

VOTE FOR MISERY

THE SOLE VIRTUE of this election is its brevity. In the words of Thomas Hobbes (talking about something entirely different) it is 'nasty, solitary, brutish and short'. Its nastiness is inherent in its cheap opportunism, in its schoolboy slapstick; it is solitary in its complete isolation from anything connected with human life, it has its solitary moment of truth in the polling booth when one can realise (usually too late) what a farce it all is; it is brutish in its frank appeals to our baser instincts and its back-stage 'survival of the fittest' deals.

Its shortness was rendered possible only because the energy crisis, which it is claimed gave it birth (or death?) developed more quickly than the minds of power-seeking politicians could work out the odds. Is the reflection of a bone I see in the water better than the bone I have in my mouth? I might possibly finish up with two bones.

This shortness of the election has made it even more urgent to find a theme on which to base the election, a theme which, preferably, has no relation to any living person or issue. The Conservatives, overestimating the voters' patriotism, chose "Who Governs Britain?" but that

question has some rather disturbing factual answers, and the bogey-stories that worked just after the 1939-45 war will not work again -- short of a last-minute scare-story like the Zinoviev letter or the Post-Office-Savings annexation which worked well in the past.

There have been attempts to swing the focus of the election onto the cost of living, this has driven the Conservatives to their refuge in the admittedly increased cost (and shortage) of world food supplies. Now, as we go to press, the focus has shifted to the question of oil -- not of course the world shortage -- but how to exploit Britain's (Scotland's) assumed potential glut of oil in the North Sea, leased out at some pittance to private enterprise and fcre-doomed, as some would have it, by nationalization.

The realization by both, or all three, parties that they have little to offer the voters but further misery has moderated some of the promises but remedies for this necessary initial pain are still on offer...

The whole election has an even more positive affirmation of its irrelevance. The topics and problems it covers are not soluble by political methods. The



"I'M SORRY, my horny-handed old proles--but in the National Interest we must reduce your standard of living to improve our own."

topics and problems it should cover are ignored, which is probably just as well for they, too, are not soluble by political methods.

Voting itself is counter-revolutionary. As an institution it bases itself upon the wishes of the majority who can be coerced by the mass-media into voting upon issues and into returning individuals to vote upon issues upon which neither they nor their constituents have any real knowledge or experience. As an additional hazard, the party system is interposed between the M.P., the elector and any effectiveness, so that whatever votes are cast are for a party rather than an individual.

continued on P. 6 Col. 3

Twenty-Four Hour Picket of Spanish Embassy

THE LIFE OF OUR COMRADE SALVADOR PUIG ANTICH IS NOW IN EXTREME DANGER and it is up to all of us regardless of political affiliation, opinions and personal squabbles to ensure that the world, but mainly the fascist dictator Franco hear our vehement protest against the confirmation and the possible execution of the death sentence on the person of Salvador Puig Antich.

The Spanish fascists are screaming for blood in order to avenge the death of Carrero Blanco. We cannot allow one of our comrades to be the scapegoat of "justice" in Spain. Last Friday, the Supreme Military Court of Barcelona confirmed the death sentence and on Friday 22nd February, Salvador Puig Antich's "case" will be presented to the Spanish Cabinet, headed by Franco, in order to receive the final decision -- death or life !!!

Our weekly FREEDOM, the Centro Iberico and Black Cross could not fail to participate in this non-sectarian 24-Hours Picket to be held in front of the Spanish Embassy (24 Belgrave Square, London SW1) starting on the evening of THURSDAY 21st FEBRUARY. At the time of going to press we are unable to give further information. As soon as you read this, please 'phone us (01-247 9249) Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Monday 6 - 9 pm; other days 10 a.m.-6 p.m. to know the latest news on this initiative of solidarity with SALVADOR PUIG ANTICH. Remember...his life depends on the international protest movement against the barbaric and nauseating death sentence being carried out.

If Salvador Puig Antich dies it is because we have failed to force Franco to commute his death sentence. So ALL AT THE SPANISH EMBASSY THURSDAY THE 21st.

Claude.

PUIG MUST NOT DIE!

The Latest information received by the 'Comité de Soutien et Verité aux Emprisonnés de Barcelone'

The Supreme Military Council met on Monday, 11 Feb., a dossier concerning Salvador Puig in its hands, and later in order to pronounce on the death sentence passed by the Barcelona Military Tribunal.

The Council sits behind closed doors. It may, if it wishes, summon the accused's lawyer, but the accused himself has no right to be present. It can either confirm the sentence, which will then be passed on to General Franco and the Council of Ministers for confirmation; or it can annul the death sentence and substitute another, or, finally, order a retrial.

