

Aug 1968

Solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER



CZECHOSLOVAKIA :
The end of an era

FRANCE :
Posters and Documents

INJECTION MOULDERS
LOCKOUT

INJECTION MOULDERS LOCK-OUT

This article is an answer to those dockers (and other workers) misguided enough to swallow the racist nonsense of Enoch Powell. It is about a dispute in which the bulk of those involved were Pakistanis and West Indians. It should help explode the myth that immigrant workers are prepared to accept wages and conditions that British workers wouldn't touch.

The article also shows how a relatively 'new' labour force, unfamiliar with the tortuous and time-consuming channels of 'official procedure' (and lacking the cynicism bred of repeated 'betrayals') can immediately resort to radical methods of action and -through sustained solidarity - achieve worthwhile results.

The lock-out involving 90 men at a small factory in Queensbury should be studied by socialists and industrial militants. It illustrates a rather neglected feature of monopoly capitalism.

We are all too familiar with the usual results of takeover bids: closures and sackings. But in other cases smaller units swallowed up by the Big Boys are in fact kept open. Having studied this article the reader will know why.

It is taken for granted by those with scant knowledge of industry that certain standards are adhered to regarding working conditions and hygiene. Many believe that wages, if not generous, are at least adequate. This dispute should be an eye-opener to them.

Injection Moulders Ltd. is part of the giant Guest Keen and Nettlefold (GKN) empire (total capital £240 million!). It is situated on the small Queensbury (Middx) Industrial Estate. The factory produces plastic mouldings for a variety of industrial products (switches, insulators, etc.). It became a subsidiary of GKN's last year (1967). The firm held a long reputation for being anti-union. Prior to the takeover, it had been engaged in recruiting immigrant labour to such an extent that Asians and West Indians comprised over 90% of the labour force. This recruitment has been continued by GKN. One would like to think that this was a philanthropic gesture by a liberal management, eager to prove itself a pioneer in industrial race relations. However, it is more likely to reflect the firm's experience with 'cheap labour' in South Africa and Rhodesia. Incidentally, GKN is one of the biggest contributors to Tory Party funds.

Language difficulties and lack of industrial experience limit the areas of work open to Asian immigrants. To shrewd managements, these men appear an 'attractive proposition'. But capitalists frequently fall for their own lies: the cheap labour myth was the one Injection Moulders management swallowed. This illusion and many others have taken a knock during this dispute. Workers, irrespective of race, have to pay the same prices in the shops. Asian and West Indian immigrants often fork out a lot more for rent. Therefore acting as cheap labour just wasn't on.

'SOMETHING OUT OF DICKENS'

At 5/5 $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour for machine operators, the wages at Injection Moulders are among the lowest in the area. In order to take home sufficient to live on the men often exceed a 70-hour week! At the rates GKN are paying, they can afford any amount of overtime.

Only the management can understand the bonus scheme. Errors are often made. The chargehands say 'We're only human' - a claim that no one who has worked for them would endorse.

The working conditions remind one of a story out of a Dickens novel. The shop floor is dusty and hot. Sanitary arrangements are primitive: filthy wash basins, no proper drinking water, only four W.C.s (one of these had to be used as a urinal). Any operator wishing to visit the toilet had to get someone to 'stand in' for him. Several workers have been refused permission. The discomfort and indignity caused by such callousness can be imagined. There are no tea-breaks at Injection Moulders. If you do have tea, you drink it while you work. Operators often work from 7 pm to 2 am without a break. It isn't surprising that some of them decided things couldn't continue like that.

The factory had never been T.U. organized - and it seemed unlikely that Asian and West Indian immigrants could manage to do what their white colleagues had failed to do in 25 years. Yet this is precisely what they did. It is a remarkable achievement considering the difficulties they faced. Several Pakistanis and West Indians had some T.U. experience. Several were well educated but due to the colour bar in jobs they had entered industry - poetic justice indeed! It was extremely difficult to organize openly, but despite this some men were recruited into the AEF. Encouraged by this, the North London Area Organizing Committee of the AEF leafletted the factory.

The management sacked one man who was active in the union - for breaking a moulding pin valued at 6d! Stewards were victimized by being forbidden to talk to their fellow workers. One steward was told not to talk to the men because 'it could reduce output'. As the number of men joining the union grew to 50% the management decided to use the age-old 'divide and rule' policy. They conferred staff status on the setters. Despite this, by March 1968 95% of the machine operators were in the union. They proved to be no mere card holders, but men determined to struggle for better pay and conditions.

Speed-up began after the Time and Motion people had visited the machine shop. The 'experts' would study a machine and its operator for 30 minutes (the machine had to be operated 12 hours!). Machine rates were increased and so were the minimum job rates necessary to earn a bonus. One machine set at 65 cycles an hour was speeded up to 90. Not surprisingly, no one could make it pay.

THE 'GRANULATING' QUESTION

Excess plastic from mouldings is trimmed off and re-processed by granulating. This job had always been done in a separate room. The management decided to fit each machine with a granulator. Each operator would have to run this machine as well as his own. Quite apart from the extra work involved, the men objected to the health hazards. The grinders were dusty and anyone drinking or eating would be lucky if he didn't swallow the dust. Many got sore throats and lost their voices.

The management refused to discuss with the shop stewards using the pretext that they hadn't been officially informed of the stewards' names! Negotiation eventually began but one steward was excluded because his name had been misspelt. The management appeared to concede that granulating was a separate job and that lack of space was their problem. But they didn't seem in any hurry to solve it!

On June 18, 1968, the stewards informed the bosses that their members were no longer willing to operate the granulating machines - until talks began. The management made no reply. The lads worked normally - i.e. refused to do the granulating. On June 24 a Works Conference was held. The bosses refused to negotiate unless the operators did granulating.

