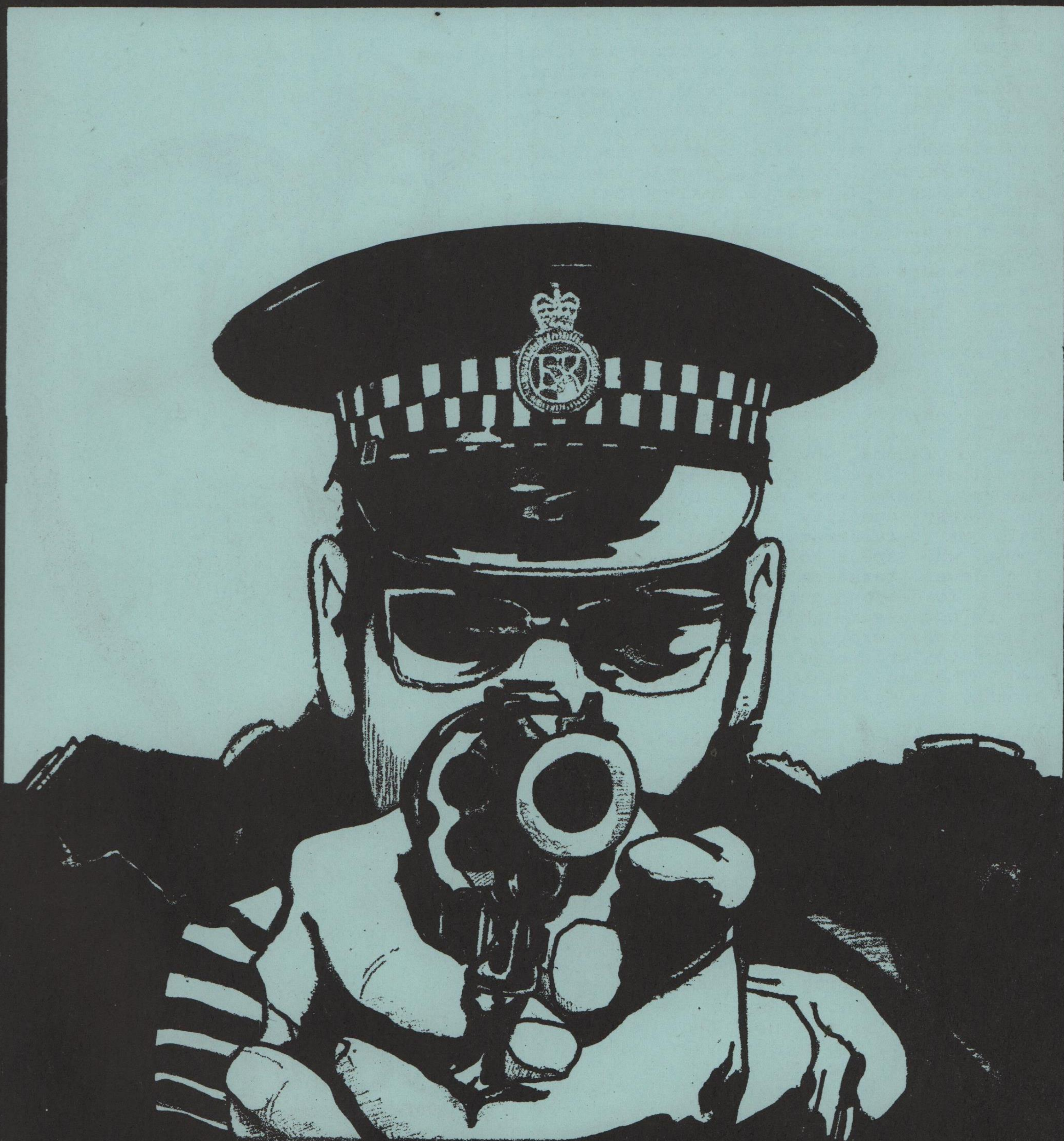


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SOLIDARITY

vol.1/no.4

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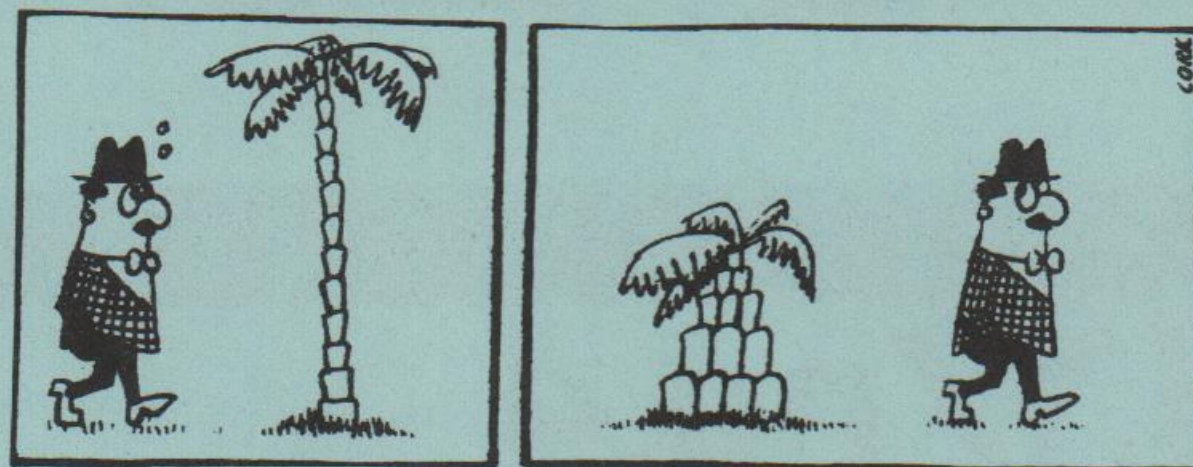
About ourselves

SOLIDARITY is a small group which tries to show that being a revolutionary socialist does not mean accepting the "merits" of party discipline and the "correct line". Unlike many groups on the left, we do not have to check our views against a series of sacred texts before deciding that they are ideologically acceptable. This means, for instance, that while we believe the women's liberation movement to be an integral part of any movement for the general liberation of humanity, we regard it as a matter of course that we should be free to challenge any idea or part of that movement which we think does not advance that goal. It means that because we oppose imperialism we oppose all imperialisms, including that of the USSR, and we do not assume that people involved in "national liberation struggles" are therefore exempt from criticism. Too often have we seen self-styled socialists in the West support and indeed idolise the leaders of such movements, only to have their blindness cruelly exposed when these leaders seize power and create their dictatorships "in the name of the people". Such muting of criticism has, we believe, done greater harm to the cause of socialism throughout the world than almost any repression could have. Again, because we disagree with Tory policies we see no reason why we should disqualify ourselves from criticising those of Labour; those who make mouthings about peace and equality while supporting the rule of bureaucrats are no better than those who speak of freedom and the need for lower taxation while boosting the armed forces and cutting public services. We do not assume that nothing has changed since Marx wrote, and we are equally happy to criticise the ideas of Friedman and Sherman, Marx and Lenin, Keynes, Trotsky, or Castoriadis.

When it comes to our editorial policy in this magazine, the absence of party discipline seems to have confused readers not accustomed to the idea. None of the articles in this paper reflect any party line. Each is a statement of the author's own views. We are not afraid to disagree in public or to publish material whose ideas we reject if we think that it raises important issues; we are not happy that it should be assumed that we all think the same, and that because we have published something we necessarily agree with all or indeed any of the points it makes. We have published a brief statement of our general views under the title As We See It but this is not intended to be our final word on the subject; rather, it is a means of clarifying our thought.

Finally, Solidarity is not just a magazine; it is also a grouping of activists. As such, we welcome co-operation with others and information about struggles with a positive socialist content.

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EDITORIAL

The road to 1990

We are sure that by now our readers will be as tired as we are of everything to do with George Orwell and 1984, especially the endless stale discussions about how much of his vision has come true. Orwell himself made it clear that he was not writing prophecy, but political satire. So let us concentrate on a book which, although it has no great claims to be regarded as a literary masterpiece - it was in fact the 'novelisation' of a TV series - does better present what is happening in Britain today. We refer, of course, to Wilfred Greator's 1990.

In 1990, an economic collapse in 1977 has given the government - by implication, a government of the 'left' - reason to introduce a controlled economy. A wealth tax has largely disposed of the old landed aristocracy. Moonlighting is illegal, but the "work-shy" and "scroungers" are heavily penalised. Immigration and racial prejudice are no longer problems. Indeed, the Public Control Department, fittingly a branch of the Home Office, is waging a war against illegal emigration by people who, in return for their training as doctors,



scientists, and so on, have signed an undertaking to work in Britain for ten years. Dissidents and the few journalists not working for State-owned newspapers are under constant electronic and manual surveillance. Having more than four children renders you liable to compulsory sterilisation. Meanwhile, rationing has been reintroduced, and while unskilled workers can only drink beer substitutes, skilled workers can have the real thing, and administrators and other special classes alone are entitled to wine and spirits.

Sounds wildly improbable, doesn't it? And yet...in 1984 the government is proposing to make the Prevention of Terrorism Act, hitherto temporary and subject to regular renewal, a permanent fixture on the statute book; introduce a Police Bill (discussed in more detail elsewhere in this issue) which is more or less based upon the principle that since the police are breaking the law in order to obtain convictions these breaches should be legalised; and pass a Data Protection Bill which excludes protection in all those areas where one would most want it,

that is, in police and security records. There are still no proposals to introduce a Freedom of Information Act giving people the right to know what is being done in their name; indeed, the government is still prosecuting under the Official Secrets Act - so convincingly condemned in 1977 by the same Lord Franks who whitewashed the government in his report on the Falklands crisis - the few brave civil servants who are prepared to act on their belief that the public should know. Meanwhile, harassment of people in receipt of state benefits is increasing (for example, the mass arrest of claimants in Oxford known as Operation Major); the black citizens of this country are threatened by private racism and constant checks upon their right to live in this country if they report a crime or seek medical assistance from the NHS, and their own efforts to protect themselves are attacked by major state interventions in the form of conspiracy trials (the Bradford 12 and the Newham 8). Meanwhile, the police are 'targeting' i.e. making subject to close surveillance, not only professional bank robbers but also suspected pickpockets, the criminal courts are sending people to jail faster than the Home Office can build new ones, and the civil courts can be relied upon not only to support the state by interpreting the law relating to confidential information in the government's favour, but also, where it is a question of private profit, allow the nuclear industry to carry on running its operations in preference to enforcing the public need for radiation-free beaches, even where the state itself is considering prosecution for breach of safety regulations.

