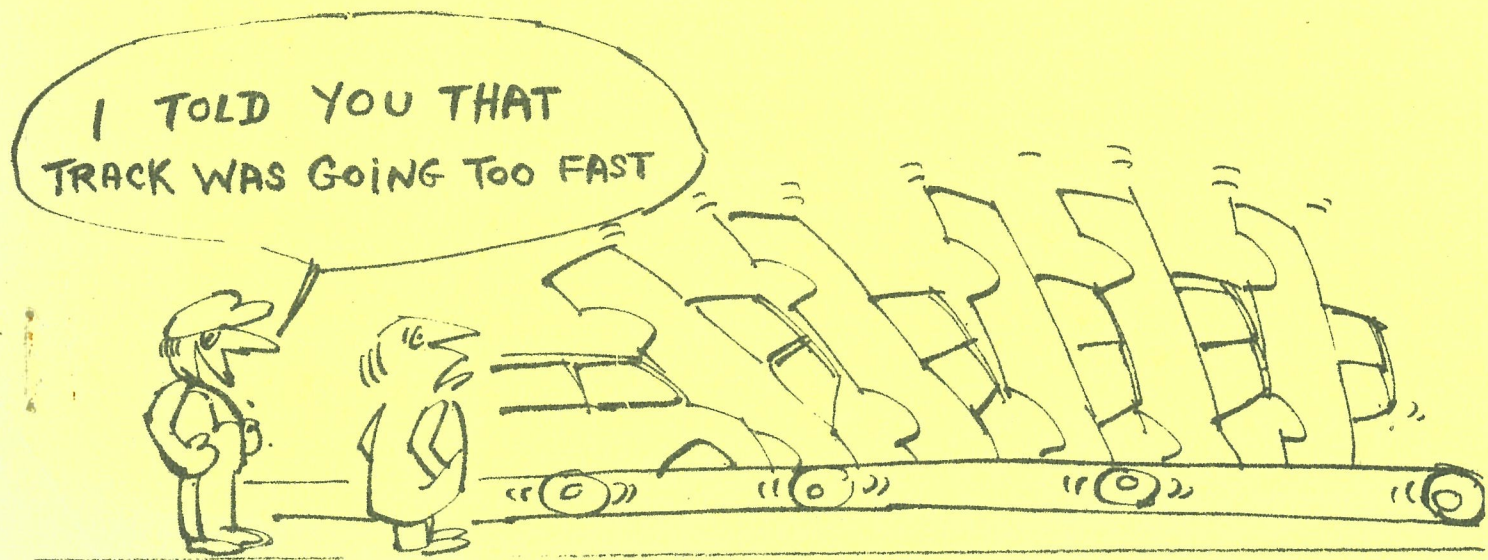


solidarity

for workers' power

- Ford Report
 - Manchester tenants
 - Angela Davis
 - Women's lib
- Volume 7, no. 4 / 5p



1900

1901

1902

1903

1904

1905
1906
1907
1908
1909
1910
1911
1912
1913
1914
1915
1916
1917
1918
1919
1920
1921
1922
1923
1924
1925
1926
1927
1928
1929
1930
1931
1932
1933
1934
1935
1936
1937
1938
1939
1940
1941
1942
1943
1944
1945
1946
1947
1948
1949
1950
1951
1952
1953
1954
1955
1956
1957
1958
1959
1960
1961
1962
1963
1964
1965
1966
1967
1968
1969
1970
1971
1972
1973
1974
1975
1976
1977
1978
1979
1980
1981
1982
1983
1984
1985
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
1991
1992
1993
1994
1995
1996
1997
1998
1999
2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025
2026
2027
2028
2029
2030
2031
2032
2033
2034
2035
2036
2037
2038
2039
2040
2041
2042
2043
2044
2045
2046
2047
2048
2049
2050
2051
2052
2053
2054
2055
2056
2057
2058
2059
2060
2061
2062
2063
2064
2065
2066
2067
2068
2069
2070
2071
2072
2073
2074
2075
2076
2077
2078
2079
2080
2081
2082
2083
2084
2085
2086
2087
2088
2089
2090
2091
2092
2093
2094
2095
2096
2097
2098
2099
2100

2101

2102

2103

2104

2105

2106

2107

2108

2109
2110
2111
2112
2113
2114
2115
2116
2117
2118
2119
2120
2121
2122
2123
2124
2125
2126
2127
2128
2129
2130
2131
2132
2133
2134
2135
2136
2137
2138
2139
2140
2141
2142
2143
2144
2145
2146
2147
2148
2149
2150
2151
2152
2153
2154
2155
2156
2157
2158
2159
2160
2161
2162
2163
2164
2165
2166
2167
2168
2169
2170
2171
2172
2173
2174
2175
2176
2177
2178
2179
2180
2181
2182
2183
2184
2185
2186
2187
2188
2189
2190
2191
2192
2193
2194
2195
2196
2197
2198
2199
2200

FORD REPORT

In the run-up to the next round of struggle at Fords - a struggle for decent working conditions and wages which will reach its climax in March 1973 - a number of fragmentary but interesting and perhaps important developments have been taking place. They are worth mentioning, although it is too early yet to come to any general conclusions.

On September 18, at a meeting of representatives of Fords Works Committees, a proposal to deduct trade union dues through pay-roll 'check off' was defeated by 63 votes to 41 with 14 abstentions. The proposal had been backed by the Company and by most trade union executives, including left-wing ones. This decision flies in the face of traditional trade union attitudes. It is all the better for that, for there is nothing in these 'check off' systems of any advantage to rank and file organisation. However, there are advantages for the union, in that the system guarantees and stabilises their income without the unpleasant necessity of having strong and active workers' organisation in the factory. The advantage for Ford (on one occasion explicitly stated by Henry Ford Mark I) is that the Company is placed in the role of banker to the unions, a role which can be a potent source of pressure. It also removes one of the main justifications - within the agreement, that is - for the mobility of shop stewards. As Les Moore, Convenor of the Halewood Body Plant, has said 'Of course collecting dues is just a pretext for the steward to fill his members in on what's been happening'.* It is encouraging to see shop stewards taking the needs of job organisation, rather than the financial problems of the national trade union apparatus, into account.

At Dagenham there have been a number of significant disputes and walk-outs which clearly show the direction workers feel the struggle should develop. In the first week of October, on the night shift in the Body-in-White shop, a supervisor on the door line abused an immigrant worker, who promptly stuck one on him. The worker was sacked, and the men on the line stopped work in sympathy. They were followed by the day shift, and eventually over 800 men were affected. The dispute was a kick in the teeth for those idiots who see industrial struggle in racial terms, arguing that black workers must organise independently of their white co-workers. However the man remained sacked, in spite of the limited action in his support.

Another dispute started on October 4, when 8 women in the K.D. department had their wages stopped because they were late for work, the reason being a traffic jam inside the Ford estate caused by a lorry delivering materials. 120 men stopped work in support, and by the following

* 'Ford Strike: The Workers' Story', John Mathews, p.80

day altogether 300 had stopped. The girls got their money. This dispute is relevant to the current discussion about the need for independent women's industrial organisation. There are frequent cases of transsexual industrial action - in fact this is the general rule where there is a mixed work force. Women workers do have specific problems which they have to solve themselves, but in my view it will be by united action of men and women together that they will basically improve their situation.

A third walk-out, also early in October, involved nearly a thousand workers. This was in response to a speed-up on the overhead cam line in the Engine Plant. Incidentally, this dispute brought to light the massive stockpile of parts which the Company has been building up.

In the Press Shop, in the middle of October, a crane driver was suspended for refusing to unload a roll of sheet steel from a lorry. He thought it was unsafe. The other workers in his section stopped work in support, and he was reinstated within an hour without loss of wages. But then the men demanded payment for those who stopped in support. The firm didn't answer the ultimatum and the following day the whole shop stopped. The firm promised to enter negotiations.

