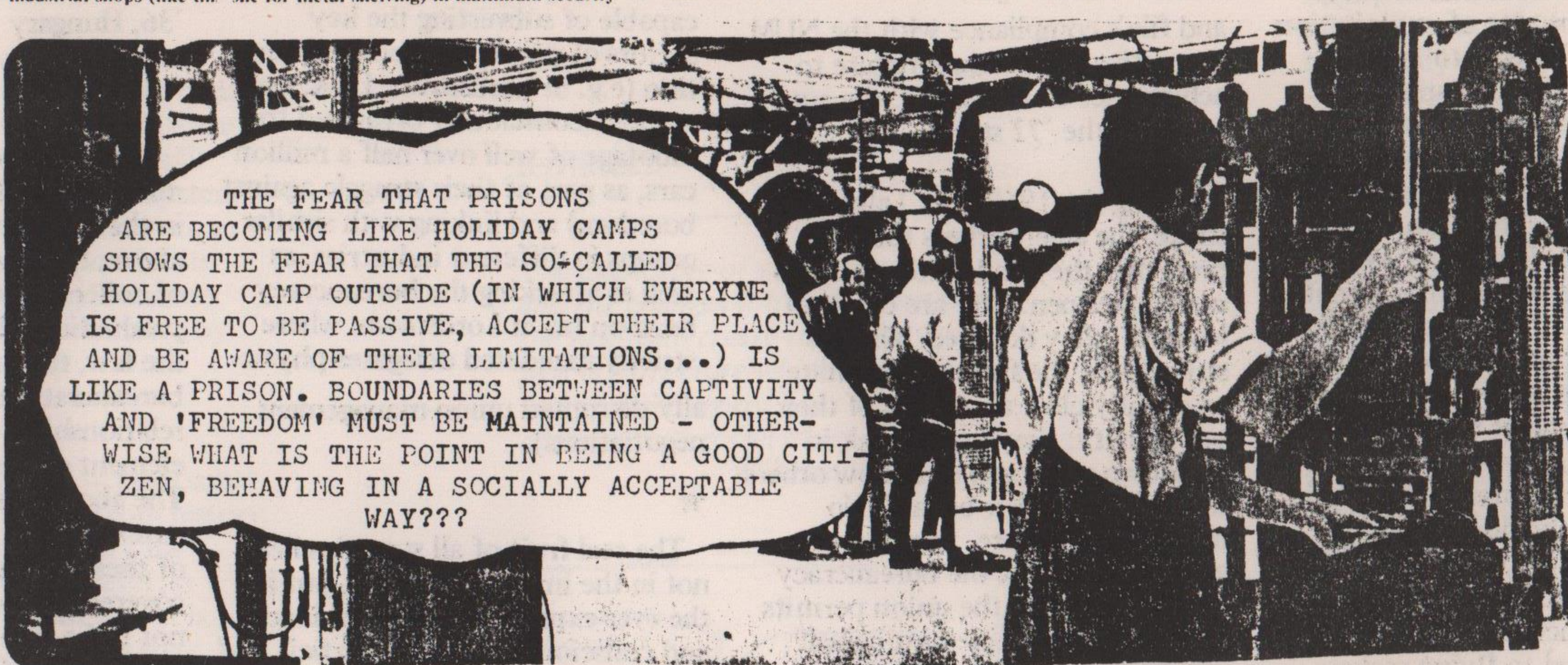
The violence of the authorities following the non-violent revolt is enough to expose the limitations of such priestly leaders. Their righteous condemnation of this repression did not lead them to question the non-violent strategy and reformist analysis which ensured its success. In Brixton, the prisoners showed their mistrust for the negotiations being made 'in their interests' by continuing their sit-out (despite threats from the authorities) because, they said, it was sunny. Pity the PROP theoreticians (who define prisoners as victims of society - a purely passive definition, ignoring the elements who actively refuse to 'play' by society's rules and get caught) failed to mention that the cells most people inhabit outside might have been criticised by similar action.

★

The crisis hitting world capitalism (a decline in economic growth accompanied by accelerating inflation) clearly reveals how commodities are in the saddle riding an increasingly reluctant mankind. In the immediate future the rulers of this country are likely to attempt a precarious balance between repression and 'participation' (i.e. getting the workers to help in their own exploitation: running their own alienation) in order to weaken the opposition to capital which will arise in response to its crisis.

But the crisis will only be final if the proletariat (all those who have no control over their lives and know it) asserts its autonomy against the autonomous power of things, which it can only do by going beyond the quantitative level at which the crisis strikes. However, the most recent workers' struggles in this country have failed to break out of the control of the Union bureaucrats, who owe their allegiance to the existing order of things. If the workers are forced to prostitute their labour to the capitalist in

Opened in 1969, Coldingley in Surrey has been described as 'a prison in a factory'. A new concept in prison design, it enables inmates to work in modern industrial shops (like this one for metal shelving) in maximum security.



THE FEAR THAT PRISONS ARE BECOMING LIKE HOLIDAY CAMPS SHOWS THE FEAR THAT THE SO-CALLED HOLIDAY CAMP OUTSIDE (IN WHICH EVERYONE IS FREE TO BE PASSIVE, ACCEPT THEIR PLACE AND BE AWARE OF THEIR LIMITATIONS...) IS LIKE A PRISON. BOUNDARIES BETWEEN CAPTIVITY AND 'FREEDOM' MUST BE MAINTAINED - OTHERWISE WHAT IS THE POINT IN BEING A GOOD CITIZEN, BEHAVING IN A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE WAY???

## Wilson: How the worker can help to run his factory

DAILY MIRROR, Friday, June 15, 1973

### Business leaders back Jones

LEADING industrialists - worried about the image of British industry being portrayed by some politicians - have joined in the appeal by Mr Jack Jones to set the record straight.

In an open letter to newspapers, Mr Jones has rejected allegations during the election campaign that the unions are dominated by extremists and said the claims were damaging Britain.

Now acting through the London Chamber of Commerce, business-men representing international companies operating in Britain are planning to take active steps to improve on what other countries think of British industry.

**Image abroad** Commenting on remarks in Mr Jones's letter about damage to exports caused by 'union-busting' politicians, a Chamber spokesman said: "In many respects the Chamber supports the essence of what he is saying."

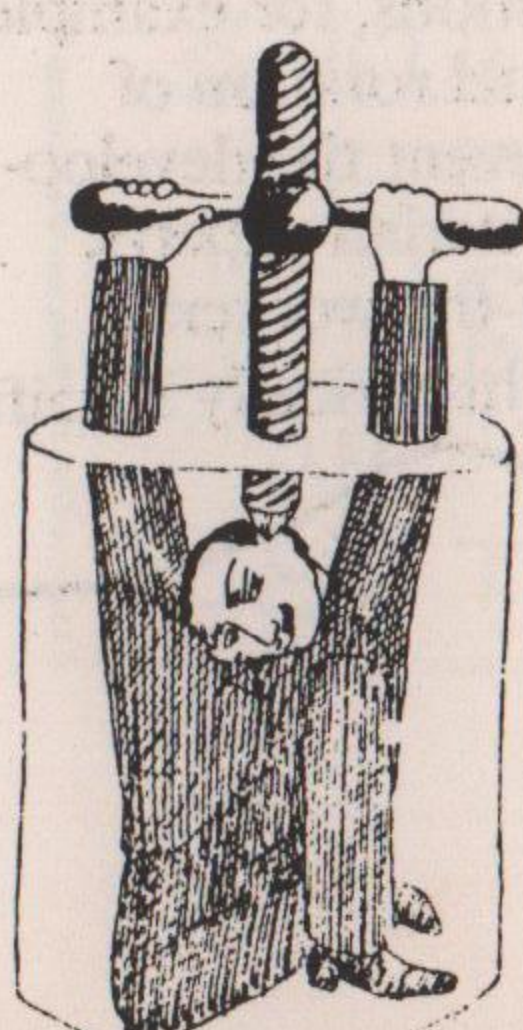
"We have decided to set up a working party to look at the whole question of the British image abroad. This will be led by a number of senior foreign industrialists working in Britain."

Mr Jones's public appeal not to ignore the falling number of days lost through strikes, and the co-operation between management and workers over the three-day week would give new urgency to the project.

"Outside the political context of attacks by politicians on unions, most industrialists would probably echo the basic sentiment what Mr Jones has said."

Unless radical changes are made in relations between management and shop-floor it will become increasingly difficult for modern industry to function effectively.

- H. WILSON



Workers' participation.

## IT'S WAR AGAINST BOREDOM

By ALAN LAW Industrial Correspondent

THE Government, the Confederation of British Industry and the TUC are linking up to conquer the increasing problem of boredom at work.

Employment Minister Maurice Macmillan yesterday announced the joint scheme aimed at improving the quality of our working lives.

The Ministry is backing the project with money, top psychologists and social service experts.

The joint working party, led by Mr Robin Calchester-Clark, Minister of State at the Employment Ministry, will draw up a programme of experiments in industry and commerce.

Mr Macmillan said last night: "We have produced an industrial society which has produced a higher standard

of living as a result of production techniques.

"But it is these techniques which have produced difficulties and additional stress in people's working lives."

"Rewards to workers have been concentrated too much in extra money. Now we want to give them extra satisfaction in doing the job."

Mr Macmillan said that "boredom by automation" must be curbed. He said that employers must understand that it is people, not machines, who matter.

### Monotony

And he said: "The action we intend to take is aimed at making people's working lives more satisfactory."

Mr Macmillan said that motor car belt production did not have the "monopoly on monotony."

He said the job of the working-party will be to find ways of minimising boredom, monotony and the feeling of insignificance on shop-floor working throughout the country.

The working-party has been set up after an exhaustive report on "The quality of working life" by Dr Norman Wilson, a senior occupational psychologist.

## Tory charter for workers' power

Sunday Mirror Industrial Correspondent

HALF the directors of every firm should represent such interests as the workers and the local community, says the Tory Bow Group today.

In a report on worker participation, the group calls for "a gradual but fundamental change" in the ownership and control of industry.

"If companies are not to become subject to tighter and tighter statutory control, it is vital that the self-regulatory powers of boards should be reinforced from within," says the group.

So the option should be open for up to half the directors to be nominated by non-owner interests.



order to survive, it's clear that the role of the union is that of pimp, negotiating the rate of exploitation.

The unions' task is to integrate the workers into the capitalist structure, which sometimes necessitates a stance of opposition in order to lead a struggle, which might otherwise escape its grasp, back into acceptable limits. As Joe Gormley stated during the recent miners' strike: "The argument by the lads for continuing with the strike was that if it was called off, the members might walk all over us." (Times 9/2/74) — a fear that might have been meant literally in view of what the dockers did to Jack Jones in '72. Gormley was obviously afraid of any kind of rank and file action, which is why he was opposed to flying pickets, used by the building workers in '72. "Flying pickets can fly out the

window", he stated just before the miners' strike began. And the rank and file's compliance with the NUM 'executive' shows their failure to achieve, let alone extend, the autonomy of the '72 strike.

★ During the 1969 Port Talbot strike, the steelworkers told the press that they had neither leaders nor spokesmen: "We are our own leaders", they declared. The struggles of the future necessitate an equally clear awareness of their self-activity: they must speak in their own voice and not allow others to steal it 'on their behalf'. No matter how sincere, workers who attempt to attack the bureaucracy within the terms the union permits will inevitably tangle him/herself up in ever-tightening contradictions: such confrontations are as useless as shadow-boxing. The union must

be by-passed: workers must create their own non-hierarchical groups capable of subverting the key sectors of producing and consumption (e.g. in Lordstown, USA, car workers consciously organised the sabotage of well over half a million cars, as part of their struggle against boredom) and linking with similar groups in different industries, as well as attacking the bureaucracy head-on (as in Lordstown, where strictly mandated delegates physically disrupted union-management negotiations).

★ The real fruit of all struggles lies not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding self-confidence and consciousness of the participants; their real victory will be in the conscious appropriation of the use of their lives through the absolute

power of the workers' councils (as outlined in Kronstadt '21, Barcelona '36, Hungary '56 etc.)

Whilst the general form of self-management has begun to appear in the unofficial struggles outlined above, their content (the experience of collectively seizing the means of production, the streets, fighting the law, the State, the union bureaucrats etc.—the change in relationships, the pleasure and the element of play, if any) has not. The above has largely been an external observation; the content of these struggles must be rediscovered by the participants if it is not to be smothered under the the blanket of ideology: analysis must unite with experience if it is not to become abstract.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD  
UNITE — YOU HAVE NOTHING  
TO LOSE BUT YOUR BOREDOM  
— YOU HAVE A WORLD OF  
PLEASURE TO GAIN!

Utopian? Naive? To those common-sense smugs who, in imposing limitations on the consciousness of possibilities, lock up our passions and fantasies in our minds and bodies by demanding that we 'face up to reality' (i.e. reduce the future to what capitalism will permit) and 'accept our limitations' (i.e. give up the fight and resign), we say "Peer through the dim mists of adulthood back to when you were a child. Look at Watts, look at France '68, look at Portugal this year." Of course, the festival of revolt must find the social form that gives its essence unimpeded expression. Or else the various bosses will smother the cry of freedom with the dull monotone of 'Business As Usual', justifying themselves according to the sober principles of 'realism', which is merely the reality of the order of things which have weighed down humanity for two centuries, the only reality these bosses can conceive of

because, steeped as they are in its quantitative rationale, they can only get 'enjoyment' through their management of it: the illusory control of an economy, the laws of which in fact control the controllers, confers upon the bosses a real power over people from which they get their profits and their 'meaning' to life.

To prevent this, spontaneity must seek its consciousness, must search for the social form in which it can unleash itself; history has shown us this form in the power of the workers' councils: sovereign neighbourhood and factory assemblies mandating delegates, revocable at any time, to execute and co-ordinate the decisions made by the people themselves. The councils of the future must destroy not only the geographical barriers but also the illusions which have enabled those of the past to be smashed: all social life must be centred on themselves, all separate centres of power treated as enemies.

They must aim to overcome all separations and contradictions (the split between work and leisure, neighbourhood and work-place, town and country etc.). Internally, the councils must guard against all hierarchical pretensions (status, for example) and bureaucratic growths through the constant surveillance of delegates by the base (through telecommunications, for example) and the continual rotation of delegates to prevent the development of authoritarian experts.

The power of the workers' councils is the historically specific

form in which the proletariat abolishes itself as a subjugated class, in which individuals are directly tied to world history, in which history is consciously made by each and everyone of us, in which the self-management of all is dependent on the self-management of each, in which the pleasure of one is inseparable from the pleasure of all: it seeks to make "the senses direct theoreticians in practice" (Marx), to dissolve the inner-outer antinomy so that (wo)man recognises him/herself in the world (s)he has made, to bring truth into the world, so that thought is corrected by practice and practice corrected by thought and the dichotomy between the two disappears.

"The world has long harboured the dream of something. Today, if it merely becomes conscious of it, it can possess it in reality." (Marx). The development of automation heralds the possibility of the complete abolition of forced labour and at the same time, the creation of a purely playful type of free activity. The productive forces must be put at the service of our imaginations and will to live, of our countless dreams, desires and half-formed projects, of our wildest fantasies. They must be given real, not abstract, powers. We must create environments which transform individual and group experience and are themselves transformed as a result: a real time and space in which all our desires are realised and all our reality desired: game-cities. The total work of art.

1.

Men and women will be given perfect equality as inanimate digits in the society cyberneticians dream about. Women's oppression will only cease when the whole system of imposed roles is overthrown, as part of the general opposition to the society where people's interaction is everywhere mediated by images.

2.

Women's separation — both subjective and objective — from history gives them an opportunity for critical revolt; this, however, is obscured to the extent that it is harnessed to left-wing ideology. In the moment of total rejection of the given social relationships, everything is possible; instead, most women seek shelter in a structure whose very attractiveness is its smothering and ultimately destructive familiarity.

In the established ideologies of revolution, the discussion of the role of women has become mythologised into a partial issue competing with many others, if it is not swamped entirely by the quantitative analyses so beloved of specialists.

It is the attempt to relate to traditional 'revolutionary' ideology — with its emphasis on state power and a 'period of transition' — which leads to the endless debate over job and economic status, caste and class, and sexual identity. Because it is subsumed by a series of traditional rationalisations, the analysis of female identity has not been developed into a total critique.

3.

A critique of female identity implies a critique of all sex-defined roles, which is inescapably a critique of roles in general. Roles suck dry the will to live; keeping and handling them determines the position held in the hierarchical spectacle.

Male chauvinism consists in the reproduction of woman as an appendage, property object and helpmeet, and the denial of her autonomy and her real desires. In the fight against hierarchy, women have in the past enjoyed a head start by being concerned with the more immediate concerns of life and thus having fewer boots to lick.

But they are rapidly losing this advantage as the market completes its global occupation of the gap where daily life once was. The generalised reign of value denies humanity to everyone, irrespective of class or sex. As J.P. Voyer says of the sexual liberationists: "They insult me by insinuating that this world, being the world of 'men', is therefore my possession... me, who doesn't even have the full use of my own life!"

Of course, "dominant sexuality" doesn't exist. There is only sexual misery: a real oppression and an image of happiness. Under the

theses

on

feminism

"The anchoring of sexual morality and the changes it brings about in the organism create that specific psychic structure which forms the mass-psychological basis of any authoritarian social order."

— Wilhelm Reich.



4.

The extreme form of women's liberation has been a brand of militant lesbianism involving separation from the 'oppressor' (men). The predominant attitude of this separation (whether or not it is realised in a separatist colony) is antagonism, distrust and hatred. The separatist woman is defined by this attitude. She has a social identity which can be nothing but negative (offering no opportunities for supersession); it becomes merely the negation of the traditional female identity.

By finding a new role in which to relate to men, she perpetuates her subservience to the world of appearances. Rather than relate to men and women as individuals, she continues to define them through the juxtaposition (to her, antagonism) of the sexes. She expends all her energy in that friction. She is successfully protected from a submissive relationship with men; yet she submits to a fragmented view of the world which is not of her own making.

5.

The majority of feminists fail to realise that they are rebelling against an image of men which is as superficial as the image of women they have rejected for themselves; by limiting the critique of psychological stereotypes to women, the realm of the possible is drastically narrowed.

Their critique has only constructed the image of the New Woman to be realised in the 'post-revolutionary era.' The New Woman like the New Man are mystifications postponing the necessity of calling into radical question all that the revolutionary project must encompass. Those who aim for women's liberation without the liberation of men dig nought but their own graves.



"I've been in this factory for twenty years now, and I've seen people make so many mistakes. All the time fighting for handfuls of rice, you know. And it's never done us a scrap of good. But now they are starting to understand that it's no good fighting for scraps, that the struggle now is to have everything. In the factory either you have everything or you have nothing. There can't be any half measures." — Italian FIAT worker, quoted in Italy, '69—'70. Big Flame.

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Spontaneous Combustion sticker (no longer available).

Used for 'Sex' shops and 'erotic' movies.



Insofar as the fighting in Northern Ireland is a religiously motivated anti-colonialist and nationalist struggle, it offers no possibility of radical change. The most advanced stage was the indiscriminate looting in Ballymurphy and the Bogside, the short-lived Derry street councils of 1969 and the mass rent strike in the Catholic areas following internment, which were all a critique in acts of all political parties and the reign of commodity values which forms their foundation.

This practice was far ahead of Irish political ideology, which has never emerged from militarism, sacrifice and suicide. The supposed oppositions between 'English' and 'Irish', 'Protestant' and 'Catholic', 'North' and 'South' all mask the essential unity of the whole facade against any glimmer of real life. The Southern Irish, English Left (setting up impotent terrorists like the Price sisters as martyrs), Irish Americans and so forth all vicariously participate in these mock battles from the graves of their daily existence. Until all the Christian creeds and political doctrines are dumped in history's dustbins, along with their apologists, no change is possible. All we have now is — on one side — continuous terrorism, impotent because of the theoretical illiteracy of the terrorists: they can't see further than their machine guns. And on the other, an ascendant separatist (masked as 'loyalist') Protestant working class, capable of overthrowing the Faulkner government — but only through the tiny elite of the Ulster so-called Workers' Council, complete with the backing of the bigots — Paisley, Craig etc. The most likely outcome of all the sound and fury will be the traditional one: a pot of bones from which the spectacle will prepare its stew for time to come.

The unusually open repressive nature of British rule in Northern Ireland (indiscriminate killing of demonstrators, internment without trial, torture etc.) can only be seen as the culmination of the economic contradictions of Ireland: the enormous contradiction between monopoly production and the largely tribal pre-capitalist society in which it was suddenly planted. Up until the early 19th century, it was the south that was industrially advanced, while the northern counties had an ill-organised and archaic peasant industry.

A hundred years later, the situation was the other way round. This resulted from the difference in land tenure systems, the system in the north ("Ulster Custom") being more secure and facilitating capital accumulation. From 1820, linen became the northern growth industry, supplemented by ship-building after 1850. In this century, the southern Irish bourgeoisie resorted to protectionism against the imperialist market to arrest any further industrial decline. (The island's population has fallen steadily to its present four and three quarter million.)

The political failure of the industrial bourgeoisie at the beginning of the century, plus the geographical contradiction between big and small bourgeoisie — a contradiction which exists in all capitalist societies, but which is usually kept well in hand by the big bourgeoisie — to become aggravated in Ireland to the point where the only solution was the division of the nation.

Partition was not a cause but a consequence of this division. It

arose out of the uneven development of Irish capitalism. In 1920 the two parts of Ireland would not fit together to make a harmoniously functioning bourgeois system. The two bourgeoisies had conflicting interests in the market; politically, they took the form of nationalism and Unionism.

The protectionism of Fianna Fail in the south reached the limit of its effectiveness by the end of the thirties. After that, southern industry could only increase by operating on the international capitalist market. In the late fifties the inevitable conclusions were drawn: protectionism was dropped. The politically dominant petty-bourgeoisie of the thirties has now given place to a stable grouping of large-scale industrial elements. The new situation was reflected by the repeal of the Manufacturers' Act in 1959 and the Free Trade Agreement with Britain in 1965. On March 4th 1968 the Irish Press declared in a front page headline: "ECONOMICS AND REASON WILL END THE BORDER". In other words, capitalism has no further need for the border. Business interests both in the south and the north recognize this. At the moment, we are witnessing the spectacle of a bourgeoisie abandoning its insular nationalism in favour of Europeanism (a compromise between various national ideologies), while the Left (Sinn Fein et al) heroically struggles on carrying the torch the bourgeoisie have since extinguished. Having missed the ideological boat, the Left stands on the deck frantically shouting "Traitor". (As if the bourgeoisie could betray themselves).

The IRA dare not analyse the economic situation in Ireland for fear of revealing its counter-revolutionary position throughout its existence. It can merely present the Northern ruling class as the incarnation of gratuitous evil, rather than a class stuck with a sectarian ideology of its own making which refuses to disappear when the requirements of the economy demand it.

The Official IRA held recently to a programme demanding a ragbag of private ownership, nationalisation of key industries, credit unions, land co-operatives and a ceiling to land holding. Recently, they have placed more emphasis on the land co-operatives. They aim at worker-ownership based on 'Irish and Christian values' (!) It is completely false to recognise any revolutionary possibilities in either wing of the IRA as it exists today. The nostalgic nationalism and vague dreams about land co-operatives are relics with no significance. The leadership is rigidly authoritarian, capricious and sexually archaic. The IRA acts as a 5th column police force, dealing severely with looters, suppressing sexual 'offences' such as adultery and homosexuality, and the use of proscribed drugs (really dangerous drugs like work, TV and religion are honoured and respected by almost everybody). We must clear away the dross of bygone historical struggles.

Let there be no mistake about it, nationalism is the antithesis of the revolutionary project. Whilst nationalism historically appears as the ideology of a definite stage of capitalist development, always serving the capitalist interest no matter how it is dressed up in the rags of left-wing ideology, internationalism could only belong to the left-wing groups and their patron countries as an ideological

## [IRISH BONE STEW]

justification for the power of the bureaucracy. Bureaucratic societies (Russia etc.) are precisely the dictatorship of the proletariat turned upside down — a dictatorship over the proletariat in its name. In the past, nationalism at least had the merit of recognising that it was Ireland, and the concrete circumstances of Ireland, which had to be changed. But today, all these ideologies must be superseded if any revolutionary movement is to emerge. (Ideologies, in Marx's sense of the word, are ideas which serve masters.)

The coming revolution can only find aid in the world by attacking the world in its totality. The revolutionary movement can only rise up over the grave of Sinn Fein and the other 55 varieties of leftism operating in Ireland.

## THE POLITICS OF SUICIDE

DAILY MIRROR, Thursday, June 27, 1974

# COURAGE OF DYING IRA MAN

By JOHN SANDIFORD

THE courage of IRA hunger striker Michael Gaughan as he faced death was described by a prison doctor yesterday.

"I think his political motivation was such that it over-rode the natural fear of death," said Dr. Brian Cooper.

"There is no doubt in my mind that he was a very brave man. He told me he knew he was going to die and was looking forward to it."

Gaughan, the 24-year-old bank robber, died three weeks ago at Parkhurst jail, Isle of Wight after sixty-five days on hunger strike.



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For the ruling classes politics is the technique by which they manage commodity society, the organisation of principles for the management of social reality by groups with differing interests within these ruling classes, and the interaction of these groups. As a technique of commodity management, it is ubiquitous, colonising all time and space. It is both a result and a perpetuation of man's separation from the world, a result and perpetuation of fragmented experience: an abstraction with a real effect on the world.

The political frame of mind is political precisely because its thought never leaves the confines of politics. Everything else becomes secondary. Drives are put at the service of the political organisation, instead of strategy being put at the service of our drives: people are valued only as political beings, dispossessed of their individuality and their real experience. Hence the politicians' conversations usually remain on an abstract level — never relating ideas to daily life. Often boring and unconvincing, their conversations almost always attempt to convert you to their ideology, an excuse to relate to people.

This political role eases the anxiety and uncertainty involved in relating to people without overcoming the isolation which is the cause of such symptoms.

The Left, always altruistic, whether parliamentarianist, vanguardist or service-orientated, are unconscious victims of the Christian ideology of sacrifice and self-denial (pause to wipe away a tear of sympathy). These rebels with any cause but their own, try to escape the consciousness of the misery of their own lives, by conjuring up some self-importance through organising others. But, incapable of seeing the realisation of their desires (assuming they have any) in the activity of others, they cannot possibly fight for others to do the same — i.e. help to generalise isolated acts of refusal.

They wear their activism like medals — the more they are seen to be 'doing' the greater their moral authority.

"The Other in whom I do not find myself is nothing but a thing, and altruism leads to the love of things. To the love of my isolation ... I recognise no equality except that which my will to live according to my desires recognises in the will to live of others." (Raoul Vaneigem).

Altruism ensures that the Left cannot understand the struggles they hope to lead; they cannot see that the struggle is against isolation, sacrifice, roles, hierarchy, etc., and thus mirror capitalism in their organisations, reflecting perfectly the antagonism between self and other, the individual and society.

They cannot see what makes them want to change the world, and thus create a meaning for their lives by trying to help others, justifying their existence according to the ridiculous clichés of 'revolutionary duty' and 'political commitment' (to the solitary confinement of 'revolutionary' cells?).

The Leninists' (International Socialists, International Marxist Group, Workers Revolutionary Party, Militant etc.) endless exposure of the 'betrayals' of Trade Union and Labour leaders expose nothing but their own hierarchical ambitions, which they show every time they try to manipulate a struggle around their superficial 'transitional' demands in order to squeeze out a few recruits. Their papers (despite the usefulness of some of the information) are not just boring and superficial (i.e. journalistic) — their consciously projected deadly serious workerist image is as insulting and patronising in its assumptions about what workers want as it is in trying to give it to them.

The separation of 'theory' from propaganda stems from an equally elitist motive: get the workers interested on a simple level and 'politicise' them on the heavy stuff later. The only effect of this can be to create a dependency on those

"All other questions, be they religious, national or political, have been completely exhausted by history. Today, therefore, there remains only one question, resuming all others: the only question from now on able to stir the people — the social question." — Bakunin.

who claim to be the most knowledgeable.

Thus their statistic-packed articles which prove beyond a doubt that the absolute final and irreconcilable crisis of capitalism is at hand, merely re-introduces the specialism of bourgeois economists and politicians, who use the complexities of running the commodity economy to justify their authority, within the 'revolutionary' groups.

These articles inevitably conclude that the only thing standing in the way of socialism is the absence of the Revolutionary Party — the fairy godmother whose ideological magic wand ensures that the workers shall get to the festival of the oppressed dressed up in their immaculate false consciousness.

I.S. betrays itself with its absurd slogan 'Vote Labour without illusions', which is rather like urging people to pray for rain, but don't believe in God: the cul-de-sac of mystification leads only to the shithouse of confusion, which is just what the professional 'revolutionaries' want: I.S.'s numerous 'rank-and-file' groups are as bureaucratic as the union bureaucracy they were set up to fight.