The authoritarian drift of the British state has been gradual: it is not merely a product of Thatcherism but has been a general trend ever since the middle of the 1960s. The British need time, but they get there in the end, and now the pace is hotting up. But we are not alone in facing an increasingly strong state. The legal machinery, policing tactics, and control technology now confronting us were developed and tested in Northern Ireland; and in Western Europe generally and in West Germany and Italy

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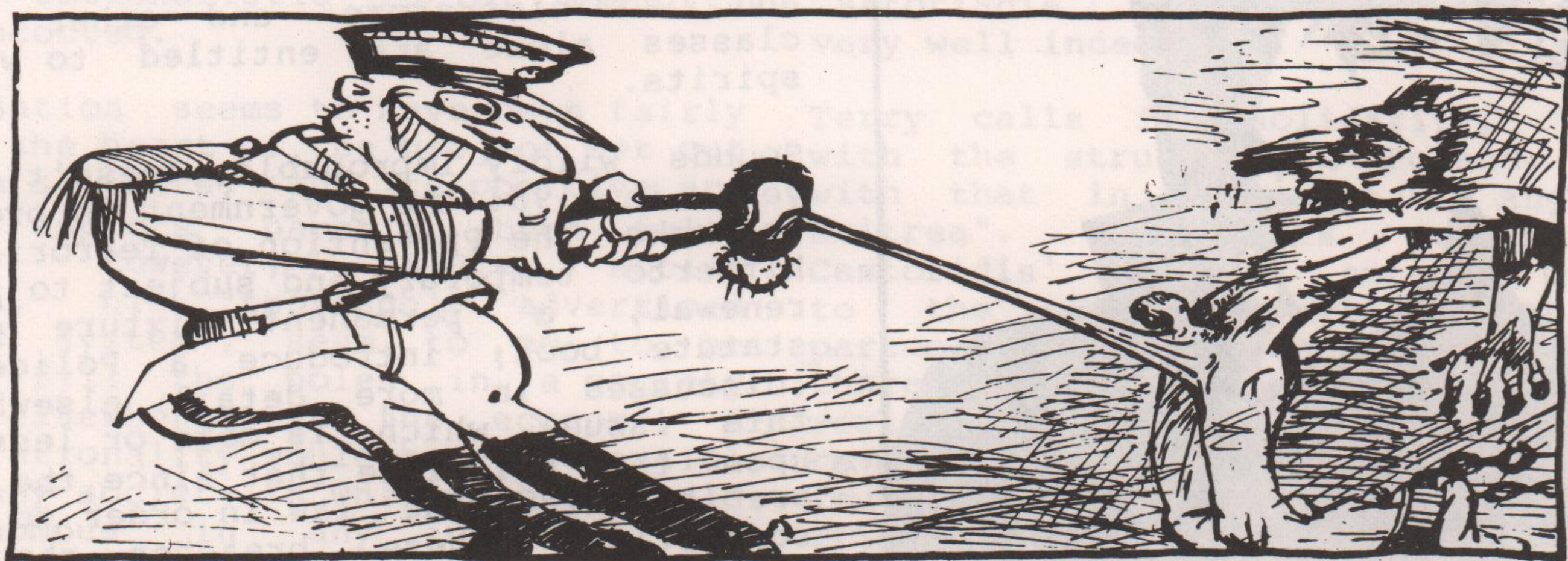


Leaders

particularly civil liberties have been under attack for the last decade.

Of course, the strong arm of government is not omnipotent. Against it, the peace movement is breeding a whole new group of activists interested in taking direct action to influence the course of events. In many other areas, not least in public enquiries into roads, nuclear power stations, and dams, increasing numbers of previously non-political people are coming to realise where the real decisions in our society are being made, and industrial militancy is slowly starting to rise after a period of decline.

But if 1984 is not to be the harbinger of the world of 1990, we cannot afford to be complacent: it is essential that the threats and the manipulations should be exposed now.



THE POLICE BILL

An analysis

It is, I believe, unique in British legal history for a Bill to be opposed by the British Medical Association, The Law Society, The Criminal Bar Association, 55 bishops, a senior Law Lord (Lord Salmon), the Shadow Home Secretary (Roy Hattersley), Shirley Williams, the Daily Express, the Daily Mail, and the Sun, as well as the malcontents of the NCCL and the GLC Police Committee Support Unit. This, however, was the fate of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill which was introduced in October 1982 and fell with the Dissolution of Parliament in June 1983.

Much of the professional opposition to the Bill stemmed from the fact that among its proposals were that the police should be able to apply to a circuit judge for inspection of or a warrant to enter premises for the purpose of seizing confidential records of solicitors, doctors, social workers and journalists if they felt that the information contained therein was evidence of a "serious arrestable offence". Such was the strength of this opposition that the government felt compelled to backtrack and offer what it regarded as safeguards to the professional lobbies shortly before the bill fell. But the more general powers contained in the Bill were in fact far more threatening to our civil liberties.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the Bill has been promptly reintroduced into the present Parliament, in substantially the same terms as before, give or take a sop or two to the professions. The Bill's philosophy, which stemmed from the Report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure (January 1981), the parent of the Bill, purports to draw a balance between the ostensibly opposed "interests of the community in bringing offenders to justice" and "the rights and liberties of persons suspected or accused of crime", which it assumes are automatically opposed. Astute readers may have noticed that this supposes that (1) the interests of the community and the police as prosecutors are identical, and that (2) suspects are invariably guilty.

In fact the Bill draws no kind of balance at all between the rights and liberties of suspects and the desire of the police to secure a conviction, which is not at all the same thing as a balance of society's interest in public order against the amount of power to be given to the police. Rather, it should always be an interest of the community to protect the rights of a person presumed innocent, as is ostensibly the case with our legal system.

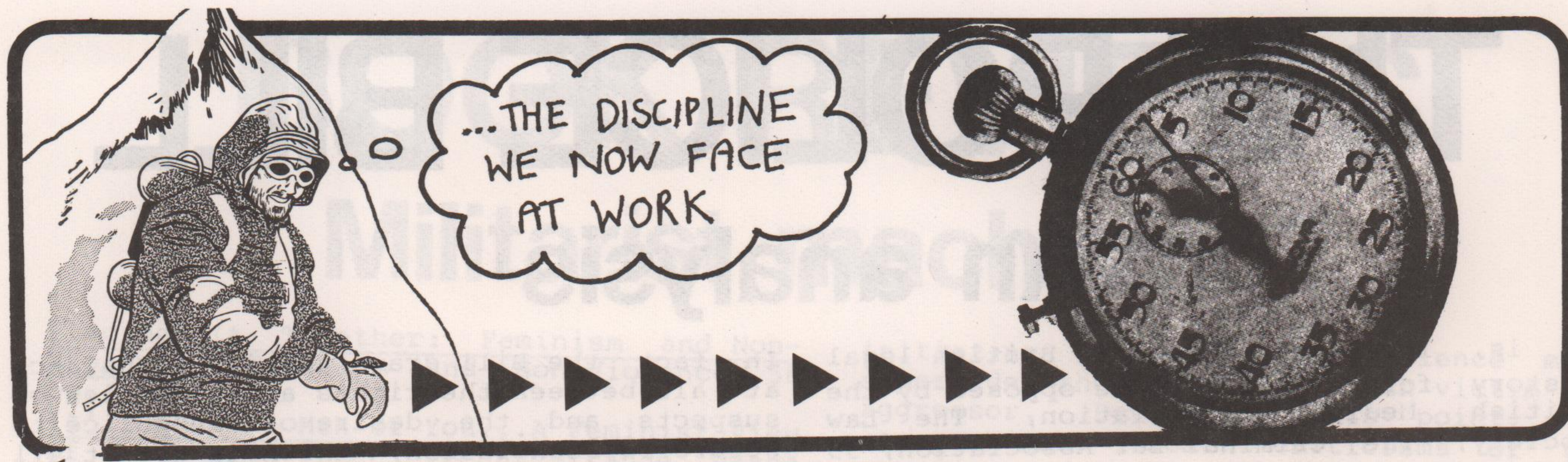
There is not space in this article to deal with the reasoning behind the findings of the Royal Commission, interesting though it is. Instead, I propose to draw readers' attention to some of the more disturbing proposals contained in the Bill for increasing police powers.

a) New Powers on the Streets

At present the police have powers to stop and search persons in public places for stolen goods, drugs, firearms, and things for use in connection with terrorism (under the Prevention of Terrorism Act) in London and other metropolitan areas. The Bill extends these powers by permitting a police officer, upon reasonable suspicion, to search a person or vehicle for offensive weapons and items made or adapted for use in the course of or in connection with burglary, theft, taking motor vehicles without consent, and obtaining property by deception, and to detain a person or vehicle for that purpose. No definition of 'reasonable suspicion' is proposed, nor is it limited to the commission of a particular offence, and this provision therefore amounts in effect to the reintroduction of the 'sus' law. Discussing the original Bill at the Committee stage, Patrick Mayhew MP stated that it would be sufficient to search for an offensive weapon if "a young man known to have a record for that type of offence ... is seen in circumstances where he has committed the offence before in company with people with whom he has committed the offence before". If, therefore, you were convicted of possessing an offensive weapon when you and a group of friends were involved in a pub fight and you



THE STRONG STATE WE
FACE ON THE STREETS
IS REFLECTED IN...



threatened someone with a knife, you may be searched the next time you and the same friends go to a pub. The law on offensive weapons requires that an otherwise innocent item can be an offensive weapon, but only if the prosecution show an intention to use it as such. Perhaps possession of a comb would be sufficient to justify a stop and search? Similarly, if you are known to be "a regular drug carrier" (according to Sir Nicholas Bonsor MP), you may be liable to search, even if you have never been convicted. As the Bill also gives the police power to confiscate items which they believe will be used as a weapon by someone other than the person stopped, these powers may in practice amount to a requirement for anyone on the street to justify the contents of his or her pockets, the penalty for failure to do so being confiscation of the item and/or being charged with an offence.

The Bill also allows a constable to use "reasonable force" if necessary both in carrying out a stop and search and detaining a person for that purpose. At present the law permits the use of such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent crime, or to arrest offenders, suspected offenders or persons unlawfully at large (i.e. a person on the run). The new provision would extend the existing law by authorising a police officer to use force where there was no resistance e.g. if he thought there was a risk of drugs being dropped down a grating. We are told that in legal theory a police officer is 'a citizen in uniform'. While practice diverges widely from theory, this provision would therefore legitimise the use of force in circumstances where the ordinary citizen would be acting illegally. The Bill further permits stops and searches by plain clothes officers, and readers may wonder how they are going to be able on the spur of the moment to tell police from thieves.

One theoretical protection which has been included in the Bill is a requirement that a constable proposing to carry out a search should give his name, the purpose of the search, and if asked grounds for undertaking it; further, he/she should make a written record of the name of the person searched (or description where this is not known), the purpose and grounds. This record could be obtained by the searched person within a specific period (presently under review). Unfortunately this is unlikely to prove much use in practice to someone seeking to show that the search was improper, for

police tend to acquire during the course of their training assumptions about who are likely to be potential criminals. A training manual by Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Powis states that police must "...learn to distinguish between normal and abnormal conduct of members of the community. This acquired knowledge will sink into the subconscious mind and, when unusual conduct is observed, suspicion will rapidly register without conscious rationalisation...". Thus women without handbags are suspect, joggers (who may be "homosexual nuisances"), young people driving new cars, and the carriers of "know your rights" cards, who "consider it at least possible that they will break the law and be interrogated by police. Thus they [the cards] are carried by male homosexuals, by industrial and other agitators, by 'Angry Brigade' inadequates and similar amateur criminals, but rarely by the shrewd and hardheaded professional thieves". Clearly, stereotyping is a key part of police culture, with the white community divided in police eyes into the 'rough' and the 'respectable'. Police officers have admitted that they cannot distinguish 'potential criminals' among the black community in the same way, and assume that almost any black person can be a suspect, therefore carrying out stops and searches in a way which they would never dare in the ordinary way to do in a white community. As so much of a police officer's assumptions about who may be a suspect stems from this stereotyping, rather than observable behaviour, it is not unreasonable to assume that the reasons for stop and search which will be given will soon themselves become a bland stereotype and give little scope for challenge.

The Bill also gives power to set up a road check if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person suspected of having committed a "serious arrestable offence" or who was unlawfully at large is in the area. This is something which at the moment is done by consent of the public, which will no longer be required. It also authorises a road check if, having regard to a pattern of crime in an area, the police have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a serious arrestable offence is likely to be committed within the period for which the road check is set up. As the Bill stands at present road checks can be set up for seven days at a time but renewed without any limit. Having regard to the pattern of crime within the Greater London area, I feel sure that under this

clause of the Bill the Metropolitan Police could justify holding road checks indefinitely anywhere within London, thus compelling anyone in a car to justify their presence anywhere at any time.

b) New Powers of Entry Search and Seizure

The Bill permits, for the first time, the grant of a search warrant for evidence of a serious arrestable offence regardless of whether the occupiers of the premises are suspected of the offence or any other offence. The magistrate issuing the warrant should be satisfied that the police could not contact the occupier for permission, or that the occupier has "unreasonably refused" permission, or that the evidence is likely to be concealed, disposed of, altered or destroyed if entry is sought without a warrant. 'Reasonable force' is employable.

