

solidarity

FOREVER?

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EX-MEMBERS

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"A group which decries organization becomes simply a circle of friends and can become in practice as exclusive as any vanguard party. Assumptions which are tacitly accepted as being agreed upon within the group may prevent the discussion and development of new ideas just as successfully as the most rigidly bureaucratic constitution. Real democracy requires a framework however fragile in which to operate. It requires regular and reasonably structured meetings at which ideas are jointly elaborated, criticisms aired where all can hear them, and where policy can be collectively challenged and changed". ("Structure and Function", SOLIDARITY Vol.4, n° 7)

A SUITABLE CASE FOR STUDY

The "Solidarity" group has existed now for more than seven years. During this time it has produced a number of articles and pamphlets which have been of interest to many people whose politics were not those of the group. Their journal also claimed to offer a theory of working class organization. We, as ex-members, feel that there is a lesson to be learned from the experience of this organization. Some may feel that the internal workings of a tiny group can be of no interest to anyone outside it. We feel, however, that a study of this attempt to transcend the usual form of political organization will have some value. In the perennial debate between anarchists and socialists this experience may illustrate the incoherence of the anarchist position.

The precise status of the "Solidarity" group was always ambiguous. It proclaimed itself a revolutionary socialist organization, and at various times it made sporadic attempts to recruit people. At other times it seemed to see itself as a publishing house. The actual form of the group, as distinct from its image of itself, was a group of friends who formed a retinue around the leader, M.B.

The ambiguity extended to "Solidarity"'s political ideas. It did not proclaim itself as anarchist, although it contained within itself most of the confusions of anarchist theory. Notably, it remained uncertain whether bureaucracy was an inevitable product of organization or whether it was possible to create a rational, libertarian organization of social and economic life - i.e. socialism. Members could point to the Soviets as examples of real democracy, while maintaining that a committee was by definition bureaucratic.

It would be possible to deduce the errors and sectarian excesses of "Solidarity" as an inevitable working out of its ideas. This would be

a mistaken approach. The ideas were themselves confused, so there could have been many different conclusions from them.

THE USES OF AMBIGUITY

"Solidarity"'s ideological fuzziness had a function. It prevented it from being torn apart by the doctrinal quarrels which have split many Marxist groups. The attitude was adopted that if agreement could be reached on immediate issues there was no need to quarrel about abstract matters. In practice the group settled for a matter-of-fact empiricism which sometimes degenerated into mindless militancy. This empiricism and ideological fuzziness undoubtedly enabled "Solidarity" to unite a number of people of quite different political views to perform specific actions. In the long run, however, the failure to think or discuss had fatal consequences. The inability to argue about issues was also not accidental. It reflected the suppressed realization that the group contained incompatible elements.

In fact, rather than "Solidarity"'s aberrations resulting from any working out of general ideas, they can be explained only by the specific experience of the group.

ORIGINS

"Solidarity", like most other left organizations, originated in a split in the Trotskyist movement. It moved rapidly away from Trotskyism for two reasons :

- 1) It took over the ideas of the French group "Socialisme ou Barbarie" which had published a large body of work since its appearance in 1949.
- 2) "Solidarity"'s origins coincided with the upsurge in the peace movement, around the Committee of 100. Although it did not originate in this movement, the group soon became very influential in the anarcho-pacifist milieu around the Committee.

A glance at the magazine during this time showed how deep its immersion in this type of activity was. Many people thought of "Solidarity" as part of the peace milieu, rather than of the labour movement. This was, however, rather misleading. "Solidarity" made concessions to pacifism, but so does every group which tries to work in a specific sphere. It inevitably recruited people who were pacifists and understressed the ideas of class division.

However immersed "Solidarity" was in the peace movement this was never its sole interest. Even at the height of this activity it still carried articles on industry and on working-class struggle.

