

# **CAPITALISM AND CONSCIOUSNESS**

**SOLIDARITY (CLYDESIDE) PAMPHLET 3**

**one shilling**

# INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet consists of a number of articles written around different aspects of a central theme - that of consciousness.

Consciousness is the central factor not only of this particular pamphlet, but of Solidarity's entire case. If a group's activities do not contribute to the spread of consciousness among the working class, those activities are not relevant. It is always the consciousness of the class as a whole which matters, not the individual consciousness of an elite. The working class must be fully conscious before it can effect a change in the structure of society. It is on this basic point that we rest our case. Unlike the traditional 'left' who believe that the working class is incapable of achieving more than a 'trade union consciousness', we believe that not only is the class as a whole capable of achieving a revolutionary consciousness, but that it must do so before a true revolution can occur.

It is only when the two factors of activity and understanding are used in conjunction by the class that revolution can come about. The 'self-activity' of the workers which many groups proclaim, is not revolutionary if it takes the form of blind militancy; it can in fact be reactionary. (E.g. the London dockers who went on strike to support Enoch Powell's racist policies). Conversely the intellectual elitist in his ivory tower may have all the answers but without activity it is of no importance. There must be a link between theory and practice. And that link depends on the consciousness of the working class.

## HISTORY OF THE ARTICLES

The first article, 'Capitalism and Consciousness' is in two parts. It was written for us by Jim Evrard, an American comrade who at one time was a regular contributor to the Solidarity journals. We originally published this in 'Solidarity Scotland', Vol.2 Nos. 3 & 4, of November 1966 and May 1967 respectively. There was originally a third part planned, based on consciousness in the factory, but unfortunately it was never finished. We have, however, printed the third article, 'Working Class Consciousness', in an attempt to counteract the imbalance caused by this omission.

The second article, 'Consciousness and Theory' is also by Jim Evrard. This was originally printed in August 1965 in the London edition of Solidarity, Vol.3, No. 10.

The third article we included both on its own merits and because we felt that it fitted the gap left in the structure of the first article. 'Working Class Consciousness' first appeared in its present form in Solidarity Vol.2, Nos. 2 & 3. It was based on an extract from a much larger article by Paul Cardan, entitled 'Proletariat and Organization' which appeared in No. 27 of 'Socialisme ou Barbarie', the journal of our French co-thinkers, in April-May 1959. Paul

Cardan will, of course, be familiar to many of our readers as a theoretician who features largely in Solidarity's politics and whose pamphlets form a large part of the theoretical pamphlets we have produced.

Together, we feel that these three articles gell into a coherent whole and make a worthwhile pamphlet which we hope will contribute in some measure to the spread of consciousness.

Solidarity (Clydeside)  
February 1970.

---

THE FATE OF MARXISM by Paul Cardan. Can a theory which set out not only to interpret the world but to change it be dissociated from its historical repercussions? 8d.

REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION. An analysis of the bureaucratic concept of organisation and the alternative libertarian organisation. 10d

Availbale, post free from D. Kane 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton.

THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM by Paul Cardan. What is a socialist programme? The real contradiction in capitalist production. Socialist values. A restatement of socialist objectives. The case for workers' management of production. 10d.

SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM. A redefinition of socialist objectives in the light of the events of the last 50 years. 10d.

THE CRISIS OF MODERN SOCIETY. by Paul Cardan. The interlocking crises in work, politics, values, education, the family, and relations between the sexes. 10d.

MODERN CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTION . by Paul Cardan. A fundamental critique of the traditional left. The problems of our society (bureaucratisation, political apathy, alienation in production, consumption and leisure). What are revolutionary politics today? 4/3d.

FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY by Paul Cardan. Bolshevik theory and practice in relation to the management of production. An introduction to Alexandra Kollontai's 'The Workers Opposition'. 10d.

THE WORKERS OPPOSITION by Alexandra Kollontai. A fully annotated account of the anti-bureaucratic struggle of 1919-1920 within the Russian Bolshevik Party. 80 pages. 3/6d.

HUNGARY '56 by Andy Anderson. The anti-bureaucratic revolution. The programme of the Workers' Councils. 4/1d.

All these, post free, from H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Rd., Bromley,

# CAPITALISM AND CONSCIOUSNESS

## PART 1.

Like many others in the Marxist arsenal, the phrase 'bourgeois consciousness' has been so misused and overused that many people now doubt whether it has any meaning at all. However, the phrase once did have a clear meaning and I would like to examine this meaning, to see if it still helps us understand our society. I will try to cut through both the 'Marxist' misuse and overuse of it, and one hundred years of establishment propaganda against it, and try to see through the label to its contents.

The basic question will be this; can it be that many of the ideas and opinions we take for granted are actually an 'optical illusion' caused by the social organisation of the world we live in? Can we, by taking a more careful look at this world of ours and its social organisation, learn to see through these 'optical illusions' and understand our life more accurately and better? I believe the answer to these questions is yes.

One of Karl Marx's deepest insights was his recognition of human consciousness (including revolutionaries) being profoundly affected, conditioned, ever determined by the typical social relationships in any given society. Whether this rule need always apply does not concern us here. In a society like our own, where propaganda, advertising and organised mystification in general, substitute for social consciousness, the rule certainly does hold. We have been so thoroughly brainwashed that many of us would deny the fact of having been brainwashed.

If, then, our social organisation has a profound affect on our consciousness, we have to ask what are the salient features of our social organisation.

In capitalism, the two most basic models of social relationships are to be found in the market relationship and in the structure of the factory. If you analyse these two models carefully, you may be surprised to discover that an amazingly great part of our living patterns reflect one or more aspects of these basic models. You will discover that the imitation of these models, almost always unconscious, penetrate even the more intimate areas of private life, both in our behaviour and in our

way of thinking. You will also understand better the nature of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, as I will show in detail later on.

## THE MARKET

As any introduction to economics will tell you, a market is a place where commodities are bought and sold. This leaves 'commodity' to be defined. A commodity is a product which is produced in order to be sold. Every commodity is a product, but not every product is a commodity. When American Indians, before the coming of the white man made canoes for the use of their tribe, they were not making commodities; they were making products. There are many societies where commodities don't exist. As little as a century ago, there were areas of Scotland where commodities were neither produced nor used. The clan made all its own products in common and therefore did not need to buy or sell. In capitalist society, on the other extreme, almost everything produced becomes a commodity.

This is a central fact in our life. In a world of commodities, human relations are converted into relations between things, or at best between people and things. In philosophy this is called reification when people and social relationships come to be treated as mere things. In our capitalist world, even a man's work becomes a commodity, which he sells for a higher or lower price. The specific price he gets for his work is not the essential thing in the relationship. Essential is the fact that his relationship to his work, is that of any seller of a commodity to what he sells. His work is not a meaningful activity whereby he creates the material things he needs to live. It is not an activity from which he derives pleasure, satisfaction or development of his human capacities. It is simply an object of sale. With the wage he earns, he will go to the market again and buy what he needs. There is no direct relationship however, between the content of his work and the rest of his life,

This social relationship strikes its counterpart in consciousness in the prevalent attitude that labouring people would not work if not forced to. 'Man is naturally lazy', as the saying goes. The commodity work has been so dehumanised in our society that we are incapable of conceiving work as a pleasurable, self-fulfilling activity. And in fact, as long as work continues to be the miserable alienated activity typical of capitalist business organisation (or its imitation in Russian state socialism) men will never do it unless forced by economic need, or by the whip.