Tension is developing over the planned run-down and closure of the blast furnace and coke ovens at Dagenham. These plans threaten the jobs of 500 men, and are scheduled for completion in 1975. There have been calls for the men to take it over and run it themselves, and at a mass meeting on November 19 a decision was taken to strike if the Company does not withdraw its plans. But whatever action is to be taken, strike or occupation, the decision must be taken soon, before the Company lets the run-down proceed much further. And certainly this struggle should be integrated with the major struggle over parity, possibly with a view to reducing the Company's stockpile level.

In late November, 40 long-suffering workers on the Cortina underbody line had a sit-down over an appalling supervisor in the Body Shop. Although the situation was largely defused by the 'responsible' local GMWU steward, it did result in the suspension of the foreman. He was then supported by his fellow foremen, who threatened strike action. The workers' response was to welcome it. They threatened to prove the irrelevance of foremen by keeping production going.

The way in which the Company has been allowed to work massive overtime has been a negative feature of the current situation. This is not how to prepare for the struggle. Ford has been able to accumulate stockpiles of completed vehicles, which are salted away in its dealers' showrooms. K.D. sets* are being built up in assembly plants abroad, and large pressings and other parts have also been assembled. These are essential

* K.D. means 'knock down', i.e. where unassembled cars are prepared and packed for export.

for continued production at Cologne and Genk in the event of a national stoppage here. It seems to me that any dispute which gives advance warning, but is not preceded by a planned overtime ban and a restriction of production, is going off half-cocked.

On December 1, Henry Ford Mark II announced the planned construction of a manufacturing plant in Spain: 50% of components would be made in Valencia and at least two-thirds of production would be exported. This decision raises serious problems for militants who must decide a policy NOW on the export of dies and components to Spain to get production going. A Ford factory in Spain, where strikes are illegal, would be making common models with the other European plants. In other words, Franco's police will be playing a part in disciplining workers at Dagenham and Halewood.

The wage freeze is also making militants think seriously about the March 1 deadline. This raises several questions. Will the wage claim still be pursued? If so, will there be a struggle against a union-led scabbing, for example by the GMWU? If this happened, would the case for occupation be even stronger? Should the wage element in the demand then be dropped to concentrate on the other issues, for example mutuality and 'status quo'?

It is too early yet to say what will emerge from this discussion, but the coming struggles should sort out the sheep from the goats. Workers will once more have an opportunity to find out where their real interests lie.

M. F.



Moss Evans in the classical position of a trade union official: on the backs of Ford workers (note the shop stewards' slogan). It's about time Ford workers got out from under.

* This refers to no change in working conditions or line speeds without prior agreement from the workers.

FORD FACTS

One of the real, but largely unfulfilled needs of militants is the need for facts. Information about the wages and conditions of other workers, and about the firms for which they work, helps provide an essential basis of understanding on which united action should be built. This information is often available, if you know where to look and have enough contacts. But generally those who can most effectively use it are kept most in the dark. This article is an attempt to provide Ford workers with ammunition for the struggles to come.

The latest available figures for 1971 showing the comparative exploitation of British car workers indicate that Ford workers are way out in front. Not only do they receive the lowest wages but the sales per employee are the highest.

	Sales per employee
Ford (1)	£ 10,628
Chrysler (2)	8,421
Vauxhall	7,784
British Leyland	6,067

It is a pity that so far Ford workers have not been able to reduce this unsought for eminence. It seems to me that a reduction of the work load, initiated from below, is an essential part of any parity struggle.

Not only do British Ford workers work harder and receive less money than other motor workers, but they can proudly claim to receive by far the lowest wages within the Ford empire itself. German and Australian Ford workers are also poorly paid and savagely overworked compared with other motor workers in their respective countries (where Ford only keep going by relying on massive infusions of tied immigrant labour). But they still receive much higher rates than their British equivalents.

* (1) Adjusted from 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ months to 12 months due to the 10 week strike.

(2) Adjusted from 16 months to 12 months due to Chrysler changing the starting date of their accounting year.

When considering the following figures, one should bear in mind that there are different costs of living and general social conditions in the three countries.

BRITISH AND GERMAN FORD HOURLY WAGE RATES - NOVEMBER 1972

Britain (3)		Germany (4)
Grade A	76½p	70.2 - 77.1p
Grade B	82p	81.4p
Grade C	84½p	86.6 - 92.8p
Grade D	87½p	100p
Grade E	92½p	110 - 129p

Plus payments in Ford Germany include:

- 3.32p per hour for working directly in production
- 3.32p per hour extra skill payment
- A points system for unpleasant work, 0,93p per point
- A points system based on track speed:
 - 1 point 0.66p
 - 2 points 1.46p
 - 3 points 2.25p
 - 4 points 3.32p
 - 5 points 4.24p

Other conditions in Ford Germany include 18 basic days holiday plus 3 days (if over age 25) plus another 2 days (if over 30). There are also between 10 and 13 bank holidays depending on the region. Holiday pay is 130% of average hourly earnings.

FORD AUSTRALIA

The wage structure of Ford Australia is so complex that it is impossible to show it on any meaningful comparative scale. There is a national Vehicle Industry award which recognises no less than 148 wage classifications excluding supervisors. Some classifications have up to 48 sub-classifications with different rates. The situation is further complicated by 5 separate regional rates for each classification, and by plus payments paid by individual motor manufacturers.

(3) These rates apply after 4 years' service!

(4) Basic rate is given. Figures are based on an exchange rate of £1 = 7.54 DM (18/11/72).

In the case of Ford Australia the rate is made up as follows:

- (1) the award (or basic) rate.
- (2) after two weeks' service, a flat rise of 75p
- (3) an over-award payment of 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ %

This latter payment involves penalties by which a worker can lose 6% of the over-award payment each time he is late, or for any portion of an hour which he remains off the job, for example at shop meetings.

The selected examples of rates are the consolidated current (November 1972) rates for the largest Australian Ford plant at Geelong, Victoria. An interesting feature is, other things being equal, that workers 'on the line' receive extra money, as in Ford Germany. (Exchange rate: £1 = \$1.97Aus.)

	Total = (1) + (2) + (3)		
Fitter/turners and many other craftsmen	£41.34	=	35.18 + 6.16
Car body assemblers 'on the line'	£37.58	=	31.98 + 5.60
Dent knockers, Press setters			
Trimmers and welders 'on the line'			
Vehicle assemblers 'on the line'	£36.26	=	30.86 + 5.40
Solderers " " "			
Painters " " "			
Assemblers not on the line	£33.28	=	28.32 + 4.96
Press operator (over 400 tons)	£35.19	=	29.95 + 5.25
Janitor	£29.70	=	25.28 + 4.42

There is a 40-hour week, overtime is at time and a half for the first 3 hours and double time thereafter and on Sundays.

Ford workers clearly have an irrefutable case by any standards. But what is also clear is the urgent need for parity and united action between workers throughout the Ford empire. There have been international meetings of convenors from the European plants (the last was at Cologne only a few weeks ago), but very little information about what happens at these meetings, about the situation in the continental factories, or about the possibilities of joint action, has been passed on to the rank and file. This situation is appalling and reflects, on an international level, the same malaise concerning the spread of information which already exists on a national scale in the Ford shop stewards' organisation.

We welcome contributions and comments on the continuing discussion of the problems facing Ford workers.



CHANGE the political prisoners!

Angela Davis. Woman. Black. 'Radical'. Imprisoned by the government that murdered Joe Hill, that framed Tom Mooney, that executed Saccho and Vanzetti, that hounded the Chicago Seven, that has a finger in every counter-revolutionary plot from Morocco to the Phillipines, from Guatemala to Iran. Nothing easier than to throw oneself blindly into the campaign for her release.

Nothing easier, too, than to 'forget' (or worse, to deny) her trumpeted allegiance to a Party that supported the framing (and execution of countless revolutionaries in

Russia and elsewhere, the rape of Hungary and of Czechoslovakia, the suppression of any autonomous working class action or thought for five decades. Within the USA itself, her Party welcomed the railroading to gaol of the 18 Minneapolis truckdrivers and Trotskyists in 1941. In relation to the Negro struggle, the Party betrayed the 'Double V Movement' and the threatened March on Washington, in 1941, that resulted in the FEPC. In relation to Women's Liberation, the Communist Parties oppose legalised abortion in France and Italy, and in Russia gave women medals for multiplying like rabbits.