PACIFISM

"solidarity" had been attracted to the peace movement by their use of the tactic of direct action, which it saw as a revival of an older syndicalist tradition. It never subscribed to the pacifist philosophy behind this tactic, but thought that this difference was secondary. Here we find a recurrent characteristic of "Solidarity"'s activity - the raising of tactical questions to greater importance than those of political principle.

It will be difficult for those who have come into politics during the past five years to realise how understandable "Solidarity"'s over-estimation of the peace movement was. In the early 1960s many thousands of people were marching with CND. This immensely colourful and active movement seemed like a classless rebirth of revolutionary politics. Today, with the advantage of hindsight, we can see that it was the last gasp of middle-class radicalism, not a new manifestation of revolutionary politics.

Because "Solidarity" rejected the consideration of overall strategy, it never had a correct evaluation of the peace movement (although it was quick to pounce on the backslidings of the leadership). "Solidarity"'s lack of a democratic structure or clear ideas meant that it was too involved in the peace movement to realize the extent of its collapse.

INDUSTRY

"Solidarity"'s other main preoccupation was the rank-and-file struggle in industry. This was in accordance with the original mixture of Syndicalism and residual Marxism. (The sub-heading of the magazine was "For Workers Power").

The studies of specific industrial situations are what "Solidarity" will be remembered for. These articles improved on the general level of left-wing journalism. They were serious studies which went beyond the over-simplified "down with the bosses" which still forms the gist of the industrial articles in most left-wing papers.

"Solidarity"'s isolation from the working class meant that these articles were mainly sociological studies for a predominantly middle-class readership. Here lay one of the greatest weaknesses of this

approach. "Solidarity" never attempted to work out an industrial strategy. Although it was an explicitly revolutionary journal, its concentration on careful, accurate description of things as they were contained the likelihood of leaving things as they were. A concentration on description of existing reality, with no strategy for changing it, eventually leaves this reality as something which in its totality must be accepted. One could only struggle against the manifestations of the system ; the system itself remained inviolate because it was not understood.

A socialist strategy for industry would have to go beyond careful empirical examination. Such glimmerings of an industrial strategy as could be deduced from the pages of "Solidarity" were merely repetition of classic sysndicalism, with all the virtues and weaknesses of that tradition. Syndicalists were justly annoyed when "Solidarity" presented the ideas which they had propogated for decades as brilliant new discoveries.

The "Solidarity" leadership realized that something was lacking in a purely syndicalist approach, but instead of attempting a total critique of capitalist society - a critique which would realize that there were many struggles in society but that the class struggle in industry was the crucial one - they documented a number of struggles, without having any clear ideas of which was primary. This approach is the logical corollary to a practice which consisted in joining in any struggle which came along, without trying to see its relevance to the whole.

The leadership was aware of the elementary fact that life did not begin at the factory gate. It saw that a socialist journal had to deal with other aspects of life. But the aspects which they chose to report on contributed to the paper's lack of success among the people it tried to influence. The non-industrial articles in "Solidarity" tended to be ornamental, which sometimes meant that they were eccentric (the fluoridation fringe which haunts some of the wilder fringes of the left were distressingly interested in our aberration). One of the articles which provoked most response was a cretinous piece which tried to present the development of the symphony orchestra as part of the bureaucratic phenomenon.

DIVISIONS

It was not really "Solidarity"'s fault that the different strands of its activity did not fuse together into a united movement. No other group had any greater success in converting the peace activists to revolutionary politics. Perhaps the potential for such a fusion did not exist.

Industrial workaers maintained an attitude of tolerant indifference to the peace movement. Peace movement activists saw no need to look beyond the next sit-down. Supporters of "Solidarity" were prepared to sell the group's theoretical pamphlets but were not prepared to read them, and certainly not to discuss them. This produced one of the most curious aspects of "Solidarity"'s activity : Pamphlets which aroused a lively reaction outside the group were not discussed within it. "Solidarity" appeared as the carrier of a disease which it did not itself suffer from.