I realise this description does not conform to the subjective attitude of all workers. Many workers have a certain amount of interest in the content of their work beyond just wage earning, and a tiny number even get real and deep satisfaction out of their job. But this number is getting smaller and smaller and it is the tendency of capitalism to abolish them completely. More and more modern work is becoming completely meaningless, stupid routine activity. More and

more the modern worker tends to have only one relationship to his job; the selling of his labour power in order to be able to buy the things he needs to live. It is important here to recall that the exceptions you find exist despite the system not because of it. They exist because human beings fight the system, not because the system itself is human. Its tendency is to reduce people to objects, but people have needs and are forced to fight the system. This way islands of humanity appear amidst the inhumanity. Human beings fight the system, thus preventing its internal tendency from developing completely. Class struggle is not just an empty catchword.

This commodity type relationship has important consequences for the working class as a whole. The first and most obvious consequence is what happens to the product of your work. As we saw, your work power is simply a commodity that you sell on the 'labour market' as the economists call it, for whatever price you can get, or force your employer into giving. Now in our legal system, once you sell something you can no longer dispose of it. It belongs to the buyer. This goes for your work power and for the product your work produces. Both belong to your employer to dispose of as he sees fit. As to the product of your work, you can get no more than that portion of it which your wage will buy back.

A hundred years ago, before workers had organised effectively into unions, this aspect of the commodity relationship was very important. On the labour market, so-called free competition prevailed. The result was literally starvation wages with the capitalist grabbing all the rest. But this has changed. The unions never did succeed in abolishing the commodity relationship in labour, and today at least, that is the last thing in the world they want to do. They did however succeed in raising the price of the commodity. As a result, today's wage is usually enough for the bare physical necessities. And if you are a skilled worker you may even live quite comfortably.

The fact that you cannot dispose of the product of your work has a second consequence, which is of primary importance today. To understand this, you have to look at the problem from the point of view of the working class as a whole, as against the boss class as a whole. From this point of view a large part of what workers produce consists of what economists call 'investment goods'; that is, plant and equipment. To your boss it may be just plant and equipment, but for the working class, it is a condition of your work. Since you do not have the right of disposal over the products of your work, and since the products of your work yesterday become the conditions of your work today, these conditions, under which you spend almost half your adult waking life (including time to and from work) are dominated by your friend the boss. As a member of the working class, you are in the absurd position that the products of your own creation have become your lord and master. This is only the logical consequence of the commodity relationship dominating work in our society. If you sold your work power, and accepted this relationship as right, by what right can you complain about the miserable conditions of your work? Logically, you can't, unless you question the whole rotten system.

To go beyond capitalism for a minute, it is not important what legal form all this takes. You notice I haven't stressed ownership, but rather right of disposal, because ownership is only a legal question. In real life what counts, is not legal technicalities, but real power. It is basically not a question of the workers, not owning the product of their work. It is a question of their not dominating the product of their work, but rather being dominated by it. Whether the functionaries that carry out the domination are capitalists or communists doesn't matter, since domination is domination. For the working class, the alternative to capitalist bosses is not communist bosses, but rather being its own boss, i.e. collective workers' management of production. Capitalists and communists alike think this idea is utopian. They should! It's against their interests. If you think it's utopian you've been brainwashed!

From the moment you start selling your work power to an employer, you've sold your soul! If you work in a small office or plant, the boss may be a nice guy and the atmosphere may be human. But this is despite the system, not because of it. The bourgeoisie are human too and have human needs (as individuals not as a class). But the inherent tendency of capitalism is expressed by the perpetrators of time and motion study and by the efficiency experts. To them you are just data for the computer. If you don't fit they throw you out. As far as they are concerned, humans are to serve production, not the other way round. Even in a larger plant, if you and your workmates are militant enough, you may, through struggle, win a certain amount of control over the conditions of your work. But remember, you've won it by struggle against the system. If you don't fight you get nothing. Or your employer may be listening to an industrial psychologist who has convinced him that if he makes life more pleasant, he can squeeze more production out of you for the money - like feeding in soft music to cows at milking time. Even here you are being treated as objects. Your life isn't being made more pleasant because you are human beings, but because management thinks you will be a more efficient production machine, if you are not too unhappy. That again is reification. To the bosses, you are things not people.

If you are an average worker you probably have had many of these ideas. The important thing is to realise the connection between your individual situation in your plant or office and the position of the working class as a whole, and it is also important to realise that the degrading, inhuman conditions of modern work are the necessary result of a society in which human work has degenerated into a mere commodity, and is bought on the labour market as a 'factor of production' as the economists call it, to be entered on the cost accountancy sheets along with plant and machinery.

In history, work was one of the noblest actions. It was by work that man rose above the apes and made himself human. Work was, and can be again in a more human society, man's highest act of self-fulfillment. It was and can be his act of self-creation. Nothing in modern psychology tells us, that work, as such, must necessarily be unpleasant. In its degenerate form in our inhuman society, wage

labour is a curse. And if many of us cannot even conceive of work being a pleasurable and satisfying activity, which men would engage in freely, even if not forced, that only confirms our starting point, that our consciousness is profoundly affected, conditioned, ever determined by the social reality in which we live. Our society has in fact all but abolished productive work as a source of satisfaction, and substituted for it hobbies, has all but abolished productive work as a source of pleasure, and substituted for it its packaged recreation, all but abolished work as creation and substituted for that - nothing. Is it any wonder that the social reality produces people who cannot conceive of work except as a plague, the curse of original sin?

If you happen to be a manual labourer, you may think head workers are better off. If you mean in income, you may be right, but in terms of the commodity relationship they are in the same position as you are. A chemist working for industry is a highly specialised and skilled worker, who neither helps determine the object of research nor disposes over the results. He just sells his labour power for a higher price. A journalist for a magazine like TIME or NEWSWEEK, turning out the standardised prose dictated, not by himself, but by the editors, is another case of a glorified wage worker. He will come back to this on the section on the factory.

## PART 2

### THE MARKET IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In the last part, I tried to show how the commodity relationship poisons work for us. Now I would like to show how it poisons our free time as well. We will see that the commodity relationship dominates even our personal life to a greater extent than we may think.

For contrast, to begin with, let us examine the opposite of our commodity society. In society with community production (and these societies are not figments of the imagination; they exist) commodities are not produced, products are. Everybody does more or less his share of work, and everybody shares, whether equally or not, according to the principle of the society, in the common product.

If the people want something, they have to produce it themselves. There is no market where you can buy or sell things. The principle of production is identical with the needs of the community, that is, if a thing is needed, and the resources are there, it is produced. Nothing gets produced which is not wanted, or needed beforehand. Production is subordinated to the community's needs, and the individual's work has a direct relationship to these needs. In free time, economic activity stops.

In Capitalism, the all commodity society, goods are not produced directly for the community's needs. They are produced for profit.

To make profit they must go to market, and get sold. This means, of course, that production has to correspond more or less to needs, at least to the needs of the people who have money to spend; otherwise it would not get sold. But needs are no longer the direct motive of production. From the point of view of the Capitalist, his direct motive to produce is profit prospects. From this point of view, satisfaction of needs is a by-product. And, in fact, human needs today are subordinate to production. If need be the producer will use modern advertising techniques to create the 'need' for his product. If people will buy it, he will make and sell them poison. (If you think this is an exaggeration, try reading up on the early history of the canning or meat packing industries, for example.)