What followed Angela Davis' recent release deserves to be more widely known. She pledged herself to fight for the liberation of all political prisoners. Cashing in on the publicity, the Communist Party of the United States appointed her to its Central Committee.

It is not only a revolt of intellectuals or young people, as is sometimes asserted by western left-wingers to justify their silence or hesitation. Four weeks ago in Prague the Congress of the "normalized" trade unions (purge of more than 50,000 cadres since 1969) annulled the decisions of the preceding congress, including the right to strike. The workers are not allowed to have independent trade unions or to fight for their demands, or to protest against the dismissal of comrades, against production schedules and bad working conditions.

The Workers' Councils, formed in 1968 and dissolved in 1969, have been defined by the party leadership as "instruments of counterrevolution". Isn't that absurd for a so-called "working class" state?

When I describe all that, without the slightest pleasure but with shame and sorrow, to my western friends, they reply that of course it's a disagreeable situation but that one mustn't say so too openly so as not to "play into the hands of socialism's enemies", and that one must start from "a class position". But what "class" can benefit if people are arrested without trial, if trade unions are enslaved, if all free discussion is suppressed, if socialist countries accuse each other of imperialism, betrayal, revisionism, and invade each other by turns?

If they mean the working class, then that of Czechoslovakia has made it clear that it does not consider the present régime socialist.

That is precisely why you, Angela, and the millions of people who supported you and believe in a more just socialist society with more freedom, can no longer be silent about the violation of human rights in the countries which call themselves "socialist" and by their behaviour discredit socialism more than any reactionary propaganda.

On July 28, 1972 The Times published an 'Open Letter to Angela Davis' by Jiri Pelikan, one of the leading figures of the 'Prague Spring'. During that period he had been Director of the Czechoslovak TV and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of Parliament. (Pelikan had also been elected to the Central Committee of the Czech Party during the 'illegal' Congress held in a Prague factory a few hours after the Soviet invasion of August 1968.) The letter described why Pelikan had become a communist, welcomed Angela's release and took her up on her promise to fight for the freedom of political prisoners throughout the world. Would Angela fight for the release of political prisoners in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union? Pelikan's letter listed the way communists were being persecuted in Czechoslovakia, not only by imprisonment but by being deprived of work for their political beliefs. Children were being deprived of the right to study for the 'sins' of their parents. Excerpts of the letter are published alongside.

Angela did not answer Pelikan's letter. Instead she went off on a grand tour. First, to the land from which the orders that had gaoled the Czech communists had emanated. There she was feted and granted a Doctorate at Moscow University. Then to Bulgaria. Then on to Czechoslovakia itself. Meanwhile in New York one Charlene Mitchell, close friend and political associate of Angela Davis, issued a statement on her behalf. 'Miss Davis' she said 'did not think that people should leave socialist countries to return to the capitalist system. Even if such people said that they were communists they were still acting in opposition to the socialist system, objectively speaking ... People in Eastern Europe got into difficulties and ended in gaol only if they were undermining the government'. (The Times, 29/7/72)

Angela meanwhile had landed in Cuba. The October 8 issue of Gramma ('Official Weekly of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba') heaped fulsome praise

on her. Dorticos, President of the Cuban Republic, pinned the Playa Giron National Order on her lapel in the presence of Fidel - a public supporter, let it be remembered, of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. (The order had been created in 1961 for presentation to 'Cuban or foreign figures that had distinguished themselves in the struggle against imperialism ... or who are engaged in outstanding feats for peace or the progress of humanity'.) Gramma reported a mass rally held on September 28 in Havana's Plaza de la Revolucion. Here Angela Davis gave her public answer to Jiri Pelikan. 'Our stay in Czechoslovakia greatly increased our appreciation of those who ... were participating in the construction of socialism, while standing strong against imperialist intrigue, sabotage and counter-revolution ... The critical requirement was to challenge the pseudo-revolutionaries who try to use anti-Sovietism to divide and confuse the anti-imperialist movement (loud applause)'.

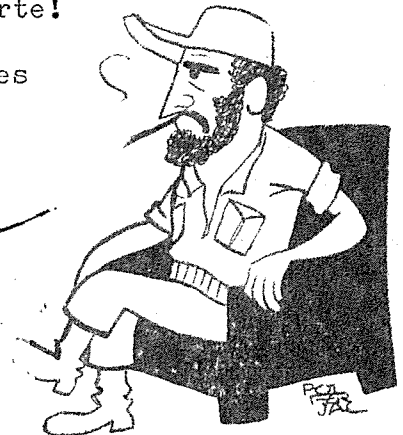
Attitudes to such Stalinists pose serious questions for revolutionaries. Angela Davis is no newcomer to politics, unaware of the past and international record of the Communist Parties. She is a hardened apparatchik. She is part of an apparatus dedicated to repressive state capitalism.

So where do we stand? On the one hand we are opposed to all persecution by bourgeois or bureaucratic state power. We deny our rulers the right to incarcerate anybody, even our future class enemies. On the other hand, we have no illusions about the fate revolutionaries would face in the hands of people of Angela's ilk. We dissociate ourselves from those who campaigned for her release without mentioning her politics.

Revolutionaries themselves will eventually have to settle accounts with the Stalinist counter-revolution. But we cannot in the meantime allow the bourgeois state to usurp this function. We welcome Angela Davis' release ... while documenting her outrageous utterances about the Czech political prisoners, utterances which fortunately undermine her credibility in the eyes of many ordinary people. We reassert our opposition to all governmental repression. To oppose only some forms of such repression is to destroy one's own credibility and to appear as the mirror image of this Stalinist hack. It will be time enough to decide how to confront the Stalinists when they seek to destroy the power of the Workers Councils, as they undoubtedly will. In the meantime our main enemy is our own ruling class. We must oppose its every arbitrary act, while keeping an eye on its successor, waiting in the wings.

Azúcar o Muerte!

The principles
of trade
justify the
trading of
principles!



M. B.

THE TENANTS' STRUGGLE IN MANCHESTER

This is an attempt to sum up what has been happening in the Greater Manchester area during the past few months. In fact there are two tales to be told: one deals with the fight between the tenants and the authorities, the other with the long-running comedy show-cum-struggle between the tenants and those attempting to wage the fight on their behalf.

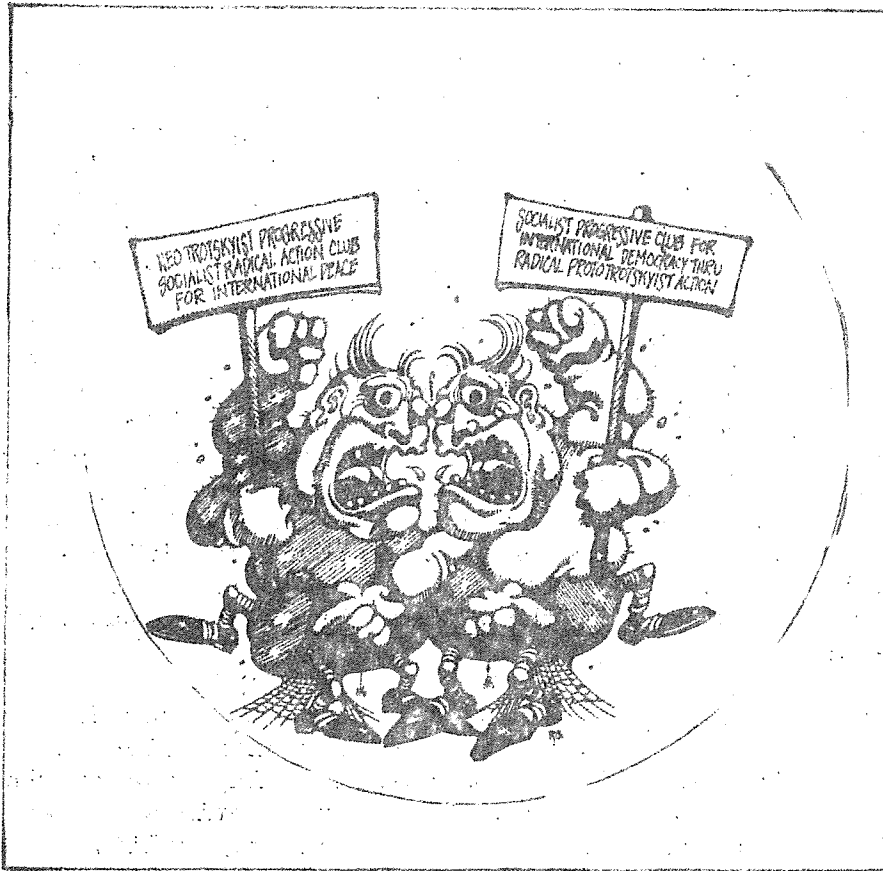
TENANTS' CONTROL ... OR CONTROL OF THE TENANTS?