That afternoon the manager called one of the day shift stewards into his office (the other steward was ill at his home). While the manager and steward were talking, the supervision were busy in the machine shop. They approached the operators and tried to get them to sign a book - this would commit them to operating the granulators. This crude attempt to cut off the men from their stewards failed. The lads refused to be intimidated. They wouldn't discuss anything in the absence of their elected representatives. The management told the men to go out and informed them that they were sacked.

SOLIDARITY

The locked-out workers sent for the night shift steward, then waited until 7 pm for the night shift men to appear. A meeting was held and it was decided that the night shift would go in and work as usual. On entering the factory the night shift workers found no clock cards in the rack. The stewards told the bosses that the men would be willing to work but not to granulate. Within minutes the police arrived and ejected the workers. They came from Wembley, some miles away. It looked as though the whole operation was planned.

Two weeks later the locked-out men received a letter informing them that they were dismissed. They refused to collect their cards. The bosses then sent them to the Labour Exchange.

The North London District Committee of the AEF met on July 1st and decided to support the Injection Moulders workers. Eight days later the Union Executive gave official backing. This encouraged the men - their loyalty and faith in the union is fantastic (it will no doubt take a knock in the future). The slow machinery of officialdom churned into action, soon overtaken by the solidarity of local militants. Collections were held in nearby factories. Workers from Simms Motor Units, Hoovers, Roto-print, Phillips and Fords, Hilger and Watts joined the marches in solidarity. They also put pressure on to ensure that products from Injection Moulders were 'blacked'. Students joined the picket lines and were present every day of the dispute.

Many of the locked out men had purposely saved some money for such a dispute. The not so well off were taken care of. Stewards would gather the men around them and ask if any of them had a pound note. Two groups would emerge: the haves and the have nots. The money was then shared out without a murmur either of protest or gratitude. There was a silent understanding between them.

'INTEGRATED' SCABBING

The blacking wasn't extensive and the factory continued some production. The management succeeded in persuading some other workers to do the operators' jobs. Chargehands would operate fork lift trucks in the road, although they had no licence. Alf Payne, local AEF branch secretary, got onto the local police. They 'checked'... but the work continued. The quality of the work produced by the scabs wasn't up to much. Frigidaires, Fords and Rotoprint rejected much of it.

An American firm called 'Manpower Ltd.' supplied 30 scabs. They were a cosmopolitan crowd: white, Asian and Negro. Some were students. One drove his Union-Jack-bedecked motorcycle right through the picket line. Policemen standing nearby ignored the incident. 'Manpower' received 11/6 per hour for each scab supplied, out of which the scabs received 7/6 an hour. Obviously Injection Moulders could well afford to give its operators a rise.

Does the P.I.B. know about scab rates which involve less productivity - and bad quality at that? It was nauseating to hear student scabs rationalizing their disgusting behaviour. Another nasty taste was the fact that two white workers who had at first supported their colleagues took money from the strike fund and then went in and scabbed! It was a bizarre situation: black and white students and workers were inside the factory, scabbing; black and white workers and students were outside - manning the picket line!

Drivers would be stopped by pickets and told that an official strike was on. TGWU card holders would ring their district officials and were told 'we know nothing about a dispute'. So much for official help. A sympathetic driver would sometimes be persuaded to come into the management's office 'to use the phone'. After a few seconds, he would emerge and proceed to unload his lorry. It is not known what passed between them in the office - but it is unlikely to have been a discussion on business ethics!

No mention of the workers' case appeared in the local rag. It referred to Injection Moulders and peddled lies about the role of 'professional demonstrators' (the people referred to were industrial workers and students of International Socialism and Solidarity who were able to assist the workers). The article also referred to the coloured workers 'who remained loyal'. White legs?

THE BOSSES START TO CRACK

The AEF officials put pressure on Manpower Ltd. who withdrew their men. This was one of the first signs of victory. The bosses no doubt surprised at the assistance the immigrants had received from other workers and perturbed at the phenomenon of political groups helping their employees started to talk with the union. Bill McLoughlan (a dissident CPer) and his assistant Les Elliot met the management who offered a 1/- an hour rise but declared that they reserved the right to exclude persons they considered 'undesirable'. A meeting was held outside the factory and this 'magnificent' offer was turned down flat.

The spirit of solidarity had to be seen to be believed. Unlike other groups of workers these immigrants had little choice of jobs - they couldn't afford to chuck a job in and move on. They had their backs to the wall. They were determined to fight and win. At one meeting in the Queensbury swimming baths the Brent C.A.R.D. people attempted to recruit the locked out men, but were unlucky. The locked out men wanted practical help - they seemed unimpressed by C.A.R.D. claims that 9 out of 10 problems could be solved by union officials or local MPs. C.A.R.D. could have assisted by dealing with the black scabs, or picketting, rather than by trying to recruit members.

POLITICAL GROUPS

For a considerable period political groups have joined picket lines (Shell Mex House, the Barbican, etc.). This has often either been resented by strikers or has taken an artificial character - substitution for the lack of real working class support (May Day March). The Injection Moulders lock-out saw the emergence of a different kind of student. These were comrades who have now had considerable experience of factory leafletting, etc. - they had access to valuable information and time to assist. I.S. comrades and one or two Solidarity members who weren't on holiday turned up to join the picket line. Leaflets were produced informing local factory workers of the dispute and appealing for funds. Shop stewards were contacted. Posters were made. For a change these comrades formed part of a team: too often students seem to 'know better'. This time they listened and offered help.

VICTORY!

On Wednesday, August 14, the management conceded defeat. Tea breaks would be allowed. Improved amenities for meal breaks were promised. A rise of 1/7d per hour was offered (with bonus, a rate of 8/6 per hour was thus guaranteed) and accepted.