As Capitalism develops even greater productive power, producing untold numbers of different saleable goods, the problem of 'marketing', as it is called in business administration, arises. These goods, once produced, must be sold. They must 'realise their nature as commodities', that is, as products whose sole purpose of production was the selling. Just as we are forced to serve the 'economy' on work time by selling ourselves into the relationship of commodity labour, we must serve the same economy in our free time by becoming 'consumer pigs' for their new products. This ubiquity of the commodity extends itself indefinitely. In modern capitalism, the tendency is for everything to become a commodity, not only material products, but ideas, entertainment, sex and human relationships as well. Reification is not just an empty phrase.

One of the most obvious consequences of this is the modern advertising industry. We can estimate that about 20% of the total national production of the modern capitalist nations is spent on advertising, and in advertising and packaging research.<sup>1</sup>

## LAND OF SUBMARINES

What a producer produces, he has got to sell, and if people don't want it, they have to be brainwashed until they do. The fundamental inhumanity of our society gives them the opportunity to do this.

In our society, many basic and important human wishes are systematically frustrated in us, the needs for love and affection; for meaningful accomplishment and recognition, for freedom and self-development. Psychological research has taught us that we can be manipulated to accept surrogates<sup>2</sup> for these basic needs in the form of material goods. This process is usually not conscious in us. Otherwise the manipulation would not work. And since when has our loving ruling class become interested in educating us to consciousness anyway?

- 
1. In the U.S.A., for example, this amounts to £4000M per year.
  2. By surrogates I mean substitutes of inferior quality.

Basically, a car is an extremely useful object, a means of transportation. Is that what they are selling us when they advertise 'the feeling of power behind the wheel'? Ale is a pleasant tasting drink, or a means to get pissed. Is that what they are selling us when certain brands advertise as being 'a real man's drink'? Smoking a cigarette is a pleasurable physical experience. What has that got to do with 'wherever particular people congregate'? Or what is the tiger doing in the tank? In this lousy commodity society, all of us have one failing, weakness, feeling of inferiority, unfulfilled wish or another. And so we buy freedom and independence in a car, sexual potency in a brand of ale, recognition in a cigarette, and independence, strength and potency in a brand of petrol. They have converted the commodity into a magical means of mystifying and enslaving us, a sop for fundamental human satisfactions they won't let us have, a golden cage. 'what you have is what you are', as a West German advertising slogan says. And because we all do have our personal problems, the bastards get away with it.

## ADVERTISING

This may sound exaggerated to you, but I am only reporting to you the concept modern advertising has of us. Dr. Ernest Dichter, who is more or less America's leading ideologist for advertising psychology, expresses it as follows: 'If the desire for freedom and emancipation can find fulfillment in a streamlined new sports car, then I am happy to accept the responsibility for having united two strong motives in advertising with the advantage of the automobile producers.' And so, you see, if you've got the money, you, too, can go to the market and buy freedom. Dichter, of course, like the good ideologist he is, believes, or pretends to believe, that he is doing mankind a service. Since we are not ideologists for the establishment, we do not have to follow him here.

One important consequence of this advertising is greater human dissatisfaction. Advertising is constantly creating in us by various means the attitude 'you're not happy if you don't have this or that material thing'. Although wages have gone up since 1900, few of us earn enough to buy all the goodies they tell us we need for the full life. And so, increasing material wealth goes hand in hand with decreasing human satisfaction. And now we come to another of the 'optical illusions' I mentioned at the beginning of the first part.

## "MATERIALISM"

Cultural pissers and moaners and other spokesmen for the established order of things are constantly complaining about the growing 'materialism' of our 'godless' world. The more we get, they whine, the more we want. Better poor and happy. As soon as you see the real social and economic connections, you can expose this little bit of nonsense for what it really is. If we were less willing to buy their

---

3. If you want further factual material on this area of advertising and manipulation techniques, you can read Vance Packard's book, 'The Hidden Persuaders'.

junk, so that they could cut back on their 'materialistic' production, the system would collapse. Then the pool of unemployment would go out. Look what happens when the government cancels military contracts in the aircraft industry. Our dissatisfaction with our standard of living is not the prompting of an evil materialistic spirit in our bellies. We are not 'guilty' of this, as they would like us to believe. They generate this dissatisfaction systematically with the millions they spend on advertising. You have every right to demand material goods. After all, it is your work that produces them.

From this we see that, in a symbolic sense at least, love, freedom, self-fulfillment have all become commodities, objects of sale. Business is business, friends are friends, and ne'er the twain shall meet. But we will see that the dehumanisation goes further. The commodity relationship dominates or influences almost every area of our life.

## POP GOES THE MUSIC

Take recreation, for example. Before capitalism began to mass produce entertainment as a saleable commodity, people used to make their own. Before song and musical instruments became commodities, most people could and did produce one or the other themselves. Capitalist entertainment means buying a ticket to a cinema, concert, sports event, etc., and 'consuming' it. There is, of course, nothing in itself wrong with mass entertainment, as one means of recreation. But the tendency of our commodity society is to reduce all our recreation to this standardised pattern: conventionalised, passive, non individual, without being collective, non creative, mass produced. One example of this is the Beatles and other star beat groups. I am not referring here to the type of music involved, but to the beat groups, and specifically to the stars, the mass producers, as a social phenomenon. I certainly do not mean to say that a socialist society would not have beat groups. But would it necessarily be the stars with a passive audience? In a society which developed creative talent rather than stunting it who is to say that almost every person would not be able to play an instrument or sing? Who is to say the teenagers would not be so busy swinging to their own, self-made music, that they wouldn't have time for the stars and their mass produced commodities. But this is the music of the future. In our society, recreation is not re-creation, creative self-fulfilling activity. It is consumption of the commodity entertainment. In this, the youngsters are no different from anybody else, so let's get off their backs. They are only following the universal pattern of this lousy capitalist society which their elders set up for them before they were born, in a society whose highest aspiration is the production of more and bigger objects of sale.

# I'LL BUY THAT

This goes over into the arts in general. Take the example of pop music. People sometimes remark how short lived the hits are today, in comparison with grandma's youth. They are in fact short lived, not only in comparison with 50 years ago here in the west, but also in comparison with other parts of the world today..I have lived and been in the near East more than once, and one thing that struck me was how long the hits stay popular. This is not due to some vague 'more enduring quality of the art', but stems from the fact that pop art in advanced capitalism is commodity pure and simple, whether music, books, cinema, or whatever. Put yourself in the place of the president of a recording company looking at his sales charts. What happens to sales if hits stay on the top for five years? As soon as a big hit has sold about all it is going to sell, business dictates that it disappear and be replaced by a new one. Vance Packard describes this so-called psychological obsolescence in his book, 'The Waste Makers'.

There we have it. In your work time you bring your labour to market as a commodity, and in your free time you are expected to come to market again and buy their packaged leisure activities. But the commodity relationship goes beyond this: 'And finally comes a time where everything which man had up to then considered inalienable became an object of bargain and exchange. This is the time when things which hitherto had been imparted, but never traded, given, but never sold, taken, but never bought - virtue, love, conviction, knowledge, conscience - where in a word everything became an object of trade. It is the time of universal corruption, of universal venality, or, to use the terminology of the economists, the time when every object, whether physical or moral, must be brought to market as a commodity to be appraised accurately at its value.' (Karl Marx, 'The Misery of Philosophy'). This is not yet literally and completely true, but it expresses well the spirit and tendency of our society. 'Every man has his price' as the saying goes. Proverbs are never quite literally true, but they express the spirit of their time. And there is in fact a universal tendency for human relations to be expressed in commodity form. An example of this is the greeting card business. Don't send your friends a hand written or typed personal note for their birthday, buy them a birthday card for 2/- , or 'say it with roses' (at £2 a dozen). Again, the commodity mediates the personal relationship, or more often substitutes for it. Think of the list of obligatory Christmas cards each year.