[See front page - since this report, the death sentence has been confirmed by the Tribunal]

On 8 January, Salvador Puig was judged by Council of War and condemned for two crimes: armed bank robbery, with Jose Luis Pons Llobet; and presumed murder of a policeman in the course of an exchange of shots at the time of his arrest. By Spanish law the first crime comes under a Military Tribunal, the second a civil one, and for this crime the death penalty cannot be inflicted. However, these two crimes were judged together, although according to the military code crimes not directly connected cannot be judged together unless the court (article 5) decides otherwise.

For the death of the police inspector the lawyer was not able to obtain an expert witness for the defence. All the members of the Tribunal, being soldiers, are considered to be experts on ballistics. Though the court was entirely composed of soldiers one of them was a lawyer also. The counsel for the defence, although a lawyer, does not have to be a soldier also, as formerly. In the case of Puig and Pons Llobet both were civilians. They could do nothing after sentence had been passed except to make a statement that there was no connection between the two crimes of Salvador Puig and that there should be a fresh trial of the two crimes separately, and that the death sentence could not legally be passed in this case.

Salvador Puig is in good health and his morale is high. He can see his family twice a week. But the rest of the time he is kept in solitary confinement and subjected to a

complete search every six hours. His lawyer can visit him every day. He has the right to read books. He does not deny what he has done, nor any of the declarations published by the M.I.L. until his arrest.

When Oriol Soler and, once again J. L. Pons Llobet appear before the Council of War, accused of two attacks on banks it is hoped that the public prosecutor will only ask for thirty-year sentences, but he may ask for the death penalty for both. Since they made use of their arms when arrested, fortunately without wounding anyone, the prosecutor can ask for an additional twelve years, which would make 42 years for Soler and 72 for Pons, already condemned to 30 years in January.

This second trial of the MIL will probably take place in early March. It will follow closely the trial of the workers arrested in the March, 1973, demonstrations.

There will be a third trial of the M.I.L. where again Pons Llobet will appear, and Emilio Pardinias, Santiago Soler and F. Javier Garriga. The date is unknown.

There was a complete blackout for the first three months on the political nature of the crimes. Once the trial was announced the press began to mention it, and while it was in progress gave the maximum amount of information possible in such a repressive climate. Demonstrations and acts of so solidarity were also given publicity. Spanish broadcasts of the French and British radio are listened to mainly in politically enlightened circles.

On Thursday, 9th January, there was a demonstration of about 1,000 people in Barcelona, and another in Bilbao, as well as sabotage of monuments to dead pro-Franco civil war heroes, some bombs in Catalonia and perhaps in the Basque country. Lawyers in Barcelona and Madrid, also doctors, engineers and architects made collective protests, which were not covered in the national press. Many Spaniards sent telegrams of protest to General Franco and the Prime Minister, M. Arias Navarro.

BUT IT IS PROTESTS FROM ABROAD WHICH ARE CONSIDERED DECISIVE. They must be intensified. The new Spanish government, much tougher than the preceding one, is little known

yet abroad. It wants to join the Common Market, but knows that its future in Europe depends on creating a good impression now. It is hoped that pressure from abroad may save Salvador Puig and the others from the death penalty.

However, even if not executed, the prisoners may be subjected to an inhuman regime, form of slow execution. This has already happened to several who were "reprieved" after the Burgos trial. Contact and support must therefore be kept up.

The prisoners are anarchists or Communists of the Left. They do not want to be helped as a matter of charity, or used as propaganda for any cause, even that of M.I.L. If their attitude is more difficult to explain and understand than that of others (like the Basques of E.T.A. or that of the Workers' Commission) it is not because of the murder of the policeman. It is because of the attacks on banks, for an attack on a bank shocks people far more than the death of a man.

The authorities have used this to isolate the men from public sympathy.

Those who wish to protest should send their telegrams and letters to:

1. General Franco, El Pardo, Madrid
2. Sr. Arias Navarro, President of the Government, Madrid.

It would also be a good idea to write to the accused in Spanish, some harmless words that would nevertheless break their isolation; for example, "Recuerdos", "Saludos afectuosos", "No te olvidamos", etc. Begin with Salvador Puig in view of his immediate peril. His address is:

X. Apartado Oficial de Correos No. 20.
Carcel Modelo, Barcelona.

* * *
Four people have been arrested in Paris: Moreno; Jean-Claud Torres; Michel Camilleri; Pierre Roger. Their defence council is Maitre J. J. de Felice, 17 avenue de Massine, Paris 8eme. Extradition is not to be feared. These four were preparing an action of solidarity which, say the police, would have been an attack on an airplane of Iberian Airways.

(Translated and abridged by John Brent)

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A Dirty Election

THE TORY ELECTION slogan "Firm,
but Fair" is all part of their
campaign to create an illusion
that they are a party of com-
monsense people with "moderate"
views. They are casting the
Labour Party as "extremists"
and supporters of illegal
action.