As for the W.R.P. (formerly the S.L.L. — Society of Leaden Leaders), one of I.S.'s rivals for the dictatorship over the proletariat in the name of the proletariat, its rigidly disciplinary centralism and archaic (anti-) 'sexuality' (expulsions of homosexuals, strictly enforced sexual segregation in the summer camps) make the Tory Party look relatively radical.

Its eternal drone of 'Force the TUC to call a General Strike to kick out the Tories and elect a Labour government pledged to

socialist policies of nationalisation under workers' control' — recently re-cycled to cope with a change of government (which shows how the electoral circus defines completely the politics of this sect) — is only relevant to the pathetic sacrificial character-armoured parrots who have to repeat it outside the tube every night.

Some of the Leninist groups (I.S., for example) have such 'faith' in the autonomy of their members that they have to issue them with a list of prescribed slogans on a demonstration. They conveniently forget that it is essential that the revolutionaries be revolutionised themselves, which is why they can only imitate the Bolshevik model or organisation, attempting to ensure yet another 50 years of counter-revolution. Marx ("I am not a marxist") answered these marxists over a hundred years ago: "The emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself."

The Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists admits to being nothing more than a vaguely-libertarian I.S.: they fight constantly for 'genuine rank and file organisation' but never see what organisation is for. In every struggle they only see its official economic level, and they compartmentalise Workers' Councils into an ideal to be aimed at, but never a project resulting from the premises now in existence, the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.

They fight for 'democratic control' of what Malatesta called "reactionary institutions" — the unions, completely mystifying the essential role of the unions in supporting capitalism. Their opposition to individualism becomes an opposition to individuals, and they end up with the same false collectivity as all the other sects, packaging politics in a separate box from the life of the individual. Their federalism is

purely formal: their 'autonomous' groups are not to develop a theoretical/practical coherence autonomously, but rather function as just another piece in the confused jig-saw called ORA.

'Libertarians' (an amorphous body, linked mainly by an often merely formal rejection of leaders, which is less the absence of leaders than the creation of conditions for leaders to emerge, who are in no way responsible to those they pretend not to lead) for the most part accept the fragmented categories by which the spectacle divides and rules: women, gays, prisoners, tenants, blacks, claimants, etc., uniting on a vague, simplistic, a-historical level: 'Smash the State', 'Power to the People', etc. Peoples' problems are seen in terms of their various compartments, rather than in terms of their total experience.

Most of them fail to generalise, which is reflected in their parochial inability to extend beyond the 'community' in which they are so politically active, and to place this activity in some general perspective.

And their relationship to the 'community' is often very patronising. Hence Islington's *Gutter Press* says: "We don't want to say 'crime is great' — there's nothing great about small-time thieving, it's desperate, individual, and in most cases born losing." (Issue 13)

And yet many of those around *Gutter Press* rip-off regularly from their local supermarket ... clearly one has to lie to win people over. Their politics is neither — with sporadic exceptions — pleasurable, stemming from their individual uniqueness, nor does it have any theoretical framework, which is often dismissed as a wheelchair revolutionaries' wank.

The attempts to stick together the various fragments into an ersatz totality — a popular front of the alternative society, with everyone isolated together — can easily be sucked back in as grist for the spectacular mill, despite the sincerity of the participants (for instance, in the USA, 'Community' Power — over the world as it exists now — is increasingly being used to recuperate the negative violence that has exploded in the cities in the past). It is up to each one of us to refuse to sacrifice ourselves for the boss — be it community, factory, party or State.

Whilst many claimants unions do not just function as social workish service groups, nor as fertile (?) ground for the Leftists patronising 'consciousness raising' (read: 'ideological indoctrination'), and are genuinely self-managed, they organise purely on a survival level. Whilst screwing the State for as much as you can get is necessary and desirable, the C.U.s don't go beyond that.

And the idea of revolution, slipped in surreptitiously after the

transitional demands, is always posed (if it's ever posed) purely in quantitative terms: the 'power of the people' against the State is to replace production for profit with that well-worn phrase 'production for use'. But what use remains unsaid. Since claimants are an eclectic conglomeration defined by the State, C.U.s can only fight on the battlefield chosen by power.

Solidarity is the only group to have developed an analysis of society on an international level. However, they see the development of consciousness in a somewhat simplistic, mechanistic way. Their thesis, briefly, is as follows: the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is that the 'order-givers' constantly aim to reduce the 'order-takers' to cogs in a machine — yet in order for the machine to work demand constant participation from the 'order-takers'. Abracadabra! — consciousness dawns — workers see themselves as the real managers — Hey presto! — workers seize factories — workers councils proclaimed!

The present re-organisation of capitalism, manifested industrially by the plans for workers 'participation' (the programme of all three major parliamentary parties) will institutionalise this contradiction into an active alienation ... besides, the binary division of the world into reifiers and reified ignores the complexity of commodity fetishism which reifies the reifiers.

Their 'analysis' is based on a conception of the proletariat as purely the negation of hierarchical forms of production, never as the negation of the bourgeois use of production, never as the invention of a new use of life. Thus they present an immaculate blueprint for the workings of the councils, whilst

ignoring individuals, their subjectivity, creativity and pleasure.

Since they cannot see the project of the councils as the destruction of all that exists independently of individuals, the critique of the commodity-spectacle in practice, they can still talk of wages, money, work and institutions. For them, despite the cheerful smiles of the cartoon worker-hedgehogs in their pamphlets, the councils are simply an ideal economic structure. And the transformation of the world is not a joyful journey without end, but a dull necessity for "which, whether we like it or not, many million man-hours of labour will probably have to be expended" (Workers' Councils and the economics of a self-managed society, Solidarity pamphlet 40). Their critiques of the repressive hierarchy engendered by the past revolutionary movements fail to focus on what it was that this hierarchy repressed and perverted — the rage to live without restraint.

The spectacular 'extremism' of the now silent Angry Brigade — bombing the latest newsworthy cabinet minister, publicising itself through underground and so-called underground newspapers — merely reinforced that which they seemed to oppose.

Their 'opposition' to 'spectacles' (applied simplistically to the Miss World contest) blinded themselves — and much of the 'underground' (e.g. *Ink*, *IT* and *Freud*) fervently clapping from the risk-free sidelines) — to the spectacular nature of their opposition. A similar contradiction was manifested in their opposition to 'leadership', whilst at the same time declaring that they were preparing for armed struggle on behalf of the 'working class',

betraying an elitist world-view.

Frustrated by their inability to hit out at the society that oppresses them, they chose to romantically imitate the tactical scouts of yesterday — Ravachol, Vaillant etc., displaying as much a refusal to learn from history as a lack of imagination. As for the defence groups set up immediately a comrade gets arrested, their outraged cry of indignation designed to inspire solidarity from the masses never gets them further than an occasional resolution of support passed at a union meeting. Since they can only react to an issue they ensure that the State defines their activity, keeping them running fast to stay still. The issue is a life-belt the ruling class throws out to an unimaginative Left, without which it would drown.

The 'opposition' by counter-specialists to the authoritarian expertise of the authoritarian experts offers yet another false choice to the political consumer. These 'radical' specialists (radical lawyers, radical architects, radical philosophers, radical psychologists, radical social workers — everything but radical people) attempt to use their expertise to de-mystify expertise.

The contradiction was best spelt out by a Case Con 'revolutionary' social worker, who cynically declared at a public meeting, "The difference between us and a straight social worker is that we know we're oppressing our clients".

Case Con is the spirit of a spiritless situation, the sigh of the oppressed oppressor; it's the 'socialist' conscience of the guilt-ridden social worker, ensuring that vaguely conscious social workers remain in their job, whilst feeling they are rejecting their role.

At best this rejection merely



Tony Cliff — star comedian for the International Socialists

## 'COP-OUT'

is a magazine for rank and file radical policemen as fed up with their role as agents of social control as with the conditions of their work.

We recognise that ultimately the function of the policeman is to protect the ruling class and its property. But we believe that it is too simple for policemen who realise this to quit the force and leave it to the racists and other bigots. That way we would be abdicating our responsibility as revolutionaries to raise the consciousness of our fellow work-mates, as well as our 'clients', as to the repressive nature of the force. We therefore base our organisation on the following 6-point transitional programme:

1. The right to withdraw our labour.
2. Community control of the police.
3. The right to abstain from police duties at picket-lines and demonstrations.
4. 30% wage rise and four weeks annual holiday.
5. Abolition of police uniform and truncheons.
6. The replacement of police numbers with name-plates.

Whilst we realise that the present leadership of the Police Federation are incapable of struggling for these demands, the majority of policemen are not aware of this. We therefore act as a pressure group to expose the leadership when they fail to put our demands into effect.

**FOR A TRULY SOCIALIST POLICE FORCE READ 'COP-OUT'**



replaces a repressive altruism with a benevolent one — the do-gooder showing their clients how to escape through the loop-holes in the rules of the old world. The confused mish-mash of reformist and revolutionary ideology permeating Case Con is expressed in their aim to phase out the role of the social worker altogether and their demand for more social workers to lighten the work load.

'Radical' lawyers attempt to exploit the internal contradictions of the law but, like the social workers, always remain loyal to its terms, as if the resolution of relevant contradictions doesn't lie outside and against the law. Their specialism leads them inevitably to mystify the really radical nature of self-managed struggles; as one of them said on TV recently: "Mass action can be a good way of getting the law changed."

The academic counter-specialists attempt to attack (purely bourgeois) ideology at the point of production: the university. Unwilling to attack

the institution, the academic milieu, the very concept of education as a separate activity from which ideas of separate power arise, they remain trapped in the fragmented categories they attempt to criticise.

Non-sectarianism is the excuse for their incoherence, which has its real basis in their inability to understand the absurd vicious circle of criticising false categories (psychology, philosophy, etc.) within the prison of these categories, within the prison of separated thought.

An invisible organisation called Piranha, a group of pathetically comic poseurs, has absurdly grandiose delusions in their own importance, a ridiculous self-image of the threat they pose to the old world, which is but a mask for emptiness: these self-styled emperors have no clothes and secretly they know it. They merely imitate ideologically the megalomaniacal style of the S.I., but without having even earned it: a

facade for impotence.

Their theatrical display of self-confidence and omniscience — a performance of a kind of 'situationist role' — a group character armour — is merely a cover for (and reinforcement of) their stupidity and inability to relate to people: knowing that politeness is the art of non-communication they believe that it's false antithesis — insult — must be the art of communication, an art these ham actors specialise in... we're in danger of falling into the same trap...

It is the subjective experience of alienation (the lethargy, the frustrations, the isolation and degradation), and not any external issue, which forms the point of departure for a truly revolutionary opposition to capitalism: it is not one or another isolated aspect of contemporary civilisation which is horrifying, but the absolute impoverishment of life. Revolution is

essentially a game — as much as the society it pre-figures — and one plays it for the pleasure involved. Today this can only mean the total destruction of hierarchical power.

Only Marx's original project, the creation of the total man, of each individual re-appropriating the entire experience of the species, can supersede the individual v. society dualism by which hierarchical power holds itself together while it holds itself apart.

If it fails in this, then the new revolutionary movement will merely build an even more labyrinthine illusory community; or, alternatively, it will shatter into an isolated and ultimately self-destructive search for kicks. If it succeeds, then it will permeate society as a game that everyone can play. Life and revolution will be invented together or not at all. Meanwhile, the project is to identify and mercilessly oppose all the obstacles to our living without restraint.

"I call it the State where everyone, good and bad, loses himself: the State where universal slow suicide is called 'life'... Only where the State ends, there begins the individual who is not superfluous; there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune. Where the State ends, look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the superman." — Nietzsche (Thus Spake Zarathustra).

"It must be said once and for all that man only plays when he is a man in the full meaning of the word, and he is fully human only when he plays." — Schiller.

Time Out review of the original 'Dialectical Adventures'...

★Dialectical Adventures into the Unknown  
This new situationist journal is an outrageous attack on all that 'Time Out' stands for: ie concerned left-wing journalism and critical appreciation of all that's best in entertainment. It's condemnation of everything and everyone standing in the way of each individual enjoying their passions and imaginations fully in the world around them, includes, among others, the Left (caricatured as sacrificial altruists out of touch with their experience) and the Arts (belittled as mere sporadic compensations for people's lack of creativity). This little slander sheet is available from Box LBD, 197 Kings Cross Road, WC1, price 25p (post paid).

An ad. for the original 'Dialectical Adventures'...

## Mini phrase-book for foreigners (those foreign to this world)

### SOME TRANSLATIONS

**WAGES** — Damages awarded as poor compensation for boredom, humiliation and frustration.

**THE RIGHT TO WORK** — The right to be a cog; the right to be ordered about; the right to forced labour.

**PARTICIPATION** — If you don't like being fucked up they get you to fuck yourself up.

**STATE BRITAIN OR GREAT BRITAIN** — Tweedledum or Tweedledee.

**EQUAL PAY** — Equal emptiness; equal impotence.

**SAVE THE ECONOMY** — Worship the order of things; lose yourself.

**SOCIAL CONTRACT** — Pay now - never live later.

**A LIBERAL** — Someone who preaches tolerance, i.e. says you should tolerate the intolerable, e.g. himself.

**TRADE UNION OFFICIAL** — Pimp; negotiator of the rate of exploitation.

**REVOLUTIONARY PARTY** — Forget yourself - follow us.

**THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE** — See 'Social Contract'. Also see 'Revolutionary Party'.

**"WHAT'S ON T.V. TONIGHT?"** — "I'm so bored I can't create my own pleasure".

**"That's life"** — "That's capitalism!"

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# COLOUR SECTION

FROM BEHIND EVERY MASK THE MALADJUSTED INDIVIDUAL  
RESTLESSLY STALKS THE PRISON BARS OF HIS ROLE

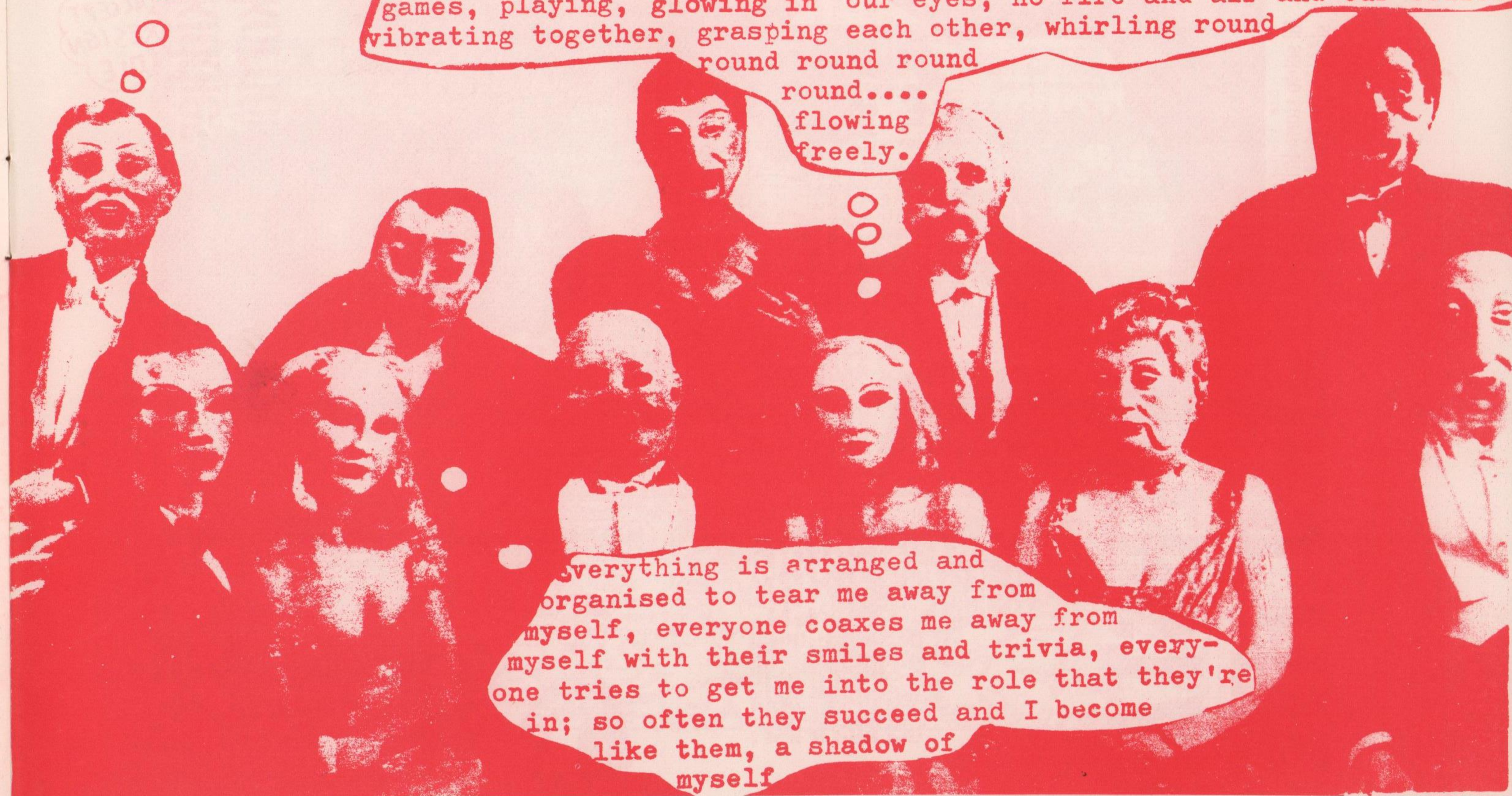
I remember  
once - our gaze met and melted...  
our gaze caressing each others eyes...  
tingling in the head, whirling down the throat...  
exploding laughing in the stomach...but now our eyes  
are empty, eager to be distracted, glazed and dulled  
eyes, reflecting our weariness,  
and our words  
no longer  
play together

There's a conversation in the middle,  
to which everyone contributes; it  
bounces between them, towards one and then  
the other; I throw my bit in, but it's not  
me, I'm outside: it bounces this way, that way.  
Then: laughter...and the conversation evaporates.  
Silence. I sink into my own head, yet somehow I'm  
tangled up in that silence, it niggles at my stomach.  
The eyes of everyone else seem to have  
turned inward. It seems as if that laughter  
was mere illusion, the feeling of  
togetherness a lie...real

or not, it has  
gone, and I  
am alone,  
like the  
others

monotone, fixed  
phrases, masks of self-confidence,  
rigid gestures, reminiscences, anecdotes,  
'jokes', discussions on abstract politics, sport,  
the latest film, play, the last acid trip, our holidays,  
the price of food, the price of dope, who's pregnant, who's been  
busted...but never words touching, changing, intermingling, laughter,  
games, playing, glowing in our eyes, no fire and air and our bodies  
vibrating together, grasping each other, whirling round  
round round round  
round....  
flowing  
freely.

Everything is arranged and  
organised to tear me away from  
myself, everyone coaxes me away from  
myself with their smiles and trivia, every-  
one tries to get me into the role that they're  
in; so often they succeed and I become  
like them, a shadow of  
myself





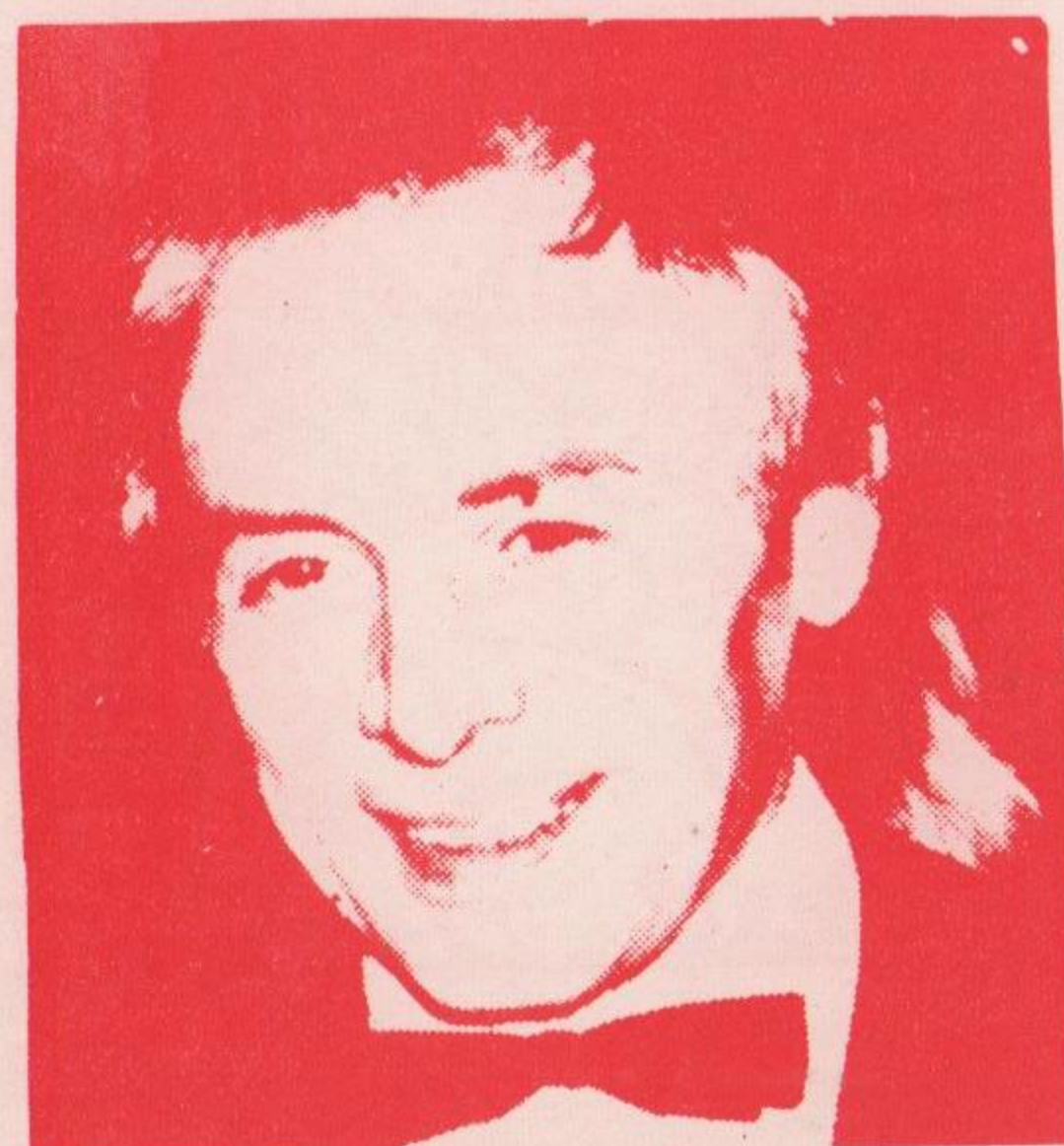




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 The fight for  
 The higher - you

Hi there! - I'm Ronnie Laing, celebrated anti-shrink. Having proved - as if it needed proving - that so-called madness is manufactured socially - my contribution to lubricating the manufacturing processes has been to get you fucked-up individuals to adapt to reality by means of accepting your madness as a form of revolt in itself: the inversion of a stigma into a celebration is still an identity built in the image-language of the ruling lie, where sanity ("Well, at least I'm not as fucked up as that looney over there") and madness ("I'm not like those grey nonentities, I'm unique!") are the daily Tweedledum and Tweedledee of the submissive mind battling over delusions of superiority..... Madness is merely an ultra-narcissistic result of failing to break with that which is breaking you, an inability to decide, to chose to fight your alienation, and the world from which one is alienated. The mad person places herself in a self-justifying tautology outside history, whereby she remains inaccessible to others, and others remain inaccessible to her. Russell Jacoby - in admittedly his usual stodgy academic style - has produced quite a good critique of me in Telos 17, which is worth reading if you're one of my fans. As for that lie about my being opposed to families, as I said in the Times of October 9th 1972: "I'm not against families...And although I have tried to show how families go wrong, I think they are one of the best relics of a crumbling system we have to hang on to." That's all for now, folks!



## THE ARTS

Patrick McGuiness

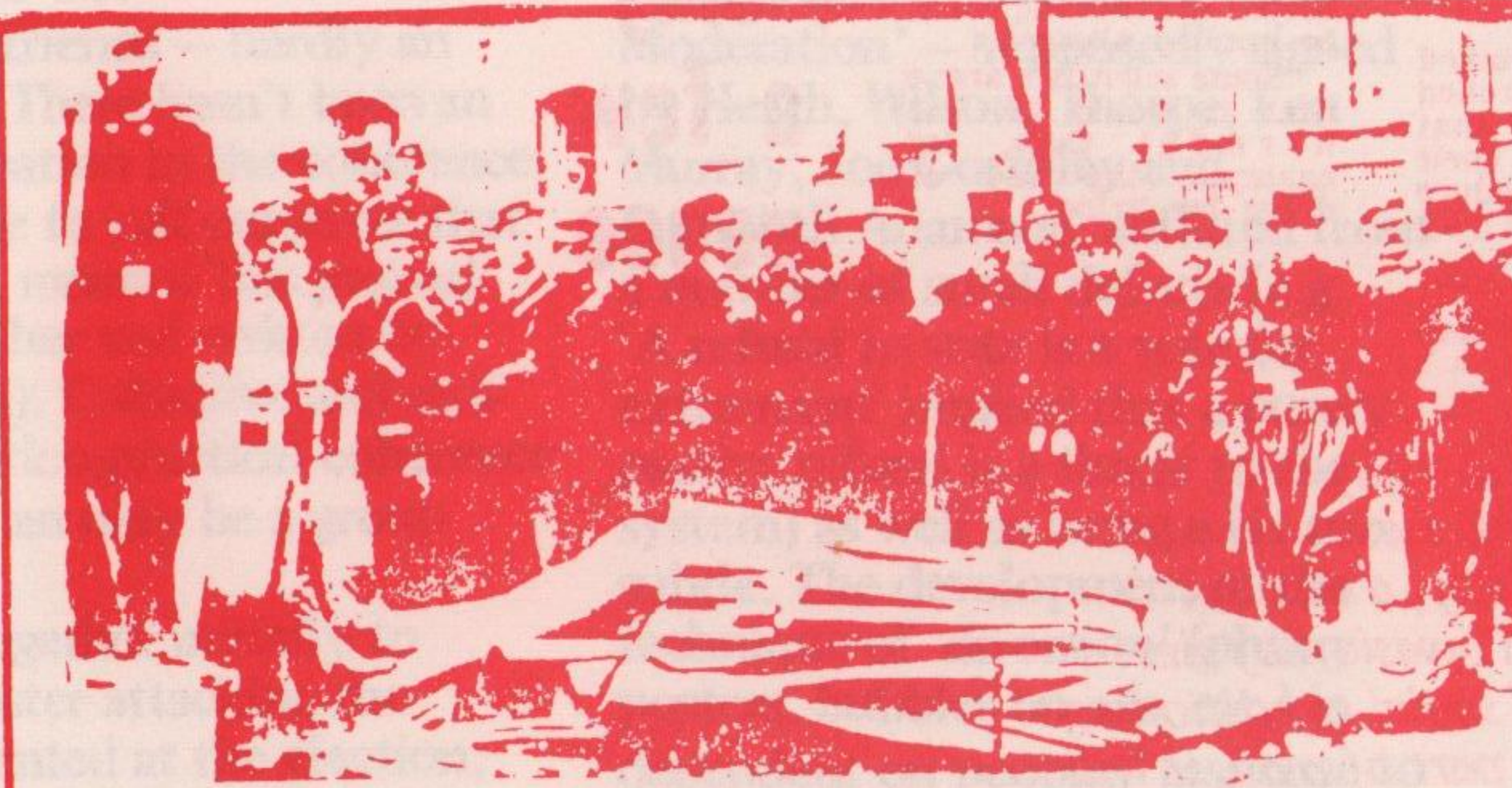
SUCH A SUBTLE  
 EXPRESSION OF  
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 SOUL...

...AN  
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 THAT ART HAS  
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ARTISTIC  
 "SELF-EXPRESSION"  
 CANNOT COMPENSATE  
 FOR THE LACK OF  
 SELF-EXPRESSION IN  
 DAILY LIFE, IN OUR  
 RELATIONSHIPS AS WELL  
 AS IN THE WORLD  
 AROUND US.

A space to watch: a couple of schoolboys inspect one of the two paintings by Bernard Cohen, newly acquired by the Tate

Lonely Isolation lets his imagination flow into the fantastic separate form of the book, creates his private subjective world and falls into it: madness, subjectivity stuck in the head, incommunicable wealth, desperate to be shared and lived in the real world...Lewis Carroll, shy and sexually inhibited in his life, compensated for this by letting go on paper....art as gratification substitute...Everything of value in art has always cried out aloud to be made real and to be lived. Creativity must be freed from the forms into which it has been ossified, and brought back to life. Art must stop being an interpretation of sensations and experiences, and become the immediate creation of sensations and experiences. The problem is how to produce ourselves, and not things which enslave us.