The men had planned to resume work on Monday 19th. But on Thursday 15th the stewards discovered that the management had decided to put the machine operators on a 3 shift system (the scabs and setters were to remain on a 2 shift basis). This was rejected by the men as another way of dividing them. Despite the gains already made they decided to stay out until this idea was dropped. It was. A weary and utterly defeated management caved in. The men went back on Thursday, August 22.

This is a victory for rank-and-file trade unionism. It is also a victory against the lies of racialists who spread the bilge about immigrants undercutting British workers. In this dispute a small number of men fought against tremendous opposition. They thought perhaps that they would be alone in their struggle; so apparently did the Injection Moulders management. They both proved wrong.

TOM HILLIER.

APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Although this dispute is now over, many debts have piled up for these men. We appeal to all trade unionists and progressives to send financial support to:

S. Zaman,
6, Wood Lane, Kingsbury, NW9

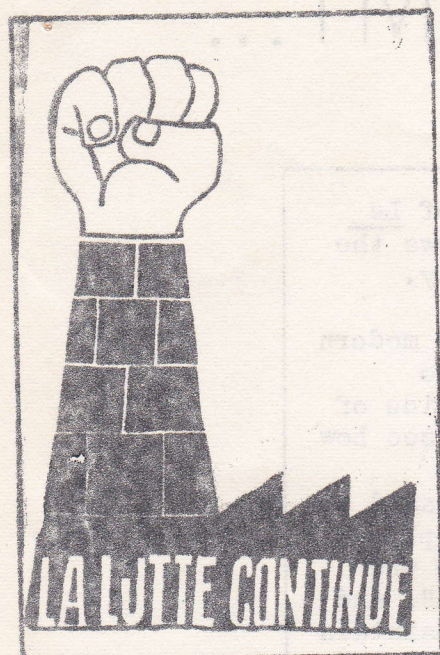
F
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E

The next few pages carry material relating to the French events of May and June. On pages 7, 10 and 11 are copies of some of the posters (many of them coloured), a rash of which cropped up on the walls of every district in Paris. They were produced at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, converted for the purpose into Ateliers Populaires (Peoples Workshops). These posters played a big role in counteracting the official propaganda being churned out daily by the mass media.

The cartoon on p.15 does not (unfortunately) refer to Britain. But we don't doubt British trade union officials would feel much the same.

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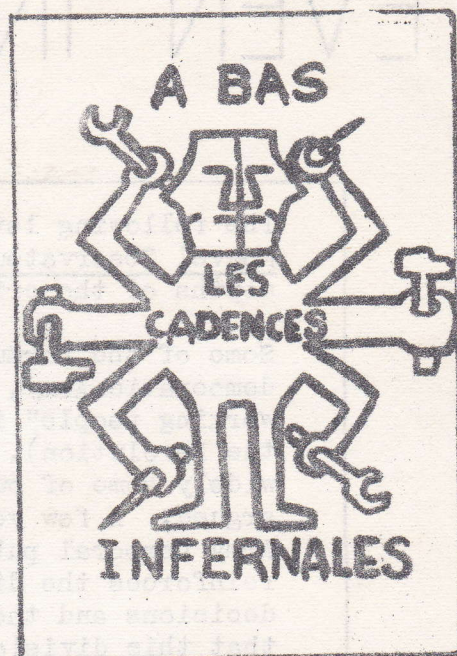
POSTERS OF THE REVOLUTION



The struggle continues



Striker (at Sochaux)
tackles the Peugeot lion



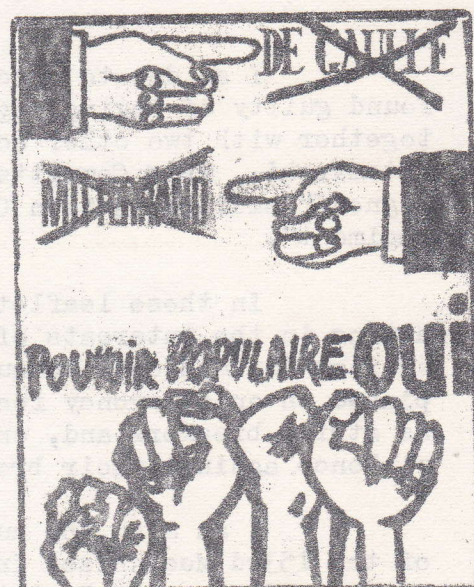
Down with speed-up



You're young.
Shut up!



Real worker-student
solidarity (as at Renault-
Flins against the CRS who
tried to occupy the factory)



For the power of the
people

EVEN IN THE ARMY...

The following letter was published in No 193 of Le Nouvel Observateur (July 22-28, 1968). It shows the depths of the crisis that shook France last May.

Some of the formulations may be ambiguous ("a modern democratic Army, acting in the interests of the working people" is certainly impossible this side of the Revolution). We are pleased, however, to see how widely some of our basic ideas are now being argued. A few years ago, who would have envisaged an Army Corporal publicly proclaiming that "discipline reinforces the division between those who make the decisions and those who have to carry them out", and that this division is "necessary in order to maintain economic and social management in the hands of a minority"?

I am due to appear before a Military Court where I will be found guilty of having organised a Soldiers' Action Committee, together with two other soldiers: Corporal Fugier and regular soldier Antomarchi. This Committee organised the distribution of two leaflets signed "Soldiers' Action Committee of the 153rd Mechanized Infantry Regiment".

In these leaflets we advocated a modern, democratic Army, acting in the interests of the working people. We warned all conscripts against "exceptional measures" (such as confinement to barracks, being placed on an emergency footing) which might have led to them being used as strike-breakers and, one thing leading to another, to commit acts of violence against their brothers; the workers, peasants and students.