Although the election has
been called "tough" and
"dirty", really it is being
fought on a lie. Mr. Heath
is posing as the defender of
"democracy" when really his
use of the lie is bordering on
fascism. If he repeats the
lie often enough then some
people are sure to believe it.
Compared with other Tory gov-
ernments since the war, Mr.
Heath's has in fact been the
most extreme. His Industrial
Relations Act was a direct
attempt to bring State inter-
vention into the affairs of
the trade union movement. His
party claims that the miners'
strike is a political strike
but in fact it has been the
government who have made
strikes political. But man-
agements have relied more and
more on the State to prop up
the system. To combat the
current inflation the Tories
have reversed their policies
and have used what they at one
time called "socialist con-
trols" in order to manage the
economy and keep workers' de-
mands under control.

None of this has anything to
do with socialism, if by that
word we mean the substitution
of co-operative for competi-
tive production. But socialism
also means that individual
freedom should be subordinated
to the interests of the commu-
nity. With the concentration
of industry into giant corpora-
tions, the competitive ele-
ment at national and even con-

tinental level has been re-
placed by monopolies. The State
is part and parcel of the
monopoly and only serves the
interests of increased exploi-
tation and profit of these mul-
tinationals corporations. If
these corporations' profits and
power are threatened then the
State will give them every as-
sistance. This can mean legis-
lation like the Industrial Re-
lations Act, Special Branch
surveillance of militants,
phone tapping, and military
intervention like we have seen
at London Airport.

Our "democracy" is supposed
to be based on the "freedom of
the individual", and this in
turn is a basic tenet of the
so-called "free world". The
miners' dispute started as a
ban on overtime, and this nor-
mal working decision led to a
fuel crisis. Because every-
thing in our society has a
price tag placed upon it the
mines were allowed to run
down. Equally, our transport
system is in chaos, not be-
cause of the train drivers'
recent action but because
there are just not enough wor-
kers willing to work at these
rotten jobs. We see from this
how important people working
in productive jobs and serv-
ices really are, and when they
withdraw their labour, or just
ban overtime, it causes econo-
mic chaos.

If this is so, all the poli-
ticians, the heads of industry
and all the hangers-on are not
necessary to create the goods
and provide the services for
the needs of the community. We
should sweep these parasites
aside, instead of voting for
new political masters, and
take over our places of work
and create a free society.

P.T.

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STRONG ARM OF THE LAW

Mr. Jan Pearce, a court usher
in Plymouth, had his arm bro-
ken when he volunteered for a
courtroom demonstration of an
arm hold used by a P.C. Stables
to restrain prisoners.

Mr. Pearce said: "Constable
Stables took hold of my left
arm and we heard a crack. He
asked me if I had torn my shir-
shirt and I said: 'Torn my
shirt? You've broken my arm'."

P.C. Stables said: "I'm very
sorry it happened. I was under
the impression that Mr. Pearce
was trying to make it as real-
istic as possible by posing as
an unco-operative prisoner and
keeping his arm stiff."

We do not know the verdict in
the assault case being heard at
the time!

T.P.

UNCLE MAXIM'S COMRADES

I WAS particularly interested in Paul Avrich's article "Berkman's Uncle" (FREEDOM 17.1.74), as I had also mentioned Berkman's uncle in my own introduction to the ABC of Anarchism, reprinted by Freedom Press in 1971. I did not, however, know who "uncle Maxim" was.

In his article, Avrich briefly mentions Natanson's comrades, Kamkov, Steinberg and Spiridonova. All three were, in many ways, close to the anarchist-communist position and would, in Britain today, generally be described as "libertarian socialists".

In the summer of 1917, first the Kornilov affair and then the calling of the Democratic Conference, precipitated a split in the Social Revolutionary Party (the Essars). From that split a new grouping, the Left S.R.s, emerged under the leadership of Boris D. Kamkov and Maria Spiridonova. The Left S.R.s repudiated the Provisional Government, and took a line very similar to that of the anarchists and, at that time, the Bolsheviks. Most of the rank-and-file of the Social Revolutionary Party went over to the Left S.R.s. By the end of August, they had control of the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet, and by September, they had completely captured the Petrograd City organisation of the old S.R. Party. They began to co-operate with the Bolsheviks in the Petrograd Soviet. After its formation, the Left S.R.s joined the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet. (Besides the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.s, the anarchist and former "Wobblly" Vladimir "Bill" Shatov was also a member.) Boris Kamkov, however, commented just two days before the "October Revolution" that "We (the Left S.R.s) did not enter the Military Revolutionary Committee for an uprising. The power must be created by the Congress of Soviets". But events were moving far too quickly for Kamkov. And on the following morning (October 24), Kamkov declared: "It is clear that the Provisional Government, since it does not enjoy the confidence of the country, must finally go. We must create a revolutionary democratic power, responsible to the organs of the revolutionary democracy, i.e. the Soviets."

FOLLOWING the coup d'etat on the 25th, members of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party formed, at Trotsky's suggestion, a Government - the Council of People's Commissars.