The first point to note is that this power will validate 'fishing expeditions' by the police, who do not have to show that the person whose premises are to be searched has committed any offence. Thus, suppose you are involved in a defence campaign. If the police think you may have some evidence showing that the person on trial has committed a 'serious arrestable offence', your home can be forceably entered and turned upside down if they can persuade a magistrate to give them permission. Anyone who has ever seen police applying in court for a search warrant under the existing law will know that requests for warrants are seldom, if ever, denied, for how can the magistrate check on what he is told by the police, even if he/she is concerned to do more than rubber-stamp the application? And can it ever be said that there is an unreasonable refusal to permit entry when the occupier is innocent of any offence?

The second thing is that although the search is supposed to be limited to the purpose specified in the warrant, evidence of any other offence which is also discovered is also seizable and is not inadmissible in court proceedings, so you had better beware of that unpaid parking ticket you've been ignoring. This provision is directly contrary to what was proposed by the Royal Commission, which suggested that evidence seized illegally should not be admissible in subsequent proceedings (as in the United States). Considerable damage can be done in these searches, as witness the compensation which the Metropolitan

police have had to pay to certain occupiers of premises in Railton Road, Brixton, following raids in July 1981.

The original Bill also permitted application to a judge for disclosure of evidence contained in confidential records or a search warrant for such evidence, but this caused such an outcry that it is very unlikely that such powers will in fact be granted.

c) Arrest

The proposals relating to arrest contain some of the most disturbing aspects of the Bill, in the light of police/community relations. Although the definition of 'arrestable offences' is similar to the present law, the power of arrest is extended to all offences, however minor, if certain conditions are met. An officer is enabled to arrest someone if he/she reasonably suspects that any offence has been, is or is about to be committed or attempted, and one of the following conditions applies:

- i) that the name and address of the person suspected is unknown and cannot be ascertained;
- ii) that the officer has reasonable grounds for doubting that the name and address given are genuine or that the person will be at that address long enough for a summons to be served upon him or her;
- iii) that the officer has reasonable grounds for believing that arrest is necessary to prevent a person causing physical harm to him/herself or another, loss of or damage to property, an affront to public decency, or an obstruction;
- iv) that the officer has reasonable grounds for believing that arrest is necessary to protect a child or other vulnerable person from the person to be arrested.

These provisions mean that for the first time the power to arrest someone can be exercised independently of the offence for which they may be charged, and it may well produce a situation where wide-scale arrests can be justified in law for trivial offences, bringing more and more people into police custody. For example, a person could be arrested for littering if a police officer 'reasonably' believes that the name and address he/she has given is false. It may also enable the police to arrest glue sniffers who are not committing an arrestable offence, which generally speaking they cannot now do. Perhaps more likely to cause concern is the provision that arrest can take

THE RECESSION IS BEING
USED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF US ALL. SOME ARE
TEMPTED BY NOSTALGIA
FOR A 'GOLDEN AGE'...





place to prevent an affront to public decency. This is open to abuse as an excuse to arrest homosexuals because of their non-criminal behaviour or appearance in public.

A further power contained in the Bill is the right to require any person who has been convicted of an offence which is recorded on national police records i.e. almost any offence other than traffic offences and breach of the peace, to attend at a police station to be fingerprinted, within one month of the conviction. A person who refuses to do so can be arrested without warrant. The new powers are intended to enable the police to carry out 'firebrigade policing' i.e. their current practice, particularly in metropolitan areas, of rushing large numbers of police officers to reported disturbances, and arresting large numbers of people. Any increase in arrests in this way would be likely to make worse the relations between the police and young people in particular; although it should not be forgotten that these powers would apply just as much to demonstrators or pickets in industrial actions. They would amount to a right for the police to demand the name and address of any person (a power which was sought by Sir David McNee in his evidence to the Royal Commission) with the consequence of arrest for refusal. Clearly this could be prejudicial to the homeless. It would also give the police far more control over demonstrations or pickets.

d) Detention of Suspects

The Bill authorises detention of persons without charge for a period of 24 hours if there are reasonable grounds for believing it necessary to prevent harm to person or property or for the suspect's own protection, and the suspect is not in a fit state to be charged. This will enable the police to keep drunks or drug addicts in custody overnight before charging them, a practice which of course happens at the moment, but without authority. While this may not seem much reason for concern, it should be noted that deaths in police custody by 'misadventure or accident', which nearly all occur within 24 hours of arrest, have been on the increase in recent years (from 17 in 1981 to 30 in 1982), and it may well be thought that the proper place for such people is in some place of treatment rather than a police cell.

The Bill also allows detention for questioning for 24 hours from the time

the person arrested is brought to the police station before being charged, but this can be extended to 36 hours if a senior officer is satisfied that a serious arrestable offence is being investigated, the continued detention is necessary to obtain or preserve evidence, and the investigation is being conducted diligently and as rapidly as possible.

Now it is often thought by the public that the police must bring a person suspected of an offence before a court within 24 hours of arrest or release him or her. This is not in fact the case. In Scotland a person must be charged within 6 hours of being arrested. In England and Wales there is no limit on the period of detention, save what the courts may lay down. The remedy, where a person is being detained by the police but has not been charged, is to apply for a writ of habeas corpus. However, the courts have said in recent years refused to consider an application for habeas corpus unless the person has been detained for more than 48 hours, and even then generally adjourn the hearing so that the police can be legally represented or charge the detainee. Once a person has been charged, then he must be brought before a court as soon as reasonably practicable and in any case within 24 hours (or 48 hours at weekends). So curiously enough it might appear that the Bill actually restricts the ability of the police to hold suspects. However, the Bill remedies this by permitting an application to a magistrates court for a further period not to exceed 96 hours after the person was first brought to the police station (a period apparently chosen by reference to the period of detention authorised by the Prevention of Terrorism Act), and further applications for more extensions can be made. A detainee has the right to be legally represented on such applications, and the Bill further provides that a suspect should have the right to consult a solicitor privately, if they so request, and that the person should be enabled to do so "as soon as is practicable" after the request. The significance of this latter expression is made clear in a subsequent clause which provides that the suspect must in any event be permitted to consult a solicitor within 36 hours of arrival at the police station; however, a draft Code of Practice provides that even then access need not be permitted if a senior officer considers in the case of a serious arrestable offence that access might lead to interference with evidence or witnesses, the alerting of other suspects

not yet arrested, or would hinder the recovery of property. A similar provision concerning access to detainees is already contained in the Criminal Law Act 1977, and in practice has meant that the police can refuse to allow a solicitor access to see a detainee for effectively as long as they like. Solicitors are generally allowed to see their clients when either the client has already made a verbal confession and the police want independent corroboration of a written one, or the suspect has convinced them that no answers will be given without legal advice.

Again, the Bill grants a detainee the right to have a person notified of his or her whereabouts within 24 hours, and again this right is subject to the same exception as applies to access to a solicitor.

Readers should appreciate the strong psychological pressure on detainees to make a confession to the police. In the police station, they are on the police's territory and not in their own surroundings. They are dependent on the goodwill of their interrogators for their bodily well-being, access to the outside world, and their release. All they have to offer in return for the privileges which the police can provide is a confession. In these circumstances it is seldom necessary for the police to resort to actual physical violence to secure a confession, and it is therefore necessary for outside controls to be available. The Bill makes it all the more unlikely that outside assistance will be forthcoming to prevent a false confession being tendered. Nor, for all the Judges' Rules and draft Codes of Practice under the Bill governing the interviewing of suspects and their treatment, and the theoretical rights given them by the Bill itself, is there any real protection against such a confession. The one thing which would enforce the rights of suspects - the exclusion of evidence obtained in breach of the rules - is not included in the Bill.

There are a number of other issues which fall under the general heading of detention and evidence obtained during the course of such detention, including the question of obtaining samples from suspects without their consent, but to go

into them would unduly extend the length of this article. I would merely like, in concluding this section, to mention perhaps the most frightening item in the whole Bill, which is that where a person is arrested otherwise than at a police station, he or she should be taken to a police station as soon as practicable; but this may be delayed if the suspect's presence elsewhere is necessary to investigate an offence. This, as drafted, provides no specific time limit; no record of the conduct of the investigation; no right to legal advice or notification of whereabouts; and clearly, in its potential, could enable the police to rival anything which their counterparts in Latin America have carried out against suspects. Even now it can on occasion be difficult to locate a detainee who is being moved from police station to police station; with this new proposed power a detainee might one day never be found.

I hope that I have said enough to illustrate that the Bill represents a dramatic threat to civil liberties in this country. Most of our readers will be aware that the police are taking an increasingly political role in society. This is a process which came to public notice with Sir Robert Mark and has continued with Sir Kenneth Newman's appointment as head of the Met. Police. Much interesting information about the Bill and its background is contained in Policing by Coercion by Louise Christian (available from GLC Publications, Room 82, County Hall, London SE1, at £2 inc. p. & p.). I would also refer readers to Poor Law by Ros Franey (available from the National Council for Civil Liberties or the Child Poverty Action Group) for an illustration of police working with other agencies (in this case the DHSS) against a class of suspects rather than individuals and holding suspects without charge, and Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order by Hall, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts (Macmillan Press, 1978) for a detailed analysis of the new ideology of policing.

The London Campaign against the Police Bill can be contacted at 50 Rectory Road, London N.16 (01 249 8334).

SOL ISHTAR

SABOTAGE!!!



A scenario...

You are a keen member of the National Graphical Association, whose union is in dispute with the Messenger group of newspapers of Warrington (prop. E. Shah). Your union has called a picket of the print works where the dispute is taking place. You decide to attend and you write a short leaflet urging your fellow trade unionists not to allow Mr. Shah's vans carrying his newspapers to leave his works.

You are driving to Warrington in your new car when you decide to buy some cigarettes. You park on a double yellow line and dash into the shop. On your return a police officer greets you and points out the offence. He asks you for your name and address and says he is going to report you for illegal parking. When you give your name, he radios the police station for a check on the ownership of your car. The check reveals that the car is still registered with the garage from whom you bought it as DVLC has not yet had time to alter its records. The police officer tells you he is not satisfied with your identity and arrests you. You are taken to the police station.

Eventually you are released when you show your driving licence. You continue on your journey, rather delayed. On the outskirts of Warrington you run into a police road block. Your car is flagged down. An officer again checks your name and address and wishes to search your car. You refuse. The officer puts your arm behind your back while another officer carries out the search. Your leaflets are found. The officer tells you that he is arresting you for conspiracy to incite a breach of the peace. You are taken to the police station, where a CID officer tells you that this is a serious offence, and asks you who else helped you write the leaflet. You tell him truthfully that you wrote it alone (This is a defence to a charge of conspiracy). He tells you that in his opinion you are not intelligent enough to write such a leaflet and you will be detained for further enquiries. You ask for a solicitor, and for your brother to be notified. He refuses on the ground that he fears that contact without outside



people may prevent him obtaining evidence. You have still not admitted writing the leaflet with anyone else after 24 hours. A senior officer says that he is satisfied that further enquiries need to be made, the charge is serious and all diligence is being used in the investigation.

Meanwhile, the CID officer has decided that your brother may know some information and may have the typewriter you wrote your leaflet on at his home, as he is the only person whose name you have given to the police. Fearing that he may have heard of your disappearance and concluded that you have been arrested, he decides to raid your brother's address on the basis that if he asks nicely for admittance to search your brother will not let him in. A magistrate grants a warrant. At 5.00 am. the front door of your brother's home is broken down. Nothing is found to link him with anything you may have done, but two library books he has forgotten to take back are found. He is arrested for theft.