# CANT GET NO SATISFACTION

Again, in sexual relationships, our all commodity society has stuck its dirty finger in the pie. We all know that our generation is still going through the last stages of its long and painful emancipation process from 'Victorian' sexual morality, the so-called 'revolution below the belt'. Nor can we deny that sexual emancipation,

the ability to say, and act as if, 'my body belongs to me', is an essential part of total human freedom. But what form has this taken in our capitalist, all commodity society? The admission to the market of sex as a commodity! I do not mean this only, or even mainly, in the sense of today's somewhat less intolerant attitude towards prostitution, the oldest form of sex as commodity. It goes much further than that. Film producers, entertainers, and magazine editors have all discovered that sex is an extremely saleable commodity. Advertisers have learned that the proper doze of 'sex' often helps them to sell their wares. Not to speak of 'Playboy' for the moment, a recent issue of the highly respectable 'Harvard Business Review' carried an ad. for warehousing with a picture of a girl in tight pants lying on the floor, a man standing near her. The text read, 'If you are looking for space that expands and contracts according to your needs.....'.

## BUNNIES OR BIRDS

Beauty contests make good publicity and draw well heeled people towards expensive tourist resorts. 'Playboy' type magazines, which twenty years ago or less would have been declared 'pornographic', and forbidden, flood the market. And 'socially critical' films and novels coat all this with a layer of 'enlightened' respectability. But is this sexual freedom? Is this the freedom of total human beings to have fullphysical and emotional sexual relationships without guilt as well as without 'love's sad satiety'? Or is it the freedom to buy a surrogate? Standardised female bodies, paragons of commercial beauty, appear as shadows on screens or on glossy paper, and the partner one has in reality is a contrast in ugliness, for there are not enough beauty queens to go round. Some of the 'Playboy' type magazines carry articles showing how a man can go about having simultaneous affairs with several women, keeping each in the illusion that she is the only one, and that he intends to marry her. The tone of these articles is to praise this type of behaviour as intelligent, cool, and right. Sexual 'freedom', based on the lie excluding real human relationship. Everywhere, women are portrayed as mere objects, to be 'had', 'possessed', manipulated, enjoyed, but not to enjoy. Is sexual freedom with a statue? Is masturbation via woman sexual freedom, even for a man?

## PAINT AND POWDER

But this 'freedom' offers women even less. The standardised model of commercial beauty presupposes body proportions and contours that are not those of the average woman. By definition, the great majority of women are below beauty standards: 'ageing' begins long before thirty! .. the discrepancy becomes even worse. This may create a great deal of human misery, but don't be sentimental, it's good for the market. In a frantic effort to distort themselves into that lifeless statue of commercial beauty which they are not, millions of women spend their own or their husband's hard earned money on cosmetics, wigs, falsies, and on the many other 'beautifying' comm-

odities our loving capitalists offer them in exchange for their humanity. There is, of course, nothing wrong with cosmetics in themselves. The misery comes in the fact that many women try despairingly to use cosmetics to make of themselves something they are not, instead of using them in their natural function as adornment.

But this has still another side. Sexual freedom is one of the most important parts of total human freedom, but only one! The present 'liberalisation' of sexual norms has the tendency to act as a safety valve, to keep people from demanding total freedom. A good example of this can be seen in a series of articles in 'Playboy' entitled, 'The Playboy Philosophy'. These articles carry a facade of phoney 'enlightenment' and 'modern sophistication' in the area of sex; in every other area they are as conservative as you can get. But there is no partial freedom in an unfree society. The commodity relationship can only enslave us.

## CONDITIONED RESPONSE

The overall commodity structure of our society has found its way into our consciousness in many subtle ways. We will find the best examples of this in our everyday idioms and proverbs, and in successful advertising and propaganda slogans. Everyday expressions and proverbs tell us a good deal about our habits of thinking, because as with all habits, we do not reflect or philosophise about them before using them. We use them automatically and uncritically. They reveal our unconscious, automatic ways of thinking to us, and sometimes expose in us attitudes we are not conscious of having. You know how your girl friend (or boy friend, if you are a girl) will react if you once mistakenly address her with the name of another. You can protest all you want; you've given yourself away, and she knows it. Successful slogans obviously teach us a lot because, if they did not correspond to something already there in us, they would not be successful.

One example of commodity thinking in everyday life is our tendency to judge ourselves and others by what we possess, instead of according to inherent qualities of character and personality. Poor people often feel it necessary to apologise for the simplicity of their house. Girls (not prostitutes) sometimes refer to their different boy friends by the brand name or model of their car. The West German advertising slogan already quoted, 'What you have is what you are' has its English counterpart in, 'Clothes make the man'. Not what you are, but what you have on. When I was in high school in New York, students in shoddy clothes were greeted belittlingly with the question, 'What's the matter, you too poor to buy a new suit?'. West German advertisers have come out recently with the concept of the tie slob. You are a tie slob if you don't have several ties for each suit, and your children and family have the right to be ashamed of and disgusted at you. This particular advertising campaign aroused a great deal of indignation in West Germany, but brought about a 25% increase in sales as well. No smirks here, in one area or another it gets YOU and ME too.

# SELLING YOURSELF

Another aspect of commodity thinking is the tendency of many people to regard the whole world as a market. When I was in elementary school, part of the brain washing informed us that, 'In the last analysis, everything in life is selling. You try to sell yourself when you apply for a job, or try to impress your friends. If you're not selling yourself you're selling your abilities, your personality, your ideas.' This type of thinking is prevalent in all capitalist countries. You can even experiment with this one if you like. Pretend you are a conservative and make the above statement to acquaintances as if you believed it yourself. You may be surprised how few will contradict you, including some 'revolutionaries'. In the U.S., 'I'll buy that', is an everyday expression meaning simply, 'I agree with what you say'. There is a common West German expression, 'I won't buy that from you' meaning simply, 'I don't believe you'. We do not choose these expressions deliberately. They are automatic. And if you examine your own experience, you will find many examples of your own.

This market thinking, plus the 'you are what you have' thinking, leads to a general tendency to think of human beings as if they were mere objects, commodities for sale (every man has his price) or property. This trend is particularly manifest in the language of business men. One American executive expressed in 1961 as follows: 'The quicker you start to think of a business problem as a thing without human beings, the better you'll do'. Individual business executives are sometimes coded by their firms into 'management inventories'. Recruiters for some firms ask themselves if a prospective executive will make 'a successful package' (like soap).<sup>4</sup> But this type of thinking goes beyond business. Moralists, men who 'deal in' souls, admonish us to 'take stock of ourselves', as if even our character traits were wares. The 1964 alumni bulletin from the college I attended informed me of the following, 'Barry C. and his wife, Marcia, have become owners of two properties, a new house ..... and a new baby'. Unfortunately, the bulletin did not inform me which of these two 'properties' was the more expensive one. In the concentration camps of Hitler Germany, this type of thinking became literally true in a horrible manner. Before their final 'special treatment', prisoners from many of the camps were rented out as labour at so much a day to German business firms. (Needless to say, the prisoners did not get the money.) After the war, the balance sheets of these concentration camps were found, including these transactions. Nothing distinguishes the balance sheets from those of a car rental firm in Great Britain today. We will come back to this subject of the chapter on the factory. The important thing to realise here is that these atrocities of the Nazis were actually only the logical extension of the principle inherent in the commodity structure of capitalism. Basically, the thinking of people like the 'mass murderer' Adolf Eichmann was exactly the same

---

4. The last three examples are from Vance Packard's book 'The Pyramid Climbers'.

as that of any competent manager in Great Britain today. His commodity happened to be human beings. As to the indignation this statement may arouse in some, I can only say: there is no heart so pure as that of the businessman who has caught the competitor in an irregularity.