Destruction of the Vendome Column, Paris Commune, 1871.

THE GREATEST WORK OF ART OF THE 19th CENTURY

Culture - both high and low - is the false 'realisation' of the imagination (from Lautreamont to Disney), false in that it is realised in petrified forms, novels, plays, songs etc.) separated from the daily life of individuals & their world, shared purely as an end product, but not as immediately created experience.



To concentrate the senses on this separate sphere is to make illusions sacred, and the lived reality of the dialectic between self and world profane: separation perfected... life decreases as illusion increases... lived experience dries up whilst the world is flooded with surrogate experience.

"Never before has there been so much talk about civilisation and culture as today- today, when it is life itself which is disappearing. And there is a strange parallel between the general collapse of life...and this obsession with a culture which has never co-incided with life, and which is designed to domineer over life." - ARTAUD.







## CARRY ON CONSCIOUSNESS

(A chronological auto-critique of the previous text, originally titled 'Dialectical Adventures Into The Unknown', plus some elaborations on some of its themes.)

### 'The Work Of Negation (& the negation of work)' (See pages 2-5)

The split between qualitative and quantitative is a schematic mind-shift, a false hierarchical criterion for judgement of struggles, a false reaction to economism, to leftist ideology. The struggle for more real wages is also a qualitative struggle against degradation in the form of demands for intensified productivity, and creates qualitative crises for capital (see, for example, Zerowork—available from 122 Offord Rd., London N1—for further analysis on an international level).

What Knabb said about pro-situs in 'Society of Situationism' applies to this article: "In every single struggle they saw the same simple, total conclusion and identified the progress of the revolution with the appropriation of this conclusion by the proletariat. In thus abstractly concentrating the intelligence of human practice above the complex process of the development of class struggle, the activist pro-situs were the would-be bolsheviks of a fantasized coup of class consciousness, hoping by this shortcut to bring about their councilist program whose implications they overstepped out of incomprehension or impatience." In criticising, for example, the CP for limiting the struggle of the dockers to a change of government I ignored the fact that the CP expressed the ideological consciousness of the dockers who did not want to recognise the implications of their power. Likewise, the mass of workers who resist work don't dare follow up the revolutionary implications of this disgust; e.g. absenteeism doesn't mean workers act more radically/intelligently with this extra time than the way they use their officially designated 'free' time. Most often they merely continue all the usual compensations, escapes and competitive illusions of superiority: betting, strip shows, alcoholism, racism, sexual bravado, football etc. . . or they get into frantically restless extrovert activity and desperate jokiness—anything to stop that niggling semi-consciousness of directionlessness and of underlying pain unacknowledged. A 'Poverty of Workers' Life' would be a project worth pursuing by those who are fighting the poverty of their own lives.

Thomas Jeffersons' "I hold it that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms are in the physical . . . It is a medicine necessary for the health of governments" is probably the best criticism one could level at some of this article.

There's a cheer-leading tendency in this article, which is a brake on extending revolutionary possibilities. It's the humble "Any opposition is good opposition. How can I criticise what little opposition there is—that would be sheer megalomania. I must boost what there is: Wow!—look at Fords, Notting Hill, Hull prison, Poland, Soweto, Cairo, Italy! Yeah—the revolution's a-happening!" In fearing the label of 'arrogance', the cheerleader avoids trying to extend the revolts that exist: he sees the spectacular representation of struggle as the main enemy—or even the only enemy—and attempts to counteract the media's put downs of struggles with merely justifying these struggles, rather than analysing the contradictions in the struggles, criticising their limitations in order to make them more conscious and more dangerous for society. It's necessary to look at the problems, the things that make a difference (e.g. that this strike (or, for that matter, intervention/conversation/sexual experiment . . .) worked out this way, whereas that one was different and why . . . There's an implicit support for violent rhetoric—e.g. the building workers' strike quote, which remained purely rhetorical, in part due to the Trade Unionist ideology of the strikers, which completely separated them from their fellow workers on the lump, blocking out any possibility of reciprocal recognition and common battle. The contradiction of supporting the State against their fellow lump workmates and of opposing the State in its defence of those same non-striking work-mates must have been one of the reasons for the total failure (apart from certain tactical innovations) of the strike.

There's an ouvriérist-feminist tendency in the piece on Fakenham. In fact, the semi-legalised worker co-operatives are often encouraged by the Left of capital (Benn etc.) as an isolating safety valve against more concentrated opposition to both unemployment and employment. It diverts workers from extending their opposition to existing conditions by supplying them with a niche in this world which they can identify with. Since such niches are forced to compete on the world market, they bind people even more to the complexity of the economy than when people straightforwardly sell their labour to an exploiter. And the conclusions drawn from their tendency to economic failure are usually the reactionary "Well, that just shows you that workers can't possibly run things for themselves", never

ones that lead to a critique of political economy.

Concerning prison struggles: without a general movement to which prisoners can appeal as fellow proletarians-in-struggle, or without mass escapes, prison-riots invariably result in heightened brutal suppression of the rioters (e.g. the sickening savagery of the screws to the prisoners after the £1m. destruction of Hull prison). This cannot be due to "their marginal position in modern society" (Shutes, "Skirmishes With An Untimely Man", Box 4502, Berkeley, California 94704, a position he's retracted in Implications) since in this sense all struggles are now marginal until they converge, federate and find their real common basis in a concerted global attack on class power and its creator, the commodity. Nevertheless, the misery of prisons is such that, unlike in other manifestations of this crazy world, there's no possibility of acting radically (even anonymously) without exposing oneself to the full brutal weight of the authorities (witness the beating up of Jake Prescott, star witness against the 13 screws charged over the aftermath of the Hull riots). Escape must be the only sane aim of any future riot—anything else is tactical suicide (unless there's a general insurrectionary movement throughout all prisons—as in Spain—which obviously creates difficulties for the State). It's in a situation where there's a virtual impossibility of organising directly (unmediated by leaders) either with those outside prison or between prisons. (and even—to a lesser extent—within each prison) that PROP gains its credibility. It could play a useful purely informational expose role, without obscuring itself and confusing others with its need to be respectable and its concomitant reformist ideology (which is a futile illusion: prison reform organisations have been around for years and yet prisons are hardly 'better' than they were 30 years ago, and far worse than 10 years ago, when the great 'reformist' Home Secretary Roy Jenkins tightened the screws.) (Incidentally, a book worth reading on daily life in American prisons is 'Bad' by Jimmy Carr,<sup>1</sup> available from Isaac Cronin; a few copies of this book were distributed round english prisons via me: unfortunately, they're no longer available).

One of the few brief exceptions to the general trend of strikes which have so far kept to the straight and narrow of Trade Unionism and the Social Contract,

was the unofficial power workers' strike at the end of '77. In courageously risking virtually the only attack on the Social Contract and in rejecting the usual apologetic PR-type relation with the media they exposed themselves to its merciless attacks (manipulating 'public outrage'), as well as the opposition of the Union bureaucrats and the blatant lies and divide and rule tactics of the 'militant' shop stewards, leading some workers to organise against the stewards for a few days until the strike was crushed in isolation. Apart from the enormous weight of the enemy, one of the reasons for the internal divisions within this strike was the workers' failure to confront the bosses' strategy of creating a skill-hierarchy (status, 'responsibility', and small differentials) as a means of divide and rule: for the most part the workers accepted these miserable compensations as the 'reward' for weakened solidarity.

There are several omissions in the list of British radicality: e.g. the squatting 'movement', which is a partial refusal of exchange relationships, a rejection of the constraints of landlords, artificial scarcity and poverty, a rejection of the laws of property and propriety. Nevertheless the squatting scene is packed full of the usual bullshit: pumping up squats as 'liberated zones', whilst they're just as full of unchallenged misery and separation as families or colleges—in fact often "unarmed laziness"<sup>2</sup> reigns—the passive nihilism of the drifters; militant squatter organiser roles (the pathetic Piers Corbyn-types, rushing around like a politician trying to be nice to win votes, trying to get people to be interested in the latest irrelevant meeting) etc. etc.

1. For those few who still retain the sycophantic worship for the Black Panthers of five, ten years ago, it's worth revealing that this guy—an ex-Panther, friend of George Jackson—was shot and killed by the Black Panther Stalinist Mafia-type gang, for daring to challenge their (illicit) big business rackets. Perhaps because he refused to commit revolutionary suicide they thought they ought to do it for him.

2. "All the capacities and desires of non-externally-dictated activity are being utterly destroyed among men of these times. Unarmed laziness, which goes so far as refusing the pseudo-activities offered within production without being able to reinvent human activity upon other bases, is asserting itself everywhere as the normal subjective attitude in the new state of social reality." (Denevert, 'Theory of Misery/Misery of Theory') (contd. on page 21)

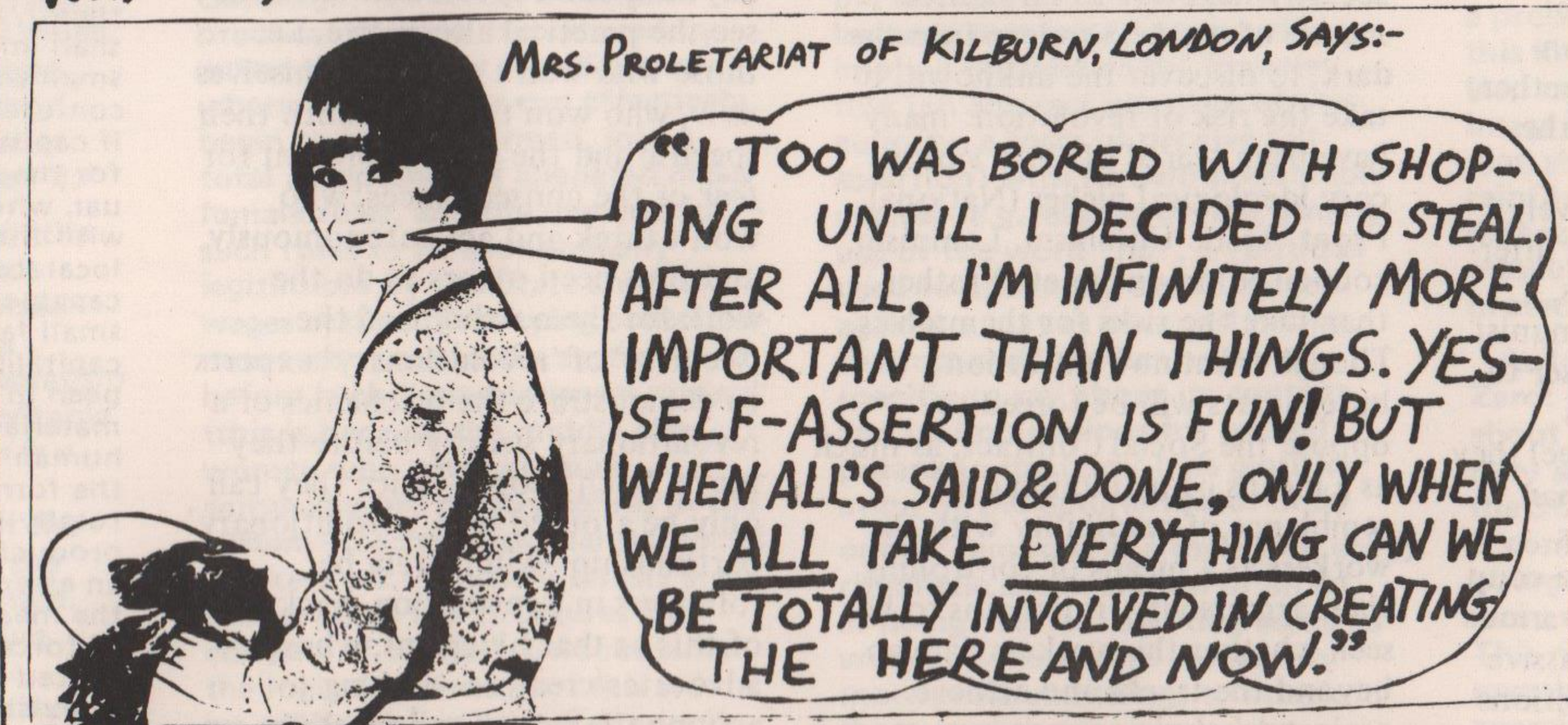
(See page 2)

PASSIVE CONSUMPTION  
IS THE  
OPIUM OF THE PEOPLE!!



Why pay for food just to fatten your bosses?  
Why cow down before the altar of the Economy?  
Why submit to the law and order of things & their price?

WHY PAY WHEN YOU CAN STEAL?



YES—YOU TOO CAN STEAL BACK  
WHAT'S BEEN STOLEN FROM YOU!

(YOUR WORLD, YOUR LIFE, YOUR ACTIVITY, YOUR PLEASURE, YOURSELF)

YOU KNOW  
IT MAKES SENSE



Spontaneous Combustion mini-poster, October '75.

Shoplifting generates about as much spectacular value nowadays as it liberates of commodity value: it's coolly taken into account among other store-operating expenses and in an article in *The Guardian* at the end of 1977, a liberal suggested that ripping-off from shops wasn't such a bad thing, was even 'justifiable' and should be made into a civil offence.

It's on the level of a symptom of society's decomposition, rather than of real struggle. It's purely an immediate buzz—though, as with everything, repetition anaesthetises this. Though all kinds of immediate audacity can enable one to leap out

of a depression and impel one to more consequential activity, it's rare that people use such self-therapy in a radical direction: and usually such temporarily therapeutic audacity is a superficial response to a fundamental misery in one's life that one could seriously confront but which one wants to avoid because it would be too hard and possibly traumatic to do so.

In fact, it's often the rich who are the biggest shoplifters: for them, it's an escapist pastime, a 'change' from their conventional mediocre 'lives'. Obviously for an individual who cannot steal, theft would be an element of a breakthrough—it demystifies the

preciousness of a thing and enables one to see things as mere use-objects: necessary—particularly as one aspect of a means of survival—but very insufficient. And—although it's a refusal of sacrifice, of exchange—fetichised, it still remains a form of consumerism, whereby people see their 'radicality' or adventurousness in how much they can steal.

Sometimes this fetishism of stealing (in order to create a daring self-image, for example) is actually an evasion of more direct and open challenges in one's relationships with other people: stealing, after all, is generally a private, individual,

un-public and not usually very demanding activity.

Of course, there are moments where shoplifting becomes something more than the banal act it is: for example, in Italy, as part of the general campaign against inflation, hundreds of youths often march into supermarkets and leave with half the goods (a few years back, Italian Maoists, doing their half-hearted version of this, went into a supermarket and made speeches to the customers, urging them to pay 'only' half the marked price. So engrossed were they in sermonising that the cops had time to come and bundle them off to jail).



(from page 19)

To merely praise all manifestations of proletarian violence is to ignore the specific function of such manifestations. For example, the firemen's violence after the total defeat of their strike was a gesture expressing impotence and a protest against such impotence, the last gasp of a strike that several firemen knew, before it began, would be 'sold out' by 'their' leaders. "Next time things will be different" is the usual pose of bitter defiance, but very rarely do they do anything the next time to make sure things will be different. In fact, in innumerable strikes the 'sell-out' is a well-known foregone conclusion —yet each time workers do nothing to publicise what they know is likely to happen, to alter the course of events, resigning themselves to the so-called 'inevitable'.<sup>3</sup> For the most part, tactics are determined by the Trade Union organisation; individual workers who feel disgusted by such manipulation rarely try to create alternative organisations within the strike, and, unlike individual revolutionaries, have mostly failed to realise the banal possibility of getting their own information-communication network together, of printing and distributing the consciousness of their own struggles, preferring to passively and lazily submit to existing interpretations (Union newsheets, Leftist papers, council communist leaflets etc.) because it's closer to the truth than the bourgeois media. That most of them feel they can't write anything more than what has already been said is generally a submission to the coup of consciousness which the various ideologues compete for, a passive acceptance of external definitions of what is important to say, of what is 'correct', a self-evasive fear of communicating what they know for fear of being 'wrong' in terms of the acceptable, which is, ultimately, their choice for what exists. The repetition of the *same* mistakes, whether it be in the confused struggles of an individual's relationships, in the histories of revolutionary groups or milieus, in the history of revolutions or in the specific struggles of the working class in Britain<sup>4</sup> all of these are avoidance of experimenting with dealing with a situation in a new way without the crumbling crutch of any external authority, of facing the difficult—sometimes painful—truth: the immensity of each and every proletarian's tasks. The usual despondent attitude "Well, what can you do—it's the times" is a complacent reinforcement of the counter-revolutionary nature of "the times". No-one's calling for martyrs: but each proletarian knows that (s)he can—and must—challenge, again and again, the status quo, if necessarily anonymously, if their life is to be something richer than a joke.

The present crisis forces the spectacle to confess—in its own

terms—what everyone knows from their daily experience: things are in the saddle riding each and every individual and few are trying to shake their riders free. Every time I hand over a pound or receive a pound, I know the commodity reigns and I and the other person don't. People are so used to relationships based on exchange, so well defended against the consciousness of their absurdity, that their inhumanity never hits them in the guts or even enters their mind, but merely dulls them with their fatalistic routine taken-for-grantedness: a partly necessary defence which has long slipped into fatalism amongs those who have given up, and fatalism on any level logically leads to resignation to *everything*. Just as most people don't try to attack relationships mediated by things, roles and images in their immediate lives, the spectacle is able to coax them into accepting the rule of the economy as much as it tries to get them to save it, using the half-truth "Inflation is everybody's enemy" as its major weapon. The increasing hassles of survival security have *not* so far incited masses of workers to leap into the dark, to discover the unknown, to take the risk of revolution: many have been scared off into various cosy ideological niches (National Front, Trade Unionism, Leninism, council communism etc.) rather than take the risks for themselves. Though from now on Union bureaucrats will be forced to oppose the Social Contract, as much as a means of maintaining a semblance of credibility with the workers as a means of controlling their aggressivity, it remains to be seen whether the workers dare go beyond the tracks and achieve against a *Labour* government at the very least the minimal necessary radicality they showed in the period '71-'73 against a *Tory* government (if the Tories win the next election then the chances of a repetition of such confrontations with the state are far higher, but the revolutionary possibilities are far less, since such a conflict wouldn't involve an attack on the labour movement by those who have up to now been represented as its essence).

\* \* \* \* \*

The piece on the councils doesn't make a clear connection between the *content* of struggle and the *form* of the councils. In fact the councils are set up as the pat solution to everything, much like the Party is for Leninists: the totality is neatly wrapped up with an image of an ecstatic future<sup>5</sup> as a method of seduction to revolt, and there's nothing left for the reader to do than to smash capital (as if it's a thing rather than a social relationship to be dissolved) and create the power of the councils, rather than be incited to question our own discoveries and discover their own questions. The

advocacy of "All Power To The Workers' Councils"—though it had some association with extremism - 10 years ago—is now part of the program of many capitalist hierarchs: Ceacescu in Rumania claims his country is run by workers' councils; so does Tito; sections of the IRA have a councilist program; so does the whole of the Leninist Left; and left-wing labourites advance it too. Even though the revolutionary proletariat of the future may well experiment with the councilist forms of the past (which *never*—even in Spain—went as far as to challenge the commodity form<sup>6</sup>) all advocacy of blueprints, of a set notion of the revolutionary society, avoids the fundamental project of the revolution, which is primarily *negative*, and thus they merely slot into and get confused with the *positivist* plans of *this* world to re-organise forced labour so that people participate in their own alienation.<sup>7</sup> The function of these "after the revolution" type blueprints is seductive ("Yes, it is possible—we're not just utopians") to convince those who won't do anything for a revolution until they see the practical alternative, i.e. those who won't act for themselves *now*, who won't criticise both their specific and the general present for *fear* of the consequences, who won't think and act autonomously and thus need others to do the work for them, who need the 'security' of 'revolutionary' experts to demonstrate the mechanics of a revolutionary society before they move. Such people—since they can only be aroused into 'revolutionary' partisanship—will merely be followers in a revolution, backers of this or that blueprint, whose advocates/creators—wishing to assume the role of specialists in revolutionary re-construction (I'm thinking in particular of Solidarity's thing on Workers' Councils) will attempt in a revolutionary situation to mould reality into their formal structures (no matter how 'libertarian' they seem), much as the Bolsheviks did in 1917. Just as *now* those who need such positivist 'proof' fearfully avoid the critique of the illusions necessary to maintain their and others' niches in *this* world, in a given revolutionary situation, as the present status quo becomes less viable, they'll be chasing after someone else's fantasy status quo as their anxious illusory escape from the posing of all the practical problems, the questioning of the new illusions that the revolution will throw up. He who needs clear and fixed signposts, timetables and maps is incapable of choosing his own direction, and of going beyond the tracks of the given.

3. Phil Mailer, in his book on Portugal, shamefully admits to his miserable avoidance of publicising what he knew was going on, and which subsequent events verified: which is one concrete example of the relationship between the struggle against character and the revolution. This resigned fatalism

was a self-fulfilling avoidance of attempting to effect history; so used to repetition, cynicism and being spectators of world events are people in their normal daily lives, that even in a concrete situation of struggle revolutionaries often resign themselves to what's going on, and then blame the left afterwards as the bogey-man who fucked up the scene, as if they didn't know it and couldn't say it and do something about it at the time.

4. COBI's "The Crisis of British Capital" part 1 (available from 3/8 May Court, Edinburgh EH4 4SD) has quite a good history of the quintessentially english archaisms of capitalist development and the miserable repetitions of a working class that has never cut the umbilical chord of Labourism. Nevertheless, this Marxist-Leninist organisation aims to build "The Party", and as such is obviously an enemy of the revolution.

5. This even tends towards a romantic yearning for paradise, a creeping idealism based on a real non-existence of such situations.

6. See Riesel in Anarchy 7, winter '72 for a brief critique of the councils of the past.

7. Another prevalent example is the ideology of 'small is beautiful' (decentralised production: breaking up of large units and dispersing them), a variation of "the meek shall inherit the earth"—"the small shall inherit the earth". This confuses form with content: it's as if capital's vastness is responsible for the belittlement of the individual, who is only capable of coping with the narrow confines of the local 'community', who is only capable of making decisions in small face-to-face groups. If capitalism has been progressive it's been in the fact of creating the material basis for a world-wide human community, even though the form of the basis has been totally inhuman. World-wide production and communication is an essential condition for creating the means of survival, the abolition of forced labour and the uninterrupted transformation of all aspects of existence: it's the world market which has to be superseded, not large-scale production. Crafts could run parallel to large-scale production and even be incorporated into it, but can never replace it if people are to free themselves from the realm of necessity. Crafts are attractive because they are an immediate form of creativity—"this desperately felt need to see their own action, to do something that is really theirs, which causes masses of people to take up crafts and vandalism." (Knabb, DOUBLE REFLECTION). But the free association of the creators/producers inaugurated by the revolution, will have to eradicate both the oppressive mediated use of modern large-scale technology (which might well involve much of the transformation of its form as well as its use), as well as the narrow limitations of handicraft which leads to the prison of specialism—"every medieval craftsman was completely absorbed in his work, to which he had a contented slavish relationship, and to which he was subjected to a far greater extent than the modern worker, whose work is a matter of indifference to him." (Marx, THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY). (The Volvo 'experiment' in Sweden attempts to combine the worst of both worlds—it's participation is merely a slavish absorption in the world of the commodity . . .).

\*Portugal: The Impossible Revolution (available from: Solidarity (London) c/o 123 Lathom Rd., London E.6).

The imbalance in this article—its tendency towards an abstractly critical negativity—is redressed in terms of theory in Nadine Bloch's 'All Things Considered, 1976' and Joel Cornuault's 'Some Reflections On Subjectivism And Intellectualism', printed in my pamphlet "Revolutionary Theory For Beginners" (see pages 36,38 & 39).

Also some of the article is factually incorrect and was dated even when it was produced.

The article fails to show the process of self-discovery that Women's Liberation began, a process which has mostly petrified into ideology: ideology here is seen as something external to this process. Feminist consciousness, born out of the novel excitement of talking about, sharing and superseding long bottled-up common frustrations and experiences petrifies into the crutch of predictable anti-patriarchy clichés, the individual women's fearful holding on to a collective protective zone defining itself negatively against some aspects of masculine alienation and its miserable effects on women, and often positively for some aspects of feminine stereotype-casting (e.g. "Women are so much easier to get on with than men, they don't bother with generalisations, they're so much more immediate and spontaneous!").

Feminism has moved from the strategy of separate women's groups which most have found temporarily necessary for a critique of sex roles, to separatism—an acceptance of the 'inevitable'—men as the enemy, which is a repression of the critique of sex roles, a repression of the process of struggle against the separation of men and women. This has led to the disgusting idiocy of—for example—the feminist rockband Jam Today, one of whom said, "I often hate it when I see men enjoying the music; as far as I'm concerned it's not for them and if we're acceptable . . . then I feel we've failed." (Spare Rib, Jan. '78). Or the absurdity of some feminists demonstrating *purely* in favour of an anarchist woman recently arrested with 5 other men, rather than for the 6 of them together. If the enemy is clearly defined as something external (the man) then

The best critical account of Irish history is Black and Reds' "The Counter-Revolution In Ireland", which unfortunately says hardly anything about the last ten years and concludes with the deterministic implication that joining the EEC will somehow result in the unity of the Irish proletariat across religious boundaries.

The "short-lived Derry street councils of 1969" mentioned weren't particularly radical since they were very quickly taken over by the Official IRA without the least opposition from the Catholic 'community', presumably because of their ability to defend the ghettos from the RUC and later the

## Theses on Feminism

(page 6)

that enables women to avoid the conflicts between and within themselves, avoiding essential breaks by defining such actions as "typically male sectarianism", maintaining contradictions under the blanket of 'sisterhood' (images of joyful women hugging each other, eulogies to the high energy level of the last conference). What's more, it allows for the reappearance of sex roles in a gay form—mummy and daddy dressed in drag. And it leads to gullibility towards the image of "dominant sexuality" in which the man supposedly finds pleasure whilst the woman is frustrated—as if, for example, men's lack of tenderness and receptivity and women's passivity don't work against men as well—as if, for example, men don't sometimes have as much orgasm difficulties as women, etc. etc.

The failure to recognise the misery in the 'privilege' of masculinity leads, on a political level, to equal rights to misery (equality of exploitation, equality of opportunity within the hierarchies). The 'Wages For Housework' campaign (with its sickening but logical extension in the Wages For Sex campaign) is a leftist evasion of practical struggle unmediated by external authority (the State etc.) where relationships can effectively begin to be transformed, into a total acceptance of alienated male-female roles, and the demand for such roles to be economically legitimised by the State and the wages system, thus tying consciousness even more to the system than before such "consciousness raising" (this is because the middle class women who advocate such campaigns are mostly cadres in the system—teachers, journalists, social workers etc.—whose interests are linked up to the structures and content of capital). Undoubtedly the logical extension of this will be a "Wages For Wife-Battering" campaign.

When feminists dramatise and hail the fact of women doing activities previously defined as men's arena, imbuing—say—women car mechanics with an exciting radical significance, they are ironically adopting as patronising an attitude towards themselves as that which they rightly condemn in men. The critique of smug expertise, which puts the unknown-

ledgeable in an insecure unconfident position, fearful of asking, is particularised in feminist ideology to a critique of *male* attitudes, rather than a critique of *all* knowledge hierarchies, a protective conspiracy which obviously works against excluded men as well.

All the adulations to 'Women's Culture', the counter-cultural pseudo-opposition to dominant culture, are the ideological means for female professionals to make and maintain a niche in this world whilst dynamising its cultural market. Everything of some artistic merit achieved by women for women is lauded merely because it's achieved by women for women, another example of women's self-patronisation. These women, in giving a feminist content to reified forms, which they justify in terms of supportive *confirmation* of women's battles, are the future thieves of the real and continuing present struggles: the more this representation of the 'movement' grows the more men and women will forget to move and grow.

Feminists cannot make the link from the critique of sex roles to the critique of roles in general because that would necessarily imply a critique of the feminist role (an abstract negation of masculinity, a form of divisive self-assertion) with its own predictable clichés—e.g. leaping on the generic use of the word "he", a "critique" used to abstractly assert oneself against a text as a way of hiding the fact that one has nothing specific to say about its content and its implications for oneself; paeans to the body (the glorification of the naturalness of body odour; tampons as a male plot etc.); ritualistic denunciation of an ad. as being "sexist" and degrading to women (when there are usually more profound things to attack in them, and they're obviously degrading to men as well), an attitude which even leads to counter-revolutionary support for 'non-sexist' advertising; comparison of male-female relationships with that between bosses and workers, a superficially attractive analogy which, as an appeal to the amorphous identity of "victim consciousness", implies that a man is a capitalist role and that men and women's relationships are

## IRISH BONE STEW

(From page 7)

army.

