

SOLIDARITY

FORMERLY AGITATOR

FOR WORKERS' POWER

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6_D

THE 'LEFT' & THE SITDOWN

The 'Left' have found a new target. Since the 'sit-down' of April 29 they have been busy putting the 'Committee of 100' in its place.

'Tribune' has decided that the 'organizers of the Whitehall sit-down lack patience'. * 'Patient explanation won the TUC for unilateralism and made possible the decisions of the Labour Party Conference'. ** 'Tribune' doesn't explain what subsequently happened. These decisions will get thrown out at this year's Conference.

The reasoning is obvious. Everyone should concentrate on the task of persuading the Labour leaders to become unilateralists. This will require much time, energy and patience. Let the comrades apply themselves to a thoroughgoing study of the life of Job. A very long struggle lies ahead.

'Tribune's angry growl was echoed by a peevish yap from the 'Newsletter'. During the Whitehall sit-down, the Healyite Trotskyists spent their time safely selling their literature within the legally permitted area. Mr. Perry appropriately enough named his article: 'Let's sit this one out'. ***

His suggestions do not differ from those of 'Tribune'. He puts his faith in a 'Labour government - without Gaitskell and those who refuse to accept majority decisions'. Neither Mr. Perry nor 'Tribune' inform us how this is going to be achieved. Nor do

the Trotskyists state whether or not they will then campaign for this Labour government to have H-bombs - as they campaign for the Russians to have them. But one thought at a time is enough for them. Perhaps we are even being unkind to ask Mr. Perry to think at all!

Both 'Tribune' and the 'Newsletter' complain that the 'Committee of 100' are diverting people from politics. 'The Newsletter' considers it a diversion 'from the fight against Gaitskell'. 'Tribune' moans that people are being 'led out of, not into, political activity'.

Both are quite confused as to the meaning of real politics. There is nothing useful about a meeting where garrulous Trotskyists or muddled 'Tribune' supporters spend three quarters of the time imposing their pet solutions on six patient, but no doubt weary, listeners. Nor does the scheming and manoeuvring that takes place at the big conferences constitute real politics.

People concerned about the nuclear threat want to do something effective. They don't see any sense in 'fighting' Gaitskell inside the Labour Party... then canvassing votes for him at election time! They will not join a party which takes no notice of their ideas and suggestions and which frustrates their every attempt to change things.

This is the root cause of apathy. As long as the 'left' offers 'solutions' similar to those people have already rejected, apathy will remain.

* See Editorial, May 5, 1961.

** Ibid.

*** 'Newsletter', May 6, 1961.

The success of the 'Committee of 100' is attributable to the fact that it offers something different. It gives people the chance to do something themselves. It encourages them to find their own means of opposing war. It does not call on people to substitute Wilson for Gaitskell or some muddled Healyite leadership for Labour's bureaucratic National Executive.

The response of over 3000 people to the last demonstration and the preparedness of 865 of them to be arrested shows that people will respond. Let 'Tribune' and 'The Newsletter' call a 'Gaitskell must go' meeting. They would be lucky to get 300 there. People have had their fill of such meetings. They recognize how worthless, boring and ineffective they are.

We know that more than a polite 'sit-down' is needed. But no one has suggested that this is all that should be done. The 'Committee of 100' will now discuss what to do next, how to attract more people into action and how to make its fight more effective. We hope that the next sit-down will take place at a time like Budget Day. What better than to disrupt Parliament as 'Lefts' and 'Rights' get together to discuss how best to raise the money for nuclear arms?

Others are suggesting that non-cooperation should not cease immediately an arrest is made. They are asking: 'Why not carry it on during the arrest, at the charging, and even in Court itself?'

Obviously the movement needs industrial support. Only the most naive would believe that right now workers are prepared to take strike action against nuclear weapons. To date the unilateralist campaign has made very little progress with its ideas amongst rank and file workers. It must devote far more time to propaganda in this direction. The successes it has recorded with middle class people, students and political workers need to be repeated with the average worker.

The activities of the 'Committee of 100' are not designed to 'encourage the belief that the sit-down can win the objective of disarmament by pressurizing this or any other government'. * By its manner of opposing nuclear arms the Committee challenges the government's right to rule. Governments are not removed by resolutions but by people prepared to break the law to secure their objectives.

