Holman's of Camborne
Derry: How the People Fought
Inside Vauxhall
The industrial revolt
NEITHER CASTLE NOR FEATHER, BUT JOB ORGANISATION

The current demarcation dispute between the Government and the T.U.C. over who should be responsible for smashing job organisation leaves us cold. The 'dispute' is a classical example of the hoary old technique of offering a false 'alternative' which superficially seems to be a lesser evil: in this case the bogus alternative is the policing of 'industrial discipline' by union officials instead of by civil servants. We totally reject this 'choice'. To us it is irrelevant who will be the executioner of shop floor organisation. In this respect anyone who thinks that T.U. officialdom will be an easier task master needs his head examined.

Some facts should be stressed about the new 'industrial relations' proposals. In return for their participation and cooperation in smashing industrial resistance the national trade union bureaucracies are being offered substantial advantages - for example the right to 'recognition', which means more members, more dues, etc. Already a number of major unions - for example the NUGMW and the ETU - support the government's propositions as they stand. Most of the other unions are critical of the form rather than the principle!

The second thing to note is that dangers don't only lie where they seem to. The Daily Telegraph (May 22, 1969) reported Labour back bench M.P.s as cynically arguing that if they could 'get the T.U.C. to recommend that constituent unions should provide by rule a disciplinary system of their own, this could be even more effective than fines imposed by law. For example, expulsion from the union, in an industry where the "closed shop" prevails, would be a much heavier sanction than any fine'.

It is typical of the 'traditional' left that it is falling over itself to take sides in this shadow conflict. The task facing revolutionaries now is not to choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but to concentrate their forces on building up the only force that can combat the new offensive: rank-and-file consciousness. The new attack will not be stopped in the corridors of power of the T.U.C. or in Parliament, but only by workers facing up to the real situation, taking action into their own hands and resisting industrially.

To trim or to compromise on the question is to lose. The smashing of the wartime Order 1305 by the dockers in 1951 (also under a Labour Government)* and the current struggle in Australia which has forced the release of Clarence O'Shea, the tramwaymen's leader arrested under the Industrial Arbitration Act (also introduced by a Labour Government in 1947), are instances of what should be done. It is this sort of struggle for which militants should be preparing now.

* See 'The Labour Government versus the Dockers 1945-1951', Solidarity Pamphlet No.19, price 6d.
DERRY

HOW THE PEOPLE FOUGHT

Derry is a violent city. Its people have been treated with particular brutality by the authorities over the last fifty years. It boasts some of the most appalling slums in Britain and the most flagrant gerrymander in British history. In Derry houses mean votes* and the hack politicians have no intention of voluntarily relinquishing their ill-gotten power. So thousands are forced to live in the slum ghettos all their lives - lives which are often drab and sickly, where religion is a 'consolation', an escape and insurance policy which you are brainwashed into buying at birth and through your particular pattern of education.

Not surprisingly Derry has been to the forefront of the C.R. (Civil Rights) campaign.

In Duke St. on October 5, 1968 (a date already established as 'sacred' in the C.R. calendar) a peaceful C.R. march was first banned by the Unionist government and then battered to the ground by the police.

Police brutality is nothing new in Ulster but the bourgeois have always denied its existence. However, under the lens of the T.V. cameras it was revealed to a mass audience and the C.R. movement was really born. The incompetent Craig, then Minister of Home Affairs, watching slow motion pictures of police batoning women and children, blandly denied that it happened. 'Moreover' he averred, 'we have conclusive evidence that the I.R.A. organised the whole march'. In the past he might have got away with it, but enough was enough.

Events followed rapidly. The Peoples' Democracy was born spontaneously in protest against police brutality. Throughout the next few months marches were held in Belfast, Armagh, Lurgan, Dungannon, Newry, Enniskillen and smaller towns. And inevitably in Derry.

* Protestants control Derry City Corporation, even though outnumbered 2 to 1 by the Catholic population. Despite 4,000 Catholic and Protestant homeless (P.D. handout 'Civil Rights North and South') the local housing authority has

a) refused Derry Housing Association's proposal that 450 homes be built in Pennyburn on the grounds that it involved placing Catholics in a Protestant area;

b) persistently dragged its feet on slum clearance in Protestant areas, not wishing to upset the carefully gerrymandered arrangement of votes.
On November 16, 15,000 marched over the banned route. They were halted at the end of Craigavon Bridge and assured yet again that the area within the city walls was holy ground - 'loyalist' territory. The police were ignored as people swarmed around and made their way to the Diamond by diverse routes. They occupied the holy ground. In fury Craig banned all marches within the city walls. Next day, in defiance, a dozen different parades marched in and out of the sacred gates. Next week Craig was out.

The Unionist Party was split - the bourgeois 'liberal' wing backing the aristocratic O'Neill; the working class blindly following Paisley.

But Derry was to see more action.

On January 4 the P.D. march from Belfast to Derry set out on its fourth and last lap, 'harried and harassed' by Paisleyites receiving official police connivance.* At 11.30 am the police led them into the infamous

* Chief of the R.U.C. riot squad, Head Constable Patterson, was seen chatting amicably with armed Paisleyites at Burntollet an hour before the ambush (Photo in 'Ramparts', journal of the Derry Labour Party).
ambush at Burntollet Bridge, five miles outside Derry. The details of
this have been told elsewhere * - how the marchers numbering among them
women and children were battered with rocks, iron bars and clubs with
six-inch nails; how their attackers were largely 'B' Specials with the
odd J.P. and M.P. in attendance.**

That night saw a police attack of incredible ferocity on the people
of Derry. Batons and water cannon were used continuously up till 12 pm.
Then at 3 am on the morning of the 5th a section of the police, many of
them drunk, rioted and attacked the residents of the Lecky Rd., in the
Bogside ghetto. Doors were smashed down, windows broken and elderly people
in their night attire reviled, and in some cases batoned. The police
moved through methodically smashing up two entire streets and left before
resistance could be organised.

By lunchtime the people had had enough. The barricades went up and
a deputation delivered an ultimatum - 'stay out of Bogside or else!'.
The initial resistance had been spontaneous, but by now the Citizens
Action Committee led by bourgeois business men such as Cooper and Hume
(subsequently M.P.s) took over.*** Vigilante patrols were organised and
guarded 'Free Derry' each night. A pirate radio station commenced broad-
casting. The barricades stayed up. The police, frightened of the conse-
quences, stayed out. Panic-stricken, the government ordered an inquiry
into the 'allegations' of police brutality, to be conducted 'impartially'
... by a senior police officer. As yet (May 6), four months later, he is
still completing his enquiries.

Free Derry lasted five days. Then the businessmen panicked. At
two hastily rigged meetings, while the vigilantes were manning the barri-
cades, they 'persuaded' the people to dismantle their defences. The heady
period of 'liberation' was over. But the people had had a taste of armed
defence. On the next march, they sang a new song - 'Ee ay addio, the
pigs are on the wine'.

Throughout the province the demonstrations continued. Police
tenders were proffered as burnt offerings by the Newry R.U.C. in an
attempt to discredit the C.R. movement.

* See full account in 'Burntollet' by Egan and McCormick.

** For instance James Chichester-Clark, Unionist M.P., Westminster (bro-
ther of the new P.M.) and Albert Anderson, Derry Unionist M.P.

*** In Derry a recently formed independent Civil Rights movement has
accused the moderate C.A.C. leadership of direct responsibility for
recent outbreaks of religious sectarian rioting, since it has persistently
refused to push a class line on specific social ills.