The Left, chasing after the Republicans as they mechanistically apply Lenin's 'theory' of imperialism to the Irish situation, demand a united (socialist) Ireland, comparing the country with Vietnam as they do so. And in the united socialist Vietnam socialist capitalists, like capitalists everywhere, are demanding more sacrifice and greater productivity whilst the workers continue to resist the drive towards intensified capital accumulation (see Zerowork 2 for article on Vietnam). The Irish proletariat has much to look forward to.

The only reason for the continuing presence of the army there is

not economic (since the cost of maintaining the army far outweighs any possible return on investments there) but primarily as a training ground for the future class war in the rest of Britain.

There is absolutely *nothing* worth supporting or encouraging in the Irish situation: everything from the Peace People to the IRA to the UDA to the UVF to the army—everything is riddled with hypocrisy and counter-revolution. And the meaningless nebulous conclusion of the article unintentionally admits that. The chances of anything remotely close to class struggle happening in Ireland in the nearish future are virtually nil, outside of the slim chance of an internat-

*essentially* hierarchical; dismissal of this article because "It's obvious it's been written by a man", the feminist equivalent of the IRA's defensive "You can't attack us—you're British" the victims' flip-side version of the Afrikaan bourgeois' "Don't criticise South Africa until you've been there" etc. etc.

As for pro-feminist men: they're generally somewhat mild-mannered, shy and in a bit of a haze, guiltily repressing their aggressivity as if it's a purely *conditioned* trait of *masculinity*; which shows that they're not fighting their masculinity but merely deterministically blaming themselves for it as if it's not a misery to be consciously struggled against. They apologise for it because they still see it as an advantage, because they still identify with it even as they try to deny it, rather than seeing it as an obstacle—like alienated femininity—to be suppressed. Guilt is the great salvation of everyone who doesn't want to change, smuggling in a static and monolithic version of the self, placing any notion of change as something completely external to what is now rather than a process developing from now: this kind of pro-feminist wants to leap out of his skin and become the image of what a 'good' (passive) man should be. This attitude reinforces complacent men's defensive identification with masculinity as a privilege worth protecting.

As for the anarcho-feminists of Zero: so confused are these people about what they're aiming at, that they actually make demands on the *State* to *imprison* rapists (which is comparable with Berkeley bourgeois feminist demands for more cops to patrol the streets). This ridiculous self-contradiction reveals the practical lie of their anarchist ideology of direct action (clearly, badly beating up convicted but freed rapists would be a far more effective deterrent than prison), of anti-statism and opposition to prisons.

ional revolutionary crisis provoking something. The only thing Irish revolutionaries can do (presuming there are any left) is anonymously publicise an attack on all factions. Or get out of Ireland. Or both.

1. Incidentally, Debord's film-of-the-book 'Society of the Spectacle' juxtaposes film of riots in Derry with film of May '68, riots in the States, demonstrations in Portugal etc. This indiscriminate equivalence which reduces the notion of revolution to street battles with agents of the State, regardless of the varying consciousness, content and purpose of such battles, shows how much Debord is both victim and perpetrator of the spectacle of revolution.



## Today's Punch and Judy Show (pages 9 - 11)

Stylistic incoherence: sentences don't flow too good. The piece on the libertarians about leaders emerging "who are in no way responsible to those they pretend not to lead" is no longer true to anything but a small extent: formal democracy (democracy of form, rather than content: everyone democratically participating in decisions which continue along the previously defined ideological pathway) is now a strict necessity in 'libertarian' groups. In fact, when this isn't the case, there'll always be some outrageously original guy who specialises in persistent complaints about the absence of democracy.

ORA changed its name to the Anarchist Workers Association, in keeping with its workerism; then dissolved and formed the Libertarian Communist Group, in keeping with its anti-anarchism. These ex-anarchists have joined up with Socialist Unity, a group mainly run by worshippers of Trotsky, a man responsible for the slaughter of thousands of anarchists. Oh well — you can't be sectarian, can you? (as the Jew said, embracing the SS officer).

It's completely false to say that 'Solidarity is the only group to have developed an analysis of society on an international level'. Incidentally, Solidarity has become weaker and weaker over the past ten years, and now is virtually indistinguishable from any other libertarian group trailing behind the left.

An article in one of the Case Con journals (which disbanded as a group in 1977) by Pete Feldon claims to criticise my critique, but in fact re-asserts most of what I had attacked in my original article, including a projected niche for himself in the future society where there will be a need for full-time workers to help "those people in trouble, sorrow & sickness." (Criticism of such abstract hypothetical wanderings aside, clearly such a 'need' will be the reciprocal 'work' of each and everyone). In saying social workers are just like any other worker, he conveniently ignores the authority role that social workers intrinsically have, plus the fact that workers when

they participate in the class struggle don't do so by 'radicalising' their specific place in the division of labour (e.g. radical dockers, radical mechanics) but by revolting against it.

Piece on Piranha: a piece of revenge, which is defensively self-contradictory since it says little more than insults. See page 31 for Piranha's grotesque offspring.

### Some Additional Insights into Leftists:

Leftist militancy is usually subjectively justified by a collectivist ideology where the individual buys a sense of belonging at the expense of her autonomy: it is the sacrifice of the individual's perspective for a self-image of revolutionary purity which she measures in terms of the number of good causes and campaigns she's into, articles she's written, pamphlets she's distributing, leaflets she's handed out, demonstrations she's been on, meetings she's spoken at etc. It is essentially a quantitative accumulation of self-justifying, self-congratulatory images based not on fighting her alienation, but on a *series* of deeds.

A more distanced, less subjective, critique of the Left and its method of operating in specific radical situations, would be a more useful tactic as a part of intervening in such situations.

The conclusion of the article is somewhat abstract and unconstructive (which isn't to say that specific ideas for radical activity should be given, since it's up to each individual to subvert what they can, to elaborate the critique and experiment where they wish). It's abstract in that specific symptoms of capitalist misery, and sometimes external issues, are the starting point for the struggle against alienation. What is important always is to not lose sight of the goal; to grasp the relation between the particular and the totality, or else fall into "the abstract will of immediate effectiveness" which "throws itself into the compromises of reformism or the common action of pseudo-revolutionary garbage. In this way delirium reappears in the very position which pretends to fight it". (Debord, SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE).



### The ICC

The list failed to mention the International Communist Current (ICC), a group of DEADLY boring and repetitive council-communist vanguardists, which in England goes under the name of World Revolution. It's worth going into some detail about them because they are one of the most ideologically coherent, prolific and internationally organised (10 or 11 groups throughout the world) of the anti-Leftist groupings. Since they are sufficiently close to articulating elements of the real struggle (total opposition to Trade Unions, to 'community' politics, to self-management ideologies, to Leftism etc., abolition of wage labour etc.) they are likely to become the most attractive danger in the future intensification of the class struggle. That is, their claim to be the organisational mediation between the proletariat and history may well be seductive enough to catch those revolutionary workers who've seen through the lies of the Left, but still retain enough of a cadre mentality (but not enough autonomy and confidence) to fall for these "anti-Leninist" Leninists (though they don't like the Lenin of Kronstadt, they like the Lenin for whom Kronstadt was a logical consequence, the Lenin who said in 1917 in his most 'libertarian' work, 'State And Revolution',

"We do not dream of disposing at once with all administration, with all subordination . . . No, we want the socialist revolution with subordination, control and foremen and accountants."). Revolutionaries need to organise but they need an organisation like they need a hole in the head: any organisation claiming to represent the most advanced consciousness of the class will *always* function hierarchically both externally and internally. The ICC's fixated claim to be the link between the present and the revolutionary past expresses mainly the fact that its ideology is hierarchically transmitted from the KAPD sages still hobbling at the top of its ranks, whose claim to greater revolutionary experience the youthful majority submit to. Lest anyone doubt the threat these people pose to a revolutionary movement which attempts to abolish all that separates individuals from their collective self-realisation, which would obviously include the ICC, the following quote from their manifesto should be sufficient: "The cults of newness . . . of the individual, of de-alienation, and of the spectacle . . . have often succeeded in transforming many groups that the class since its resurgence has given rise to, into exotic sects . . . If they persist . . . in standing in the way of the task of regroup-

ment of revolutionary forces, the proletarian movement will ruthlessly destroy them". Lest anyone be conned by their apparent opposition to the State and all future States, they themselves have revealed this lie in a slip of the pen in WR no.3—"It was not a question of 'negating' wages or economic struggles but of *going beyond* them, towards the *struggle for state power*", an unfortunate 'accident' they've not repeated since. This article is also noteworthy for its complete distortion of what it calls 'situationism', caricaturing the situationists as individualists (petty-bourgeois ones, of course), using crude amalgam techniques, amongst innumerable other falsifications, including the idea that the S.I. believed the proletariat was integrated into capitalism. Their 'argument' against the abolition of work—which they see as "one of the very activities through which the revolutionary proletariat will dissolve all class differences"—(mis)represents the critique of work as a critique of productive activity, rather than a critique of the separation of work and play, which ensures that 'play' is neither consequential nor demanding, and work is neither creative nor pleasurable. Though I realise *their* compulsion to reach out for the marxist security blanket and quote from the good ole favourites is a reflection of the repression of their own insights, it sometimes takes a quote to catch a quote: "Work is essentially unfree, inhuman, unsocial activity, determined by private property and creating private property. The abolition of private property becomes a reality only when it is understood as the abolition of 'work'." (Marx, "Über Friedrich Lists Buch 'Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie'" ).

The constant apparently deliberate distortions of the situationist critique show an obsessive need to assert themselves *purely* through crude belittlement of others, whose ideas they seem to resent. And hence they can never use and correct these ideas—but merely criticise them by falsifying them: resentment is always counter-revolutionary. Their contempt is a facade for the real fear that they might have to question their dogma, their rigid sense of identity, their mistrust of anything which demands they centre their understanding of the world on themselves. Hence their need to define themselves in the terms of the classical workers movement: for them, the traditions of the past shine like a rainbow into the brains of the living.

Their role of didactic propagandists for the serious *business* of revolution is an attempt purely to get *others* to see the necessity for a revolution (with the bogey-man of a future nuclear war to frighten them into it, a threat which no way provokes people to confront present misery) in order to extend themselves *numerically*, as a substitute for fighting the dullness of their desires and despairs. Their economic determinism (which even 'explains', post facto, the revolts of May '68 as being due to the beginnings of the economic crisis—as if the crisis in France isn't far worse now, yet the revolution far less explosive) is an attempt to provide a scientific basis for this teacher role, which believes one has to educate the workers to understand the objective laws of capital in order to get them to destroy it (doubtless, using the ICC as its central weapon). As for us, "We know only one science: the science of history" (The German Ideology). They're incapable of seeing how the proletariat is partly responsible for the crisis, in so far as it has failed to confront the objective consequences of their limited revolt. The ICC sees the crisis as the creation of the proletariat only in so far as it's the alienated product of its wage-labour turned against it, rather than a dialectic of this and the alienated product of its class struggle turned against it, existing as an apparently all-powerful force. This notion of the proletariat as merely victim is a justification for their semi-secret belief in themselves as the saviours, as sole possessors of class consciousness; their belief that the workers are merely manipulated by the Left in a one-way fashion (as if workers aren't Leftists, and in part *choose* to succumb to ideology) reveals a hidden belief that they can manipulate them with 'True' class consciousness.

They achieve 'coherence' by excluding every aspect of life and the world that does not conform to their militant worker-centred ideology: they censor their ideas down to the ones which have consequences they can easily handle, in particular, the simplification of specific problems into questions of

confronting the totality of capitalist relations. Of course, they have to develop an ideological defence against breaking out of their fixed definition of what constitutes the revolutionary process: thus, in the name of anti-individualism they effectively dismiss the struggle for individual autonomy as "dilettanteism"; in the name of the centrality of the world crisis, every other aspect of critical activity is dismissed as "marginalism"; in the name of following in their fathers' footsteps—those of the old workers' movement—they dismiss every extension of practical theory covering all aspects of life as "the cult of newness" (since they never do anything new or experimental they're incapable of distinguishing between the phoney novelties this world produces and what is genuinely new about modern alienation and the forces that oppose it).

The achieve the determined sense of certainty they apparently have because breaking new ground, concretely confronting resistances and obstacles in one's daily life, involves an anxious uncertainty and fear of aloneness which it is all too easy to avoid by repressing such confrontations. If such a milieu has pre-defined what is revolutionary then allegiance to such a group assures the militant of evading the search for autonomous discovery: but it sure must get a drag churning out the same permitted stock phrases and set 'analyses' over and over, again and again that anyone with just the slightest taste for adventure must feel the urge to leave and thereby achieve an element of self-respect.

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Between 1973 and 1976 I had a comrade-friendship with Roger Gregory, until he joined World Revolution, which made me decide to break (in a somewhat unclear un-definite sort of way) off from him. Since that time I saw him on and off occasionally, and finally decided to clearly break with him in 1977 rather than leave myself with the nagging feeling of not having taken my critiques of him seriously. During this time our relationship had been a series of frivolous joking about, mad goonish immediacy (which was sometimes fun, but became pretty compulsive and empty after a while), consequenceless and frustrating argumentative discussions and half-hearted challenges which never resulted in anything. He'd occasionally challenge my couple relationship at that time (a challenge with a lot of potential substance to it; but *he* could only make artificial critiques based on an abstract critique of the couple in general—a "You're not developing your autonomy"—type accusation—rather than be concrete, a challenge which was not so much concerned with changing our relationship as with *proving* his critical ability); I'd criticise his lethargy, his inability—refusal even—to get anything together, to write anything, or to assert himself without his words being half-quotes from Vaneigem or Debord (now he's substituted the ICC's line as his medium for being 'aggressive', which always comes over as rehearsed and not quite authentic, as if there's a little man in his head saying, "I must make a critique of that opinion if I am to prove to myself I am a revolutionary"). I also made some criticisms of his romanticism (a focussing on—and very often, exaggeration and dramatisation of—the 'good' aspect of a friend of his or situation he has been in, to the distortion or neglect of the 'bad', a way of showing off what a weird, exciting, subjective daily life he led), which was linked to his attraction to the ICC (their manifesto is really stirring stuff: images of leading the triumphant through the gates of the proletarian heaven!). Of course, compared with his previous inactivity he was bound to feel temporarily happy: as part of a ready-made international grouping that's *DOING* something about the world he could feel himself stretching beyond North London to the four corners of the globe. But this buzz, based as it is on militant totality-type ideology, was short-lived: in private he's pretty scornful of those comrades of his who lead totally conventional mediocre lives (in fact, their economic determinism is the ideological rationalisation which enables them to avoid looking at their own relationships: the struggle of the workers becomes the projection of all the hopes that they are incapable of fighting for themselves, beginning with each other). He 'justifies' this self-abandonment with the fatalistic belief that such organisation is the only radical possibility today—as if one can fight alienation with alienated means.



## Some more thoughts on terrorism:

(From page 10)

Terrorism is now one of the daily occupational hazards of being a member of the ruling class—like fatal 'accidents' are for building workers. Though the rulers' moral emotional outrage expresses merely their own class solidarity and an ideology of violence that automatically excludes their own (e.g. the murder of Moro is to be condemned by all right thinking people, whereas the murder of Lorusso—Italian revolutionary killed by the cops in 1977—is considered "normal and inevitable", according to the Prime Minister

Andreotti) this banal bourgeois hypocrisy is used by various so-called radicals to justify support, critical or otherwise, for various terrorist tendencies—from the Angry Brigade to the Red Brigade, from RAF to ETA. The attitude of romantic identification with such apparently proletarian expressions of courage—"Well, they don't quite have the right ideas, but they are on our side and they are attacking our enemies, so we have to support them, because basically, if they go down, we all go down"—ignores the fundamental substitutionism of terrorism, even when the participants claim to be merely "part of the movement". In fact, often the rise of terrorism coincides with the petrification of the movement (in Italy? for example), and sometimes even acts as a brake on the beginnings of a general anti-State movement (e.g. the recent killings of the generals in Spain after a spontaneous general strike against the cops in the Basque country).

The recent revival of interest in the Angry Brigade amongst certain currents in Britain, signified by the rapid sale of a pamphlet merely listing their communiqués and their bombings, illustrates the seduction by spectators of revolt to one of the dominant definitions of revolutionary activity. Such an image is attractive only to those who over-impatiently seek short-cuts, a desire born out of the desperately felt, but unthought out, wish to immediately consequentially destroy the Old World, an attraction to instant cures which commodity advertising promotes and which is internalised by peoples' daily anxious yearning for satisfaction now. In its superficially revolutionary form (terrorism) this commodity "impulse" refuses to recognise that the revolutionary meeting-point with history is a process which takes time, a process of conscious development. Terrorists and their cheerleaders are essentially concerned with a bravado image because they know that simulation is the only thing that can escape time, though they don't know that simulators cannot.

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A few words on Germany, the Red Army Faction & the response to these by English 'libertarians':

Despite many mystifications (e.g. students—or 'youth'—as the vanguard of the oppressed), the gut disgust with the dead life of bourgeois complacency began in the sixties with a great deal of imagination and originality, but the sexual experimentation and anti-bourgeois anger have long outlived the adventurous content they ever had and have stagnated into the forms of Otto Muhl's A.A. communes and the RAF, into sexual politics ideology (character assassination, compulsive polygamy etc.) and anti-imperialist, anti-fascist ideologies. Terrorism, born out of the failure of this youth movement, retained its vanguardist, anti-imperialist illusions, a fundamental aspect of its failure, the miserable consequences of which it has never seriously faced.

One of the functions of the Mogadishu Show, put on by international capital courtesy of the RAF and friends, was clearly to make up for the tarnished image of the army after the anti-nuclear power demonstrations in the summer of '77:

1. Someone bursting with bright-eyed invention will come out with the sparkling words: "Huh, you're accepting a bourgeois category to call it terrorism. You gotta call it armed struggle or else you're a counter-revolutionary creep". As if all words—"armed struggle"—included—don't have ruling and revolutionary interpretations according to their context; 'terrorism' and 'armed struggle' in the terms and terminology of a revolution of the majority are incompatible: in the lying language of the bourgeoisie (and the just mentioned cliché-spieler) they're indistinguishable.

2. And in terms of strategy, if the Red Brigades hadn't killed Moro the fact of the bourgeoisie having been prepared to let this Elder Statesman die would have caused far more embarrassment, conflicts and crises in the ruling class (as well as making it hard for them to present a scape-goat Tragedy-image of the equivalence of revolution with savagery, the Villainous Monster Movie everyone loves to be terrified and horrified by).

the violent defenders of State property and its pollution turn out to be not so nasty after all—just like the boys next door, really. The internationally televised Schmidt-Social Democrat political electioneering and State show-of-strength celebration, hypocritically "on behalf of" the hijack victims, is mirrored on a small scale in the 'libertarian' spectacle of martyr worship intended to boost their political self-image. Like the ruling class which posthumously awards Victoria Crosses to the obedient slaves who die for it, the "well-what-else-can-you-do?" type 'libertarians' in this country mourn the dead heroes. Solidarity with the RAF is, on the one hand, an admiration for a realised comic-book notion of heroic daring that English 'libertarians' rarely act out in an underivative form in the reality of their own daily lives; and, on the other hand, it's a deeply-felt empathy with the victim, which shows how much libertarians here are virtually always the victims of circumstances, rarely their creators. In Germany (as everywhere where people have refused to take responsibility for the personal and objective effect (or lack of) their own mistakes) the victims have always been victims of circumstances they have helped to create: the vicious circle of State reaction and of reacting to the State means that at all stages the State has called the tune. In this sado-masochistic knot, each time the terrorists' competition to up the stakes and prove their revolutionary audacity (status rewards for those who spiral up the attacks on an ascending hierarchy of bourgeois villains; contempt—even death—for those who 'weakly' fail to measure up to such demands) has led to more martyrdom, heightened technocratic State power, liberal-humanist-reformist campaigns, ritualistic leftist denunciations, solidarity campaigns with the terrorists (not only useless but a dangerous & mystifying distraction, bolstering conventional stereotyping of what constitutes a threat to Power, and the scapegoat use of such notions for strengthening the separation between workers and what they think the revolutionary struggle is) and just plain burnt out resignation. In each case individuals have renounced their autonomy for the false choices of various ideologies, various causes, various 'scenes' and their various self-enclosed but reciprocally-maintained characters.

The common identity based on the lowest common denominator of common revulsion against State atrocities, breeds, at first sight, strange bed-fellows: the Leninist counter-State atrocities of the RAF are 'critically' supported by the libertarians whose fundamental unifying factor is opposition to Leninism! (and this purely on the basis of their being tortured, as if common "criminals", who don't share the elitism of the terrorists, aren't proportionally brutalised by the system for their own crimes against bourgeois property values). But at second sight this isn't so strange: secretly the libertarians recognise their own militant-cadre desires in these—albeit unnecessarily violent—would-be sparks that light the prairie fire. In the case of the RAF this latter self-justification is, for the most part, a lie, even in its own vanguardist terms: it's put on to maintain some semblance of apparent 'revolutionary' credibility. In reality their guilt-ridden Third Worldist ideology is based on an arrogant contempt for the workers of the 'First World' they pretend to attempt to incite on the callous principle (which history has repeatedly given the lie to) of "the heavier the State repression, the more likely the workers will explode." And counter-State terror only breeds nausea and outrage from these workers and tends to bind them more submissively to State terror (and even if it didn't, it could only breed passive follower-supporters, or, at 'best', imitators). Basing their strategy on the old nihilist cliché "When you got nothing you got nothing to lose" the RAF can't even begin to grasp the banality that just desperation almost always leads to greater and more purposeless desperate activity, or to shell-shocked petrification. Their 'theory'—"Urban guerilla warfare bases itself on the analysis that by the time conditions are ripe for armed struggle then it'll be too late to prepare for it"—conveniently ignores the basic fact that it's the State that gets the most preparation and the working class gets none, as well as the fact that revolutions have been destroyed primarily by the combination of fear, gullibility and ideology before they were destroyed militarily. Likewise, their efforts to expose the vulnerability of the State has made the State far less vulnerable, and the proletariat far more. This isn't to deny the value of learning how to shoot; like all techniques, it has a revolutionary use; merely that consciousness is the major weapon revolu-

tionaries can use now, in counter-revolutionary circumstances. For the RAF the urge to destroy now has become equally the urge to self-destruction and the only 'creative' urge that has developed has been that of the most advanced Big Brother machinery ever. In fixating unstrategically on the State and its personas (whether out of an impulsive sense of disgust or out of a guiltily repressed semi-conscious resentful self-recognition) they have fed the State with its armoury: when the enemy chooses the battlefield and the weapons, only the enemy can win.

In the midst of all this crap, which is being increasingly seen as such, the far from novel illusion which is likely to gain in popular support—because of its appeal to pragmatism, to 'usefulness', is that of the liberal reformists, possibly in combination with leftist intellectuals. It's therefore worth saying a few disillusioning words about their history and their 'strategy': In the period up to 1972 the various representatives of capital (press, education hierarchy, civil service etc.) feared a threat to their ideological hegemony and their position posed by the leftist intellectual entrists, with their manipulative elitist strategy of trying to destroy the system "from within". The battle over whether capitalist institutions (mainly the schools and universities) should be authoritarian or 'democratic' and over the content of the lie (whether marxism should be on the curriculum or not) was really a battle over different strategies for capitalism—rigidity or pluralism. Pluralism, despite giving anti-students a bit more leeway, is essentially merely more subtly bewildering and suffocating—as in the USA or Britain etc. Anyway, the struggle to make the institutions more 'democratic' was already a leftist recuperation of the revolt against all separate institutions and all separate notions of education, a revolt that knew itself to be so (the isolation of the struggle—which reformism opportunistically aimed to remedy at the same time as falsifying its content—was helped by the rebels' tendency to stereotype and resign themselves to the 'inevitable' hostility of the workers, such that they never tried to undercut the reactionary media's mediation between them and the rest of the proletariat, thus helping to reinforce the workers' reification of them; anti-work ethic faced work ethic, and each solidified into a posture that excluded self-recognition in the other). In this battle between Left and Right, the Right won inevitably (given that the failure to confront the backward consciousness of the German proletariat made the possibility of a general revolutionary movement very unlikely): firstly, because the peculiar history of the development of capitalism and its democracy in Germany

(the dominance of the military, the unity of the aristocracy and industry, the lack of any independent bourgeois revolution etc.) makes the possibility of a liberal State virtually nil; and secondly, because capital has chosen the definite particular strategy of cybernetic Social Democracy as a model means of defending possible attack due to its economic crisis and the attacks of the RAF. The opposition to Berufsverbote is—like that towards pollution—completely uncontroversial, ranging from the Guardian to Solidarity. (But, like one's understanding of pollution, different analyses of its cause should lead to differing conclusions, though the difference between the Guardian and Solidarity in this case is merely the difference between types of unpracticed advocacy: a liberal campaign versus a libertarian campaign). The excesses of Berufsverbote could be tidied up, but merely as a means of glossing over the continuing repressive bureaucracy. The liberal-leftists 'outraged' critique of Berufsverbote and their strategy of appeals to 'world opinion' etc. is not only confusing, bound to fail and lead to demoralisation because it fails to grasp the objective strategy of the State, and hence sets up illusions in the possibilities of a 'good' State, but also because they don't (and don't want to) attempt to 'win over' the mass of proletarians, by attacking their complicity with their miserable life, or by intervening to extend the struggles they are already involved in. This they naturally cannot do without undermining their own class position and ambitions—their place in the avant-garde of culture, academia etc. (Just this once, I shall avoid giving a rousing ending to an article).

## A few words on defence groups:

The human necessity to expose the liberal sham and try to secure the release of British dissidents is ideologically pumped up as a means of inciting people to revolt, falsely assuming that individuals' recognition of the democratic lie can be taught by the example of the victimisation of others. This 'method' can only attempt to make partisans, who then go and spread the word to other would be partisans. There are even those who gleefully thrive on the prospect of such victimisation as yet another opportunity to churn out yet another propaganda campaign. Ironically, the humanitarian justification for such a campaign tends to inhumanly ignore the fact that it is a human (but not revolutionary) need to help anyone in prison, whether 'political' or not. Strangely, anarchists and Leftists in this country sloganise "Free All Political Prisoners!", whereas anarchists, and even Leftists, in Spain have long had the slogan "Free All Prisoners" (which demand, nevertheless, remains pretty abstract, and is hardly acted on, except by the prisoners themselves).



## CONVERSATION LIBERATION FRONT (from page 12)

An elaboration of some of the things touched on:

### Gossip

It allows people a vicarious view of others; links people superficially with innumerable other individuals (people like to feel they know and are known by several others—feel they have several 'acquaintances'—a desire for, without the realisation of, community). Gossip meets

peoples' curiosity needs on a very superficial level. The alienated individual tries to escape the insularity of his experience by finding a vicarious link with the apparent life of others. Though gossip may well be a way of confirming or disconfirming a view one holds about another, it's rare that such opinions are armed, are tested out in relation to the person one is talking about: talking openly about others acts as an evasion from talking openly about the person you're talking to.

### Anecdotes

Unless used to illustrate a point, they reduce people and events to purely behavioural appearances, failing to grasp any meaning about people etc., abstracting the story from the experience of it, anaesthetising the reality for an aesthetic/dramatic image. They're a way of being entertaining/amusing—but are usually an undialectical monologue: showing how much the 'story-teller' is out of touch with the 'listener'—unable or unwilling

to reach out. Nostalgic reminiscences romanticise (and, hence, falsify) the past, failing to learn from and supersede the past. The past defines the present (the conversation), rather than illuminating the present. The constant repetition of particular anecdotes illustrates the stagnation/non-development of the individual. Rather than critically supersede the past, it becomes congealed into an 'interesting' story. The difference between 'radical' anecdotists and 'straight' anecdotists is that with



the former the event is something they *make* happen, with the latter it's something that happens *to* them.

#### The Good Conversationalist

One who entertains you with words and stories, but never feels your presence except as a listener, as someone to be impressed, as someone who can respond to, or laugh at, their words, but not someone who will effect them, not someone who can be played with, or have demands put on them. This person displays autonomy, but secretly needs to be patted on the back and congratulated.