The only result that 'Tribune' and 'The Newsletter' will achieve by their negative arguments is to prevent a number of socialists from engaging in an active struggle against war.

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Newsletter, May 6, 1961.

THE STANDARD TRIUMPH STRIKE

One hundred and twenty six men at the recently organized Standard - Triumph Service Depot (Western Avenue, London) have been on strike since April 24.

Five unions are involved, the NUVB, AEU, TGWU, ETU and the Sheet Metal Workers. As the NUVB is the union with the most members involved in the dispute, its officials have negotiating rights.

The men are striking against the very wide differentials in wages and piecework prices existing - for the same work - between Coventry and London. This difference, which amounts to about 30 per cent, means that there is from £5 to £7 less in the pay packets of the London men.

As one of the leaflets issued by the Strike Committee says:

'The wages at the London Depot are paid from Coventry. The National Insurance cards are at Coventry. The Income Tax is dealt with at Coventry. According to the management only the piecework times and the bonus system are divorced from Coventry.'

The argument used by the Management is that the lower times given for jobs will make more work available at London, presumably at the expense of the Coventry men.

It is worth recalling that the management of Standard - Triumph is notorious for its record of speed-up and also for its offensive against the shop stewards organization in the Coventry factories.

Another leaflet, distributed in Coventry by the Strike Committee of the London Depot, puts it this way:

'If the management win this fight, Allesly (the Coventry factory) will be next. Already they have restricted the activity of your Allesly shop stewards. They stopped these stewards holding meetings and have tried to withhold pass-outs. This is only the start! Stop it now! Stop the cut-throat policies that put men out of work and speed up production at the expense of reduced bonus earnings.'

The official procedure has been exhausted in talks which have dragged on for over a year. The management have finally even refused to discuss with the full time officers, despite three attempts to obtain informal conferences.

At a mass meeting the men overwhelmingly passed a resolution stating that unless the London depot had the same conditions as the Coventry depot by noon on April 24, they would withdraw their labour. This decision was carried out.

The role of the trade union leaders has been disgusting. As far as most of them have been concerned their only interest has been to get the men back as quickly as possible... on any terms. A further leaflet issued by the Strike Committee makes this quite clear:

'At a meeting held under 741 in London on 25.5.61, the E.C.s of our combined unions recommended a return to work, the only concession favourable to us being the resumption of a meeting scheduled

for resumption in February 1960, which until now was claimed as being closed. All other points subject us to conditions worse than those in operation before the dispute came about. WE REGRET WE CANNOT ACCEPT THIS.

We do not need a union to worsen conditions for us, the employers do this well enough. Since the union officials agreed to the peaceful settlement of-dispute-policy with the employers, it seems apparent that all union members are wrong, no matter what their complaints!

This is a situation we will not tolerate.'

The details of what took place - both at this meeting on May 25 and subsequently - are outlined in a letter to SOLIDARITY, written by Brother G. Jacobs, secretary of the Strike Committee. We believe these facts deserve the fullest publicity and are therefore publishing Bro. Jacobs' letter at the end of this article. The facts speak for themselves!

The object of the Standard - Triumph strike is not only to secure more pay for the London men. It is also an attempt by rank-and-file workers to break down divisions between themselves and other workers, employed by the same company on similar work. Modern management repeatedly resorts to methods of this kind to keep the working class divided and to make workers think that the real enemy is the worker in the next shop, in the next factory, in the next town... or overseas.

Any struggle against such artificial divisions, any struggle which tends to unite workers, deserves the support of all militants.

SOLIDARITY aims at truthful reporting of all working class struggles. We are particularly interested however in those struggles in which basically so-

cialist issues are involved. Such are the struggles concerning control at workshop level, struggles concerning managerial rights, actions in support of workers in other places and other countries, and struggles against wage differentials.

June 6, 1961.

K. WELLER
T. HILLIER

Despite twelve months' attempted negotiation with the management, the members of the Standard Triumph Sales Ltd. were forced to withdraw their labour. The union officials have made three attempts to obtain informal Conference, but received rejection each time.

The E.C. of the NUVB met and referred this case to a meeting of 741. At this meeting, held on May 25, the assistant General Secretary of the NUVB was instructed to phone the National Federation of Employers. At this stage the meeting broke up. The officials recommended a return to work, not knowing the terms offered by the N.E.F. and not having debated those terms. The N.E.F. terms were only phoned to the London District Office of the NUVB later that day.