('Northern Informer' No.3.)

'Liberalism has nothing to offer people living in Protestant slums'

Eamonn McCann.
On April 19, the North Derry Civil Rights Committee had planned a march from Burntollet Bridge to Derry in protest against the totalitarian Special Powers Act, the proposed Public Order Amendment Act, the criminal 'B' Specials (the 10,342-strong armed extremist Protestant police auxiliaries) and the police failure to indict the guilty men of the Burntollet ambush.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Robert Porter, banned the march ('the Orange Order in the area have informed me that they cannot control their members', etc.), abdicated his responsibility for 'law and order', and handed it over to the bully boys.

That afternoon 200 jubilant Paisleyites stood on the Bridge waving Union Jacks and stoning the occasional passing car. Meanwhile people staged spontaneous and peaceful sit-downs in Derry city centre, at Foyle St., Sackville St., Waterloo Place and Shipquay Gate. The scene was set for a police riot.*

At 4.30 pm the demonstrators were about to disperse when the Paisleyites returned from Burntollet. A few gathered on the city walls and hurled missiles at those sitting in the road. Police appeared rapidly and charged the C.R. demonstrators, ignoring the jeering Paisleyites.** Shoppers in the Diamond were suddenly caught up in the action as the police pushed people towards their ghettos. But the mood of the people had changed. As the police advanced, rocks flew and suddenly the impossible happened.

The police, overestimating their strength and underestimating the pent-up hatred of the people, attempted a running baton charge down Waterloo Street, yelling like banshees and armed with shields, visored helmets and batons. Normally a crowd would splinter and run. But not today. The crowd charged the riot police. Hurling rocks, bottles, anything, they ran straight for the advancing squad. For a second a head-on crash seemed inevitable and then the police turned tail and fled. Never noted for their courage, accustomed to beating up the odd drunk or passive demonstrator, woman or child, the squad's nerve broke. This was the signal for the crowd to swell. Like lightning the word spread as hundreds took to the streets grabbing anything at hand.

The crowd chased the police right back to their H.Q., Victoria Barracks in Strand Road, and besieged them. Inside, the police cowered as the crowd smashed the windows and battered the door. For over an hour they surrounded them until driven off, after several batonings, by a relief force.

* 'Black Dwarf' (May 2, 1969) has an excellent corroborative article on the subsequent events.

** Paisleyites hurling stones down Shipquay St. at Civil Rights demonstrators were confronted by Head Constable Kerr-Patterson who, leaping from a police landrover, rushed into their midst, and joined them. (Northern Informer' No.3.)
The crowd's action had been spontaneous and there was little organisation. During the first hour the police had taken a terrible hiding but they were able to summon help. The few people who had any experience of organised street fighting, barricade building, petrol bomb manufacture, etc., were not there (a C.R. march had drawn many to Lurgan). The numerous petrol bombs thrown were innocuous - no sand or oil was used - and throughout the night the police were able to outflank the crowds in the narrow streets around the walls.

Some spontaneous and imaginative tactics were used, however. In many of the narrow streets the manhole covers were removed, making it difficult for the police jeeps to manoeuvre, and two jeeps were put out of action when they tried to smash through a flimsy-looking barricade sporting concealed spikes which punctured the radiators. Moreover, one of three water cannons used to drench the people was put out of action by a petrol bomb, which led a police sergeant to fire shots 'over the heads of the crowd'.

But what impressed many observers was the courage of the people, and the young in particular. Time and again, with rocks and bottles, they charged the riot squad armed with guns, shields and batons, forcing them to retreat. The press refers to these youths as 'hooligans' but those I saw were not 'hooligans' but young people who, infuriated at police brutality, showed a lack of concern for their own safety. They attacked the police. They did not give in to sectarianism and attack the Paisleyites in the Fountain St. area.

By midnight, however, the reinforced police were deep into Bogside taking revenge. The water cannon ran over a youth breaking both his legs, and eyewitnesses have given evidence under oath of police jeeps mounting pavements and running down people standing in doorways. Their tactics were simple. One or two jeeps would lead a charge down a street followed by a mob of fifty or so screaming police, beating their shields and batoning. The Devenny case has become a 'cause célèbre', but it was duplicated many times that night.

The Devennys were sitting at home at 69 William St. when a group of police pursuing demonstrators smashed down their door and set about the family. Mr. Devenny was left lying in a pool of blood. His sixteen year old daughter, just out of hospital after an appendix operation, was smashed in the stomach when she attempted to defend her ten year old sister (also batoned). Harry (20), Ann (18), Danny (12) and Jim (51) as well as neighbour Freddy Budd were all struck and subsequently all received hospital treatment. The house was wrecked before the gang left. Devenny was rushed to hospital with brain damage and has subsequently

* A bullet damaged the inside hallway of a house, leaving a mark seven feet from the ground.
had a coronary following internal injuries. The family are suing the police for £35,000 and the police are reluctantly conducting yet another 'inquiry' and praying that Devenny doesn't die, lest the people rise up.

By 3 am, Derry was quiet. The streets many impassable to vehicles, were littered with rocks, bricks and bottles. Large groups of police stood at street corners, swinging their batons in a threatening fashion at anyone on the streets.

Next day came the evacuation. At 3 pm, the people marched the half mile up to the Creggan estate, leaving the Bogside empty but for the large groups of armed police. This time they were all armed - hurley sticks, clubs and bottles. Pockets bulged with rocks; women carried bags in which the bottles clinked; the faces were determined. The ultimatum to the police was short and simple: 'Get out of the Bog, or we'll kill you'.

The deadline was 5 pm. By that time over one-third of N. Ireland's police force was present in Derry. At 4.45 senior officers, playing a dangerous game of brinkmanship, were still there. Many of the constables were terrified.* Then at 4.50 pm they were given orders to quit. Within five minutes of receiving them, not one policeman was to be seen within half a mile of the Bog. 51,000 marched down from the Creggan back into Bogside.

Meanwhile in Belfast the C.R.A. in an attempt to defuse the situation staged demonstrations and sitdowns. Similar tactics were employed in Lurgan, Dungiven, Strabane, Armagh, Newry, Enniskillen and Dungannon. A peaceful march in the Falls Rd. (the R.C. ghetto in Belfast) passed off quietly enough, but on the Monday evening (April 21) street fighting broke out after a vicious baton charge.

Again the action was disorganised. A crowd of predominantly young people gathered and threw stones at the hated police, regarded by many as Paisleyites in uniform (91% of the R.U.C. are Protestant, while the 'B' Specials are 100% Protestant, and 'extremist' at that). As usual the police overreacted. People were arrested and indiscriminately batoned. Innocent bystanders were clubbed to the ground and the evidence in court the next day was generally blatantly perjured - so much so that even the R.M. in Belfast acquitted some of those charged with disorderly behaviour, including Michael Farrell of P.D.

On Sunday the Silent Valley reservoir and a pylon eight miles from Armagh, at Kilmore, had been dynamited leaving Belfast with severely restricted water supplies. That same evening ten sub-post offices in Belfast were bombed, two being gutted. As usual responsibility for these two actions has been disputed by everyone.

* Mary Holland of the 'Observer' has reported how men had to be literally forced to go into Bogside by their senior officers.
On the most reliable information, it can be assumed that Ulster Volunteer Force elements blew the pylon as they did the Castlereagh power station a month earlier. The P.O.s appear to have been the work of a small fringe Republican group.