#### The Academic

Academia: a social relation among people, mediated by books. When

A couple of tentative observations on the poverty and contradictions of encounter groups, growth groups, primal therapy etc: in such a culture as ours excessive repression & confusion must be avoided if people are to be capable of playing the increasing variety of roles necessary to meet the requirements of a fast-changing economy; already ideas of ridding people of their feelings of alienation have been used in factories in Sweden and the USA, to help ease the tension between workers and management. At the same time one can't dismiss the various therapies as simplistically ideological in this way: all of them recuperate the desire for something new and original, for honesty and mutual dis-

the interaction between people becomes stifled, awkward, damned up, reach out for a pamphlet—the instant paper over the cracks in the facade of togetherness... Of course, there's nothing essentially 'false' in discussing a piece of writing—the trouble is, it's so often a barrier to mutual learning and development, rather than a springboard: the piece of writing is discussed in its own self-contained framework, as a piece of writing, rather than its application to the lives of the individuals discussing it.

#### The Questioner

The questioner asks questions because he has nothing to say, yet cannot stand silence: there is no genuine curiosity or purpose to his questions. Fearful of his own

#### A Few Additional Thoughts On Therapy (from page 15)

covery and development, the desire to reach out, the desire to let go, into spheres separated from the individuals' daily interaction (frightened to scream in the supermarket? come to our secure, safe and sound-proofed padded pad - and scream to your heart and lungs' content). All techniques are permitted - massage and psychoanalysis included - it's merely a question of tearing up the ideological wrappin that go with them and using them to revolutionise the world. But the therapy-group functions as a thing-in-itself, a social-relation-in-itself, people who come together for that specific evening, a vacuum coming together for the specific reason of working out their re-

thoughts he asks questions which hint at his thoughts, but which enable him to avoid committing himself to them lest he say something that challenges the stasis of the situation and, in particular, his own stasis.

#### The Nice Guy

Politeness is the easiest way of coping, the simplest form of indifference and impersonality. The nice guy wants to get by with as little aggravation as possible. He wants to be approved of, is anxious of being disliked or feared. He wishes to affirm every role-bound person, because he fears they will not affirm his role otherwise; he uses his vulnerability, his 'warmth' and his 'generosity' as a defence. He is frightened of attacking lest he hurts the other person—he feels

guilty for the other person's pain, but in this way he masochistically swallows his thoughts and feelings, and hurts himself instead, believing that in his silence he can maintain some illusion of purity and superiority. But what he fears most of all is being attacked back. He only gets angry or assertive in situations where he knows he is loved and safe and will always, like a child, be supported: he is frightened to realise that he has to act alone. His energy is so other-directed it's like he is frantically trying to escape from himself, from his own desires in all the activity designed to please everybody else: but since he has lost himself, he is incapable of ever meeting anybody else.

the daily world that reinforces their 'necessity', which would make the experienced and theoretically grasped connection between the immediate social relationships and the society as a whole directly tangible; 'therapy' - even in its' so-called radical forms - never helps towards the discovery of these crossroads, these points of unity between daily life and the totality, when we see how changing ourselves is inextricably linked with attacking the world, with changing and challenging others, with exploding the separation between the immediate and society in general.



The piece on 'us' (see page 18): it should really have said that 'us' never really existed, in that 'us' never actually defined any common project(s), any minimum requirements, or anything about 'us'. In fact, the journal was purely put together by me, though two articles (one on feminism, the other on Ireland) were mostly 'written' by Paul Sieveking (in fact there was virtually nothing original in these articles—most of what had been written had been ripped off from other peoples' texts; Paul Sieveking merely signed his name to them).

Concerning Paul Sieveking, towards whom my past tolerance expressed an evasive tolerance towards some of the same pretensions in myself: In 1975 he published, under the pseudonym of Practical Paradise Publications, a translation of Vaneigem's "Traite de Savoir-Vivre Pour L'Usage des Jeunes Generations" (under the title 'The Revolution of Everyday Life'). This had a critique of Vaneigem contained in 'A Footnote on Practical Truth', a critique through which he aims to imply that he is superior to Vaneigem, when in fact he never ever had anything of Vaneigem's former originality, and in fact the critique is completely applicable to

him as well. In 1977, he published a re-printed translation of Debord's "Society of the Spectacle", whilst at the same time being a member of the 'Orange Order' cult of Bagwhan Rajneesh. Apparently he can see no incongruity between printing a brilliant revolutionary book and wearing the photo of a guru round his neck. The contradiction, however, is explainable: both the book and his allegiance to the most modern of cults are means of sustaining his radical self-image, his spectacle of opposition to the spectacle. Of course, anybody's insights can be a means by which an individual represses his own thoughts and feelings; they merely become a set of ideas that the individual can bullshit his way through life with. And the more the ideas express some essential element of the reality of the individual's misery, the subtler their repressive effect: but it is usually the individual who cons only himself—others, less caught up in ideology, can see through the abstraction far more easily. "The need to imitate which is felt by the consumer is precisely the infantile need conditioned by all the aspects of his fundamental dispossession. In the terms applied by Gabel to a completely different pathological level, 'the abnormal need for representation here

compensates for a torturing feeling of being on the margin of existence.'" (Society of the Spectacle, thesis 219). Paul's desperately dependant need for a benevolent authority and guide has led him to discover his ideal parent, however, incarnated in the form of the Rajneesh—a model of excellence which has replaced his former drugs—Hegel, the S.I., Norman O. Brown and cocaine. Paul's IT eulogy of Bagwhan as the 'Genius of the Absurd' and his favourite quote of the guru "Everything I have said up until now is rubbish" is his objective support for unsuperseded self-contradiction, repression of the memory of his past, rejection of history and general purposelessness, directionlessness and futility. Like all agreeable and reserved english gentlemen he keeps his thoughts and anger (if he has any left) to himself, verbally suppressing any remnant of subjectivity with quotes from books & pamphlets, occasional half-hearted 'celebrations' of famous peoples' works of art and anecdotal banter learnt at Cambridge University. His submerged illusion of superiority occasionally bobs up when he unguardedly reveals his contempt for the 'mindless masses', though—according to what is conveniently

protective at any particular moment—he will say "Well, I'm as much in the shit as everybody else." Completely lacking in any enthusiasm whatsoever, he is like a lost orphan, in search of the womb of a totally accepting mother, which yearning for total fusion he projects into the golden utopia of the future after the Revolution, which is somehow going to drop from the sky. But for now, such 'practical paradise', such total here-and-now harmony (an ideal he clutches onto to avoid conflict) is to be found in his 'home' in India, where he longs to return. Poor Paul.

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Recently in that counter-cultural culture-counter International Times, he got a 'friend' of his to defend him with lies about the S.I.—Heathcote Williams, a semi-alcoholic trendy playwright and blatant public liar, with whom Paul has never exchanged an honest word. He can no doubt justify these pre-emptive bits of bullshit (e.g. dismissing the S.I. and its vital involvement in France May '68 as "embittered scene-creamers who... tried in typically French fashion to intellectualise the whole mood out of existence", and slandering them by saying that "their heroes are... Solanas, Nechayev, the IRA.")

with his smug compulsively inane "don't take things so seriously", defending himself from every critic of his very ordinary flippant role by labelling them kill-joys (exactly how the Sun dismissed leftist critics of the Jubilee). He has moved from Blakean-Christian visionary politics (Albion Free State) to Groucho Marxist fantasies (Freestonia), which expresses his daily false separation between his utopian compensations for present misery and innocuously frivolous here-and-now-ism which only he and his flatterers appreciate, and which get him nowhere. His personal cliché is "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar", which is an inadvertent admission of the trivia of his desires and his vanity (not to mention what he thinks of sweet and sour pork.<sup>2</sup> His "critique" of The Catalyst Times<sup>3</sup> is no critique at all, since he is at least as—if not more—guilty of the facile attacks he makes on that chaotic jumble of a pamphlet.

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IT, I should add, continues that classical idiosyncrasy of negative identification 'The enemy's enemy is my friend'—by, for example, supporting Ron Bailey merely because he's having a battle with the council. It's worth making public the suppressed memories of the history of this "Working Class Hero". In 1969 during the Redbridge squatting campaign, old Bailey's role as anarcho-militant was always to present to the council and the Press a moralistic 'Cathy Come Home'-type case on behalf of the respectable family squatter. This led him to denounce as having nothing to do with decent squatting those unemployed homeless kids, who, in escaping from family life, decided to occupy (in August '69) 144 Piccadilly, a massive mansion overlooking Buckingham Palace and the Hilton Hotel. This kind of behaviour, he said, in his self-appointed capacity as squatter press officer, was damaging to the reputation of those 'genuine' squatters—homeless families. He repeated this kind of social work militancy in the famous

Centre Point occupation of 1973. The strategy was brilliant—Bailey & co. spent 6 months infiltrating the security company guarding Hyams' monstrosity, only to stay just three days inside (at a time when public buildings in Italy were being occupied for up to two years). Their first action once inside was to invite in the Press in order to publicise the scandal of this massive empty building whilst hundreds of thousands were homeless; but none of them were homeless—and the thousands of homeless people outside, for whom they were supposedly acting, were not allowed into the building, whilst journalists were. The building was kept spic and span, and they left it in a neater state than when they took it over. So concerned were they about their responsible image that they phoned up the security company every hour to say everything was alright. Though Bailey and friends arrived on the balcony outside clenching their fists and spilling rhetorical slogans of solidarity with the miners strike, their actual practice in the building had been a form of scabbing of the strike; for, at a time when the minimum gesture of support for the miners meant using up as much electricity as possible, they had conscientiously ensured that most of the lights were switched off. And the festive mini-riot in Charing Cross Road that followed the occupation was condemned as irresponsible and disgraceful by our Ron, who was really quite upset by this display of bad manners. Aaah—if only people could revolt tidily...! Incidentally, one of Bailey's equally remonstrative co-starring cohorts of this West End farce was Jack Dromey, centre forward of Left United in the match against Right Rangers at Grunwicks, an event designed to boost Trade Unionism's fading militant image; as at Centre Point, Dromey's "sensible" concern for others, was aimed to ensure that others should submit to him and his 'radical' posture.

To return, once more, to the original text:

Shutes remarks on Horelicks (in Skirmishes with an Untimely Man) applies to the comment on 'situations' (page 18) in this piece: " 'Situations' are not understood by Horelick... subjectively, as social relations, but only objectively, as something one finds, comes to, intervenes in." (which isn't to deny the use of the latter).

The concept of diversion is oversimplified: applied purely to printed material, not to every aspect of life.

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A couple of general ideas on its style:

There's a constant repetition of 'boredom', 'bored' and 'boring', which reduces the complexity of repression to a blanket experience. After all, boredom, apathy, resistance, is partly the responsibility of the bored: a drab situation can be diverted, made to come alive by pen, voice or gesture.

There's an overuse of the literary/lyrical style, which, although is part of the process of steeping the commonplace in dreams, giving it over to the sovereign pleasure of subjectivity, thus emphasising the contradiction between what is and what could be, it is easy prey for a stance of admiration (something challenging, possibly painful, is turned into an aesthetic appreciation by the writer and reader—and the criticism is lost, glossed over and swerved around by the literary mind). Also, it isn't really conducive to serious reflection. One has to fight through the overstatements to get to those parts that are illuminating.

1. Bagwhans' attraction is that he can see through peoples' pretensions and expose them, yet play the accepting parent: having had their characterological rigidities attacked, his followers attribute the release of energy to the suppression of the ego, which is a confusion of ego with character, with image. Bagwhans' growthese ideology of opposition to all defences in a world in a world where defences are essential, is his means of lobotomising people (suppressing their thoughts and desires) so that he can supplant their own

individuality with his 'enlightenment'. His favourite story—that of the Zen master who, when his pupil slapped him round the face after 15 years of faithful studenthood, said 'At last! - you understand!'—is merely a witty articulation of the most subtle of avant-gardist postures: the anti-leader pre-empting and recuperating the possibility of a consequential break with his challenging teacher role by, on the one hand, reducing it to a reformist battle, and on the other hand, congratulating himself for his teaching capacity as a means of taking the radicality out of a potential autonomous aggressive act, at the same time as making out that such criticality is his intention all the time anyway. The complete unreflected immersion in the immediate, a collective solipsism, is both product and producer of a smug dismissal of the relevance of death and of the fear of dying—which enables these well-fed wealthy drop-outs to justify ignoring the misery around them, and to reject any notion of changing the world (their conception of change is a-historically metaphysical: people merely 'grow'). Their ideas might carry a bit more weight if they starved themselves, but of course none of them live with the very directly real daily threat of death. 'Nothing original comes from thinking' is Bagwhans' unoriginal thought, as if thought is separable from practice and sensitivity. Bagwhan thinks he can escape history but history will not escape him, whether it be in the form of his own organisation collapsing in on him, his worsening asthma or the Indian proletariat.

2. This ideology of the dangerous radicality of playfully taking the piss out of the rulers and the dominant conditions (i.e. "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar") is something the rulers, particularly in this country, have long accommodated and even encouraged. From Queen Victoria's love of Alice in Wonderland to Denis Healey dressing up as a fairy-godmother and Queen Elizabeth making fun of her 'my husband and I' platitude, via The Goons, Private Eye, Monty Python and The Goodies, satire and humour have distracted from the very real power these people have over our lives. In fact, it contributes to their fascination, even if people are cynically fascinated: laughing at the cripples who govern us is an impotent gesture of contempt which enables the cynic to accept them even as he inconsequentially attacks them, and distracts him from that area of his life he can directly effect.



BAGWHAN SPEAKS

AS YOU SOW, SO SHALL I REAP: FOR I AM THE STEALER OF EGOS. THROW DOWN WHAT YOU NOW THINK ARE SHIELDS, THAT I MAY CHANGE THEM INTO SPEARS FOR MY ARMOURY. SURRENDER YOURSELVES THAT I MAY TRANSMUTE THE WEALTH YOU DARE NOT USE AND SELL IT BACK TO YOU IN THE FORM OF SEDUCTIVE ENERGY, BENEVOLENT PATERNALISM, CHARISMA. VERILY, SHALL YOU REPEAT MY NAME A HUNDRED TIMES DAILY AND YOUR OWN AND YOUR FRIENDS' BUT SELDOM... DOUBT NOT—LEST I BE FOREVER LOST!



# AMAZING WIN A POLICEMAN COMPETITION

YES - you too can have your very own policeman in the comfort of your own lounge. All you have to do is to put the following descriptions of policemen in order of aptness (i.e. if you think A is nearest the truth place it in the box next to 1):

- A walking robot with a frightened individual squirming inside.
- An object obsessed with its own power to turn others into objects.
- Someone who humiliates you "for your own protection".
- One whose greatest pain is for someone to ignore his authority.
- The keeper of the peace of the world of obedient slaves.
- A servant to the community of isolated individuals, keeping them well apart to insure the smooth-running of the economy.
- The personification of the State on your street corner, keeping you safe and secure in the knowledge that you have no control over the use of your life.
- One who is so responsible for himself that he will declare, as bravely as they did at Nuremberg, "I'm only following orders."
- One who would gladly lay down his 'life' to protect the power of things and their price.
- One who gets confused, frightened and aggressive in situations which do not conform to the 'normal routine'.
- The man who helps you sleep safe in bed at night, rest assured that your dreams will never become real.
- A father-figure benignly protecting you from those who wish to harm you, in particular, yourself.
- The external justification for all the cops in your head.
- Yourselves - everytime you constrain another, everytime you restrain yourself.

- ☐ 6. ☐ 11. ☐ After having filled in the boxes on the left, complete the following sentence in not more than 20 words: "I like policemen because....".
- ☐ 7. ☐ 12. ☐
- ☐ 8. ☐ 13. ☐
- ☐ 9. ☐ 14. ☐
- ☐ 10. ☐ 15. ☐ Now write your name and address in the box provided, wrap your answers round a brick and throw through your nearest police station window...

NAME.....  
ADDRESS.....  
.....

...or, if you prefer, send your replies to SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION, BOX LBD, 197 KINGS X RD. LONDON W.C.1

1000s  
OF PRIZES  
TO BE  
WON

Produced May '75. (no longer available)

Situationist *humour*—product of the contradictions between the latent possibilities of the epoch and its absurd reality—once it ceases to be practical, approaches simply the mediocrity of a society where the good spectator has been largely supplanted by the cynical spectator.

— 'Society of Situationism'

This leaflet was popular precisely because it was such a general and unspecific challenge. It could probably even have appeared in Mad magazine.



SOMETHING TO HIDE THAT EMPTY MIND AND FRUSTRATED BODY:—  
**YES!!—IT'S THE IDEA THAT HAPPINESS CAN BE BOUGHT AND CONSUMED.....**

**YOU TOO CAN FORGET YOUR LONELINESS AND JOIN THE LONELY CROWD OF "HAPPY" CONSUMERS, WHERE THINGS, ROLES AND IMAGES RULE EACH AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL—KEEPING THEM WELL APART IN ORDER TO INSURE THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF THE ECONOMY AND ITS BOSSES. AND THE COST OF ALL THIS?—JUST YOURSELF—YOUR SPONTANEITY, CREATIVITY & SOCIABILITY! YES!—YOU TOO CAN DIE OF CONSUMPTION!!!**

Used for ads depicting happiness.

## ITALY TODAY

In April 1977 I re-printed, with a few alterations, Isaac Cronin's leaflet 'Class Struggle In Italy, 1977', predominantly to provide some information at a time when there was virtually none. This gap has more recently been filled by a pamphlet by Red Notes entitled 'Living with an earthquake', which is excellently informative despite its uncritical eclecticism (available from Box 15, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1). Nevertheless, the uncritical celebration of the re-emergence of a general revolutionary movement (understandable—but not very helpful—10 years ago) is unforgivable now: despite the massive conscious practical rejection of Leninism (illustrated by, for example, the self-dissolution of the mass party, Lotta Continua—about the most radical thing Leninists have ever done) there are several dangers that seem to be looming in the movement. Take, for example, the manifesto of the Metropolitan Indians. This combines impossible 'transitional' demands, vaguely radical practical demands, populist irrelevancies, abstract utopianism, contentless hippy-type humour—and all this with a Woodstock Nation-type image of a community of desperate, angry, fun-loving revolutionaries who are going to storm the citadels of capital on will power and emotional gut-seductive rhetoric alone. Their humour, fetishised, abstracted from its ironically satirical attack on idiotic Stalinist platitudes, tends to lose its strategic bite and falls into flippant reflex. The whole thing conveys a mood of a general movement of negation that doesn't really want to think about its movement: the joyful self-spectacularisation (posing as triumphant applause) of a movement that doesn't want to move. It condemns the way the hippy movement in California was assimilated into the system and put on the market, but, failing to see how the limitations of the hippies, yuppies etc. led to their recuperation,<sup>1</sup> repeat some of the failings of the hippies and yuppies. This, in an objective situation which cannot permit such integration, may well lead to unrealised alternative society yearnings, parochial despair and narrow obsessions with drugs: some Metropolitan Indians are now campaigning for that corny banality "Legalise Cannabis" at the same time as hypocritically condemning the workers as being totally integrated into the system, into the work ethic and the CP structures and strictures, their justification for refusing to meet the workers. Since the CP has nothing to offer the workers 'except' representation, slightly cushioning the blows of austerity and the passifying threat of the insecurity of unemployment as compensation for present misery,

this anti-interventionist ideology is a self-fulfilling justification for avoidance of one of the most hopeful routes out of the Italian revolutionary movement's impasse; it is a daily life-ism which refuses to extend the terrain of daily life, a rejection of a revolutionary possibility in a potentially revolutionary situation. In their break with leftist militancy, there has been an implicit association, in the movement, of sacrificial cadre politics with going to the factory gates, as if there can only be a patronising "this is the line" relationship with those at the centre of the production of this world (and of its negation); as if they can't share experiences and ideas or intervene or be honestly critical without being elitist. In the name of anti-sacrifice this in fact sacrifices an essential terrain to the Stalinists without a fight. Or to those leftist opportunists who meet the workers on the basis of the transitional slogan<sup>2</sup> "Work for all; Work less". This slogan is likely to become a powerful, yet confusing, force in Italy precisely because, on the one hand, it uncritically appeals to the still dominant ideology of the work ethic amongst workers and their real concern about unemployment; on the other hand it undermines the Eurocommunist and bourgeois 'divide and rule' over the proletariat, which hopes to pacify the workers with an illusory privilege (secure job) and further immiserate the revolutionary movement in permanent survival hassles. However, capital is capable (even if it doesn't want to) of granting this demand (though at the price of even further reduced real wages) and anyway it ignores the unconscious already existing in workers' consciousness: however apparently strong the work ethic is, in practice workers do, if not all they can, at least a great deal to avoid and undermine the conditions of work. The work ethic is merely the facade of those workers who lie to themselves in order to squeeze out some phoney dignity from their daily misery. And it can't be so strong if thousands of workers were threatened with the sack for supporting the slogan "Neither the State, nor the Red Brigades!" The only basis for unity is that of the secret desires of all those who want to do away with all external authority (in particular, the State, wage slavery and their Union guard-dogs), desires which must be made explicit.

The notion of the 'marginated', implying exclusion from the commodity-spectacle and its production processes, expresses two tendencies—a complaint against such exclusion which has an underlying desire to be included, and a rejection of the dominant processes. Whilst the latter is obviously more revolutionary it can

only become historically revolutionary by rejecting the marginal position assigned to it by the ruling system and its Eurocommunist supporters and attempt to undercut CP hegemony in the factories (at a time when it's potentially weakest) or disappear into the fragmentary struggles of the 'alternative' 'marginal' scene and destroy themselves in the increasing cost of survival, or in attacks on specific symptoms of State repression. At the same time, having practically rejected the poverty of the traditional family and of the couple, there's a drift within the movement towards an ideology of supportive community which is inclined to reproduce the insular sense of belonging of the family without its blatantly hierarchical roles; intended as a bastion against the full weight of capitalist misery, it could still develop into another labyrinth of confusion, where people are caught up in their particular oppressions/stigmas as both real specific problems to be confronted, and as false identities to cling on to and assert oneself through.

The strongly feminist ideology within the movement, though born out of an opposition to the traditional workerism of a Left which has never concerned itself with the critique of its own daily relationships,<sup>3</sup> falls into separatism when it associates proletarian consciousness with an apparently revolutionary Left it rejects. At the same time, unlike—for example—in the USA, the archaism of the unity of Church and State, and their dated morality which doesn't even serve capital's most avant-garde interests, leads to a greater violence and apparent radicality of the struggle against this morality and its particularly miserable effects on the daily life of women. This leads to the idea that there is something revolutionary in, for example, "Abortion On Demand"; though this is obviously a necessary reform, there's nothing essentially radical about it—for example, in the USA abortion is legal, and even in its self-help form—the vacuum method, though relationships between men and women are no less impoverished than anywhere else. It's not enough to say that the form of women's struggles is a threat to all authority, to all hierarchy—since its content isn't.

P.S. In 1975 Sanguinetti (an ex-member of the S.I. and friend of the now alcoholic Dehord) created a scandal in Italy, by publishing a fake anonymous report claiming to be a leading member of the ruling class and suggesting that the only way to save capitalism from the wrath of the workers and others was to work out a common front with the Communist Party (this, 18 months or so before the

official 'historic compromise'). This ironic report was widely acclaimed and discussed in the press, parliament and amongst leading business figures, until about 9 months later Sanguinetti revealed himself and the true nature of the document. The point is, however, that though this scandalised and embarrassed ruling circles, it did nothing to elucidate, incite or extend the struggles of the proletariat, and even may have given the bourgeoisie a few good ideas. Though the use of lies to create confusion amongst the ruling class may serve some potential strategic function in a revolutionary situation this was not the case at this time and thus could only add to the general confusion—or, at best, unarmed contempt—of the masses of individuals. Sanguinetti, in the book in which he reveals the fraud, continues the situationist tradition of *mechanistically* applying preformed theory to a particular set of events, subtly re-organising these objective events so that his conception of 'reality' can be readily analysed; thus he says "If you want to see situationist theory in practice look at Portugal". Though it's possible that this is an unintended admission of the poverty of both, it's clearly a stupid glossing over of the contradictions of that failed revolution.

1. Most glaring examples: Jerry Rubin has become a PR man for the growth movement; Abbie Hoffman has become a hard line pro-Peking (and, incongruously, pro-Cuban) underground communist militant; Tom Hayden now campaigns for the Democrats; Eldridge Cleaver is now a Christian; Timothy Leary helps out the FBI etc. etc.

2. "Transitional demands" are the Left's ideological link between immediate reformist consciousness and practice and eventual revolution: demands which cannot be met are meant to lead to radical consequences (more usually they lead to mystified resignation), as if a conscious manipulative lie, justified on the basis of "the workers aren't face the whole of the truth, yet" ('consciousness-raising') can have any practical truth.

3. This, in more 'advanced', more secularised, countries is already reforming itself on the Left on the basis of a most generally, abstractly, applicable unity of the 'personal' and the 'political', in which everything is said about the 'personal' and the 'political' except that which would be fundamentally critical of the persons and politics involved: that is, the submission of the perspective of the individual to that of the collective, the false overthrow of the previously dominant submission of the perspective of the collective to that of one (or a few) individual(s).



In July 1977 Mike Bradley & Michel Prigent<sup>1</sup>, under the pseudonym The Big Brothers Anonymous, produced an ultra-paranoid pamphlet called "Strange But Completely Untrue Bedtime Stories For Nihilists", under the pseudonym 'The Catalyst Times'. This text is remarkable not merely for the fact that it sees the world almost purely in terms of plots, intrigues, informants and secret agents (which reflects the authors' total mistrust of everybody, which they justify as a refusal of gullibility), nor merely for its innumerable shallow attacks on individuals and its claim to reveal the apparent secret misery of such people (which as a part of ones' strategy is fine, depending on the content of such attacks) but for its complete absence of anything personal about its authors, about their struggles (not to mention - but I will - its celebration of chaos and madness as the false alternative to bourgeois order and normality). This they cannot do without revealing the secret compromises and delusions of their own comradeship, and of its' history. In all the denunciations of individuals they never reveal the fact that they at one time had substantial comradeships and friendships with a number of them<sup>2</sup>. Nor do they reveal that they themselves had broken with each other for several years, and in fact, some months before the production of this mish-mash Bradley wrote of Prigent "...would-be director and messiah of the group Isadore Ducasse, excluded [from Bradley's life] principally for his overbearing sourness and his compulsive sense of duty and fetishisation of the 'work of the negative'. A very melancholy character, riddled with bravado...patriarchal manner.., and even when he'd renewed his comradeship with this guy he admitted to me that he was a 'buffoon'. As for the accusations against me: my 'banking family' consists of my grandfather who died 13 years ago. The very artificially constructed connection he tries to put on me from this fact - an ouvrierist 'background determinism' - that this will some day make me see revolution in terms of a 'common humanity' is an idea I've publicly opposed in my critique of 'Alternative Socialism'. Presumably he believes that anyone who thinks it would be better to maroon the ruling class on Mars and let them exploit one another than vengefully slaughter them, is a humanist. The only true statement is my past occasional role of 'radical teacher': but in opposing to this the idea "Theory cannot be taught; it can only be incited" he once again (as throughout this self-contradictory text) poses a false choice - revolutionary incitement and education cannot be separated. One more lie amongst this massive pile of lies (one can only assume that they're follow-

ing Goebells' tactics - "The bigger the lie, the more easily it is swallowed - with their own peculiar nuance - "The best lies are those that pretend to denounce all the others") is the stupid insult that Ken Knabb hates homosexuals and junkies and calls them "biological degenerates". The only basis for this is that an ex-comrade of Knabb - Cronin - wrote in Implications 13 that homosexuals and drug users were "biological deviants" (which isn't really true, since both are essentially social identities) "...whose weapon in the struggle against conformity is their bodies"<sup>4</sup>. As is well known, all the various 'revelations' about CIA plots etc. are themselves CIA plots, created to bolster their image of notoriety and omnipotence, their star-role as the "revolutionaries" all-powerful bogey-man - anything to make the masses feel impotent, and to distract them from the enemies closest to home (and our heads and beds are as close to home as our schools, work-places, streets, etc.). Leftists<sup>5</sup> have long focussed on such obvious enemies as a diversion from critiquing their own daily lives: now they've been joined by nihil-situs. The sole common thread in this text is their obsession with the dominant celebrities of the spectacle - whom they fetishise because of an underlying resentment: Bradley's fantasy is to become a de Sade figure living luxuriously in the Bahamas. They only attack the showmens' 'crimes' - never the specific attractions they hold for the proletariat, mainly: because they too are fascinated. At best such 'revelations' merely add to the very normal general cynicism: another spectacle of scandal. More usually they lead to a demand for 'honest' liars (Carter as opposed to Nixon, for example). What's more, the whole thing reduces history to the power of a few individuals: in all these 'exposes' the effect of the class struggle in determining the rulers' manoeuvres is completely absent. They merely present intriguing tales of the dominant show, superficial attacks on its' "apparent" opposition and a celebration of the vandals and rioters who are - supposedly - its' authentic opposition. Their central style of seductive witty entertainingly violent but empty rhetoric - with no analysis - is repeated in their leaflet on the '77 New York blackout, which could have been written twelve years ago about Watts and have been equally, if not more, relevant. They don't seem to think it important to note that when dawn broke the next day not one looter was left on the streets: which merely shows that if you turn out the lights anywhere anything can happen - that is, the symptoms of disgust with 'civilisation' reveal themselves in acts. But revulsion doesn't equal revolution. They

can't see the incongruity of describing (in their ad. for The Catalyst Times) the - in terms of activity and effect - far more radical Gordon Riots of 1780 - two centuries ago! The spontaneist aspects of Vaneigem and some of the other SI tendencies, which abstracts revolt from its' consciousness and from its' specific social setting and attributes a meaning which ignores the meaning the acts have for the participants, are here repeated with absurd exaggeration: revolution becomes a pure moment of explosive revolt, development is nothing, one riot is as good as another and nowhere is the question of differences between different riots/orgies posed, the differences between the results here and there. A black South African woman on a Thames programme about Soweto had far more sense of strategy: "Each stage of the struggle determines and effects the next: we're learning all the time." But the Big Brothers no longer Anonymous aren't: for them history has stood still.