At a meeting of the London District Committee of the Union, held on June 1, the N.E.C. officer was asked if it was true that the terms were not given to the E.C.s present at 741 and also whether it was true that there was no debate on these terms. He agreed this was true.

Two of the clauses in the N.E.F. offer are not acceptable. One is that we return to work under a worsening of conditions, under conditions that were not in operation when the dispute came about. The other is for a resumption of a Works Conference that has nothing to do with this dispute. We also object to the fact that this was accepted without any knowledge of the terms of reference to the resumed Works Conference.

George Jacobs, Sec. of
Joint Unions Strike Ctte

POSTSCRIPT.

We understand that soon after the Standard Triumph strike started the Employers Federation wrote to the Executive Council of the AEU asking them to instruct 'their' men to return to work.

The Executive Council immediately transmitted these 'instructions' to the Divisional Organizer and to the District Secretary of the London (North) District Committee. The letter from the E.C. was discussed by the District Committee. In their reply to the E.C. the District Committee pointed out that the E.C. had instructed them to tell the men to go back without even waiting to receive the District Committee's own report of the dispute. At the same time, the District Committee did not, 'for tactical reasons', endorse the strike.

The Executive Council replied repeating its instructions that the men should return to work under minute 741 of the Confederation Executive.

With the horrible example of Swindon before it - where the entire District Committee was suspended for refusing to instruct the men on strike at British Light Steel Pressing (under contract to Standard Triumph) to go back to work - the London (North) District Committee caved in under protest. It recommended the men to return to work and 'go through the procedure'. The men, of course, refused.

* * *

PROBLEMS FACING NEW ARCHBISHOP



INTRODUCING :

'bollocks!'

Following the sensational revelations of the Daily Express (May 8 and 10, 1961) and of the Economic League (Bulletin No.88), SOLIDARITY's industrial reporter now presents to readers for the first time in Britain, the full, un-expurgated, blood-curdling truth about the Socialism Reaffirmed group.

Our reporter, disguised as Yul Brunner, wearing spectacles and speaking with a fluent pseudo-American accent, traced these agitators down to a prefab in the middle of Clapham Common. He told the butler his name was Gerry McHeal, and that he had recently been expelled from the Socialist Labour League for spitting at meetings and prolonged factional inactivity. He was given a warm welcome and escorted down to the cellar.

Some twenty sinister characters were sitting on crates, some disguised as men, others as women. In a far corner, an old pile of newspapers, under which lay hidden a foot-operated duplicator, a hand-operated typewriter and a barrel of invisible ink. I also caught a glimpse of the new secret weapon used by industrial disruptors: a big roll of toilet paper for producing pamphlets. There is no knowing where this subversion will end!

Ginger Wellington was sitting on the largest crate. He said he would read the minutes of the last meeting. He was immediately reminded that no minutes existed. One member explained he was deaf and could not hear the minutes. He was opposed to all forms of bureaucracy. Unless he could read the minutes, he would be deprived of his democratic right to challenge them. After much argument it was discovered that this man was also blind. Someone quoted Groucho Marx 'Let the blind lead the blind'. This was passed unanimously. As none of the assembled comrades had passed a good resolution for months, they all felt somewhat relieved. The deaf and blind member was immediately elected Supreme Deputy Chief National Committee Organizer. Provided he could find himself a crate, he was also instructed to sit as an alternate on the International Secretariat of the General Council of the Workers of the Underworld. It was finally decided that in future all minutes would be published in Braille.

A great deal of argument surrounded a suggestion to rename the paper. Brian Ericson reminded the meeting that the Workers News Bulletin had dismissed AGITATOR as a load of bollocks. Amid cheers it was agreed that henceforth the paper would be called 'BOLLOCKS'. This, after all, was a good old fashioned working class word, upon which the future of humanity was entirely dependent. New readers would receive two for the price of one - or one for the price of two. It was not quite clear which, but this was immaterial as long as the operative word was two.

(continued p. 27)

Dartford 1961

COUNCIL TENANTS FIGHT BACK

Stagnation

Dartford, a town of about 50,000 people, is in the centre of the North Kent industrial region (engineering, cement, drug manufacture, etc.). For years it has been famed as a political, cultural and social void. Adult workers' education, thriving in other nearby towns, has fizzled out at every attempt. Despite valiant efforts, there is now no live theatre. Between elections, the Dartford Labour Party might well not exist. The Trades Council reflects the town's image of apathy. Indeed, the few who have tried over the years to arouse some awareness in this 'Watt Tyler' district of the real issues confronting people, have been brought almost to despair.