In the beginning there was Bill Ball. And Bill begat the Greater Manchester Federation of Tenants and Residents. And the G.M.F. of T. and R. begat a series of meetings. And as these meetings were getting the struggle nowhere a number of tenants tried to remove Bill. But Bill was like the house which was built upon the rock. He would not be moved. At two successive meetings massive votes of no confidence were passed. Bill said he didn't feel that these votes conveyed the true feeling of the meeting. At the second meeting a new Chairman was elected, and the assembly turned their backs on Bill and proceeded to hold their own meeting. At this point our hero said that the meeting was closed and stormed from the room. Since then he has been seen but rarely, hurrying by, his Morning Star clutched tightly to his breast.

After the C.P. had lost control there was a predictable revolt against the whole tight procedural nonsense which had gone on, and a new, freer, group came into being. All those who claimed to support the tenants' fight were made welcome, whether they were themselves tenants or not. At first this worked admirably, but serpents were appearing in this little Garden of Eden. Not the ones which go SSSsss... but rather the ones that go SLL. After Bill's departure there had been a need for some sort of minimum organisation to do such mundane things as write letters, book meeting rooms and act as an info point. A certain lady offered her services and this offer was gladly accepted. She was, we gathered, a disenchanted member of the Labour Party. It subsequently turned out that she was a supporter, though not actually a 'member' of Gerry Healy's happy brand of brothers and sisters.

At this stage things were going extremely well. The Labour Council in Manchester had just shed its last bit of credibility by voting to implement the Act. Tenants all over the city were mobilising to withhold the increase. The Tenants Action Group (the new name for the Tenants Federation) was going great guns, organising meetings, publishing a news-sheet and spreading the opposition to the Rent Act in all the city estates and

beyond. The various political groups and grouplets were sinking their differences and working together in a really effective way. Then the rot set in. The lady secretary began to plug the 'Workers Press' at public meetings on the estates, and presto - no more unity. I.S. and 'Workers' Fight' weren't going to be left out and began to sell their papers too. At the next meeting of the Action Group a move by tenants to depose the lady secretary was narrowly defeated. In fact the voting procedure at this meeting was nonsensical. For instance, the League had three votes (more than half their local membership) while some of the bigger estates (representing thousands of bona fide tenants) had to be content with a single vote.



Obviously this state of affairs could not be allowed to continue. Representatives of some of the better organised estates held a meeting restricted to tenants. After the sad bickering meetings which had been going on, this one was a revelation. Twenty odd people of widely differing political persuasions sat down together and talked for an hour and a half. At the end of that time full agreement had been reached on a whole range of ideas. The thing that made this meeting work so well was that every-one attending it was on partial rent strike. There were no attempts to score debating points; no

one wanted to build a marxist party (although there were several marxists present); what mattered was the tenants' struggle, and how to enlarge it in a realistic way.

At the next meeting of the Action Group the proposals drawn up at this meeting were put forward. These included re-election of all officers, only tenants being eligible for office, and the adoption of a voting system

which would give 2 votes to each Tenants' Association and one vote to all other accepted groups. These ideas were accepted, and new officers elected. In fact the existing chairman and treasurer were re-elected. The lady secretary was not eligible, being an owner-occupier. The Workers Press reaction to these events was fairly predictable. They poured abuse on those who were 'trying to keep politics out of the struggle'. They indulged in long harangues against the 'stalinist-anarchist-revisionist-reformist-fascist conspiracy....' etc, etc, ad nauseam.

During this period the tenants' fight was being pushed further into the background as the politicians battled for control. In spite of this, and despite a virtual blackout on the issue by the local and national press and television, the rent strike was steadily growing on the estates. More and more people were refusing to pay the 92p increase.

Things grew worse at the Action Group meetings. People were treated to long speeches on the need to politicise the rent struggle. At a meeting at the end of October a tenant from an outlying estate stood up after a particularly uninspiring speech by an SLL member and said that he hadn't realised there were such long words in the language. 'The only long words I know are marmalade and skirting board, and they seem to have as much to do with the rents as all the rubbish I have just been listening to'. Loud and long applause.

At this same meeting the sheer lack of principle of the SLL was shown at its worst. The chairman of a semi-defunct Association, who had been 'helped' by the League leapt up and announced proudly that he had kicked several people off his committee 'because I found that they were politically motivated, and I am not having that'. This announcement was greeted by the League members with broad smiles! The people who had been expelled in such a democratic manner were in fact members of the C.P. who had been 'witch-hunted' on the estate they lived on. And this was approved by the same people who were putting regular articles in the Workers Press about the way the SLL were being 'witch-hunted'.

Things came to a head on November 6. At this meeting the Moss Side Tenants Association proposed that because of their constant disruption of meetings and because of the vicious and slanderous attacks being made in the Workers Heypresto, the SLL should be barred from all future meetings. After a lot of hassling the motion was carried, the vote being clearly split, tenants voting one way and political groups such as I.S. and Workers' Fight voting to keep the SLL in.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of this (from the League's point of view) is that they had aroused the anger of the tenants, not because they were putting forward a revolutionary programme, but because they were such bloody bores. Tenant after tenant got up during the discussion to point out that people were staying away because they were sick and tired of the interminable speeches of the 'leaders of the class struggle' when they, the tenants, were more interested in finding out exactly what was happening in the rest of the city and how to deal with such non-political matters as how to prevent evictions.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE ESTATES ...

Meanwhile, back on the estates, tenants are getting on with the job of fighting one of the most vicious pieces of class legislation the Rt. Hon. Edward Teeth has yet dreamed up. The Act simply means higher rents. The clearly stated intention of the government is to turn the present subsidy of £2 million odd into a £3 million profit. The intention is to increase rents yearly until a 'fair rents' level is reached. This level is very vague, but is not related to the 'economic rent'. It will be considerably higher.

Of course there is a bit of sugar to help the medicine down. But in this case the sugar (the rebate scheme) is in some respects worse than the medicine. The rebate scheme only applies to low-paid workers, who are already amongst the most exploited members of society. To qualify for a rebate it is necessary to fill in an eight page application. This is a means test worse than anything we have seen since the thirties. After working hard all week for a totally inadequate wage, tenants are expected to submit to this disgusting indignity. And in many cases the rebate they get is less than the recent increase. So after all this their rent has still gone up.

Incidentally, any subsidies to the unemployed and those on Social Security were formerly paid out of the National Exchequer. But in future all subsidies, rebates, etc., will be financed from the housing revenue account of the Local Authorities. So in fact the burden of helping our less fortunate neighbours will be borne entirely by council tenants.

Faced with these rises and the various other attacks included in the bill, tenants have been left with four choices. Look for private rented accomodation, which is almost non-existent; buy a house, in a market which has been priced far beyond the bounds of sanity; stay and pay, with the certain knowledge that the council, like blackmailers, will be back for more; or stay and fight, which thousands of tenants are doing.

The credibility of the local Labour parties has worn so thin as to be transparent. The Manchester Labour council submitted to the government without any fight at all. Nearby Eccles said they would fight to the last ditch. But the last ditch turned out to be a letter from the government telling them that they must implement... or else. So they implemented. A few councils are still holding out, but by and large the Labour Party has once more shown its total ineffectuality when the chips are down. Champion of the council tenants, Salford M.P. Frank Allaun, wrote to The Guardian recently saying that tenants should be thinking about organising some form of strike against the increases due NEXT year. He is so out of touch that he doesn't know that thousands of his own constituents are on a partial rent strike NOW.

People are finding out that if this Act is to be defeated then, like the Industrial Relations Act, it must simply be defied. In the Manchester area thousands of tenants have dragged themselves away from their colour televisions and leapt into one of their Jags to drive down to mass meetings and avow their intention to help Ted keep down the cost of living by freezing council rents at their former level!

Links are being made with trade unionists at shop floor level and a North West Conference is planned for the near future. The Manchester Corporation are playing a very tight game, saying very little and pretending that there is no rent strike. Of course there have been a few exceptions to this. After all it is obvious that some of the bureaucrats in their little offices are really uptight that tenants are getting away with not paying the rent rise. One instance of this was the Area Housing Manager, whose office covers Manor Avenue Estate. On this estate a leaflet went out calling for support for the rent strike. Six names were on this leaflet. Two weeks later all six received warning letters about their arrears of rent. In fact five of them were less than £3 behind at this time, and the sixth, for special reasons, was not withholding. Yet he got a threatening letter too. What made the whole affair even more ridiculous was that his name had been spelt wrongly on the leaflet. And the same spelling mistake appeared on the Town Hall letter. Since then the Town Hall has said it was 'all a mistake'. But their crude attempt at intimidation has backfired in their faces. The people of Manor Avenue, far from being intimidated, have been angered. They are more than ever anxious to carry on the fight.

So in Manchester the rent strike goes on. And it is growing in a good many of the surrounding towns. Liverpool has a big rent fight. But what is happening elsewhere? We need to break the conspiracy of silence the press has imposed. What is happening in YOUR town? Spread the information. Let the Manchester tenants know what YOU are doing. The Manchester Tenants Action Group can be contacted via MAGIC (Manchester Alternative General Info Centre), 7 Summer Terrace, Manchester 14. Tel: 061 224 9087.

When the rooster
fails to crow at dawn
we will know he was
up all night planning
how to liberate the farm

when the workers rise
not with the alarm clock
but with their own desires
the ruling class must beware.

INSIDE THE DAGENHAM STORAGE CO.

This article tells how a worker at the beleaguered Dagenham Storage Company depot sees the situation. Not only dockers and containermen, workers and management, but even rival groups of employees within the firm have been fighting each other. In some respects this article itself reflects this fragmentation and voices opinions with which we certainly could not agree - however genuinely held. It illustrates yet again that the only way the workers can really improve their position is by fighting their common enemy together.

The Dagenham Storage Company is on the same site as Dagenham Cold Store. Although they have separate administrations and are to all intents and purposes separate companies, both are owned by Hay's Wharf. When Dagenham Storage Company (DSC) started Inland Container Depot (ICD) operations in July 1971, several men in the Industrial Tractors Earth Moving Equipment assembly department who were due to be made redundant were offered employment in the ICD. Many accepted and so migrated, with their lockers etc., from the Phase I building to another building on the same site, Phase III, where the new depot was to be based.

Those who accepted the ICD jobs thought they were on to a good thing, believing that the depot would expand as more and more container contracts were secured, and that hundreds more men would be needed to handle the freight - although they did realise these extra men would, of course, be dockers. But they thought the men already employed (themselves included) would handle the warehousing, paperwork, inspection and related work while the dockers would load and unload the containers. But these were not the intentions of DSC management, nor were they the intentions of the workers already in Phase III, who were working on the tea and canned goods contracts. Those workers and their foremen wanted to keep the ICD work to themselves as a source of weekend overtime. It was 'their' work. The workers from the other building were interlopers who were to be 'encouraged' to find employment elsewhere. Looking back, it was certainly poetic justice that some of the first jobs to be threatened by the dockers' actions belonged to those men who had tried to get their fellow workers from Phase I sacked.

The tactics used by the Phase III mob were petty. Phase III had a rest room where the workers could have their tea and sandwiches at break time. Somehow there would be no seats for the Phase I men. No cups either; those who brought their own cups would later find them 'missing'. Pallets of tea chests would be placed in front of the Phase I men's lockers to make

clothes-changing difficult. This continued until April 1972 when ICD was relocated in the Phase I building. In the resulting transfer of personnel most of the Phase I men were left behind in the Phase III building as labourers, and their original jobs in ICD were taken over by Phase III men. Such was the situation at the time of the dockers' actions.

Some of us feel that if the management had been less myopic in outlook, had expanded the ICD contracts and employed dockers to cope with the increasing work from the start of ICD in 1971, the confrontation with the dockers would have been avoided. But we realise this would be too much savvy to expect from a management that was paying its workers a wage of £20,* which with a £6 bonus made £26 per week. To that management the thought of a docker walking on DSC ground was a financial nightmare.

DSC has been hit hard, but not fatally, by the dockers' actions. One of the DSC contracts which has been hit by picketing, the Tractor packing, was already under threat of cancellation. The Tractor packing department had been operating for some time on a day-to-day basis, although Fords would send in enough work for two weeks in advance. For some time Fords had been planning their own Tractor packing depot at Basildon. The dockers merely encouraged Fords to speed these plans up. Hay's Wharf had already started tea warehousing in Birmingham and much of this DSC contract had been syphoned off to Brum by June/July 1972. The canned goods (Sainsbury's) contract was temporarily stopped, but now that the fruit containers are being sent in from Victoria Dock Water Terminal again, things are returning to normal (i.e. exploitation and sweated labour).

Most of the ICD personnel at present are ex-Phase III men. Still bent they are - hell bent on their feud with ex-Phase I men for one thing! In this they are supported by their management. Having the workers squabbling with each other makes for less trouble for the bosses. So bent that they cannot even think straight. If they did they would realise that the workers have to plan and act together, otherwise if the management mean every word of their statement, 'We will not employ dockers - we will close the site first', they are going to lose out either way.

Lately, wages have been raised at DSC. The £6 bonus has been compounded with normal wages, and an increase of £2 per week awarded, equalling a total wage of £28 per week for cargo handlers. This has been welcomed by all as a real advance. Some of the men think it is not enough, but they don't intend to do anything about it, so the Company can congratulate the local management for buying some temporary peace for only £2 a week.

Still, many of us feel that the dockers may yet have the last word on the future of DSC. Hay's Wharf is more interested in its property development activities on the Tooley Street site, and whether they will consider DSC worth bothering about is a moot point. It may well pay them to flog the site. So the future of the men's jobs at DSC is still insecure.

Jeff.

* since changed

TWO REPLIES TO SELMA JAMES

In our last issue we published a review of Selma James' pamphlet 'Women, the Unions and Work', together with Selma's reply. In this issue two women members of SOLIDARITY answer some of Selma's points. We would welcome further contributions to this developing discussion on Women's Liberation

I'd like to answer part of Selma James' letter (Solidarity, VII,3) where she talks about male-dominated political groups. I have no compunction about pursuing the argument here; open discussion can only be good for the women's movement. We don't have to present a united front.

Much of what Selma and other women say about the authoritarian practice and defective theory of the traditional left is undoubtedly true. It must be difficult for members of certain groups to be into women's lib. at the same time without experiencing a degree of schizophrenia. But does it follow that we can't encounter men without being dominated by them, that our only salvation lies in separation? When our ultimate goal is people's liberation, the practice of excluding a vast category of people (men) takes some defending.

The principle of autonomy is a different thing. Of course women must organise their own struggles, accepting direction from no-one. And there is a case for excluding men from the small group situation, when women feel that a male presence would seriously damage their ability to relate to each other and communicate as never before. Similarly, as long as male-dominated politics tend to exclude a vast category of people (women) we must be prepared to supplement them with our own analyses and activities.

However, I do not see the alternatives as being male domination or radical feminism. There is another possibility. It is indeed the only possibility if we are to work towards the kind of society we want, instead of internalising the worst features of the one we reject. It is the possibility of a mixed libertarian grouping with a total critique. This is far from being incompatible with a commitment to women's liberation. But the basis of our commitment is political consciousness, not the biological fact of being female.

I don't see that it is a failure of the women's movement not to have won us all away from mixed groups. On the contrary, it could be seen as one of its limitations that many women are apparently content to restrict

their involvement to single-sex groups. Preoccupation with nappies and washing-up aren't to be accepted, so that we can only relate on equal terms to those similarly preoccupied; their power to detract from our political and social lives should instead be eliminated (by leaving the dirty dishes until someone needs one and washes it himself or by involving others concerned in the baby's welfare). Certainly women's lib. has done a great service in making discussion of such problems legitimate, and in pointing the political implications of the welter of trivia in which the oppression of women manifests itself.

Selma is right in saying we have a lot to tell men. At the same time, though, we shouldn't close our minds to all politics outside the women's movement, including our own pre-women's lib. ideas, for fear of contamination from dominant males. Clearly Selma herself does not do this: she calls herself a marxist, and can make the rather astounding remark 'In 1902 Lenin obviously didn't yet understand the working class...' (my emphasis). Perhaps there is room in her mind for rejection of a few more ideas received from such sources, like the concept of a power struggle for leadership of the oppressed. A more libertarian outlook might make for less pessimism about integrated political theory and practice.

I'm not saying SOLIDARITY is perfect in these respects. Much remains to be done (and said). For example, men are certainly dominant numerically - but this would inhibit the full and equal participation of women only if there was a real conflict of interests between men and women in the group. I don't think there is.

The differences which our rulers would like to make us believe are irreconcilable need not divide us. Throughout the class, conflicts can be resolved by cooperation, discussion, understanding what's really going on, and asserting our unified interest, in the context of revolutionary politics.

I may have been dealing with the tendency of some of Selma's remarks rather than what she actually meant. Anyway, such tendencies are quite strongly present in the women's movement, and should be answered by libertarians.

Liz W.

Selma's remarks on male domination of organisations, in her letter in the last issue, deserve some comment. It is true that most organisations (not all, as she asserts) are dominated by men, but then men constitute a large majority in most organisations. There is no justification, therefore, for concluding, as Selma appears to do, that men have a greater tendency to dominate a group than women have, given roughly equal numbers. It remains an open question, on which Women's Liberation groups would be ideally placed to provide information, if only they had the courage and confidence to

include men. My own does, and has not found that it creates problems - in fact we welcome their involvement. As long as women themselves believe in the alleged 'inevitable' differences between the sexes they are, ironically, helping to perpetuate, both in society as a whole and in their own minds, those very misconceptions which have been the chief obstacles to their liberation. An oft-repeated argument for the exclusion of men is that women can develop confidence in a totally female group. But if this confidence is so fragile that it would dissolve as soon as we worked with men, of what real value is it? Excellent training for a convent life perhaps?

The identification of the male as the cause of women's oppression (like the hostility to whites in the Black Power movement)* tends to distract from a more fundamental phenomenon, of which male (white, etc.) domination are special cases - domination itself. Almost all societies, groups and organisations (including revolutionary ones, and even those which claim to be libertarian) are effectively, if not formally, controlled by a minority. Whether this minority happens to be male, female, hermaphrodite, neuter or mixed is irrelevant as far as the other members' participation in decisions is concerned. It is just as oppressive to have all the important aspects of life dominated by a female (or a black, etc.) minority as it is by a male one, and just as bad for men as for women.

The questions which seem relevant to me are: why do some people need to dominate others? Why do others need (apparently) to be dominated? ('The Irrational in Politics' provides some explanation). To what extent are culture, language, and particularly in-group jargon used to induce feelings of ignorance and inadequacy in people and as a barrier to understanding and involvement, not only in schools, trade unions, courts, doctors' surgeries and labour exchanges, but also in revolutionary organisations?

No doubt some 'expert' (of irrelevant sex) in sociology, marxicology, psychology or some other -ology will damn my own words with a few neat phrases of jargon, but I shall nevertheless make one more comment on Selma's letter, on the subject of unions.

Selma is attacking an Aunt Sally here, since all her perfectly valid criticisms of unions, and a few more, have been made almost ad nauseam by SOLIDARITY; it is hard to imagine SOLIDARITY claiming that 'unions fight for the worker' or that 'the unions have betrayed workers'. We have never had these illusions. That is not the same as saying, however, that one should never join a union (often there is no choice anyway) and work at a local level. The struggles that matter can take place independently of the union, either within it (in spite of it) or outside it, depending on the particular situation. As Selma says, the miners used the union when it suited them and ignored it when it didn't. All the pro's and con's of joining a union in a particular case apply equally to women as to men.

J. G.

* See 'Black separatism and White sycophancy' in Solidarity, vol.VI, No7.

ON THE SOLIDARITY WAVELENGTH

When SOLIDARITY was launched, some twelve years ago, we made a deliberate choice of priorities. Our first task was seen and stated as one of total theoretical reconstruction. This required, we stressed, 'a radical break with all present organisations, their ideology, their mentality, their methods of work'.

We started to publish a number of pamphlets, describing the class struggle as we saw it. We produced certain historical texts, seeking to restore to the working class parts of its own history, more or less consciously hidden from it by the organisations claiming to speak on its behalf. We also produced material with wider theoretical implications, analysing the structure of modern capitalism and the nature of its crises. Texts were also published seeking to redefine the meaning of socialism. This work was not undertaken with parochial objectives in mind. We hoped, from the onset, that sooner or later it would have international repercussions.

We feel it is time to take stock of what has been achieved in this field. Our silence on this matter has been wrongly attributed, in certain quarters, to the fact that there was nothing to report, or that our influence was 'waning'. Nothing could be further from reality. In the last 2 or 3 years there has been a considerable and growing international interest in our literature. We have maintained a regular and systematic correspondence with comrades in a number of countries, explaining our ideas, arguing about them, and seeking to encourage their dissemination as widely as possible. These endeavours are beginning to bear fruit.

In this issue we will describe what has happened in Sweden. We will mention which groups have translated our literature (they themselves make no secret of having done so). We do this in the perspective of genuinely helping to build international links. We can anticipate that comrades in these groups will now be bombarded with literature from many other British revolutionary organisations and - hopefully - from further afield. Many of these latter organisations will have ideas very different from our own. Nothing but good can come from such a fertilisation, however.

It is probably in Sweden that the repercussions of our ideas have been the widest and most sustained. This is no accident. It is in those countries where the standard of living is above average and where capitalism has succeeded, by and large, in solving one type of problem (that of mass poverty) that its innumerable other problems and contradictions emerge in their clearest and sharpest form. We had to go beyond some traditional methods of analysis in order to describe and understand these other types of crises.

The first Solidarity pamphlets to be published in Swedish were produced by groups of Situationist inspiration. In 1968, Libertad (Allmänna Vägen 6, 41460 Göteborg) produced 'Bolsjevism, Byråkrati!', a translation by Ingemar Johansson of Cardan's 'From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy'. Later that year the same group produced a duplicated Swedish version, under the title 'Kronstadt 1921' of Ida Mett's 'The Kronstadt Commune' (again translated by Ingemar Johansson). A later printed edition, in 1969, was published by the anarcho-syndicalist Federativs Forlag (Sveavägen 98, 11350 Stockholm).

Shortly after it was produced our pamphlet 'Paris: May 1968' was fairly widely circulated in Sweden. In their issue No.4 of 1968 the magazine Zenit (Box 19017, Stockholm 17) produced most of the text under the title 'Paris, Maj 1968'. The translation was by Ingemar Nilsson. The last two chapters were omitted. They appeared in 1969 under the title 'Frankrike 1968, ett ögonvittnes reflektioner' in a book 'Anarkisterna i Klasskampen' published by Bengt Ericson and Ingemar Johansson (Bokförlaget Aldus-Bonniers, Stockholm).

In 1971 the Stockholm branch of the anarcho-syndicalist 'Samorganisation' (Stockholms Lokala Samorganisationen, Kammakargatan 47, 11124 Stockholm) produced a printed version of 'The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, 1917-1921' under the title 'Fabrikskommitteerna i ryska revolutionen' (Factory Committees in the Russian Revolution). The book had been translated by Ingemar Nilsson and some 2000 copies have already been sold.

During 1972 no fewer than eight SOLIDARITY pamphlets have been translated into Swedish and more are due shortly. First, the Federativs Forlag of Stockholm produced Alexandra Kollontai's 'The Workers Opposition' (Arbetsmotståndet) basing themselves on the SOLIDARITY text and on parts of our introduction, footnotes and chronology. (Ingemar Nilsson again did the translation.)

Then the socialist youth group in Växjö (Växjö ungsocialister, Box 224, 35105 Växjö 1, Sweden) published 'Socialismens Mening' (The Meaning of Socialism) by Paul Cardan (translated by Margareta Edgardh) and 'Auktoritär betingning, sexuall repression och Politikens Irrationalitet' (Authoritarian conditioning, sexual repression and the Irrationality in Politics) by M. Brinton. The text had been jointly translated by Peter Kempinsky, Lars Nordvall and Ingemar Sjö. This group of young socialists has recently started publishing a printed paper called 'Arbetsarmakt' (Workers Power). They call themselves council socialists. Their paper is an extraordinary mixture of syndicalism, Third Worldism, and genuinely revolutionary insights. It simultaneously publishes interviews with the NLF in Vietnam, and advertisements for Pannekoek's 'Lenin as Philosopher'. A process of rapid differentiation seems inevitable.

Later in 1972 AFIS (Anarkista Federationen i Stockholm, Box 11075, 10061 Stockholm 11) produced 'Socialism eller Barbari!' (Socialism or Barbarism) and 'Strategi för Industriell kamp' (Strategy for Industrial Struggle) by Mark Fore. We can but welcome the receptivity of Swedish anarchists to certain marxist ideas and of certain Swedish marxists to the more subversive libertarian ideas. We would like to stress their developing grasp - mirrored in many other parts of the world - that what matters is the content and development of ideas, not the label stuck on them, or the legitimacy or otherwise of their parentage.

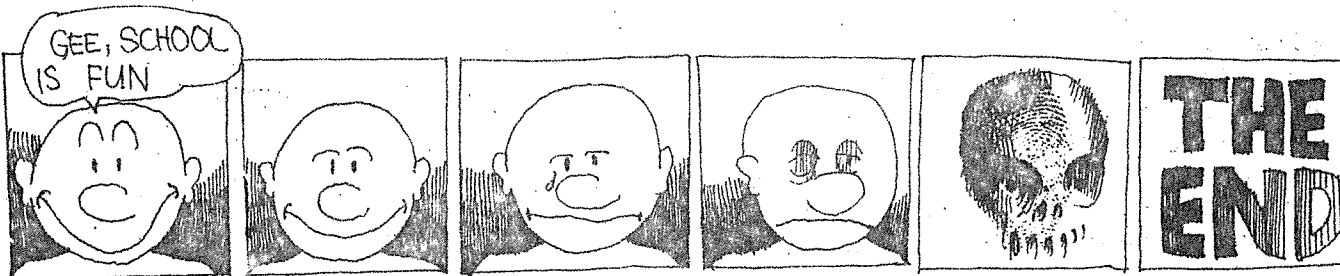
Finally in October 1972 the Umea Fria Press (Box 4033, 90004 Umea, Sweden) published a translation (by Pedro Lindekrantz and Anders Nordin) of our pamphlet on 'Kronstadt 21' by Victor Serge. At about the same time the group of libertarian revolutionaries around Föreningen Frihetlig Vänster (Sturegatan 4B, 75223 Uppsala) were publishing Som vi ser det (As We See It) and adopting it as their programmatic statement.

The situationist group Ravachol-Förlaget (Fack, 12102 Johanneshov, Sweden) were meanwhile publishing a Swedish version of Cajo Brendel's Theses on the Chinese Revolution, basing themselves on the SOLIDARITY (Aberdeen) production of this text.

Other SOLIDARITY texts now being translated into Swedish and due out in 1973 include 'The Paris Commune' (by Guillaume and Grainger), 'Hungary 56' (by A. Anderson), 'The Crisis of Modern Society', 'Modern Capitalism and Revolution', 'History and Revolution', 'The Fate of Marxism' (all by Paul Cardan), and the pamphlet on 'The Workers Councils and the economics of a self-managed society' (by P. Chaulieu). That all these texts have evoked an echo is, in our opinion, highly significant.

We hope in our next issue to discuss the impact of SOLIDARITY ideas in the very different environment of Japan.

M. B.



REVIEW

Natalia Trotsky and the Fourth International. Pluto Press. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ p.

This 14-page pamphlet consists of 5 documents translated from a history of French Trotskyism.(1) It also contains an introduction by Jim Higgins, a leading I.S. member. It is with this introduction that this review is concerned, for Jim Higgins insinuates that Natalia Trotsky left the Fourth International only over disagreement on the Russian question.

The publication of these documents and Higgins' introduction to them is not incidental from the standpoint of I.S. The tone of the introduction explains the purpose: to attack the orthodox Trotskyists of the IMG/United Secretariat tendency. Just as they hide their theoretical bankruptcy behind quotations from Trotsky, Higgins attempts to hide behind the authority of Trotsky's widow. But the attempt merely uncovers issues that Higgins would have preferred left untouched. Let's examine them.

Before and after Natalia Trotsky broke openly with official Trotskyism, she collaborated closely with the Spanish revolutionary Grandizo Munis and the exiled Spanish section of the Fourth International. This group later became the Fomento Obrero Revolucionario (F.O.R.).(2) The revolutionaries who founded F.O.R. split from the Fourth International at the IIInd Congress (1948) over the issue of revolutionary defeatism during World War II. According to Munis and his comrades - including Natalia Trotsky - the official Trotskyists had betrayed their own principles and working class internationalism during the war by not adopting this position in practice.

Already in 1941-42, Munis had criticised the opportunist statements of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leaders when they were charged with conspiracy by the Roosevelt government in July 1941, and taken to trial to Minneapolis. Munis' criticisms were translated by the SWP and included in a pamphlet titled Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial.(3) The pamphlet also contains the evasive answers of a veritable Trotskyist hack, one

(1) Les Enfants du Prophète, Jacques Roussel, Paris.

(2) Benjamin Péret, French revolutionary and superb surrealist poet, was active in it until his untimely death. The F.O.R. publishes a regular bulletin, Alarma, and two of its main documents, Pour un second manifeste communiste and Les syndicats contre la révolution have been published in Paris by Le Terrain Vague.

(3) A later reprint (1969) has the laughable title: What Policy for Revolutionists - Marxism or Ultra-Leftism?

James P. Cannon, considered in the US as the 'father' of American Trotskyism. It is interesting to note that Munis' critique is only 15 pages long. In it he wrote of the possibility of amplifying it; and that his critique 'had been written with extreme haste in order not to lose an immediate opportunity to transmit it'. (p.15) Cannon's reply takes the rest of the pamphlet's 64 pages! Munis' criticisms, which Higgins calls 'ultra-left' (parroting Cannon and the SWP social patriots) were in fact amplified and published in 1946 under the title El SWP y la guerra imperialista. This devastating anti-critique was consciously ignored by the SWP and never translated for circulation. And like Munis' previous critique, it was supported by Natalia Trotsky, a fact that Higgins fails to mention. Logically, she too would be an 'ultra-left'.