The Silent Valley explosion and the (April 21) Dunadry explosion occurred while 'B' Specials were 'guarding' the water supplies, and have resulted in the Army being called in and strict water rationing in Belfast. These incidents have also ensured the continuance of the 'B' Specials, strengthening the hand of those Unionists who scream for 'law and order'. No one else has benefited, and their guilt is at least a reasonable supposition.

The changing of the guards at Stormont, Chichester-Clark (Eton and Irish Guards) replacing O'Neill (Eton and Irish Guards) and the inclusion of hardline right-wingers in the Cabinet will do nothing to improve the situation. The C.R.A. and P.D. are committed to a policy of civil disobedience which will escalate through the summer. The oppressive state has been warned. Unless reforms are granted immediately and the Paisleyite element restrained, reforms will be too late.

A. Berke (Rev.)

*A quasi-military Protestant force formed in 1920 in preparation for partition. The 'B' Specials are their 'legitimate' successors today.*

**i.e. Brian Faulkner, new Minister for Development (sic!) - a renowned Catholic-baiter while Minister of Home Affairs under Lord Brookeborough.**

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<tr>
<th>AUTONOMOUS 'SOLIDARITY' GROUPS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aberdeen : c/o N. Roy, 138 Walker Rd., Aberdeen</td>
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<td>Clydeside : c/o D. Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton</td>
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<tr>
<td>London (South) : c/o A. Mann, 79 Balfour St., London SE17</td>
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<td>London (Bow St.) : c/o C. Whitbread, 121 Goldhurst Terrace, London, NW6</td>
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This article is about a factory in the isolated industrial area of North Cornwall. Conditions there are an example of the situation facing the often forgotten hundreds of thousands of workers outside the industrial mainstream. The Camborne workers have shown they could revolt. Let others follow.

BACKGROUND

Begun in 1801 by Nicholas Holman and run since by five generations of brothers, Holman Brothers of Camborne, Cornwall, have been virtually the only heavy industry in the area since the fall of the great copper and tin mining interests.

They originally manufactured the equipment (compressors, engines, rock drills, etc.) used in the mines. Mining machinery, and 'compressed air and all that goes with it' are still the main products of the company. 70% of output is now exported, the image being of 'Rolls Royce' quality, but with commensurate prices. The firm has never been noted for technical innovation and these days suffers from considerable inertia despite moderately efficient selling techniques abroad. Last year the firm undertook a defensive amalgamation with Broom and Wade of High Wycombe to form the International Compressed Air Corporation (quoted on the London Stock Exchange). The main effect of this merger so far seems to have been the systematic sacking of most of the family names from the Board of Directors.

The Holman attitude to its labour force has been marked throughout its history by a kind of paternalistic tyranny, resorting to outright repression when the men occasionally stepped out of line. After the First World War the company joined the Engineering Employers' Federation and enforced the national lock-out of 1922 with great severity. Now, however, a 100% Union shop is operated, and new employees are treated to a lecture in trade unionism as part of their official 'induction course' (i.e. indoctrination course). This is an interesting example of the change in managements' attitude to unionism. The position of the men meanwhile remains much as before.

Examples of weekly basic wage rates this century have been (for skilled men):

1935 - £2.11s. 1945 - £4.16s. 1965 - £11.0s.
1939 - £3.6s. 1955 - £7.15s.
'Old hands' at the works are convinced there has been a deliberate conspiracy between the Holman family, the Employers' Federation and the local authorities to keep other engineering companies out of the area, thus maintaining a surplus of workers on the dole and wages low. There seems to be some evidence for this. Even now, when council bureaucrats crow each week in the local papers about 'industry' which 'they' are 'bringing to Cornwall', it is noticeable that the industries concerned are small, light, and with a high proportion of female labour.

In 1960 Tecalemit (now at Plymouth) was all set to come to Camborne; many of the best Holman employees signed up to form their labour force. Then suddenly, with no reason given, Tecalemit dropped the whole idea. Similarly a few years ago in a fit of 'rationalisation', Maxam Power, a Holman subsidiary, was moved into town nearer the mother factory, and the Maxam works building put up for sale. Another engineering firm became interested, and suddenly the 'rationalisation' was discontinued and the Maxam people moved back out to where they are today. Holman's must view the revival of local tin mining, with its high wage levels, with extremely mixed feelings!

During 1936 the management had lorries waiting to transport the workers after the shift to pick up potatoes on the Holman farms; the pressure on individuals to do this extra work can be imagined. Between 1939-1945 the firm worked on war production but also kept their own lines going. The government built two new factories for them; as nearly all the overseas agencies were kept in being, the company made large profits in a sellers' market in the post-war years.

CONDITIONS TODAY

The shop floor today is reminiscent of the 'Smallcreep' fantasy. Time clocks proliferate as do foremen, supervisors and similar controllers of people. In addition to clocking on to establish one's presence it is also necessary to clock on at the start of each operation of each job. Failure to make time could bring a 'word' from those in charge. Every minute is regulated and must be accounted for (tea break: 9 minutes, wash hands: 3 minutes, etc.). The numerous company rules lay down a law for every conceivable occasion. The company will supply all that is necessary for life: meals (expensive and inferior), house mortgages (used for blackmail), car insurance and many other 'welfare' facilities. The web is extensive and comprehensive and it is difficult for the workers to avoid becoming hopelessly entangled in it. Needless to say, in all this mess of rules and procedures the productivity per man is abysmally low by anyone's standards.

I added up the time - calculated in hundredths of an hour by their lovely new computer - shown on a recent typical 'gain sheet' (i.e. bonus sheet) as being the time actually spent in productive work. It was exactly 20 hours. The other half of a forty-hour week was lost in enforced mucking about, ten minutes here, half-an-hour there, being checked
by foremen, clocking on and off umpteen times, etc. This is quite apart from the fact that, of the total employed labour force of about 3,000, less then half are engaged on productive work. The remainder being pen-pushers, supervisors, foremen, supervisors of foremen, etc, etc.

The men are fully aware of this situation. Their short, effective leaflet produced for the demonstration of April 12, expressed their feelings: 'We are tired of subsidising the inefficiency of the company with our low wages'. I have yet to meet a shop floor worker who does not agree that, even within the capitalist system, this factory could be run far more successfully under workers' control.

New employees are bred at the firm's apprentice training school. This establishment exploits the cheap labour of large numbers of boys. It receives substantial aid from government grants and is the one section that guarantees to make a profit every year. The school is run on quasi-military lines by an ex-army type: 'Get your hair cut', 'Stop talking', etc., and for the most part this regime is accepted with resigned apathy. As more apprentices complete the course than are required in the works, the firm is able to select the 'most promising' (i.e. acquiescent company men) to form its skilled labour force.

**TIMES ARE CHANGING**

Until recently the firm have had things more or less their own way. The combination of old retainers, dispirited young workers and a high rate of unemployment in a depressed area has ensured that the only engineering firm in Cornwall large enough for realistic workers' organisation has been kept strictly under control. However there is a growing influx of men with more experience of industrial action from other parts of the country, attracted to Cornwall by the environment and also by Holman's own recruiting propaganda. This is helping to catalyse resentment and develop activity. Also helpful has been the fact that management invariably reacts with all the skill and finesse of late Victorian provincial capitalism at its most inept.