I am also the author of an Appeal (signed "Action Committee of the 153rd Mechanized Infantry Regiment") which was distributed on a nation-wide basis. In this document I denounced the present kind of military service as organised but hidden unemployment for young people. I denounced its obsessional discipline, based on values never to be questioned. The function of this kind of discipline is to reinforce the division between those who make the decisions and those who have to carry them out (a division necessary in order to maintain economic and

and social management in the hands of a minority). To this type of discipline I counterposed a responsible type of discipline based on the joint management of military activities between conscripts and military instructors. Despite this, I will be found guilty of incitement to indiscipline.

I will be done for "attempts to demoralise the Army". I here affirm that the only demoralisation possible would be the one resulting from the Exceptional Measures resorted to by the Government (abolition of leave, state of emergency, etc.) - measures which created a climate of uncertainty, to be added to the strains due to lack of mail and to the stoppages on the railways, for which the Government bears the entire blame. This kind of demoralisation might have resulted in unwarned sections of conscripts being used against their class brothers, the workers, peasants, and students.

I am finally accused of being involved in a plot. I proclaim that we only had the courage openly to state what 80% of conscripts are thinking.

To struggle for our acquittal is to struggle for the rights of expression and of political choice among those called up. It is to struggle for a democratic army, at the service of the working people.

Corporal Le Bris.
153rd Regiment of Mechanised Infantry,
Mutzig.

PARIS: MAY 1968 (SOLIDARITY Pamphlet No.30)

An eye-witness account of events in Paris. The Sorbonne 'soviet'. Inside Renault. The role of the French C.P. and the C.G.T. The Censier revolutionaries.

Over 4000 copies already sold. 1/5 (post free)

RECENTLY REPRINTED : (prices include postage)

KRONSTADT '21 by Victor Serge (9d)

THE WORKERS OPPOSITION by Alexandra Kollontai (3/-)

HUNGARY '56 by Andy Anderson (4/3)



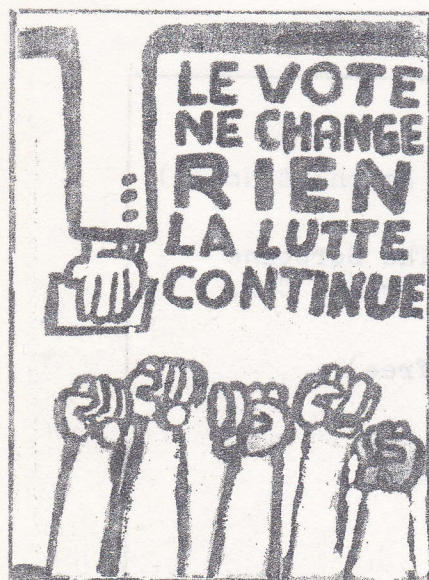
To work now would be to work with a gun in one's back



The impetus has been given for a long struggle



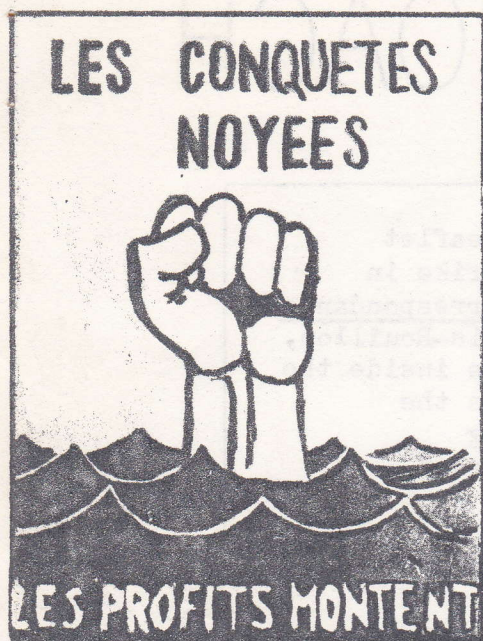
Let's continue the strike. Capitalism is dying.



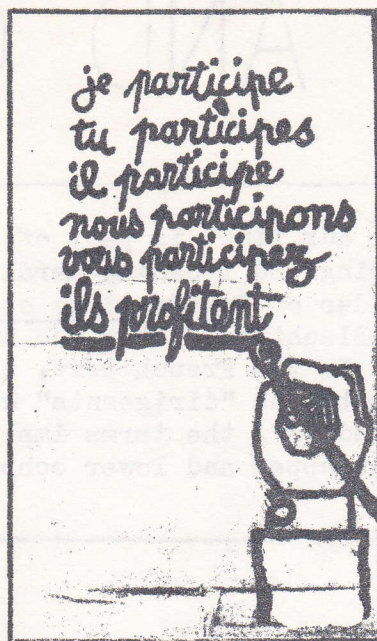
Voting changes nothing. The struggle continues.



Carry on with your voting. I'll see to the rest.



Gains drowned as profits rise



Press: do not swallow



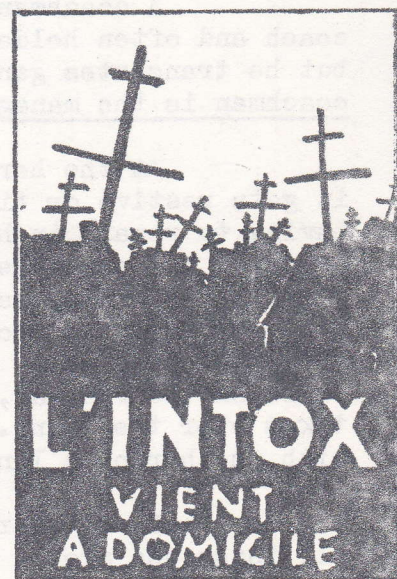
Light wages, heavy tanks



MY victory



Police at the ORTF means the police in your own home



Poison delivered to your home

HORSE AND COACH

This "fable for our time" is part of a leaflet distributed during the recent general strike in France by comrades of Informations et Correspondance Ouvrières (c/o Blachier, 13 bis Rue Labois-Rouillon, Paris 19ème). In the French text, those inside the coach are described as "dirigeants" while the coachmen are "cadres", the terms implying respectively the upper and lower echelons of management.