"Solidarity"'s move away from the peace movement did not follow from an analysis of the inherent limits of that movement, but from a reaction to the fact that the dog was not only dead, but stinking abominably. The move back toward industry followed.

THE NOOSE TRIAL

The tensions within the group were revealed most obviously by the publication of an article in "Solidarity" Vol.4 N° 1 in April 1966. The article, entitled "No Noose is Good News" was a defence of the so-called workers' courts which in several factories had imposed sanctions on blacklegs and rate-busters. There had been a vicious and sensational press campaign against these "courts", alleging that innocent men were being driven to the brink of suicide by them.

The "Solidarity" article, editorial in tone, although signed by three members, was an excellent explanation and defence of the "courts" pointing out that they were an expression of working-class values and objectives, which presented a challenge to bourgeois law and order.

This article was not printed as an editorial because the anarcho-pacifist members of the group objected. From their point of view workers' courts were identical to the bourgeois variety : both tried to tell the free individual what to do. The article was, therefore, quite rightly not printed as an editorial (We wish taht "Solidarity"'s contents had always been decided so democratically). But it does say something about the political level of the group that it was split on an issue which is basic not only to the objectives of working-class organization but even to its existence.

The publication of "No Noose is Good News" started a process of political differentiation within the group. People did not present a point of view and resign when it was defeated. As "Solidarity" did not have formal membership no thorough discussion took place. But a number of the anarcho-pacifists took their distance from the group.

SIX YEARS HARD

The new direction within the group was clearly shown by the article "Six Years Hard" in Vol.4 N° 5. This article, a summing up of the work of the group, announces the intention of leaving the peace milieu. At the same time it tries to justify the group's past immersion in it (the editorial was a joint production of one of the authors of this article and Solidarity's leader M.B.) It is highly inadequate in that it praises the peace movement with faint damms, but nevertheless it does announce its break from it towards working-class activity, and the intention to institute some kind of formal membership. The article may be schizophrenic but it is frank. A few quotes will give the main direction of the new line :

"Unlike most of the left, who paid only superficial attention to the upsurge round the peace movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, we considered this movement to be extremely important ; we thought that it marked a new stage in the struggle for a free society. We said that this was the only mass movement in existence. The "entrists" pointed to the slumbering millions who were allegedly members of the Labour Party - or who would become members "once things started to move". Unfortunately these do not constitute a movement. They do not participate in any way in "their" organization."

"We think we were right in trying to work with the activists of the peace movement. That is not to say that we think the experiment has been an unqualified success. In many respects it has been a failure.

The peace movement has not developed its moral protest at the atrocities of the warfare state into any overall criticism of society. Lacking any coherent system of ideas it is imprisoned by the concepts of established society. The activists' protest becomes an isolated moral gesture which at its worst degenerates into irrationality and exhibitionism. They have been unable to participate in the undramatic day-to-day issues which for most people comprise the reality of the class struggle. They lacked a bridge (or even any understanding of the need for a bridge) to the mass of ordinary people. The easing of international tension and the consequent decline in fears of atomic war has therefore left them aimless and isolated."

"Others accuse us of precisely the opposite failing. They resent the basic framework of our ideas, our talk of class and class struggle. The way to freedom, for them, is a molecular process, the slow addition of one free individual to another free individual. We have even heard

"...it put forward that the only real revolutionary force in society today consists of those who have "seen through the necessity to work" and who have "emancipated themselves through drugs". We are criticised for not having developed a sufficiently total critique of society... by those whose notion of totality includes ignoring the real struggle in industry, where most people spend the major part of their life."

"Solidarity" generally did not discuss its ideas so frankly. It usually maintained an effective silence about its internal affairs which would have been the envy of any hardened Bolshevik organization. In an organization which does not have a public discussion of its views, seemingly minor events have a special significance.