Natalia Trotsky and the F.O.R. broke with the Fourth International not only on the Russian question (i.e. whether Russia was a degenerated workers' state or a state capitalist society) but on the more important issue, that of revolutionary defeatism during World War II. The overwhelming majority of Trotskyists had supported the Resistance and the bourgeois struggle against Fascism (of course, with all the 'transitional' clauses that Trotskyists use to excuse their opportunism). Higgins ignores this crucial motivation behind Natalia Trotsky's break and prefers to emphasise her view on the Russian question - that Russia was state capitalist.

The policy of revolutionary defeatism would have been an implementation of the policy proclaimed by a handful of revolutionaries in World War I (among them the groups around Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Trotsky, Rosmer, Pannekoek, Lenin). The slogans 'The enemy is in your own country', 'Turn the imperialist war into a civil war', and 'The workers have no fatherland' expressed militant internationalism against the wave of patriotism which engulfed the Social Democratic parties in 1914. Similarly, in World War II, few socialist groups stood for revolutionary defeatism. The majority of the Trotskyists, even if proclaiming internationalism, tacitly supported one side of the war, the allied imperialisms. The phenomenon of Fascism in Germany and Italy didn't change the imperialist character of the war, and by participating in or supporting - even critically - the French and other 'resistances', many Trotskyist groups totally abandoned class politics. The 'Resistance' was, from the beginning, a force supported by and supporting the allied capitalisms. In our imperialist epoch, 'lesser-evil' politics of this type can only serve capitalist interests.

But there's more to it. Higgins' one-sided treatment of Natalia Trotsky's positions also enables him to cover up I.S.'s theoretical and practical opportunism on issues of internationalism. It suffices to ask I.S. members what they would have done in 1939-45 vis-à-vis Fascism. The question is not academic. Inevitably, many of them would argue that the struggle against Hitler was a 'transitional' priority during those years. Indeed that was the practice, if not the theory, of the majority of the Trotskyists during the war. The real role of the British Trotskyists in those years is a matter that has to be studied in depth; the few articles

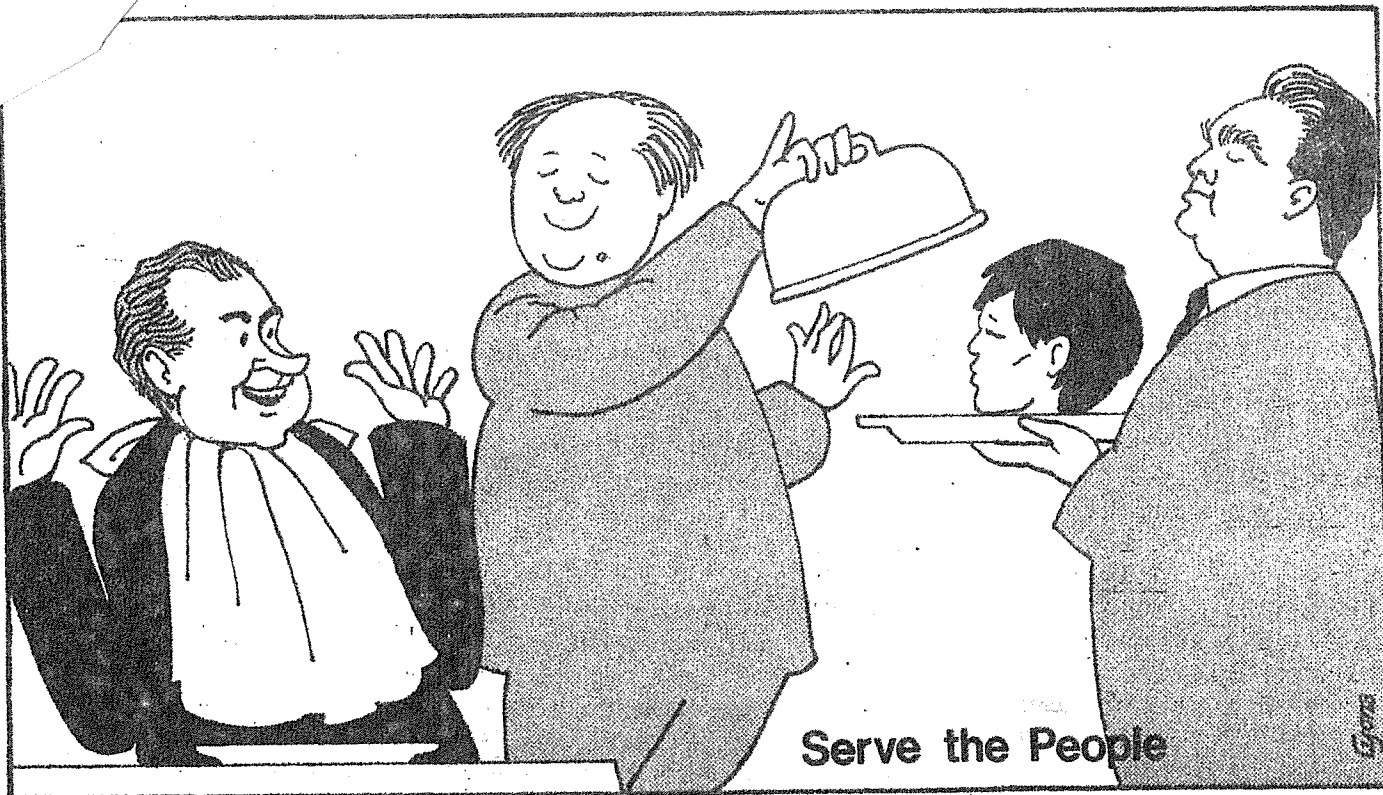
in existence (by Higgins himself, and by Brian Pearce) merely cloud the period with self-adulation. It would be interesting to know, in exhaustive detail, for example the positions and statements of the Trotskyists in relation to India, to the Resistance in France, the exact 'defence policy' during the trial of Jock Haston, a Trotskyist leader gaoled in 1944.

Concerning the American SWP, for instance, we know that its official version of the Minneapolis court proceedings conflict sharply with the stenographic court record microfilmed by the Fund for the Republic. The SWP presently uses its own version -pompously labelled Socialism on Trial - as a basic educational piece in the US. If that version is opportunist to the core, the microfilmed one is a blatant proof of the SWP's consistent capitulation to a bourgeois court, a capitulation that became social patriotic.

In France, few Trotskyists stood for revolutionary defeatism in a clear and consistent way. In 1967-68 the French Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvrière documented many of the patriotic acrobatics of its colleagues during the Nazi occupation. Higgins does not deal with these issues, mainly because the only point of difference between IS and official Trotskyism is the Russian question. On the more fundamental question of revolutionary defeatism IS shares the usual Trotskyist methodology: 'lesser evil' politics. This is confirmed by IS's statements concerning the troops in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1969. It opposed calls for the immediate withdrawal of the troops alleging the danger of a Protestant 'pogrom'. Equally, had it been in existence in the war years, it would probably have found excuses to support the 'democratic' imperialisms against Fascism.

The IS leadership stands against what Natalia Trotsky stood for in her last years. She wouldn't have supported China against Russia, or the state capitalist imperialisms against US imperialism in Vietnam as the IS leaders do. She wouldn't have stood for supporting the Labour Party or the trade unions. Her break with the Fourth International was over issues far more fundamental than the Russian question. It was a break, albeit incomplete on the issue of the Bolsheviks' role in the Russian Revolution, with a lot that is fundamental to Trotskyism and which is shared just as much by IS as by the IMG and the SLL. It is for these reasons that Higgins' introduction to the pamphlet is both dishonest and mystifying.

J. M.



SOLIDARITY AUTONOMOUS GROUPS

Clydeside : c/o Dan Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton

Dundee : c/o F. Browne, 1st Floor, 42 Baldovan Terrace, Dundee

North.West : c/o Clark, 23 Tame Walk, Colshaw Drive, Wilmslow,
Cheshire.

Oxford : c/o 4 St. Barnabas Street, Oxford.

Swansea : are in the process of changing contact address.
Write to us and we will transmit.