After 36 hours you are released without charge as the police have no evidence that you have conspired with any one. You have no legal redress, and neither does your brother.



THE PEACE MOVEMENT

Out on the street

Ignoring revolutionary etiquette, I went on CND's October 22nd demonstration and enjoyed it. Why? Mainly because a big demonstration gives you the chance to talk to people. The people I walked with were cheerful, the weather was good, and the Long March from the Embankment to Hyde Park proved to be surprisingly entertaining. Of course, the SWP were about, giving out their usual leaflet ("CND is selling out and only by Joining the Party...") but such were our numbers that even the massed ranks of paper sellers could not daunt us. I reached Hyde Park quite late in the afternoon, missing both the big name speakers and the only objectively valid statement heard during the whole day: the punks and anarchists chorusing "We don't believe you!" during Neil Kinnock's speech. Instead I wandered through a multi-coloured forest of banners, buskers and theatre groups, and I realised that this really had been a big demonstration.

It wasn't until I left the park that I began to feel doubts about the people I'd met. I was given a leaflet containing the following passages:

"We find ourselves in dark times...Yet there is hope...People everywhere are re-identifying themselves with the Earth/re-earthing/beginning to feel the Power of the Earth...Albion awake! The faun, the wren, the unicorn will join the Rainbow Serpent's dance and our sleeping motherland will stretch and, calmly rise...I am convinced there is a correlation between the siting of military bases and places of spiritual power, centres of earth energy...There are 108 American bases in this land, or thereabouts, and 108 beads on the Tibetan and Sufi mala..."



The leaflet ended with an original suggestion for an anti-nuclear strategy: we should build bonfires on the nearest ancient spiritual site to each base, hold hands and chant "The earth, the water, the fire, the air re-returns, re-returns, re-returns, re-returns".

There seems little point in debating the possible effectiveness of this strategy. But it is worth pointing out the profoundly reactionary, anti-humanist thinking which it is based on. This sort of mysticism pre-supposes that human beings do not and cannot make their own history; we are but the victims or captives of huge and mysterious spiritual forces that lie beyond our control. Any radical project that aims to create an autonomous society based on positive self-consciousness must be totally opposed to such irrationality.

Obviously this leaflet is not typical of the peace movement. But an alarming amount of mysticism is creeping in. A recent non-violent feminist pamphlet states that "...women are still close to the essence...[and] the magic of human life..." (1) without defining what is meant by "essence" and "magic". Even E.P. Thompson, the most capable theorist working with the peace movement, is getting sentimental. His latest pamphlet, The Defence of Britain, contains many passages that substitute an artificial juxtaposition of 'good' peacemongers against 'bad' warmongers for coherent analyses of world militarism. His eulogy (or obituary?) of Michael Foot is a direct result of this sentimentalism. This line of thought will make the peace movement either ossify into a religious sect or dissolve into a vague mass of good intentions safely under the thumb of the Labour Party.

According to the SWP, the antidote is simple and readily available: join the Party! An incident at the end of a CND-organised sit-down in Trafalgar Square is a good example of their attitude to CND. Although initially the protestors had been able to outwit the police, very quickly a strong police cordon surrounded the square and blocked off Whitehall. For two hours the protest was allowed to continue: the SWP gave out the usual leaflet, while most of the demonstrators walked around the strangely silent square. It was frustrating to see how easily the protest had been contained, but what else could be done? No doubt understandably, no one tried to charge the police lines. At about ten o'clock the demonstrators gathered in Whitehall and began to sing. Under the circumstances, this seemed the best time to end the protest. The SWP, though, 11

thought otherwise: half way through the fourth verse of 'We Shall Overcome', a disciplined cadre of class-conscious socialist workers, usefully equipped with megaphones, broke into an inspiring chorus of "Jobs not Bombs!".

In some ways I share the SWP's antipathy. Too often peace demonstrations come to resemble church services. But chanting a slogan like "Jobs not Bombs!" is no more productive than singing "We Shall Overcome". This action by the SWP was not simply tactless and mistimed. Their actions were motivated by a cynical and destructive opportunism: distribute a leaflet denouncing CND, disrupt the protest, attempt to recruit new members.

Superficially, Big Flame's critique of the peace movement seems to resemble that of the SWP. Both claim that CND is dominated by middle-class people, and that CND needs firmer links with the labour movement and with workplace struggles. However, Big Flame have concentrated their efforts on working within the peace movement, and have produced three issues of a paper - Anti-Nuclear Action - which intelligently and responsibly tries to introduce socialist perspectives into debates taking place within the peace movement (2). While hoping that ANA will help the creation of a revolutionary socialist current within the peace movement, I suspect that the creation of such a current will not bring about the transformation they want to see.

Inside CND

Everyone wants to see CND as a single simple category. Conservatives, liberals and even some anarchists dismiss it as a front for Communist machinations. The revolutionary left sees it as too middle class and too distant from the labour movement. A libertarian analysis must start from a radically different viewpoint. There are over 80,000 paid-up members of British CND; their political views cannot be adequately summarised through a headcount of Communists on its National Council. The real strength of CND comes from the activities of its largely autonomous local groups.

My first reaction to a CND group meeting was "How can all these people stay in the same room without a punch-up?". Radical feminists, socialist feminists, ecologists, Quakers, Labourites, Communists, leftists, plenty of old-fashioned liberals, and one slightly confused libertarian socialist were all sitting together, discussing activities at a blockade of an American base. CND must not be seen as a dogmatic organisation tightly bound to an agreed line. In reality it is a federation of different opinion. There are two broad categories of CND activity; pressure group politics and direct action. Although these activities carry significantly different political perspectives, often the same people are involved in both. Pressure group politics inevitably lead to parliamentary lobbying, which in turns leads into the labyrinth of the Labour Party. The direct action wing is motivated by a deep, although undefined, belief that today's anti-Cruise demonstrations are part of a wider movement of fundamental social change. It's no coincidence that CND's rebirth started at the same time as the Labour Party's organisational and electoral eclipse. The sincere and clear-cut radicalism of CND's local groups has attracted many people - both working-class and middle-class - who at one time would automatically have become Labour Party activists. It remains an open question whether these people will eventually trickle back into the Labour

Party, or whether a new form of radical politics can grow out of CND's local groups.

Unfortunately, CND's national organisation fails to express the radicalism of the local groups. Last December's Sheffield conference illustrated this very well, as it quickly degenerated into bitter bureaucratic battles between lobbies ('specialist sections') and cliques within lobbies, represented by delegates claiming to speak on behalf of 'youth', 'blacks', 'the working class', and 'women'. The most important subject - actions to be taken against Cruise missiles - was squeezed into a tense 30-minute section at the end of the conference. Most of the time was wasted on futile attempts to take coherent positions on such vast subjects as the relationship between the labour movement and CND. The 'debates' came to resemble an absurd parody of electoral politics, with desperate speakers making rhetorical promises in an effort to gain that magic 51% majority. Real discussion was impossible, deals between lobbies



replaced consensus, and the National Council carefully but forcefully steered the confused group delegates through the motions.

The tragedy of this process is that most members of the National Council undoubtedly believe that they really are working for the benefit of the peace movement. They act impartially to avoid splits in the delicate tissue of alliances. Potentially damaging moves by die-hard Stalinists, anti-separatist feminists or purist pacifists are deflected; normally the local groups remain quite ignorant about the strains in CND's national organisation. Sanity is controlled to represent moderate, uncontroversial opinions. Some lessons have been learned from the sixties: today's National Council rarely issues condemnations of other peace groups. Despite its disagreements with the Stop the City demonstration, no instructions were issued to the local groups to boycott it. But although the National Council could perform some useful co-ordination tasks, it fails to strengthen the real potential of CND's local groups.



Direct action

On the surface, the debates within the direct action wing of the peace movement seem to be dominated by vague liberal-humanitarian concepts. Like the arguments presented by E.P. Thompson in his The Defence of Britain, the direct actionists' strategy seems to be based upon a simple juxtaposition of 'good' against 'bad'. Anti-Nuclear Action accurately identifies their failure to analyse imperialism, and it is easy to point out other important ambiguities. What is the goal of direct action? Is it simply to gain publicity? (On this basis the Greenham Common peace camp must be seen as a major success). Is it to be a form of permanent protest, aiming to harrass the USAF bases and subvert military personnel? Or is it a real effort to stop bases functioning?

The direct actionists should not be underestimated. Extensive debates over these questions occur regularly in direct action affinity groups. Great efforts are made to make actions flow from theories, and to assimilate new ideas - feminism, non-violence, ecology - in order to create more effective forms of action. Libertarian ideas of direct, participatory democracy and rotation of tasks are an integral part of their activities. Most importantly, the direct action wing of the peace movement is the first mass movement in Britain to seriously attempt a working equality between women and men. The Greenham Common Peace Camp is not a symbol of introverted separatism, but an explicit recognition of the creative force of feminism within the peace movement. In Beyond the Fragments Sheila Rowbotham looked to a resurgence of leftist radicalism to realise a synthesis of

socialism and feminism: the direct actionists have proved more capable of achieving this goal than any other orthodox left group. They are 'picking up the pieces' from among the fragments. This permanent interaction between theory and practice makes the direct action section potentially a profoundly revolutionary force.

However, problems and weaknesses within the direct action section need to be analysed seriously and discussed openly. It seems unlikely that the addition of a socialist analysis of imperialism into existing debates within the peace movement will produce any deep transformation; indeed, it may actually serve to divert attention from real problems. Demands for 'workplace struggle' are even more misplaced. At a time when the labour movement is being crushed by recession and a right-wing government, workplace struggles will generally centre around the issues of jobs and the simple survival of the labour movement.

What is the principal obstacle which holds back the direct action wing of the peace movement? Reformism? - no, the logic of their actions is anti-parliamentary and is often explicitly stated to be such. Lack of socialist perspective? - they have proved to be better socialists than many left-wing sects. The single greatest obstacle to their development is mysticism. Their protests often become "the sigh of an oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world", a form of self-identification rather than a coherent strategy for revolutionary change, because they use the campaign against the

arms race as a vehicle for a total protest against an authoritarian, dehumanising society. Fear of the sheer strength of the military-industrial complex leads to a numbing feeling of powerlessness; then, like the Puritans of the 1640s who fought with God on their side, like the Bolsheviks who invoked the inexorable logic of History, today's direct actionists may come to put their faith in the spiritual powers of 'Mother Earth' to ensure their victory. The initial surge of activity that such faiths produce is inevitably followed by quietism and disillusion, as can be seen by the rapid decline of the dissenting congregations during the 1660s or in the cynicism and callousness of the modern Soviet Communist Party. Ultimately, our only real strength must be our positive self-consciousness.