1. Both former members of Ducasses, pro-situ group in London, '71-'72; Prigent also a former member of Piranha, pro-situ group '72-'76 (see page 17)
2. From '73 haphazardly, but more closely from '75-'77 I had some kind of comradeship/friendship with Mike Bradley. Much of the time I secretly admired and wished to emulate his dynamic aggressivity and energy (which I lacked), a development he has achieved at the expense of any serious reflection, and which he justifies in terms of 'emotional language'. It became a pretty unopen relationship since

he refused to accept any criticism and assumed that all attempts to pin him down to a point of view were intended to control and dominate him: so in any dialogue (though much of his conversation was monologue, particularly 'fact'-bashing) he'd skip around in a chaotic unfocussed way, avoiding anything definite, contradicting himself all the time and denying he was doing so. He thrives on his idea of himself as a dangerous character - which he is, but mainly because he is both very charming, and yet is dishonest, both with himself and others; none of the violent scorn he expressed in his 'Catalyst Times' was ever stated to me directly (or by letter) and the same is likely for any relationship he has now or in the future.

3. Some of the comments on nihilism in this text are directly applicable to Bradley & Co.
4. If this is meant to be a criticism on Cronins' part then it's bullshit: clearly our bodies are one of the 'weapons' in the struggle against conformity, and the failure to relate sexually to our own sex is as much an experiential block to be overcome as the blocks in our relationships with the opposite sex; if gays are to be criticised it's for asserting themselves purely as gays, i.e. purely through their sexuality and purely through one aspect of it - the social category 'homosexual'.

5. One is the famous Philip Agee, whose anti-CIA-ism has led him to support his fellow anti-CIA-ist Eric Manley of Jamaica, and denounce the riots against this State capitalist as being CIA inspired, a fact which, for some reason, never appeared in 'fact'-and-Philip Agee-loving Time Out.



One of the Big Brothers dictating his words of wisdom to an admirer

Some words about Tom Cahill, pro-situ lecturer at Lancaster University, with whom I have had somewhat haphazard intermittent clashes on and off for a year, until I finally broke with him in May. I focus specifically on this relatively unknown guy (unpublic apart from an article in Peace News) because he personifies in a concentrated form some of the most general subjectivist eclectic revolutionary ideologies.

Firstly, in his role of lecturer he believes he is attacking the university and his role in it merely because he does so verbally - but practically he remains complacent with his niche, tolerating the intolerable and in turn being tolerated as the 'eccentric' (advanced capitalism permits everything one can say about it, welcoming the most extreme idea as an "interesting and freely expressed" opinion: a democracy of freedom of expression without consequences). Against the false choice of the blatant lie he thinks it's radical to spiel the subtle lie, and the anti-academic academic is now the most avant-garde liar (as prescribed roles become increasingly recognised as empty and laughable, the self-critical role becomes the form of 'self-assertion' whose function is to accept the absurdity at the same time as demonstrating to those who see it as absurd one's hip superiority to it). He pretends to be more sussed out than anybody else in order to pretend to some superiority amidst his essential adaptation. Even if he is more 'sussed out', it's knowledge he doesn't use in anything but a counter-revolutionary way: he once got a student who attacked his lecturers and lectures to apologise to his head of department in order to avoid being kicked out of the university - as if there weren't better (less degrading) things for him to do to avoid such a situation. In a letter to me he says "I am, I suppose, a rather shameless reformist" and "I teach at a state university, replicating plastic people, teaching more a new and slightly more subtle version of the dominant ideology" as a pre-emptive self-parodying defence against doing anything serious about such a situation: 'lucidity' without effect. He thrives on being challenged, because it gives him an illusion of self-importance. But he never does anything about such critiques, he merely integrates them into his list of exciting encounters and into his image of himself as an interesting guy, worthy of being attacked: he is flattered by such concern. His rambling conversation-style (which is more a tendency to monologue than conversation) is a symptom of his eclecticism: he's into everything (critically and/or affirmatively) - from food co-ops to situationist theory, via The Grateful Dead,

violent TV cop shows and Zen And The Art Of Folding Clothes And Brushing Teeth - but never says anything of real interest about such things, never attempts to radicalise them, and in fact merely affirms that they are part of a whole and that making the connections between them all is part of his struggle. This because he knows that the revolutionary struggle is the struggle for the totality; therefore, by some abstract logic, making links between everything is revolutionary! This merely shows that he never makes any decisions concerning x and y, that he does not choose: he calls anything he's into 'revolutionary' merely because he's defined himself as a revolutionary, a justification (after the fact) for a subjective desire. Revolution, here, means anything he wants it to mean merely because it's 'subjective'<sup>1</sup>. At the same time this enables him to put down anyone who's not open to the illusions of all the various scenes and who expresses some element of sadness, as narrow, dogmatic, and not a real revolutionary because they are unable to "extract any ecstatic joy from this world", a rationalisation for his inability to break with his role of ad. man for what passes for pleasure in this world ("...MacDonalds hamburgers, airplane takeoffs... driving my car, country music... the news..."). His wishy-washy 'critique' in Peace News of a totally reformist proposal for an alternative college (complete with phoney humility - "In my more critical moments I got very annoyed..." - a 'nice' image he has to put on for Peace News readers, which is in total contradiction to his normal superficially ultra-critical (even if charmingly so) manner) reflects his attachment to the lie that radical consciousness can be taught and in an institution, a lie that history has consistently shown as reinforcing the capitalist division of labour under an 'alternative' guise. How many times need it be stated: people learn through struggle against the separations of this world, not by creating more of them. Another noteworthy bit of this review is his recommendation of an advertisement for the Chinese 'Revolution', a book called Fanshen. Like a million others, in conversation Tom Cahill says "China's got a really reactionary foreign policy" and follows it up with a justification for China's internal policy, a typically paternalistic mentality towards Third World countries whereby people vicariously support a situation which they themselves would hate to submit to, but which is somehow o.k. for those Third World proletarians because they have refused to succumb to the crude materialism of the West. (This kind of person desperately clings on to an image of socialism encapsulated in the "communal spirit" of China (centred around

the bureaucracy's news-speak rewrite of Marx's slogan "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work") both as a reinforcement of his collectivist reflex and as an illusory morale-booster for his need to believe that somewhere in the world capitalism has been defeated, without which faith he would be incapable of trying to make a revolution. The painful 'incongruity' of China's foreign policy with this glorious socialist image is awkwardly brushed aside as an anomaly, an unfortunate aspect of the realities of this world, but not as an indication of its essentially capitalist nature, which obviously cannot allow any radical conflict between an 'internal' and an 'external' policy. The best information on China comes from a group of anarchist ex-Red Guards - Minus 6, c/o APS, Asia-Pacific Workshop, 180 Lockhart Rd., 1st Floor, Wanchai, Hong Kong).

1. This is a specific example of the way individuals who are doing nothing challenging, who are in no way contributing to a revolution, pretend they are by pumping up what they are doing anyway to give it more meaning: they know that daily life is the central starting-point of struggle but instead of subverting banalities they merely tack on a radical interpretation to them, without actually doing anything different or difficult (e.g. food fetishism); but this only intensifies illusions and doesn't help extend peoples' possibilities.

'Obscurity and confusion are often manifested by the preponderance of a single means of communication, for example, conversation...' (Peres, 'ON THE SIDE OF THE SUBJECT')

The following is a letter to a woman with whom I had a relation for some years - an illustration, both in form and content, of challenging ones daily relationships:

Dear B.,

Yes - a letter. And one reason I'm writing it is as a refusal of your moralistic put-down of this form of communication as detached. In the past I've avoided writing...because of your anxious threat that you'd refuse to read it - which has just been a way of submitting to you. In fact, it's one of the ways I can get some clarity and the only way I can make sure you can't avoid the content of what I want to say, a necessary step in the long overdue break with the repetitive knots of our past.

The 'discussion' the other afternoon - the things you, B. and R. were saying - was like an absurd parody of the stupid superficial stereotyping that psychologists go in for, a perfect example of how your therapist role, mentality and behaviour effects your

relationship to me, as well as to D. Your aim is always harmony and reconciliation, rather than trying to see the critiques I have of you - hence everyone was happy because the argument ended on a happy note - the lowest common denominator of mutual caring: in fact, every time we've had an argument I've ended up being seduced by your immediate warmth and succumbed to the cosiness of reconciliation rather than pursued the more difficult path of change and of a possible break.

What's been stupid in my past behaviour towards you - what you call my 'bullying' - has been an argumentative desire to make you into a revolutionary - not on the basis of criticising what you were but on the basis of trying to get you to agree with me about ideas separated from what you and I were, abstracted from our relationship. Having 'allowed' myself to be dominated by your insecure 'need' for monogamy (because of my own fears - fears of losing the elements of play, love and comfort in the rut we were in) I tried to dominate you with a political definition you with a political notion of theory which made you resist this theory - partly because my desire was to get you to accept what I said and become part of the specific - somewhat separate - projects I suggested and/or acted on. In all this criticising (and complaining about your insecure possessiveness every time I said I fancied someone) I never - until this year - dared face up to the consequences of my critiques - to act on them in such a way as to put my affective dependence on you in danger: that I needed to be cared about and loved (and that you were the only person who seemed to care about and love me) made me frightened to run the risk of loneliness. There's still, of course, some fear but until I take the risk I'll just remain dominated by your emotional criteria, which criteria only assure in me a confused ambivalence, as much in my head as in my feelings. As for trying to change you - obviously I can't change you - but I can try to make you see yourself from a different angle; nevertheless my aim in this is for myself - to break with the normality of our relationship.

You complain about my lack of overt display of 'compassion' in my criticisms (what should I do? - say, like my mother, 'But I do love you' in the middle of arguing with you?) - but I wouldn't even bother to see you if I didn't have some affection for you. This standard complaint is a typical feminine defence against any challenge, and outside of a mutually challenging relationship compassion is mostly just a role, a way of keeping things as they are (take, for example, your so-called compassion towards D P which prevents you from telling him how pathetic he is: the only way he's going to be able to change is when someone is compassionate enough to 'insult' him with the truth). You asked me what



I want from you - I can only say something beyond mere pleasantries, light discussion and jokeyness. I want you to challenge me as well as yourself - I want excitement when we're together - I don't want to just pass the time in lethargic comfort, because that's mutually contemptuous - that way we don't treat our relationship seriously; if what I say hurts or makes you feel uncomfortable, that is just something you need to look at: I don't intend pain but if pain is part of genuine dialogue then let it be. You would like to pin me down to the most predictable easy-going aspect of me - what you call my 'essence', that is my character, the nice guy. To be negative and warm, friendly and aggressive, emotional and intellectual doesn't conform to your simplistic categorisations - and if these aspects of myself are sometimes in conflict with one another you dismiss the problem as 'failure to accept yourself' or 'you're schizoid', whereas I, at least, try to be aware of the reality of the conflicts and their relation to the situation I am part of - the people I am with. I suppose in some ways I am at war with myself - I recognise that sometimes I resign myself to stupidities and avoid difficulties, and sometimes I have to consciously assert myself against such sleep-inducing 'comfort'. I participate in changing myself or not changing myself: I can choose to say 'What's the point?...I can't be bothered' or I can assert myself and risk the subsequent effect. B's banal ideology of gradual evolution against revolution, conscious assertion - 'One can't force change - change evolves' ignores active choice in favour of just passively drifting along with what happens, which is what most people do most of the time - just part of the dominant ideology of reformism applied to daily life, a justification for permanent compromise.

What mostly pisses me off are arguments without results - where none of us change. You can take discussion of therapy if it's nice and 'understanding' (i.e. merely curious - an abstract desire to discover without criticism) - but once the other person demands that you get out of your 'on the one hand...on the other hand' wishy-washy evasiveness you feel that's uncompassionate and nasty - that is, they've stepped out of the boundaries of bourgeois etiquette. Oblivious of the blatant contradiction one minute you defend yourself against criticism of your opinions by saying 'I'm entitled to my opinion', the next minute by denying you have an opinion about therapy - the most central aspect of your life - 'Everything's so uncertain' (the first cliché may have some relevance when confronted with a cop, but outside of that it's just an appeal to free speech without consequences or an abstract defence against being challenged about such consequences; the second cliché just becomes a cowardly excuse for not asserting yourself for fear of being 'wrong', for fear of making mistakes). The therapist role of benevolent understanding listener of other peoples' obsessions and anxieties gives a completely reformist solution to such

problems - both you, the therapist-servant, and patient-consumer mutually comply in a relationship where many things are challenged but never your therapist-patient relationship, never, in fact, the concrete relationship involved. What is manifested internally within the 'consulting' room is seen merely as symptoms of experiences completely external to the room, usually from the past. The solution is to exorcise purely these 'external' problems and accept oneself - both the autonomous and conditioned aspects of oneself. Since you can't see conflict as essential to every individual in this society you chose to resign yourself to it, repressing consciousness of contradictions with a defensive 'Yes, I am bourgeois' (read: 'Yes, I am complacently conventional and proud of it'). Acceptance of yourself can only mean acceptance of the world as it is. If therapy has a radical side its use lies outside the risk-free confines of the so-called therapeutic situation: the articulation and acting out of the feelings, desires, conflicts and dislikes of the individual have no use if they contain themselves in a relationship where one of the individuals keeps silent about his desires etc. and where that person, like a 'good' parent, is always there for the 'patient' to act out on (at a price, of course). It's less clearly defined aspects of this relationship which you want to maintain outside the therapy room. For example - you defend yourself against the content of criticism with the typical psychologistic need to reduce everything to underlying external unconscious motivations and projections - in arguing with you I'm really getting angry with my mother. Ironically - in a typically maternal way - you claim to know me better than I know myself - 'You're essentially nice', which is just a way of demanding I be a

good boy and behave in a way you can accept according to your own need to follow the line of least resistance.

R's stupid crap about drugs being essentially self-destructive and her advice that I get a job shows just how how normally absurd and narrow-minded hers, yours' and Bobs' stigma stigma of madness is: D. and I are mad because our way of behaving doesn't have mediocre reality to support and confirm it (the blatant despondant misery of R.'s kids shows just how depressing such ordinary sanity is). R., for example, avoids confusion and a sense of loss by slotting herself into routine roles and by seeing people through the narrow lenses of psychology. By this very normal existence she claims to have found herself which can only mean she has decided not to experiment with going beyond the tracks into the partly unknown. Anyone who doesn't conform to such ordinariness is seen as pretentious when they challenge it - and it's the ideology of authenticity, the support for anti-role - the role of not playing a role - which is R.'s defence for such mediocrity. All this shows what therapy and acceptance really means: illusions of growth and a growth of illusions.

One more pint: you appeal to the status quo or some other 'objective' support in order to avoid your own responsibility for your own reaction to me, to defend yourself with some criteria other than your own against me (and you say I am not 'centred').

Ironically, you often defend yourself arbitrarily with an image of autonomy the cliché 'I follow my desires' - a lie shown up by your need to find external confirmation for your actions and feelings.

In all this letter there's been an element

of emotional repression - a necessary distancing from my mixed feelings towards you. I still feel ambivalent - despite our not having much in common there's often a common warmth; but now my ambivalence is a bit less confused, a bit clearer. I hope you see -

See you if you see me - Nick.

The following two letters are specific critiques of some English anarchists, which say some things with more general implications. The first is to Don McNaill of the Black Jake Collective (address: 91 Beaconsfield St., Newcastle 4, Tyne & Wear).

Dear Don McNaill,

Thanks for your letter and the Eldon News sheet. Here's my response...

First of all, about your moan at situationist jargon: this is the commonest complaint about situationist texts - it's become almost obligatory to say 'I understand it, but most people don't'. When I first read 'Society of the Spectacle' I understood about 15% of it. If I'd acted on the 15% I *did* understand, if I'd used it at the time to subvert my own situation I would have understood a lot more of it a lot quicker. I only understood 'Ideology Materialised' very recently, mainly because I recognised how ideological I'd been. The spiel that says other people can't use a text in the same way usually leads to a somewhat patronising missionary attitude of watering down what one knows, in order to seduce people who are in no way trying to become revolutionary into somehow achieving 'revolutionary consciousness' - not by inciting them to break with their misery, their petrified situation, but by telling them the right line, an attitude which is implicitly hierarch-

ical. In fact, it shouldn't piss you off to have to translate everything into your 'semi-illiterate everyday language' - that's just one moment of using theory for yourself. The fact that it *does* piss you off implies that you want ideas handed to you on a plate, implies, in fact, that you don't want to do anything difficult, that you don't want to use theory to subvert yourself, and your own situation. Written theory, incidentally, is often hard to understand not because it is 'excessively wordy' but because it is very condensed - 'a refined product of practical struggles, consciousness momentarily crystallised in a form on the way to becoming broken down again into raw material for other struggles' (Ken Knabb 'Double Reflection').

You say the Black Jake Collective is 'people working in assorted left/community politics', typical of the wishy-washy attitude of most English anarchists: left politics has to uncompromisingly attacked - but most anarchists have one foot inside the left, one foot out - mainly because they fear attacking their own remnants of leftism (issue politics, ritualised demonstrations, economic determinism etc.) as well as the sense of belonging that such a social network gives, a network where everyone suppresses acting on their thoughts about each other - papering over the cracks with amiability, unarmed gossip, political arguments without consequences etc. Everyone fears risking being spurned as a sectarian, a label which the left uses to denounce every individual's threat to its phoney community; everyone fears being isolated from the scene (now loneliness is a real threat that often prevents people from attacking their alienation - but relationships based on repression and lies are worse than such possible isolation: what's more, if the critique of such a scene is thorough and public the chances are that it's going to incite meetings with other revolutionaries). Collectivism, as the false critique of bourgeois individualism, is the self-justification for this self-evasion. 'Community' struggles often have some practically useful basis, but they're generally caught up in reformism. Obviously I'm not opposed to reforms - e.g. easier housing etc. (this is obviously dependent on what is *strategic* for particular groups or individuals) - but the ideology of reformism and overall perspective that usually goes with such pragmatism is no threat to the status quo and is usually controlled by informal leaders and 'initiators' to whom the led submit on the basis of their apparent expertise etc. Even the relatively democratic 'self-managed' struggles, when combined with a reformist strategy, often lead to the most tortuous compromises with State Institutions (e.g. the council) and with liberals etc., where the State determines how the battle shall be fought; and from that arises all the expert tactician roles, co-option and/or disillusionment.

About your Eldon News sheet: this illustrates the eclectic dilutedness of 'community' politics. You combine obvious attacks on consumerism that almost every moralist and sociologist can agree with (and which provides people with some illusion of critical opposition to the world), with a totally reformist attack on monopolies that every petty-bourgeois shop-keeper would avidly support. You talk about the 'ordinary Newcastle shopper' (which is both patronising and complacently accepting of reified categories of people) and give advice on how to avoid being conned by the big supermarket scene, in no more radical terms than the Consumer Council. This kind of weak complaining is certainly not going to help create a revolution - and in fact merely encourages the usual impotent moaning attitude about the world, whilst people just carry on as before (every modern consumer is opposed to consumerism): it merely gives 'correct' 'political' reasons for such moaning - it doesn't even incite an attack on such monstrosities. If you're serious about making a revolution the very least commitment is to break with such mediocre community politics.

I have 'met' the Anarcho-Utopian Mystics - initially at their meetings at LSE in London: their way of going about things was 'Well folks, anarchism's about action - so what shall we do tonight? How about this or that or the other or...?' (this to a group of people who'd never met before). 'We've got to get the word across, because most people think anarchism is about chaos' - which thought would have been confirmed by anyone going along to the meetings. Their only strategy seems to be 'anything's better than watching TV', which arbitrariness leads to a nihilist and/or militant activism with an underlying feeling that nothing's ever going to happen, that it's all pretty worthless: a sense of resignation which is reinforced by their aimless desperation. The way they're going they'll just burn themselves out. Some of them are able to bullshit about 'recuperation', 'roles', 'separation' etc. - all the situationist jargon, but it has no more meaning than 'Life is what you make it' or some other such cliché: it's just a script. Most of them refuse to even discuss or argue about anything in any proper concentrated way - not because there may be no practical consequence to such a form of communication but because it's all too difficult and theoretical for them, and it might mean they'd have to think about challenging themselves and each other, and not just this or that place out there in the streets. One of their leaflets reads like a washing powder ad., only the commodity is 'lovely revolution'. It's absurdly simplistic - 'what is the motive for revolution? Quite simply - it's one of love', which doesn't distinguish them from Che Guevara or Jesus Christ and is

anyway contradicted by their own practice. Some of the AUM<sup>1</sup> smashed up a party of mine (ripping out the phone, breaking a window, throwing stones at the neighbours' windows, twisting my leg, writing swastikas and fascist graffiti over the walls: a crude buffoonish attempt to outrage and shock,<sup>2</sup> which they justified on the basis of my middle-class background, the fact that I lived in Hampstead and that I'd been given my flat free. It's this kind of superficial 'critique' (it would have made sense if the graffiti had said something) - a purely resentful moralistic ouvriérisme, and the contempt for theory as being a trendy wank, which is a classic symptom and example of the 'quintessentially English archaisms' which on the general level of the class struggle has so retarded the revolution in this country, leading (amongst other things) workers to judge people not on what they do, but on their background and other superficialities (e.g. support for 'King Arthur' Scargill: crude suspicion of the student revolutionaries of '68-'70, which is not to say that there were some reasons for suspicion, merely that the reasons were indistinguishable from the 'Daily Express'). The main protagonist of this bust-up was the pathetically clumsy player Martin Wright, an anarchist monologuer with an obsessively repetitious fixation with violence. I mention him because he helped produce the pamphlet 'Authority', which plays the same function for English anarchists as Monty Python plays for the BBC; potentially consequentially self-critical anarchists can continue as before, this time able to tolerate their confusion by cynically laughing at themselves, rest assured that 'Authority' will play court jester. With this kind of self-ridicule anarchists defend themselves against confronting the poverty of their lives and activity seriously. (If you ever met Martin Wright that would be sufficient empirical proof of this statement).

Concerning Spontaneous Combustion: it no longer exists - I now 'speak to the world' as myself - Nick Brandt. In writing, I'll continue in my name only until the conditions change such that I can be more effective writing collectively. However, there are different people that I do things with at particular moments, obviously.

Maybe I'll hear from you...?

- Nick  
BM Combustion,  
London WC1V 6XX

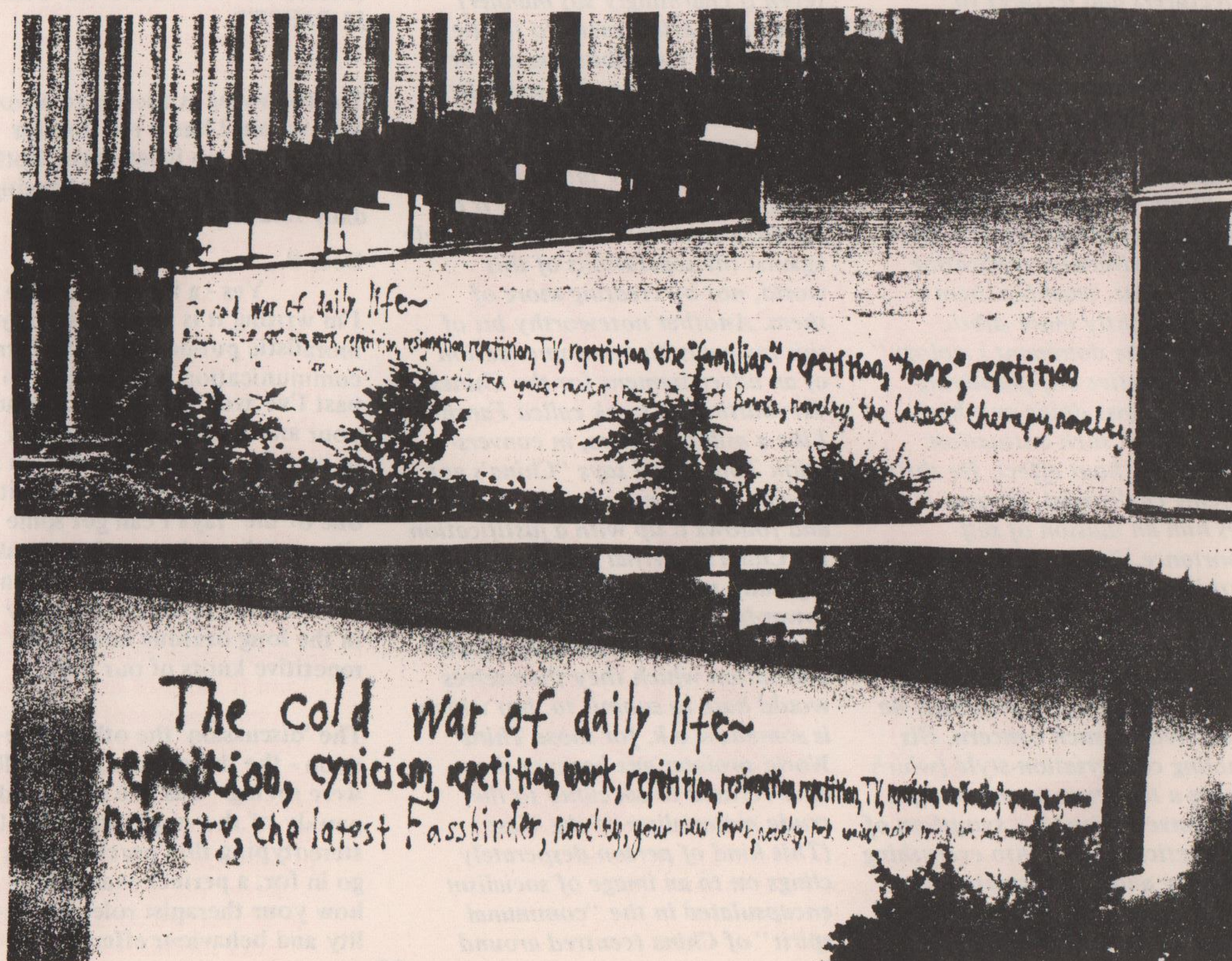
1. Since writing this letter the AUM has evicted the 'heavies' and become a highly contrived conventional encounter group, with everyone pretending to make contact as they awkwardly touch one another.

2. A typically masculine display of empty arrogance and toughness.

A letter to Nik Noir, producer of the magazine 'New Life' and creator of The Syndicate Of Initiative:

Your 'Syndicate of Initiative' is disarmingly (but unintentionally) honest: 'I should like to state what I mean by the project of the Syndicate of Initiative. It has not got off the ground yet but hopefully it shall in the future'. Quite.

Just like every tourist opposes tourism, every pro-situ has to denounce pro-situ: you're no exception. The trouble with your pamphlet is that it doesn't do what you say it does in your letter - you don't 'clarify my own situation in its particularities'. You go on about 'refusal to be bored' (in a most boring way), 'critical practice', 'a modern praxis', 'subversion', 'imagination', 'creativity', 'the workings of the group and its relation to society as a whole', 'passion' etc. - but say *nothing*. You have done what you attack the pro-situ for doing - not producing their own critique: you advocate 'autonomy' but it's an abstract demand, without concrete





content, applied to nothing—and the unoriginality of the so-called 'New Life' text illustrates the lie of this demand, which is always for others. Most of the pamphlet could have been written 10 years ago or more—in fact, there's a lot more specific content in a corny leftist article than there is in the whole of your text. Your first article is a weak, patronising "I'm just like you attempt at seduction of the workers—probably you don't criticise workers' passivity in the face of misery (or, for that matter, say anything concrete about particular situations or conflicts) because you presume the workers are as passive and as unconcrete as you, that they merely need a "religious" conversion to the correct perspective and then they'll make the revolution. Your thing on Italy says less than my leaflet, when now there's more to say and to criticise in the movement; you're just into cheerleading to boost an image of an exciting revolutionary situation (which is a simplification of the Italian movement) as a contrast to the stagnation and sterility of the english situation. You even give a little ad. for the terrorists, as if they're not essentially counter-revolutionary. Your re-print of the thing on feminism, which was already dated and insufficient when it came out, is just another example of your failure to elaborate on modern developments. Your thing on the CNT in The Sheffield Anarchist reduces the critique to its past, whereas the CNT is still a union, with a syndicalist ideology and practice which can only result in it being a mediator between capital and the proletariat, another means of integration: the CNT is in essence counter-revolutionary. The base in the CNT—the assemblies in the work-place—if they are to develop their autonomy, can only do so by attacking and by-passing the CNT structure: I can only assume your 'critique' is so mild because you're still an anarchist.