The previous issue of "Solidarity" had carried an article criticising part of the Spanish Anarchist CNT for co-operating with Franco's official Sindicatos. Connoisseurs of the left scene know that any criticism of Spanish anarchism will be hotly resented by the anarchist pseudo-community. Even the mildest reformist English pacifist anarchist feels an emotional bond with this violent proletarian movement.

The "Solidarity" leadership was well aware of this. Printing such an article was part of a move away from anarcho-pacifism.

The move away from the peace movement had already started when a motion to remove the sub-heading "For Workers Power" was introduced and narrowly defeated.

There was an alliance between the Marxists and the group leadership on this question. The revival of left politics made it obvious that any group which seriously tried could make an impact. But to carry out the minimum work in a larger group it would be necessary to have some division of labour. The leader himself felt unable to carry out all the tasks which he had done till then.

ORGANIZATION AND BUREAUCRACY

The discussion on this move was a curious one. Those opposed to it felt that organization in itself was bureaucratic. They rejected, not the frustration and malfunctioning of the democratic process which constitutes bureaucracy, but the democratic process itself. Elections, voting and discussing were considered bureaucratic.

Democracy, it seems, could best function by means of informal private discussions, telephone calls, and personal political horse-trading. The anarcho-pacifist idea of democracy bore an uncanny resemblance to the processes of "soundings" which resulted in Lord Home being made leader of the Conservative Party !.

However, the decision to have formal membership went through. It was decided that committees would be formed to carry out specific tasks, an outline of the group's aims was produced (As we See It), and it was decided that we should make serious attempts to recruit members. A curious fact about "Solidarity" then emerged : some of the most active comrades felt morally bound to decline membership !

In practice the decisions on a formal structure were largely inoperative. Things soon drifted back to their old ways, confirming the anarchists in their belief that formal structures do not work.

THE FUNCTIONING OF SOLIDARITY

For anyone outside the "Solidarity" group a knowledge of its decision-making processes must be limited. More surprisingly, this was also true for the members of the group ! The decision-making machinery was shrouded in mystery.

Pamphlets would appear "out of the blue" and would be issued without discussion after having been read by one or two people. Even the date of publication of the paper rested with one comrade. Many theoretical articles were translations from the French of P. Cardan. These would be presented to the trusting English comrades at the last moment. It was claimed that there were yet unmined treasures of theoretical writings which awaited translation.

Though the group claimed to be a factory of ideas, it would be more correct to describe it as a retailer. Most of the theoretical material consisted of translations from the French magazine "Socialisme ou Barbarie". Yet when the S. ou B. group, the parent factory as it were, collapsed there were, unlike on the occasion of every other factory closure, no protests or demonstrations, let alone a post mortem. "Solidarity" was opposed to traditionalism, but on this occasion the one-minute silence has lasted for several years.

The smallness of the "Solidarity" group made the task of producing a paper more difficult. The people who did the actual production work felt that they had special rights over content and timing. It was noticeable that something which met with the leadership's approval would be quickly typed and duplicated, while something which did not would be delayed "for technical reasons". When one comrade dared to mention a publication deadline he was met with outbursts of emotion and was prudent enough to keep quiet in future.

HUE AND CRY ABOUT GREECE

The crucial event that frustrated "Solidarity"'s attempted escape from the peace ghetto was the Greek Embassy occupation.

The colonels coup in Greece sparked a lively reaction in the British Left. Academics, scholars and gentlemen who would not have given a damn if the entire workers' movement in Turkey, Japan or the Argentine had been decimated wrote indignant letters to the TIMES and decided not to go to Greece that year. Why? Well, Greece is the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy (This included slavery, but never mind).

So there was a sympathy for the Greek people and for the ousted Papandreu regime which is in striking contrast to the massive indifference to the genocide which accompanied the suppression of the C.P. in Indonesia. The Anarcho-Pacifist wing of "Solidarity" were at one with the readers of the TIMES in feeling outrage at the murder of Greek democracy. Out of this feeling there came the break-in at the Greek Embassy.