But the situation appeared to change early this year.

Disturbance.

A letter sent by the Dartford Borough Council to the occupiers of each of its 3,600 houses on January 16 startled the tenants. The letter stated that rents were being increased on March 27. This alone was not particularly disturbing since tenants had had regular rent increases imposed upon them in recent years. But the extent of the increases was, this time, quite unprecedented. For example, there was an almost 55 per cent. increase in rents of pre-war built houses, houses which lack most of the amenities accepted as normal today.

The letter told tenants either to accept the new rents or to get out. Many were astonished by this, but it was

the Rent Rebate Scheme that really angered them. This was the grandiose title the Council gave to a means test. Those who claimed to be unable to afford the new rent had to apply to the Council, whereupon they were to be subjected to this degrading test.

Discussion Raged.

Angry discussion among the people of Dartford's council houses began immediately. Over the garden wall, in the street, in the shops, in the factories, indeed, wherever tenants met the discussion raged. If there was one thing which really hurt, it was that the Dartford Borough Council had a large Labour majority of 17 to 7. People who had been solid Labour supporters all their lives, began to question their 'image' of the party and the nature of their own voting habits.

Movement.

Just over two weeks after the Council's infamous letter, a public meeting of tenants was held in Dartford Central Park. It was here, on February 4, that the Dartford Council Tenants Association began with the creation of its first committee. By this time, tenants' activities had become front-page headline news in the local press.

Stronghold Threatened?

Dartford is a traditional Labour stronghold. It has a Labour MP. The officials of the Dartford Labour Party are uncommonly thick-minded. Yet even some of these, people whose best friends would hardly call them quick-witted, realized that something had to be done to counter the growing opposition to their Council. On February 24, they held a public meeting about rents at the Community Centre on the Temple Hill estate, the largest and newest of the Council's estates.

Labour Arrogance.

If the Labour Party's purpose was to pacify the tenants, this meeting failed dismally. Of the four speakers (all Labour councillors), only one made any serious attempt to defend the council's actions - and this he did in terms one has come to expect from the more 'progressive' Tories. The other three worthies on the platform (including the Mayor) constantly insulted the tenants, and showed an arrogance and contempt ('We paid for this meeting, so shut up') for ordinary working people which was hard to believe.

Tenants Despair.

Whether or not this was due to anger at such treatment, the case put by the Tenants Association was weak. Their own awareness of this almost caused complete despair. There was talk of ending the campaign.

Yet this meeting was extremely useful to the Association. They had assumed that the solution lay in explaining their point of view to the councillors. It was now clear to them that, not only had the councillors remained insolently unmoved, but that the Association's arguments lacked cohesion and were largely a collection of emotional remarks.

The Lesson Learnt.

Although neither side could draw much comfort from this meeting, the Association learnt the lesson quickly. They decided that a detailed analysis of the Council's rent scheme was essential. This could not be done by the tenants alone. Specialised help was sought - and given.

This analysis provided the tenants with information which proved the Council's rent scheme to be even worse than had appeared on the surface. It showed there was something radically wrong with the Council's management of their housing account. This completely rallied the tenants.

On March 12, an effective leaflet containing much of this information was produced by the Tenants Association and distributed on the estates. This leaflet also announced a mass meeting of tenants to be held in the Co-op Hall on March 24.

Strike Decided.

The meeting was a great success. It was the largest working class meeting Dartford could remember. The hall was cleared of chairs and was packed to the doors with people standing shoulder to shoulder. Arrangements for an overflow meeting had been made but were not carried out. Consequently, many people who could not get in had to return home.

The atmosphere of the meeting was excellent. Amidst tumultuous applause, it was decided to refuse to pay the rent increase until the Council postponed the whole Rent Scheme for three months to enable negotiations between the Council and the Association to proceed. It was then moved from the floor, to the accompaniment of even greater applause, that if, as a result of the refusal, any tenants were threatened with eviction, all tenants would refuse to pay all rent.

All-night café

BY NORMA MEACOCK

'Let us consider this waiter in the café'. *

' - Eleven hours a night. Two half hour breaks. That's ten hours. I'll pay you 3/- an hour. In a couple of months, if you're any good, I might raise it to... 3/3d.