After some discussion, Kamkov, Steinberg and Spiridonova were invited to join the "Council". But they were somewhat unhappy at the manner in which the Provisional Government of Kerensky had been despatched; and, in the words of Victor Serge, "... first boycotted the Bolshevik authorities..." (Memoirs of a Revolutionary, O.U.P., p. 118) Shortly after, again in the words of Serge, the Left S.R.s "...collaborated with them..." They continued their collaboration until April (new calendar) 1918. But the Bolsheviks were already persecuting the Left S.R. in much the same manner as they were the anarchists. In July, the S.R.s staged an insurrection against the Bolshevik regime. Many of them were arrested. Like "uncle Maxim", Kamkov fled abroad*. Steinberg and Maria Spiridonova were not so fortunate.

Dr. Isaak Z. Steinberg had been a member of the Social Revolutionary Party since 1906, but had gone over to the Left S.R.s in October, 1917. He had been imprisoned and exiled under the Czarist regime. Late in 1917, he accepted the post in Lenin's Government of People's Commissar for Justice, but resigned in April, 1918. Between that date and February, 1919, when he was arrested by the Vetcheka, Steinberg's home was raided and searched twenty-two times. Finally, he was arrested with hundreds of Left S.R.s on the charge of "Conspiracy of the Left Social Revolutionaries Against Soviet Power". He was taken to Lefortov jail, where he was beaten. After four-and-a-half months he was released - without trial. In 1922, he was arrested again and taken to the Butirky Prison in Moscow, and kept in the "inner" prison of the Vetcheka. In 1923, still without being tried, he was again released, and was given permission to go abroad to participate in the work of the "Vienna International". The Central Executive Committee of the Bolshevik Government thereupon declared that his departure abroad was "forever".

MARIA SPIRIDONOVA was one of the greatest revolutionists of all time. In 1906, when still a young girl, she attempted to assassinate a Czarist General notorious for his cruelty to the peasants. She was captured by a horde of Czarist Cossacks, and was raped and sabered. She was then condemned to death; but after protests from all

over Europe, the Czar commuted her sentence to penal servitude for life in Siberia. After eleven years, she was released following the February Revolution, in 1917.

After her release, Maria Spiridonova threw herself into the struggle against the Provisional Government, and against Russia's continued involvement in the war. She, like her comrades, gave conditional support to the Bolshevik Government, but soon withdrew.

Likening Lenin's Government to that of Napoleon II's of 1858, she wrote early in 1919: "Plots of right socialist-revolutionists and Mensheviks are being invented wholesale. While still co-operating with the Bolsheviks, I often quarrelled with them furiously, pointing out that these 'plots' assumed a mass character. I am now confident that they were invented on purpose, that they were not panicky visions but systematic fabrications. The best proof of this is the latest 'plot of the left Socialist Revolutionaries'. Even from their own statement it can be seen that there was no such plot". (Letter to her friend and comrade, Alexandra Izmailovitch, February 19, 1919.)

After leaving the Government, Spiridonova was arrested. After five months, she was released without a trial or an explanation. In February, 1919, she was again arrested by the techekists. She was now very ill with T.B. as well as suffering from the results of her former incarcerations under the Czar and the Bolsheviks, and the sabre-cuts. The sentence of the so-called Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal read: "Not wishing to cause Maria Spiridonova unnecessary suffering, the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal resolved to isolate Maria Spiridonova from political and social activity for a period of one year in a sanatorium, affording her the opportunity for normal physical and intellectual work."

On February 15, she was put in a cell in the Kremlin guardhouse. On March 9, she was transferred to the Kremlin Hospital as she was coughing up blood. Afterwards, she was again moved to another room in the Kremlin, which was unheated, and had bars at the windows. From there she escaped with the assistance of one of the guards. She was rearrested, while sick with typhus, in October, 1920.

*Not until 1920. Berkman's uncle Maxim went in 1918.

'Freedom Fighters For All'

DUE TO some forthcoming event the papers have failed (as usual) to give coverage of any substance to a case being heard at Winchester Crown court where two young men allegedly belonging to an anarchist organisation, are on trial for causing two explosions; conspiracy to cause explosions; conspiring to trespass; and damaging property. The first of these three incidents was a hoax bomb left in a women's toilet at the Portuguese vice-consulate in Bristol. A second bomb went off outside the Portuguese consulate in Cardiff; this was made from camping gas cylinders. A similar explosion occurred outside the officers' club at Aldershot. Hardly a campaign of terror worthy to be heard at Winchester Crown Court with its echoes and memories (in the mind of judges and juries) of IRA bombings.

The evidence reported in our free press includes that of a couple who were walking beside a sandpit at Guildford and (we quote The Guardian) "saw a green van parked in a lane and noticed a column of smoke coming from the sandpit. They noted the van's number. When they heard about the explosion at the officers' club in Aldershot the following day they informed the police. Subsequently the van was traced and Mr. Ladd was driving with Mr. Tristram as a passenger". Significantly the Times report (same day) says "The couple made a mental note of the van's number and on returning home wrote it down." An interesting twist to mysteriously insubstantial evidence.