The people involved were mainly the remnants of the activists who had been around the Committee of 100, and Solidarity. These, of course, overlapped, although "Solidarity"'s recent decision to turn away from the peace movement would, if implemented, have made cooperation with such people impossible.

Shortly after the coup there was a meeting at LSE to consider some kind of direct action over the Greek situation. The meeting had been advertised only by personal contact. (An outstanding feature of the whole action was the military efficiency with which it was carried out, combined with a total lack of understanding of its political meaning). At this meeting a number of people committed themselves to a sit-in at the Embassy.

People did not yet realise what they were letting themselves in for. Contrary to the revolutionary myth which developed after the event, the occupation was seen as basically similar to those which had taken part in other embassies.

The reason for the authorities taking the thing so seriously remains uncertain. The whole operation was more elaborate, less spontaneous, than other sit-ins. The police were probably annoyed at the presence of prominent veterans of the civil disobedience movement, like M. Randle and T. Chandler.

The political point of the sit-in did not get across. Probably none of the participants were supporters of the ousted Papandreu's regime, but the whole escapade inevitably seemed to be in defence of the corrupt Greek parliamentary system.

TWO STYLES OF POLITICS

Once the demonstrators had been charged they were faced with the familiar dilemma of all political offenders : whether to use the court as a political forum, and therefore invite heavier sentences, or to try to get the lightest sentence, conducting a conventional legal defence. There can be no a-priori answer on which of these is the right course ; it will depend on the specific circumstances. In this case the relevant circumstances were :

1) The colonels' regime had consolidated itself by that time -A gesture could not have the marginal effect in shaking it which might have been hoped for in the first weeks of its existence.

2) The British working class displayed a massive indifference to the whole business -Not having a classical education, they did not share Sir Maurice Bowra's concern- Greeks were just like other foreigners.

3) Very few of the demonstrators were Greek. The sit-in could hardly be presented as a legitimate protest by outraged Greek citizens ; it was too easily dismissed as another Rentacrowd exploit.

4) There was no political agreement among the defendants. We think, therefore, that the LSE socialists were right to take the attitude that they should conduct a conventional defence and try to get the lightest possible sentence.

The Anarcho-Pacifists around "Solidarity" took a different view. To them, any trial was a suitable occasion for a political demonstration. The LSE students' arguments on tactics were dismissed as cowardice. The pacifists were unable to make any distinction between principles and tactics. To them the least, tactical question was one of principle, and also a matter of personal pride and honour. Of course if every tactical question becomes one of principle real discussion of principles becomes impossible, and discussion of tactics consequently becomes futile.

Eventually, all of the defendants, including the Solidarity-Pacifist block pleaded guilty. Only the Quaquer Mike Randle made a political speech

HATCHET WORK

What followed was one of the most shameful episodes in the history of any left group. A. Anderson, a "Solidarity" supporter and one of those involved in the occupation, produced a pamphlet, "The Greek Embassy Case", which was a vicious and scurrilous attack on the LSE students. The pamphlet was not a "Solidarity" production, but it had been produced on "Solidarity"'s duplicator and A.A. had been given editorial assistance by "Solidarity"'s leader, M.B.

This is an example of the disadvantages of the informal structure of the "Solidarity" group. The leader when challenged denied responsibility for the Anderson pamphlet. However, "S" Vol 4, N° 10 carried comment of the same scurrilous nature. No analysis of the fiasco appeared in the paper. "Solidarity" was not formally, organizationally, responsible for the pamphlet or for the conduct of the defendants, in spite of the fact that most of its resources were being devoted to the aftermath of the Embassy affair.

The leadership were able to avoid discussion of the lamentable episode. The "Solidarity" supporters who had sat-in were even more reluctant to discuss it. Any mention of the affair provoked the hysterical reaction: "You are not involved!".