Saturday night, six o'clock sharp. I drop my card in the slit of the clock, collect a uniform from the stores. A changing room? A plump, West Indian arm through the broken panel of a broken door adjusts a bra strap. Inside, across a heap of grimy overalls, the day and night shifts struggle to get in or out. Hands to push, elbows to poke, in a narrow, windowless space. 'Ooo no, don't leave yer bag 'ere, dearie'. An upraised spanish voice: 'After that, I tell heem, I work again on this floor, never!'. After what? Better get out and see.

My job: to clear tables, serve coffee, and, if asked, buy further cups at ninepence a time. No refills... in case you pocket the money. A 'Lilac Domino' selection seeps through the loudspeakers. About a hundred seats, I reckon and three of us on duty at the moment. I pick up a dishcloth. Every table full and a queue waiting. All are easily identifiable, at this time of the evening: young couples off to the cinema, the more highly decorated to a dance. 'Excuse me, miss. Yes, coffee please. Ah, thank you very much indeed'. Smiles all round. 'Excuse me, miss...'. I withdraw the plates. The café is a collection of private worlds. I, a convenience or an intrusion. I have my role.

Now, elderly gentlemen, in select quartets, depart - for a theatre, a club, an eighteenth-century coze? - folding their Financial Times neatly into the tray-racks. Clear, wipe, scrape the waste, serve the coffee. Clear, wipe, scrape... The café is emptying. The littered tables are now distinct. Customers come in as individuals - the wanderer, the boarder too late for his meal, the disappointed provincial who didn't find that place, the discreetly lonely, the merely hungry. As I pour coffee they talk a little: the weather, the food, the music. They usually leave sixpence.

At 9 o'clock I empty the waste in the back room. The open dustbins are wet with slime, and the flies hover. This is where the washers-up work. They carry heavy piles of crockery to the encrusted conveyor-belt which scalds the plates. I collect a supper from the cook's hot, small, unventilated room and take my half hour off. My workmates are temporaries. The students - mainly Spanish and Italian - newly arrived and speaking little English, finish at midnight.

The true casuals are the all-night workers. No stamps, no cards, no permanencies in any direction. They wash up through the night, taking a kip on the crates in the early hours when work slackens. By day they wash up elsewhere, or do a bit of sweeping. After three or four days some of them knock off altogether and blue the money at the Lyceum. A couple are homeless, and pass any 'idle' hours in the cartoon cinemas... or in the park, sleeping it off.

I push back the broken chair from the narrow ledge which is our only table and carry my plate out of yet another narrow, windowless room thunderous with water systems.

Through the loudspeakers, the 'Lilac Domino' is seeping. From ten to midnight the earlier crowd replaces itself, weary or animated, private and self-absorbed. But the last tube must be caught. Get a move on, girls. The tables are piled high again. Newspapers litter the floor. The evening staff - the students, clerks or librarians trying to make a little extra - leave with the home-going. At midnight, prices rise: coffee at a shilling, and a four bob poll-tax to keep out the destitute.

A couple of art students, portfolios on the table, stare at the walls. An old man reaches out for an abandoned paper. Six youths, padded gloves and crash helmets beside them, throw sugar lumps into the mustard pot, and, this filled, at each other. 'Ere dahlin!' - they want diversion for their money - 'Come 'ere. Fill them cups again, will yer. 'Ow much? A fuckin' bob? Whadda they charge fer water?'. Two Indians, having missed the last train to Sutton, sit over eight empty cups, calculating reasonable intervals. Brooding over the now dated papers is a Scotsman down from Glasgow, with a connection at six thirty. An old antique-dealer, Sotheby's sales list in the pocket of his worn coat patched with sacking, mumbles his steak and dreams of Tanagra. From one a.m. to three a desultory communal life feebly sprouts.

Kath, my workmate, a sprightly old Irish woman, is escaping the tedium by chatting to customers. She beckons me over. I take the coffee. The customer presses ninepence upon me. He is a lonely Australian, in London for a fortnight in need of a companion. In short, I decline. He insists, itemizes his wealth, his solitude, the short duration of his stay, his sheep-shearing innocence. I take my second half-hour break.