## THE UNIVERSAL ROBOT

As in the first part, here too, if you are an average consumer, or 'consumer trainee' (if you happen to be younger), many of these ideas will probably not be entirely new to you. In one form or another, you have probably seen much or all of this yourself. As always, the important thing is to recognise the connection of the individual elements and facts with each other and with the basic nature of the capitalist, all commodity, society. The dehumanisation and reification of human beings shown in these examples are not abuses in the system. They are the integral nature of the system itself, and will continue to operate as long as the system stays in existence. The highest goal of our commodity society is to produce more and better objects of sale, regardless of the human costs involved. Its tendency is to reduce human beings to mere objects of manipulation to serve computer programmes. If it does not succeed completely in this, that is not due to benevolent aspects of the system itself; it is because human beings won't let it. But as long as the system exists, this will always be its tendency, and it will always have at least partial success. Children cannot grow up undamaged in an anti-human world. No amount of wage rises will change the degrading nature of work as it exists under present conditions of production. No amount of commodity wealth, no amount of packaged freedom, packaged prestige, and packaged sex will ever replace human freedom, human recognition, and human sexual love. And no paternalistic 'revolutionary party', organisation, or 'leadership' will better your situation for you. The only guarantee that your interests are taken care of is that you take care of them yourself, collectively, for alone you can't fight city hall. If the bureaucrats are against you, it is not because they are evil; it is because their interests are different, whatever high, holy and noble motives they may contrive to justify their behaviour to themselves.

The interests of a bureaucrat are simply different from those of a working man whether in office or factory. This is an objective fact, and no amount of pissing and moaning will change it. Only action will.

Many workers and ordinary people have not learned this lesson completely enough yet. They are still too willing to trust others, parties, organisations, 'leaders' who 'know better'. This type of thinking reflects in part the social organisation of the factory, the second basic organisational principle of our society.

The how of this will be the subject of the next part.

Jim Evrard.

# CONSCIOUSNESS AND THEORY

For centuries the working class has smarted under the arrogance of intellectuals, theoreticians and philosophers. Intellectual ability has long been held to be the privilege of an elite. In a sense, this has been true, for access to education was and remains a privilege not equally open to all, and the content of established education served and serves the needs of the rulers, not of the ruled. This begins in elementary school, where working class children are told that the language learned from their parents is 'incorrect' - i.e. 'inferior'.

The rulers of both feudal and capitalist society defined the 'brain' worker as inherently superior to the manual worker. This social definition of superiority has a class content, as the German philosopher Schopenhauer showed us unintentionally in an essay he wrote on 'Noise'. 'It is well to remind the man in the street that the classes above him work with their brains, for any kind of brain work is utter torture to him.' (Emphasis mine, J.E.). First, the 'classes above' take education as a privilege unto themselves. Then they define education as a mark of superiority. And finally they use their superiority as a means to justify their privilege, and their right to manage or rule. Of course I do not imply that this process is necessarily conscious. But who cares? It has done its job.

Throughout history this attitude has damaged the working class. One reaction has been the 'humility reaction'. The 'lower' classes accepted the evaluation of themselves as inferior, looked up to their 'betters', and developed an uncritical respect for the learned man or the intellectual. This reaction was probably more typical of the feudal period than it is of today (if so, that is progress). But it is still with us. It takes the form, for example, of many workers at least partially accepting the idea that managers, specialists, those who 'know better' can run the society and economy better than the masses will ever be able to do. Or again, many workers respect intellectuals in a fundamentally different way from the way they respect their more skilled brothers on the job. Emotionally, many feel the intellectual as someone who possesses some sort of higher ability

which they themselves could never attain. The 'humility reaction' among the working class is a symptom of damage.

Another symptom of damage is what we might call the 'sour grapes reaction'. Intellectuals and theory, it is felt, have no relation whatsoever to real life. The intellect is seen as the deadly enemy of good, practical common sense. This reaction, although false, is perfectly understandable. Social theory has been and is largely the monopoly of a privileged elite. In its degenerate form, ideology, it has been used to justify a social order that is contrary to the interests of the working class. Even the sincere 'left', themselves damaged by this society like everyone else, has largely failed to present social theory to the workers in terms of their needs and interest. Furthermore, the way children are taught at school, theory is experienced by the child as the deadly enemy of all natural human impulses.

The anti-theoretical attitude, however, is a bad thing for the working class. It represents the rejection of a valuable tool because that tool has been mis-used. The working class badly needs theory, theory growing from and relating to its own practice. We should reject the social theories offered to us by the ruling class, but not reject the intellectual tool itself. Rather we must work to break their monopoly of it.

Theory is that complex of ideas, hypotheses and concepts which man shapes for himself as tools, and with which he approaches, orders, explains the external world for himself and forms his experience and his practice. In this sense, there is no such thing as a human being without theory. If we refuse to concern ourselves with questions of theory, we simply limit our consciousness, impoverish ourselves, make ourselves know less about ourselves, our thinking, our motives, our activity, than we might otherwise know. Our concepts, attitudes, ideas, control us instead of controlling them. Or rather those forces that control our attitudes, etc., control us through them.

The answer 'we just follow our practical common sense' is no way out. 'Common sense' is a very problematical concept. How many of us who, in one conversation, beat our chests saying 'I'm just a practical man', in other conversations make such statements as 'It's just against human nature to do such and such a thing'. What's so 'practical common sense' about that statement? Did we just find 'human nature' in the backyard, a red piece of clay weighing 3lbs. 7oz., with seven little yellow feet. Or is it a little ghost, hanging in our left rib cage, that pinches our hearts every time we go against it? Or is it a concept? If it is, it is a mental tool. And as a tool, we had better learn to use it right. Or it'll use us.

'Human nature' is not the only questionable concept we may fall victim to, if we are not critical of theoretical assumptions. There is a whole garbage-dump full of such questionable concepts, all containing silent assumptions foisted on us from childhood by the established order: 'common sense', 'common decency' (that one's in the right rib cage), 'natural inclinations', 'healthy instincts', 'bad

breeding' (I'd be showing it if I told you where that one hangs), 'normal', 'feminine nature', 'native intelligence', 'innate character', to name but a few. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we all operate on one set of assumptions or another about man, the reasons for things, or why we and others act the way we do. The more consciousness we cultivate about these things, the more intelligently can we master our practice. If there are two things whose presence has never hurt the working class, they are knowledge and consciousness.

Why is it dangerous to remain unaware of our own theoretical assumptions? We find the answer in the structure of our society. No one in his right mind can seriously claim that the working class control education, or that we determine the content of the newspapers, magazines, radio, television programmes, movies and other products of mass communications that pound at us night and day. And yet these things have a decisive effect on the formation of our ideas, opinions, attitudes and concepts, an effect of whose nature we are often only dimly aware.

Most of the concepts that we take on unawares and uncritically are ideological, that is, they offer us seeming explanations of things. But their real function is to justify the existing order of things in the interests of those who rule over and profit from this society.