The latest confrontation, in which the men chalked up a significant victory for almost the first time in the firm's history, was over the interpretation of the Engineering Industry National Wage Agreement concluded in December 1968. This agreement gave a £2 rise on the basic rate to skilled workers. Holman's naturally pays the basic minimum, the pay packet is made up to some kind of a living wage by means of a bonus system.

The bonus payment can be anything between a few shillings and £3 or £4. Each job is timed by the firm's work study department and bonus paid on the basis of time gained, i.e. a 3-hour job completed in 2 hours gives a 1-hour gain. It is possible to make a reasonable bonus only by cheating the system in some way, either 'arranging' the time spent on the job, speeding up the machine or skipping operations. This practice is
accepted throughout the factory although no-one admits it officially. Many other ills inherent in this type of scheme include disregard of safety precautions, sub-standard production and dissension among the men. The first of these problems is ignored by management, the second dealt with by an over-elaborate and expensive inspection system. Dissension among shop-floor workers is caused mostly by the differing bonus rates which can be obtained for the same amount of effort on different machines and jobs. This is one of the main aids to the bosses in keeping the workers divided amongst themselves and consequently maintaining a very low rate of pay. It also gives them the power to reduce a man's wages below subsistence level (as defined by the Ministry of Social Security) merely by making sure he remains on a 'difficult' machine. Blue-eyed boys get the best jobs and it is possible to discipline 'trouble-makers' quite effectively without going to the trouble of formally sacking them. Obviously now that some form of shop-floor organisation is getting going, the entire bonus system will have to be one of its first targets.

The December agreement, while giving a £2 rise throughout the engineering industry, also allowed employers to offset this as part of a productivity deal where workers were already well paid. This was in order to satisfy the Incomes Policy. It is typical of the working of that policy that the system claimed to help the lower paid in fact does just the opposite. Lower paid workers are lower paid due to lack of job organisation, and their employers can get away with tricks which would never be tolerated in a properly organised shop. Holman's did not wait for the negotiation of a new productivity deal. They offset the rise from the existing bonus scheme, leaving the men not only without a rise, but in some cases with a cut in their wages. The first the workers knew of this was the thinner pay packet.

It was not the first time the management had done this, so they had good reason to think it would work again. The previous three-year wage agreement had been fiddled in such a way that the total rise over a period of four years amounted to only about 15/- (all rates quoted are for skilled men, but most of the employees are semi-skilled). In January 1969 the bonus dropped to 7d. per hour gained (four years ago it was 2/6) and obviously the firm intended to leave it this way as long as they could get away with it. The unions didn't even squeak, so the men had to start action on their own. A go-slow began, first in the main factory, and later in the Maxam Power division which is subject to the same rates.

STRUGGLE — AND VICTORY

The principal unions concerned are the NUGMW and the AEF. The NUGMW is the usual haven for reactionaries and it was their officials who came hot foot to the factory at the start of the go-slow to advocate what amounted to an unconditional return to work 'pending negotiations'. The AEF is the largest union and has effective control. The area orga-
niser (Plymouth based) is L.C. Jones, an old guard reactionary who longs for the days of Lord Carron to return. Right at the start of the dispute he tried to sabotage the men's resistance by publishing an item in the union's national journal stating - a lie - that agreement had been reached with the management. The District Secretary indicated he was sympathetic to the men's position, but the union structure is so tied about with red tape that it is impossible for even the most well intentioned bureaucrat to do more than whisper.

The men's action was simply to decline to work the bonus system, which they insisted they had a right to do anyway. As the bonus was by now derisory, the loss to the men was minimal, while the cost to the firm of each unit of production increased by 200-300%. Management began to get rattled, particularly when the usual rumour-mongering ('the night shift is working normally', 'so-and-so wants to stop', 'it won't last, the Cornish never stick together') failed to have the desired effect. Indeed the men began holding mass shop-floor meetings - a totally new development - and reaffirming solidarity. During March the bosses offered a new bonus of 1/6, but tied with several productivity strings. This offer was rejected by a negotiating committee representing both the main works and the Maxam division. The firm then tried (through 'ballot slips' in the pay packet) to make the same offer directly to the men. The reaction was hearteningly angry.

The next move was quite unprecedented in the area: the workers organised a protest demonstration through the centre of Camborne. Holman's have been the overlords of this town for 150 years and have left their mark everywhere - institutions, park benches, chapels, hospitals, fountains, and other 'good works' all bear the Holman name. That one march knocked the bottom out of this 'sugar daddy' image and no amount of public relations will put it back. Militants would have been pleased with a turnout of 200 men; in the event there were between 750 and 1000, filling the main street, cheered by Saturday shopping crowds, surprised at their own audacity in marching through the streets of their own town to demand a living wage. The lead banner read 'Holman Workers March for Fair Pay' and on the reverse (much applauded) 'Let's sack the boss'. This was on April 12.

The following week's local paper announced a 'settlement' of the dispute. This turned out to be the management's opinion, but the men's morale was severely shaken. The bosses still offered no more than 1/6 with strings. Holman main factory drifted slowly back to normal working, apparently sold out by the negotiating committee who omitted to call a meeting of the men and instead 'thought' they would accept a deal. At Maxam however the stewards did call a mass meeting and the men roundly rejected the sell-out. Maxam were now left to fight alone; but in a strong position, because this is the most profitable section of the factory, with short delivery dates. Unfulfilled orders were piling up.

Two weeks later the management collapsed completely and offered a 2/- bonus without strings, to both works. This was accepted - as an
interim payment - by the Maxam men who have now returned to normal working. Productivity negotiations are now in progress, and the bosses know they can no longer fiddle the men as they have done in the past.

**INTO THE FUTURE**

Concrete gains from this struggle, apart from the money involved, have been in the awareness of the men that by sticking together and acting militantly they have achieved what years of 'negotiation' and 'going through channels' failed to achieve. The carefully fostered image - contrary, it may be said, to historical evidence - of the Cornish worker as a passive, downtrodden little man interested only in doing his mate down, has taken a hard beating. Despite its popular image as a mere holiday resort, Cornwall is a largely working class area with a powerful but essentially small-minded bourgeoisie firmly squashing any initiative from below.

For almost the first time in this district the struggle was given a political tinge and content, largely through the efforts and influence of a new local magazine, One and All. This paper's accurate reporting of the facts of the Holman situation delighted the men who are cynically accustomed to the distortions of the mass media, both national and local. The visible horror of management at One and All's temerity in publishing these articles and then selling the paper in the factory (200 copies in one morning!) was evidence enough, if any were needed, of the bosses' assumption that they own not only the men's bodies but also their minds.

'Jack Straw'

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**ONE and ALL**

The new Cornish magazine which gives the truth about life in the county, is essential reading for anyone interested in the revolutionary struggle in this area.

It is local but not parochial; libertarian socialist but not dogmatic.

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'The social life from which the worker is shut out is a social life very different in kind and extent from that of the political sphere. This social life, from which his own labour excludes him, is life itself, physical and cultural life, human morality, human activity, human enjoyment, real human existence. Human life is the true social life of man. Just as the ir-remediable exclusion from this life is much more complete, more unbearable, dreadful, and contradictory than the exclusion from political life, so is the ending of this exclusion (and even a limited reaction: a revolt against it) more fundamental: as man is more fundamental than the citizen, human life more than political life. The industrial revolt may thus be limited but it has a universal significance. The political revolt may be universal, but it conceals under a gigantic form a narrow spirit.'