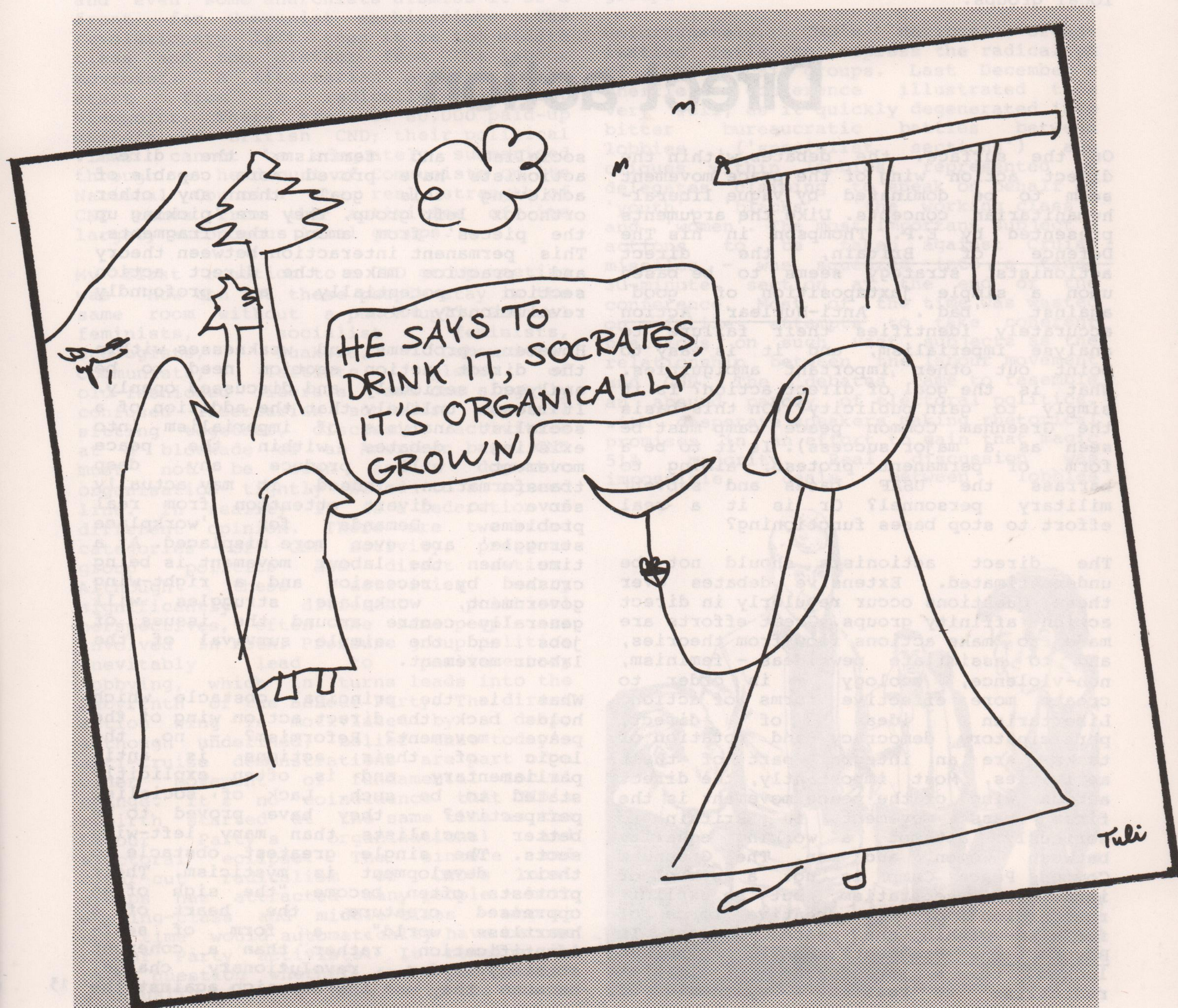
I have not written this article as recruitment propaganda for the direct action wing of the peace movement. Solidarity readers are quite capable of making up their own minds about which groups they want to work with. The point

that I want to make is that our ideas - self-management of all spheres of life, autonomous and self-defined struggles - have profoundly influenced parts of the peace movement, and will influence any modern radical movement. Possibly the direct action movement will be recuperated or outflanked by a revival of the Labour Left. Our task is not to play a game of 'more revolutionary than thou', but to identify the truly revolutionary features of the peace movement, to learn from them, and to attempt to generalise then into wider forms of self-managed activity.

JOHN COBBETT

1. Feminism and Non-Violence: Piecing It Together, p.11 (Section two of this pamphlet is a far more coherent and imaginative depiction of non-violent feminism).

2. Anti-Nuclear Action is available from Box 11, 109 Church Street, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, at 40p. plus postage.



ON CASTORIADIS

In Solidarity two issues ago there was a lengthy article by C. Castoriadis about the nature of the Soviet Union. The main thrust of that article, which was called 'Facing War', was to suggest that the Soviet Union had become a militaristic society; that is, the military had managed to assume decisive control of the orientation of Soviet society and that marxism-leninism was dead as the dominant ideology.

Much criticism of this view was made by several correspondents in the last issue of the magazine, and even those who applauded Castoriadis for pointing out that the Soviet Union bore a strong responsibility for the continuation of the arms race (Castoriadis, indeed, implied that the Soviet Union was now the principal culprit) said that he was greatly overestimating the efficiency of the Soviet armed forces.

Castoriadis was careful to make clear that he was referring not to the influence of a military clique within the Politburo, but to the social position of the military as a body which is able to take for its own use the best resources of the Soviet economy, and he asserted that this process had reached such a point that there were now two quite separate economies functioning within the Soviet Union, the military being far superior to the civilian, and that "in one of the sectors, the military, everything seems to function with near perfection, and in the other, the civilian, everything remains chaotic and debilitated".

However, from what we know of the Soviet military machine, this conclusion would seem to be wrong. Such limited evidence as is available (and to be fair to Castoriadis more has come to light since he wrote 'Facing War') tends to suggest that despite the apparent ability of the Soviet armed forces to demand the best their society can produce their equipment remains relatively backward, liable to break down frequently, uncomfortable to use, and sometimes positively dangerous to their own operators. It was recently reported that defectors from the Soviet army had revealed that Soviet tanks' guns sometimes tore the arms of their loaders. Another report, of Warsaw Pact manoeuvres, stated that the tanks, which were supposed to cross a river and proceed up the opposite bank, were quite incapable of performing this feat (which is well within the capabilities of the British Chieftain) unless the river bed were concreted first! Such example could be multiplied. Even more recently we have heard of Soviet efforts to purchase computer technology, to such an extent that member governments of NATO have made it illegal to export such material to

Warsaw Pact powers without licence, precisely because the Soviets have been unable to produce such sophisticated technology themselves.

It is true that the military sector is one of the few parts of the Soviet economy which operates to any extent on consumer demand; by which I mean that the military has the ability to reject goods which do not come up to its own specifications. It does this not only in its own, closed, factories, but also in the mixed military-civilian factories, where there may be three different assembly lines, one military, one for export goods, and one for ordinary domestic consumption, and the workers are paid different rates according to which line they work on. But even so, in those high priority areas which are regarded by the Soviet state as of crucial national importance, the quality simply does not match Western standards to any great extent. This is evident from the imbalance in Western-Soviet trade. According to the Soviet journal Foreign Trade in 1974 the West bought 170 million rubles' worth of Soviet machinery and equipment (i.e. technology) whereas the Soviet Union bought 2 billion rubles' worth from the West. The balance was largely made up of oil, natural gas, and other minerals - essentially the exports of a 'developing' country. In the 'Vodka-Cola' world, the cola is far superior to the vodka.

Castoriadis suggested that the military had gained such a degree of control over the resources of the Soviet economy that it now made more sense to see the Soviet Union as orientated to the needs of military power to the exclusion of all other considerations. But in fact there do exist major civil engineering projects (including the space program) which can call on the same kind of all-out effort which Castoriadis was thinking of. For example, the Bratsk High Dam, which is reported to rival the most modern Western



facilities in its technology, was hurled into existence by 1961, in spite of the fact that its main customer, the Bratsk aluminium plant, was not completed for another ten years. More recently, the Kama River Truck Plant was started in 1971 on an open plain as the showpiece of the 1971-75 Five Year Plan. It was intended to be built and fully functioning within that period, producing at full capacity 150,000 heavy trucks a year. The fact is, however, that the Soviet highway system even today, and still more so at that time, would be incapable of handling such an enormous fleet of trucks, still less the required service network. Indeed, only a small proportion of the roads in the Soviet Union are made up. In other words, these projects, on which so much of the resources of the Soviet economy have been concentrated, are or were when completed functionally useless. Again, in the late 1950s the Soviet Union made a vast effort to get first a satellite (Sputnik) and then a man (Gagarin) into space before the United States of America. This had little military value; manned space flight is irrelevant so far as missile technology is concerned.

This raises the question why, if Castoriadis' analysis were correct, the military would permit such projects to proceed, wasting so many vital resources of skill, manpower and materials. I would suggest that the answer to this lies in notions of what it means to be a great power, and in a pervasive sense of inferiority within the ruling circles of the Soviet Union, particularly in relation to the USA. Most educated Russians, from the time of Peter the Great, have looked to the West as their yardstick, and have considered themselves to be Europeans; there has been resentment that the West did not share the sentiment. In its most modern guise this attitude has led the Soviet Union into a desperate struggle to catch up and overtake the USA, to gain superpower status in the eyes of the world. And what makes a superpower? Modern industry; space flight; above all, a great army. This is hardly an unfamiliar phenomenon: practically every Third World country, no matter how poor, finds its rulers throwing money into a national airline and the best equipped army they can afford, at the expense often of the bare necessities of life for the bulk of the

population, in a futile bid for respect. In the Soviet Union the same picture is seen on the largest scale. Stalin himself expressed this national inferiority complex in 1934 when he said,

"To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered because of her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her because of her backwardness, military backwardness, cultural backwardness, political backwardness, industrial backwardness, agricultural backwardness. They beat her because to do so was profitable and could be done with impunity".

If something is regarded as vital to the Soviet state, whether because of its perceived defence needs or need for international respect, it will be specially done, and generally done well. If it is for members of the elite - political leaders, top scientists, athletes, dancers, people important to the state or its image in the West - no expense will be spared, though the ordinary Soviet citizen must tighten his or her belt to pay for it.

Castoriadis then suggested that the ideology of marxism-leninism within the Soviet Union is dead and had been superseded by Grand Russian Chauvinism. He did not explain how or when this change had occurred, but he could no doubt point to Stalin's call to defend the Motherland during the Great Patriotic War as a key turning point. Again, however, I think he overestimated the efficiency of this ideology as an integrative force. It does seem to have quite a grip within the military itself, at least within the officer corps. However, its potential "as a socially integrative ideology [is] fortunately limited by the fact that over half the Soviet population are not Russians", as one of the correspondents in the last issue of Solidarity put it. While this does not, of course, prevent Russian