The society in which we live and work is like a coach drawn by a horse.

Those who give the orders are inside the coach. They are sheltered from everything. They decide where the coach should go. They also decide what the horse's ration of oats should be, when it should rest and at what speed it should advance.

A coachman relays their orders to the horse. He sits on the coach and often holds a whip. He doesn't decide on the basic things but he translates general decisions into practical instructions. The coachman is the managerial apparatus in the factory.

At the horse's side walks a footman. He pats the horse when it gets restive or tired. He more or less successfully comforts it for having to remain in harness. He prevents it from breaking free and smashing the carriage. He puts blinkers on the horse to prevent it from seeing what goes on in the coach, from seeing that others enjoy life while it slogs on, from seeing how green are the fields around. When the coachman is tired or incapable of controlling the horse, he calls on the footman, who then climbs up onto the coachman's seat and takes over the reins. The footmen are the trade unions. They have been with the horse so long some of them think they own it!

In the harness is the horse, which pulls the coach . . . and all those who are in it, on it, or around it. The horse is the worker. For him the harness of work and all the servitudes of his condition. The horse decides nothing, not even when it will eat its oats. (The ration, anyway, has been determined by others.) The horse doesn't even have a say as to when its blinkers may occasionally be removed.

The oats are the workers' wages. The reins are the managerial instructions. When it has been decided that the horse may rest, worn out after a day's work, the blinkers are removed. But by then the horse doesn't really feel like looking or walking around. Anyway, it's usually night.

Each of the characters mentioned has wishes of his own, which he seeks to fulfil, by force if necessary.

The bosses, who take the fundamental decisions, aim at perpetuating their privileges. They want to remain inside the coach. They do all they can to keep others out. Above all, they want the horse to keep on pulling. Catastrophe, for them, isn't so much that the horse stops from time to time (one can always find a carrot to get it moving again). Catastrophe, for the bosses, is that the horse should refuse the harness, for those in the coach would then have to get about like everyone else.

As for the coachman, he would like to ride inside the coach. He would like to take a hand in all the decisions. But, of course, he too insists that the horse remains in harness.

The footmen (trade unions) would like to climb up and take a seat by the side of the coachman - or even to be allowed into the carriage (altering the structure of the carriage, if needs be, to make room for "everyone"). Of course the footmen too insist that the horse go marching on.

What has happened today? The horse has suddenly stopped pulling the coach. It is on strike. A slight increase in its ration of oats doesn't seem enough to get it moving again. Nor do some of the other usual carrots. So one has to talk to it of other things. Basically everyone knows that the horse has only one wish: to be free of the harness. But no one talks of that. No one even dares think of it!

The horse still refuses to budge, whatever those inside the carriage say or do. Everyone is in a dither. The coachman and footmen will do everything, except remove the harness. They promise to increase the oat ration. They will shorten the working day. They will look after the horse better. They will even remove the blinkers for short periods, or let the horse itself determine in part how fast it will move, or how much it needs to eat to get on with the job. That is workers' participation as understood by coachman and footmen.

Provided the horse can be made to "return to its senses" the bosses might allow the coachman (and even the better dressed of the footmen) to come into the carriage from time to time, to see how some of the decisions are taken.

With the horse at work again, it will be time enough to talk about whether to load it a bit more, or to make it run a bit faster; time enough to argue about the oat ration. The main thing for 'everybody' is that the horse should move. Otherwise 'everybody' will have to walk.

As for the elections, their only purpose is to decide whether the coach should remain blue, or be painted pink... or even red. And as for the horse, it will only be truly free when it can get out of the harness and stop pulling the carriage around.

LYING LOW

It is now common knowledge amongst revolutionaries that the French Trotskyists grouped in the F.E.R. - a sister organization of the Young Socialists (Clapham brand) - refused to participate in the Paris 'night of the barricades' on Friday, May 10.

Not only did the F.E.R. refuse to cancel their mass meeting, scheduled for that evening but, once their meeting was over, they marched to the barricades of the rue Gay-Lussac seeking to dissuade students from manning them. The June 1968 issue of 'Keep Left' describes this exemplary behaviour of the self-proclaimed vanguard as 'a highly disciplined demonstration up to the barricades in an attempt to get the anarchists to withdraw'. Why did they do it?

According to 'Keep Left' 'heroic though the battle (of May 10) was, the sad fact is that it was unnecessary. It was already clear that the students could only be successful in their struggle with the support of the working class, which by that time was forthcoming'. 'Keep Left' gives as evidence for this 'forthcoming support' of the working class an 'emergency meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party at 2 am on Friday, May 10, held to change its line and call a general strike and demonstration against police repression for May 13.'

Extensive inquiries have shown that there was no such call at the time stated. In fact it was only in the afternoon of Saturday, May 11 (i.e. after the tremendous student action during the night of the barricades) that the CGT issued its call (together with other unions) for a 24-hour strike on Monday, May 13. They were forced to do so precisely because of the courage and militancy shown by those students who did man the barricades. What the CGT had proposed on the Friday (i.e. before the barricades) was a demonstration (not a strike) for the evening of May 14.

Anyway, we always thought that revolutionaries determined their actions by the requirements of the situation, not on the basis of gossip as to what the Stalinists might or might not be planning.

The absence of the F.E.R. from the barricades will long be remembered. So should the endorsement of this evasion by the leadership of the Socialist Labour League (sorry, 'Keep Left').



BROTHERS, I HEAR YOU'VE STOPPED WORK ...

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??

YES! WE HAVE! THAT'S RIGHT!



IF YOU'VE DOWNED TOOLS YOU MUST HAVE A GRIEVANCE
I'M YOUR UNION OFFICIAL. DONT HIDE ANYTHING FROM ME ...

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??