Your anarcho-alternative society crap about "organising the new society in this one" leads straight to the reformism of daily life, and political reformism—look at California: a whole range of alternative institutions absorbed into the economy, smoothing over some of the more brutal capitalist contradictions, acting as state pressure groups, pushing various separatist 'revolutionary' ideologies. You're constantly saying nothing can be done until we're organised—which on the one hand leads you to join up with a load of anarchist individuals you feel contempt for, and on the other hand is a cover-up for avoiding saying anything specific about organisations and groups that do exist and have

justified and how they have effected (helped/hindered) the class struggle, if at all. The banality that capital fucks us up and isolates us, in you leads to an ideology of being supportive, smoothing over conflict and not risking isolation: generally this usually leads to the lie of the

alternative collectives—specifically in you it leads to your avoidance of arming and pursuing the critiques you have of all those anarchists you put down in your letter to me.

It really isn't worth the time and energy to produce 'just anything'—if you have nothing new to say pretending you have just appeared ridiculous, and unserious. And you're certainly not going to contribute to any revolution that way, though you might add to the mild novelties of the counter-revolution.

Nik Noir's address is: Box 151, 341 Glossop Rd., Sheffield S10 2HP.

In March, after a three month period of sporadic discussions, and after receiving my pamphlet 'Revolutionary Theory For Beginners' plus some first drafts of what is included in this text, Dave & Stuart Wise (2 pro-situs, who'd been involved with King Mob in the period '67-'69, but who now seem to be following a more marxist line a la At Dusk—a text produced by two of the leading lights of the ex-pro-situ group Point Blank—a text which, despite innumerable falsifications and evasive self-rationalisations, not to mention its incredible verbosity, poses several important questions for the revolution) sent me, out of the blue, without any previous indication, the following 'break' letter:

Dear Nick,

We hate writing these "situationist" type letters but we feel the time has come to break off. The gulf between us is enormous which for the moment destroys any possibility of collaboration. No do we wish to have a further parley about it as our points of view are almost totally opposed. We are both now far too marxist to go back into the pro-situ milieu.

Yours  
David & Stuart  
Wise

I responded with the following letter:

Dear Dave and Stuart,

Your letter made me feel a bit sad, depressed and then angry: obviously I don't object to breaks, but your way of going about it is silly—completely evasive, cowardly. You risk nothing in your 'break'—you merely preserve your mutually confirming secret opinion you have of me but dare not state. Why? (the usual excuse is "I don't want to hurt him with the truth", which just maintains the mutual lie—it equally means "I don't want to hurt myself with the truth I'm avoiding"; the truth always hurts, but the lies will kill you). Maybe you avoid saying anything more precise because you'd have to examine my perspectives and yours thoroughly enough to realise that you might have to actually change (aaaagh! ... no ... anything but

THAT!). Or maybe you avoid attacking me specifically, for fear of getting a more specific, precise critique back. Or maybe you're just too lazy: which shows how much you "can't be bothered" to confront concrete problems in your other relationships, in particular your own. And you "agreed" with the critique of breaks in 'At Dusk'—hypocrites! You both must have some definite critiques of me, of my behaviour and attitudes, of "Revolutionary Theory For Beginners", of my thing on terrorism and anarchism, and of my thing on 'situationist' militancy (which latter is very much a first draft, by the way). Is it so terrifying to state those critiques?

From my side, I value the subversive effect it will have on me and the possibly radicalising effect it will have on you and on how you see me enough to state where I think we are 'totally opposed', what I think was stupid in our brief relationship—in a more concrete way than 'Revolutionary Theory for Beginners' does.

One of the reasons I wanted to have a 'collaboration' with you was to get out of some of the (though less so now) "ivory tower" isolated aspects of my life—to understand the particular fuck-ups of particular scenes, the local community crap, the various histories of what happened and what's happening etc. I found quite an excitement in meeting some people who had been through, though from a different area of the movement, the same—or similar—periods of history, objective events, known the same people etc.: a past that is in me and in the world and in the way people are and act today; I had some idea that we could possibly exorcise it together, and that this—to a certain extent—abstract mediation to our relationship, could become a springboard—but we never sprung anywhere.

Although I could see innumerable differences and obstacles, I thought maybe (perhaps evasively) that I could have a political relationship with you, that we could somehow find something in common in our common opposition to terrorism, punk, Trade Unionism, libertarianism etc., but that's a shallow basis for a collaboration, as if we can make that age-old split between our personal lives and our politics, as if we can get anywhere defining ourselves always in opposition to the big lies, in order to evade the "small" ones. For both of you historical failure—the counter-revolution—has become an excuse for 'personal' failure. Now obviously I don't make that split—but until you start experimenting 'personally'—that is, combatting hierarchy and misery 'at home' you can't really understand the relation between the personal and the historical, and you certainly won't be able to intervene in history, in 'other peoples' struggles. How anyway can anybody say anything of much use

about the confusions between what, for example, workers say and what they do, between their acts and their thoughts, if they're not trying to fight the same split on the terrain where they can be most effective: with their friends and lovers, with you and me, for example. How can we understand how workers avoid the obvious, if we do it with each other? A critique of political economy in relation to the class struggle, of how it divides people off, of how it effects their particular perspective, of how it limits their possibilities, can't be separated from a critique of how people limit their own possibilities, of how they submit and compensate etc., which can't be separated from actively challenging your own submissiveness and compensations and lies. Everytime I've been with you we've almost always related through obvious externals—it's a trap we always seemed to fall into. The only time that was different was when we started talking briefly about our sex lives (the whole term shows up how split we are)—but that didn't get anywhere, probably as much out of my nervousness as yours. I feel that a lot of the time, Dave, your fascination with the dominant show, even in the snarling, semi-vengeful "fucking sell-outs" antagonistic form it takes in you, is—in part—a projection of very particular frustrations you can do something about onto the ruling terrain which—for the most part—can't be effected until there's, at the very least, a much larger revolutionary movement in this country; it just expresses an impotent rage—as uselessly cathartic as the mass of people saying "politicians are all liars"—but they still go and vote for them. You're avoiding what you know again and again: that is, your basic submissiveness to Stuart. The lack of individual autonomy in your essentially 'couple' relationship is obvious to everyone—and somewhere it must be obvious to both of you (the fact that one of you signed the letter for both of you is just a blatant symptom of this couple-ness). Each of you reinforces the "qualities" of the other, but they're not really qualities since you don't really use them for yourselves, but use them defensively. So in a sense you both reinforce each others' defences. Stuart plays the intellectual, verbally criticising—say—"quintessentially english archaisms" and then gets aggressively heavy over a discussion about Victor Grayson, an aggressivity which obviously had nothing to do with the content of what he was saying: it sounded like a teacher telling naughty Dave off for not learning his history properly. And Dave objects, rebels, but finally gives in, beaten into a mumbling sullen silence; and yet he "criticises" the similar paternalism-deference balance of the middle-class—working class 'relationship'; what's the point in verbally attacking alienation 'out there' if you're not

practically doing something about the same misery 'at home'. You both embody your hierarchy—Stuart, the "intellectual", the "male", the "boss" (I bet it was you who wrote the letter)—some-what sternly aloof, almost above everybody else (though this might have been merely a reaction to me), with an apparently un-self-critical stance of self-confidence; Dave, the "sensitive" one, the "female", the "proletarian"—somewhat withdrawn, often lacking confidence, often overwhelmed by what's happening. I feel closer to you, Dave,—you're generally warmer, more in contact with your experience; Stuart—you're usually pretty distant, often cold—but that may have been due to the unspoken thoughts you have about me. Dave—you have complained about your lack of "seductiveness": well, loveability depends on asserting your point of view, and

In January 1978 I published 'Revolutionary Theory For Beginners', with an afterword that claimed to be an initial public reversal of my own impoverished involvement with an impoverished milieu (to be specific, the ex-Notice comrades, the CRQS in Paris, Nadine Bloch and Joel Cornuault): but it was more a spectacle of honesty which falsified my history, as well as repressing some of the genuine insights I'd developed (which the present text makes public, minus some of the confusions). When Isaac Cronin calls me a 'masochistic psychoanalyst' in many ways he was right. My masochism took the form of a pre-emptive defensiveness, a spectacle of self-criticism: guilty apology took the place of a genuine self-critique of my situation—I was still seeing myself through others even as I claimed to break with such deference. But it was only me whom I fooled (now, some of my decisions had been silly—including being militantly over-generous to two crazy people who almost literally drove me mad—but apologising for such stupidity was masochistic too). But now, out of the confused jumble of words concerning the theory and lives of the individuals comprising this milieu, I shall rescue those aspects of my point of view, that I still retain, for posterity—that is, for public scrutiny—using Cronin's "The American Situationists" as a springboard. I see this as part of my break with my own lies and with the lies of this milieu.

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The falsifications in Cronin's text (many of which can only be explained by the fact that one of the purposes of the pamphlet is as a public relations job for the radicality of the CRQS) begin in the first thesis: Shute's letter to the Centre for the Research of the Social Question (a pompous name for a dependant couple<sup>1</sup>) did not merely criticise the basic principles of their activity (rigor, the refusal

breaking with the old world again and again, centering more and more confidently on your own needs and possibilities—a pretty oversimplified, rough formula/homily, but an essential aspect of revolt and of revolution. Defining yourselves as marxist, and projecting out hope of active change onto the revolution which will somehow fall from the sky or from the workers becoming conscious of an updated critique of political economy, is an escape, is metaphysical crap, hardly better than "the meek shall inherit the earth". One of the major reasons why our angles on the class struggle rarely ever met—but which I hoped to overcome—was because I'm more interested in the proletariat as subject, and in you and me as subject, and in the conflicts and contradictions in their/your/our subjectivity, than in the contradictions of the economy: this

### The American (and other) Situationists

of external authority & of the ideology of the collectivity) but also attempted—in admittedly a clumsy fashion—to criticise some of the unacknowledged affective aspects of this activity which were implied in their hysterical denunciation of Cornuaults' "tortuous letter of self-repudiation". Cronin 'forgets' this fact because it would be an admission that some element of the CRQS's critique of daily life was a "self-perpetuating battle of egos" (thesis 8)—that is, the element of secret jealousy and secret hurt pride in their critiques of Cornuault and Bloch. In fact, the Denevert's "consistent (sic) critique of daily life since 1973" has been won at the expense of the repression of admitting to such contradictions (which contradictions are the only explanation for 'critiques' of Cornuault based on factual lies—e.g. the petty lie, in the Post Office affairs, that Cornuault put the cops onto them). And the rigid sense of self-pride which makes an individual incapable of admitting to a lie, appears externally as a smug pose which is the compensation for the isolation resulting from such a lie: according to the Deneverts, they and Jean Peres<sup>2</sup> are the only French situationists. Cronin dismisses such talk of such aspects of the critique as "psychological phenomenology" in order to maintain a hierarchy of notions of radicality ordered in terms of "severity" versus "feebleness", which reduces the critique of daily life to the degree of its aggressivity, regardless of its truth, and expurgates from the critique all questions of the feelings, of sensitivity and vulnerability, which are regarded as signs of weakness. Cronin also "forgets" in his text that one reason Denevert gave for excluding Cornuault was for his "betrayal" of a "revolutionary organisation" of which he was a part, which amnesia is convenient for Cronin since it enables him to assert the Deneverts as maintaining a "consistent critique of daily life since 1973": since the major radical

probably because the objective conditions don't weigh so heavily on me as on most other people. In part, I wanted a collaboration with you to help me overcome this imbalance, since it obviously means I have a lot of blind spots. But clearly you—for your own escapist reasons—prefer to maintain your objectivist perspective.

You always look for underlying reasons (i.e. in your upbringing) for the knot of your relationship and of your personalities as a justification for avoiding doing something about your characters: it's only in suppressing your characters now that you can begin to see how it came about in your family, your upbringing and your reaction to it.

Your choice seems clear: either confront the sado-masochist knot, break with it (the anticipation is far more traumatic than

innovation of the CRQS was its critique of the organisational perspective, the inconsistency of this perspective with the Deneverts' critique of Cornuault has to be: be suppressed by silently ignoring this fact.<sup>3</sup>

In his comments on intentions, Cronin uses a sleight-of-hand distortion of what I said in order to produce a general theory of intentions which is also only half-true: my "not being totally clear about my intentions" becomes "not knowing what one's intentions were". It's a banality that the corny assertion of 'good intentions' is inseparable from the practical result of such intentions, both subjective and historical; which isn't to say one judges people "solely by the practical manifestations of their lives", since clearly such manifestations will in part be determined by their intentions (the result of a riot or of a revolution, for example, is obviously partly determined by the motives of the participants). Moreover, in order for the individual to subvert himself through his own practice he obviously cannot pretend to be totally clear about his intentions. That is, to break new terrain, experiment involves an element of not quite knowing what one is doing: to always have a clear aim means one stays stuck to the straight and narrow track of the previously discovered. It's the dismissal of the motivation behind actions (beyond the very general—and hence not very useful—notion of the intention of subverting the individual(s) who created them) which leads Cronin to make an abstract parallel between Cornuault's critique of Parisian rioters in Spring '76 and the Italian bourgeois press's description of Italian revolutionaries in 1977: the motivation and consciousness of the rioters of their own acts in each situation is ignored in order to belittle the Deneverts' most public enemy in France. Cornuault's—admittedly overstated—attack on the fetishism of window-

the realisation) or resign yourself to the mutual illusion, dismiss this letter as just another "situationist-type" letter, and go to bed, depressed.

— Nick

It's worth saying that, despite the above—which shows how much they're what Nadine Bloch has called 'affective revolutionaries' (see 'Revolutionary Theory For Beginners')—these two people, unlike most other ex- (or present) pro-situs, retain at least an authentic and genuine desire to destroy the Old World: but they'll only be able to make some useful contribution to the revolution if they stop pulling their punches—that is, if they can overcome their debordist half-truth of "knowing how to wait", which has been their justification for avoiding its other half—"knowing when to negate".

smashing was at least a partially correct critique of an action which at the time was a reflex activity of some of the students. The Parisian students, at least on the level of their own official consciousness—which none refuted—were explicitly reformist—which shows that smashing windows, in itself, is not—as Cronin likes to see it—a "violent attack on the commodity". The Italian students did publicise aspects of their struggle which were way beyond reformism (e.g. abolition of wage labour). The link between the intentions and the practical manifestations of these intentions is illustrated by the fact that the results in each case were vastly different.

There are other evasions and lies (e.g. the one line put-down of Jim Brook, which is completely untrue)—but most notable is the way he glosses over what must have been the CRQS's completely dishonest relationship with Ken Knabb. If the Deneverts and Knabb found a "certain commonality of perspectives, principally on the necessity for a vigorous critique of ... the petrification of the daily lives of revolutionaries", how come, during all the years of their comradeship, the Deneverts never criticised what everyone criticises (but rarely arms) about Knabb after a week: namely, his acute narcissism, his complete lack of curiosity about others, his ultra-repressed sexuality, his fixation with reading and writing, and his pedantic precision fetishism which is part of his desperate need to be understood in his narrowly intellectual terms, terms which he's shit-scared to break out of (in fact, he cannot bear to be in a situation he doesn't have complete control over; in fact, he can't even say something without even working out what he's going to say well before he says it). One of the reasons for this can only be that, as Daniel Denevert once stated explicitly, "I never say what I think of somebody": when the Deneverts



attack, they hardly ever do it verbally, but always by letter—which is why they are seen as politicians by other revolutionaries who have come in contact with them (and not just Bloch and Cornuault). This reduction of relationships to a political content (which has been excellently criticised in Cornuault's "On subjectivism and intellectualism") continues to be justified in Cronin's text in terms of rigour and coherence, which is a situationist version of 'The Party Line'. In this perspective, lovers break<sup>4</sup> purely on the grounds of coherence—which even goes so far as to avoid admitting to the ambivalence of past attractions for an individual, or even failing to make explicit the specific critiques (of specific miseries) they had of a person which is a failure to recognise that it takes two to tango. It's the simplest form of evasion and the most conventional way people operate—people break relationships without attempting to clarify the reasons for such a break because it's too difficult and involves too much of an effort of consciousness. It's part of that neat division of life into 'comrades' and 'enemies': a spectacle of certainty which, recognising the weak evasive nature of uncertainty, suppresses consciousness of contradiction in order to display decisiveness.

Nevertheless, despite these critiques of the practice of the CRQS, some of their theory of organisation is excellent and worth re-printing, particularly since these ideas are completely non-existent in England. However, though I endorse their attacks on organisation, clearly these attacks are not ahistorical—there are obviously situations where organisation is, at least temporarily, essential. The following is taken from some notes by Daniel Denevert which should appear in the Jeneverts' second journal, *Chronique of Public Secrets 2*:

"It is correct that the conception of the CRQS is the 'consequence of a failure,' and even of a series of failures. On the one hand, the failures lived by its founders, but also of the failure of all the tentatives of autonomous organisation encouraged by the example of the S.I. The CRQS didn't attempt to be a better organisation, it is part of the bursting of the very perspective of an autonomous revolutionary organisation (or organisations), in which I see the heritage of the model of Leninist organisation, that is to say of a bourgeois-bureaucratic conception of struggle, developed by the ensemble of the old politics.

One can say, in all rigor, that the Situationist International attempted to restore a revolutionary significance to this model, starting up again the adventure of the revolutionary Party - in the sense of Lenin and Lukacs, the organisation seen as the mediation destroying all its presuppositions (militantism, the historic mission

of guiding the class to revolution and of officering it there, putting an ideology in power, etc.). The originality, but at the same time all the ambiguity, of the S.I. was in its constituting itself as a useless Party, that is to say useless in the perspective of party struggle. Which, in the context of its period, was an extremely ingenious method; which can be compared on the terrain of organisational politics with the methods of Dada on the terrain of art.

But the S.I. also exposed itself as empty form, because as organisational form it didn't really have any perspective, if not to defend for itself a place among the leaders wrangling over the ownership of the modern revolution.

"It is notorious that anarcho-situationist egalitarianism has always refused to recognise the real hierarchical organisation upon which it has functioned. This major practice: evasion finally reduced the Situationists' theory, on the question of revolutionary organisation, to being nothing but a mere counter-ideology opposed to the dominant hierarchical organisation; preferring to share the illusion and official lie of equality rather than bear the shame of its denial. Yet the possibility of effectively anticipating all the new problems while there was still time to do so (notably for the old S.I.) hinged upon the acceptance of this denial and one the theoreticopr

and on the theoreticopractical conclusions resulting from it" (Theory of misery/misery of theory)

"If this epoch can now do without a Situationist International, it is because its solution depends on the fact that a situationist proletariat is going to succeed in exposing and developing itself there." (Chronique of Public Secrets, vol.1)

This is the principal

failing of the S.I....Not to have been aware of it was for a long time its worst error (and, to speak of myself, my worst error). If this attitude had dominated, that would have been its definitive crime. As an organisation, the S.I. has partly failed; and precisely on this point. It was necessary therefore to apply to the S.I. the critique that it had applied, often so well, to the dominant society. (It could be said that we were well enough organised to make our program be visible in the world, but not our program of organisation. (Orientation Debate of the S.I., '69-'70: Debord)

The autonomy of individuals has been posed as the fundamental condition of the "autonomous revolutionary organisation"; a counter-measure aimed at prohibiting the habitual relations of revolutionaries in the classical organisations. This is organisational strategy - organisational ideology - arrived at the bursting point of demanding the autonomy of its members. The individual officially desires his autonomy "for himself", but fundamentally because it is the ultimate requirement of the ultimate possible spectacle: the spectacle of the destruction of the spectacle. It is the last condition through which organisational ideology can still think to save itself (although it thus moves toward its accelerated destruction), it is the last ruse of that conception of the world so well embodied by Leninism. It has come to the point of demanding autonomous members, that is to say precisely individuals capable of doing without membership in an organisation. That which the organisation demands, in the interior, of its members, it must equally demand, at the exterior, of the revolutionary proletariat; it must demand that it do without the organisation; it declares itself useless; sometimes going on to pose itself, in the greatest confusion, the never resolved question of its relations "with the class", which comprises, for example, the absurd substance and the impotence of the Orientation Debate.

The contradiction that shields the notion of autonomy is perfectly reflected in the significant expression "autonomous organisation": which refers at once to the autonomy of the organisation the autonomy of individuals - that is to say to their capacity in their activity to do without each other and the organisation - and to the autonomy of the organisation, i.e. to the absolute dependance of the individuals mediated by the organisation. The organisational perspective is a conception of

revolutionary activity that walks on its head. The principal of organisation does not lie in a determined accord between determined activities, it does not translate the really organisable element of individuals' activity, but is the inversion of this point of view: it is real and potential global activity, the very substance of individuals, working to organise the organisation. The organisational perspective precisely translates the estrangement into a spectacle of revolutionaries' activity and their need of conserving a spectacle.

Another significant notion is that of "interior" or of "exterior" that one systematically meets with in all the groups and parties. The very fact that this distinction is possible well expresses the strange autonomy of the organised individual. Regarding the banal - non-organised - individual, one would spontaneously tend to think that if he has an "exterior" it begins with the other, with the objective world. That is to say that this notion translates the fundamental relation of the individual to the world and his own activity, the point of view of his own subjectivity in the world. With the organised individual (formally organised or living in a group, a gang, a couple, a socio-professional group, a family, a country) it is completely different: the feeling of exteriority is pushed back to the frontier of the organisation, that is to say, the organisation itself tends to become the only real individual, the sole historic subject; of which, according to that other significant expression, the individuals are no longer anything but the members.

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The guiding line which has oriented the conception of the CRQS has been to consider the autonomy of individuals in its relation with the organisational perspective and the ideology on organisation. It is to have detected that the need of an organisation and the practice of an organisation constitute the first major resignation of individuals, the moment when the activity of individuals separates itself from individuals and faces them as spectacle of their own practice. The CRQS has considered the autonomy of individuals as a problem which was not dependant on revolutionary solidarity, nor on any collectivity.

The CRQS is, to my knowledge, the only practical tentative - of which I obviously recognise all the insufficiencies, including that of having scarcely known the significance of its enterprise - which has not been content to repress the problem, that is to say in the best of cases to leave to the future the task of creating its organisations when individuals have finally become autonomous. It is almost unnecessary to point out how much this attitude which

temporarily affirms its reticence to organise itself is still dominated by the organisational perspective, and therefore, which is more important, by its very manner of conceiving of "autonomy".

We have organised our critique and our refusal of organisation. We concluded an accord - defined the rules of our game - in such a way that it would not be able to come to dominate us as an autonomous rationale; we organised a definite part of our capacities for a voluntarily modest - non-valorisable - activity, while smashing the spectacular logic of organisation.

I consider that the CRQS has perfectly succeeded from this point of view, inasmuch as, for the individuals who composed it, the CRQS was not able to constitute the central reference for judging their activity. Just as it is clearly and publicly affirmed as forming the revolutionary politics of the individual, that is to say, the radical critique of politics, so that the internal reference of the CRQS is the individuals themselves and not so much what associates them there; they are bluntly placed before their personal result, that of their activity or inactivity, and from this point of view can refer to no one's account but their own (i.e. hold no one else responsible). This is our radical manner of approaching autonomy: the activity of individuals is not an organisational preoccupation, it is not taken charge of by any form of collective reason, i.e. deformed or hidden by any spectacle. There no longer exists any entity capable of guaranteeing the revolutionary excellence of individuals. The success or failure there of the individual is clearly declared the affair of the individual, which can only be concealed by individual blindness, that is to say, by an autonomous choice...

No form of collectivity should be able to come to orient or judge the fundamental activity of individuals in the perspective of integrating or conserving them in the collectivity, that is to say from the point of view alone of the results of the individual activity insofar as they concern the collectivity. For there is one fundamental result to which the collectivity is necessarily indifferent: the individual himself. When the collective reason comes to dominate the individual reason, the individual is placed in a spectacular relation. Everything is said about the spectacle except what it is always and fundamentally: the colonisation of the point of view of the individual by the point of view of the collectivity. The point of view of the collectivity and the point of view of the individual are irreconcilable, one must dominate the other. To reverse the dominant perspective that would have it that the individual is only a part of the ensemble "society", it is necessary to practically smash the

authority of all the existing or potential societies, from the family to the State, from the sects to the Parties, community and socialism, in order for society itself to no longer be anything but a part of the ensemble "individual". It has too readily been said that the essence of man is social; it is necessary, on the contrary, to consider how much the essence of society is individual."

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#### Some reflections on Knabbs' "Realisation And Suppression Of Religion":

Apart from the critiques in Cronin's text, this pamphlet is also criticisable for:

(a) Its ideology of embarrassing oneself - which is merely a way of using others as objects for one's own repressed; in this, honesty is merely a display of honesty, whose purpose is either manipulative or merely an exorcism for oneself, oblivious of its relation to others. Usually the purpose of such 'embarrassment' is to produce theory, rather than revolutionise one's relationships. In fact, Knabbs' loud proclamation of having "the courage to act without caring what others will think of him" hides the fact that he cares very much what others think of him: he thinks the way to avoid being constrained by others is to embarrass himself (and others) by going against the grain of expectations, but since he is concerned about others expectations, he is still defined by them even as he takes a reactive attitude to these reifying cages. Though the exhibitionistic testing of one's aversions is often a necessary moment of transgressing a previous taboo (i.e. a conscious role) the fetishism of this subjectivist form of the critique of daily life stays stuck on the exhibitionism of breaking expectations.

(b) Its justification for a view of individuals which is essentially affective: "He may be cruel with a role or ideology while loving the person caught in it." What is to be found in this etiquette of seductive criticism is "the old mystico-bourgeois conception of the 'interior richness of the human being, always there to be discovered', which would have it that a person is something other than what he actually does." (Bloch, *All Things Considered*, 1976).

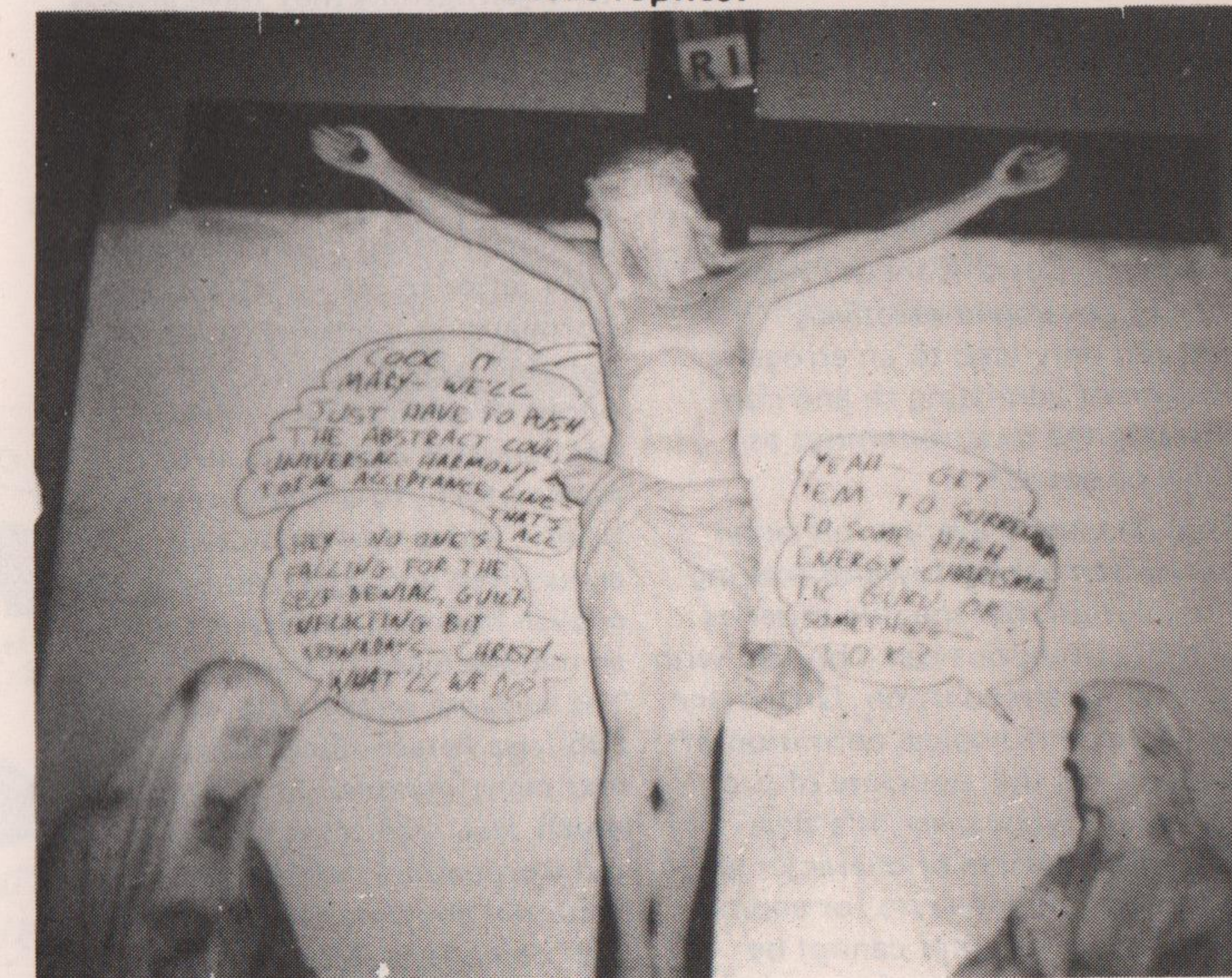
(c) Its advocacy of the necessity of the masses of individuals to "emulate" revolutionaries, who are held up as "exemplary", which is situationist Leninism: each would-be revolutionary obviously must learn from - at others - at least, in part - but to follow their example is to sacrifice their own insights and experimentation.