At three o'clock, resurrection! The old dealer peers through his fingers. Sleep is broken. Eight American servicemen unloading trays, raking up chairs, call for attention. They are charmed by London, the clubs, the pubs, the sights, the night, the food, by Irish Kath, and, before long, by the lavatory paper which they abduct to wreath across the chairs, or send in spinning arabesques to the opposite walls in a goodwill linkage. They are generous - half-a-crown a time for fresh black coffee. In the kitchen the washers sleep on empty crates. The machine is silent.

A prostitute, her face fresh and downy under the light, tugs at the jewelled collar of her poodle snared in the American linkage. She is joined by a colleague stepping delicately in high shoes. Three o'clock. Work finished for tonight. They mull over the evening: 'E was a right goon, that one'. Their piled hair glitters like spun glass. They can afford to tip. The old dealer limps away. The youths are shaking themselves out of their sprawling stupor.

The Americans consider the pros. Their party-buffoon hollers: 'Just don't say a word against the blonde lady. She's my wife.'

A wave from the youths - ' 'Ere dahlin'. No, come on. On the straight'. It's Kath's turn. She goes over. 'Give us six bob's worth, if that's all there is. And don't go wivaht yer tip'. One of them drags an empty bottle of Scotch out of his pocket and throws a silver coin on the table. Kath looks at it and puts it back. Some foreign thing. The American nightbirds rise with a clatter and haphazardly take their departure. The man from Glasgow picks at a crossword, wearily. The Indians doze.

A table jolts as a youth leaps to his feet. 'I want my 'alf sovereign. I want my 'alf sovereign'. He pokes at Kath's chest, drumming his rage. 'You fucking thief. I'll do this gaff right up'. The cafe watches from a distance. The youths try to soothe their mate. The night-manager is fetched from wherever night-managers go to at night. Kath tells the tale of the silver coin. 'An' I pushed it back t'him, sorr. I thought it was a thing of sentimental value, merely. I wouldn't take a halfpenny off him for the world, sorr'. Tears of exhaustion on a white, lined face: 'I've nobody to defend me... And my daughter's gone away'. Old and tired, all her sorrows well through this crack. 'Sorr, fetch a policeman'. The manager doesn't.

4.15 a.m. A sweeper nudges me. 'She'll be the next one for the sack'. Kath starts putting up the chairs. Four to a table, at fifty tables... Our hands clutch the legs. Through the bars we watch the youths gather and shrug themselves out. Not many more to come in now - a few managers of the smaller clubs, regular, solid, almost respectable, the nocturnal bourgeoisie. The Australian makes a final appeal. If he waits, how long... For ninepence you are anyone's property.

Still a trickle of people at the counter. The manager won't keep them out. He knows we are trapped here, that we have to hang around for the first tube at a quarter to six. In bed by seven. Six hours to sleep... that leaves three hours to live. 'He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. * The man from Glasgow shakes himself up. The Indians leave. The Australian waits. We place the urns, the wastebin, the dishcloths, on the trolley and slowly wheel it away. The sweepers close in.

We take off our overalls. We clock out. White faces, greasy shoes, we sit down to wait. In four minutes if a bomb should drop... In four minutes if our loved ones were dead... We walk to the tube. I suppose the sparrows were twittering.

* 'What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

'First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour...'. (K. Marx. Estranged Labour. in 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. P. 72. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1959).

THIS

MANAGERIAL MISINFORMATION LTD.

The Daily Express (May 8 and 10, 1961) and the Economic League Bulletin (June 1961) have recently unearthed sinister plots to disrupt Britain's economy, plots in which certain comrades associated with SOLIDARITY seem to figure prominently.

We hereby inform all concerned that we have not disrupted any good economies lately - or any bad ones either, for that matter. We admit, however, to having a typewriter!

We furthermore point out that nothing our comrades could do could disrupt things anything like as much as they are being disrupted, year in, year out, by management itself.

Management disrupts production because it imposes its 'organization' from outside production itself. It has no proper knowledge of the real problems that arise at shop level. No wonder it makes a constant balls-up of it all!

Why do outfits such as IRIS, the Economic League, and various cliques of 'industrial reporters' and union officials feed management this blood-curdling crap?

Well, charity begins at home! They have to justify their costly existence. So they keep their employers in a judiciously adjusted state of constant semi-hysteria. Then they 'tell them bedtime stories, like they never heard before.'

Never was such utter nonsense purchased at such great cost, and to so little avail!

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE... BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.