It is no accident that the concept of 'human nature' often shows its ugly head when we try to point out that such things as prostitution, criminality, and the 'inhumanity of man to man' are the product of social conditions. If you advocate social reform you meet the argument about 'human nature' but it is mixed with pity and understanding. If you advocate social revolution you are looked on as blathering idiots who 'forget' the facts about 'human nature'. What is the function of this concept at this point of the argument? If you accept it, you must logically give up your advocacy of social change. For if your character, good or bad, is innate, what's the point of trying to change society?

You can pick up this concept, and others like it, on every street corner. Many of us do not question such concepts. Uncritically accepting them, however, may lead to passive acceptance of the whole social order which is oppressing us. It is particularly insidious because the process usually goes on unconsciously. Becoming conscious of it, which is the same as having a theoretical orientation, is often enough to neutralize its effect.

Now what about the scientific validity of the concept of 'human nature'? We could point to a mass of evidence from psychology as to how changing situations change personality. The typical personality types characteristic of modern capitalist society are completely absent in some human societies (this type of 'human nature' crops up repeatedly in arguments ... by a strange coincidence it just happens to coincide with the type of character needed to keep our wonderful capitalist system going). The same could be said about the 'competitive instinct', which today usually means the 'inborn' urge to enter capitalistic competition, but which was absent in some earlier stages of our own civilisation.

'Native intelligence' is allegedly one part of our 'innate character'. Many people think of it as a largely unplastic, 'inborn' fact. But in the United States, a large group of mentally deficient (semi-moron) twelve-year-olds were taken out of orphanages, put into new environments, and given special training. Within three years, the average I.Q. for the group was 110 (an I.Q. of 100 is average for the population as a whole). This means that the group average rose from moron level to above average for the population as a whole. Not one exceptional case, dozens. And not even infants, but twelve-year-olds.

Another example is that of twenty-five three-year-olds who were taught to read and write, using special methods. (The kids dug it. The method used was not work to them. It was a game which they were not allowed to play more than a limited time each day!). By the time they were six, the youngsters were editing a children's newspaper (no, not Solidarity) by themselves, and reading and understanding the school books of 12-14 year-olds. Where had the 'inborn limits' gone?

Another allegedly 'inborn' trait is musical ability. A rather uncommon ability that comes under this category is the ability to discern absolute pitch. Recent experiments in Czechoslovakia have shown that this 'innate' ability can be taught to all children, almost without exception, provided you begin before they are three years old.

The facts cited above do not come under the Official Secrets Act. They, and many like them, are strewn all over the technical journals of psychology and sociology. But who reads technical journals? How many products of our glorious educational system are equipped to read and interpret the highly technical language in which such research reports are usually couched? And what about the media of mass communication, or our schools? As it is, these reports remain largely mysteries sealed with seven seals, or science fiction, or slices of utopia. The educational institutions which deform our children go on as if these things did not exist, dosing one generation after another with ignorance and prejudice.

They have miseducated us as children that they may manipulate us as adults with their movies, TV, radio, and newspapers. It is essential that working people do not adopt an anti-theoretical attitude. This would render them even more victim to the attitude-forming agencies and forces of the established order. We must formulate our theoretical assumptions consciously. We must shape for ourselves theoretical tools, which we can use the better to grasp the reality of today in terms of our own interests. We must construct tools with which we can better unite in common understanding of the interest we all share; our common liberation from a form of tyranny which, as never before in history threatens to make man a willing captive in a golden cage, or to sacrifice him in an atomic furnace.

This does not mean that we should exalt theory as a goal in itself. I have constantly referred to theory as an intellectual tool to help us grasp our own practice. As any other tool, theory has value only in relation to the job it is supposed to do. I have yet to meet a mechanic who collects wrenches and spanners as Objects of Art. As in any other job, so too in intellectual work: the better the tool,

the better the job we can do.

Socialists are not all agreed as to what is the basic contradiction of modern capitalist society. I, for my part, am convinced that despite great changes since the days of Karl Marx, the fundamental - though by no means the only - contradictions in modern capitalist society are still economic in nature. But it is not the economic contradictions of capitalism that engage us. It is rather the fundamental inhumanity which is the very essence of the capitalist social order. Dehumanization of man is not a mere by-product of capitalist society, which can be somehow eliminated, or even substantially lessened by reforms. It is at the very core, it is the vital pre-requisite for the continued existence of the system itself.

As ignorance of medicine in the tribe is the necessary condition for the continued prosperity of the witch doctor, so too does the continued existence of capitalism absolutely require our continued ignorance, prejudice, lack of insight into ourselves, and into what makes this society run. There has been a total organization of all the resources of the established order against man's mobilizing himself to achieve his own self-realisation in freedom. This is the final proof of how real the possibility of human fulfillment has become in our time. A working class armed with a coherent insight into the inhumanity of our present social order, coupled with a grasp of how real is its power, this will be the death toll of capitalism and the birth of a new order.

Jim Evrard.

AUTONOMOUS SOLIDARITY GROUPS:-

Aberdeen c/o N. Roy, 138 Walker Rd. Torry, Aberdeen.

Clydeside c/o D. Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Bellsmyre, Dumbarton.

London (North), c/o H. Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Rd., Bromley, Kent.

London (South), c/o J. Shreeve, 44 Sturgen Rd., London S.E.17.

London (West), c/o M. Duncan, 15 Taylor's Green, London W.3.

North West, c/o J. Harris, 96 Doveleys Rd., Salford M6 8QW.

EMBRYO SOLIDARITY GROUPS:-

Dundee, c/o F. Browne, 444 Perth Rd., Dundee.

Romford, c/o Tony Reed, 26 Seamore Gardens, Ilford, Essex.

# WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Is Socialism a Utopian dream? Will there always be rulers and ruled? Will the working class always be exploited either by its class enemies or by those who claim to speak in its name? Is it but a modern army of industrial slaves, whose periodic eruptions into activity are without real social significance?

Or, on the contrary, do the conditions of proletarian life - and in particular factory life - lead the workers to develop a consciousness, ideas, and forms of action, whose deepest content is implicitly socialist?

Answers to these questions can only be found in an analysis of working class history and of working class experience. This must start at the most elementary level, from the social reality at the point of production. It must then look wider afield, at the organisations the working class has created throughout its history - and at what happened to them. It must finally look at the objectives of all previous mass actions of the class, during periods of revolution.

Such an analysis must lead to a drastic revision of traditional ideas concerning socialism. A different conception of socialism, in turn, implies different demands to be fought for by socialist organisations. And these organisations, in turn, must be of a new type, if they are successfully to challenge the social reality of today.

## THE STRUGGLE IN PRODUCTION

The struggle of the working class against capitalism is neither purely 'economic' nor purely 'political'. It is a struggle which starts at the point of production. Its object is not merely more wages (i.e. a bigger share of the surplus value produced by the working class). Nor is it explicitly concerned with the general reorganisation of society. Its importance lies in the fact that the struggle in production attacks, every hour of the day, the fundamental reality of capitalism. For what it challenges are the relations of production in the capitalist factory, i.e. the relations of groups of men to other groups of men in the process of producing wealth.

Attempts to 'rationalise' production are constantly taking place in the society around us. They are an inevitable by-product of the concentration of capital, whether private or 'state-owned'. These attempts can be seen in the Docks, in the Engineering industry, in the Railways,

in building, in the mines and in banks and offices up and down the country. They affect manual worker and 'white collar' worker alike.