The pacifist wing produced a thoroughly dishonest collection sheet entitled "Save Greece Now" which seemed to suggest that contributing money to their fund would help to do something about the situation in Greece. The leaflet did say that the collection was for the defendants in the Greek Embassy case, but it was the heading which most people responded to.

PRINCIPLES AND TACTICS

The nearest we have to a considered "Solidarity" view of the Greek Embassy occupation is an article by Dan Thersites in Vol.4 No 8, July 1967 -i.e. several months after the event.

The article, written in boys' adventure story style, informs us that the Embassy "was a difficult nut to crack". We are told all about the door being locked, the necessity of split-second timing, the importance of timing the operation to fit in with newspaper and television headlines, and many thrilling details of the operation -but almost nothing about the politics.

The most significant item in this account is that the occupiers included everyone "from ultra pacifist quaker to blood and thunder revolutionary" and that "many people who had been inactive for three years or more re-emerged to participate in this project. Action forged a unity which no amount of talk could have done".

"Thersites" goes on: "Our reporter met with a discreet and judicious silence when probing for details of the prior organization of the demonstration". This is nothing to the wall of silence which the authors have met when they have tried to discover the relevance of the whole operation.

The first and presumably the most important conclusion drawn by Thersites is that "people of quite diverse views are prepared to work together on projects involving radical action". We never doubted this but...

Should Thersites account be dismissed as a mere childish caper? We think not. It illustrates in a grotesque form the weakness of "Solidarity"'s position on principles and tactics. Obviously people of quite diverse views can agree on tactics. Disagreement on the timing of an exploit for instance would not normally correlate with political views. But the same people who agree to cooperate on tactics will find themselves disagreeing on the meaning and significance of their action.

We think that the LSE students should be criticised for taking part in this brilliantly executed but politically ambiguous venture. But their conduct when faced with a trial was sensible. "Solidarity" should have dissociated itself from Anderson's scurrilous attack.

The whole sorry episode was an illustration of the criticism "Solidarity" had made of the peace movement activists in "Six Years Hard" only a few months before. "The activists' protest becomes an isolated moral gesture which at its

its worst degenerates into irrationality and exhibitionism".

SYNDICALIST SPLIT

Following the decision to create a formal structure, "Solidarity" presented a deeply mystifying appearance. The formal structure remained ornamental. The leader lacked the desire to implement it. The aftermath of the Greek fiasco had alienated political supporters, while the pacifist wing continued to decay. Three tendencies began to form in "Solidarity":

- 1) the anarcho-pacifists ; this group tended to be senior in having been group members for longer than the others.
- 2) the syndicalists, who wished the group to concentrate more exclusively on industrial issues. They also resented the hierarchical functioning of the group.
- 3) the semi-Marxist, consisting of Marxists and others, who rejected a purely syndicalist orientation but agreed with the syndicalists that the group should have a democratic structure.

A formal structure was mutually agreed in Nov. 1968, but the discussion was carried on an incredibly personal and politically low level. The leader's tendency denied that they were opposed to a structure for the group, so the discussion took the form of a legalistic haggling which disguised real differences. Confidence in each other's good faith was absent.

At a meeting in January 1969 the syndicalists suddenly announced that they were forming a separate "Solidarity" group. They offered no explanations. At this point, the leader congratulated the seceding group on the maturity of their approach which avoided the tedious wrangling which follows political differences in traditional groups ! He also announced that the group was really a geographical division. Several of the seceding group happened to live in South London. Thus a division caused by political differences compounded by personal hatreds was presented as a geographical division of labour, while the failure to provide an explanation was accepted as a sign of maturity. It seems to us that this procedure is grossly inferior to that in traditional political splits.

The split left the leader's faction in a majority. They proceeded to take advantage of this by starting to dismantle the structure, while denying that this is what they were doing.