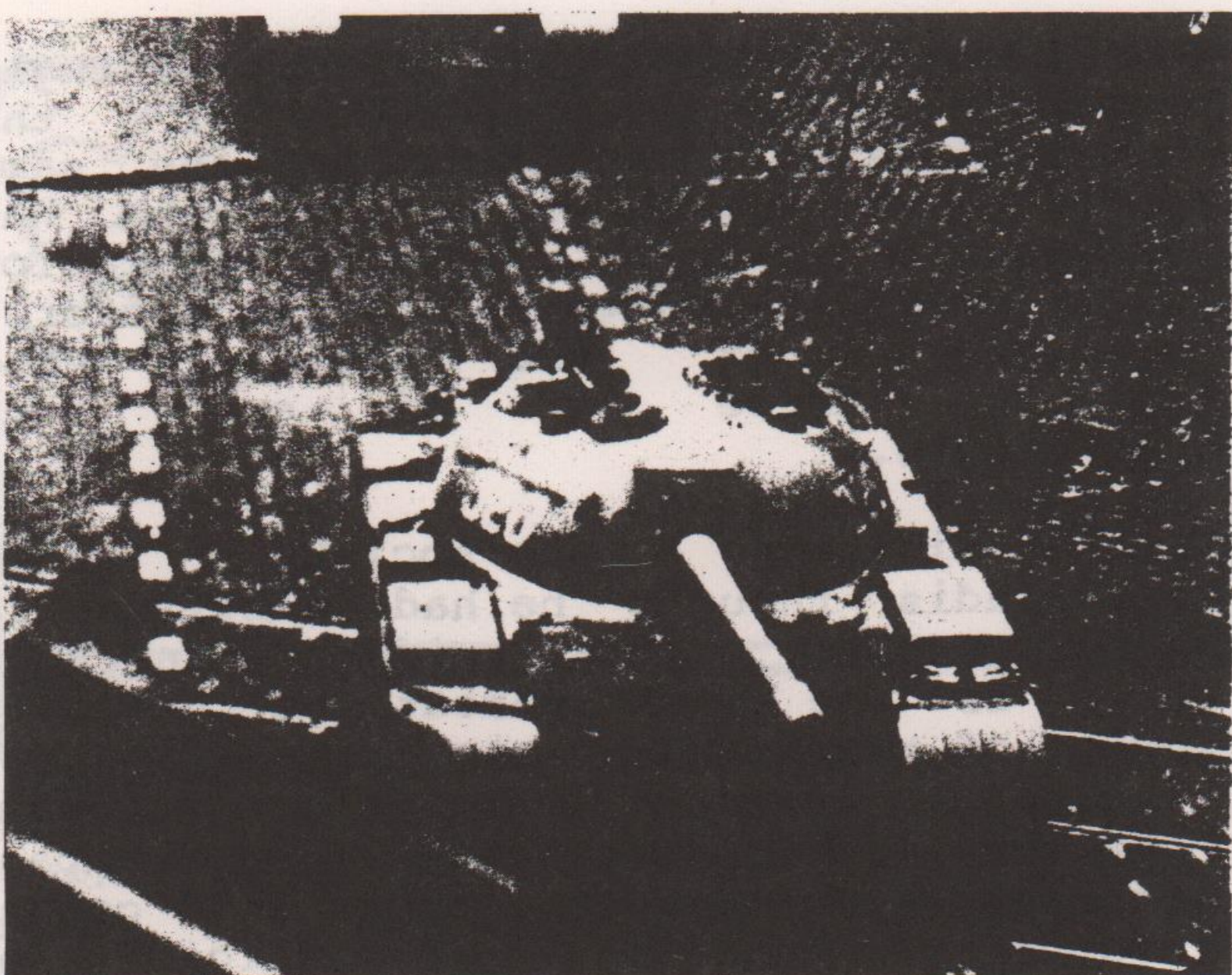


leaders from speaking as though they were the Soviet Union, one may doubt that this unduly impresses a Georgian, and perhaps still less a Tatar. It is known that the Soviets are concerned about the possible spreading of Muslim fundamentalism within their borders in the wake of the Iranian upheaval. More importantly, however, it is difficult to see how marxism-leninism could be abandoned when it provides the basis for the legitimacy of the Soviet leadership. They are the heirs of Lenin, a figure whose iconography in the Soviet Union is all-pervasive. So long as this legitimisation persists, no non-Party group can obtain overall power in the Soviet Union, for in the last analysis the leadership can always say 'Without us you cannot rule; the alternative is another Revolution'. The fact that martial law was declared in Poland in 1981 following the virtual collapse of the Party there might at first sight seem to contradict this proposition. However, it should not be forgotten that throughout the Eastern bloc (except Yugoslavia) the Soviet system was imposed by an external power following a military occupation, whereas at its root it is an phenomenon indigenous to the USSR, within which, moreover, it remains a relatively broadly-based elite which offers the prospect of a gravy-train to something like one in every fifteen of the population. According to a recent Moscow report (*Guardian*, 4 October 1983), there are currently 18.3 million members and candidate members. 44% of these are officially described as workers, but in fact party members continue to be carried on the books under the occupation they were following when they first joined, and even the late unlamented Leonid Brezhnev was described in party records as a worker. The reality of the situation

is that the Party is increasingly becoming the preserve of the intelligentsia. According to the same report, every third citizen who has received a higher or specialist education is a member - one-sixth of the doctors, one-quarter of the engineers and teachers, three out of every four journalists.

The military sub-society which Castoriadis thought he had identified is actually part of the wider technocracy which is the real threat to the sole power of the Party. Castoriadis said that "to be a 'good officer' is not to watch over the impeccable state of the company kit, nor to lead the troops into combat revolver in hand. It is to participate as a specialist in a function of technical qualification in the management of an immense multi-trust...". Now quite apart from the fact that this overlooks the evidence of inefficiency and lack of morale within the Soviet armed forces, as evidenced by the recent spate of desertions in Afghanistan, there are other people who are specialists in the same sense, whether they work in engineering, agriculture, the arts, journalism, or the security forces, none of which are part of the military. Castoriadis was right to point out the size of the share of national resources which the military can claim; but this does not prove his thesis, that the military is now the dominant force in Soviet society - it still has to compete for those resources with the other groups which make up the Soviet elite. It is fortunate that for historical and psychological reasons it can put forward a strong claim. When the political leadership is in confusion, following the death or ill health of the Party's Secretary, the military has always seemed to gain influence; but when the political succession is clarified this influence seems to shrink once more, and there is at present no reason to think that when Andropov either recovers or is replaced that the situation will be any different.

Now even if Castoriadis' analysis was wrong, it does not necessarily follow that he was incorrect to suggest that the Soviet Union is gaining an 'advantage' in terms of both conventional and nuclear weaponry over the 'West'. Even if this is so (a matter which I am not qualified to discuss), it is not clear what he intended his readers to see as the consequence of such a situation; he merely stated that it was a question of orientating oneself in history. This is a somewhat cryptic remark without his interpretation of what use such an advantage might be to the Soviet Union. However, I may not be doing him an injustice if I suggest that from his other remarks about the Soviet Union being the only state now able to carry out an offensive policy - a remark which hardly seems justified in hindsight in the light of recent developments in Latin America - he was thinking in terms of the Soviet Union being able to carry out an invasion of some part of the world without any resistance being offered by the West.



In particular he seemed to be thinking in terms of the classic NATO scenario: a push by the Warsaw Pact conventional forces into the German plain in a bid to conquer Western Europe, which NATO is too weak to prevent by conventional means and which forces it to resort to 'theatre' nuclear weapons to prevent its being overrun. He appeared to feel that there was now such an imbalance in forces that the USA would not dare to intervene to resist such an invasion, and would in any event be too inefficient to mount such an intervention. His reasons for thinking such a result likely included the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; Soviet support for and influence over the governments of Ethiopia, South Yemen, Mozambique and Angola; the Vietnamese conquest of Cambodia after the collapse of the Pol Pot regime; the revolution in Iran with its combination of "chaos and crude theocracy"; the energy crisis; accelerated inflation; and "the floundering of what had until now appeared to be the tranquil course of modern capitalism". Although I am not entirely certain that I have understood his point, the implication seemed to be that the 'West' had become weak and feeble, while the Eastern barbarians remain as vigorous and brutal as ever; a refrain familiar to students of European history ever since the decline of the Roman Empire.

It should not be forgotten that 'Facing War' was written in 1980. It is now 1984 and the Red Army is still bogged down in Afghanistan, apparently no nearer 'pacifying' the population than ever. The Cambodians and Vietnamese had a long history of brutal warfare between themselves long before marxism provided an intellectual justification. Inflation is down. The energy crisis has gone away. The regimes which Castoriadis referred to, Angola and the like, seem rather to be using the Soviet Union as a convenient source of weaponry and economic aid than as a source of ideological commitment, while the Soviet position seems to be one of attempting to maintain influence in a 'buyers' market' for friends of super-powers. There seems no reason why they could not switch orientation immediately if it were to be convenient, without fear of any retaliation by the Soviet Union except perhaps the expulsion of a few diplomats. In an interview in Labour

Focus on Eastern Europe (Winter, 1982-83) Zhores Medvedev suggested that Andropov was likely to give top priority to improving relations with China and strengthening links with eastern Europe, and might seek to limit Soviet commitments in the Third World. "He is likely, in other words, to return to a traditional theme of Russian policy, namely that relations with the country's neighbours matter much more than problems in other parts of the world". Andropov's apparent ill-health has meant that we have seen very little from the USSR which could be called foreign policy. A last-ditch effort at the Geneva INF conference to prevent the deployment of cruise missiles failed, and the result seems to have been the abandonment of talks as not worth while in the face of what the Soviets apparently see as American intransigence, and a consequential 'battening down of the hatches'. Nothing is clear, and it is unlikely to become any clearer until the question of the Soviet leadership is determined. At present, Soviet policy appears to be operating on a hand-to mouth basis, with no long-term strategy at all.

Recently scientists have pointed out that any large-scale use of nuclear weapons is likely to create a new Ice Age as a result of the dust blown up in the explosions blocking out the sun's rays, with a consequential catastrophic drop in the earth's temperature. This means that there can be no 'winners' in a nuclear exchange and ideas of fighting nuclear wars and first strikes will have to be abandoned. Once this is realised, conventional weapons enter into their own once more, and we therefore return to Castoriadis' analysis of Soviet intentions towards the 'Western' bloc. He may well be right to suggest that the Soviet armed forces are larger than those of NATO. But how likely is the Soviet Union to take advantage of this superiority, if superiority it be? Castoriadis claimed that the USSR is the only power which is "pursuing and actually is able to carry out an offensive politics" (emphasis in original). I have mentioned above the USA's activities in Latin America, which tend to suggest that if anything it is the USA which is presently able to carry an offensive politics. The Soviet Union's foreign policy in the 1970s has not had



Personal questions answered about superstitions



impressive results. The dispute with China is still unresolved; detente - a keystone of policy under Brezhnev - has practically collapsed, and Soviet influence in the Middle East has been virtually eliminated. The USSR has worse relations with Iran than it did under the Shah, and is fearful of Muslim-fuelled nationalism spreading inside its own borders. Its own subject peoples in Eastern Europe have revolted on several occasions, and their governments are showing several signs of going their own way both in terms of economics (e.g. Hungary), and in some limited respects politically (Rumania). Even the Bulgarians, notoriously the most hardline of the satellite governments, have been calling for greater efforts towards nuclear disarmament. So if, therefore, the possible range of Soviet goals for Western Europe can be broadly summarised as military invasion, a peaceful transition to 'socialism' after Western CPs gain power, and promotion of a non-aligned Western Europe, which has the most to offer?

Even if sudden invasion were successful, it would have to be followed by occupation of lands whose industry has been severely damaged and whose peoples would be hostile. The USSR has found it hard to maintain control over Eastern Europe for almost forty years. Would it now wish to compound its difficulties? Castoriadis suggested that between 15% and 25% of the populations of France and Italy would prefer not to resist a Soviet invasion i.e. they would be pro-Soviet Communists or sympathisers. Since he wrote he must of course have seen the French CPs' popular vote crumble under the influence of Mitterand's brand of 'socialism', and the Italian CP declare that the Soviet system in the USSR had exhausted its capacity for renewal, condemn the "permanent and grave limitations of freedom" in Eastern Europe, and begin to equate Soviet foreign policy with that of the USA, which a scandalised *Pravda* described as "truly sacrilegious". In fact the USSR has had constant ideological difficulties

with Euro-Communists over the last ten or fifteen years, although as we well know not all have gone so far as the Italians. Some might suspect that in the event of a peaceful transition to power by the Western European CPs their criticisms, however muted, would be dropped as so much window dressing. The historical experience, however - China, Yugoslavia - suggests that splits between the CPSU and those Communist Parties which have come to power without Soviet tanks tend only to widen. It is at least arguable that Communist rule in China has damaged Soviet interests more than any other single development since 1945. A Communist Western Europe might be worse. It is, however, rather unlikely in the foreseeable future. Perhaps, therefore, a non-aligned Europe would be in the best interests of the USSR, as it would be for us: a neutrality like that of Austria, which remains unconquered despite its lack of nuclear weapons. However, this also remains at present a somewhat remote prospect.