IT'S YOUR WAGES, I BET. YOU WANTA RISE, DONT YOU?
THAT'S IT, EH?

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??



OR IS IT BONUS? OR OVERTIME? I'LL HAVE TO SUBMIT
A REPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT AND TO THE EMPLOYERS. I'M
YOUR REPRESENTATIVE. TELL ME!

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??



YOU FUCKING BASTARDS!
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME
WHY THE BLOODY HELL YOU'RE
ON STRIKE?

WE WANT THE REVOLUTION...

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??



THE REVOLUTION?
YOU'RE NUTS!
THE BOSSES AND
GOVERNMENT WOULD
NEVER AGREE!

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??

WOLINSKI

LITERATURE AND REVOLUTION

We would like to draw the attention of French-speaking readers to 'La Brèche' (obtainable from Fayard, 6 rue Casimir Delavigne, Paris 6, price 10F.) and 'La Grève Généralisée en France' (from P. Blachier, 13bis rue Labois-Rouillon, Paris 19, at 2.50 F.). Both are fearless and original analyses of the May and June events guaranteed to annoy every kind of traditional revolutionary. We also recommend 'La Grève à Flins' and 'Ce n'est qu'un début'. The first contains inside material on what happened at Renault-Flins, the second a discussion with militants of the March 22 Movement on the themes of self-defence and 'autogestion' of the factories and faculties. Both books are obtainable from Maspero, 1 Place Paul Painlevé, Paris 5, price 6F and 9F respectively.

'L'insurrection Etudiante' (Union Générale d'Editions, 5F) is also useful, its 500 pages being devoted to the escalation of the struggle in the student milieu between May 2 and May 13.

For detailed information as to what happened in certain factories and offices, we recommend the excellent 'Cahiers de Mai' (from Marcelle Fournié, 80 Quai de la Rapée, Paris 12, at 1F each). The May-June issue of the review 'Partisans' (Maspero, 9F) reproduces many of the leaflets and statements issued by Action Committees, political groupings and established personalities throughout the whole period. It is likely to become a classic. 'Analyses et Documents' (Nos. 154, 155 and 156, from 29 rue Descartes, Paris 5, at 2F each) likewise provides an extensive documentation. 'Les Murs ont la Parole' (Claude Tchou, 7F) reproduces part of the wisdom that suddenly blossomed on the walls of the Sorbonne and elsewhere. Copies of 'L'Enragé' contain superb cartoons, many of which would probably be forbidden here on the grounds of 'obscenity' or 'incitement to disaffection'. They can be obtained (1F each) from Pauvert, 8 rue de Nesle, Paris 6. The student paper 'Action' can be had from the SNESup, 28 rue Monsieur le Prince, Paris 6.

For those who want analyses that will confirm their pre-determined conclusions (that it was all quite classical, that everybody had predicted it, that 'all-that-was-lacking-was-a-revolutionary-party-of-Leninist-type') we suggest subscriptions to 'La Nouvelle Avant-Garde' (from van Ceulen, 111 av. Seghers, Bruxelles 8), 'Lutte Ouvrière' (from Rodinson, 54 rue Monsieur le Prince, Paris 6) or 'Jeune Révolution' (from Berg, 131 Boulevard Victor Hugo, Clichy 92). Like the proverbial Bourbons these dealers in revolutionary dogma have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. They make interesting reading, however, as exercises in 'retrospective rationality'.

REVIEW

KNOW YOUR ENEMY. 'A report on the reports' by Bernard Ross. Published by Coventry May Day Manifesto, 38 Park Road, Coventry. (Price 1/-)

This 16 page pamphlet is an exposé of the spate of recent reports on the industrial conflict and trade unions. It concentrates on the menace of measured day rate in the motor industry in general and the Coventry factories of Rootes Motors in particular, and provides readers with a substantial amount of material not published before.

To me the most interesting parts of the pamphlet were those dealing with the productivity agreement proposed by Rootes for its Coventry works and with the "Blue Book" published by the Coventry Engineering Employers Federation. Both documents were master-minded by George Cattell who was both Manufacturing Director of Rootes Motors and Chairman of the "Working Party" responsible for producing the "Blue Book". He has now been appointed by Barbara Castle to lead the Labour Government's Manpower and Productivity Team. One can, therefore, assume that both the Rootes agreement and the Coventry Employers' effusion now represent, at least to a limited extent, Government policy.

The pamphlet quotes from the "Blue Book" at some length. Rightly so. For this book outlines the attitude of management towards Measured Day Rate in a cold and brutally frank manner. One passage reads prophetically:

"Such negotiations (for wage increases under measured day rate) on a factory basis, only taking place periodically, would remove from the stewards their present continuous function of being active negotiators on piecework price bargaining to which they owe much of their importance and influence. The substitution of conversion-figure negotiation on a factory basis would probably involve full-time officials of the unions because of their importance. . . this again would be advantageous to the employers. . . The stewards would be most concerned to retain their bargaining strength, but the unions as responsible organizations would probably accept the change."

This pamphlet clearly and with careful documentation establishes the real meaning of the employers' offensive in the motor industry. It should be read by all militants. It is all the more welcome because it seems to reflect a change of attitude in some people grouped around the May Day Manifesto who have in the past shown illusions in the national trade union bureaucracies.

K.W.

LINWOOD: THE A.E.F. ACTS

Solidarity (Vol. 5, No. 2) contained a long article on the outrageous agreement recently signed at Linwood by the NUVB and the TGWU. Since then the agreement has been endorsed by the AEF. We would like to draw the attention of those who retain illusions in the "left-wing", "militant" character of the new AEF to the fact that its Executive agreed unanimously to sign the agreement - and moreover agreed to sign it unchanged in any way.

This presumably means that both Hugh Scanlon (HERO of the left and well-known advocate of "workers' control") and Maoist Reg Birch must also have agreed. So much for left wing officials!