"Solidarity" will now, we are convinced, become more and more openly the loose group of friends which it never entirely ceased to be. Those who still demand a democratic structure will be edged out, while the anarcho-pacifists will be wellcomed back into the fold.

ORGANIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

If we ask ourselves why "Solidarity" failed, the answer must be that it failed to define its function. It was never sure whether it was a magazine produced by the informal group around M.B. or whether it was an attempt to build a socialist organization. Both of these functions are legitimate, but they call for different structures. Failure to be clear on what the nature of the group was led inevitably to incoherence and bad faith.

The group's failure to distinguish between tactics and principles meant that it alternated between narrow, apolitical direct action - direct action conceived not as a tactic, but as a philosophy - and a romantic, absolutist, political theory.

Thus the paradox which struck most people about "Solidarity", its careful, detailed industrial reports with its romantic adventurism does have an explanation. A failure to politicise day-to-day struggles finds its corollary in romantic adventures as a compensation.

The mixed elements of political idealism and petty personal spite which characterized "Solidarity"'s internal discussion, likewise form a unity. The leader got no personal advantage out of the members' work for the magazine. His commitment and dedication is something which might be emulated by more level-headed people. But the failure to distinguish personal and political matters flew precisely out of a total commitment to the magazine which was therefore treated as part of himself.

THE POLITICS OF GESTURE

The "Solidarity" leadership were able to observe the empirical fact that the working-class did not go for the same kind of direct action and politics of demonstration as the middle class pacifists. They hoped to fuse the two elements together. But they did not realise that the different styles of politics are not an accident but follow logically from the class composition and politics of the different social groups. Similarly, the form of organization is a logical expression of the different life-styles and modes of behaviour. The type of loose friendly association is not accidentally but inevitably a product of a middle-class group.

"Solidarity" propounded a theory of industrial and political organization which demanded instant recall of delegates and of anyone elected to a position of responsibility. But since the group did not provide any political education for its members there was no possibility of revoking the leadership. No one could replace them.

CONSCIOUSNESS

"Solidarity" had always stressed the importance of mass consciousness rather than leadership. However, without political discussion the term consciousness is quite meaningless. Internal democracy could not flourish in an atmosphere where political decisions were secondary to personal prejudices and whims. The ability to replace comrades on committees with others capable of taking on the responsibilities depends on the political consciousness of the rank and file. Without the stimulus of discussion and education all constitutional safeguards are just pious words

SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

Libertarian socialists could draw certain lessons from the history of "Solidarity" :

- 1) Organization should not be confused with bureaucracy. Democratic organization is a basic necessity if the working class is to achieve consciousness of its class interests.

We do not claim that the socialist organization can be a working model of the socialist future, but socialist ideas are not compatible with forms of association which maintain the hierarchy of leader and follower.

- 2) Any organization which seeks to win acceptance for its ideas must be accessible to potential supporters. Membership of the organization should not be dependent on personal friendships.

Any small political group runs the risk of becoming an exclusive clique of inward-looking sectarians, but this danger is much greater for the informal group which makes no distinction between political and private life.

A political group is necessarily an artificial association, that is, it consists of people who come together on the basis of shared ideas. The group should accept people who accept these ideas and are prepared to assist in the group's work. Therefore there must be a boundary between members' private and political life.

- 3) People who share specific ideas and work together to implement them, by definition form a group. The anarchist device of refusing to have formal membership or of refusing to specify the functions of individual comrades has no advantages.

We would urge serious libertarian socialists to abandon the politics of melodramatic gestures and the cosy life of the small group, centred round a patriarchal leader, to participate in the task of building a socialist movement which is both democratic and revolutionary.

Small personal groups might have had some value at a time, when the socialist movement was at a low ebb. Today, when it is both possible and urgently necessary to build a revolutionary movement, the self-imposed isolation of groups like "Solidarity" cannot be justified.

We would welcome comments on this pamphlet. Send comments and orders for further copies (10d post free) to :

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