K. Marx, 1844.

It is an irony of history that today most marxist revolutionaries would fail to recognise the significance of this quotation from Marx. They wouldn't see its immediate relevance to daily life inside most factories or grasp its tremendous revolutionary potential.

Today most marxists see both society and revolution predominantly in political or economic (rather than in social) terms. They talk of the 'conquest of power', the 'betrayal of leaders', the 'economic crisis', etc. Workers are seen either as voters, or as a two-legged wage packet. Policies are based either on the theme of 'wages versus profits' or on the slogan 'Down with Imperialism'.

Yet anyone in close contact with workers knows that whereas wage demands are always meaningful and rightly popular, their revolutionary potential is questionable. In contemporary society the struggle for higher wages does not initiate mass revolutionary activity aiming at establishing a new social order. This struggle can be (and in fact has been) contained within the existing system. As for the 'Down with Imperialism' slogan, it means little in terms of daily reality on the shop floor. Its capacity for mobilising workers for a revolutionary struggle in the industrialised countries remains to be proved.
In Marx's main writings about society and revolution the workers figure as a revolutionary force not only because of their numbers, material misery or productive function, but mainly because the changing technology of production imposes new social relations upon all those directly engaged in the productive process. The new technology of production generates new social relations (in which the workers are the first affected) and these new relations are the basis of the new society. According to Marx it is these relations which constitute the source of all other human relations. Those first involved in the new relations are bound to come into conflict with the prevailing social relations generated in previous epochs, whose totality constitutes the existing social order.

Let us point out in passing that this classical theory does not consider the peasantry (e.g. the 'Third World') as a potentially revolutionary force. Nor does it consider the impact of the products themselves to have a significant revolutionising effect on society. According to Marx it is not what is produced but how things are produced that matters. Thus Radio, Television, films, aeroplanes, motorcars, the Pill, computers and nuclear weapons can be encompassed within marxist theory only insofar as their mode of production is concerned. This seems to us inadequate, to say the least.

But it is not on these shortcomings of a theory created a century ago that we here wish to dwell, but on the consequent shortcomings of many sincere, devoted and militant revolutionaries who live and act today in the industrialised countries. The activities of many of these comrades are conditioned by a constant anticipation of an economic crisis or 'collapse' of the capitalist system. Or they live in the expectation of a political crisis, of the downfall of some leader, Party or coalition. These militants seem incapable of recognising the permanent social crisis right under their noses, the crisis which Marx outlined in the opening quotation. It is this crisis of the capitalist system that could release a revolutionising energy and mass activity far beyond anything motivated by purely economic or political issues. It is on this crisis which we now wish to focus attention.

The following are three commentaries on their work made by industrial workers. The first is by a man who has worked at Fords, Dagenham, for 27 years:

The working man in particular is full of emotions, of either likes or dislikes, all the feelings that are inside him when he works in a factory. He is out of contact with other men. Other men can see the sky, they are in the world. In press operating you have no time to do anything bar to shunt metal and metal doesn't talk to you, does it? ... They come to me, 18 years of age, I tell them: you should be out enjoying life. This pays you £20 a week but while you are here and your mates are out there you can't use the £20. In a factory a man has to pick up a sheet of steel and put it into a press and then do it again and keep on doing it. The foreman is there to see that he does it - he can't not do it.
All the while they are in the factory they are not free ... I don't feel any loyalty to Fords, but I get satisfaction from them, I can put my hand in my pocket ... Oh yes, I would use violence to overthrow the State. I don't approve of the structure of our society. The Labour Party have done more against the working man than the Conservatives would ever dare to do. If there were a revolution against the State I would take up a machine-gun. I would be happy to do so.' ('Evening Standard', March 28, 1969, p.14.)

These words ought to set serious revolutionaries thinking. How come that this veteran worker, who claims reasonable satisfaction with his wages, is nevertheless willing to overthrow the State, by violence if needs be? What is the motive of such willingness?

The second report comes from a worker at Vauxhall's: 'My job is a typical example of how the meaning of work is completely destroyed. I don't ever see the finished product which I help to produce. I do nothing which is creative in any way. Certainly the type of work surroundings give little opportunity to be particularly creative. Most important of all, I have no say in the general conduct of production, what should be made, what quantity, and to what use it should be put. ... Ask anyone in my factory whether they really think this is the best method and whether they like doing it, the same bloody thing thirty-five times an hour, eight hours a day, five days a week, fifty weeks of the year. They'll soon vehemently give you their answer ... If most people, in industry and outside of it, experience the fact that they have little control in decision-making, they do not all experience the reality of having the tempo and quantity of work forced on them with little prospect of altering it except by direct action.' ('Solidarity', vol.V, No.7, p.9.)

In this passage this worker is expressing a profound dissatisfaction with the quality of life. We doubt his fundamental criticism about these matters would lessen if his pay was increased by 5% per annum.

The last report is from the volume 'Work : Twenty personal accounts' (Penguin, 1968). 'I work in a factory. For eight hours, five days a week, I am the exception to the rule that life can't exist in a vacuum. Work to me is a void, and I begrudge every precious minute of my time that it takes. ...Time is what the factory worker sells: not labour, not skill, but time, dreary time. Desolate factory time that passes so slowly compared with the fleeting seconds of the weekend. Monday morning starts with a sigh, and the rest of the working week is spent longing for Friday night. Everybody seems to be wishing his life away. And away it goes sold to the man in the bowler hat. ...Factories may differ, but those working in them are all suffering from the same industrial malaise. We are all second fiddles to machines. ...The Workers Educational Authority have persuaded some of the larger firms in the district to release workers for one day a week (on full pay!) for a course in liberal studies ...it was not very difficult to qualify for the course: mine was one of only seven applications from a firm that employs 5,000.' (p.19)
The last commentary is actually equivalent to a statistical survey involving a sample of 5,000: a sample which one has every reason to believe to be typical rather than exceptional (the man works in a cigarette factory). This worker is neither unemployed nor complaining about his wages, although he would doubtless like them raised. It is the quality of factory life which he revolts against.

These three reports express views that are commonplace to most people involved in mass production. Work is a boring drudgery which they detest. It is a process over which they have no control but which contemporary society forces them to undertake for economic reasons. What revolutionary significance, if any, has this widespread attitude to work in contemporary society?

There can be no 'objective' answer to this question. It will always depend upon one's subjective analysis of social relations. If one agrees, with Marx, that the technology of production determines in a 'unique manner' and 'independently of their will' the behaviour, attitudes, and relations between human beings engaged in production, then there is little one can do to liberate human beings from the yoke imposed upon them by a given technology of production. Seen from this viewpoint, the frustration and mental misery suffered by millions of factory workers today (the permanent social crisis on the shop floor in every industrialised country) has hardly any revolutionary potential. It is inevitable for a given level of technology. It cannot become the driving force that will propel millions of workers to overthrow the existing social system and establish another that will abolish that misery.

Those who accept this point of view (and Marx was one of them) must then answer some questions. Under socialism, as they understand it, how would the workers be liberated from alienation in production? How do they envisage 'socialist factories'? Will the 'realm of freedom' immediately increase within production - or only through a shortening of the working day? Who will make all decisions concerning production? The producers themselves? Or their 'representatives' outside the productive process? If, as Marx stated, 'all human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and all types of servitude are only modifications or consequences of this relation', what type of social relations can one expect in a society where the worker is not free (i.e. is not the decision-maker) in production?