HILLS PRECISION (COVENTRY)

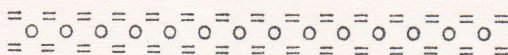
In the last issue of Solidarity (p. 10) we briefly referred to the strike of workers at the Rootes subsidiary of Hills Precision Ltd., Coventry. The strike was over the victimization of Tommy Woods, the TGWU convenor. It threatened to bring production in the Rootes car factories to a halt. Since then a copy of the report of the Motor Industry Joint Labour Council dealing with this dispute has come into our possession. It documents a number of interesting facts.

What looked like a squalid inter-union dispute was something far more significant. Hills Precision, which is not a member of the Employers Federation, had signed a "sweet-heart" contract with the National Society of Metal Mechanics. In return for privileges in recruiting members, the NSMM agreed to wages and conditions far worse than those pertaining at the other Rootes factories. Dissatisfaction with this situation had led to a break-away into the TGWU. Eventually the TGWU had 120 members, against 40 in the NSMM.

The NSMM then asked the management to stop the TGWU recruiting and to sack Tommy Woods. This was in fact done on the technicality that on his job application he had falsified statements concerning his previous employers (a very widespread "fault" - it would otherwise be impossible for militants ever to get a job).

As usual the report justified all the actions of the management.

The conflict at Hills Precision brings out several points. Firstly the need for much stronger liaison between Rootes workers to ensure that they struggle together to get the same rate and conditions. Secondly that as the national trade unions continue to degenerate, "sweetheart" contracts will be increasingly common. Thirdly that collaboration between unions and management, in the disciplining of militants, will tend to increase.



THE INTERNATIONALE
UNITES THE HUMAN RACE...

'On August 20, acting like bandits and highwaymen who have discarded their masks, the members of the renegade clique grouped around Brezhnev and Kosygin launched their numerous forces. They savagely occupied the whole of Czechoslovakia, committing thereby a monstrous crime against the Czech people. More clearly than ever, the clique of Soviet renegade revisionists, frenetically indulging in imperialist power politics, revealed its hideous face. (The invasion of Czechoslovakia) is the most contemptible episode of the struggle opposing the clique of Soviet renegades to the clique of Czech revisionists. It clearly shows that the Soviet revisionists are only a paper tiger...'

Editorial in Peoples Daily, Peking, August 23, 1968

'The occupation of Czechoslovakia is regrettable but probably necessary for the defence of Socialism against the threat of counter-revolution.'

Gus Hall, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USA.

'Since the Bratislava Conference, the counter-revolutionary forces in Czechoslovakia have continued to intensify their anti-socialist activities. This compelled the solid elements of the Communist Party and of the State to appeal to the armed forces of the USSR and its allies

with a view to defending the socialist regime. It is with this noble objective in mind that the fighters of the armed forces of the USSR and its allies penetrated Czech territory on Wednesday morning.'

Radio Hanoi, August 21, 1968.

'The invasion of Czechoslovakia constitutes a flagrant violation of the national sovereignty of a sister socialist country. Nothing can justify such an act. It is a heavy blow against the unity of the world socialist system, against the unity of the Communist movement, against the prestige of socialism throughout the world and against the cause of peace.'

Resolution of Central Committee of Rumanian Communist Party.

'The intervention was necessary to defend the achievements of socialism. It was necessary to respond to the appeal of the leaders of the Czech Communist Party.'

Radio Damas (Syria), August 23, 1968.

'An elite of Jewish intellectuals had seized the command posts in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet intervention has no other objective than to eliminate these revisionists who under the pretence of marxism are seeking to serve the purpose of zionism.'

Amin El Awar, a Lebanese Communist in Al Moharrer (Syria)
August 23, 1968.

'For the first time in the history of the communist movement, we are witnessing an aggression perpetrated by the armies of socialist countries against a state led by a Communist Party...'

Czech Government declaration, broadcast by Prague Radio
on August 22, 1968.

'Our leading principles have been and remain order, progress, the future, truth, the development of socialism, national independence and close solidarity.'

From the 'Appeal to the Soviet Union', issued by the unspecified members of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party, which called for the intervention of the Warsaw Pact troops.

'The criticism directed at certain officials became transformed into a campaign aimed at securing massive sacking of high Party functionaries ... A large number of highly experienced personalities, faithful to the cause of the Party and of the working class ... found themselves being evinced from active political life. How else can one interpret the call of Central Committee Secretary Cestmir Cisar that 200,000-300,000 young people be recruited into the Party? It was not only a question of dismantling the leading cadres, but also of loosening the various links of the administrative apparatus, of the trade unions and of the youth organizations ... The perfidious treason involved in these activities constituted a veritable menace for socialist achievements in Czechoslovakia...'

Pravda, August 22, 1968

'We denounce the brutal occupation of a friendly socialist state. The purpose of the military intervention is not the defence of socialism. It is to stop the process of renewal taking place in Czechoslovakia. It is to help the bureaucratic forces in Czechoslovakia and even to compel Czechoslovakia to travel backwards along a road its people had already rejected.'

Mijalko Todorovitch, Secretary of the Executive Committee of the League of Yugoslav Communists, at a mass meeting in Belgrade on August 22, 1968.

'The occupation of Czechoslovakia was "a shining example of socialist internationalism".'

Walter Ulbricht, of the German Democratic Republic.

'Dr Fidel Castro ranged Cuba on the side of the Soviet Union last night. In a broadcast speech he said: "The Czech regime was marching towards capitalism, inexorably towards imperialism."'

The Times, August 24, 1968.

'The Soviet Union has rendered us a great service. They have discredited communism in a way we could not have done by our own propaganda.'

A leading Greek supporter of the Colonels' regime.