We must conclude that the analysis of the Soviet Union presented in *Facing War* is wrong, and that the military have not yet rendered our attention to the civilian politics irrelevant. Castoriadis has overestimated the efficiency of the Soviet military machine and has allowed himself to make from this overestimate a wrong assumption about its dominating role in Soviet society. He has underestimated the functional nature of the Party in legitimising the State, and its social importance to a large proportion of the population, especially the best educated sections which make up the Soviet ruling class. Finally, the notion of Soviet 'adventurism' rests on a hunch rather than much in the way of objective evidence. Is it not just as likely that people who have lived through the relatively good years since the Second World War and have enjoyed a gradual but persistent increase in their standard of living will be less enthusiastic about the possibility of losing all their gains in the gamble of war? What we have been able to discover about Andropov and the people around him suggests that he is a 'realist' who recognises that revolutions in foreign parts complicate Soviet relations with the capitalist world, just as they have done since the Spanish Civil War, and offer no guarantee of a corresponding increase in Soviet strength or security. 'Revolutionaries' may look to the USSR for material support, but less and less do they look to it as a positive model to be emulated - they are likely to demand more, therefore, than the USSR can see any advantage in providing. The USSR wants the respect of the world for its position as "one of the greatest world powers without whose participation not a single international problem can be solved", as the *History of Soviet Foreign Policy* puts it; it wants this participation for a guarantee of security and stability. Nothing is more likely to ruin the prospects of such security and stability than further military expansionism.

BOOK REVIEWS

Militarist machismo?

Piecing It Together: Feminism and Non-Violence (Feminism and Non-Violence, 58 pp., £1.50)

It'll Make a Man of You...A Feminist View of the Arms Race (Penny Strange, Peace News/Mushroom Books, 31pp., 95p.)

An article in 1982's Feminist Review pointed out that since 1969 feminist theorists have tried successively to graft socialism, marxism, psychoanalysis, and lesbianism onto feminist theory (1). Feminism and non-violence seems to be the latest concern. Does this succession of subjects indicate a sustained growth and strengthening of feminist theory, or rather an ideological fashion parade? Two recently published pamphlets show the strengths and weaknesses of non-violent feminist theory.

Piecing It Together is a collective work which aims to give a variety of views rather than to hammer out a single perspective. The sources that have been drawn upon are quite eclectic: traditional anarchism, civil disobedience, pacifism and feminism. Most importantly, the analyses offered are both subtle and complex. The influences of sex, race, class, and social hierarchy are considered, and the pamphlet avoids giving comfortingly oversimple explanations.

Perhaps its greatest single weakness is that it tries to do too much in too few pages. Often a clipped summary is offered where a full exposition is really needed. But even this abbreviated argument is enough to convince us about some basic points. There is undoubtedly a connection between masculinity and militarism. A glance at the photograph on p.12 should be enough to persuade any sceptical reader: a soldier lying on his bed, leering up at photos of bare-boobed beauties. The angle of the camera draws our eyes first to his heavy army boots, then to his leer, and last to the photos. Enough said.

The bulk of the pamphlet is concentrated in three compact essays which set out the premises of non-violent feminism. To my mind the first is the least successful. It aims to analyse the "interconnectedness" between patriarchy, the state and capitalism. Even allowing for lack of space, the perspectives presented here are clumsy and a-historical (2).

However, the second and third essays are far more interesting. The vision of non-violence that they present is quite different from the traditional Gandhi/Peace News version. They point out that to accept the role of victim perpetuates violent conflicts in the same way as

initiating violence. Non-violence must supersede the roles of both victim and aggressor. Developing this point, the essays make some criticisms of the passive and maternal images associated with the women at the Greenham Common Peace Camp. Non-violence should not be seen as an abstract spiritual ideal, but as (a) a practical tactic and (b) a sound basis for a long-term perspective for social change. The pamphlet does not prove that there is any necessary connection between feminism and non-violence, and I remain sceptical about the usefulness of non-violence as anything other than a tactic. But both these essays are informative and provocative, and I would recommend them to anyone interested in current developments in feminist theories.

But as I read the pamphlet I became disturbed by the way that vast areas of lived experience were being neatly divided into 'male' and 'female'. Too many sentences started "Women feel that..." or "Men think that...". There seems to be a serious contradiction in the arguments presented. The central thesis is that society is shaped by a complex dialectic of social forces, yet these solid categories of male and female are presented as being quite monochromatic and static.

I felt this to be linked to one of the pamphlet's keywords: "interconnectedness". This concept seems to suggest that society is arranged like a telephone exchange: male sexual violence is somehow "connected" to militarism. If one accepts this framework, all that is left to discuss is cause and effect. This is too close to a satisfyingly oversimplified explanation; it ignores the interaction both between social forces and within those forces themselves. Each social category should be seen as both active and reactive. It is not enough to "piece





it together"; we have to recognise that society is formed not upon a static equilibrium of social forces, but from their dynamic development (3).

Clearly, 'women' and 'men' are distinct biological categories. But 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are quite different: these are socially created categories. Confusing the two can make for a magnificent separatist-feminist polemic, but it does not help us understand the world we are living in. There is such a wealth and depth of experience within each gender that it is impossible to speak of the women's or the men's view. Perhaps it would be more useful if we talked of 'femininities' and 'masculinities'.

Penny Strange's pamphlet -It'll Make a Man of You - seems to be a classic example of dogmatic confusion. She constructs a very full, wide-ranging argument to prove that all boys will grow up to become xenophobic, misogynist, nationalistic militarists who can only feel fulfilled by abusing women and joining the army. In fact, her pamphlet can be reduced to one idea: masculinity = militarism. Her argument is inflexible and dogmatic, creating a kind of 'Fortress Feminism'. Occasionally the vast generalisations about all men are delicately qualified - "apart from a few exceptional individuals" - but usually the existence of other masculinities is ignored. One is left with the impression that she read one copy of the Sun during the height of the Falklands war and decided that this was an accurate depiction of all men and all forms of masculinity.

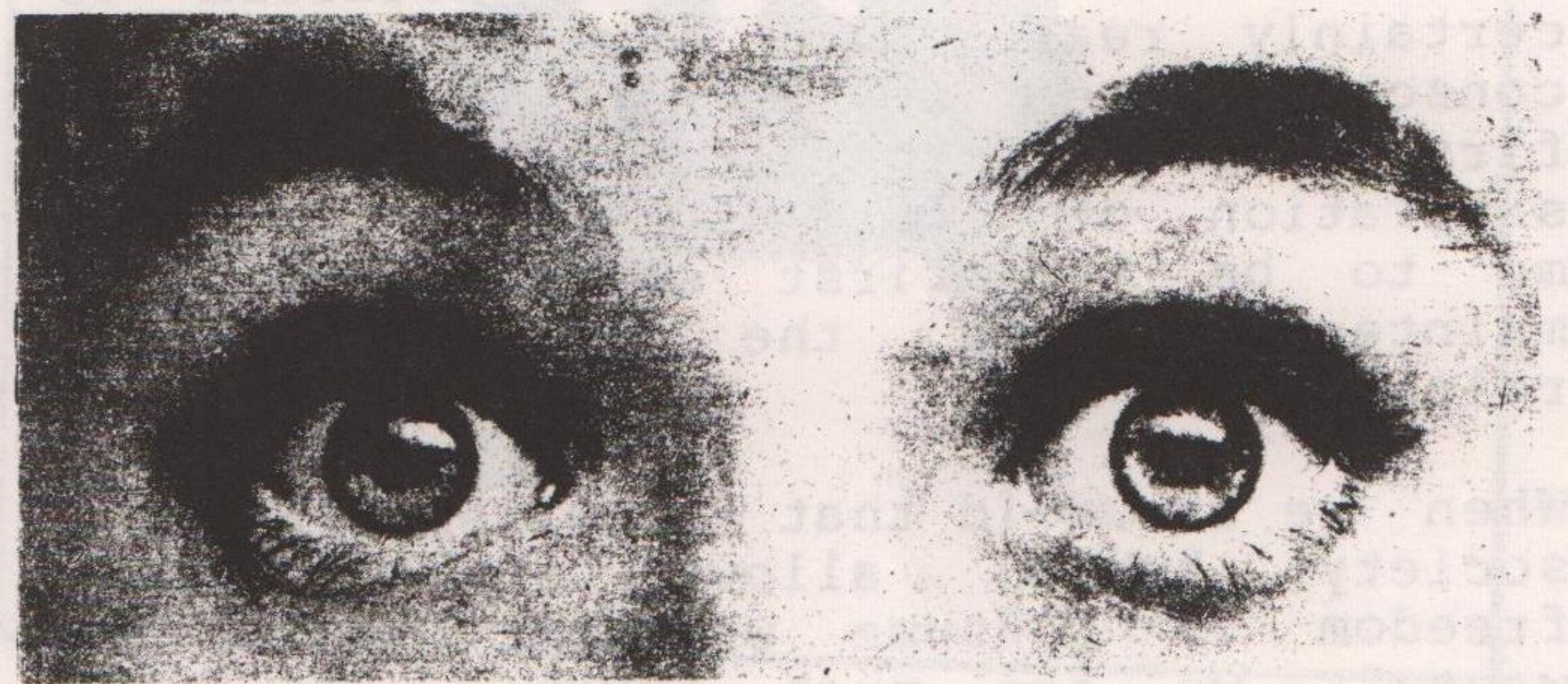
From this perspective, how can Penny Strange explain that for three centuries there has been a constant and strong resistance to conscription and a standing army in this country; or that there was a significant working class movement of conscientious objection during the First World War; or that even in the worst economic crises most men still refuse to consider learning a trade in the army; or that during the Falklands war opinion polls still showed that between a third and a quarter of the population was against armed intervention; or that even in the middle of nationalistic wars soldiers have mutinied (4)?

Neither male nor female socialisations are so strong or so complete that men and women are powerless to break out of the roles which they have been dictated. The mere existence of radical movements should be enough to prove this. Our theories about sex roles must learn to express what we have already gained by our practice. Despite the breadth of her arguments, Strange's pamphlet does nothing to aid either men's or women's self-consciousness. Of the two publications, I found the open and eclectic discussion of Piecing It Together far more useful than the closed dogma of It'll Make a Man of You.

JOHN COBBETT

1. Wendy Clark, "The Dyke, The Feminist and The Devil", in Feminist Review 11 (summer 1982), p.39
2. See Sheila Rowbotham's essay "The Trouble with Patriarchy" in Dreams and Dilemmas
3. E.P. Thompson gives a far fuller exposition of this argument in The Poverty of Theory
4. See Mutinies by Dave Lamb, printed and published by Solidarity.

Piecing It Together can be obtained from The Feminism and Non-Violence Study Group, 2 College Close, Buckleigh, Westward Ho, Devon.



Short review

BULGARIA: A NEW SPAIN (Kulak Press, 30pp., 60p). Available from T. Liddle, c/o 83 Gregory Crescent, Eltham, London SE9.

Originally published in 1948, this short essay reviews the history of the Bulgarian anarchist movement, tracing its development from anti-authoritarian medieval religious beliefs to the bloody battles of the 1930s and '40s with fascists and communists. The author wrote from a traditional anarchist perspective, with plenty of references to the "heroic struggles" of the "sober and hard-working" Bulgarian people. The comparison with Spain seems accurate; the great strength of the Bulgarian movement came from its deep roots in traditional rural culture, and it was eventually shattered only by the twin blows of fascist and stalinist repression.

JOHN COBBETT

Letters

Dear Solidarity,

Andy Brown's article 'On Socialism' [in the last issue (eds.)] clearly draws out the form of the society for which he is aiming, and describes one version of the "content of socialism" associated with Solidarity. As such it raises some problems.

While the critiques of the various kinds of reformism, marxism, and anarchism are alright, problems begin to appear when he begins to outline his 'realistic' form of socialism. Out goes "the short-sighted purism of assuming that one can simply abolish money overnight"; such measures will have to wait for a "full socialism" which will come into existence once "we have had time to effect a change in the way people think and act".

It seems to me that this is a return to the idea of 'The Revolution' as something other than a conscious development by the great majority of people, that instead it is to be something premature in some way, implying that some 'we' would have to take people through some consciousness-raising experiences before they would be ready for 'full socialism'. The problem of the transition to socialism is certainly real, but it will surely be a conscious creation or not at all (as the first page of the article says); the separation of 'full socialism' seems to me to be the first slippage towards a maintenance of the current social relations.

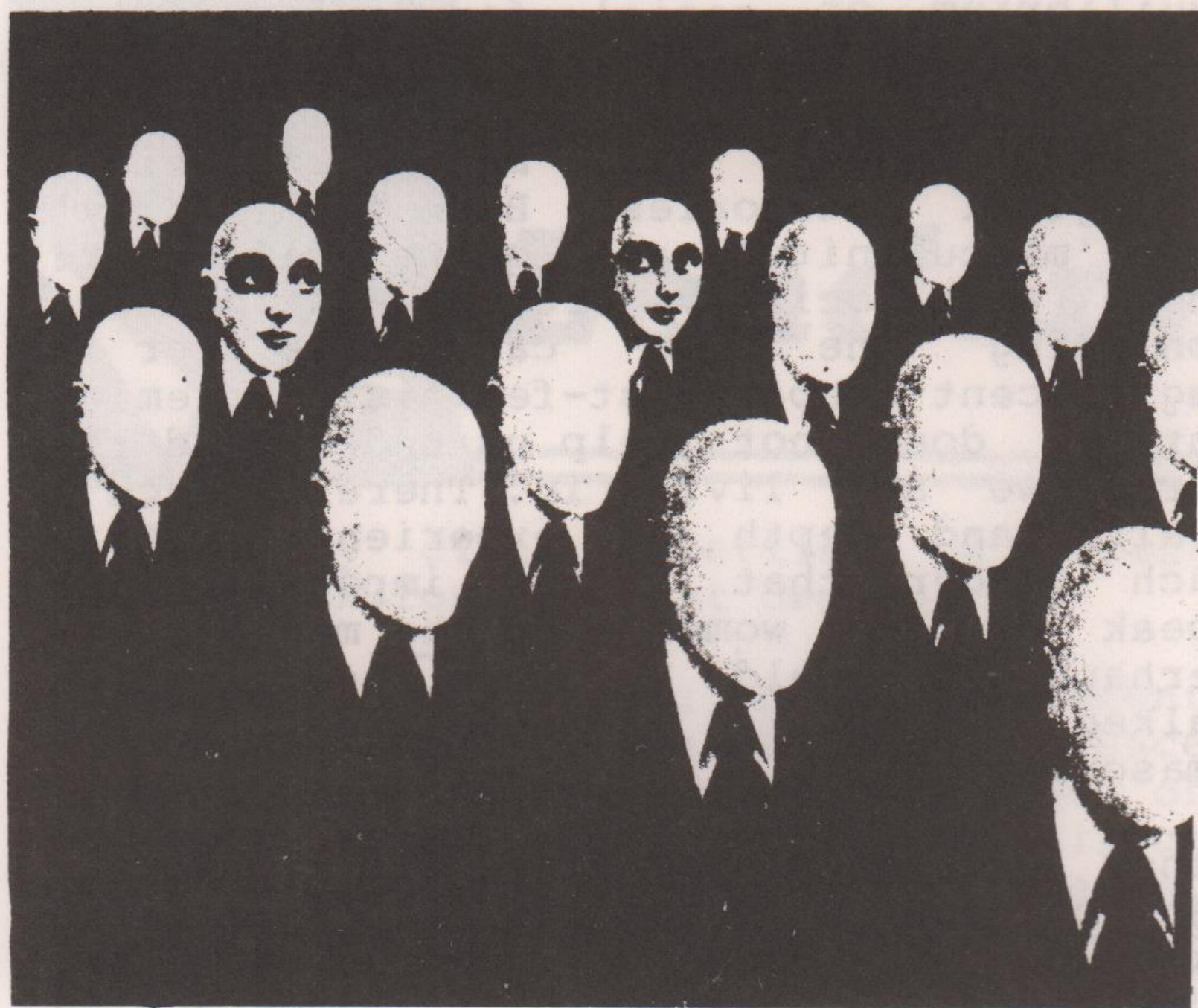
When we are told that socialism will be a society "which allows the consumer freedom to consume whatever he or she wants", we are much further down that slope; is the status of 'consumer' going to continue to exist in a socialist society? Are our lives in such a society going to continue to be dominated by an abstracted exchange of values, even if this is limited by redistributive mechanisms "at local, regional and central levels"? The extent to which "we are out to break the power of money to dominate our lives" would seem to be that to which rationalistic social measures can be concocted.

Rationalisation seems to have been fairly close to the heart of the project set out in Cardan's texts, and its positive and negative aspects haven't been fully explored. However, A.B.'s social mechanisms, his "thoroughly advertised complaints system", seem to me to be there to fill the holes in a society centred elsewhere: in the economy. A certain rationality would be an essential part of any society in which people could be autonomous in any individual or collective sense; but at the same time, it is a main component in the politics of

that new grouping within the welfare bureaucracy, Labour Party, etc., which other recent articles in Solidarity have attempted to analyse.

People in that grouping may denounce the apathy of people who fail to participate in the corrective institutions which they have devised. In a similar sort of way, the vision of society found in this article doesn't fill me or anybody I know who has read it with any great desire to live (and participate) in, far less struggle for, the society described. The strange consequence could be that such a 'realistic' vision of socialism could be far less likely to be realised than some other, more 'unrealistic' vision which would attempt to erase the divisions of producer and consumer, work and leisure, work and domestic non-work, etc., as such.

A.D.



Dear comrades,

I'm something of an old lag in Solidarity terms (supporter since 1965; member since that rather quixotic status became available). The time has come for a parting of the ways and this letter is to explain why.

I've already voiced my concern over the degeneration of Castoriadis' politics. After the publication of his article in issue no. 2 of the new paper, I expected some collective comment from the London group. Issue 3 arrives, and there's no such thing. It's left to Terry Liddle to draw out the full implications of Castoriadis' arguments, and he does so very well indeed.

Terry calls for solidarity, "not only with the struggle in Poland, but also with that in Afghanistan, Angola, and Eritrea". This is precisely what Castoriadis' argument entails. Opposition to the 'Soviet military threat' is paramount. All such oppositions must therefore be supported, whether they are working class insurgencies with a genuine revolutionary potential as in Poland, feudal reactions as in Afghanistan, or tribal risings with Bantustan potential as in Angola. I know very little about Eritrea but had assumed the conflict

there to involve several self-styled marxist-leninist factions with varying ethnic bases and slight differences in bloodthirstiness. But I'm ready to be further enlightened.

'The enemy of my enemy is my friend': this is the name of Castoriadis' game. So too, presumably, are his/her friends. Terry should thus come down on the side of the Pope, of P.W. Botha, of Zia-ul-Haq - all 'allies against Stalinism'. On the same logic he should favour Reagan against the Sandinistas, Pol Pot against the Hanoi puppet regime in Kampuchea, and endorse the French recolonisation of Chad, since - in the latter case - the rebels (last year's regime) are supported by Libya, which is backed by the USSR. Differences with the Pentagon can concern tactics, nothing more. Retrospectively, Castoriadis will support (and Terry should support) Diem against Ho, Pinochet against Allende, perhaps even Hitler against Stalin. (If the last suggestion is offensive, tell me why future Ukranian or Croatian war trials shouldn't have Castoriadis as witness for the defence).

Terry's letter makes it very clear that he (and Castoriadis) can legitimately be described as cold warriors. By this I mean that they believe that (1) 'their side' is very, very much worse than 'our side'; (2) defence against 'their side' is the only political issue of any consequence; and (3) almost any means (?short of Armageddon) are justified in the interests of keeping 'their side' at bay. There is certainly a case to be made for (1), though it depends on what part of the world you happen to be in: I'm

sure that life in Lancaster is better than Leningrad, but I'd be reluctant to choose Santiago over Gdansk, say, or Soweto rather than Budapest. But neither (2) nor (3) follows from (1), and (3) doesn't follow even if (1) and (2) are both accepted. There's just one alternative to cold warriorship, for a socialist: 'a plague upon both your houses'. This is as true in 1983 as it was at the height of the Vietnam War, when all the temptations pulled in the opposite direction. I wouldn't want to be associated with anyone who takes sides.

What does the London group think about these issues? I don't know, and I doubt if anyone else does. What are the reasons for their reticence? We can only guess: unconcern? embarrassment? fundamental disagreements?

In short, and rather like Shirley William, I find the party isn't what it used to be. I still like the Castoriadis of Socialism or Barbarism and the Maurice Brinton of The Irrational in Politics. But Castoriadis has gone horribly wrong, and the present London group seems unable to say anything very interesting. Even "M.B"'s partial defence of Modern Capitalism and Revolution relies on assertion rather than detailed argument.

This, then, is a resignation letter. I intend to keep reading the paper in the hope of a recovery of vision and perspective, and enclose a fiver for the next few issues.

Yours in sorrow,

John King



A RING OF FIRE

Beacons at the Bases

THE WINTER SOLSTICE IS A TIME OF TURNING ~ When to our ancient ancestors the Sun appeared to have receded further than ever, perhaps never to return. They lit fires as imitative magic to call back the Sun from the depths of darkness that it might warm the Earth once more and awaken Nature with fertility and Spring.

WE FIND OURSELVES IN DARK TIMES: the forces of decay and destruction are rife. Yet there is hope, a feeling that we are at a turning point, that the trend cannot be only and ever downward for that in itself is contrary to Nature. People everywhere are re-identifying themselves with the Earth /re-earthing/ beginning to feel the Pain of the Earth and in appreciating & working through that trauma, coming to a realisation of our potential ~ our ability to work with the natural forces that permeate and dance around us; Of the possibility of healing: ourselves, each other, the Earth.

THIS YEAR ON THE LONGEST NIGHT, Wednesday 21st December, when the Moon^d will still be full, Let us light fires ~ A chain, a ring of beacons encircling the country^d linking us, warming us, uniting us. Beaming out a message of Hope that we might call back the Spirit of Light & Life^d from the depths of our Darkness to nurture the seeds of Peace?

ON HILLTOPS & CAUSEDAWAYS, across valleys and plains we'll make our chain & pass the flame from place to place. The call: ALBION AWAKE! Shake off the Sleep of years and rise to greet the New Dawn. The faun, the wren, the unicorn will join the Rainbow Serpent's dance and our sleeping Motherland will stretch & calmly rise and stand; strong in all her magical sensitivity to show hers is the Peaceful way.

FROM TAN HILL TO TOR & FROM BASE TO BASE ~ for let us make our fires also at the sites where the Tics of the WAR MACHINE have dug in their jaws to suck the LifeBlood from our Mother, draining & blocking the flow of her Energies. So build Beacons at the Bases or on hills overlooking them. At best, on old Beacon Hills nearby. I know of two: Maid's Cross Hill at Lakerheath where I lived for some time as part of Families Against the Bomb Peace Camp and Beacon Hill which stands above Greenham Common.

I AM CONVINCED THERE IS A CORRELATION between the siting of military bases and places of spiritual power, centres of earth energy. The old beacon chains seem to be on meridians and I think you'll find the same connection near you. Look out in place names for the words "Tan" (Welsh for fire), St Anne ~ a Christianisation of Santan the fir deity, Black Hill, Cole's Hill, Brent ~ old english for burnt, Flame (flame) and of course Beacon, Beacon & Beck-on, all from the ^{same} Anglo Saxon root and meaning "come to me."

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