Further evidence was given of a rather romantically bombastic letter received by the BBC from 'Freedom Fighters for All' (not quoted in The Guardian): "They did not heed our first warning in Bristol at the Portuguese Consulate. We

Boris Kamkov was at her bedside the night that the tchekists came to take her away. She was imprisoned (like Soviet dissidents of today) in a prison hospital - the Psychiatric Prechistenka Hospital. There, she went on hunger strike, and was forcibly fed (just like some British prisoners today). In 1921, Maria Spiridonova was put under house arrest in a guarded villa in the small town of Malachovka, near Moscow. But in 1922, she was secretly exiled to Turkestan...where she probably died.

Peter E. Newell.

again warn the British Government to break with Portugal... They won't let it happen. The only rule is self-rule - each individual must make it happen". (This text is very confused in The Times report).

This case was preceded by the usual ominously police-state proceedings. On Friday, 14 September 1973, police from the South Western Regional Crime Squad and the Hampshire CID Bomb Squad raided 6 houses in Bristol, detaining 19 people in connection with bomb attacks in Cardiff, Aldershot and Bristol. Several people were held for 25 hours, and Dafydd Ladd and Michael Tristram charged at Aldershot on Tuesday with Criminal Damage to an Officers' Mess in Aldershot and to a door in Cardiff.

Contrary to the law they were held 90 hours before being charged. No bombs or explosives were found in the raided houses which were extensively damaged and looted by the police who produced no search warrants at most. Dafydd Ladd's wife was held for 6 hours and prevented from feeding or changing her baby. Complaints by the NCCL and Bristol Trades Council to the police have been ignored. Dafydd and Michael have been brutally treated in Winchester Prison and subjected to interrogation. All their defence papers and letters from their solicitors were taken from them, and only returned after a lot of complaints. A local M.P. was refused permission to raise the matter in the House of Commons. Their solicitors had applied in vain for the trial to be transferred to another court as, following the other bomb trials in Winchester, the jury would be biased.

The police had infiltrated an agent into Bristol Squatters Association, under the name of Dennis.

A benefit dance was organised for political prisoners in Bristol. Some of the money was given to the "Shrewsbury 24" Defence Committee, the rest will go to Michael and Dafydd's defence.

For further details contact Bristol Committee for the Defence of Socialists, c/o 82 North Rd, St. Andrews, Bristol 6

The case (we presume) continues.

ACTION, NOT WORDS

THE DEMONSTRATION in favour of higher pensions organised by the TUC in London on February 24 will be used by the union leaders and the invited Labour speakers as a timely propaganda exercise in favour of the Labour Party. The politicians will pay lip-service to the needs of the old in a cynical quest for a few more votes. What we will not be reminded of will be the dismal record of the last Labour Government in failing to substantially alleviate the poverty of millions of old people and other deprived groups within our society. Significantly, in a recent speech Barbara Castle had to hark back almost 30 years to the Labour Government of 1945 for evidence of the party's "soul"! Harold Wilson now makes political capital out of the massive tax relief dished out to the wealthy by the Tory Government. However, he himself presided over a substantial redistribution of wealth in favour of the rich by way of his "incomes policy", etc.

The plight of the pensioner has always been a convenient cause for exploitation by politicians of all persuasions. The Labour Party inevitably provides a large slice of "pie in the sky" -- inspiring but not very nourishing. Communists like Jack Dash have done their best to "organise" the pensioners: marching them to the top of the hill -- and down again to the ballot-box. The Tories have done their best to turn pensioners against younger workers still on the treadmill of wage-slavery. They have tried to hide their tight-fisted callousness behind a smokescreen of talk about "inflation" which magically makes militant trade unionists responsible for the Government's meanness.

No government on Earth will attend to the needs of people who are powerless to insist. That is why it is time that the industrial strength of the trade union movement was used to insist that the urgent needs of the old, the homeless, the unemployed, and the poorly-paid are attended to. Now we must start to campaign within our unions for strike action on behalf of all underprivileged groups.

The trade union movement was built on foundations of brotherhood and sisterhood, on a vision of a better society for all. It is time for trade unionists to stop helping political fakers and con-men to power and, instead, start to put our ideals into practice - and our feet where our mouths are.

T.P.