If, on the other hand, one rejects the view that the relations of production are determined 'uniquely' and 'independently of human will' by the 'material powers of production', different conclusions follow. If one accepts that the relations of production, the mode of production, technology, science, and everything else that is man-made can be shaped by, and is dependent on, man's will, then there is nothing 'objective' or 'natural' in the relations of production. Postulating them as such will then be seen as just another mystification. Moreover this view implies that the worker can be liberated in production, can become the
decision-maker in production. There is then no 'objective' justification for the social crisis on the shop floor. The enforced drudgery, frustration, feeling of wasting one's life, the mutilation of body and mind which constitute the daily proletarian condition, could then become the driving force for creating a new social order. Millions of workers, especially youth, can and should be propelled by such a motive to put an end to their daily deprivation. Revolutions are not generated by objectivist theories. Every theory is man-made, a tool of the human mind. As long as theory is not recognised as such, it will dominate its adherents. Revolutionaries, beware of 'objective' revolutionary theories!

There are no objective criteria to prove the correctness of any theory. The only valid criterion for a revolutionary theory (and movement) is its ability to motivate millions of people to engage in a revolutionary struggle for a new society.

A. O.

BROTHERS! YOUR UNION OFFICIAL WHO LOVES YOU, HAS MANY ENEMIES ... YOU CAN'T GUESS WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT HIM

BUREAUCRAT! TRAITOR! COMPANY MAN! TWO-TIMER!

YES, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY SAY

WOLINSKI
The next Solidarity Conference will be held in London on June 21 and 22. The main subjects for discussion will be national organisation and the formation of new groups. The ad hoc committee elected at the last Conference recommends that those attending the next one should either be Solidarity members or comrades committed to the ideas of Solidarity and to the creation of autonomous Solidarity groups in their areas. Anyone wishing to attend (who is not a member) should contact their nearest group or the convenor of the ad hoc committee (Don Kirkley, 30 Winchester Avenue, London NW6).

The sales of both the magazine and the pamphlets are steadily increasing. 1,900 copies of the last issue were sold (our best sale ever for an issue of the paper) including 350 in Aberdeen. Several pamphlets are being reprinted to meet a sustained demand (in particular 'Paris: May 1968' and 'The Kronstadt Commune' by Ida Mett. 'Socialism or Barbarism' is now available again with a new introduction.

Two members of the group (Tom Hillier and John Sullivan) have recently 'dropped out' of libertarian politics, and are now members of International Socialism, one of them already well up in the hierarchy. On leaving Solidarity they produced a singularly inaccurate pamphlet ('Solidarity forever') in which they criticised us for various alleged actions and shortcomings. We have decided that these 'criticisms' should be answered and the record set straight. Afficionados of this sort of thing may order our reply-pamphlet now (10d., post free). An excerpt of this reply-pamphlet, giving the September 1968 views of T.H. on J.S. is published below.

We are currently in the throes of producing a new 60,000 words pamphlet entitled 'The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, 1917-1921' (The State and Counter-Revolution). It chronicles, in considerable detail, (continued p.26)
The gradual emergence of Vauxhall workers from their long sleep is of significance to car workers all over the country. For this reason we are attempting to document current developments there as fully and as accurately as possible. In this second contribution from a Vauxhall worker,* we repeat our invitation to all General Motors employees. Please help us by sending articles, letters, criticisms and comments.

We wholeheartedly endorse the subtitle 'THE GIANT STIRS' (below). There is nothing Vauxhall needs more than a good bit of stirring!

This article attempts an assessment of the pressures exerted on Vauxhall production workers, and their effect on the level of struggle.

Inside Vauxhall two large negotiating unions "represent" hourly rated workers**. Between them exists an antipathy somewhere near hatred. While the National Union of Vehicle Builders recruits mainly production workers, the A.E.F., in addition to production and ancillary workers, organises skilled tradesmen. Within the A.E.F. in the factory, stewards from the skilled areas predominate - a situation that has caused some resentment among A.E.F. production workers whose interests are underrepresented.

To counter this, last November saw the birth of the Production Areas Shop Stewards Committee. A.E.F. and N.U.V.B. stewards put their heads together and conceived a baby - a journal optimistically entitled "Points of View"... The child is now perplexing its parents, having no idea of the role it should play, where to go, or what to do. Meanwhile the Production Areas Shop Stewards Committee (as autocratic as any other self-appointed group) doesn't bother to consult the shop-floor members.

Similarly the petty-minded union officials are never interested in the opinion of the shop-floor on things concerning them. Popes Meadow has been the site of two mass meetings, both of which were rigged to ensure that no resolutions should come from the floor. The officials both promised nothing and delivered it. They are justifiably hated.

* The first article Vauxhall: Militants Beware! was published in Solidarity, V. 5, No. 10.
** A third, the E.T.U., only covers the electrical and plumbing trades.
Eventually this leaves the ordinary union member as apathetic as ever. He reads the Convenors' Reports with the usual crap about "Concerted effort . . . Trotskyist and Anarchist influences making for disunity . . . support for the established committees . . .", etc., and then tends to bury his head in his own little pile of sand. To him the current situation is yet another wage negotiations' session, heading, as always, towards the BIG SELL OUT! In short the unions are just one more cross for the worker to bear.

**BRAINWASHING AT VAUXHALL**

The production worker's job* and the conditions he works under stultify his mind. He becomes less thinking than the machinery he works at. While true of production workers everywhere, it is particularly relevant to the oppressive system at Vauxhall. Here they provide one foreman for about every thirty workers; here the low rates create heavy dependence on overtime; here one-time 'militants' desert to company jobs having been completely isolated on the shop floor.

The pressures of a consumer orientated local society and all the worries of a family man unsure of his job's future have led the Vauxhall worker to place a bet on the horses above the need to fight a grasping employer. He would rather accept 2/6d per hour rise than fight for 2½d, and he has paid a heavy price for this attitude.

The high turnover in the 'production' areas might suggest that the servile state of mind would rapidly disappear. Unfortunately it isn't that simple. The longer term employee has already accepted his position, while the newcomers, attracted from all over Britain by the lies about wages and conditions published by the Employment Division of Vauxhall Motors, either leave very quickly (often after the first shift) or are forced (as the system intends them to be) to join the rat-race for enough cash to keep two homes going.

Shop stewards are often blamed for not doing their jobs by workers who will not lift a finger to help themselves. Take, for example, what happened on May 5, in the Body Shop A.C. block. A large, deepish puddle spread a distance of some fifteen yards from the small CO₂ booth to the front door section. For one-and-a-half hours workers paddled back and forth through this growing morass of oil, dirt and water, without a complaint to the foreman, or even their own steward. There were plenty of grumbles in the locker room of course. Finally a steward from outside the section had the mess cleared up, although the only thanks he got was: "About bloody time!"

* Well described by a Vauxhall worker, *Solidarity*, Vol. 5, No. 7 - "Work - An Industrial Militant Looks at his Job"
THE GIANT STIRS

The militant in Vauxhall has a difficult task, but things are improving. There is a general feeling of disgust for the company's proposals in the present negotiations; people are dimly beginning to realise that it is up to each of them to do something.

Already in one shop, stewards are consulting the men at every stage of negotiations, and accepting their decision as binding, whether on shop matters or company-wide affairs. Shop Committees are being formed to get all available information to their members as soon as possible, while some who previously just grumbled are now begging to come forward as candidates for shop steward positions.