(d) Its uncritical support for the magnanimity of proletarian



Ken Knabb, realising and suppressing religion

#### Jesus replies:



revolutions, when such magnanimity was often the downfall of the revolution, in so far as it tolerated the enemies of the revolution that they might reinforce themselves against it.

(e) Its declaration that therapies and neo-religious strips are "a major positive factor in the present revolutionary movement, the widespread expression of people trying to take their lives in their own hands" when, in fact, they are one of capitals' major tactics against proletarian consciousness, and are an expression of people trying to avoid taking their lives in their own hands.

★

Some reflections on the theory of 'conscious choice' prevalent in the situationist milieu:

The subjectivist tendencies in this notion, which are publicly articulated in Nadine Bloch's "All Things Considered 1976" (see my text 'Revolutionary Theory For Beginners') are illustrated indirectly

in a letter to me from Nadine Bloch in which she says, "...my relationship with you was more an experiment in the frame of my relation with Joel...than with you." Apart from the fact that this accepts the couple form of relationships, which treats other relationships merely as a game in one's "central" relationship (as if all relationships shouldn't be 'central' in so far as it's necessary to make them substantial - for however short they last - in themselves, rather than in relation to another relationship), it also expresses some of the narrowness from which the voluntarist ideology of repression being a conscious choice arises. It's easy to see repression as being a conscious choice when one sees the struggle against it as being limited to the relatively simple challenges to one's routine that one can immediately do something about. But beyond this reduction of revolution to the fight against a few immediate constraints (a fight which is obviously essential



but certainly insufficient), the use of the theory of repression as being a conscious choice leads to the simplistic abstract platitudinous blaming of the proletariat for its failure to make a revolution. Most aspects of repression are clearly, given the objective counter-revolutionary historical conditions, incapable of being confronted without an international revolution. Repression is necessary in order to merely cope with walking down the road: it's a question of distinguishing between historically necessary repression and surplus, evasive self-repression and its' escapist function. If all repression is a conscious choice, then why aren't boredom, body armour, jealousy - all symptoms of repression - also considered conscious choices?6

If repression is simply a conscious choice then that notion enables revolutionaries to suppress consciousness of contradictions in order to prove their radicality, to deny their character, their unconscious, to themselves and others, as a pretense to its' supercession. In opposing the defensive deterministic use of the notion of "character" Daniel Denevert (see 'All Things Considered, 1976') asserts 'autonomy' as the constant and ever-presently possible negation of character. But this theory has merely developed *reactively* - and can only lead to an arrogant evasion of admitting to and confronting the unautonomous aspects of oneself.

Though clearly every proletarian can do *something* towards making a revolution, the specific miseries of most situations can't be broken with outside of a revolution. Unless one takes the tautological definition of character as the opposite of proletarian consciousness, it's clear that *some* aspects of character are a necessary manoeuvre for coping with a situation that cannot be superceded this side of a revolution. This voluntarism can even lead to the absurd idea, current now amongst French fans of Voyer, and amongst other 'revolutionaries', that the 'economy' doesn't exist - that it's purely ideology - which is just a dismissal of any notion of objective constraints outside of naked armed force. It tends towards the old reactionary ideology of "the self-made man" under the guise of the "autonomous revolutionary". It can only be a justifi-

The CRQS's address is B.P. 218, 75865 Paris Cedex 18.

Peres' address is B.P.37, Bordeaux, Cedex 33037.

fication for the isolationism of the situationist milieu which, for example, for several years now, has not tried to intervene in general confrontations with the State and has, therefore, not begun to grasp why and how such struggles return to normal, regardless of the 'conscious choices' of the participants: in many situations the choice of revolution is a suicidal choice. The practice of this theory begins at home but never leaves it. This notion of 'conscious choice' is likely to become a cliché abstract denunciation of individuals and movements which will avoid examining the specific objective possibilities and limitations that proletarians have in struggling against their condition.

1. Although their relationship is not monogamous, the Deneverts have lived together for almost ten years, without even experimenting with living separately. Despite their declared opposition to couples and to organisations they have always functioned as a couple, as an organisation, treating others as 'outsiders' or other lovers as peripheral to their central relationship.

2. Another example of this pompous posture is Peres' insulting dismissal - in a letter to me - of Bloch and Cornuault as 'pantins' (puppets; jumping jacks). When I first produced 'Revolutionary Theory For Beginners' it included a strip of paper which, to anybody (specifically, Bloch and Cornuault) unacquainted with the subtleties of english humour, appeared to be an endorsement of Peres' insults. The purpose of the strip was to publicise Peres' objections to his text being included in a pamphlet which also had texts by Bloch and Cornuault at the same time as ironically showing the pettiness of such objections. Nevertheless, after delayed consideration of the critiques of the 'strip' by Bloch and Cornuault, which was one of the reasons for their break with me, I decided that the strip was pointless and dispensed with it. Peres, like Cronin, has to belittle Bloch and Cornuault and at the same time suppress his critique of the Deneverts' couple form, in order to stay in the Deneverts' good books: Peres finds his confirmation in being used politically by his teachers as an objective sup-

port for their positions, without which their isolated couple relationship would be revealed as essentially insular.

3. This contradiction is expressed in the ambivalence of the 'Declaration of the CRQS' which claims that the CRQS is "semi-organisational", which, on the one hand, "does not seek to set forth or defend coherent collective positions", yet at the same time "Any member who, by his attitude or his taking up of positions, takes a stand in contradiction with the present rules is immediately excluded". In fact, this contradiction was practically expressed in the break with Cornuault when, despite the fact that the CRQS declared "the general assembly of the members has all power of decision; its' decisions, established by majority, are 'executory'", he was excluded solely by the Deneverts without consultation with Bloch (or Cornuault, for that matter). Cronin tries to smooth over this by stating that this exclusion was a supercession of the collectivist ambiguities of the Declaration: rather, it was an assertion of the Deneverts' collectivity in opposition to Cornuault's weak attempt to join it. It is fast becoming notorious that Denevertist anti-collectivism has always refused to recognise the real collectivity upon which it has functioned - they prefer to share the illusion and official lie of autonomy rather than bear the shame of its' denial: throughout their relationship the Deneverts have never once made conflicting decisions (such as married bliss!).

4. This may be one of the rationales behind Cronin's statement in his text on jealousy that "The counter-revolution of daily life is still able to count love amongst its' strongest allies." This cynicism can only be a reflection of Cronin's personal bitterness over the failure of his love relations, turned into a general thesis (now it's clear that air is polluted, but everyone has to breathe). This is an example, peculiar in particular to the situationist milieu, of the way people magnify their experience into a generalised 'analysis' and lose sight of the empirical basis of this thought - that is, "The identification with the universal is both a compensation for, and an abstraction from, the individuals' particu-

lar misery, which is really his only possible concrete starting point for a critique of the totality", a critique which Cronin makes in the same text which would be well applied to the above quote. The avoidance of the particular is the self-deceit from which such self-contradictions can arise. In this case, Cronin's persistent falling in love with women who conform to conventional standards of beauty, which women precisely because they imitate the dominant spectacles' requisite images, are invariably relatively conformist and relatively passive. For a revolutionary not to challenge their conditioned desire for such individuals (which, in Cronin's case, is a symptom of his macho vanity) is to resign themselves to the persistent frustration of being unable to overcome the split between their "ideas" and their love relations, an unacknowledged failure on Cronin's part which he justifies theoretically even as he attacks such a method of abstraction.

5. My response to this letter had a sufficient degree of pointless criticism, which, in a letter, was easily open to misunderstanding (a critique of Nadine Bloch's sexuality; and easy and obvious critique of Joel Cornuault's overt jealousy) to enable her to dismiss some of the pertinent criticism which, apart from some of the above, challenged the abstract nature of her challenge: I was "passive", yet she was "waiting" for me to "assert a project", to "want something from her. Nevertheless, my challenge to her challenge was also abstract in so far as I didn't really assert a project - at least with some definite content and purpose - out of these critiques. Such viciously circular challenges can go on forever.

6. For example, in Cronin's text on jealousy, the theoretically unclarified self-contradiction between voluntaristic conscious choice and objectivist determinism is expressed by the fact that he says jealousy is both justifiable and unjustifiable, both inevitable and a result of the refusal of practical truth (which latter formulation could be, and in situationist circles often is, used to abstractly critique any failure to confront a problem).

'The American Situationists' is available from Isaac Cronin at Box 5336, Berkeley, CA. 94705, USA.

'The Realisation And Suppression Of Religion' is available from Ken Knabb at Box 1044, Berkeley, CA 94704, USA.

The emotional disgust with blatant racists leads not only to crude emotive 'analyses' (e.g. comparison with the 30s, when in fact there's no objective basis for archaic forms of totalitarianism running the modern capitalist State) but also to dangerously naive liaisons with: the Labour Party (a party consistently racist in power, and obviously far more effectively and consequentially racist than the National Front), the rest of the vanguard Left (who are using genuine fear as a means of recruitment) and such 'nice' liars as Glenda Jackson (a shop window model of sophisticated, 'liberated', 'enlightened', womanhood) and Brian Clough (working class social climber and droning man of the people).

The rock stars too can now join the moral crusade, along with all the music papers - the catharsis of the good cause lest these people start to feel guilty about their complacency; anyway, it helps to boost the sales. The frenetic sock-it-to-em, I'm-as-incapable-of-thinking-as-you-gut-speak of Temporary Hoarding, with its anarchistic appeal to shallow emotional rebellion - "We want rebel music, street music... Now music... It's do it time" (a monster

created from the slickly, self-consciously aggressive and condescendingly 'anti-condescending' 'brain' of Dave Widgery & co. Ltd.) succeeds in turning on the 'kids' by appealing to that "anarcho-leftism of daily life" - the lazy cop in everyone's heads and hearts which wants immediate pleasure combined with confirmation that the enemy is purely external, where the petrified conditions sing your own tune in order to make you dance. The SWP merely tacks left ideology on to the dominant ideology of consumable 'fun' (sombre-faced people with 'Nazis are no fun' buttons pinned to them). The subjectivist seduction to an objectivist politics - "The pinning on of the badge is a political act, dyeing your hair, forming a rock band is a political act" (Roger Muddle, Socialist Review, July-Aug. '78), which re-defines revolt so as to mean absolutely anything, is leftist bait aimed to show how much the SWP is hedonistic as well as serious, and to fill the ranks with thousands of people who have "never before been involved in radical (sic) politics" (which fact was promoted as the essential success of the Rock Against Racism carnival, and not

intended as a critique: never mind the quality, count the heads!). The event provided the anonymity and concomitant chance to drop superficial inhibitions, releasing a phoney festivity in which a pseudo-common identity was discovered where the pliable recognised a common unoriginality in the corny clichés of the Tom Robinson Band and the clenched fist salutes.

The campaign to ban the NF can only be an appeal to the State to reinforce its armoury, armoury which will even more likely be used against any revolutionary force than against the NF (it's worth remembering that Berufsverbote in Germany was originally for neo-Nazis). Strategically, the banning of the NF is likely to make them more dangerous in the arena where they are most effective - in the streets and housing estates - since illegality means they don't have to present a show of being 'civilised'. And illegality is likely to make them more attractive to the 'radical' aspect of individuals; illegality - however conformist, stupid and sickening its content - is usually more exciting, more 'fun', than the standard ways people "enjoy" themselves (anti-

Nazi carnivals included). The real immediate struggle against the practical effects of the the National Front is proletarian (and not just black) self-defence (and possibly attack).

A more practically long-term strategy would be to return once more to the terrain of the class struggle, the present ebbing of which (which has been helped along by the Left) has contributed to the rise of racism and regionalism. In particular, to examine how struggles have contributed to their own failure, how individuals have delayed acting on what they knew until either it was too late or they'd forgotten, how racism is just one of many illusory notions of superiority as compensation for misery accepted (as to a certain extent, is anti-racism); and to attack the poverty of such lives (rather than merely see racism as an ideological ruse of the dominant society, which 'conditions' its members in a one-way fashion - as if people can't consciously fight their conditioning along with their conditions, an ideology which justifies the proselytising teacher-role of the supposedly enlightened).

ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLE:-



"YOU GOTTA RUN FAST TO KEEP ABREAST OF THE OLD WORLD"

### Some reflections on punk:

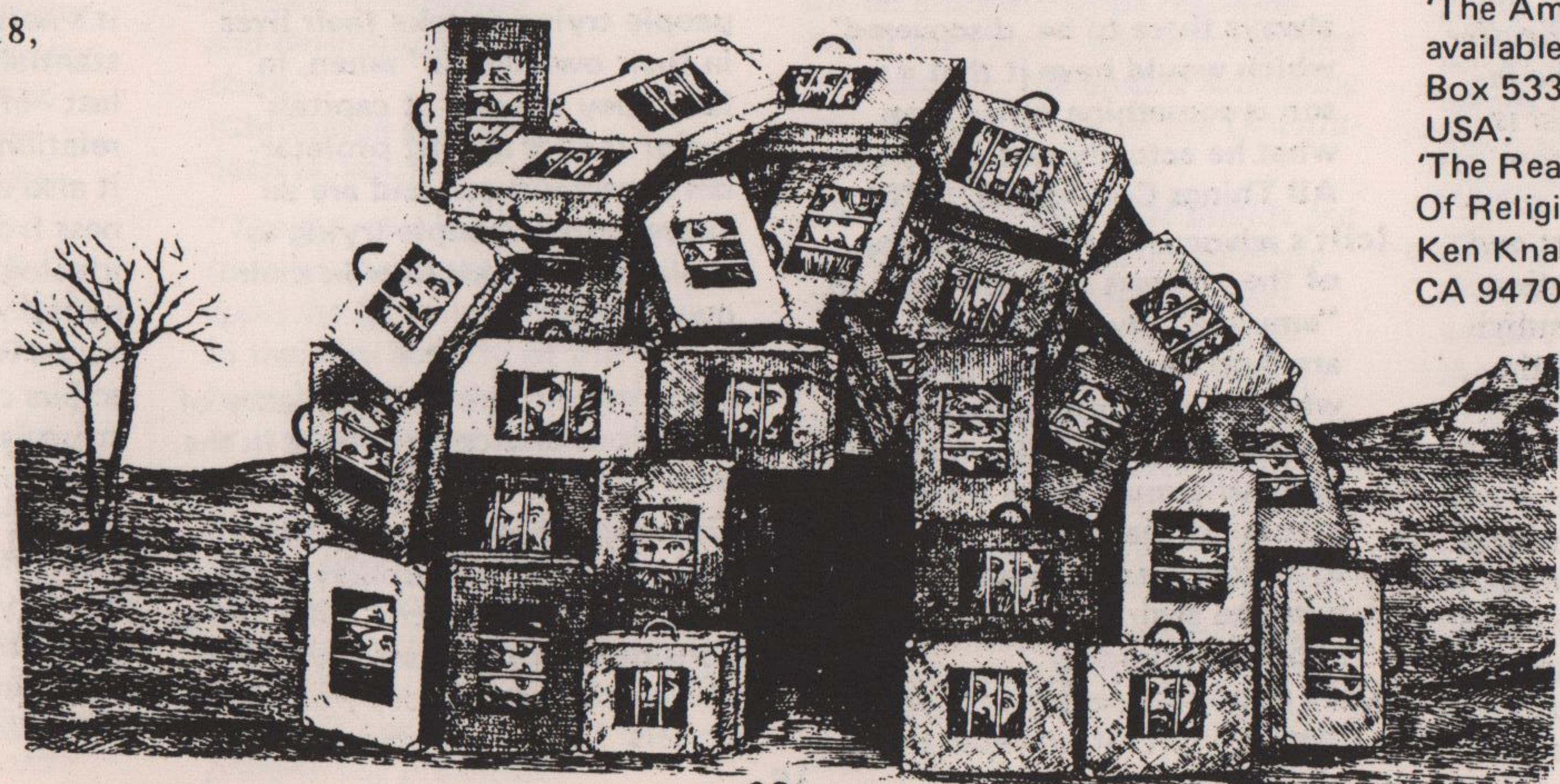
Punk was explicitly and directly a pro-situationist off-shoot: Malcolm McLaren (ex-Sex Pistols manager, and owner of the 'Sex' boutique) and Fred Vermorel (co-author of 'The Sex Pistols', a pop journalist punk version of Coronation Street) were both members of International Vandalism, a late sixties pro-situ group of anti-students; Sophie Richmond (ex-Sex Pistols roadie, and punk PR woman for the former political group "Social Revolution") and Jamie McGregor (ex-art man for the Sex Pistols) both ran Suburban Press, producing unoriginal pro-situ critiques of urbanism. Both Vermorel and McLaren had, at one time, a certain - if somewhat individualistically charismatic and inconsequential - audacity: McLaren, who once presented James Baldwin as "the black Billy Graham" to a mainly black audience of the Angela Davis Defence Committee, so'd-out his energy to the safer and more lucrative rock-bandwagon, by becoming "the christian Brian Epstein", selling the Sex Pistols to pretty vacant teenagers who enjoy seeing themselves mirrored on stage, and marketing T-shirts with May '68 situ slogans on them ("Take Your Desires For Reality" - price £2); Vermorel, one time physically kicked out of a trendy party for scrawling graffiti on the trendy artworks, now reduced to rhetorical watered down literary "attacks" on the Hayward Gallery in the *Time Out* letters page

(he thought he was being radical to suggest that the gallery be made into a night club for "artists" - and other ordinary (sic) people) to go to after licensing hours - about as revolutionary as advocating abortion on demand in South Kensington only). So far gone are they in their self-deluded spectacle of notoriety (formerly reinforced by occasional astonished establishment and media horror shocks), that these entrepreneurs really think it's revolutionary to be opposed to the monarchy, and that it's a scandal that God Save The Queen got to no.1 in the hit parade!

Bob Dylan made his first million selling 'he despair and protest of middle-class youth back to it. Nowadays the top punk bands function similarly: a working-class populist version of the nihilist protest spectacle, where the audience identify with (and even imitate) the displays of decadence, weirdness, ugliness, stupidity, rebellion and 'gut' anger, a reactive posture to the insipid insidiousness of english morality, normality, gentility, 'thoughtfulness', finesse and woolly flippancy: it's still part of the good guys-bad guys Punch and Judy Show. The bands know that singing "No more heroes..." is the best way of making it as anti-heroes, yet another one of capitalism's latest line in sick jokes, where its decay is packaged to the most overt victims of its decay - i.e. bored, unemployed youth, who willingly lap it up because of their need for

some illusion of self-assertion to hide from themselves their essential passivity in the face of increasing degradation amidst the ebbing of the class-struggle. Just as hippies used to feel less isolated by identifying with long-hairs (any long-hairs), so punks seek out a similar commonality based on similar superficial images of "opposition" to the status quo. However, confront most punks and their phoney tough-guy cover-up for mediocrity dissolves into weak "how dare you" whimpering. Significantly, the Left have offered critical support to this facade, as a means of patronisingly seducing those frustrated youth whose energies could be 'better' used to build up their own image, embodied in campaigns and the party machines.

Incidentally, for those who haven't heard, Johnny "I'm opposed to all violence" Rotten has joined his Jamaican equivalent - the millionaire Bob Marley (keeps the kids off the streets with such songs as "Burnin' & Lootin'"), whilst campaigning for Eric Manley, the Prime Minister) and become a Rastafarian. Having travelled one of the capitalist roads open to the working class (i.e. the rock band circuit, rather than - say - the Trade Union circuit, or the sports star circuit) and secured his future ripping off revolt and selling it back to those who never lived it, he has decided to dabble in less tiring novelties.





So subtly recuperative are the most modern recuperations of revolt and of its theory that they even articulate a 'critique' of the recuperative aspects of themselves - e.g. the nihilist pro-situ punk spectacle of decay "Jubilee" has lines in it like "Art has just been a fantasy world to stop people leading their own lives" or "I made the music so loud that people wouldn't hear the world falling apart". Or Stan Cohen & Laurie Taylor's "Escapes From Everyday Life" (which constantly quotes the S.I.) makes a critique of the role of the lecturer and even cynically 'criticises' the fact that having such a 'critique' enables them to continue their role as lecturers more easily, since they are able to retain some notion of their role-distanced 'individuality'. What is absent from these self-contradictory 'critiques' is a practical break with and attack on their niche: spectacles and roles pre-empt attack by 'exposing' themselves (even 'exposing' themselves 'exposing' themselves), articulating a possible consequential attack as a means of deflecting it and reconciling themselves to doing nothing about it, to not breaking with their essential - if cynical - complicity with the Old World. Significantly, Laurie Taylor, in

his role as Any Questions' pet radical, has said that he's not opposed to prisons, that he merely wants them made "more human"; and in this reformist capacity he is advising the government. 'Radical' sociologists are now the most avant-garde informants for capitalism, providing necessary insights to ward off its most radical opposition; their sardonic pessimism expresses their resigned self-justification for counter-revolutionary practice. On the 'art' side all the 'revolutionary' films express the same (though perhaps more financially rewarding and status-boosting) basic complicity: e.g. 'The Devil Probably' (an expose of the world of reification and of its futile gestures of rebellion against it; the spectacle of fatalism, of resigned misery; audiences leave muttering "Yes, things are bad. Terrible, isn't it? Must discuss it at the next cocktail party."), 'Jubilee' (the spectacle of the critique and decomposition of the spectacle, of Olde England; seduction of the ultra-bored to rebel imagery, so that they can re-perform to one another the debauched bohemian decadent), 'Jonah Will Be 25 in The Year 2000' (the spectacle of revolutionary failure and abstract

hope, with seductively 'dynamic' (?) 'aimable' eclectic family-type communalism sandwiched in between, confirming to those life-style ideologists that "Though it's not much, doing what we're doing is the best thing to do"), all of Bunuel's latest movies (the spectacle of the critique of bourgeois misery, which Bunuel knows from first-hand knowledge; such satirical tongue-pokes at the ruling class never fail to delight his bourgeois audiences since, nowadays, everybody likes to be made fun of - it's a way of not taking responsibility for what one does or doesn't do) etc.etc. All these movies mirror critiques of the Old World at the same time as presenting as its true opposition the fragmentary spectacles of opposition (punk, terrorism, ecologists etc.); they present what is, thus suppressing the negative - which they must inevitably do since they are still trapped in the intellectual art form, in the cinema - and in making a name for themselves from these 'critiques', in 'living' off them. At the Beaubourg art gallery in Paris there was an exhibit by Kienholz called The Art Room, which consisted of a room with paintings, and grotesque sub-human life-size models which,

when you pressed a button on them, spoke eruditely about art and the particular meanings of the paintings, in the usual cultural jargon. The spectacle insults itself and its spectators, and all the masochistic intelligentsia thrive on it. When this plastic mausoleum is fire-bombed, they will no doubt sell tickets to watch, and the film of the event will certainly be a box-office hit. Like the individual who pre-empt criticism from others as a defence against the difficulty and possible pain of committing herself to acting on a perspective without support from the dominant rules of her milieu (or of her specific relationships) or the person who doesn't practice what she criticises in others, the ultra-modern spectacles present a self-contradictory mirror on themselves in order to essentially tolerate their slot in the system. In the case of 'revolutionary' art or 'revolutionary' academics they function as a boost to the culture market, which needs revolt to satisfy its need for 'originality' and its image of concerned criticality, in contrast with the less attractive blatant complacency of the cruder kitsch of Hollywood and Hockney, Eysenck and Dahrendorf.

# TEXTS AVAILABLE FROM B.M.COMBUSTION:

The Poverty of Student Life by Khayati (1966) — 25p.  
DOUBLE REFLECTION by Ken Knabb (May '74) 10p  
SOCIETY OF SITUATIONISM & NOTES TOWARDS A SITUATIONIST MANIFESTO by Ken Knabb and D. Denevert & J. Charles respectively (Jan. '76 & June '75 respectively) 10p  
"ALTERNATIVE SOCIALISM"—THE MANIFESTO FOR RADICAL DIPLOMATS (August '76) 15p  
THE EMIN—THE OPIUM OF THE WORLD (Jan. '77) 10p  
Revolutionary Theory For Beginners (Jan. 1978).

## Leaflets:

Thoughts on Leaving the 20th Century  
On Anarchism  
Class Struggle in Italy 1977  
(all free)

## A few additional notes on some of these texts:

In September 1977 I did a re-print of 450 copies of 'Student Poverty' (the SI's notorious Strasbourg scandal). The development of relations with the couple of contacts I made from that text will in future depend on their initiatives (though interventions in the university scene are pretty useless until students themselves begin to break out of their roles).

In October 1977 I reprinted "Alternative" "Socialism"—the manifesto for radical diplomats, with a new afterword. Originally produced in August 1976, it's a critique of the alternative society, and in particular, Keith Paton's pamphlet 'Alternative Socialism'. (STOP PRESS: the ethereal Keith Paton is continuing to vaunt his insulting mystical glorification of women—the flip-side of misogyny—in the journal of non-violent class peace Peace News. That such a consistent hack can still be taken seriously in this country

says much of the poverty of the revolutionary movement here).

In February 1977 I publicly printed my text 'The Emin—The Opium Of The World'. Though one shouldn't judge a text's radicality by one's enemies' reaction to it, it was a minor ego boost to discover that 3 days after the pamphlet was put in Compendium Bookshop, sages of the Emin's inner (vicious) circle went in and bought up all 20 copies, and a letter of reproach from the Emin was sent to them complaining that such an otherwise respectable shop should stock such literature. But flattery will get them nowhere.

A few thoughts developed from the Emin experience:—

When someone confronts a scene, an individual within it — if he agrees with some aspect of the critique — has to break with that scene and with the

people in it (at the very least, temporarily) in order to develop the truth of his agreement. The emotional and intellectual weight of staying in the scene with everyone around maintaining the status quo — is bound to force the individual to repress the critiques he may have. And the emotional trauma of breaking with a scene he regards as the centre of his life, particularly when he's developed a dependance on this scene, is so great (or, at least, appears to be before the act of doing it: the actual act is often less painful than its anticipation) that often he prefers the confusion of staying — and not being lonely, to the challenge of developing alone. As with mystical groups, so with families, friendship networks, couples, communes, organisations — "revolutionary" or otherwise, work scenes, food co-ops, therapy groups etc. etc. When and if someone does leave a scene he either represses

its memory, or if he does supersede it, he does so individually and privately — and never conceives of criticising it — and himself as part of it — publicly, for he can see no general use of such publicity (he merely says "it's not for me"), just as he avoids trying to grasp how much a scene (and his complicity with it) is a specific symptom of the society as a whole. Either he is still affectively tied to this past or the individuals who comprised it, or he merely sees revolution as a matter of attacking the totality as abstraction (e.g. the bosses, the commodity), dismissing criticism of some small group as 'marginal' (which is subjectively true only in so far as he's unable to see how the particular is a reflection and function of the general).

## LAST WORD:

THE DISEMBODIED HEAD OF STALIN CHALLENGES THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTIONARIES:



YOU'RE SO FULL OF YOUR SELF-IMPORTANCE THAT YOU DARE TRY TO MAKE YOUR OWN HISTORY! HOW ARROGANT! HOW NEGATIVE! HAVEN'T YOU GOT A GOOD WORD TO SAY ABOUT ANYTHING?

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