News from Australia

OVER HERE things have been happening pretty quickly since (but not necessarily because) the Labor Party won the elections in late 1972. I have just heard on the news that inflation for 1973 was 13.2%. A fair proportion of this has been due to a massive increase in spending to enlarge the government bureaucracy, although the Labor government has removed many of the revolting policies of the previous government (e.g. abolished conscription and in the areas of social services and censorship). Rank and file activity is increasing rapidly. In New South Wales the Builders' Labourers' Federation, in conjunction with residents' action groups, have black banned (called green bans here) the destruction of housing and parklands and their replacement by office blocks or modern luxury housing. Millions of dollars worth of projects in Sydney have been held up and recently thugs were used to evict squatters from houses which were to be redeveloped. More importantly, the B.Ls have an excellent ability to organize on the site. Recently when one site was occupied, the cops ordered all tradesmen off the site with the intention of moving in to get the B.Ls for trespassing. The B.Ls were able to organize to prevent the tradesmen leaving and hence prevent getting smashed up -- the tradesmen did not have the ability to organize on site. At Ford's near Melbourne there was an incredible eight-week strike by assembly line workers (comprising about thirty nationalities -- the language difficulties were incredible) who attacked both the factory and one of their union leaders -- unfortunately the plant wasn't occupied. However the net result of the strike was that Ford is now heavily undermanned on the assembly line and is even employing women to work on it. The labor shortage is due to the new policy of the government in refusing to import as much cheap unskilled labor as possible from Europe to do the shit work. We have heard that Ford's plan to move their plant out of Australia.

Politically the scene has changed dramatically over the past five years. The student movements, incredibly active in the Vietnam protest movements just three years ago, lie dormant, except perhaps in secondary schools where activity is increasing. In the Institutes of Technology (the government's idea of a university education on the cheap) activity may become increasingly important in the years to follow. There are now three C.P.s (China-line,

Moscow-line, and Australia-line), several other Communist and Trotskyist groups; and our loosely structured self-management groups which we gravitate around. Main centres of activity of these are Brisbane and Melbourne, Women's Lib and Gay Lib have made tremendous advances in the past three years, and we also have Mental Patients Union, Prisoner Aid Groups and the like (unheard of five years ago). The scene for mental patients and prisoners here is grim, as I gather it is in Britain. Political action in general is becoming more grass roots and outside of the mainstream of the traditional organizations in much the same way as in Britain (e.g. as described in Barry Hindess' book The Decline of Working Class Politics).

The people in the Self-Management Groups are mainly involved in organizing and propagandizing within the institutions where they work or study. We are not putting forward any line other than stressing the ability of people in their places of work and study to make their own decisions and learn from their own experiences when confronted by bureaucrats and capitalist authorities.

I hope to be able to see you some time within the next year or so.

Fraternally

Denis Watson.

BETWEEN-ELECTION REVOLUTIONARIES

THE TROTSKYIST "revolutionaries" are falling over themselves to play the parliamentary game. Reg Prentice, Labour's "union bashing" spokesman on employment is being opposed in Newham North-East by (at least!) two Trotskyists. Vanessa Redgrave, an actress, is standing for the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and John Ross is standing for the International Marxist Group. The WRP is also putting up candidates for 8 other seats.

ARMY TORTURE CASES

FOLLOWING the damages already awarded in the Ulster High Court to Mr. Jim Sullivan another man, Mr. Patrick Shivers, has been awarded £15,000 damages against the Ministry of Defence and the (then) Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs for the torture inflicted upon him during the introduction of internment in August 1971. Claims for damages are now being prepared by 11 other men who allege brutality and torture by police and soldiers. All the men were named in the Compton Report which condemned the Army's torture techniques of "interrogation".

T P

LETTER

"Rising Free"

The Rising Free Collective's reply (February 16) to my review (January 5) of the first two Rising Free Reprints is rather puzzling.

They mention "factual errors", but don't give any. They describe criticism of bad production as "obsessive commodity fetishism", but don't understand that bad typing and duplication reduce a pamphlet's use-value. They suggest that I have been "collecting review copies of every libertarian publication for the last ten years" and am therefore one of "a few smug early birds", but don't realise that earlier (and better) versions of the two pamphlets they have reprinted are still available in London -- as is also true of the third one, which I reviewed later (February 16).

As it happens, I bought all the pamphlets I reviewed, if it matters.

Yours eternally,

N. W.

VOTE FOR MISERY...contd from P.1

Every five years, providing you have a vote, you have a choice of voting for a party. That is, for a man chosen by the party. Who may or may not support a policy agreed by the party. Which they may or may not continue if they get into office. Dependent upon circumstances, possibility or policy, providing they get a working majority, always dependent upon the wishes of our dominant allies (now or in the future) and upon the diplomatic necessity for continuation of foreign policy and maintenance of existing commitments. And hingeing upon technical progress and changes. Always providing that our rulers are wise, beneficent and sane. We may get good government. Is it worth it?

Thoreau once said, "All voting is a sort of gaming like checkers or backgammon with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right, but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail...When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote."

Jack Robinson

SOVIET GOVERNMENT EXILED

WHEN THE Russian Orthodox Church excommunicated Tolstoy, the great novelist and non-resistant (he always disclaimed the description 'anarchist'), it was stated by some that Tolstoy himself had excommunicated the Church some time previously.

In the same way the Government of the USSR in exiling and deporting Alexander Solzhenitsyn (against all international law) has placed itself in exile from the criticism of Solzhenitsyn. Manifestly the Government was afraid, largely for diplomatic reasons which had little to do with civil liberties - which scarcely exist in Russia. It was afraid to take direct action in placing Solzhenitsyn on trial since this would not only reduce their chances of an arrangement with America (known diplomatically as a détente) but leave Russia open to the scorn of China which regards Russia as her enemy -- and rival for the affection of revolutionaries.

Normally were it an ordinary Russian, Germany and Switzerland would have placed this refugee on the first plane back to Russia or would have placed him in gaol for a month or two while they decided what to do with him. But for governments, circumstances alter cases.

However, Solzhenitsyn himself has declared that he does not wish to stay in a country where he could be used for anti-Russian propaganda. Even Mr. Heath's opportunist invitation seems unlikely to get a response.

Politically, Solzhenitsyn seems to be rather naive, his views tend towards Christian orthodoxy. He believes, according to his friend Roy Medvedev, that society should be run by competent technocrats under the moral leadership of the Christian Church.

This is not the first (nor the last) time that one has to make a stand for the freedom of speech of those with whom one disagrees, but his steadfastness and adherence to his principles compel admiration. At the same time they bear traces of a truly Slav masochism.

There has been criticism that Solzhenitsyn spoke and wrote too tolerantly of General Vlasov's men who went over to the Germans in 1942-5 and were consequently imprisoned in the camps where Solzhenitsyn met them. The case he makes is that these soldiers (like all Russians) were abandoned in the prisoner-of-war camps by Stalin - who had refused to join the Geneva Convention - and that the incompetent regime which had brought about their capture made them easy prey to pro-German recruitment. It has been suggested (in the Christian Science Monitor) that he involved other people in his original arrest because of indiscreet letters. This can probably be put down more to innocence than malice.

Solzhenitsyn was deceived by the strategically-liberal Khrushchev regime into thinking that this was a real thaw in the cold war against the West and against the Soviet citizens. Once it was said that Stalin was the best thing that ever happened to the Communist parties - it gave them an alibi for everything...even Hungary! When Solzhenitsyn realized that the liberal honeymoon was over he courageously carried on denouncing the Stalinism (or totalitarianism) he still saw in operation. His friend Medvedev denies this is present to any great extent. Solzhenitsyn fails to draw any political conclusion from this, relying as he does on a Christian interpretation of events.

This incident has effectively, once more, shown the inability of the state to cope with one man of intellectual stature and integrity. It is an old story - from Tolstoy to Mayakovsky and Yenessin, Russian literature is full of triumphant dissidents (even in death) who have exiled the Soviet state to its lick-spittles and toadies.

LETTER

Convivial Society

Dear Comrades,

A.A.'s article "Convivial Society" (Vol. 35 no. 4) is an example of the type of thinking that seems all too common among anarchists, i.e. that technology and large scale production are the root of all evil.

This is the same as saying that books and newspapers should be abolished because many of them contain viscious tainted ideas.

Neither advanced technology nor the printed word are intrinsically good or bad. In both cases everything depends on who controls them and to what end.

For instance the helicopter can be used for war or for humanitarian purposes. The fact that the USA sent three helicopters to the Peruvian earthquake disaster in 1969 at a time when they had 3,000 in Vietnam is a condemnation of the priorities of the US government, not the helicopter.

Many people advocate the breaking up of all large scale industry and a return to small local "craft" production. They forget that many things which we now take for granted just cannot be achieved on this basis. The already mentioned helicopter is one, x-ray and other medical equipment is another.

The fact that energy and materials are finite is an argument for more technology, not less. Technology is the application of scientific knowledge to production to get more for less. Better performance of machinery for less materials, energy and labour etc.

It is not the application of technology to agriculture that is the reason food is becoming scarce and expensive. The fact is that over most of the world agriculture is primitive, fertile land is scarce. The only solution to this problem in view of the ever increasing population is to get more for less, more food out of each acre, by proper soil husbandry and water control. It won't help to return industrial workers to agriculture if land is scarce because they won't be able to produce more food out of thin air.

All this will have to be done regardless of the political and social organisation of society although under the present set-up it won't be.

Even so anarchists would be better employed trying to find ways of using technology and large scale production for the benefit of humanity instead of vainly advocating their abolition.

Fraternally,

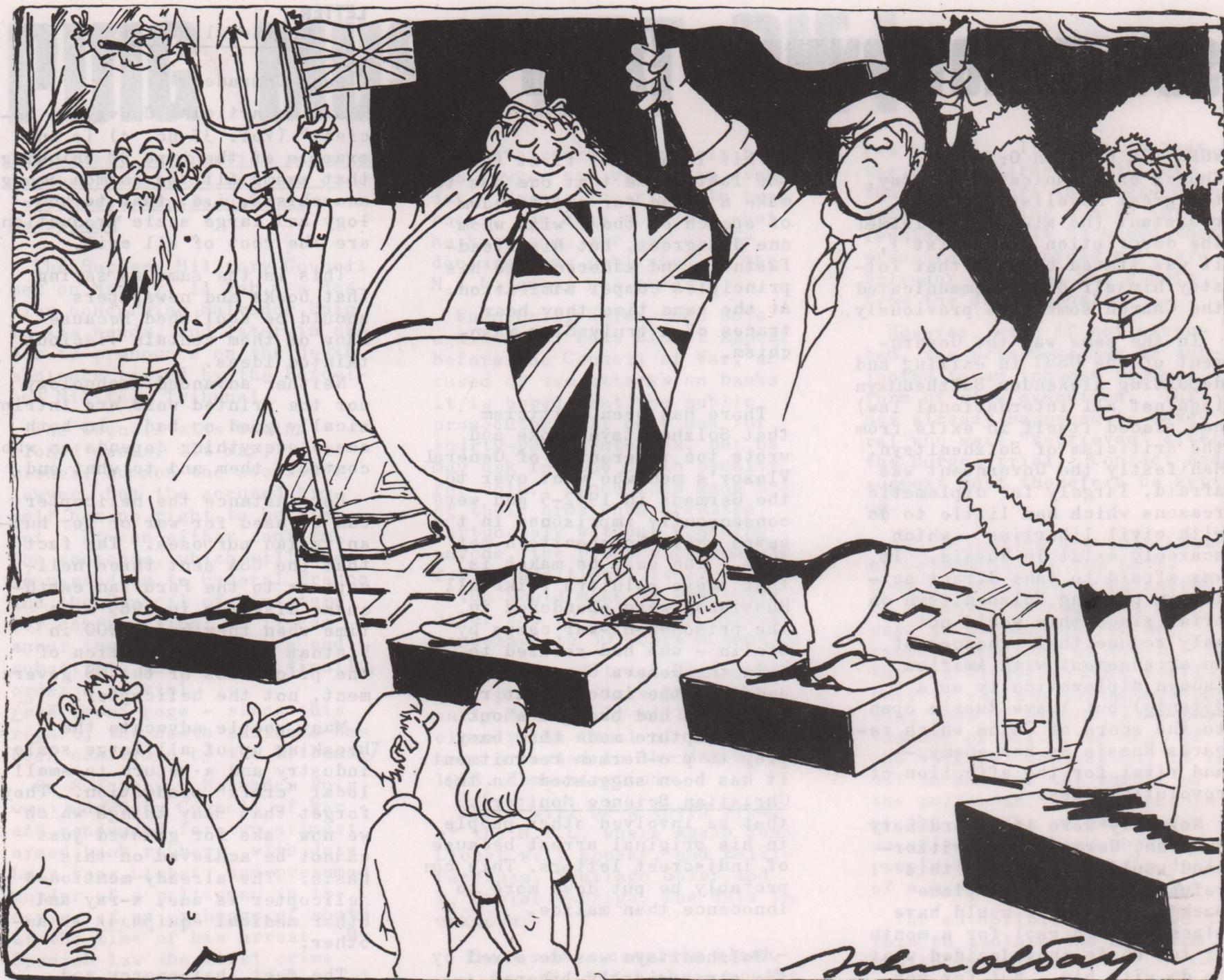
J. L. Wood



"By Gad, Sir, How could you drive a man like Solzhenitsyn into exile from his native land!"

"--The same way you drove out the Tolpuddle Martyrs but in the opposite direction so here's snow in your vodka, tovarich."

J.R.



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SHEILA ROWBOTHAM (books rev. FREEDOM 16/2/74) lectures at Central London WEA on currents in radical ideas & movements. For syllabus send SAE to Sidney Billson, 33 Compton Rd. N.1. (Also for 6-wk course from 22 April on 'Agricultural & Labour History 19th Century')

THIRD WAY IN VIETNAM - for newsletter send SAE to Denis Bates, c/. Birmingham Peace Centre, 18 Moor St., Ringway, Birmingham

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March 28: Sharon Presley "Anarchism and Feminism"

MENTAL PATIENTS UNION every Sat. 2 p.m. at Robin Farquarson Hse., 37 Mayola Rd, E.5. (tel. 986 5251). Mtg. open to all mental patients & ex-pts. foll. by coffee & work group. MPU News 10p + 4p postage

THE RELEASE MARTIN SOSTRE COMMITTEE (U.K. group) 83A Haverstock Hill, London NW3 (tel. 586 2038) trying to raise £5,000 Fighting Fund to assist appeals & combat his ill-treatment in prison. Donations to above address.

GIOVANNI MARINI DEFENCE COMMITTEE Paolo Braschi, C.P. 4263, 20100 MILANO, Italy. This comrade 20 months in prison awaiting trial.

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