It is rumoured that the N.U.V.B. District Secretary, aware of this growing movement, is now saying that no settlement should be accepted which fails to include wage parity with Rootes workers at Luton and Dunstable*, and that any restructuring of the Gradings Book must be in line with the resolution passed by the A.C. Paint Shop**. He was even heard to say that the N.U.V.B. delegation should withdraw from any meeting accepting less - thus closing the whole show (as no agreement can be reached without the acceptance of ALL parties).

There's a hell of a way to go. But we have begun to emerge from the long trance. One day action will follow the thought and we shall fight. Vauxhall militants want it to be this time!

LETTER FROM VAUXHALL (extract)

'The article on Vauxhall in the last issue of Solidarity was very well received by the workers in the A.C. Block. Broadly their reaction was - 'these are straight facts and we will have to wait and see what develops. But at least we know where we stand.' In the Paint Shop, needless to say, reaction was a little harder: 'we will be in for a fight'. Management even made copies of the article and confronted the convenor with it. The District Secretary of the NUVB was very indignant about the suggestion that the relationship between the local trade union officials and the Vauxhall management was "positively obscene". I believe he even went along to a NUVB branch in an attempt to identify the author.'

See also p.29.

* Rootes' production workers already get 12/- per hour with another 1/- due January 1970. Compare this with Vauxhall management's offer of 10/8d per hour for a grade A. production worker, to start on June 27th.
** Reported in the last issue of Solidarity, Vol. V, No. 10, "Vauxhall: Militants Beware!".
On May 1, 1969, some 200,000 dockers, printworkers, engineers and building workers took the day off. They were protesting against the government's proposed anti-strike legislation. John Gollan (Morning Star, May 3) called the stoppage an 'inspiration'. Workers had downed tools 'in their hundreds of thousands'. The euphoria proved contagious. Others called May Day 1969 'the biggest political stoppage since 1926'. What were the facts?

The mass media, as might be expected, played down the numbers ('100,000 men at most took part'). Let's double this figure. This still represents a mere 2% of unionised labour. And this at a time when the working class as a whole is being faced with the biggest challenge to its organisational rights for half a century.

The vast majority of workers today unfortunately either support the provisions of the White Paper (and in particular the call for 'firm action' against 'unofficial' strikers)* or just don't care. However obvious the motives of various Gallup polls on these issues - and however slanted the results proclaimed - these basic facts can't be disputed. Barbara Castle still gets ovations at union conferences. She is still the person most voters would like to see installed in Downing Street 'if Wilson now went' (Sunday Times, May 25). Revolutionaries can only ignore such facts at their peril. The first step in genuine demystification is the recognition of unpalatable truths.

So much for the black side. But against this background of 'apathy' and 'confusion' one must stress the progress made since May Day 1968. Last year perhaps 20,000 workers spontaneously stopped work on May Day. This year there were ten times that number. The call this time had had a much wider basis. Even a couple of small unions, the NASD (Stevedores) and the Lightermen had called their members out on 'official' strike. The SOGAT leadership had led from behind, leaving the options open to their members. But at the Eastbourne meeting of the National Committee of the AEF on April 28 the proposal for a one-day strike was defeated by 38 to 13. Hugh Scanlon, the darling of the 'left', voted with the right pointing out that 'one of the difficulties of power was that responsibility went with it', and asserting that 'it was a matter of regret that the amendment calling for support of token action had been put'.**

* We are not speaking here of the 'politically conscious' workers who are active industrially, but of the vast mass of the working class, large numbers of whom still vote Conservative. Nor are we asserting that the beliefs of these workers couldn't change rapidly. We are merely describing things as they are, here and now.

** The Guardian, April 29, 1969. The Morning Star of the same date referred to a 'brisk debate' on 'token action' but discreetly refrained from mentioning which way Hughie voted.
In terms of direct action May Day was a moderate success. No papers appeared. The docks were closed. So were a number of markets, building sites and engineering factories. An advanced layer of workers was recognising the threats implicit in the government's policy.

What of the demonstrations on May Day itself? In our last issue we explained how this year the Industrial Committee of the Communist Party, worried at the development of an independent working class challenge, sought to take over the Tower Hill demonstration called by the May Day Committee and lead it to Parliament. That it succeeded in this objective is a sad testimony to the current organisational weakness and isolation of libertarian revolutionaries.

From 9 am onwards thousands rallied to Tower Hill. A leaflet produced by the May Day Committee (explaining how the London Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions had refused to discuss a joint demo) was rather half-heartedly distributed by a handful of supporters. An attempt by the speakers of the May Day Committee to address the large crowd from the back of a lorry was successfully sabotaged by the physical smashing of the microphone (the absence of alternative loudspeaker equipment was a serious organisational flaw). With better preparation, including preparations for physical defence of the platform, if necessary, it would have been possible to address the assembled printworkers and dockworkers directly, pointing out the futility of a lobby of Parliament. A major opportunity was lost and at 10.30 am the Communist Party was able to lead some 15,000 workers off to Lincolns Inn Fields via an almost empty Congress House. At 11.30 am the May Day Committee held its Tower Hill meeting as scheduled. Some 500 comrades then marched to Victoria Park.

Particularly reprehensible was the attitude of International Socialism. On April 5 an article in Socialist Worker had called for support for the demonstration planned by the May Day Committee. 'We are not marching through London to shout at the citadels of power. Unfortunately there are no Joshuas in the working class movement and the walls of the Stock Exchange will not fall down as we shout slogans. We are marching from Tower Hill through the East End to Victoria Park where we will enjoy ourselves. There is nothing that the pompous, pious people in power hate more than contempt. If we go to Parliament we attach some importance to these people. It's like lobbying your boss... In the words of a wise man, appealing is for beggars... Let us make this May Day a day to remember, a day of resistance, a workers' day'. On April 12, an editorial in Socialist Worker entitled 'Make May Day a Turning Point' spoke of 'ritualistic rallies on the first Sunday of the month' and endorsed the attempt by the London Workers May Day Committee 'to reintegrate May Day into the life of the working class'. On April 26 the paper called on its readers, on the front page, to assemble at Tower Hill at 11.30 am.

On the day itself however the chips were down. The choice was between helping to swell the Communist Party demonstration ('When some
20,000 trade unionists moved off towards Parliament, the I.S. unhesitatingly* decided that we must go with them!) or assisting in the development of something new, however 'unrepresentative', 'isolated' or 'inadequate'. It may be for the time being. They made their choice. The I.S. banners were apologetically removed from the lorry loaned to the May Day Committee and took up their position at the tail-end of the Stalinist march. This is the price one pays for identifying the working class with its organisations. Will the revolutionary movement ever break out of the bureaucratic straightjacket by the use of such methods? Instead of acting as the midwives of something new, desperately striving to be born, must 'revolutionaries' help contain dissent within established channels for fear of being 'isolated'? Aren't they interested in creating a real alternative? Can't they understand that every 'support' they give to the Communist Party - under pretext that it has a real mass base - serves to reinforce the claims of the Party... that it has a real mass base? They help perpetuate the very illusion they should be helping to shatter.

The readers of Socialist Worker who turned up at Tower Hill at 11.30 on May 1st found that the I.S. contingent had left. They were clearly due an explanation. They received it in the issue of May 8. The Editor wrote that proposals for 'one united march' were 'disrupted by the dishonesty and manoeuvring of the Communist Party spokesman'. But he added that 'the sectarianism of the May Day Committee did not help. They were opposed to a united march'. This is a downright lie. The May Day Committee's unsuccessful attempt at a joint demo was fully documented in our last issue. Readers should draw their own conclusions.