This type of 'rationalisation' creates a mass of contradictions which cannot be solved within class society. For it consists in 'reorganising' the labour process from the outside. The wishes and aptitudes of those who do the work are excluded. Capitalist and bureaucratic 'rationalisation' attempts to reduce to a minimum the creative intervention of workers in the productive process. This is intrinsically absurd... even from the viewpoint of 'efficiency' itself!

In all class society, 'rationalisation' only increases exploitation. It gives rise to a constant working class resistance which dominates the whole of factory life. This resistance affects every aspect of the labour process. Its objectives are not merely an increase in the wage packet. They are also to control the job itself.

In most cases the actual size of the pay packet is determined less by 'official' wage-rates agreements, and more by the realities of production in a given factory: the control of piece rates, the distribution of the workers' time between different kinds of work and especially the tempo and norms of work which the management is able to impose. All these are the subject of a permanent and irreconcilable struggle between workers and management. This struggle takes many forms. It is much more a motive force of the class struggle than is the more obvious struggle for the disposal of surplus value. The pattern of recent strikes should make this clear beyond question.

## THE NEW RELATIONS

Whatever their wage level workers are constantly fighting against methods of production which daily increase the inhuman aspects of work. This struggle is not merely a defensive one, aimed at limiting exploitation. Production must somehow be carried on. While acting together against the bureaucratic apparatus of management, workers create, among themselves, a certain solidarity and discipline. They carry on a form of cooperation at work which in spirit and substance comes hourly into conflict with the everyday rules and regulations of the capitalist factory. In a sense the workers instinctively seek to impose a form of workers' management.\*

---

\*Anyone who has worked on the night shift in a large factory will know exactly what we mean. The bureaucratic stranglehold of management is a little less obvious at these times.

During work new relations are created between groups and between individuals. These new relations often challenge the capitalist morality of maximum individual gain. They even tend to replace it with a new morality, based on solidarity and equality. The more serious bourgeois industrial sociologists, such as Elton Mayo, have seen this quite clearly. It is strange to find most 'Marxists' unconcerned at or unaware of these basic facts.\*

The capitalists constantly try to impose hierarchical wage structures or hierarchical patterns of wage increases, the better to divide the workers. The more class conscious workers sense that this can only divide them. It is no accident that at British Light Steel Pressings (Acton), probably the best organised and most militant engineering factory in Britain, the Shop Stewards' organisation had succeeded in establishing virtual equality in wages between skilled and semi-skilled.\*\* The same tendency was seen recently in the London bus garages, which overwhelmingly rejected proposals to grant different increases to drivers and conductors.

This 'equalitarian' aspect of working class consciousness and this tendency of workers to manage the job themselves are no 'accident'. In one way or another they come to the forefront every time that capitalism attempts to alter the techniques of production, in order to 'solve' one of its own problems. They express a fundamental and universal tendency, the effects of which can be seen in Russia and in the United States, in France and in Britain. This tendency may remain latent for long periods. It has no formal organisational expression. It has no clearly formulated programme. But its content is to be found in the activities of the masses each time a revolutionary crisis shakes capitalist or bureaucratic society. In every factory throughout the world the workers struggle against arbitrarily imposed norms, and, more generally, against conditions of labour that they have not themselves determined. The 'abolition of the norms' was one of the main demands of the Hungarian Workers' Councils in 1956.

---

\* These 'Marxists' claim to be 'realists'. Their 'realism' consists in taking refuge behind the real or alleged 'backwardness' of sections of the working class. These 'revolutionaries' don't talk about these basic things for fear of being 'misunderstood', 'isolated' or labelled 'Utopian'. The workers, according to them, have been 'thoroughly corrupted by centuries of capitalism'!

We feel that those who use such arguments abdicate the role of conscious revolutionaries. They do nothing to develop the positive and potentially socialist aspects of working class consciousness.

\*\* See SOLIDARITY pamphlet No.8: The BLSP Dispute, the story of the strike - by Ken Weller, A.N.

# THE EXPERIENCE OF REVOLUTION

Born in the trivialities of the work process, and in the experience of collective labour, this 'socialist' conception of society has surged to the forefront in every proletarian revolution. In these upheavals the working class has not simply revolted against misery and exploitation. It has sought to challenge the real basis of every established society: the relations of production, which determine the attitude of human beings to one another.

In these upsurges the working class has repeatedly placed before mankind the whole question of a new form of social organisation. And to this question it has repeatedly provided its own answers. The Commune of 1871, the Soviets of 1905 and 1917, the Russian factory committees of 1917-1918, the German workers' councils of 1919 and 1920, the Italian factory committees of 1921, the councils set up by the Spanish workers in 1936-1937 and the Hungarian workers' councils of 1956 were at one and the same time organs of struggle against the ruling class and its State - and new forms of social organisation, based on principles radically opposed to those of bourgeois society.

These institutions, created by the proletariat itself,\* should be studied most closely. They expose, once and for all, certain misconceptions about 'organisation' which have for centuries plagued all political thinking. These organs of working class power have shown that it is possible at one and the same time to centralise power and to safeguard the workers from political expropriation by those who seek to 'represent' them. In every instance the workers have instinctively sought to impose on 'their' representatives a permanent control from below. The revocability of all the elected representatives was a feature of both the Commune of 1871 and the early Soviets. Workers' management of production demanded by the Russian factory committees of 1917 was instituted by the Spanish workers in 1936 and 1937. It was a key demand of the Hungarian workers' councils in 1956.

The development of the working class towards socialism does not only show itself in the way workers constantly try to organise their own lives and their own activity in the factory. Nor does it only show itself during periods of great revolutionary

---

\*Parties of professional revolutionaries had very little to do with these creations. The members of the 1st International were taken by surprise by the spontaneous developments in Paris in March 1871. The Russian Bolsheviks were at first opposed to the Soviets in 1905. They viewed them with extreme suspicion. The Stalinists, as is well known, were the most vicious opponents of the independent class organs created by the Spanish workers in 1936-1937, and devoted much of their energy to liquidating them.

upsurge, when the working class has repeatedly demanded the most radical change in all social relations. The working class has also struggled against capitalism, and this from the very beginning of its history, in a conscious and explicit way. This tendency to organise for permanent and open struggle runs like a red thread through the whole fabric of modern society.

From a fairly early date, workers have seen the need systematically to challenge the whole organisation of the society around them. By creating political parties, they have attempted to go beyond the mere defence of their economic interests. They have sought to oppose their own conceptions of society to those of the bourgeoisie. They have sought to go beyond shop floor solutions and to raise the question of power at a national and even at an international level.

It is quite false to proclaim (as do the Stalinist and Trotskyist legacies of Bolshevism) that the working class 'is only capable of achieving a trade union consciousness'. In Germany, the workers started by creating mass political organisations, from which the trade unions subsequently developed. When trade unions were first formed in the Latin countries they were not merely 'economic' organisations, struggling for limited ends. They proclaimed as their objective nothing less than the abolition of the wages system. Many of the first industrial unions in Britain had much the same aim. The constitution of the Mineworkers Union, of the N.U.R. - and to some extent even of the A.E.U. - still bear testimony to this fact.

It is also false that working class political organisations have always been created by intellectuals. Some say this to stress the backwardness of workers, who, it is implied, could never have created such organisations themselves - i.e. without 'leadership' from above. Others make the allegation in order to smear the very conception of political organisation.

A moment's reflection will show that things could never have been like this. Whatever the role of intellectuals, the early organisations of the working class would never have grown and flourished had not many workers come to them, made them real, injected them with their experience, constantly participated in their activity and often sacrificed their lives for them. Workers recognised, in other words, their own fundamental needs in the programme of these organisations. This state of affairs persisted during a whole period of history. This period is now drawing to a close, both objectively and in the minds of the workers, and this despite the desperate attempts of self-styled revolutionaries to keep alive the slowly dying traditional organisations.