Texts translated, unless otherwise indicated, from the August 23 and August 24 issues of Le Monde.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: THE END OF AN ERA

In a sustained clang of shattered myths, the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia brings a whole era to an end. The 'unity' of the socialist bloc is seen to be an illusion. The 'socialism' it claimed to profess is seen by millions to have been a fraud.

In their own terms the Russians are in a ridiculous position. After 20 years of Communist Party rule the 'socialist' basis of Czech society was, they claim, being undermined by a few 'false leaders'. These had somehow or other succeeded in insinuating themselves into top positions with the sinister intent of 'returning Czechoslovakia to a bourgeois form of rule'. Basically, what the Russians are implying is that a socialist society can be overthrown by a putsch. For those who hold that under socialism the whole people share in the power of decision-taking, at all levels, such an allegation is absurd. It only assumes meaning for those who equate socialism with the rule of a bureaucratic elite.

In Czechoslovakia the Russians have so far been unable any significant number of stooges to support them (outside the ranks of the secret police). Why then did they invade? Their action either reveals a very high level of misinformation indeed (of the kind subordinates systematically feed their masters in order to justify their own positions). Or it reflects a tremendous fear as to the potential implications of Czech 'liberalization'. Probably both.

Some people on the 'left' were doubtless surprised that Russia should have acted in such an 'unfraternal' and 'unsocialist' way. They need not have been. Only those who accept the premise that socialism is somehow to be equated with the nationalization of the means of production (reinforced perhaps by state monopoly of foreign trade) need feel the ground shaking under their feet. Unfortunately this is a widespread misconception. And in this area bourgeois myths and stalino-trotskyist myths mutually reinforce one another. Both erroneously assume that a change in the formal ownership of property will radically alter the class nature of a state. Both hold that the regimes in Russia and in Eastern Europe are in some fundamental sense different from those of the West. At a crude level, during Stalin's lifetime, there was an identification of 'socialism' with the interests of Russia. At a more sophisticated level revolutionaries would call for the 'unconditional defence of the Soviet Union'. These ideas have crippled the socialist movement for almost two generations. They are now rapidly crumbling - under the weight of their own reactionary irrelevance.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia marks the end of Russian domination over other Communist Parties. These are now in total disarray (see pages 19 to 21). Their statements are often more influenced by economic considerations or by the requirements of the power game than by the demands

of ideological consistency. (The problems of those who give these bureaucracies 'critical support' must be becoming extremely tough.) Messrs. Mao, Tito and Gollan denounce the Russians. Messrs Castro, Ho Chi Minh and Ulbricht support the 'socialist' invasion. Both sides speak of 'proletarian internationalism' and claim to be acting 'in the interests of the working class'. Never have words been so misused.

It would be nice to believe that some of these Communist Parties were now becoming genuinely critical of their bureaucratic past. In reality their 'dissociations' from the actions of the Russians reflect their embarrassment at what has just happened. For electoral purposes they want to present themselves as respectable, reformist, national parties. They are incapable of really deep-going self-reform. If the stalinist leaders were to admit that Russian rulers had resorted to aggression, to flagrant lies or to the 'amalgam technique' (the lumping together of right and left critics) on the Czech issue, they would have to look into the prior application of these methods - at Hungary for example, not to mention Kronstadt.

The crisis of official 'communist' orthodoxy has resulted in a tremendous ideological vacuum. Labour 'fakers' and liberals of all kinds are for the moment taking the stage. We are at times in the realm of pure farce. George Brown is to address a Labour rally to protest against the Russian aggression. The Labour Government, which has been the most abject supporter of the Americans in Vietnam, which has accepted the Greek colonels, which has endorsed racialism and which has launched a savage attack on trade union freedom, now finds an issue where it can take a 'moral stand'. Socialists must completely dissociate themselves from this hypocrisy.

Liberals of all kinds are also coming forward calling for support for Dubcek. But the interests of Dubcek and of the leaders of the Czech Communist Party have little in common with the interests of the Czech workers. The Czech leaders want to modernise their economy on the backs of the working class. They have made little secret of their intention to reduce wages and to increase differentials. To escape from outright Russian domination they have had to seek support among the general population. Their position is rather like that of colonial nationalists who have to mobilise their people to win national independence. They need popular support but are terrified in case mass action gets out of hand. It is significant that the Czech leaders prefer accepting Russian occupation to arming the workers. They are caught in the same dilemma as the rulers of any bureaucratic society: how simultaneously to obtain the participation of the ruled (in order to ensure that society ticks on) and their exclusion from any real power (for fear they 'go too far' and make the bureaucrats redundant).

We cannot say at this stage whether the Czech working class has begun to act for itself. There have as yet been no reports of factory councils similar to those set up in Hungary* and Poland in 1956. But the

* see 'HUNGARY '56' by Andy Anderson - recently reprinted by SOLIDARITY - (4/3, post free).

ferment is such that formations of this kind could emerge very rapidly. There are already hints of independent class activity amongst railwaymen and miners. The fear that this could spread is one of the factors which will drive the Russian and Czech bureaucracies to seek a compromise - a compromise which would also obtain the endorsement of the West.

For the time being there will be intense discussion - and probably considerable confusion - throughout the socialist movement. Every concept is being shaken up. A false concept of socialism is now being exploded. The real issue - the self-emancipation of the working class and its achievement of organizational and ideological autonomy - will be seen in clearer terms. The French revolt started this process. The Czech events will undoubtedly help it develop.

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IF YOU WISH TO KNOW MORE ABOUT 'SOLIDARITY', ITS AIMS AND ACTIVITIES, PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM AND POST IT TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

NAME

ADDRESS
.....

TEL. No. UNION

PLEASE SEND TO : SOLIDARITY, c/o H. RUSSELL,
53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

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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 nationalization 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 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 organizations, 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 organization 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 man's understanding of his environment and of himself, his domination over his work and over such social institutions as he 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'.

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 organizations 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 organization 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 organization 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 generalize 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.