* We doubt 'unhesitatingly' is the right word. The leaders may have acted 'unhesitatingly'. Many I.S. rank and filers looked distinctly concerned. The choice was about many things ... including a tacit endorsement of Stalinist tactics.

ABOUT OURSELVES (continued from p.20)

the attitude of the Bolshevik to the Factory Committees of 1917-1918 and describes the measures they took to emasculate and destroy them, firstly by incorporating them into the unions and then by destroying what autonomy the unions had in relation to other institutions of State power.

This pamphlet, which is to be printed, should be ready in July. The initial capital outlay will be beyond our immediate resources. We are therefore appealing to members and sympathisers to lend us money. We need about £200 (20 loans of £10, repayable within 6 months). We have financed previous printed material in this way and have never let down those prepared to help us. Would interested supporters please contact Ken Weller, 123 Latham Road, London E.6. The pamphlet will probably cost 5shillings. Place your orders now.
ON "ACTIVE MINORITIES"

In *Solidarity*, Vol. V, No. 8, we published a review of Cohn Bendit's recent book: *Obsolete Communism, the left-wing alternative*. We have received from France an anonymous criticism of this review which raises, we feel, some interesting and valid points.

The implication of the reviewer is that to overemphasize the role of active minorities leads straight back to leninism. A point which was already made more explicitly in your brochure on May. This is by no means necessarily the case. In Lenin the working-class is regarded as a passive tool and its spontaneous action is not barricades and strikes but trade-unionism. The Bolshevik party, composed of 'professional revolutionaries' (literally people whose 'profession' is the revolution), is the active element which fills the vacuum left by the degeneration of the working-class movement.

Now, if this is the only role an active minority can have, then there is no point in doing anything at all - not even in producing *Solidarity* pamphlets. All one can do is to wait patiently for the explosion of the working-class - which, I agree, is infinitely preferable to setting up a bureaucratic organisation. But in fact the relation between the 'masses' and the 'avant-garde' is dialectical - or should and can be - that is, the 'masses' themselves create the avant-garde and the avant-garde in turn attempts to affect the masses. The unilateral point of view of *Solidarity* in this connection is rather dangerous as a theory. It leads either to overemphasizing the role of passivity or to pushing people back into the bureaucratic organisations which are apparently 'doing something'.

May 1968 was a clear case of this dialectical relationship. In the first place there was not a single left-wing group which can possibly claim to have masterminded the whole thing. There was not even a single group which could claim to have forecast it for last year and for France. A more spontaneous movement could hardly be imagined and this was largely the reason for its tremendous initial success. The government was perfectly confident that revolts were something that happened in the third world but need never trouble the peace of Paris.

Having said this, it would be quite false to conclude that there was no active minority that started the whole thing going. Quite the contrary: the whole movement began with a fairly typical but exceptionally lucid and aggressive student revolt in Nanterre. At the beginning only a handful of people were involved - 10 or 12 at the most. Everything snowballed from there to their own amazement. If these students had not started to attack their professors and the university administration there would doubtless have been an initiative from somewhere else, but someone else would have had to do the same thing.
Again, on May 10 the movement reached a temporary halt. Hardly anyone expected the movement to hit the factories. The agitation would have died down in two or three weeks. Again, no organisation can claim any share in the dramatic and decisive events of the night of May 10. The student union called for dispersion at 9.00 p.m. and certain groups, notably the F.E.R., denounced rioting as 'provocation'. Once more, an active minority of people who did the impossible, made a frontal attack on the police, brought barricades back into the 20th century and completely turned the tide. From then there was no doubt that a decisive step had been taken and that the movement was going to involve far more than the mere student population.

Again, on May 13 a group of young Renault workers came to the Sorbonne and announced their intention of occupying the factory and resisting all attempts to get them out. They said (and it later turned out to be true): "If we don't give way, everyone will follow". The reason why the other factories followed is obviously not due to any organisational influence (the majority of strikers were not even union members) but because the Renault firm is a strategic point in French industry. The original wildcat strikers were a hundred or so at most. Their action not only went against the unions but even against the majority of workers who only gradually entered the fray.

Here are three clear cases of different 'active minorities' who, far from having any leninist intentions of seizing power, remain completely anonymous figures - with the exception of Cohn-Bendit himself, and that was not his fault.

On the other hand, it is my contention that it is almost always the 'inactive minorities' who are dangerous. In the case of May it was precisely the F.E.R. who denounced the barricades and later made several abortive attempts to seize 'power' in the Sorbonne and elsewhere. Historically this is very generally the case even for the Communist Party. Admittedly the Bolsheviks did a considerable amount towards the overthrow of Tsarism. But it was not the Bolsheviks who started the Workers' Councils in 1905 nor were they even in favour of a movement. Lenin said "I would tell them to wait but I shan't be asked". When it comes to later revolutions the paltry role of the Communist Party is more and more evident. In Cuba the Party committed the supreme stupidity of denouncing Castro's methods and preaching the return to the democratic road to communism three weeks before Batista was overthrown by force. The role of the Communist Party in Algeria is so well known it is not worth bringing up again. Even in May, 1968, the French Communist Party would definitely have made a hypocritical attempt to jump on the band-wagon if de Gaulle had actually fallen.

However prepared the masses may be it is always necessary for someone to make the first move, to stick his neck out. May 1968 showed the immense results that can be achieved by taking this risk, though it could well have turned out otherwise. The original barricaders might have failed to unleash any mass movement and might have ended up in hospital or in prison for nothing. I have an idea that the opposition to 'active minorities' is based on a slightly sentimental attitude towards 'the masses'. There is no need to be so hypnotised by leninism that one never makes a move at all until there is a general strike and all the ideal conditions for revolution.
The real problem is not the role of the active minority but the radical difference between various kinds of 'revolutionary minorities'. Those which are potentially dangerous are those whose avowed intention is to seize state power (for whatever reasons), whose internal organization is already hierarchical and who consider themselves as a sort of superior clique. Other active minorities demand nothing better than to dissolve into the masses, i.e. to cease to be a minority. What active minorities and avant-gardes should do is to carry out exemplary actions in the hope that they will trigger off others, and to attempt by all means at their disposal to bring about a revolutionary situation. Once the revolutionary situation exists they should dissolve into the masses, that is integrate themselves into Action Committees, Workers' Councils and all other forms of self-organisation.

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**STAR LETTER**

Sir,

I feel I must make a comment on the article* in your magazine, on Vauxhall Motors and the new wage negotiations. I have been employed by General Motors both in England and overseas, and it sticks in my craw to see the Company made the whipping boy for the faults of its employees.

The truth of the matter is simple, people get out of a firm what they put in. In Canada workers employed by G.M. work hard and they get paid in accord with their effort. Vauxhall employees also get what they deserve. The average Vauxhall worker is lazy, incompetent and disinterested and the bulk of the supervision and lower management are no better. If they would 'get their fingers out' the Company would be able to pay the best wages in the industry.

I am employed in the A.C. Paint Shop and as the article seemed to be mainly concerned with those who work there, I would only like to say I hope soon to return to a G.M. plant abroad where one is paid by results, and Red is not the only colour the men understand.

I don't suppose you will publish this letter as the 'left wing' is always afraid of the truth.

I must sign myself,

"CANUCK"

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