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Soli

# solidarity

## FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

No.4 AUGUST SEPTEMBER 1978

15 p

**The Soviet way of death**

**Czechoslovakia 1968**

**Male separatism?**

**Microprocessors**





# ABOUT OURSELVES

Solidarity for Social Revolution is the national magazine of SOLIDARITY. It is produced approximately every two months. To maximise involvement and democracy the production of the paper rotates among the various autonomous local groups. Issues 1, 2, and 3 were produced by Aberdeen, London and Oxford. This issue was produced in London by a different editorial group from that which was responsible for issue 2. Aberdeen will produce issue 5 - material for publication should be sent to them sooner rather than later.

While the contents of Solidarity for Social Revolution reflect the politics of the group as a whole, articles signed by individuals don't necessarily represent the views of all members. Some of the articles are highly contentious. We welcome readers' replies, whether in the form of articles, letters or graphics.

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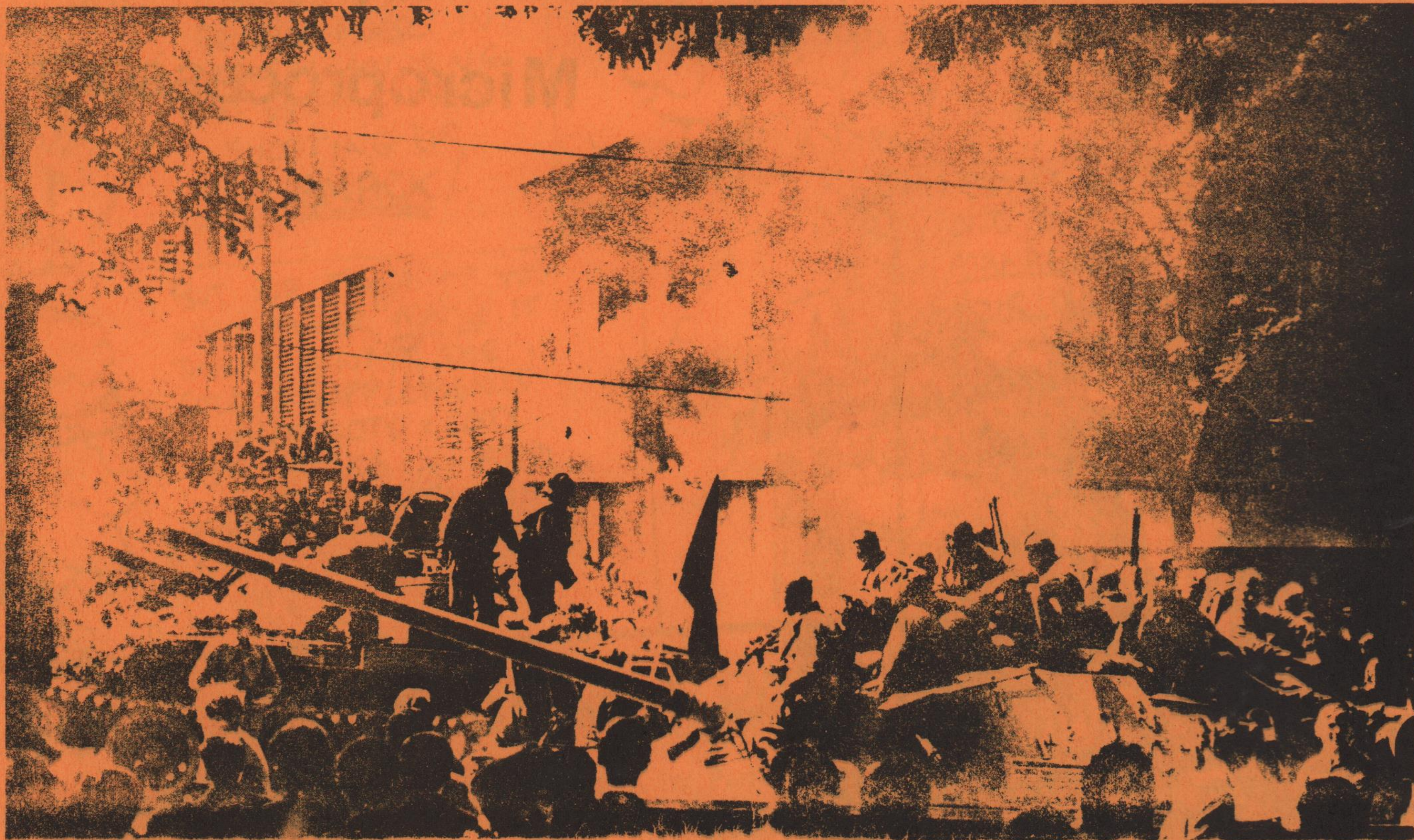
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## — as we see it —

**1** Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. They sell their labour power while others who own or control the means of production accumulate wealth, make the laws and use the whole machinery of the State to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged positions.

**2** During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as worker. Nor have continued p. 19.



# DEATH OF SPRING

This month sees the tenth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Ten years ago, on the night of August 20-21, 1968 a special flight from Moscow was announced. The plane arrived in Prague and taxied to the edge of the runway. No one got out. An hour later another plane from Moscow arrived. It released civilians who were warmly welcomed by Czech Customs officials. At 2 am an unannounced military plane landed. From it emerged an airborne unit of the Soviet Army. The occupation of Prague had begun. From then on airborne units arrived at minute intervals, throughout the night. Three hours earlier between 200,000 and 500,000 soliders of the Warsaw Pact had crossed into Czechoslovak territory.

This is not the place to give a detailed analysis of why they were there, or of the events that had led to the Prague spring. Rather it is a time of reflection and of emotion. What does such an invasion do to the spirit of a people? 1968 was the year of the marvellous. After 20 years of soul-destroying conformity, of arbitrary decisions being taken for you, of intensive depoliticisation, of official attempts to destroy natural human solidarity, of the fragmentation and atomisation of the human spirit, a people rediscovered its humanity. The Party had failed. We had not been reduced to the quantifiable ciphers that we believed we were. The colour was not grey. Crazy, imaginative happenings poured out of the head of the youth. Old men danced and the future was enormous.

Events flutter out of that dead past. For students I suppose THE event was the Strahov demonstration. On October 30, 1967 several thousand marched from the student halls on a hill called Strahov, past the Castle, into Prague. The chant was 'We want light'. The police charged in and running street battles started. The official and the unofficial. The very same evening Dubcek had mounted his first serious challenge to Novotny. The Politbureau struggle had been pre-empted (by a matter of hours) by struggle in the streets. The emergence of the Prague radicals. Jiri Muller to the Czech student movement: 'It is not important who will rule us and in what way; it is important that there should not be rulers and ruled... To rephrase the West German students' declaration I would say that only the most stupid oxen choose their own butcher'. Another name from the radical group, Lubos Holecek.

In the time of Spring we could do anything. Our confidence knew no bounds. The state was frightened and we could achieve the impossible immediately. A final example. We stopped the sale of Czech arms to Nigeria during the Biafran war. Other events, happiness. The first real May Day marches in 20 years. Parodies of Russian dances. Slogans shouted at the TV cameras: 'Everything is otherwise!'. Improvised street theatre. The feel of life.

## AFTERMATH

1972. Aftermath. The future is dead and spring has turned to winter. The men who spurred us on were now collaborators, sitting in judgment. Or they were distinguished émigrés. Or they were in the abyss. Where were we? Getting drunk, screwing the people we had once called brother and sister, informing, buying our cars, our fridges and our country cottages so that we could escape into our family from the unreality of communal life. The totality of our lives had once again been reduced to the atoms of our private existence. That is the real meaning of totalitarianism. The bloom of solidarity and warmth was now the frosted stem of jealousy and meanness.

How best to illustrate the cynicism? A conversation took place in 1972 between me and the Chairman of the CP

cell at our place of work (he had previously spent some time in the USA). P.C.: 'Why the hell are you still in the Party?

J.N.: 'Don't give me that moral bit. I've lived in the USA. I tell you, if I was an American I'd be a Republican. If I was British I'd probably be a Tory. You know why? Because that's where the power is. But I'm not. I'm Czech. So I'm in the Communist Party. Anybody who does anything else is soft in the head'.

I've chosen 1972 as the watershed year because that was the year that 'normalisation' filtered down to ordinary people. The year their Spring activities came under scrutiny. The year the sackings of the no-names began. It was also the year of the last big anti-government and anti-soviet demonstration in Prague. The feel, though, was not of storming the state; it was of defiance in the face of everything. A last fling for the impossible. The occasion? The defeat of the Soviet Union by Czechoslovakia in the final of the Ice Hockey World Cup. This was a particularly significant even because in 1969, on the same occasion, the Soviet airline offices, Aeroflot, had been burned. (This was the famous demonstration, the one reported in the West.





## DEATH OF SPRING (continued)

To my knowledge the 1972 demonstration has not been widely reported.)

We knew something was going to happen. I listened to the match clutching a glass of beer in a café on Wenceslas Square. When the final score was announced we cheered and stamped. Then we moved out into the Square. Trams started to arrive, packed with people. They were waving the Czechoslovak flag, in itself an illegal action. Taxis pulled up and people poured out. Others arrived on bicycles. Within half an hour 5000 or so people had arrived. The square was packed. A group within the crowd started chanting 'Shybo, shybo!' (the Russian word for goal). The chant was taken up and transformed into 'Aeroflot, Aeroflot, Aeroflot!'. At this point a loud metallic voice poured out of a battery of loudspeakers. 'Disperse! Leave quietly and go home! No more warnings will be given!'. We knew that something would happen if the Czechs won. And so did the state. They were ready. Riot troops with plastic shields and visors, complete with long riot sticks, had formed three deep at the top of the Square. Water cannons occupied side streets. Commando snatch squads moved into the crowd. The troops moved down the Square like a piston down a cylinder. More troops moved out of the side streets and funneled the crowd down to waiting Black Marias. Anybody who did not move fast enough was clubbed down. It was a bloody night. Symbolic of the last, desperate resistance.

Finally, now. Where are they, the Spring people? Perhaps their different fates are as much a testimony to the dead Spring as anything else. The official names: Alexander Dubcek, living in obscurity in Slovakia, occasionally reviled by the official press. Ota Sik, architect of the Party's economic policy, has a lectureship at a Swiss university. Radoslav Richta, proponent of the scientific-technological revolution, is still on the Central Committee of the Party.

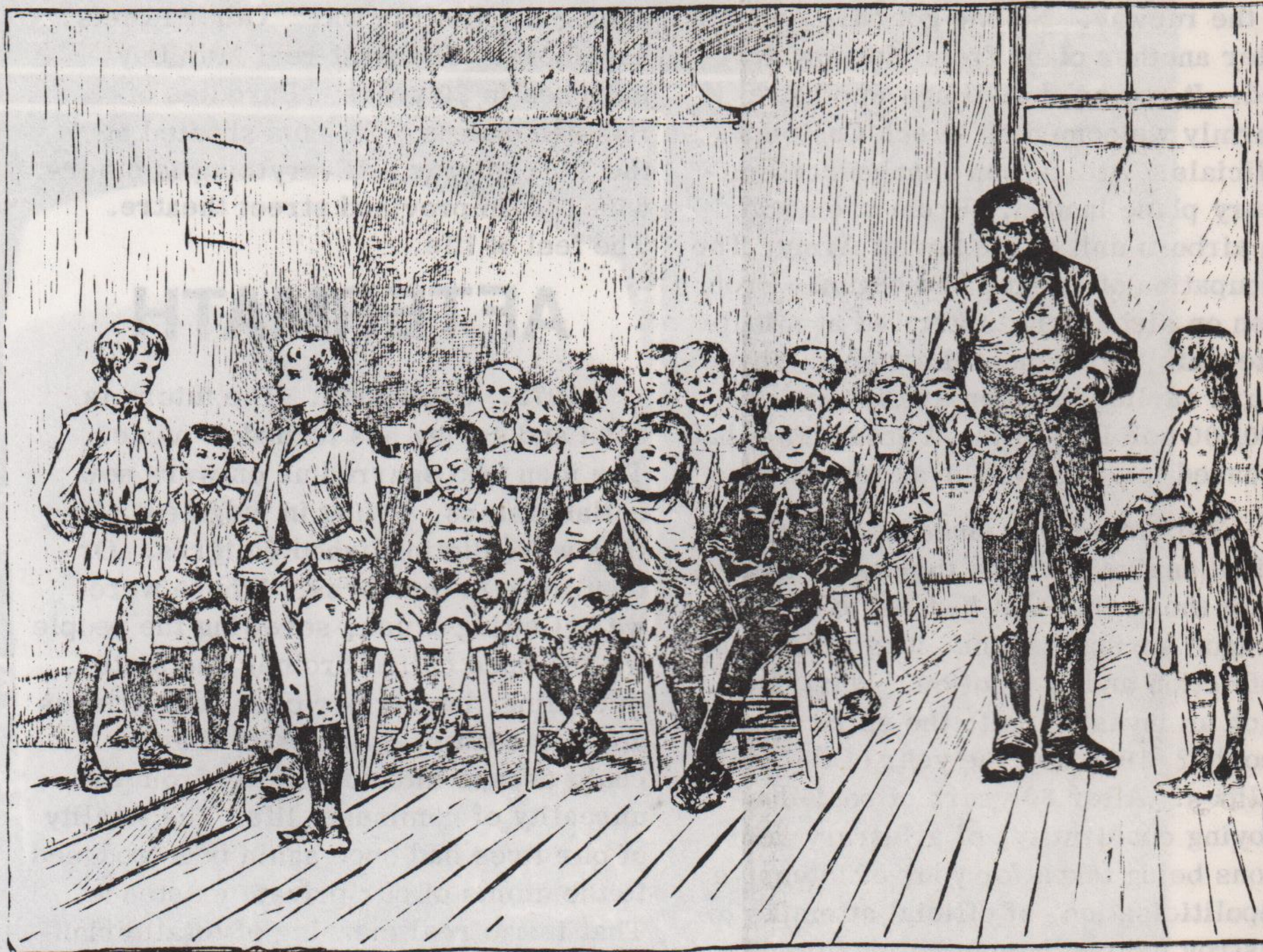
Unofficial names: Jiri Muller. Just freed after 4 years of imprisonment on a vitamin-free diet. Denied medical treatment. Health broken. Lubos Holecek, always frightened of arranged car accidents. Perhaps a premonition. Last year he died in a hit and run accident. The driver was found to be an employee of the Ministry of Justice.

This is not an article, it is a requiem.

A final question: what would you be like 10 years after the tanks had rolled down Oxford Street?

Petr Cerny.

# TEACHING: A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY?



AN ANARCHIST "SUNDAY SCHOOL." TEACHING UNBELIEF AND LAWLESSNESS.

Teaching is by its nature an authoritarian job. In fact the hardest part of the job to learn is to convince yourself that you do have the power to boss around the 20 individuals you are staring down at. For my first few weeks as a teacher I always half expected the class to get up and walk out muttering 'Sod this for a lark'. But they don't - the conditioning goes too deep for that.

Instead they stay and give you a hard time. Kids are very quick to recognise 'weakness' or 'indecision' in teachers and to exploit it. Yet, as we were told at teaching college, when you ask kids what makes a good teacher they say that the most important thing is whether she or he can keep control. Talking to the students I teach about their own education, I found that an astonishing number of them wanted stronger discipline in the schools. Yet I teach precisely the sort of students you would expect to have hated school discipline. I teach Liberal Studies in a Technical College to craft apprentices (brickies, pannel-beaters and the like). Having been brought up to accept discipline they expect that discipline to be administered tightly and see any relaxation of control as a clear sign to try it on with you.

It is this that makes the job so depressing. The teacher has to find a way to make the students submit to her control by any means she can. You can frighten them into submission or you can entertain them or offer them incentives so that they agree to submit but you can never avoid the fact that you are paid to be in control. In this situation I find that my sympathies go out to the student who rebels and refuses to submit to the role of order-taker. Yet it is my job to exert control over these students as effectively as possible.

There is then a fundamental contradiction for both myself and all libertarian teachers to face. On the one hand I want to encourage the students' ability to express themselves, to stand up to authority and to encourage them to believe in freedom and equality. On the other hand I am demonstrating by my actions as a teacher that I cannot allow them to be my equals in the classroom, and that if they stand up to my authority I will stamp on them. Whatever subject I may claim to be teaching I am in point of fact at the same time teaching them to obey.

So why remain a teacher? I hate



administering the discipline just as much as I hated being on the receiving end of it during my own education. But if I and everyone who has similar attitudes simply packed up and left, then the disciplinarians would have a field day. There are no doubt many who would argue that this would be all to the good. 'The worse it gets for the kids, the better it gets for us revolutionaries'. I am not convinced by this argument one little bit. It seems to me that the more people there are who are questioning the attitudes that many young people have towards race, sex roles and authority the better. Alright I can't preach what I believe openly (I'm not even sure I'd want to) and I can't introduce democratic procedures into the classroom; if I did I'd be sacked in double quick time. However, I can avoid reinforcing the deeply sexist and racist attitudes of some of the people I teach. I can even at times make some progress at changing these ideas.

It's not exactly work that will usher in the revolution at a rate of knots nor can I keep my hands morally clean. But then what job does allow a libertarian to remain true to his or her beliefs? The truth is that there are no morally neutral jobs in this society, no little corners where you can escape from the strangleholds of bureaucracy, class and sexism. Were such a thing possible then there would be no need for any revolution or indeed for any struggle or protest at all. We could just pack in politics and go and join some cooperative in the hills of Wales. However, even such an option as this is no escape from modern society. Firstly you have to buy your own land and get involved in buying the things you need and selling your crop. So you're already back in the world of cash and property. Secondly and more important you are leaving the rest of the society to carry on in the old way with all the old oppressions. You may do away with sexism in your commune but the second you walk outside the gates the women members are liable to be faced with wolf-whistles and the men to be denigrated as 'poofs'. There are no cop outs. We all have to live with the society which exists and do our best to change it. There is not one of us who can live and work in a totally free society and that is why I personally want a revolutionary change in our society. Teaching may not be the best place to set about changing it and indeed it forces many unpleasant tasks on those whose work it is, but like all other places where a libertarian finds her or himself, it is just one more area where we can 'put our queer shoulders to the wheel'.

A. K. Barnard.

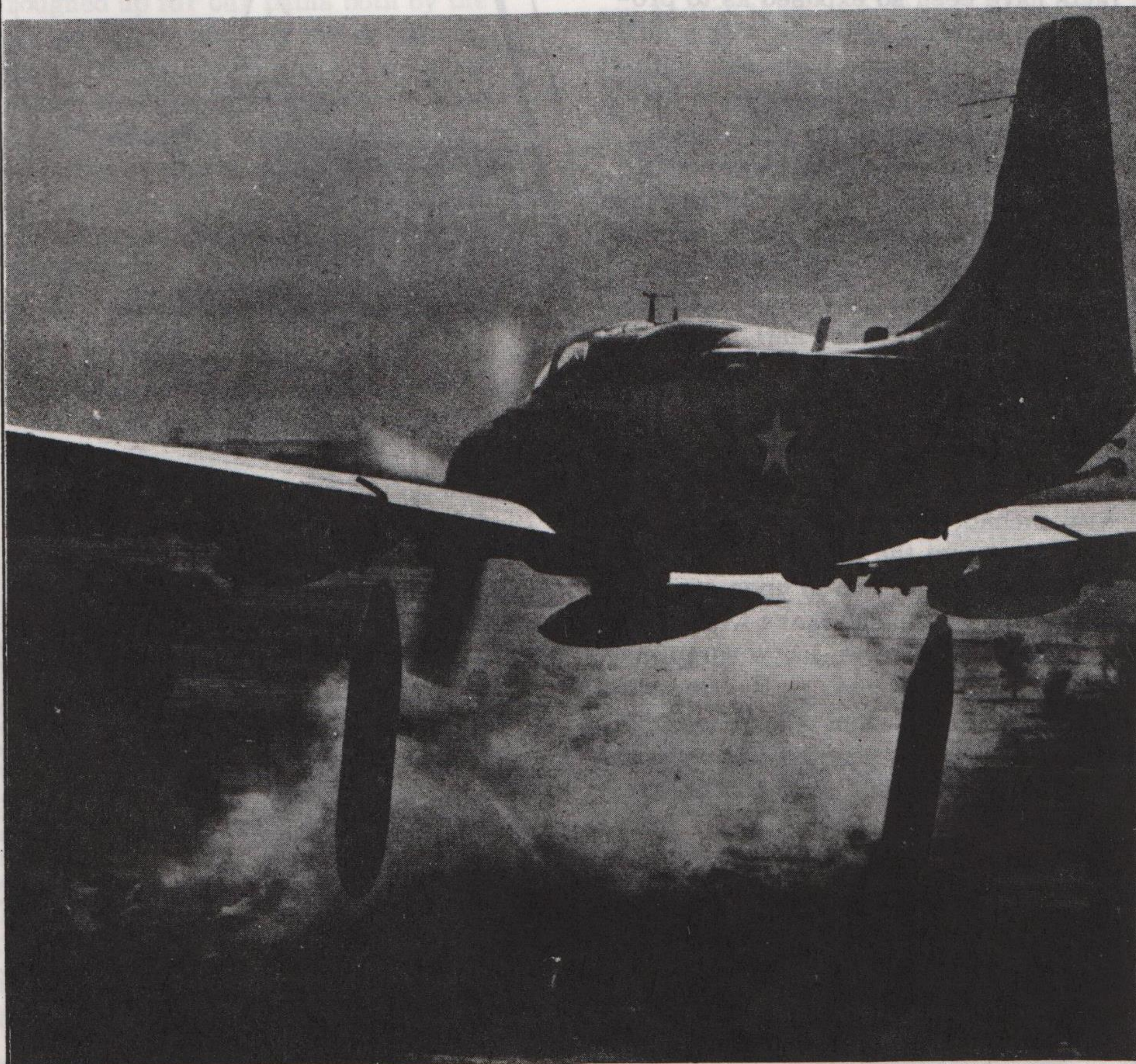
# NEUTRON BOMB

Musing on the neutron bomb - which kills people while leaving tanks and other weapons unharmed - my telefractive friend Daedalus felt that a converse device would be attractive: something that destroyed weapons while leaving people unharmed. He recalled that mechanical stress makes many materials remarkably vulnerable to corrosion. The corrosive molecules get into tiny cracks in the material, and react at the bottom of the crack where stress is concentrated, helping the stress to spread the crack. Now some molecules react with surprising changes of shape or volume. When an oxygen atom, for example, corrodes a metal to form an oxide ion, its diameter nearly doubles. So DREADCO chemists are seeking vapours whose molecules expand or unwind dramatically when they react. When they get into microscopic cracks in a structure and react at the crack bottom, the irresistible molecular expansion will drive the crack further by sheer wedge action. Thus these devilish stress-corrosives generate their own stress, and will shatter material on mere contact! Each of the DREADCO 'Shattergases' (Regd.) will only touch the class of metal or plastic it has been chemically tailored to, and with luck most of them will be quite harmless to people.



This humane anti-weapon will revolutionise warfare. A shattergas tailored to armour-plate steel, reducing tanks and armoured cars to fragments around their baffled occupants' feet, and crumbling gun barrels of all calibre, would be great fun. But more economical would be a selective shattergas attack, say on copper alloys. Most military hardware would be left dumb and useless with all circuits opened and cartridge cases split. And soldierly morale would collapse as brass buttons and insigna of rank crumbled, and trousers fell around combat boots amid splinters of belt-buckle. Battle would be reduced to an undignified punch-up between weaponless and half-dressed military clowns - making pacifism seem positively killjoy.

From 'New Scientist', 16.6.78.





# THE LIMIT OF PERMISSIBLE DISCUSSION

## KOLYMA

Libertarian histories of Russia end with the suppression of Kronstadt, the flight of Makhno and the funeral of Kropotkin. While there have been many critiques of the Russian political process, there have been few accounts of the human realities of modern Russian history, and this lack has serious implications and consequences.

Quite clearly, the period 1929-53 is of immense importance: during it the Russian people were subjected to the most violent expression ever of state power. In the collectivisation campaign and purges at least 20 million men and women, and probably far more, were put to death by their own, marxist, or rather marxist-leninist, government.

Figures of this magnitude seem so incredible that one can, to some extent, sympathise with the incredulity of 30, or even 25 years ago. That they have not yet significantly penetrated the consciousness of the great majority of socialists is, however, a tribute to the success of a deliberate and sustained campaign to conceal, or at least to minimise, the real extent of the Stalin Terror.

### SLANDERS

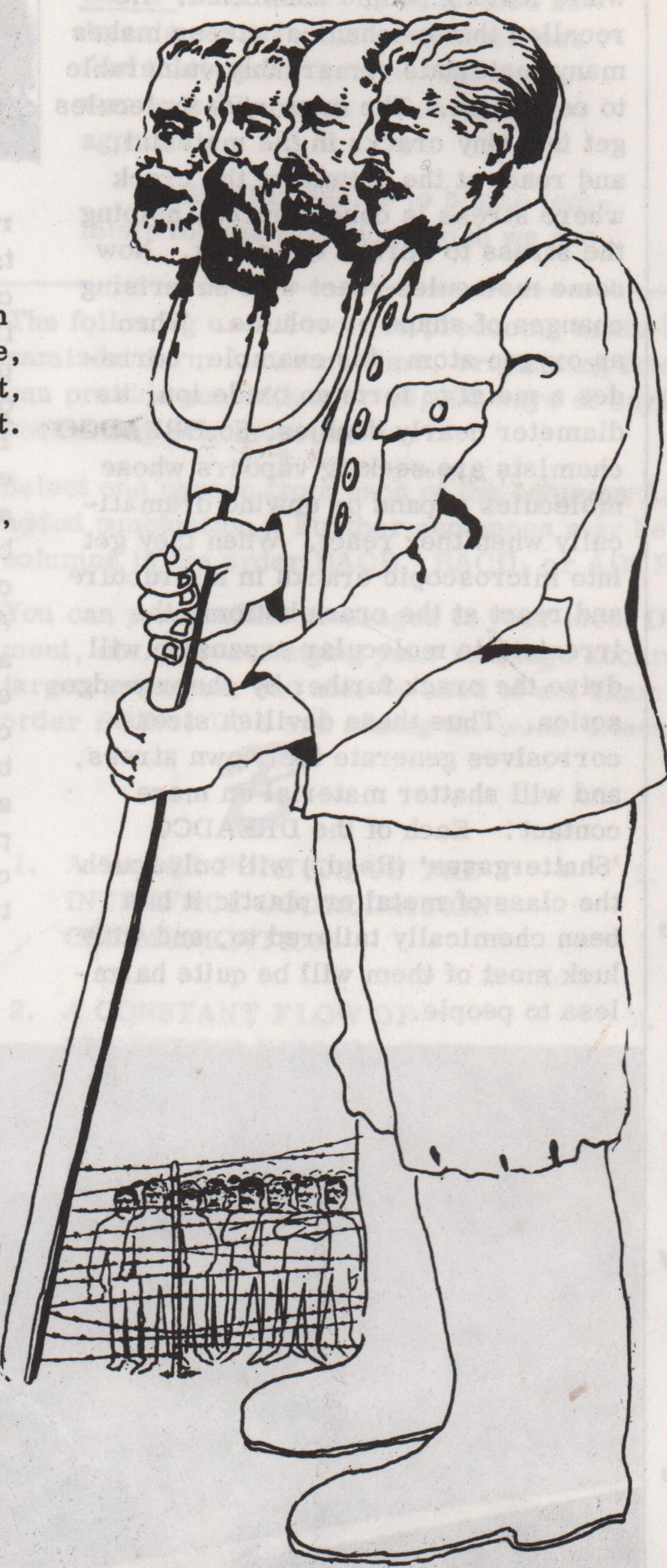
Thanks to Khrushchev the basic facts have been so exposed as to provide the outright apologist with a difficult task, but, as we have seen with the very successful campaign to discredit Solzhenitsyn, the old weapons of vilification and mystification still work. It is said that his politics make it difficult to accept his evidence, but the truth is that Solzhenitsyn's views (and personality!) have been adduced, even by self-professed anti-stalinists, as a reason to refuse even to consider what he has to say.

A good example of the power of stalinist slanders is the fate of Victor Kravchenko, whose 1951 book 'I Chose Freedom' cost the French (who defended the Stalin myth in open court) and the German (who more wisely settled out of court) CPs large sums in libel suits. Although, as the Germans conceded, his account was absolutely accurate, he was nonetheless referred to in a Times obituary as a cold war propagandist.

Not only have the Stalinoids managed to make the equation anti-stalinist = anti-soviet = anti-socialist work even with the anarchists, who will only accept criticism of Russia from other anarchists, they have also succeeded

in historicising and diminishing the Terror: 'there were excesses and violations of socialist legality, but it was all a long time ago'.

In passing, we can note that it is their failure to address themselves to the problem of the Terror, and their total hostility to people like Solzhenitsyn that most clearly identifies Trotskyists as a stalinist faction in exile. Their enthusiasm for Ho Chi Minh demonstrated that they have no objections to terror, even when their Vietnamese comrades were among the main sufferers.



What has happened, as far as the Left is concerned, is that the two groups best qualified to inform us about the Russian system have been effectively silenced. The most vulnerable to slander are, of course, the survivors. The Left, which listens eagerly to any victim of the rulers of, say, Chile, Iran or South Africa, turns a deaf ear to them. The other group is the academics. Essential for any useful study of Russia are a working knowledge of Russian and other Soviet languages, French, German, Italian, etc; the ability to sift nuggets of significance from mountains of trivia, and pluck truth from a maelstrom of lies and distortions; and the ability to comprehend the Bolshevik mentality and its nuances of behaviour and utterance.

These qualities are rare enough. To demand, in addition, 'unimpeachable political credentials is a waste of time. There is, of course, no such thing as value-free history, and facts unrelated to analysis are meaningless. Nevertheless the academic approach is more useful to us. Academics present their evidence first and base analysis upon it, and we can take and use the information without necessarily accepting the conclusions. Marxists, marxist-leninists at any rate, start with analysis and tailor their evidence to fit it, making them inseparable.

However the work of men like Leonard Schapiro and Robert Daniels is effectively dismissed as 'hostile'. As Paul Cardan remarked, a propos the Hungarian revolution, 'the stalinist bureaucracy continues, if more indirectly, to dictate the parameters of permissible discussion'.

### CONQUEST

Indispensable to any study of the Stalin era is Robert Conquest's 'The Great Terror'. It will at once be objected that Conquest is a well-known Right/Establishment man, if not a CIA agent. That he quit the CPGB over the Hitler-Stalin pact may be attributed to youthful, long burnt out idealism.

Consider however this comment from 'The Great Terror': 'Kronstadt saw the Party aligned finally against the people. Even the Democratic Centralists and Workers' Opposition threw themselves into the battle against the sailors and workers. War was openly declared upon the idea of libertarian radical socialism, on proletarian democracy. On the other side remained only the idea of the Party'.



There is only one political grouping whose analysis leads to this conclusion and, without trying to palm Conquest off as an anarchist, I'd suggest that this is not a man who can be contained by a label.

In any case labelling is beside the point. Conquest has assembled a vast mass of information that is unavailable anywhere else in English, and none of it has been refuted or even challenged. Indeed whenever errors have been corrected in later editions, the true facts are invariably worse than had been suggested.

## KOLYMA

His latest book, 'Kolyma; the Arctic Death Camps', is a particular study of the camp system in far north east Siberia, an area totally controlled by the NKVD four times the size of France. Like most books of its kind it will not be widely read, least of all by those people who could learn most from it.

Lacking the capital to develop the Kolyma gold-fields, the Bolsheviks invested the one resource they did command - human beings. Kolyma produced 300 to 500 tons of gold a year, about 1/3 of world output. Each ton is estimated to have cost 1000 lives.

At first the treatment of prisoners was not simply vicious. As their welfare was the lowest priority, 90% of the first arrivals died anyway. Once mining began Kolyma had its 'golden age' under Barzin, whose main concern was production. After his fall, accused by Stalin and Yezhov of 'coddling' prisoners (he and his staff were shot), fur clothes and boots were banned, rations were reduced and norms raised.

Failure to meet norms was punished by further cuts in rations. Systematic underfulfilment was a capital offence, but, as the authorities knew that the quotas were impossible, prisoners were not in practice shot until they fell below 50%.

A man 'working very actively' eight hours a day requires 3100-3900 calories a day. In 1977 (!) the official camp ration was 2600. By comparison in the Japanese camps on the River Kwai the ration actually received (rather than merely the official ration) was 3400. Moreover in Kolyma men and women were working 12 to 16 hours a day in the immediate vicinity of the Pole of Cold.

Taking minimum figures at every point of the calculations, a conservative estimate of the number of men and women who died in Kolyma is 3 million. These figures are very sensitive. Minor

revisions to the number of ships servicing Kolyma (prisoners called Russia 'the mainland'), their capacity or the number of trips made in a season would yield totals of up to 5 million - well within the bounds of possibility and probably more realistic.

As a sort of control group: of 10,000 to 12,000 Poles sent to Kolyma in 1939/40, admittedly to the hardest labour, 583 survived to return under the amnesty of 1941/42.

By comparison the maximum Tsarist prison population in 1912 was 183,949; there were at least twice this number in Kolyma alone at all times between 1938 and 1953. According to official Soviet sources there were 14,000 executions in the half century before 1917; on average this number died every month in Kolyma alone.

The conclusion that must be drawn from 'Kolyma' is so obvious that Conquest has no need to labour it; the primary purpose of the camps, after 1938, was to produce corpses - gold was secondary.

## COLD & CRUELTY

Kolyma has a special place in Russian consciousness, 'the pole of cold and cruelty'. There are books, songs and poems about it, all underground now, though some were published during the 'thaw'. Its name is still resonant because it still exists, albeit on a smaller scale.

The importance of Kolyma - the Gulag problem - is that for the people of Russia and, indirectly, many outside, it is an integral part of 'socialism' in practice.

The Terror was deliberately extended into every factory, office and collective farm, every village, town and street, every Party branch, every leisure group from the highest echelons up to and including the chiefs of the secret police down to the most apolitical citizen.

The Nazi pogroms, though psychotic in origin, had their own logic in the sense that once a 'crime' had been defined the accused - Communists, Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. - really were 'guilty'. The Terror, though bureaucratic in inspiration, was totally irrational. Its 'saboteurs', 'spies', 'Trotskyists', 'counter-revolutionary terrorists', etc, were, virtually without exception, nothing of the kind.

Being both pervasive and random, the Terror deeply affected everyday life. People's most intimate experience was permeated with denunciations, arrests and disappearances. Relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours were exposed,

daily, as imperialist agents, wreckers, counter-revolutionaries. Men the Russians had been taught to respect, Lenin's comrades, confessed themselves traitors, not just in individual cases but by the score.

The Communist Party, precisely because it was the only remaining medium of political expression, suffered proportionately worst of all. Half its members, over a million in all, were shot or died in camps. That Stalin regarded Communists as being so dangerous was perhaps the most generous tribute ever paid to the moral integrity of rank and file Party members. But that Stalin could get away with what he did is testimony to the fact that they were enmeshed - ideologically and in practice - in a net that was in part at least of their own creation.

## 'MISTAKES'

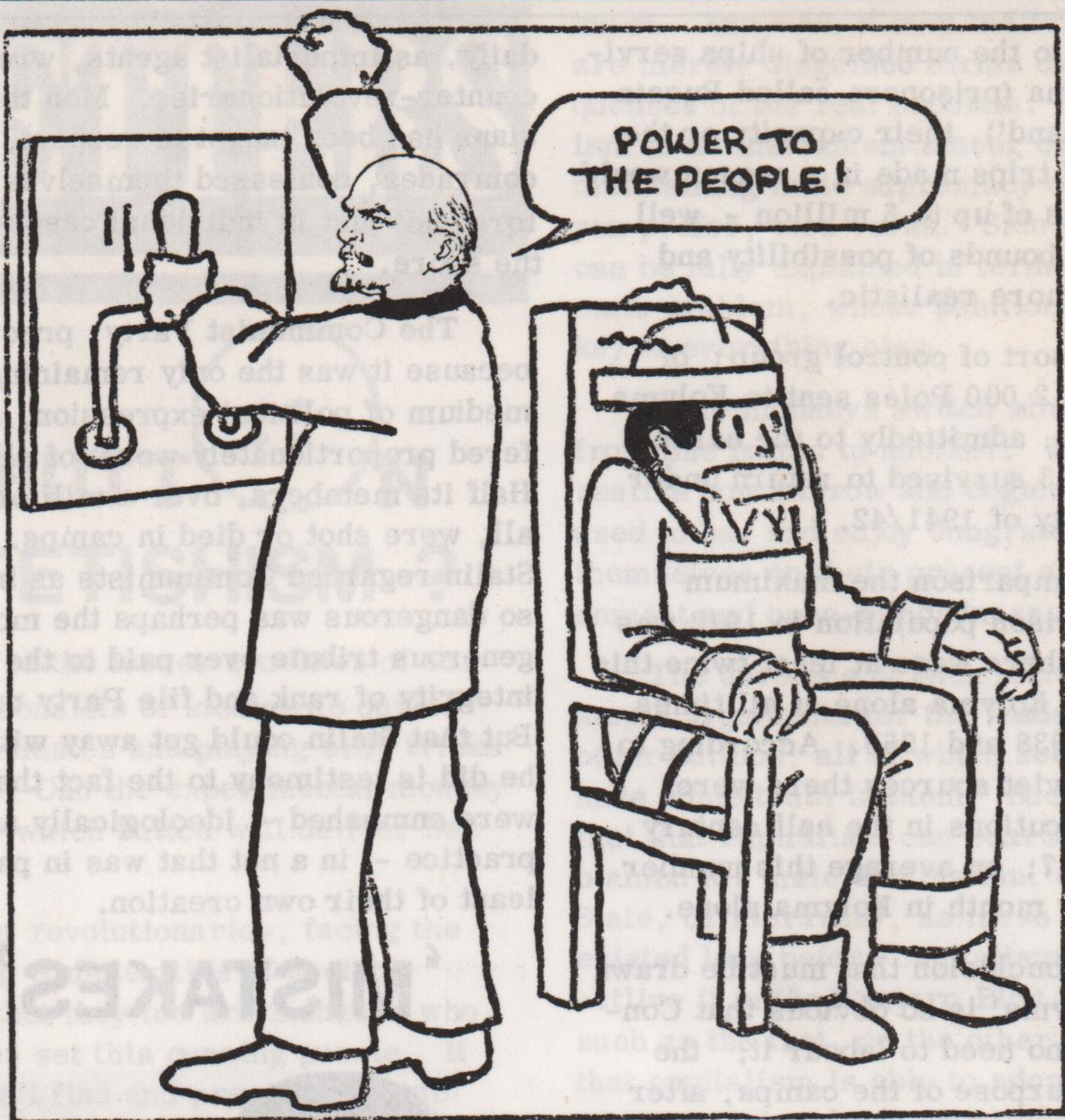


STALIN & KHRUSHCHEV (1937)

To talk of 'temporary phenomena', 'bureaucratic deformations', 'errors' or, worst of all, of Stalin's personal or political shortcomings, is totally inadequate, and any attempt to define Russia in terms of theoretical models is futile. Whatever Russia is, it has been for almost 50 years and, although there are forces for change, it is difficult to see them having any radical effect in the foreseeable future, certainly not within the present structure.

That repression now manifests itself most obviously in the non-lethal harassment of a tiny handful of dissidents is a sign not of evolution or liberalisation but of the strength and stability of the system that Stalin created. The Terror has achieved the ends for which it was intended: the transfer of control of all property and the depoliticisation of Soviet society. The role of the KGB and Gulag today is the maintenance and reproduction of this success.





Lenin: Socialism equals 'soviets' plus electrification

The idea that all policies must be in the interests of some social group ('systems analysis') is severely strained by Stalinism as Stalin practiced it. The apparent beneficiaries were purged as ruthlessly as everyone else. The whole thrust of Soviet politics since 1956 has been not so much to break with, or even come to terms with the past, as to normalise the Stalin system. The apparat today enjoys all the advantages of that system without having to endure the undesirable side-effects.

Khrushchev's achievement was to lay the burden of the past on the dead tyrant's shoulders, while retaining Stalin's personnel, policies, laws, etc. 'First, all that was good was attributed to the superhuman, positive qualities of one man; now all that is evil is attributed to his equally exceptional and even astonishing faults. In the one case as well as the other, we are outside the criterion of judgment intrinsic in Marxism. The true problems are evaded'. (Palmiro Togliatti, Italian CP leader).

At present there is no official version, even false, of the Terror. The revelations and hints have ceased,

and rehabilitations have not merely stopped but even, as in the case of Raskolnikov, been reversed. Brezhnev has added a new word to the Stalinist vocabulary - derhabilitation!

Khrushchev's successors have even reversed this process and begun to reassociate themselves with Stalin. As early as 1966 the CPSU paper Komunist could say of the Terror: 'these were mistakes in practical work which was essentially correct in fulfilling the scientifically based general line of the Party'. This year Pravda pointedly reports references to Stalin in speeches as being greeted with 'prolonged applause'.

Kolyma, and by extension the whole apparatus of the Terror, is beyond the limits of 'permissible discussion' because the regime is still exposed by it. From consideration of the nature and extent of the Terror it is only logical to move to consideration of its purpose, whereupon any attempt to identify Russia with socialism or communism, 'deformed' or otherwise, inevitably fails.

Mat Finish.



A Czech farmer was riding along on his tractor when he saw he was about to run over a toad. He took pity on it, slammed on the brakes, got down and put the toad by the side of the track. He was just about to get back on his tractor when the toad spoke to him. 'Thanks a lot, mate', he said. 'I'm a magic toad, and to show you how grateful I am, I'm going to give you three wishes'. After he'd got over his astonishment the farmer thought for a bit and said: 'My first wish is that the Chinese army should invade Czechoslovakia, and then go back home again'.

'For my second wish, I'd like the Chinese army to invade Czechoslovakia, and then go back home again'.

'My third wish is for the Chinese army to invade Czechoslovakia, and then go back home again'.

'Well', said the toad, 'you can have all you asked for. But why did you ask for the Chinese to invade three times over?'

'Because', said the farmer, 'they'll have to cross Russia six times'.



A Russian, an American and a Frenchman were discussing what real happiness was. 'Happiness', said the American, 'is getting out of the smartest car in the world with the most glamorous girl in the world to go into the most exclusive nightclub in the world'.

'Mais non', said the Frenchman. 'Happiness is eating exquisite food and drinking sublime wines in the company of a supremely intelligent and elegant woman of the world'.

'You think that is happiness?' cried the Russian. 'I'll tell you about real happiness: you are in your bunk in a hut in a Siberian labour camp. You are starving. It is thirty degrees below zero. The door flies open and the guards come in. They say to you "Ivan Denisovitch, you counter-revolutionary scum, we are going to take you out and shoot you". Then you tell them - and they believe you - that Ivan Denisovitch is the guy in the bunk below. That is real happiness!'



# THOUGHTS



"HE STARTED FORWARD AT SIGHT OF THE SMILE, AND REACHED OUT HIS HAND TO CLASP THE ONE SHE OFFERED."

I hate women. It's such a relief to write it down. When I see a woman who is radiating her femaleness, I feel a terrible anger rising inside me. I am too scared to describe on paper the thoughts that this anger gives rise to.

A number of other stimuli bring about a similar fury. Men speaking in

alarm-clocks.

Those dogs were lucky. Though they were made to drool at the sound of a bell, at least they didn't build up a mythology, a code of behaviour and an idea of their own identity, all based on the sound of ringing bells. By contrast, I have believed for so many years that sex is what it's all about,

again and again.

Unfortunately, it is not enough to be aware of a conditioned reflex for it to go away. I am not sure how to tackle this problem. Some starting points suggest themselves to me. Avoidance of genital sex with other people. Seeking that which I desire, namely human warmth, security and physical closeness directly, rather than through sex. I find myself moving towards closer friendships with men. I also find myself moving towards celibacy. This isn't easy for me, accepting celibacy feels like self-castration.

Nevertheless, once consciously admitted even as a possibility, celibacy is liberating. Celibacy is subversive! It is the dog refusing to salivate at the sound of the bell. It is the bell refusing to ring at the push of the button.

I know some women who don't bring out anger or fear in me. Women I like and feel at ease with. These women are mostly lesbian or separatists.

This is a jungle of feelings and ideas in which I am trying to orient myself. I feel like an explorer who is not only surrounded by tigers, venomous snakes and treacherous swamps, but also doesn't know in which direction home lies. There is so much I don't understand. What is sexuality? maleness? femaleness? How do they relate to friendship, affection, hugging? I cannot see the answers. I am not questioning the prefix 'hetero'. Alternative prefixes, 'homo' or 'bi' (or even no prefix at all) do nothing to soothe my anger and fear. I am questioning the very nature of the bell and I don't have any answers.

I hope I'll get some replies from other men, who are asking themselves similar questions. You can write to me c/o Solidarity for Social Revolution (London group).

Misha Wolf.

## ON MY SEXUALITY

a macho manner about any matter related to feelings, sexuality and personal relationships. Advertising posters using semi-nude women and/or men to sell product X. Songs with lyrics full of sexual games.

A Russian scientist named Pavlov carried out an experiment on dogs. Before every feeding time he rang a bell. After some days he observed that the dogs started salivating whenever he rang the bell. They had acquired a 'conditioned reflex'. I would guess that those dogs hated Pavlov, door-bells, telephones and

especially sexual intercourse. I have felt the foundations of my identity to be based on my success with women.

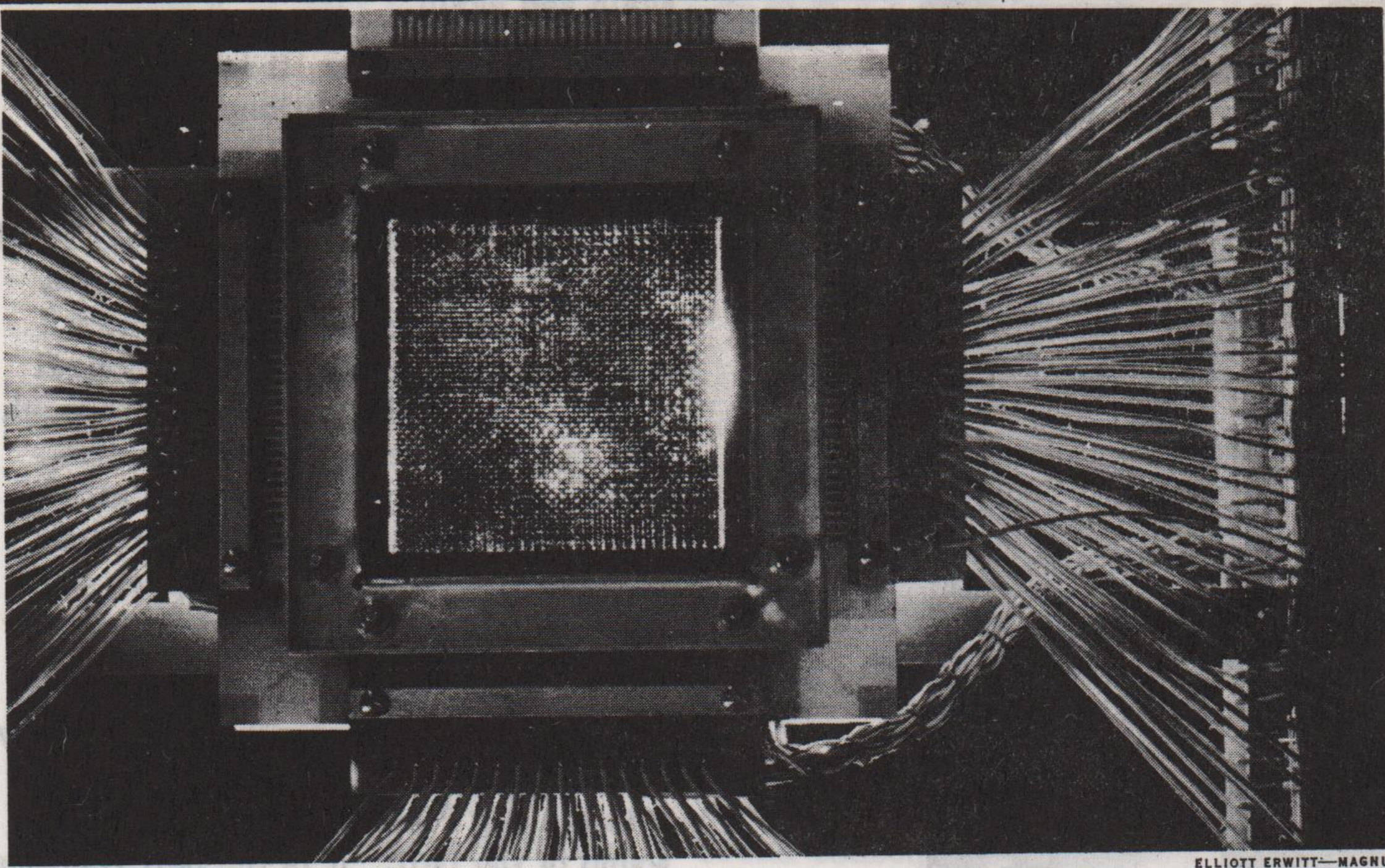
I have gradually come to see that more often than not, when I have sought sexual pleasure, what I really wanted was to hug someone, to be cared for, to feel warm and safe. I have thought for years that the way to satisfy these desires was through genital sex. Putting it down on paper it seems crazy that I could ever have believed it, doesn't it? Nevertheless I did believe it, and so was disappointed

\*ANARCHA-FEMINIST NEWSLETTER\*

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\*ANARCHA-FEMINIST NEWSLETTER\*





INFORMATION-STORING "BRAIN" OF UNIVAC COMPUTER

ELLIOTT ERWITT—MAGNU

There has been a lot of speculation in the fringe scientific press about the social effects of recent advances in computer miniaturisation. This has leaked through the media at large. The implications however have not been taken up to the extent they deserve. It may well be that the implications are precisely why the matter has not been dealt with more fully. One possible result, to put it at its most reckless, is the abolition of the working class.

under way. ICI, for example, estimate that they need to lose 4% of their labour force every year to remain competitive. The result of these combined tendencies has been the loss of one to one and a half million jobs in manufacturing over the last ten years.

But service and routine administrative jobs which have tended to soak up jobs lost in manufacturing - office jobs have increased from 8.5 to 10 million

would not represent a reserve army of labour. The relation between the unemployed and production would be that of a Third World shanty town clustered round an oil refinery - i.e. excluded and useless.

## PREDICTIONS AND REACTIONS

There have been some pretty hairy predictions. If economic growth does not rise above 2% (the average for the UK since 1950) the Institute of Manpower Studies estimates that there will be 6½ - 7 million unemployed by 1990. This takes no note of the effects of micro-processors. An ASTMS report on their effects predicts 'five million unemployed in this country by the mid-1990s even if the government takes every possible step to expand the economy'. (*Guardian*, May 12, 1978). Put these two reports together and it does not seem too much to talk of the potential marginalisation of the working class.

But while such developments might be welcomed by management on the level of the individual enterprise, the state which would have to sort out the general consequences of these develop-

# THE MINIATURISATION

Microprocessors - miniature computers based on tiny silicon chips - have developed to a point where sophisticated computer control is cheaper and faster than human supervision. A friend of mine who attended an IBM seminar on the subject quoted them saying that microprocessors had become cheaper than human beings two and a half years ago. And the Chairman of one firm that makes microprocessors predicts that by 1986 prices will have dropped to one twentieth of today's.

The range of applications is vast: 'The so-called "computer on a chip" can be incorporated into a whole host of machines and appliances to turn them into "smart machines" - that is, machines which add powers of memory, arithmetic and decision-making to their orthodox functions - whether it be cooking or cutting bits of metal'. (*Datalink*, 6/2/78). Given an unbridled development of this technology it is clear that every job involving repetitive tasks could be automated. As far as manufacturing is concerned there has been for some time a flight to the cheaper wage areas of the world, areas with more authoritarian, more corrupt and less environmentally fussy governments. For those industries which stay in the UK, automation is already steadily

in the past 15 years (*Guardian*, 6/6/78) - are now themselves threatened with an almost cataclysmic decline. IBM has designed a 'paperless office' where computers talk to each other via optical fibres and satellites. Microfilming and databanks along the line of the new Post Office facilities already promise to relegate filing clerks to the historic status of hand-loom weavers. In supermarkets computerised price-coding already enables the cashing-up of goods to double-up as stock control.

The sort of jobs that seem safe for now are those like the site-fixing side of building (all the bits could be manufactured without touching human hands, though), medicine (although lab testing and diagnosis are already candidates for automation), garage mechanics and van drivers - and of course computer operators. But the number of jobs that stand to be swept away if the introduction of microprocessors goes ahead is of such an order of magnitude (despite the number of jobs that the new technology produces) that there just aren't going to be enough van driving jobs to go round. Put simply we can say that the logic of the full potential of microprocessors is unemployment on a massive scale. This unemployment would be permanent and

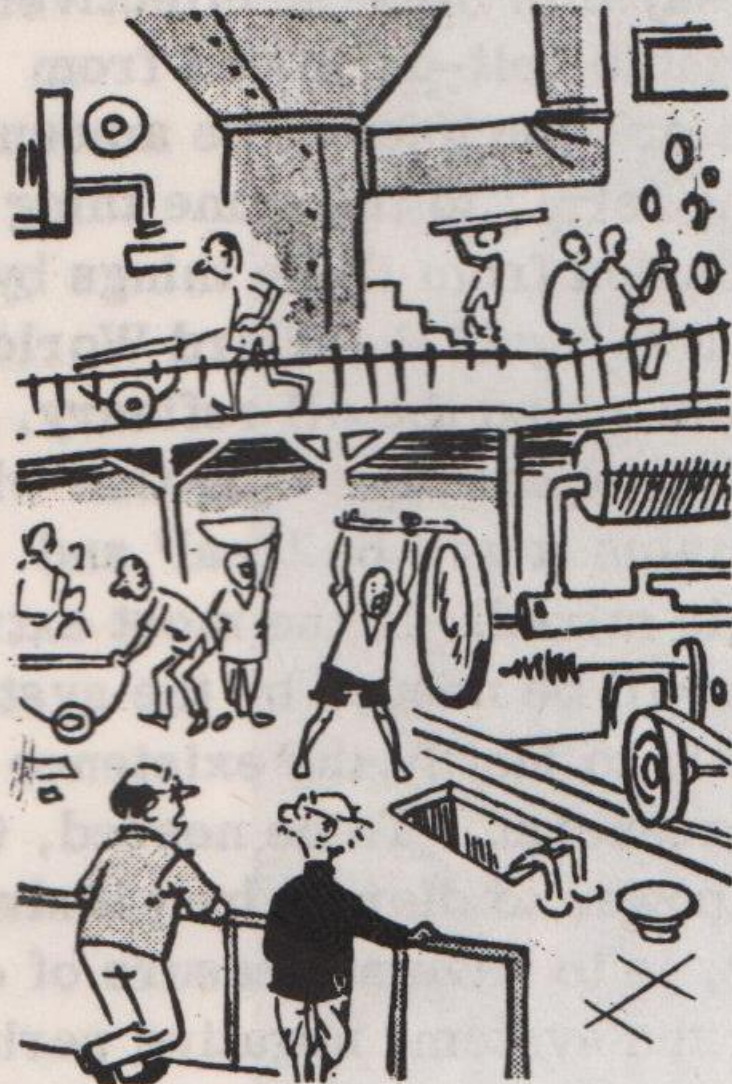
ments would not be so happy. Various stirring calls have been made to increase investment. As far as manufacturing goes this might increase competitiveness but it will also accelerate job loss through automation. (Some trade unions seem to be calling for massive investment and also fighting against the introduction of any new plant.) The state is desperate to prevent any threat to the cycle of work and consumption. While the system needs people to work, rewards (in the shape of higher consumption) must be linked to the work. Any groups outside this work/reward lifestyle have to be worse off. Yet if the numbers out of work are growing - and seem set to keep on growing - then clearly you're in trouble. Either you buy them off and risk the collapse of the work ethic. Or you don't, and risk an embittered break in the consensus and civil disorder. The short-term solution arrived at seems to be the provision of jobs regardless of point or purpose.

On one level government policy will involve a certain amount of support of the 'commanding depths' of the economy (i.e. the lame ducks), if only to prevent any disorderly increase in unemployment by sudden closures. The managed phasing out of jobs in the



older industries has become something that the government has got very good at. One can also expect further rises in school leaving age, suggestions for 1 year in ten off work, suggestions for earlier retirement, pressure to cut out overtime, all designed to reduce the numbers of unemployed.

## BOONDOGGLING



Actually this factory produces nothing. It is just a device to employ labour.

More central to our concerns and more important for the future is the government's preoccupation with 'job creation'. The thinking behind this has its origins in various interventions

But Schnellfauf is no ordinary firm. In fact, strictly speaking, like some 160 similar concerns in West Germany it is not a company at all.

Run with all the seriousness and competitiveness of normal business these mock firms trade with each other as though it were the real thing. They keep detailed accounts, have a specific nominal capital and are responsible to imaginary shareholders.

Their operations however are purely theoretical. Their main purpose is to provide practical training for the jobless. Staff have to clock in and out, and are reprimanded by their boss for arriving late or for shoddy work...

The business about providing 'practical training for the jobless' is rather put in its place by the last paragraph:

'With more than one million people unemployed in West Germany and little prospect of the number dropping, the importance of these mock firms may well increase.' (*Guardian*, January 24, 1978.)

With so many trained people unemployed, why train more, eh? No,

what we have here is magnificent. A complete world of useless work! A daily unreality! A hallucination of busyness! Yet the question that should be asked is how different this is from our 'normal' working life? After all, Paul Goodman was writing the following in the late 1950s:

'Suppose we would cut out the boondoggling and gear our society to a more sensible abundance, with efficient production of quality goods, distribution in a natural market, counter-inflation and sober credit. At once the work week would be cut to, say, 20 hours instead of 40... Or alternatively, half the labour force would be unemployed. Suppose too - and how can we not suppose it? - that the automatic machines are used generally, rather than just to get rid of badly organised unskilled labour. The unemployment will be still more drastic...

Everybody knows this, nobody wants to talk about it much, for we don't know how to cope with it. The effect is that we are living a kind of lie. Long ago, labour leaders used to fight for the shorter work week. But now they don't, because they're pretty sure they don't want it. Indeed when hours are reduced

# OF THE PROLETARIAT

by states in their economic affairs, in the thirties. Paul Goodman tells us that 'when the New Deal attempted by hook or by crook to put people back to work and give them money to revive the shattered economy there was an outcry of moral indignation from the conservatives that many of the jobs were "boondoggling", useless made-work'. The Manpower Services Commission has been born to boondoggle. A year ago it had created 70,000 jobs and has as its aim the eventual provision of 115,000 'short term jobs of social value'. The Manpower Services Commission, with its tens of thousands of Civil Servants looking for ways to make work for others, is itself a boondoggle supreme. There is little doubt that the increase in the numbers of Civil Servants in recent years is deliberate boondoggle. But for sheer class, take the following example:

'Schnellfauf Plastik (Quick Plastic Sales) seems at first sight like any other company. The office rings to the clatter of typewriters, an employee feeds data into a computer. Over in the boardroom a heated debate breaks out as executives pore over the details of a new contract.



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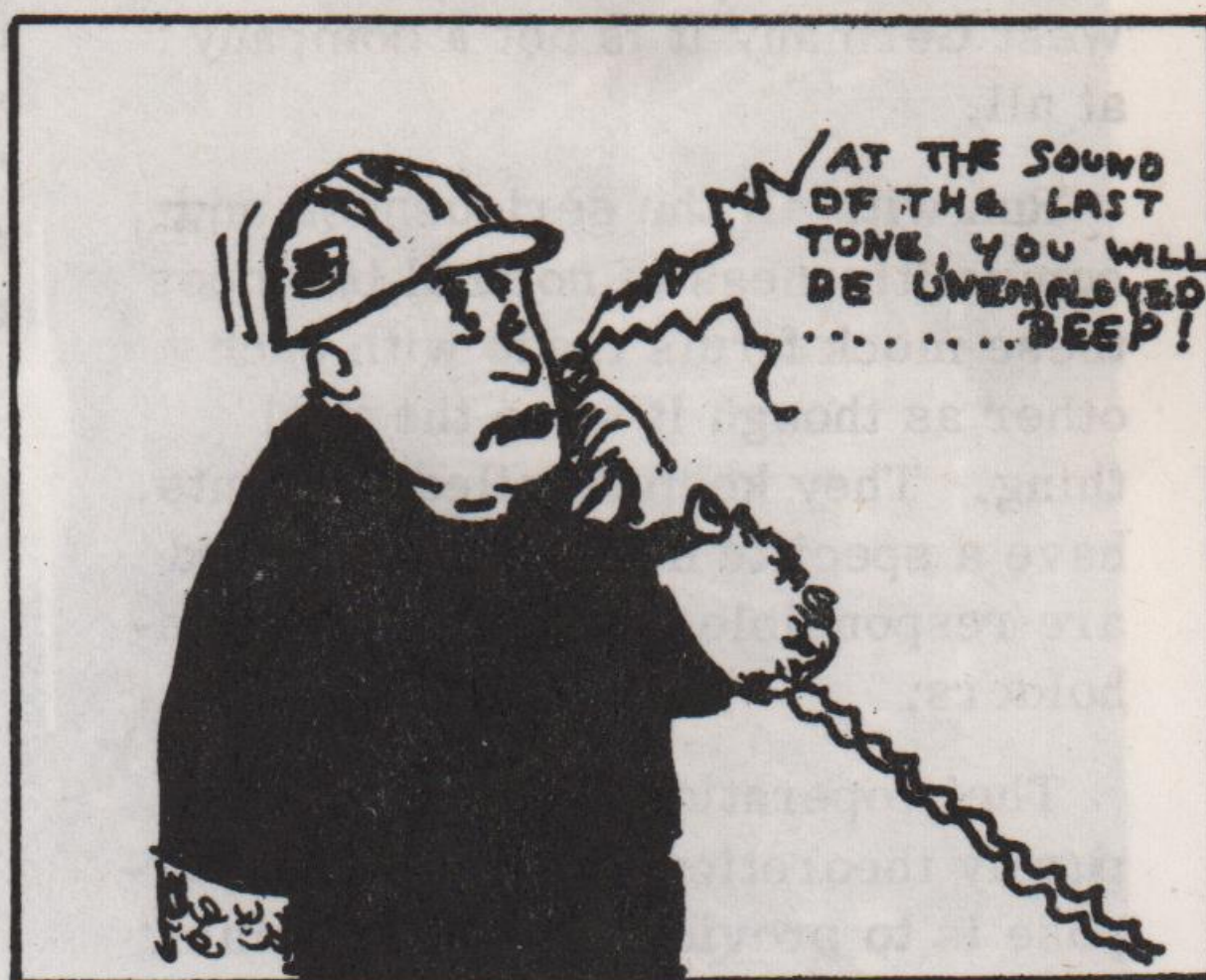


# THE CONTINUED MINIATURISATION OF THE PROLETARIAT

the tendency is to get a second, part-time job and raise the standard of living because the job is meaningless and one must have something; but the standard of living is pretty meaningless, too. Nor is this strange atmosphere a new thing. For at least a generation (i.e. since approximately 1940 - JMQ) sensible use of our productivity could have thrown a vast population out of work, or relieved everybody of a lot of useless work depending on how you take it. (Consider with how little cutback of useful civilian production the economy produced the war goods and maintained an Army, economically unemployed.) The plain truth is that at present very many of us are useless, not needed, rationally unemployable... It looks busy and expansive but it is rationally at a stalemate'. (*Growing up Absurd*, pp. 37-38.)

If Paul Goodman is to be believed, then, boondoggling has been a way of life in the West - or at least in America - for some 40 years. But microprocessors have changed the scene. Automation that was technically possible was not economically compelling, while now automation is cheaper than human beings and getting cheaper all the time. It is worth asking whether a real socio-economic break is imminent, for we are dealing with some very juicy contradictions.

The 'real' economy, both manufacture and administration, is being driven by international competition into more and more automation. Governments are being driven by political pressures to provide nonsense jobs for those out of work. The ability of governments to provide this nonsense work depends very much on the profitability of an increasingly automated economy which can provide revenue from tax. Thus the state too, in its economic role, will automate away with



the best of them. And, through its political role, it will have to cope with the social consequences of its own actions. For example the National Enterprise Board has just announced a £50 million investment to develop the next generation of silicon chips.

It seems clear that this situation cannot be anything but unstable. It has been stated by no less a person than the Chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission that 'we are on the way to a world in which about a tenth of our workers can produce all the material goods we need'. (*Observer*, February 19, 1978.) At some point on our way to that world the conventional wisdom which now demands work, no matter how useless, for the unemployed 'because it costs as much to keep a person unemployed' will start to demand well paid unemployment 'because it costs as much to give them work'.

## ALTERNATIVES

At this point we are on familiar territory for libertarians. This demand for comfortable unemployment would mark the end of the work ethic. It would mark the end of loathsome, boring toil. The situation that Kropotkin prophesied and Bookchin described as built in has arrived: technology has liberated us from work. But there has been an unfortunate tendency among socialists of all varieties to believe that somehow the system will get to socialism by itself, either by some evolutionary process or as a result of inevitable breakdown through internal contradictions. But it ain't necessarily so! While an end to loathsome, boring toil has been by socialists as a realisable goal under socialism, the fact that the system has reached that point by itself does not necessarily mean either that it has evolved into socialism or that it is about to break down in revolutionary crisis. The essence of socialism is the democratisation of society to its roots, with massive popular control over the decisions that most affect our

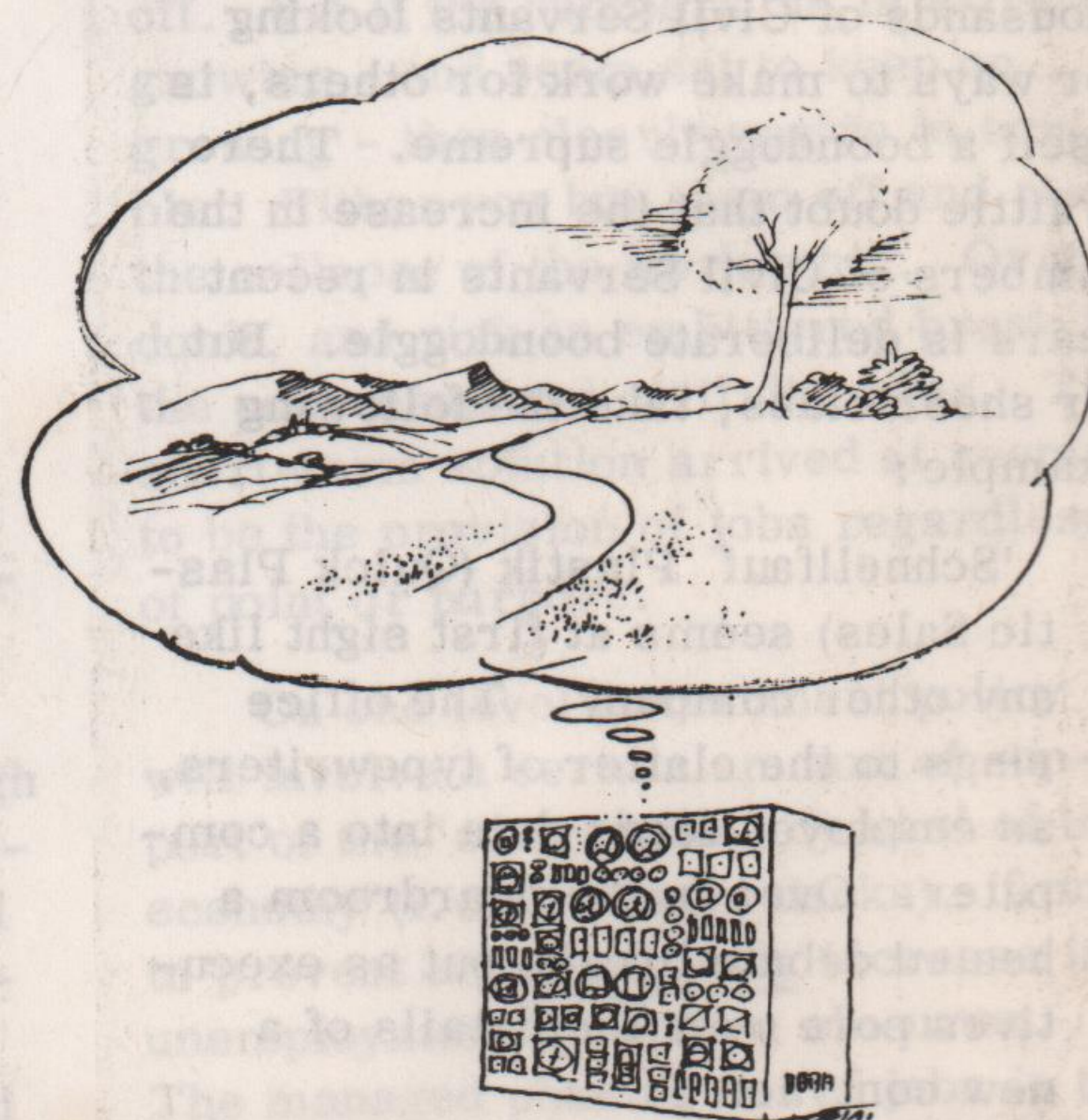
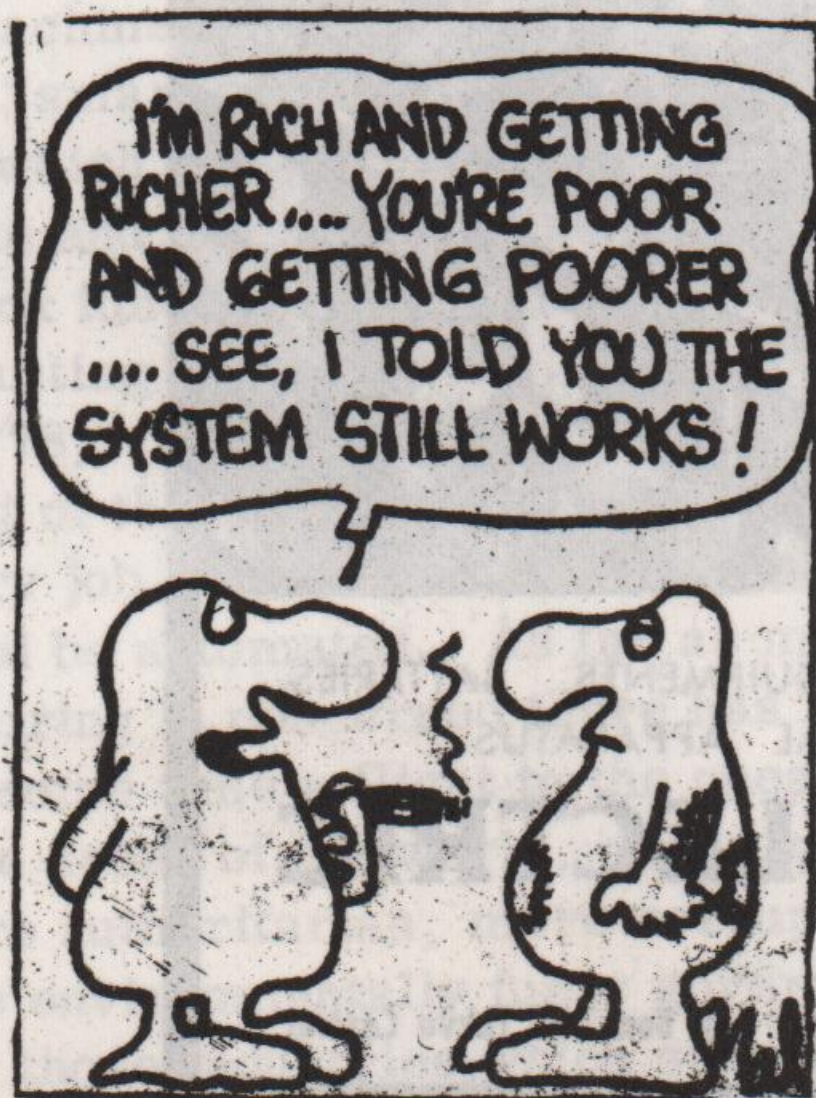
lives. It is possible to argue that, other things remaining as they are, the removal of the necessity to work for the majority of the population, even if they themselves demand it and enforce that demand, would take us further from socialism rather than nearer.

I say this because effectively a comfortable self-exclusion from economic or even useful life amounts, in the long term, to the same thing as being excluded from these things by others. It is again the Third World shanty town round the oil refinery. For the fact of the matter is that while work remains it will be 'real' and boondoggle mixed. In the most extreme cases, it will be needed by the system, even if only to justify the existence of a high bureaucrat. To be needed, to have the power to disrupt by withdrawal of labour, is to have a measure of control over the system, negative perhaps but effective. Once that is gone, the only pressure the excluded nine-tenths of the population would be able to exert would be consumer boycotts and riots in the townships.

## CREATIVE RESISTANCE

It might well be that a labour-intensive whole food-windmill-geodesic dome-stripped pine beds type of 'outside' economy might develop under such circumstances - obviously stemming from the economic fringes of our own society. It might well be that this outside economy might eventually challenge the 'real' one. But unless certain other developments took place it would be condemned to parasitism for a very long time.

All this prediction business is self-evidently tricky. Our scenario up to this point (automation leading to increasing nonsense-work, leading to an anti-work ideological break) depends

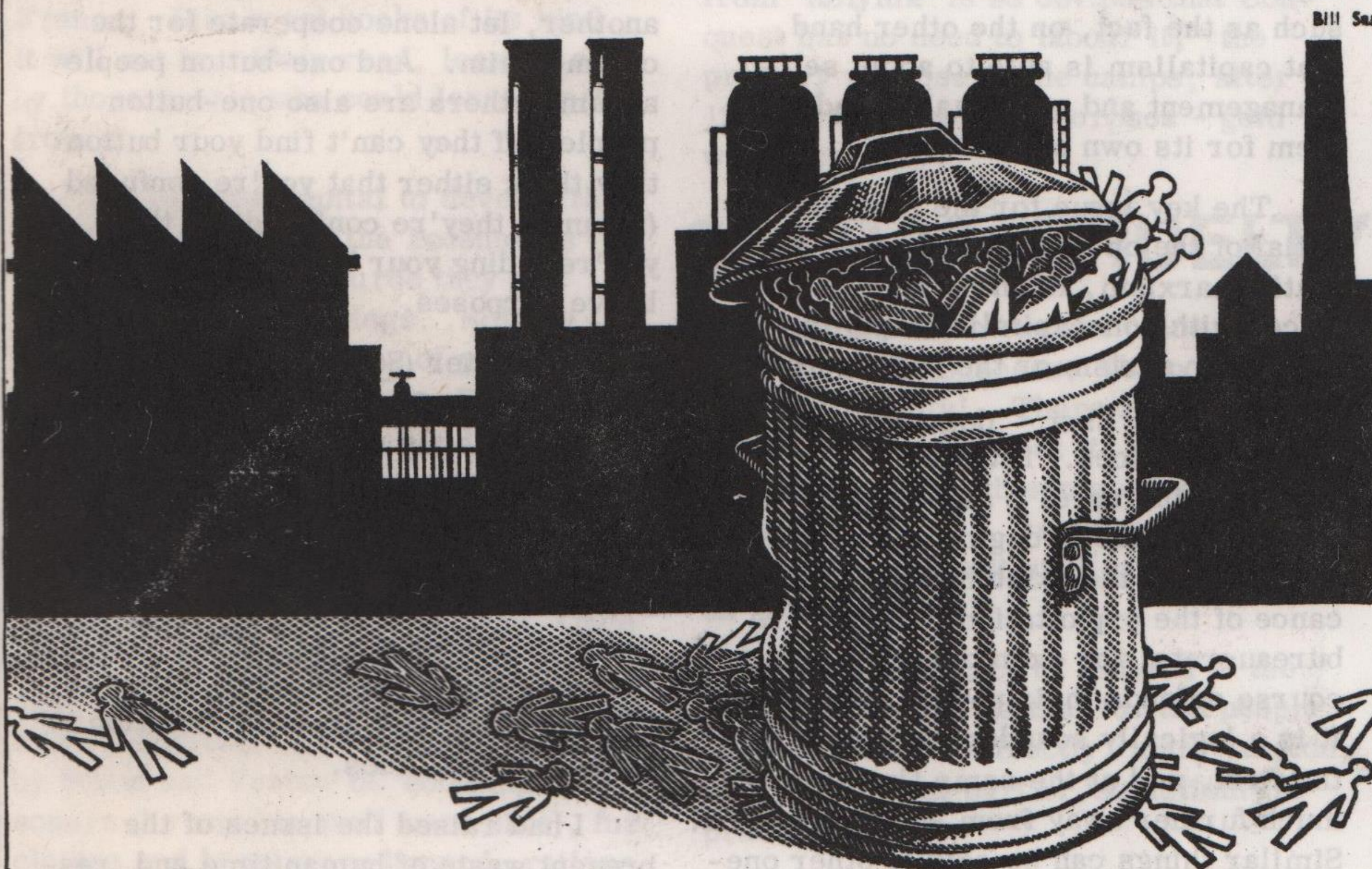




on a rather low level of popular opposition to automation and the present organisation of work. But opposing forces are possible and there are different strands to follow. Institutions and individuals whose attitude to work is based on compulsive neurosis and the fear of freedom (from something which bores and disgusts them) can be expected to oppose automation quite as much as someone who believes in human dignity through the exercise of hard won skills. The compulsive neurotics would be prepared to accept nonsense-work with depressed and depressing alacrity. Skill freaks would not. From both, however, we could expect a kind of new Luddism if opposition to automation were to grow. As to the opposition to the present organisation of work, there are two sides to this (at least). The first is the growth in numbers of small cooperatives. The other is initiatives of the Lucas Aerospace kind, where not

were. These are susceptible to face-to-face democracy of cooperatives and would make a most interesting social mix with the muesli brigade.

As far as Lucas Aerospace style initiatives are concerned, the problem is - again - capital. A set of suggestions as to how things should be produced which undermines hierarchy and managerial elitism is likely to be looked at most leerily by institutions who are in a position to lend money, but which are based on those self-same principles. In resisting such proposals the management of Lucas Aerospace and the government both reacted true to type. The latest news is that the EEC - with a longer tradition of 'trade union co-determination' but less experience of British rank-and-file militancy - is considering financing some such development. The only alternative to outside funding in the short term is some kind of insurrectionary seizure of Lucas



only what is made but the social organisation of how it is made is now the subject of contestation.

There are snags in both cases. A desperate shortage of capital often drives cooperatives into accepting loans off government bodies (like Job Creation, CoSIRA, the Council for Support of Industry in Rural Areas, etc.). These come with organisational strings attached and limit freedom of action through the huge debts involved. Another difficulty may well be that the market for things produced by cooperatives exists only in the area of small batch production, because once a mass market exists large automated machines can produce stuff cheaper and faster. There are more positive possibilities, though. For instance one area of growth in the future will be small groups of innovators, researchers or inventors - ideas as products as it

Aerospace's assets which, though interesting, would face incredible difficulties in the way of developing, producing and marketing its socially useful products. Yet despite the difficulties and pressures faced by the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine, the ideas it puts forward have huge potential. In asserting a) popular rather than managerial control of technological innovation, and b) the necessity for socially useful and responsible products, they have perhaps provided the strongest basis for contestation of the present direction and control of automation. One does not wish to wax apocalyptic but if we are to try and control automation we had better do it before nine-tenths of us are excluded from ever again having the chance to do so. Oh! yes, one more thing, there are now less than 6 years to 1984.

JMQ.

## TGWU CHINESE BANDITS SECTION

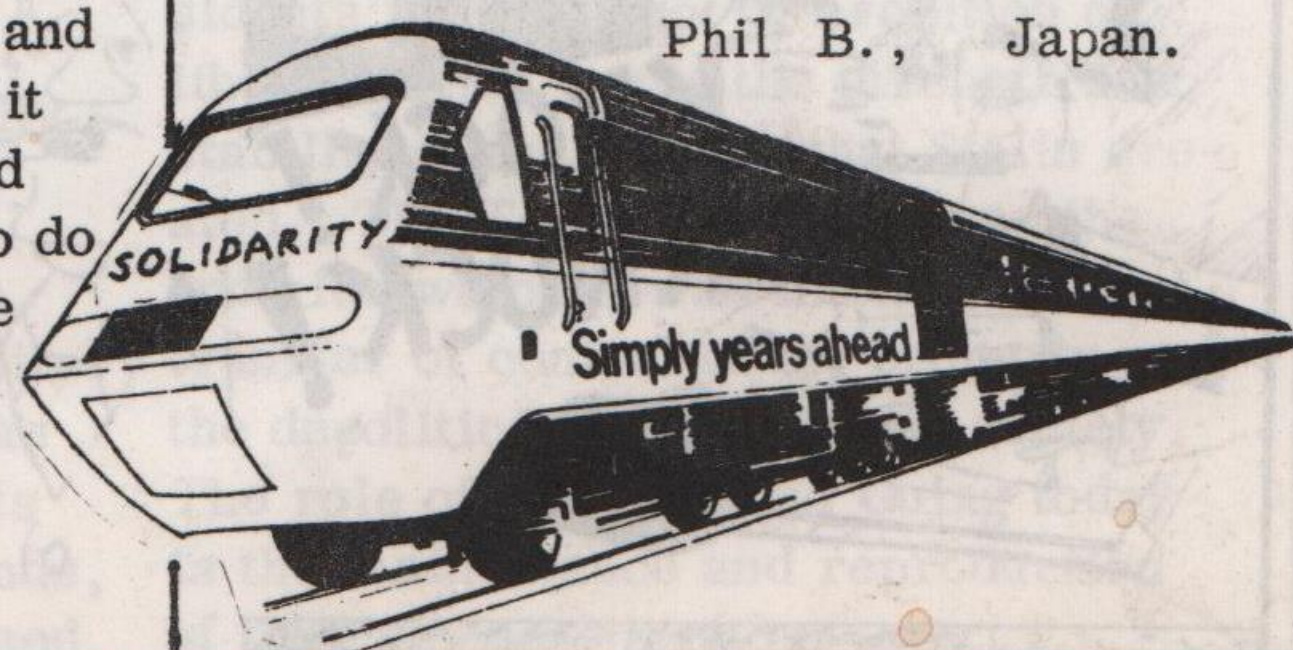
Just received 'Mutinies 1917-1920'. Where did you dig up the material for a fascinating pamphlet like that? I noticed in one of the footnotes that you referred to an article in Libero International no. 3 which dealt with the Chinese wartime labourers who went back to China and formed syndicalist unions in Shanghai and Canton.

You might be interested to know that not all the 'coolies' who came back from Europe got involved with workplace organising - most of them had no place to work. Many seem to have done what was more or less a last resort in China then: they became bandits.

In September 1923 the crack 'Blue Express' from Shanghai to Peking was derailed and several foreign captives taken and held for ransom. The negotiations lasted several months. The 'Lincheng Affair', as it was known, became a cause célèbre (it later inspired the 1931 Greta Garbo film 'Shanghai Express', directed by Frank Capra). Most of the media treated it as 'just another bandit outrage'. But I came across evidence that there was a political faction within the gang, several of whom spoke French. This group held out for a political solution to the affair, demanding the resignations of rapacious local warlords, etc.

I don't know how far the attack on foreigners was premeditated. One of the passengers was actually the niece of John D. Rockefeller, Lucy Aldrich, but the gang seem not to have known, for they released the women captives almost immediately. That would seem to suggest that there were no political contacts in Shanghai. Eventually most of the gang were enrolled in the government Army, in accordance with one of their demands. A few months later, when the fuss had died down, they were quietly bumped off - I guess in retaliation for the loss of 'face' that many of the local commanders had suffered.

Phil B., Japan.





# LETTERS

## BUTTON FETISHISM ?

One of the lesser cruelties of our species consists of locking up our fellow primates and playing silly tricks on them. Can the experimental monkey discover which button will deliver her supper?

Most revolutionaries, facing the confusing complexities of society, believe that they too are monkeys who have been set this cunning puzzle. If only we all find and press the magic button - the basic social question of our time - we'll also get our supper: an earthly paradise of goodies like freedom and equality, which we all want and hope for, more or less (some more, perhaps, and others less).

The comrade monkeys don't agree which is the right button. Some call themselves Marxists and think it's 'capitalism'. Others are called feminists and think it's 'patriarchy'. Then there are the anarchists who opt for (that is, against) 'the State', and the Solidarity members (not all of them) with a single-track passion for attacking 'bureaucracy'. The 'environment' button and the 'personal relationships' button also have their advocates.

But they all agree how vitally important it is to get to the right button - to the real, main, basic, underlying, key root problem. The other buttons - the diversions, distractions side-issues - well, they are mirages projected by the enemy. And even if they do exist, they don't matter that

much. And even if they matter, they are merely disguised forms or consequences of the real problem. Capitalism is an instrument among others for maintaining male supremacy or, if you prefer, vice versa. Side-issues can be fully explained in terms of the main problem, whose solution is the key to everything else.

Some monkeys switch allegiance from one button to another. They realise how narrow and dogmatic they used to be, and enjoy congratulating themselves on their present enlightenment and open-mindedness.

The devotees of each button have ample arguments for the inadequacy of other buttons, all of which seem to have some truth in them. Such as the fact that capitalism can scarcely be blamed for male domination, or the State, or hierarchy, as these all existed long before capitalism, and outlive it in the Eastern Bloc. Or such as the fact, on the other hand, that capitalism is able to adopt self-management and sex equality and use them for its own ends.

The key issue for the most influential of the one-button schools, dogmatic marxism, is anti-capitalism. Faced with non-capitalist exploitation - whether sexism or the bureaucratic society in the East - dogmatic marxists have two choices. Either they distort reality to interpret it as being capitalist and thus reconcile dogma with ideals. Or they deny the existence or significance of the exploitation. If they are bureaucrats, for example, the second course defends their power interests. It is a logically sounder position than the first, and at the same time one much further away from socialist ideals. Similar things can be said of other one-button ideologies.

In my view, social relationships of different kinds - family, exchange and employment, bureaucratic, the relation of people with nature and others - are interconnected and adapt to, even mould, one another. But no one kind of

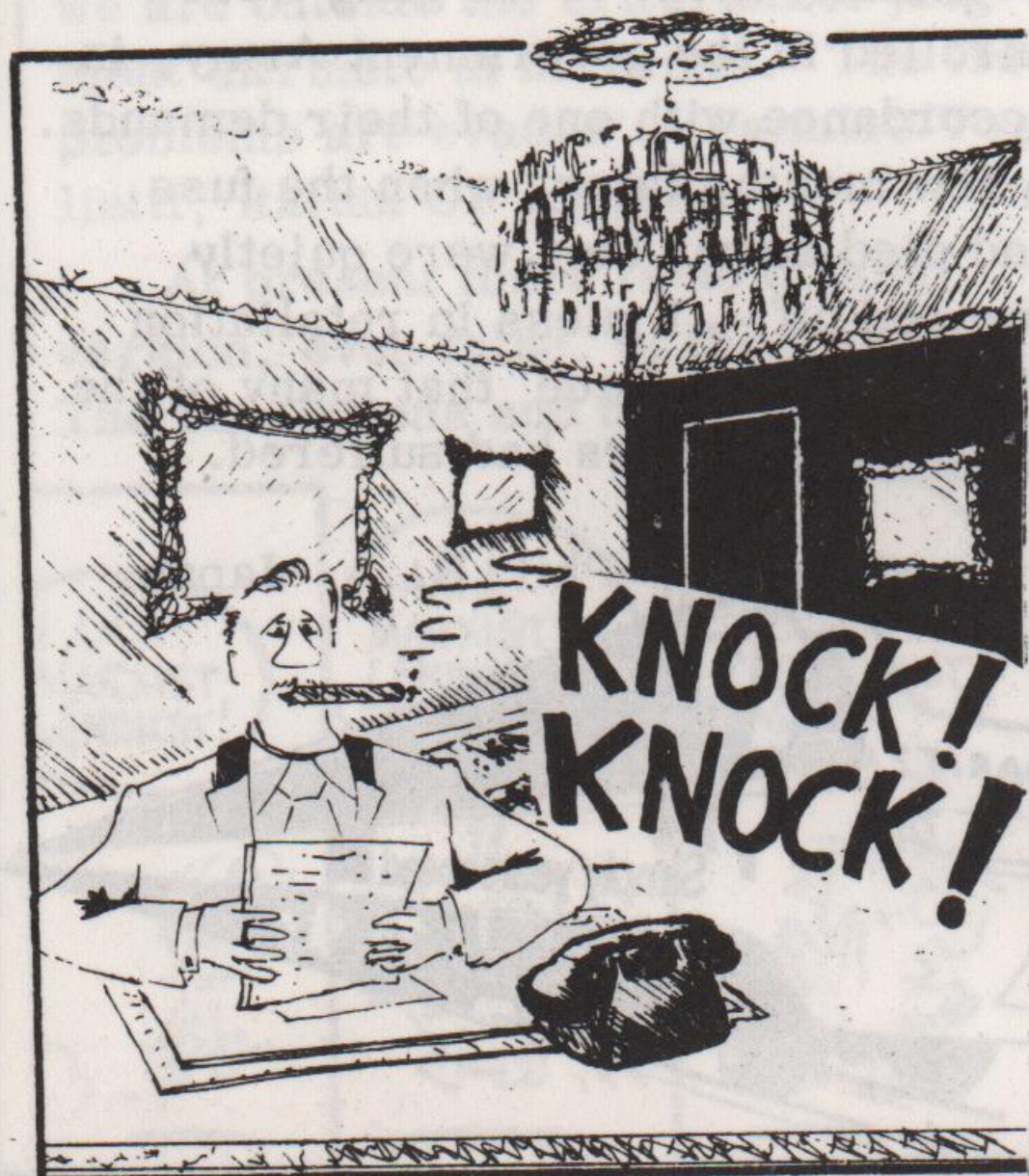
relationship fully determines the others. All buttons are necessary, and this probably includes some nobody has yet thought of. There is no magic button.

Thus each and every area of life must be transformed - we cannot concentrate safely on some to the detriment of others. It might not be enough even to transform all areas but one. Suppose that self-management, production for use, sex equality and so on were all achieved, but that people continued to neglect the needs of future generations in their attitudes to natural resources and the environment. All the socialist ideals together would not avert catastrophe.

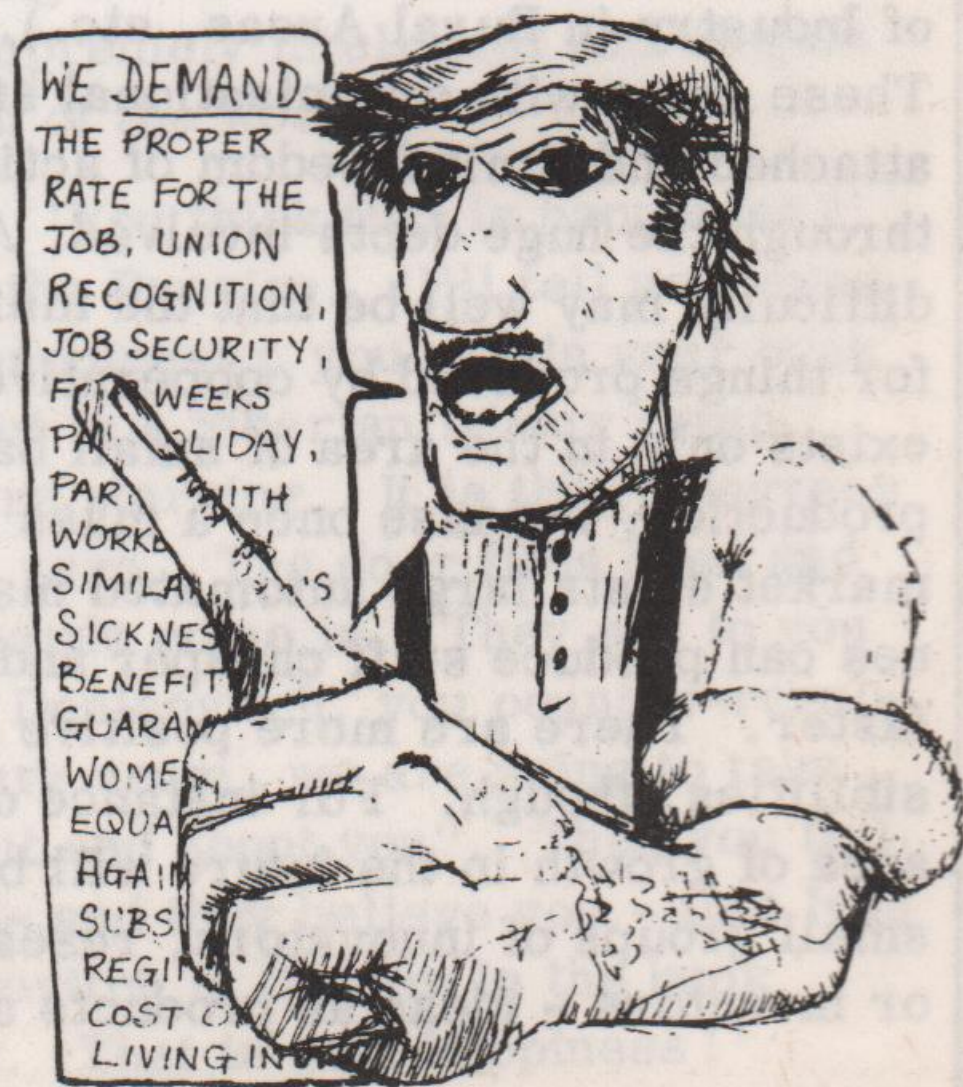
One-button people see only one main issue. They don't believe in bothering with anything less - so everyone's main issue is a rival to everyone else's. People who really share the same ideals are as a result too distrustful even to respect one another, let alone cooperate for the common aim. And one-button people assume others are also one-button people. If they can't find your button they think either that you're confused (meaning they're confused) or that you're hiding your button for manipulative purposes.

The letter (Solidarity for Social Revolution no. 3, p. 16) in which Martin S. criticises my article 'World of Waste' (SSR2, p. 8) is one of countless depressing examples of the one-button mentality. These comments do not deal with our disagreement on the question of waste, as I realise that neither understands what the other is saying. I am just drawing attention to underlying attitudes.

I had raised the issues of the present waste of human time and resources as one of many important and valid reasons for wanting a new society, one that has always been vital for me. For Martin, I (exposed as an 'alleged libertarian') was 'raising a side-issue' (this is bad), neglecting 'the main item on the agenda' (another phrase for the



O.K. GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT. WHAT DO YOU PEOPLE WANT?







"Boy, have I got this guy conditioned!  
Every time I press the bar down,  
he drops in a piece of food."

magic button - in this case 'the revolt against drudgery and hierarchy').

As far as drudgery is concerned, part of it arises from knowing how futile from a human point of view your work is - that is, from the awareness of waste (judged from a socialist vantage point, which is not the same as a capitalist one - the first considers accountancy wasteful but not sunbathing, the second takes the opposite view). On the other hand, it is possible that we shall never get rid of all tasks which are in some way drudgery.

'The struggle against hierarchy' - fine. But for Martin it is not enough that 90% of the magazine should be devoted to this struggle - he demands 100%. All or nothing. One idea at a time, please!

For example, I mention waste as part of the tragedy of war. No, he says, war is bad mainly because it kills people. Can't have 2 or 7 main reasons! Nevertheless, other things also matter here - the waste of resources, what the war machine does to people before killing them, and so on.

And 'three square meals a day' from this twisted point of view also becomes a diversion, a side-issue. In spite of there still being millions for whom the security of even one square meal a day would be an enormous relief. What hope for a new world when even revolutionaries split human needs into a hundred little pieces, and make each into an enemy of the others?

Bread - and roses too.

Stefan.

## JUST FOR THE RECORD

The unsigned editorial in the last issue cannot be allowed to pass without comment. Talking of 1968 it stated that 'the paradox of anti-stalinists waving North Vietnam flags went unnoticed. Solidarity would not now print a pamphlet about a pro-Vietcong demo without mentioning the appalling nature of that organisation'.

Neither of these statements bears much relation to the facts. When, in the summer of 1968, an IS commando led by Chris Harman literally invaded an anarchist meeting in Conway Hall, waving Vietcong flags (a vicarious Tet offensive in Red Lion Square?) many people - including the undersigned - publicly drew attention to the implications. The fact, far from being 'unnoticed', gave rise to much comment at the time. As for the Solidarity pamphlet (presumably The Death of CND) about a pro-Vietcong demo (presumably the Grosvenor Square demo of March 17), may I - as participant in the latter and part author of the former - put the record straight?

Solidarity members were present at the demonstration, selling our Rape of Vietnam pamphlet and being roughed up for our pains both by the police and by some of the demonstrators. In The Death of CND we dissociated ourselves from the VSC, which organised the demonstration, on the question of 'the nature of the NLF' and of the Hanoi regime'. We described the demonstrators themselves as having 'hopelessly wrong ideas as to the nature of the "socialism" that would follow an NLF victory'.

Our attitude to the Vietcong had been made abundantly clear long before that. In the pamphlet Vietnam (published in the autumn of 1965) Bob Potter

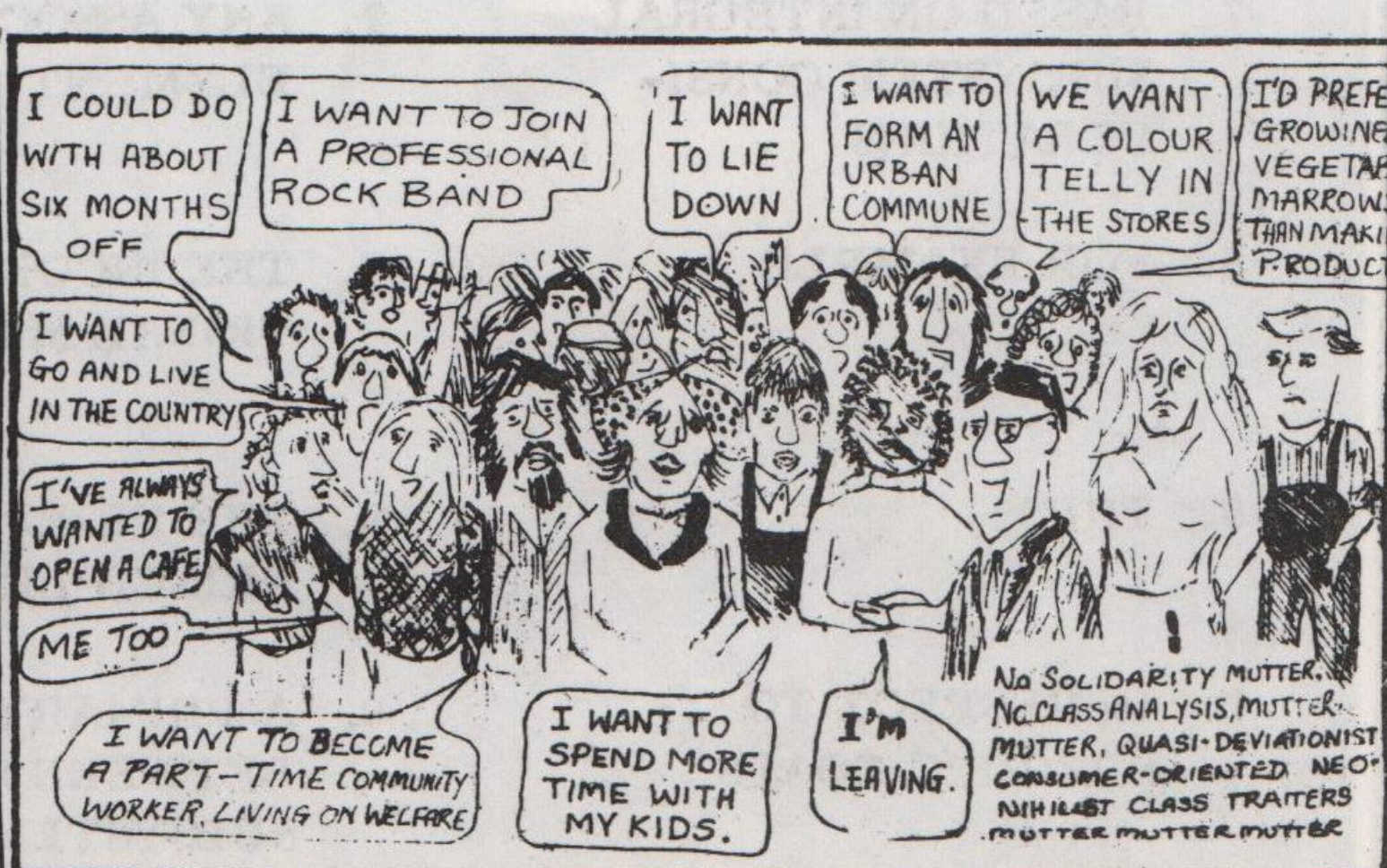
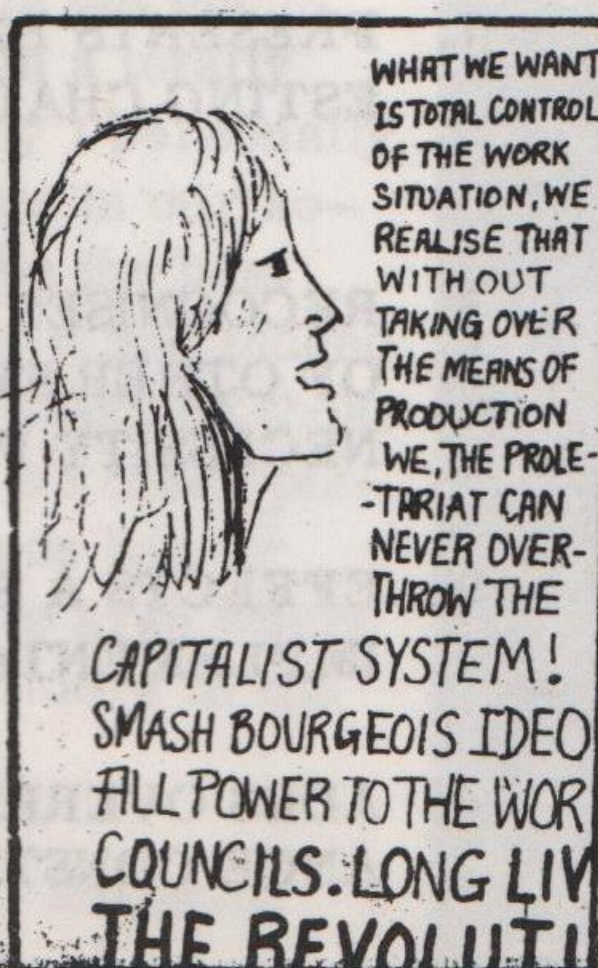
## LETTERS



had concluded that the Vietnamese were 'primarily the pawns in the struggle between rival imperialisms'. In The Rape of Vietnam (published in July 1967) the hands of the Vietcong were described as 'bespattered with working class blood'. The pamphlet drew attention to the 'liquidation by the Viet Minh of the self-governing organs of popular control and administration ... and the systematic assassination of revolutionary militants'. Although more widely accepted today (perhaps in part as the result of our efforts), these were at the time highly unpopular views. In my opinion there were wrong formulations in both of these pamphlets. But no one can accuse them of being silent about the role of the Vietcong. In October 1968 (vol. V, no. 5) Solidarity brought to the movement the whole story of the Saigon Insurrection of 1945 and of its vicious suppression by the stalinists.

The editorial writer in your last issue either doesn't know these facts (in which case he should proceed with greater caution) or he does (in which case he probably shouldn't proceed at all!). His account, as it stands, is the unacceptable face of historical nit-picking.

Maurice B.





# LETTERS



## OUTRAGED READER

Reading Liz W's article 'Politics or Biology?' in SSR 2 made me angry - and sad. I can quite understand her reactions to feminist thought - she cannot bear the idea that women are bound by our biology,

nor that men, all men, benefit from the oppression of women. These are hard realities to face - all our lives we are told to transcend our biology but at the same time denied control over it: 'be a career girl and a good mother'. Women on the left have tried to work with men as equals - it is hard to accept that they were always there on men's terms, as supporters in their struggles. You have only to look at Solidarity's statement 'As We See It'. Socialism is described as 'man's positive self-consciousness'. And that's exactly what they mean - women's liberation is not on their agenda.

But Liz seems to blame feminists for the situation which we are.

trying to fight - 'self-imposed limitations' as she calls them. She refuses to see that men gain privileges from women's oppression at every level - material, social, emotional. It is not possible for us to gain women's freedom without men losing these privileges. We must 'uphold one group against another' - women have put other people first for too long; we must learn to see women as important. Women have only recently begun to organise together - our first priority is to find out what is good for women. The 'others' whom we exclude have always been pursuing their own interests to the continual detriment of ours.

We must learn to listen to

## Jargon generator

The following useful tool for producing brain-baffling bullshit has been around in Xerox samizdat form for some time, originating from Camden Council of Social Service. It can provide you with over 40,000 ways of saying nothing at length in the now-situation vocabulary of tomorrow.

Select one phrase from each of the columns A, B, C, D and write out in full without added punctuation. Further sentences may be formed by taking phrases from the columns in the order DACB, BACD, or ADCB.

You can personalise messages to your local DHSS office, University Sociology Department, etc., by arranging your message according to their telephone number. The jargon generator can also be used to set examinations questions by forming phrases in order BCD or DCB and adding the word 'Discuss'.

### A

1. IN PARTICULAR
2. ON THE OTHER HAND
3. HOWEVER
4. SIMILARLY
5. AS A RESULTANT IMPLICATION
6. IN THIS REGARD
7. BASED ON INTEGRAL SUBSYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS
8. FOR EXAMPLE
9. THUS
0. IN RESPECT TO SPECIFIC GOALS

### B

1. A LARGE PORTION OF THE INTERFACE COORDINATION COMMUNICATION
2. A CONSTANT FLOW OF EFFECTIVE INFORMATION
3. THE CHARACTERISATION OF SPECIFIC CRITERIA
4. INITIATION OF CRITICAL SUBSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT
5. THE FULLY INTEGRATED TEST PROGRAMME
6. THE PRODUCT OF CONFIGURATION BASELINK
7. ANY ASSOCIATION SUPPORTING ELEMENT
8. THE INCORPORATION OF ADDITIONAL MISSION CONSTRAINTS
9. THE INDEPENDENT FUNCTIONAL PRINCIPLE
0. A PRIMARY INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYSTEM AND/OR SUBSYSTEM TECHNOLOGIES

### C

1. MUST UTILISE AND BE FUNCTIONALLY INTERWOVEN WITH
2. MAXIMISES THE PROBABILITY OF PROJECT SUCCESS AND MINIMISES THE COST AND TIME REQUIRED FOR
3. ADDS EXPLICIT PERFORMANCE LIMITS TO
4. NECESSITATES THAT URGENT CONSIDERATION BE APPLIED TO
5. REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS AND TRADE OFF STUDIES TO ARRIVE AT
6. IS FURTHER COMPOUNDED WHEN TAKING INTO ACCOUNT
7. PRESENTS EXTREMELY INTERESTING CHALLENGES TO
8. RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF OTHER SYSTEMS AND THE NECESSITY FOR
9. EFFECTS A SIGNIFICANT IMPLEMENTATION OF
0. ADDS OVERRIDING PERFORMANCE CONSTRAINING TO



women. No, I am not very interested in what men have to say about abortion, female sexuality or women's health, and though I would obviously not expect every woman to be interested in them as her 'prime concern' as Liz suggests, I do find that women are in general aware of their importance. Women who are forced into unwanted pregnancies, who suffer back-street abortions, who are made ill by contraceptives or forcibly sterilised, who are left to suffer all the 'female complaints' in silence, who are made to give birth in hospitals as though pregnancy was a sickness which a doctor cures you of - these women know that biology is important. And political. Until women can wrest control of their bodies, and hence of

reproduction, from men, they can never control their own lives. This is not just a slogan, but is the basis from which much feminist analysis starts.

Liz has some extraordinary ideas about the women's liberation movement. I have never met a feminist who aspired to be a scatterbrain, nor one who seriously rejected analysis and theory, though many reject the 'out-there' theorising of the male left. Nor have I heard feminists assert the 'absence of competition, self-assertion and vehemence in feminine natures'. To begin with, feminine and female are not the same thing - in the WLM we are trying to change our learnt, feminine 'natures' and to regain our female strength. Some of us begin from a denial that women and men are fundamentally different, and see equality as coming from the end of the cultural conditioning which forces people into sex roles; others believe that our strength lies in our power of reproduction, and that we must fight to control and assert this power. Despite different approaches we are working together towards a 'positive self-consciousness of women' - this requires that we first of all destroy the mythology of 'masculine and feminine principles'.

Again, feminists do not all agree on the issue of working with men - many do and many don't. But the well-worn stereotyped stories of the persecution of male children by fierce man-haters are used endlessly in attempts to scare women off from autonomous organisation. 'This sort of thing' proving the fundamental depravity of feminism.

I coordinate the Anarchist Feminist newsletter - we are accused

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of having an 'apartheid mentality'. Would libertarians dare to abuse black power organisations like this? Women organise separately, as an oppressed group - the newsletter is internal to our movement, therefore it is not sold to men. I do not see how the right of oppressed groups to autonomy can be denied in the name of anarchism - it is surely a kind of liberalism which ignores the realities of struggle to uphold some hazy idea of human rights like this.

I hope that libertarian women like Liz W. will face up to the reality of male supremacy and join the feminist struggle against it - a 'women's movement' which, as Liz suggests, repudiates feminism, could never achieve the liberation of women.

In sisterhood,

Sophie Laws,  
Bootham, York.

Note from the (female) typist: What a bore to have to type this patronising, hackneyed bullshit (cowshit?). This comrade's eyes must have been so blurred with ready-made arguments that, apart from misinterpreting the whole of Liz's article, she even failed to recognise a very well known quote from Marx (clearly put within quotation marks, by the way, in As We See It). Must we rewrite the entire literature of the world before we can begin to liberate ourselves?

J. P.

## Jargon Generator

D

1. THE SOPHISTICATED HARDWARE
2. THE ANTICIPATED FOURTH GENERATION EQUIPMENT
3. THE SUBSYSTEM COMPATIBILITY TESTING
4. THE STRUCTURAL DESIGN, BASED ON SYSTEM ENGINEERING CONCEPTS
5. THE PRELIMINARY QUALIFICATION LIMIT
6. THE EVOLUTION OF SPECIFICATIONS OVER A GIVEN TIME PERIOD
7. THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMONALITY AND STANDARDISATION
8. THE GREATER FIGHT-WORTHINESS CONCEPT
9. ANY DISCREET CONFIGURATION MODE
0. THE TOTAL SYSTEM RATIONALE

## CONTENTED

Dear Friends,

I enclose a cheque for £5 to bolster my dwindling subscription - another £2's worth please! - and to help a little toward the costs of your very valid magazine. You don't go on about 'the good old days' of anarchism but deal with relevant matters in a relevant way (unlike a lot of anarchist papers which I used to subscribe to - though I wish them well!). And you don't go on about the 'glories' (nothing glorious about death!) of urban guerillas - a form of masturbation, really. Most of all, I think, you appear to be refreshingly free from dogma. In fact

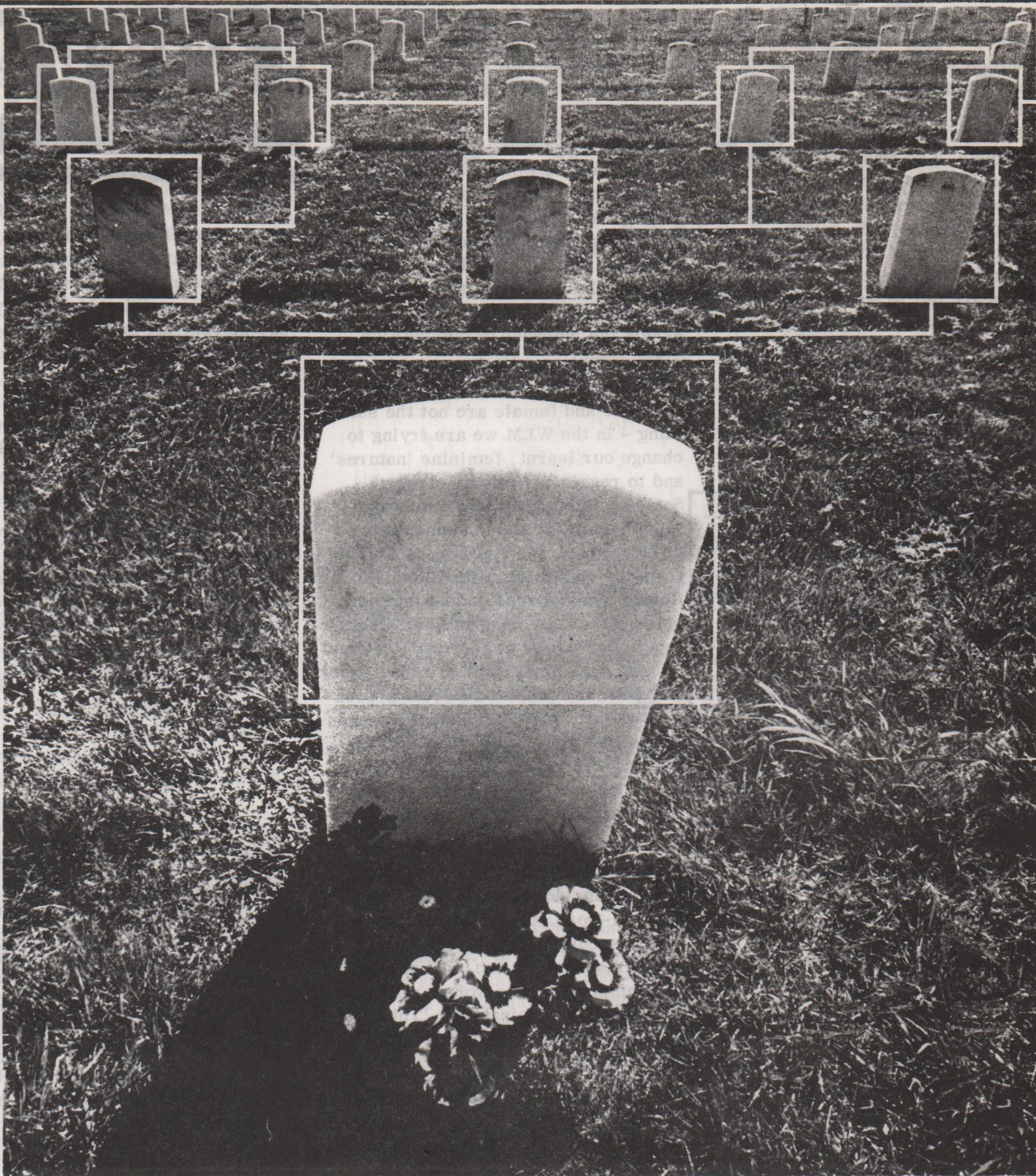
## READER

you don't flaunt the 'anarchist label' a lot (if at all) which I consider to be very commendable of you, as that is something I must confess I have until fairly recently (though hopefully not any more!) been guilty of. Solidarity is much more to the point - in other words to be a true anarchist or libertarian (a much nicer word I think) one must, I feel, liberate oneself from all systems and dogma and labels including that of anarchism. I'm beginning to sound a bit dogmatic myself so I'd better stop.

Looking forward to future publications,

Love - D.B.P., London SW16





## Giant organizations plan your future for you.

### DISSATISFIED

...Greetings and best wishes from Belfast. Many thanks for the first 2 issues of Solidarity (for Social Revolution). I can't claim to be terribly happy with them and feel that the issues I have seen of Solidarity (for Workers' Power) which had longer and better articles (I think) and which seemed to stick much closer to life at work and struggles in factories were better. I find the bits at the beginning of the new mags to be too bitty: there's a danger of becoming similar to a lot of other mags working in that area. Anyway I'll stick with it and hope it improves and look forward to your forthcoming pamphlets (any news on

reprint of Paris '68?) and resumption of your own (i.e. London) mag...

Take care,

Tómas.

### IT'S THE SAME THE WHOLE WORLD OVER

A group of brave Russian workers whose spokesman was Klebanov attempted to set up a free trade union in the USSR. They were arrested and many are now in psychiatric hospitals diagnosed as suffering from a 'mania for struggling for justice'. The gist of most of the sanctimonious crap in the papers in this country was that

'it could not happen here'.

Well, maybe it could and maybe it couldn't. But one is certainly left bemused by the following: the Guardian (June 14) reported that an attempt by Eric Heffer, MP, to table a motion calling for Labour Party support for the Russian dissidents, in the Labour Party International Committee, was thwarted. The majority, opposing such a motion, first wanted to hear the reply of the USSR to a letter from Len Murray on the subject.

However the Guardian says: 'It was Mr John Forrester (AUEW) who made the main case against the motion, arguing that even British workers were not entitled to form break-away trade unions'. (Our underlining)



# as we see it

(from p.2)

they given the bulk of mankind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free.

- 3 The trade unions and the traditional parties of the left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing patterns of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The unions act as middlemen in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends. The degeneration of working class organisations, itself the result of the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which in turn has led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions.
- 4 The trade unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured', or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organisation of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class may take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic content will not.
- 5 Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and a radical transformation in all human relations. It is 'man's positive self-consciousness'. It is people's understanding of their environment and of themselves, their domination over their work and over such social institutions as they may need to create. These are not secondary aspects, which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary they are essential parts of the whole process of social transformation, for without them no genuine social transformation will have taken place.
- 6 A socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers' councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. This democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by 'workers' power'.

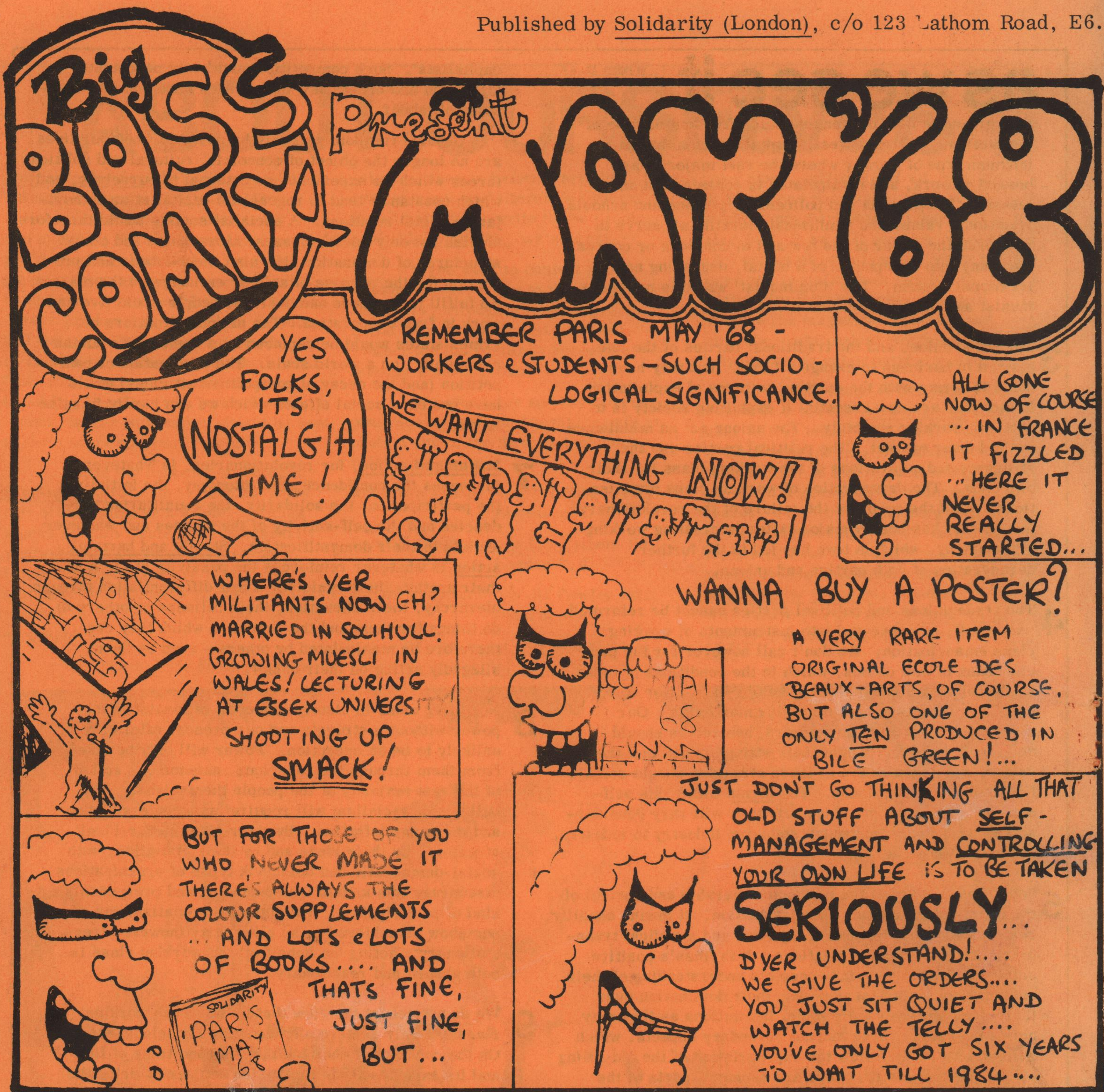
Self-managed institutions and collectivities will be the living framework of a free society. There can be no socialism without self-management. Yet a society made up of individual self-managed units is not, of itself, socialist. Such societies could remain oppressive, unequal and unjust. They could be sexist or racist, could restrict access to knowledge or adopt uncritical attitudes towards 'expertise'. We can imagine the individual units of such a society - of whatever size or complexity (from chicken farms to continents) - competing as 'collective

capitalists'. Such competition could only perpetuate alienation and create new inequalities based on new divisions of labour.

Genuine freedom will only be possible when our lives are no longer the object of economic, cultural and political forces which we experience as external to ourselves, and which constantly tend to regenerate capitalist or authoritarian social relations. A socialist society would therefore abolish not only social classes, hierarchies and other structures of domination, but also wage-labour and production for the purpose of sale or exchange on the market. To fulfill their needs and desires, people would live and work in free cooperation. The national frontiers of armed states would be replaced by a democratic human community, on a world scale. The elimination of competition (and the decay of competitive attitudes) would have profound social effects which we can hardly imagine today.

- 7 Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.
- 8 No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and by their activities, both social-democratic and bolshevik types of organisations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however 'revolutionary') acting 'on behalf of' the working class is both absurd and reactionary.
- 9 We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organisation which challenge the established social order and established pattern of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle, and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another.
- 10 We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership, but merely as an instrument of working class action. The function of SOLIDARITY is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and of its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed.





## SOLIDARITY (London) PAMPHLETS

POSTAGE  
EXTRA

MODERN CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTION by Paul Cardan. The problems of our society (bureaucratisation, political apathy, alienation in production, consumption and leisure). What are revolutionary politics today? 75p.

WORKERS' COUNCILS AND THE ECONOMICS OF A SELF-MANAGED SOCIETY by Paul Cardan. The libertarian socialist alternative to private capitalism and to bureaucratic state capitalism. From workers' management of the factory to workers' management of society. 40p.

THE IRRATIONAL IN POLITICS by Maurice Brinton. How modern society conditions its slaves to accept their slavery. Sexual repression and authoritarian conditioning - in both Eastern and Western contexts. 40p.

VIETNAM: WHOSE VICTORY? by Bob Potter. How American, Russian and Chinese imperialisms clashed - and came to terms - in South East Asia. A much expanded version of earlier Solidarity pamphlets on this subject. 35p.