There is therefore an autonomous development of the proletariat towards socialism. This is neither a mechanical consequence of the 'objective conditions' of working class life. Nor is it due to some mysterious biological trend. It is a process which finds its driving force in the constant opposition of workers to capitalist methods of organising production. It is an historical process. And it is essentially a process of struggle. Let no one distort what we are saying. Workers are not 'born' socialists. They are not miraculously converted into socialists on entering a factory. They tend to become socialists - or perhaps one should say they make themselves socialists - in the course of, and through, the daily struggle against capitalism.

This is not to deny the importance of understanding the process theoretically. We are not philistines. The experience of groups of workers in one industry or in one country must be brought to others. The wider implications must be drawn out. Artificial barriers must be broken down. Objectives must be constantly redefined in the light of new developments. But such intellectual understanding can never be a substitute for participation in the struggle itself. If it is not nurtured in struggle, if it remains based on the reality of a previous period, it can only act as an impediment to effective action.

## THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS

What is the struggle for socialism about? Where does it take place? Against whom is it directed? What are the conditions for its success? Here again there is much sloppy thinking. In our previous publications we have dealt at some length with the struggle in production. But the working class does not only fight capitalism as something external to itself.

If it were only a question of the material power of the capitalist class, of their State and of their Army, capitalist society would long ago have been overthrown. Capitalism has no strength other than the labour power of those it exploits. It survives because it succeeds in getting its slaves to accept their status. Its most powerful weapons are not those it uses consciously: its police, its army, its courts. These are but adjuncts to its rule, important though they be. Other things help the ruling class. In particular the persistence and constant re-birth of capitalist ideas amongst the ranks of the workers.

The worker is no stranger to capitalist society. He is born into it, he lives in it, he participates in it and makes it work. Capitalist ideas, capitalist values and capitalist attitudes constantly permeate the working class. Workers develop or retain these ideas

precisely because they are an exploited class. From childhood on, patterns of thought are imposed on them by 'established' society. The perpetuation of capitalism and of its institutions tends to perpetuate capitalist ideas amongst workers. The 'patriotic' notions of even the most militant workers is one of the most striking illustrations of this 'dual consciousness'.

The working class is submitted to systematic indoctrination. It is deprived of the material prerequisites of culture. It is even deprived of its own past, of which it only knows what its exploiters - or its own 'leaders' - allow it to know.\* It is deprived of an awareness of itself as a universal class. This results from local, occupational or national divisions, imposed on the working class by the present organisation of society. It is even deprived of an awareness of its present status, all channels of information being in the hands of the ruling class and of the labour bureaucracies.

Despite these handicaps, workers fight back. They make up for what is kept from them. They develop a healthy suspicion of bourgeois indoctrination and a basic indifference to its content. By many devious routes they tend to assimilate the culture of which they are deprived. They even lay the basis of a new culture. Scholastically they may ignore their past. But they find it in front of them, again and again, in the form of conditions and rights to be defended.

The situation of the proletariat in modern society is therefore profoundly 'contradictory'. In the course of production the class constantly creates the elements of a new form of social organisation and of a new culture. Outside of production it never frees itself completely from the influence of the environment in which it lives.

The constant re-birth of capitalist tendencies within working class ranks is the most formidable obstacle to the development of socialist consciousness. This even takes place amongst the most advanced sections of workers. The most subtle and pernicious influences of capitalist society are found where least expected. They permeate social-democratic, Stalinist and Trotskyist thinking alike. They consist in fundamentally bourgeois ways of looking at things. Bourgeois 'common sense' is elevated into an absolute rationality. Inertia is systematically injected into the ranks of the working class, through appeals to 'leave it to those who know better' (whether these be factory managers, production experts, specialists in 'facts' of one

---

\* There has been a systematic distortion of working class history in which bourgeois, bureaucratic, 'elitist', and other interested parties have all participated.

kind or another, 'progressive' politicians... or professional revolutionaries 'with years of experience in the movement').

Capitalist methods of organisation also profoundly influence the working class movement. Spontaneous, 'unofficial' activity is frowned upon. There is a suspicious attitude to new conceptions (to any idea, in fact, which has not blossomed in the head of some 'experienced' comrade). Dogmatism and hero-worship abound. There is a tendency to live on the dwindling capital of the past rather than on the realities of the present. All these notions are systematically fostered by both bourgeois and bureaucratic societies. They seep into the workers' movement through its every pore. They are in fact reflections of the very society the 'revolutionaries' are supposed to be struggling against. They reproduce in the sphere of intellectual life, and in the sphere of organisation, the social relations which prevail in the capitalist factory: relations based on domination, inequality, and on alienation.

In times of revolution, capitalist state power may be militarily crushed... yet the old social relations remain. This will happen if, in order to overthrow the old society (or under the pretext of 'efficiency') the revolutionary army or the 'new' productive apparatus have to be 're-organised' along the old lines. All the main features of the old society will then soon re-emerge.

The building of a revolutionary organisation to express the aspirations of the working class is a tremendous task. But the working class can instantly destroy this achievement if it believes that all that is then required of it is to have unlimited confidence in the organisation it has created. The degeneration will set in the moment the working class withdraws from the arena and hands over to 'its' organisation the solution of all its problems.

The problems of the class can only be solved by the conscious action of the class itself. There are no short cuts. This is the lesson of all previous history. The struggle of the proletariat against capitalism is therefore, to a large extent, the struggle of the proletariat against itself. It is a struggle to free itself of all that lingers on, in its thinking, in its habits, and in its internal organisation, of the society it is fighting against. The history of the working class movement is the history of the growing strength and consciousness of the working class, in the course of this struggle.

# TOWN HALL TACTICS

THE TOWN HALL HAS LAUNCHED A VICIOUS AND SMEARING ATTACK ON THE HOUSING ACTION GROUP. THE PURPOSE OF THIS ATTACK IS TO DISCREDIT A GROUP OF LOCAL PEOPLE WHO ARE FIGHTING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR MOSS SIDE.

IN FACT BY ATTEMPTING TO DISCREDIT H.A.G. THE TOWN HALL HAS SHOWN ITS CONTEMPT FOR THE PETITION SIGNED BY 3,000 MOSS SIDERS. H.A.G. HAS BEEN PRESSING FOR THE DEMANDS MADE IN THE PETITION. IF WE ALLOW THE TOWN HALL TO DISCREDIT THE ACTION GROUP THEN THEY WILL BE ABLE TO FORGET ALL ABOUT MOSS SIDE AGAIN.

DON'T  
BE  
TAKEN  
IN !

\*\* ANSWER THE TOWN HALL SMEAR BY SHOWING SUPPORT FOR THE H.A.G.

\*\*\* DECIDE AT A MASS MEETING THE NEXT STEPS TO TAKE IN OUR FIGHT FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR MOSS SIDERS.

\*\* SHOW OUR SOLIDARITY WITH ACTION GROUPS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY.

INVITATIONS TO THIS MEETING HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE CHAIRMEN OF THE HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEES. ALL LOCAL COUNCILLORS ARE BEING NOTIFIED.

SPEAKERS FROM OTHER CLEARANCE AREAS HAVE BEEN INVITED COME AND HEAR ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES.

DON'T MISS THE

PUBLIC MEETING  
PRINCESS RD. SCHOOL.

8.00 P.M.

TUESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST.