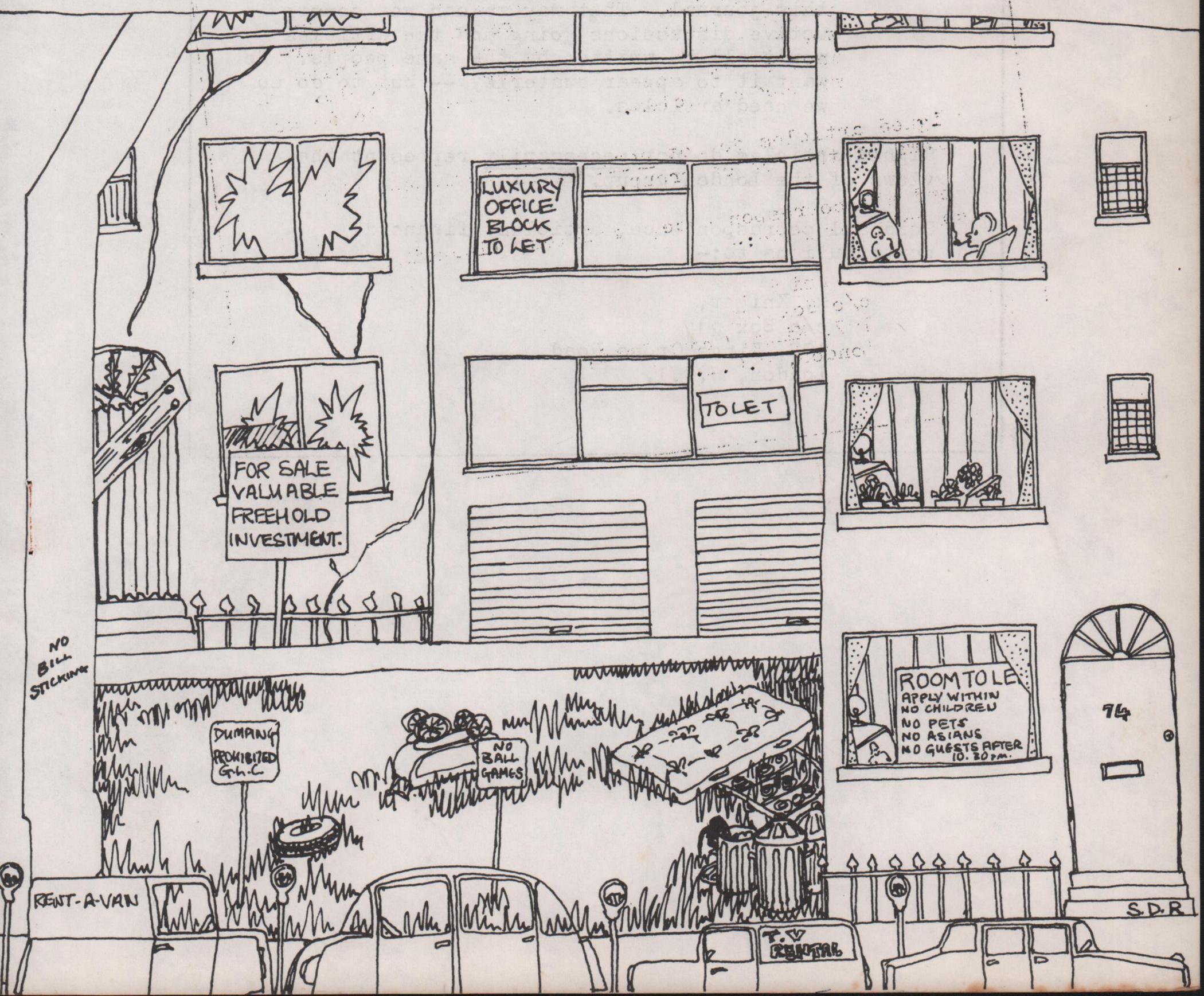


LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM NO. 5



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REPORT FROM JAPAN

INTRODUCTION

Since arriving here I have had discussions with a number of militants, and the most interesting of these have been a couple of long talks with a member of the Rodo Kumiai Katsudoka Undo (Trades Union Activists' Movement - TUAM). There is nothing very remarkable about the TUAM itself since it is the usual sort of reformist grouping which one can find in many countries. It is a loosely organised group formed in 1972 (or, rather, which held its first conference in that year) and the bulk of its membership is made up of perhaps a thousand or so young workers - mostly in their twenties and many of them factory workers. Grafted on to this rank and file is a 'leadership' composed of middle-aged activists, most of whom have split away from the 'Communist' party at various stages over the years since the mid-fifties. Although hostile towards both the 'Communist' and the 'Socialist' parties and suspicious too of the warring sects which make up the so-called 'New Left' in Japan, one could never say that this attitude stemmed from any clear understanding of Socialism. Even though groups such as the TUAM might typify a basically healthy reaction against the bureaucracy and lack of principle which are the hallmark of left-wing politics in Japan as elsewhere, it is a reaction which has gone little further than a simple determination to concentrate on the industrial struggle rather than on politics and to make the trade unions their main field of activity.

In spite of this, it has still been an interesting experience to talk with a member of the TUAM - if for no other reason than that some of the difficulties which confront trade union activists in general are problems which Socialists involved in the general struggles of the working class are bound to experience too. Before we go on to outline these problems as they exist in Japan and the inadequate attempts which have been made to solve them, however, we first need to say something about Japan's social and political development and the influence which this has had on framing the outlook of groups such as the TUAM.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of modern Japan dates from 1868 when the impoverished strata of the ruling samurai class overthrew the feudal state and used the political power which they had won in order to exploit the peasantry and to direct the surplus which they pumped out of agriculture towards the developing industrial sector of the economy. Needless to say, this policy of forced capitalist development met with resistance and one of the principal ideological weapons used in these efforts to counter capitalist ruthlessness was a harking back to the feudal values of the past. The mad scramble for individual profit which characterised late nineteenth century Japan was contrasted unfavourably with an idealised picture of the old society and, however unrealistic this might have been in disregarding the peasant uprisings and other expressions of despair which had so frequently occurred under feudalism, there was a grain of truth in it all the same since the feudal system really had displayed a far greater degree of social cohesiveness than capitalism could at that stage.

At the same time as many were looking backwards in this fashion, there was also a flood of new ideas pouring in from the West - and among these was 'socialism'. One of the great tragedies of Japanese socialism is that it

was first introduced in the emasculated form which the German social-democrats had reduced it to, and was then doubly misunderstood by being popularly identified with certain periods of comparatively benevolent despotism in Japan's feudal past. In the closing years of the nineteenth century Lassalle and Rodbertus were far more influential in Japan than Marx (because they had been prepared to compromise with the monarchy), while there were plenty of supposed 'authorities' prepared to declare that the fourth century Emperor Nintoku - who had the reputation of having been a soft-hearted ruler - had been a 'genuine socialist'! It was not until the early years of the twentieth century that a more accurate understanding of what Socialism involved started to filter through to Japan, mainly via the efforts of emigrants to the United States. As one of them wrote from San Francisco in 1906:

Recently a controversy has developed between two factions in the American Socialist Party regarding the movement's policy. One group particularly stresses public ownership (state or municipal) of monopolistic enterprises and desires to use the polls as its weapons. The other group desires to raise the ideals of pure socialism as its banner. The first group maintains that we must advance step by step in order to improve the actual well-being of the working classes, and that it is not sufficient to concentrate merely on ideals to the neglect of the real problems that confront us. They furthermore state that the reason why our German comrades have steadily gained ground, and why our English comrades reaped victory in the last elections, is due to the fact that they shaped their platforms out of issues that were directly related to the workers' well-being. The second group maintains that today's so-called public ownership does not eliminate the wage system, and simply substitutes government or municipal capitalism for private capitalism. Socialism, they insist, stresses complete elimination of the wage system. To agree to state or municipal ownership under the present system is to make concessions to social reformers and state socialists.

This showed a reasonable grasp of some of the fundamental principles behind revolutionary socialism, but an additional tragedy of Japanese socialism was that when these ideas were first introduced into Japan they were labelled 'anarchism', while the mishmash of social-democratic reformism and feudal nostalgia which we referred to earlier continued to be called 'socialism'. 'Anarchism' was taken to mean basic social change, abolition of the wages system and the sweeping away of the monarchy, whereas 'socialism' all too often meant nothing more than reforms and state-administered capitalism.

Not surprisingly, therefore, it was anarcho-syndicalism which commanded the allegiance of the most sincere and committed radicals right up until the end of World War I, but the situation changed drastically with the coming of the Russian revolution. Although the Bolsheviks' victory raised the prestige of Lenin and Trotsky everywhere, its effect on the development of socialism in countries such as Japan was devastating. In areas such as Western Europe there was, however weak, a genuine Marxist tradition which could act as a counter-balance to the Bolsheviks and keep alive an understanding of what Socialism really meant. In countries like Japan, on the other hand, there was no such tradition (a good indication of this is the fact that there was not even a translation of Capital available until 1924) and what happened instead was that after 1917 'anarchist' ideas such as abolishing wages were overwhelmed and swept aside by the new doctrine of vanguard parties, ruthless dictatorship

and State capitalism emanating from Moscow and (wrongly) identified with Marx. Ever since that time Leninist ideas have continued to be the dominant influence among those in Japan who think of themselves as 'socialists', and it is only very recently that some have started to question the whole theory and practice of Bolshevism.

Another striking feature of the situation in Japan is that (except for one brief spell of several months of social-democratic rule in 1947) the parties of the left have never formed a government. Never having had to face the harsh realities of administering capitalism, they present a different image from their European equivalents because of the importance which they continue to attach to 'theory'. In a style reminiscent of the pre-World War I SPD, it is still the fashion here to back up even the most miserable programme of reforms with an elaborate display of 'theory' - and there are other factors too which have brought 'theory' into bad repute. For example, during the years of bitter repression by military dominated governments before World War II it was the custom for the miniscule 'Communist' party of those days to draft endless successions of 'theses'. According to Bolshevik mythology, these 'theses' were the orders issued by the commanding officers of the revolution to those phantom armies of proletarians who were always supposed to be on the very verge of insurrection. It was all completely unrealistic, of course, and was based on a misunderstanding of the problems confronting the working class as well as a total disregard of workers' actual responses to those problems. Yet, for all that, it is a tradition which has been handed down and lovingly preserved by the sects and splinter groups which make up what is called the 'New Left' in Japan today. It is this spectacle of the parliamentary 'opposition' decking out its reformist demands with 'theoretical' tinsel and of Bolshevik-inspired grouplets constructing dazzling displays of 'theory' as consumer goods for the workers which has resulted in an anti-theory reaction among organisations such as the TUAM.

TUAM ACTIVITY

Having explained something about the political background against which a group like the TUAM operates, we can now take a brief look at the ideas of its members and their methods of activity. The main work of the TUAM consists of involving themselves (as workers themselves) in working class struggles for higher wages and improved working conditions, in encouraging workers to democratise and to take control of what are supposed to be 'their' unions and of supporting workers' practical efforts to achieve these ends. If one asks the activists of the TUAM where socialism fits into all this, they will generally answer that an understanding of socialism can only emerge from out of this process of struggle within capitalism. In their clashes with the 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties they have argued strongly that neither of these organisations stand for socialism, on the grounds that if either of them took power the position of the workers within society would remain basically unaltered, but what the TUAM has consciously refrained from doing is stating clearly what it itself understands by 'socialism'. Their reason for doing this is that "if we were to predict a very positive picture of the new society at this early stage ... it would have nothing to do with the actual struggles of the workers" - and we can see here a clear reaction against the ivory tower 'theorising' of other organisations which we mentioned above. There has been a similar reaction too against the readiness of Bolshevik-inspired groups to set themselves up as leaders and to use workers' struggles for their own ends, so that the TUAM activists deliberately choose a very self-effacing role. As one of their members put it to me: "theory ... should be made

by the rank and file, by the workers themselves. Even though I have some ideas and theories of my own, I am reticent about putting them forward because the workers should do this themselves." Seeking to avoid becoming leaders can be a difficult business in practice, however, simply because the activists of the TUAM tend to be both more committed and more articulate than the average worker with whom they come into contact. A recurring problem for members of the TUAM has, therefore, been that in the trade union branches and workers' groups where they have been active they have often found themselves involuntarily monopolising both the discussions that take place and the decision-making process, and the only solution they have been able to come up with is the back-peddalling response of refusing to take any initiative and of simply tail-ending the other workers' activity. They believe that it is only by adopting this attitude that democracy can be maintained within workers' organisations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE TUAM

It seems to me that while Socialists can offer a lot of constructive advice to groups such as the TUAM they can also learn something from them. Revolutionary socialists would endorse the TUAM's contention that socialist understanding arises out of workers' experiences within capitalism and also out of their struggles against the pressures which capital subjects them to, but they would go further than this as well. Socialists would emphasise that they themselves are workers and that the fact that they have arrived at socialist ideas is actual evidence that the working class as a whole can - by its own efforts - come to construct a body of theory which poses a fundamental challenge to capitalism. If Socialists are recognised as being workers themselves, however, then it obviously follows that they too have as much right as other non-socialist workers to participate in the democratic self-organisation of the working class.

There is no logical reason for Socialists adopting the passive role which the TUAM's activists impose on themselves, especially since to do so would mean forfeiting the chance of carrying out what for Socialists should be their main commitment - encouraging the spread of socialist ideas among the working class. What the members of the TUAM have found so depressing and disillusioning are the shortcomings in genuine democracy which one finds in many workers' organisations as they exist today and the eagerness with which so many workers look to others for leadership. No one can deny that this lack of democracy is indeed a problem (as is the disillusionment it can give rise to) but what is needed is a more realistic solution than the TUAM's. Socialists have something useful to say here because they can point to the importance of belonging to a socialist grouping at the same time as one involves oneself in the general struggles of the working class. A socialist grouping should not have a reform programme and should always admit only those with a clear understanding of exactly why capitalism acts against the interests of the working class and an equally clear grasp of the Socialist alternative to capitalism. Organised in this way it can function perfectly democratically and prevent any element of leadership from creeping into its activities, and thus give a unique type of support to its members. Only by being a member of such a grouping where democracy flourishes as a matter of course can one adequately fortify oneself for the frustrations and difficulties which are bound to come one's way in the less than democratic atmosphere of the working class's day to day struggles. Groups like the TUAM cannot offer this support simply because they are not organised for Socialism in the first place, and also because (ironically enough) even though they do not wish to lead the working class, there is leadership within their own organisation.

LESSONS FOR SOCIALISTS

Where groups like the TUAM may have something to teach socialists (or, at least, some socialists) is when it comes to the importance of socialists (as workers) involving themselves in the working class's struggles and of not isolating themselves. Of course, the very idea that 'isolation' from the working class is possible is treated with deep distrust by many socialists. All too often the term 'isolation' is associated with the Leninist concept of a group outside the working class (the radical intelligentsia in the Bolsheviks' case) attempting to 'make contact' with the workers and trying to 'penetrate' the class. We are then reminded that socialists are in the same objective economic position as other workers, that they too sell their labour power for wages, and this is somehow thought to have disposed of the matter! What is overlooked is that isolation need not have anything to do with one's economic status in society at all. It is quite possible for different strata of the working class to be isolated from one another - in fact, socialists themselves have frequently pointed this out in connection with racialism - and many socialists (quite unconsciously) place themselves in this position by turning their socialist grouping into a closed circle, by elevating membership of the group into an end in itself and even by speaking a strange dialect understood only by other socialists. Alternatively, isolation takes another form when some socialists follow the ridiculous practice of rigidly compartmentalising their so-called 'revolutionary' activity (which in this case generally turns out to be nothing more than talking with other socialists in interminable 'branch meetings' and so on) and their participation in the day to day struggles of the working class.

Socialists should involve themselves in the general struggles of the workers for the very good reasons that firstly they are members of the working class themselves and secondly that they - as part of the working class - have a contribution to make to the defeat of capitalist ideas by the working class as a whole. By 'involve' we certainly do not mean the artificial practice of socialists drafting themselves into activities which bear no real relation to their everyday lives (eg those with jobs entering claimants' unions, those who live in one district joining another locality's tenants' association) since nothing could be calculated more to evoke other workers' hostility. What 'involve' does mean is making the effort to take full advantage of the opportunities which exist for joining with other workers in joint struggles - and to link up with other socialists in these struggles too, of course. What socialists should be doing is looking for any glimmerings of anti-capitalist consciousness which arise out of the working class's struggles, encouraging such developments and helping other workers to move in the direction of socialism. We might add that this will not be a one-way process either! Socialists have something to learn from being involved in these struggles as well as something to contribute to them.

In deciding which struggles socialists should involve themselves in and which workers' organisations they should join, one should never raise the nature of that struggle or of that organisation into an absolute principle along the lines "socialists should only join movements which are working for socialism". In a situation such as the present one where socialists are everywhere very thin on the ground, they should obviously concentrate their efforts wherever it is that prospects look best, that is wherever workers are expressing doubts (though partial ones) about capitalism. We will leave out of consideration here the necessity which may well arise at some time for socialists to join anti-working class organisations (the army is an obvious example) in order to help spread socialist ideas there. By

ignoring this special problem, we can say that if a principle is needed to guide socialists' involvement in the day to day struggles of the working class it is that socialists should see themselves as being free to participate in any struggle or to join any working class organisation which does not have anti-socialist objectives. And if there is one thing which socialists can take comfort from, it is the fact that the vast majority of the working class's activities fall within this category.

John Crump. Tokyo. January 1974

FILM REVIEW

COUP POUR COUP (MARIN KARLITZ).

This excellent film is based on a fictional story of an occupation of a French textile factory by women workers. It combines in a realistic fashion some of the most positive lessons of workers occupations, drawing particularly on the events of May 68. The choice of setting is of special interest in making fiction seem like fact. It is a factory operated on very antiquated lines, employing mainly women, most of whom are married with a second job servicing their husbands and bringing up a further generation of workers. So their jobs whilst economically essential to their families are seen by them as supplementary to the income of the main breadwinner—the men. This combined with the fact that it is virtually the only women's employment in the town gives the boss even greater control over his workers. The frustration with the job (appendage of the machines, continual supervision, speedup etc) eventually, with little warning, produces revolt in the shape of a wildcat strike and then an occupation. All this happens in opposition to the manoeuvrings of the perplexed communist union officials who cannot think beyond the routine of wage bargaining. Since the factory is the only employer of women, once a move is made the women have little to lose and keep up the fight for a long time until all their demands are met.

The relationships between the women as workers and between the women and their husbands and children are all brought into question, and the connections between bosses, unions and police clearly portrayed.

It's much better produced than the boring Goddard film on the same theme with his "star" attraction Jane Fonda. Furthermore it presents the victories won by the women, not as the end of the struggle, but as a positive beginning.

This film will not be on general release at your local ABC or Odeon cinema but may shortly be available for private hire. If you can get it shown and discussed in your rank and file group, community association, student society etc, then it will be well worth while.

Mike Ballard.

NOTE:

Copies of No's 3 and 4 of our journal dealing respectively with "Education and Schooling" and "Trade Unions" are still available on request for the cost of postage. But only a few still left.

SOCIAL ACTION IN HOUSING

introduction

We publish the following article as a contribution to discussion on the working class housing problem. However, we disagree with its reformist conclusions and have therefore added our own comments at the end.

squatting

In May 1973 seven flats were occupied by squatters in Herne Hill in South London. Now at least twenty flats in three neighbouring streets are occupied, since squatters have moved into any which have become vacant and which they know the owners intend to leave empty. These premises are all owned by Grandiose Properties, a subsidiary of the Freshwater group, as are Deaville Court and Deaville Mansions in Clapham, also properties left vacant for anything up to three years, and now providing homes for thirty squatting families. Some squats have achieved more publicity than those in South London, e.g. Rome and Milan (see Take Over The City published by Lotta Continua), New York and Chicago, and Pon's in Islington. Squatting has been a successful form of self-help for the past few years; but I am writing with special reference to South London, having myself once occupied a council property in Brixton, and later one of the Herne Hill properties.

Why do people squat? Principally the answer is homelessness -- which, in the cases of some of the families I know had meant living in a van, the parents leaving their four children "in care"; or living in a room where the ceiling collapsed, killing the six-month baby. Some families had never had a home with all the amenities most people take for granted, neither had their parents before them; others could not afford to rent or buy a flat at the present inflationary levels; in one case a family had moved to London after being evicted from a tied house, and another from a council house for rent arrears. A few were 'battered wives', who, had they not thought of taking over a house for themselves, would not only have had to leave their home and all their belongings, but their children too. Councils do not provide a home for every family that needs one - whatever they may say about "there are no homeless in this borough". Town corporations are run as profit-making businesses, and this includes housing. One family I knew moved into a newly built council flat just before it was to be let, having learned the necessary occupation techniques from other squatters. Although they qualified on residency grounds for a council house, they felt that council officials were discriminating against them on the ground that, in some way, they were "socially undesirable". The rooms they rented, one of the less desirable properties of the Freshwater group, the biggest private landlords in London, consisted of two rooms and a tiny kitchen. The "living room" was uninhabitable because the sky could be seen through the roof and the floor was rotten. The bed-

room was damp, the plaster falling from the ceiling, and in it two adults and five children lived. There was no bathroom, and no means of disposing of waste water, since, during "improvements" -- paid for by a government improvement grant -- the landlord had had the waste pipe pulled out from the sink in an effort to evict the tenants.

In many London boroughs the population has actually decreased, whilst the homelessness has increased. Often the local council, whilst operating a slum clearance scheme, has been unable to provide as many new dwellings as did the demolished slums, a consequence of unimaginative planning, occasionally a misappropriation of funds. Or land which should have been used for housing has been sold or leased in order to build offices and hotels. The major blame for the shrinkage of housing available in London and other cities belongs to the landlords of private property, the speculators. They buy flats, evict the tenants by bribery or intimidation, and leave the property empty, in order to keep it as an investment, and by creating a shortage, further increase the cost of housing generally. The rent they might obtain is small in comparison with the accumulative interest made on the capital investment, the empty house. They continue to rent their slum properties to the really poor -- the immigrants and the old age pensioners, until they can secure an improvement grant, and evict the tenants with ease. The property speculators low-grade property is thus transformed at public expense, into a high-grade, profit making commodity -- and more expensive flats for the very few. Thus, a housing shortage and empty houses go hand in hand -- when the council leave their property empty this is generally through bureaucratic stupidity and red tape rather than the profit motive.

How do prospective squatters find the empty property and other squatters? Many, either in bed-and-breakfast "temporary accomodation" or those with literally no roof over their heads, wander around the streets and come across squatted property by accident. Some have been referred to squatting groups by social workers, either frustrated and disillusioned by the capitalist system, or simply glad to pass "the problem" on to other people. Some hear about it through the community grapevine -- neighbours, playground and youth workers and so on. Women's liberation and student groups either have their own squat going or pass information on. Since squatting will inevitably meet with resistance from the owner, or his agents, or the law, it is a case of strength in numbers, and since it often does not occur to people even in very desperate situations to take a "radical" path by taking what is theirs by right, some encouragement - it might even be termed "recruitment" - is necessary. This is possible by talking to people on a one-to-one basis about their housing situation as they leave the Social Services Department, homeless families unit, half-way house, -- anywhere in fact that is meant to, but cannot or will not, help.

How does squatting influence the landlord? Quite simply, he either brings down the full force of the law on the group -- and this has recently been changed in his favour -- or he gives up. In the case of Herne Hill, due to the united action of the Tenants Association and the squatters, Lambeth Borough Council propose to make a Compulsory Purchase Order on all the rented accomodation owned by Grandiose Properties in the three streets concerned, thus making the squatters council tenants. It must be emphasized that the law is in the landlords favour. The decision of Lord Denning and Lord Lawton in the Court of Appeal in May '73 was that squatters must leave as soon as a possession order is made, and no appeal or stay of execution would

be granted, the argument used being: "If homelessness were once admitted as a defence to trespass, no-one's house could be safe So the courts must, for the sake of law and order, take a firm stand" (Southwark L.B.C. v Williams, 1971). "A firm stand" was to declare that there are no 'squatters rights', apart from the right not to be violently assaulted during eviction. What does influence the property owners is adverse publicity. Indeed, they shun any kind of publicity, to the point of not wanting it known outside the world of big business, that they are property speculators, since they hide behind fictitious companies and other people's names, which may be discovered by a few hours research at Company House.

What does the action of squatting do for the individuals involved? Obviously, it gives them a temporary home, which with united action could become a permanent one. The action of squatting, of taking back from those in power what is rightfully yours, that is, a decent place to live, shows you that by joining with others you can change your situation. Manning the barricades when the bailiffs come, contributing to an information newsheet, expressing your point of view at regular meetings and briefings on the legal situation, all give you, the squatter, a very real sense of participation. For some people, this participation has become long-term and, even after they ^{could} have secured a flat or house for themselves, instead they move on to other empty property in order to help others work out a squatting solution there, or to help tenants organize against the landlord. And, through the experience of squatting, many people come to realize, for the first time, how they and their children are short-changed all along the line, and so they set up their own playgroups, free schools and community newspapers. Through the actions of squatters, like that of the peasants in Chile who took over the land which they could utilize but which the capitalists left barren, the government will come to realize that a habitable dwelling should be a guaranteed right for everyone in this country. In London, the Labour Party have already pledged themselves to bringing all private rented accommodation under public ownership and control. This should take place in every town and city in the country.

Sharon Haydon.

our comments

Squatting over recent years has proved useful in many instances as a means of at least temporarily appropriating property for uses decided upon by the working community -- for housing, community halls, play-space, etc. Because squatting contests property rights, it can in the end be stopped by bailiffs and police. Undoubtedly some of the participants (and through the publicity of squatting activities probably some non-participants also), have come to realise the way in which capitalism denies them decent housing and more importantly the power of a united working class to change things. The democratic self-activity of workers engaged in these struggles is an important point of departure for future organisation and activity. Whilst many of the large scale squats in Italy, for example, have involved the self-activity of workers, much of the squatting in this country has been carried out by very respectable "family squatting associations" as a means of putting pressure on the councils to fulfil their "obligations". Most of these groups operate on the same lines as charities and induce the same feelings of helplessness in their "clients" as the councils themselves.

The positive benefits of squatting to the homeless people involved are obvious but it is clear that squatting hasn't, and indeed couldn't, effect any major change in the overall working class housing problem. However successful and on whatever scale squatting is carried out it only deals with existing buildings, it can't alter the fact that there isn't enough of the right housing in the right places. Neither can it ensure that the housing provided comes up to a reasonable standard.

Sharon realises this but suggests nothing that could really solve the problem outside a change of government attitude and the bringing of private rented accommodation under "public ownership and control". Would the extension of council control to private rented accommodation provide any more homes or even lead to their being better maintained? We doubt it -- some of the worst slums are council owned.

Even if all housing was publicly owned and controlled and let at cost rather than "fair" rents there would still be no substantial improvement, because housing would still be provided within the dominating influence of capitalist market relations and under the control of bureaucratic management.

At present houses (in Britain) are constructed by private companies for profit. The land is privately owned and even where compulsorily purchased must be paid for at market rates. Councils must borrow money for purchase and development at market interest rates, and the availability of central government grants and loans depends on the general profitability of capitalist industry.

More fundamental than all of these however is the fact that housing is not produced for human beings as such, but for human beings as workers i.e. as producers directly or indirectly of surplus value. As workers our housing is restricted by our wage status, whether that housing is provided privately or by the state.

Through experiencing the successes and failures of independent squatters, and perhaps more importantly tenant associations, some workers are beginning to see the need for us to democratically control housing in our own interests. But this control must extend to all housing resources -- land, buildings and the building industry.

A more vital lesson is still to be learnt -- namely that we cannot simply "take over" the existing form of society and run it in our own interests, but must use the democratic organisation built up in struggle to actually transform society.

This must involve making land and industry into the common ownership of us all and producing houses along with other goods and services directly for our needs without the waste and distortion of the market.

NOTE :

A valuable source of information on the operation of market relations in the big cities is "THE RE-CURRENT CRISIS OF LONDON" -- C.I.S. Anti-Report on the Developers, 60p

For a discussion of housing action by squatters and tenants groups the following two duplicated publications are well worth reading
"HOUSING CRISIS -- WOMENS OFFENSIVE" 4p

" FROM THE GLC RENT STRIKE TO THE HOUSING FINANCE ACT -- A

± "If our aim is to put up as many buildings as possible, to clear the backlog of the queues of the homeless, we shall build flats that will be despised slums less than halfway through their lives."
D.Eversley, PROPERTY AND INVESTMENT REVIEW Nov, 1972.

ART, CAPITALISM and SOCIALISM

"Socialism? But it's very materialistic, isn't it? It doesn't say anything about the quality of life, it wouldn't encourage the talents of the individual, there would be such a dismal lack of variety -- compulsory philistinism for all!"

So run common objections to a common conception of 'socialism'. Often they come from intelligent and sensitive people, mostly working class. They rest, however, on assumptions that socialism is what it very definitely is not. For example, the French novelist Gustave Flaubert's comment was, "The cult of the belly breeds wind", but he confused true socialism with the antics of various people who adhered to the Left but who had not grown out of narrow-minded ruling class concepts of authoritarianism. Flaubert's 'socialist' character Senecal in L'Education Sentimentale is actually a violent reformist who eventually deserts ideas of democracy for those of dictatorship and ends up supporting the exploiting class -- clearly a prophecy of the state capitalist pattern in Russia, Cuba etc.

Flaubert, as an artist, had it in for such people because they despised art as a diversion for the ruling class from the sordid reality which they had created for the ruled class. Socialists, however, would maintain that the abuse of artistic talent does not invalidate artistic talent, which is something that distinguishes man from the animals. In fact, socialists have a claim to be the only people who really care about art, because they want to give it a positive, rather than a negative, direction. The positive direction is the emancipation of all men from animal "survival-of-the-fittest" conditions to those in which they can develop their truly human potential.

Yes, a socialist is a materialist -- but that's a word that has become as confused as the word 'socialist'. We hold that people's consciousness is determined by the economic and social conditions in which they find themselves. But that doesn't mean that they are passive creatures of some "blind fate". After all, people make these conditions in the first place. The environment acts upon us and changes us, and we in turn act upon the environment and change it. It's a two-way process. This is how man and his activity evolve. We include "art" in "activity". It's commonly thought that materialism means an excessive passion for money, cars, clothes etc., but that is rather a symptom of a private property system. We are all materialists, whether we like it or not -- we all need food to eat. But we don't just live to eat; we are more than animals, and we need to create, in both our work and in our personal relationships.

In fact, capitalism not only reduces most people's consciousness to narrow aims -- bingo, booze, betting etc. -- it doesn't even feed everyone. Even in our 'affluent' society' people starve. Only a few

get the encouragement to confront what is called "culture", and even then that few fail to realise the immense human suffering on which that "culture" depends for its existence -- mainly because conventional teaching of art obscures this connection. This obscuring is in part deliberate, in part encouraged by the excessive specialisation which capitalism requires from its labour force. If you're studying, say, English Literature, you're constrained in the compartment 'Eng. Lit' for competitive exam purposes. Unless circumstances wake you up you won't relate English Literature to the experiences of most people in real life -- because these experiences are safely filled under some heading 'Sociology', 'Politics', 'Economics' -- which may not happen to be your subjects, and even then (as they're taught and learned) don't get to the roots.

Art, before it is anything else, is the product of human labour, but it is commonly regarded as inhabiting some realm of its own, sacredly aloof from the 'vulgar' actions of the majority of the world's population. Many tend to regard 'art' as more important than the people who make it, and the people -- be they prostitutes, tramps, prisoners -- who supply the maker with material. Art becomes a fetish. But as capitalism reduces everything -- including men and women -- to exchangeable commodities, art itself is a commodity. A painting is usually discussed in terms of its 'texture', its 'form', or its 'market value' (!) not in terms of what it has to offer inwards a better understanding of the life of human beings.

Socialists do not believe that works of art, any more than furniture and T.V. sets you see behind shop windows, should be worshipped in glorious oblivion of what went into their making, often toil, boredom, misery.

Most true artists have to struggle. Many live in appalling conditions. The paternalism of middle-class arts councils etc., replaces the patronage of aristocrats. Only a few artists get recognition in their lifetimes, and those few may be forgotten when they're dead, their work perhaps pretentious, effete, elitist. The neglected British composer Havergal Brian, who died last year, composed 26 symphonies between the ages of 72 and 92; he never got a chance to hear most of his work. He came from the working class, his music 'new'. Now that he's dead, he'll become a profitable commodity for name-dropping, social-climbing, 'culture vultures'. This in a society which prefers to reward people who own factories which can perfect new weapons of war, or who promote and entrench working class narrow-mindedness by directing trash entertainments industries.

Most people, moreover, when they aren't worrying how they can best make ends meet, are only regarded as appendages to the profit-making machine. Machinery, which could be used to relieve us of burdensome work (and most burdensome work is utterly useless anyway), instead makes work drearier. Work/ers become fatalistic, think they're incapable of achieving anything better, their leisure hours are spent in passivity.

So much for capitalism's respect for the individual's talents. Schools and universities, which, it is claimed do respect them, in fact put capitalism's requirements first. As William Morris put it, under capitalism man is made for commerce, not commerce for man.

"Go over the great short stories that are classics," wrote Jack London, "and you will find that they deal 99 times out of a 100, with the terrible and the tragic." Most of these terrible and tragic things are

avoidable, and occur because of an unjust social system and the conflicts it engenders. These stories may be extremely moving, and told in a pleasing way, and it is right that, rather than produce escapist fantasies, authors should reveal the terrible and tragic -- but chiefly in order to stir us into action, to prevention of these very real evils, not just 'cure'. Some say, "If all these injustices were put right, we wouldn't have any more interesting art". What nonsense. What putting-things-before-people. Art need not be restricted to either ignoring or facing up to social ills, but it won't achieve its full human destiny until socialism replaces capitalism, which produces these social evils.

"A dismal lack of variety" -- but what variety do people have in their labour today? And in their leisure time? Perhaps people like Kenneth Clark can trot about all over Europe to tell us that palaces and triumphal arches were built by kings when in fact they were built by slaves. Most of us have to pay to travel rather than be paid to travel. Most people's horizons lie at the boundaries of their home town -- in spite of Blackpool and Majorca, even though millions are spent on the big businessmen's Concorde. Most people, if they can get a job, are stuck with that job. The job controls them, they don't control the job. It restricts their awareness of reality and all it can offer. To substitute for this, they try to acquire their own private property, which means that if they're both lucky and ruthless enough, they'll become capitalists themselves. It's a vicious circle, and only socialism can break it, offering the satisfaction of variety in creativity, something they at present despise because they can't conceive of its possibility.

"Compulsory philistinism for all" -- when most people's consciousness is so restricted it is hardly surprising that they become philistines. But narrow-mindedness is not confined to the "underprivileged", nor to the company director, but applies also to those who set themselves up as guardians of beauty -- the 'intellectuals', the aesthetes, those who like to think they are the bastions of 'civilisation' in the midst of a sordid commercialism (on which, incidentally, they depend in order to pontificate) and an ignorant rabble (thus biting the hand that feeds them). In fact art to them is merely some kind of personal ornament, a piece of private property. Like almost everyone else they confuse what they are (and can be) with what they have. They too are commodity fetishists, or to use the phrase coined by Nietzsche (who was anything but a socialist) in describing such people, "culture philistines".

In fact the objections which opened this paper are applicable to capitalism, not socialism. Another non-socialist, Ruskin, defined art as "man's joy in his labour" and we would accept this as a definition of art under socialism. Socialism is only possible when it is established by a conscious majority who both want and understand it. They will be willing to work for the community and find satisfaction in their work. Each individual will contribute according to his personal ability and will have every opportunity to develop all his faculties, not just a few, so that he can turn them to a wide range of tasks. The artificial division between mental and manual labour will disappear. Sanity will be achieved, and art based on it. In the meantime, however, artistic talent can find no nobler purpose than to expose the contradictions of the present system, and to point to an alternative. It has both a negative and a positive function. We must struggle for the time when the negative function will no longer be necessary, when man and art can really interact healthily.

Tom Hubbard.

Socialism, Anarchism and Anarcho - Syndicalism.

Much of the following text centres around the arguments used by Rudolf Rocker in "ANARCHISM AND ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM" and therefore should not be taken as the accepted views of all anarchists. But for a reasonable account of the ideas of other groups of anarchists it is worth reading "ABOUT ANARCHISM" by Nicolas Walter; both are Freedom Press publications.

It would be useful to first look briefly at some of the other groups that work under the name of anarchists. Apart from the socialists and syndicalists which we will be mainly concentrating on throughout this article, at one extreme there are philosophic anarchists who believe that a society without government is not possible or desirable; the individualists, egoists and to a lesser extent the libertarians at the other extreme advocate a society where people work for themselves rather than society as a whole. In between there are the mutualists who hold the view that instead of relying on the state, society should be organised by individuals entering into voluntary agreement with each other on a basis of equality and reciprocity; finally there are the federalists, a more advanced form of mutualists who advocate that workers coordinate their activities nationally and internationally for an efficient society.

Anarchism, Rocker says, is an intellectual current of social thought, whose adherents advocate the abolition of economic monopolies and all political and social coercive institutions within society. Like socialists he proposes a society based upon the common ownership of the means of production, but desires a federation of free communities bound to one another by their common economic and social interests, arranging their affairs by mutual agreement and free contract. In fact he has common aims with socialists, but his methods for changing the structure of society are directed primarily against the state and institutions of political power and only secondarily against the ruling class. Anarchists do not agree with marxists that the basic unit of society is the class, but many agree that the state is the political expression of the economic structure, that it is the representative of those who own and control the wealth of the community and the oppressor of those who do the work that creates the wealth. In the revolutionary movement Anarchists have therefore represented the viewpoint that the struggle against capitalism must be a struggle against all coercive institutions of political power, rejecting any form of rule -- including the marxist "dictatorship of the proletariat".

The state in itself anarchists believe to be a powerful institution which will not simply vanish after the capitalist class has been dissolved. Rocker quotes the Russian so-called dictatorship of the proletariat as an example of how a political power prevented any truly socialist society from being formed and instead forced the country into a grinding State Capitalism:

"the development of the Bolshevik bureaucracy in Russia under the alleged dictatorship of the proletariat which has never

been anything but the dictatorship of a small clique over the proletariat and the whole Russian people is merely a new instance of an old historical experience which has repeated itself countless times"

The last fifty years have certainly shown that Russia is not a classless society, especially since the despotic state denies the working class the right to complain about existing conditions. Rucker does not however point out the other factors which contributed to the failure of the revolution to bring about socialism, most importantly the lack of political (socialist) consciousness on the behalf of the majority of workers at the time.

A major difference that appears to exist between socialists and anarchists is on the question of how people work in harmony and react to each other's extremities. Socialists have tended to propose "common ownership and economic equality" as sufficient guarantees of individual freedom, but anarchists have argued that social liberation and individual freedom can only be attained when an ideological barrier within people has been broken down. In other words when people gain some degree of responsibility and understanding for their fellow human beings, then equality can be brought about. Anarchists want economic equality, but as Walter says, "equality without freedom means that we are all slaves together and freedom without equality means that the poor and weak are less free than the rich and strong". Rucker, Proudhon (1809-65) and numerous writers have followed this line, which I feel does not necessarily have an anarchist background and falls into place with the theories of many socialist organizations that aim at spreading social consciousness throughout society.

In any class divided society the dominating class must enforce its ideas and values upon the majority with some success in order to keep its privileged and controlling position. This it does by forming the state (in modern capitalism this is drawn partly from within the ranks of the working class) which is given authority over the masses. The state has the purpose of keeping the structure of society stable and upholding the economic and social privileges of the ruling class. Its external forms have changed through historical development, but functionally the state has always remained the same and anarchists say that this will always be the case. To quote Rucker:

One cannot at will hear with ones eyes or see with ones ears, so also one cannot at pleasure transform an organ of social oppression into an instrument for the liberation of the oppressed"

Many socialists adhere to this line, others oppose it and given the opportunity contest state elections with the aim of establishing socialism. It is not possible therefore to suggest that all socialists and anarchists differ on this point.

Again it is the state rather than the profit/market economy as such which the anarchist sees as producing cultural conformity within society, Rucker says:

"culture and the state are antagonists....all great periods of culture are periods of political decline.....political rulership always strives for uniformity and tends to subject every aspect of social life to its guardianship".

The anarchist believes this must always be so for the conservation of political power -- which perhaps underestimates capitalisms continuing process of change and adaption to new circumstances and threats to its survival. When the state has been unable to control social life efficiently, a threat to its existence may build up and eventually remove it. Anarchists believe the state throughout history has only been changed in form by revolutions and not until it has

been completely smashed can men and women be inspired to greater things and bring about an intellectual and social transformation.

The process of freeing society of all political and social coercive institutions involves educating the masses intellectually and psychologically for the task of their social liberation. Rocker suggests that by taking part in areas of social activity directed towards personal freedom and social justice the awareness of the working class deepens so that, through years of constructive work and education, a majority of men and women can be built up to combat the power held by the ruling class. I would certainly agree with him when he says that the wider the circles which are inspired with the ideas of a reorganisation of society in the spirit of freedom and socialism, the easier will be the birth pains of social change in the future. It is important that socialist consciousness is raised by the masses before any period of social change, but it is a revolutionary situation that develops and matures the ideas which already exist in the minds of people. It is my opinion that socialist ideas come about both by engaging in the class struggle and by analysing it from without, they are not spontaneous and cannot be generated out of nothing. Until the working class achieves this degree of consciousness all that seems likely is reformist state capitalism. The working class in the course of its everyday struggles to assert workers needs is gaining the knowledge of capitalism and an understanding of its role as a producing class. But complete understanding will not come about without the efforts of organised revolutionaries who have a total critique of society and the different struggles of workers within it.

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There is a wide diversity of views as to the methods undertaken to bring about social change. The suggestion that this can come about through trade unions has been made by groups of anarchists and socialists. The ideas of the anarchists were first integrated with those of the French syndicalist movement at the turn of the century, and spread throughout Europe, reaching a climax just after the first world war and the Russian Revolution. Before we can examine the role of anarcho-syndicalism we must see how they view trade unions. Rocker sees unions as a separate body totally separate from the state machinery, working as a unified organisation of labour with dual purposes:-

- 1) Enforcing the demands of the producers for the safeguarding and raising of their standards of living.
- 2) Acquainting workers with the technical management of production and economic life in general, preparing them to take control of the socio-economic organisation and shape it according to socialist principles.

Anarcho-syndicalists believe that political parties are not fitted for either of these tasks. Unions are regarded as the organisers (from below) of workers and as a group that challenges the ruling class. Rocker says:

"Only in the realm of economy are the workers able to display their full strength for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure and guarantees the existence of society. Only as producers and creators of social wealth does the worker become aware of his strength".

The role of workers as producers does give them strength, but can it be used effectively against the state and/or ruling class through the unions. The role of the unions today does not indicate this. The original members of the trade union may have held some idea of workers organisation, but today the bureaucratic nature of these unions act more as moderators in the class struggle than defenders of the

workers living standard and organisers for the revolution.

Rocker sees workers' parties as inevitably centralised with a minority in control. This, he says, "for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favourable moment is a curse which weakens its power of decision and systematically represses every spontaneous initiative". Rocker does not seem to have a full understanding of the nature of a socialist (administrative) party and his explanation as to the failure of these parties could just as easily be applied to trade unions which are ruled by professional cliques of powerseeking individuals which as a rule have a financial standing far in excess of the workers they are supposed to represent. For trade unions to act on behalf of the working class instead of the "national interest" they would have to be radically altered. Anarcho-syndicalists believe to be easily possible and requires anarchist workers altering the existing framework from within.

From this reorganisation the worker is supposed to get the opportunity for direct action in his struggle for his daily bread and the strength to organise for revolution. However, trade unions of today are so involved with the running of capitalism that little raising of socialist consciousness occurs and while the CP and other leadership groups remain, possibilities for the future look poor.

Rocker's arguments in his attack on the governmental approach to socialism can be briefly stated:

- 1) The national states act only in the defence of the possessing class.
- 2) A new economic form of society must be formed by a new political form of social organism.
- 3) The state is a separate body not relinquishing its own power in the event of revolutionary change.
- 4) The complexity and bureaucracy of the state makes the political body (whether with or without revolutionary aims) conform to the laws made before it, once it has achieved power.

As to point 4 Rocker says;

"Those very parties which had once set out to conquer political power under the flag of socialism saw themselves compelled by the iron logic of conditions to sacrifice their socialist convictions bit by bit to the national policies of the state. The political power which they wanted to conquer had gradually conquered their socialism until there was scarcely anything left but the name."

This is only a half-truth since the leaders of these parties were more interested in gaining political power than in promoting socialist consciousness.

The development of modern anarcho-syndicalism was a direct reaction against the concepts and methods of political socialism. The anarcho-syndicalist organisation is to be based on the "Labour Chamber" and "Federation Of Industrial Alliances". These are supposed to be dual working class organisations capable of controlling production and general administration from below. They believe that this revolutionary reorganisation of society is only possible through trade unions and no socialist party can ever achieve it through governments.

Anarcho-syndicalists hold that unions have a dual role for the working class, a political struggle with the ultimate aim of socialism (or anarchism) and an economic struggle where higher wages and lower

prices are advocated. However the history of unions seems to show that they have become completely involved with the latter. But many argue that through economic battles with the ruling class the workers gain the initiative to fight for socialism, this is a lengthy question the pros and cons of which are taken up by most left-wing groups. I would suggest that socialists should engage in these struggles not so much to win a pay claim, but more to point out the cyclical nature of the wage struggle and to use these class confrontations to educate the working class on the more permanent solution to their exploitation, socialism. The anarcho-syndicalists advocate the use of similar tactics in the fight against political suppression as against economic exploitation. In theory they support both continual wage confrontation and the decisive political battle to beat the ruling class; in practice they have tended to become authoritarian or reformist, or both. It has proved difficult to maintain a balance between libertarian principles and the pressures of the day today struggle for better pay and conditions. Like so many other groups the anarcho-syndicalists have found it impossible not to fall into the reformist trap.

Techniques of direct action were developed in the French syndicalist movement in reaction to the traditional methods of propaganda. These were strikes, boycotts, sabotage and forms of civil disobedience which were thought of as preparation and rehearsals for the revolution. All these are believed to be important when used properly, strikes being the strongest and most important. Rocker quotes the General strikes in Belgium and Sweden for the attainment of universal suffrage; the 1905 general strike in Russia which forced the Tsar to sign a new constitution; and the struggle of the CNT against Fascism as examples of workers organised for political aims. None of these are revolutionary, I would see them rather as defensive or reformist measures, than having more positive socialist consequences.

Anarchists hold that strength lies in the hands of the masses and not in a political organisation involved with government. Rocker argues that;

"Political rights do not originate in parliament, they are rather forced upon them from without. And even their enactment into law is no guarantee of their security. They do not exist because they have been legally set down on a piece of paper, but only when they have become the ingrown habit of a people and when any attempt to impair them will meet with the violent resistance

This is a historically correct conclusion, certainly the masses can bring about the downfall (or formation) of a government when the external factors influence them -- the Allende government learned that lesson (see "THE IRRESISTIBLE FALL OF ALLENDE" by World Revolution). History is indeed a valuable reference when planning future actions, but we must remember that socialists are planning for a society which has never yet been given the conditions where it can fully work on any large scale.

Anarchists tend therefore to argue that power does not lie directly in the hands of the state, but that the state influences the masses to accept the laws that it makes. This is possible through control of the mass media and the process of education. While the minority (or state) are able to influence the working class majority with bourgeois ideas they can retain their power indefinitely; which is why

socialists and anarchists if they are to build up any sizeable revolutionary organisation to oppose the forces of capitalism must expand their propaganda output and develop a total critique of society. Only this way will a majority of men and women, understanding the running of capitalism and having a concept of socialist organisation, be able to lead the revolution and not be led by a minority as has occurred in all previous revolutions.

Rowland Benjamin

"THE HANDSHAKE TIES AND UNTIES the knot of encounters. A gesture at once curious and trivial which the French quite accurately say is exchanged: isn't it in fact the most simplified form of the social contract? What guarantees are they trying to seal, these hands clasped to the right, to the left, everywhere, with a liberality that seems to make up for a total lack of conviction? That agreement reigns, that social harmony exists, that life in society is perfect? But what still worries us is the need to convince ourselves, to believe it by force of habit, to reaffirm it with the strength of our grip. Eyes know nothing of these pleasanties; they do not recognise exchange. When our eyes meet someone else's they become uneasy, as if they could make out their own empty, soulless reflection in the other person's pupils. Hardly have they met when they slip aside and try to dodge one another; their lines of flight cross in an invisible point, making an angle whose acuteness expresses the divergence, the deeply felt lack of harmony. Sometimes unison is achieved and eyes connect; the beautiful parallel stare of royal couples in Egyptian sculpture, the misty, melting gaze, brimming with eroticism, of lovers: eyes which devour one another from afar. But most of the time the eyes repudiate the superficial agreement sealed by the handshake. Consider the popularity of the energetic reiteration of social agreement (The phrase 'let's shake on it' indicates its commercial overtones): isn't it a trick played on the senses, a way of dulling the sensitivity of the eyes so that they don't revolt against the emptiness of the spectacle? The good sense of consumer society has brought the old expression 'see things my way' to its logical conclusion: whichever way you look, you see nothing but things."

"WE HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON except the illusion of being together. Certainly the seeds of an authentic collective life are lying dormant within the illusion itself -- there is no illusion without a real basis -- but real community remains to be created."

These quotes are taken from: THE REVOLUTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE by RAOUL VANEIGEM.

SPGB CONFERENCE

The following statement was produced by us for distribution at the Socialist Party of Great Britain conference this Easter as a contribution to the discussion -- "Revolutionary Socialists -- What does this mean today?"

revolutionary socialists — what does this mean today?

1) Ownership of the means of production.

Capitalism is based on the class ownership of the means of production; Socialism will be based on their common ownership. We emphasise that "ownership" means social control over the use of the means of life. The capitalist class controls the means of life through the capital - wage labour relationship. The purpose of control is the realisation of profit with a view to the accumulation of capital. In socialist society the whole community will control the means of life by democratic procedures, and the purpose of control will be the satisfaction of human needs.

There is a tendency in the Socialist Party to see consumption rights as the central aspect of ownership. Capitalist ownership is seen to centre on privileged consumption by the capitalist class, and common ownership on free access. In fact consumption rights derive from control of the means of life. Although the consumption of the capitalist class is usually privileged, the capitalist class can limit its consumption in order to maximise capital accumulation without ceasing to own the means of life (as perhaps in China). In socialist society the way in which products are distributed will depend on the democratic decision of the community; how quickly free access can be introduced will depend on the circumstances at the time. The essential aspect of common ownership will be democratic control of the means of life. Yet democratic control is not even mentioned in the General Election Statement (February 1974).

2) The Socialist Revolution.

The establishment of democratic control is a concrete revolution in the way of life, involving a conscious transformation of relationships in all spheres of social activity. Thus the working class must not only organise politically, but also develop conscious democratic self-organisation in all spheres and at all levels in order to transform the whole of society. This will involve the emergence of organisations such as workers' councils and community councils, which will prepare for democratic control.

If ownership is not seen as control, but as an abstraction separate from social activity generating consumption rights, then the revolution is seen as a mechanical transfer of legal rights, Socialist understanding by the working class is then seen as separate from activity, and its main function becomes a back-up to the legislation of Socialist representatives. We see the Socialist revolution as the active work of the whole Socialist working class, of which parliamentary activity may form a part.

Since however we hold that the working class must attain a position of political supremacy, we are opposed to ideas of industrial unionism and syndicalism.

3) The Class Struggle.

We see the class struggle as fundamentally a struggle over the control of the means of life, of which the struggle for wages is

only one part. For example, when workers struggle to establish partial shopfloor control over their work to reduce the tempo and the indignity of close supervision, or when they fight against the introduction of night-work, they are contesting the total control over the means of life by the capitalist class, and asserting their human needs against the profit-seeking needs of capital.

R.S.Wright, a Deputy Chairman of ICI, addressed the Institute of Manpower Studies on 13 February on "Manpower Policies and Company Objectives". He mentioned the problem which demand for job satisfaction from the increasingly educated workers presents to employers:-

"Nevertheless, a solution must be found if the drive for individual development is not to be frustrated on a massive scale leading to widespread disillusionment with industry, or even plain bloody minded resistance to its aims."

"New Society" of 21 February contains a report of how groups of workers in the US are raising issues of control of the workplace.

We hold that Socialism is not something separate from the struggles of the workers, but the objective aim of the class struggle. Thus Socialist propaganda must start out from the tendencies which already exist in the class struggle. Socialists must aim to make the partial and limited struggles by workers to control aspects of their lives explicit and conscious, so that they come to be seen as part of the general movement towards total democratic control.

Consequently we consider that the task of a socialist organisation is to encourage, both by revolutionary propaganda and where appropriate, by active participation, working class struggle with a view to the emergence of Socialist understanding and the militant defence of working class living standards.

If the class struggle is seen only as a limited attempt to defend living standards, separate from the struggle for Socialism, then its importance in the development of democratic self-organisation and class consciousness is overlooked. It then appears as a secondary and inessential part of the Socialist analysis.

4) The consequences of a sectarian attitude.

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The isolation which follows from rejecting all existing social trends and movements as useless and diversionary has self-defeating consequences on the attitudes of Socialists. Because the sectarian Socialist can offer no reason why Socialist understanding should spread on a wide scale in the future, Socialism appears to be a possibility for the indefinite future rather than an immediate practical alternative. The function of Socialists then becomes that of keeping alive the idea of Socialism for the future, rather than effecting social change. If the sectarian Socialist does expect rapid progress of the Socialist movement, disillusionment, pessimism or hostility to the world in general and the working class in particular follow, which make propaganda even less effective.

The failure to link Socialist propaganda with the existing class struggle can also lead to a reformist position. For example, the World Socialist Party of Canada sees the need to connect Socialist ideas with existing movements in order to become politically effective, but falls into the trap of advocating reforms as the only solution to this dilemma.

GRANTS — WHAT NOW.

(The following text is reproduced from a leaflet distributed by socialists at the University of Aberdeen.)

So Head-Teeth has got the boot and now we've got a Labour government in office. The Tories did next to nothing to meet our demands for-

- *A student grant of £655

- *The abolition of discretionary awards

- *A full grant for married women students

- *The abolition of the parental means test.

But if students think they can now sit back and wait for the new government to recognise the justice of their claim the Grants campaign is bound to fail. There is absolutely no reason to expect more sympathetic treatment from the Labour Party than we had from the Tories.

Surely no-one can any longer believe that the Labour Party stands for Socialism, or any sort of basic change. Their election slogan—"Back to work with Labour"—sums it all up. Back to the same old grind. The only change will be in the face that appears on our TV screens—and even then the hollow exhortations to "tighten our belts" and "pull together for the National Interest" will be the same. Under the last Labour government the purchasing power of the student grant fell dramatically. Nothing was done to remove the discrimination against married women students and students on 'discretionary awards'. Unless students step up the Grants Campaign the same will happen again.

WHAT KIND OF CAMPAIGN

The aim should be to involve all students. This means that all students should have the right to participate in making Grants Campaign policy—the Aberdeen Area NUS meetings are already open to all students, but more effort should be made to make this open and to encourage students to come along. In the university and colleges themselves regular open meetings should be the main decision-making body.

To date Grants activity in Aberdeen has consisted mainly of demonstrations, leafleting, and one day strikes. Necessary and important as these activities are, they are not enough. To put real pressure on the government there has to be the threat of continued disruption of the educational system. This can only be done by such actions as rent strikes and occupations of administrative buildings — if Aberdeen students are to play an effective part in the Grants Campaign serious consideration will have to be given to the use of such tactics.

Just as they did the last time they were in power the Labour Party are trying to use their connections with the trades unions to try to con workers into holding back on their wage claims. But with 5% of the population owning over 80% of the wealth, conflict between employers and employees will inevitably continue. Most students own little or no property, and are therefore future wage or salary earners. They are basically in the same position as people who are actually in employment. Thus students should try add link the Grants Campaign with workers wage claims — this will increase the chances of success for both groups and also emphasise their common interest.

THE LIMITS OF THE GRANTS CAMPAIGN

What must be realised however, is that while the Grants Campaign is important and necessary it's also very limited. If students confine themselves to it and similar activities they will never solve the basic problems they face. Even if the Grants Campaign were totally

successful the educational system as a whole would continue to be grossly biased toward the rich, remain dominated by exams and assessments, and would still be as undemocratic and hierarchical as before. Moreover problems such as slum housing, pollution of the environment, and the boredom and meaninglessness of most employment remain totally untouched by actions such as the Grants Campaign.

WHAT TO DO ?

The only solution to these problems, we would contend, lies in completely scrapping the present economic system, based on production for the profit of a few. Only within a framework of common ownership and production for human need can an education system, and a whole way of life, that puts people, not profits, first be constructed.

We think that the purpose of education should be to develop peoples' abilities and to encourage them to learn from others' experiences. Education must be voluntary and without any artificial division into superior 'teachers' and inferior 'learners'. Any educational institutions that are created will be fully democratic, as indeed will all organisation inside socialism. People will be in control of their social activity, instead of having its form and content imposed on them from above, as happens in present day employment for example.

No one section of the working class, be it students, miners, engineers, or teachers can achieve such a society on their own. It requires the vast majority of the working class, united on the basis of understanding and wanting World Socialism.

WORTH READING

Vietnam: Whose Victory? by Bob Potter. Solidarity 25p.

The Debate on Anarchism by Noam Chomsky and Eric Hobsbawn. Spokesman Offprint 25p.

Your Money and Your Life, Insurance Companies and Pension Funds. CIS Anti-Report 25p

Workers Voice-- Liverpool 5p

Libertarian Struggle -- ORA, monthly 5p

NOTE: most publications mentioned in this journal can be obtained from:-

"Rising Free",
197, King's Cross Road,
London, W.C.1.

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