A curious decision was recently reached by the US Supreme Court.

An embezzler, accused of making away with \$738,000, was also charged with failing to enter his illegal gains on his Income Tax return.

The learned judges were divided. A majority ruled that in future embezzlers must pay tax on loot.

We always knew the law gave sanction to the organized robbery that is capitalist production. The latest verdict would appear to give legal sanction to 'illegal' embezzlement as well!

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BIG TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES ON THE WAY! WORKING CLASS NO LONGER NEEDED FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

'The Fourth International is the revolutionary Marxist leadership, based on the policy of the Transitional Programme, the founding document of the International. This international revolutionary party is the only force capable of conducting the world socialist revolution.'

Socialist Labour League Conference report.

Newsletter, May 27, 1961.

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SOCIETY

PLEASE COME TO ALL MEETINGS... BUT NOT TOO OFTEN!

Union bureaucrats often bemoan the fact that so few of their members attend branch meetings.

In fact, they prefer it this way. Tears shed on this score are crocodile tears.

We saw this quite clearly last year during the Seamen's strike. Union officials buzzed around like blue-arsed flies denouncing the men for wanting to hold branch meetings while on strike. Regular meetings were promised... for when the lads had returned to sea!

Poor Sir Tom! Who knows what thousands of angry seamen might have done - quite constitutionally, of course - to him and to his clique!

The bureaucratisation of the unions is the main cause of 'apathy' among workers. Apathy then reinforces the bureaucratic stranglehold.

Don't let's get caught in this vicious circle. The answer is not to 'infiltrate' or 'capture' the machine. It is to organize where it really matters, on the job.

* * *

SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE RESOLUTIONS!

'An office trainee by mistake slid letters to be filed down a chute leading to the furnace. This went on for eight months.

'The shattering thing, The Controller comments in its current issue, was not the loss of 3000 letters, it was that none were missed.'

Daily Telegraph, 10.3.61.

OBEY OUR RULES... BUT NOT TOO LITERALLY!

Both capitalist and bureaucratic societies constantly seek to exclude the genuine, active and creative participation of the overwhelming mass of the population from both economic and political life. Yet if they were to succeed, their own social system would immediately grind to a halt.

This is seen most clearly in the field of production. Management constantly attempts to control every act of the worker, the better to exploit him. To achieve this, it lays down a series of rules, regulations and decrees.

Yet the same management screams its head off when workers, in their attempt to fight back, decide to 'work to rule'.

Nothing exposes the absurdity of these rules more clearly than a genuine attempt to implement them!

* * *

GRAVE NEWS.

Tories say: 'Bring back the birch!' (for juvenile delinquents).

Labour 'lefts' say: 'Restore the whip!' (for 'rebel' MPs).

Russian bureaucrats say: 'Down with transitional slogans! Shoot the bloody lot! '*

* Resolution seconded by National Union of Gravediggers, Undertakers, and National Service Riflemen.

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* If you lack superior qualifications, there may still be room for you at GLEE, in our public relations department, writing critiques of Pauling. (see p. 29)

Kronstadt, BY VICTOR SERGE

The following text, hitherto unpublished in Britain, first appeared in the American socialist paper 'POLITICS', over 16 years ago. It describes the tragic Russian events of March, 1921.

The working class had taken power three and a half years earlier, in the greatest revolution of all time. But it had seen that power slowly slip from its hands, first in the factories, later in the Soviets. A new bureaucracy was emerging. Its core was the Bolshevik party, whose patronage was becoming essential for accession to all important posts, both in the economy and in the state.

With the final victories of the Civil War, working class discontent, which had been smouldering for months, broke out in the great Leningrad strikes of January and February 1921, and in the Kronstadt uprising.

Serge describes an event in working class history concerning which Stalinists, Trotskyists and sundry others have indulged in a systematic campaign of misrepresentation and distortion. He shows how certain ideas concerning 'the Party' worked out, in practice. The article also exposes the hypocritical pretensions of those who claim the struggle against the developing bureaucracy as some kind of private mantle.

Serge's testimony concerning Kronstadt is of great historical value. It is the testimony of a revolutionary who was in Leningrad during those fateful days, who actively participated in the events he describes, and who endorsed, at the time, the actions of the Russian leaders.

Some biographical notes on V. Serge will be found on p.29.

DURING the night of February 28-29, I was awakened by a phone call. 'The Whites have taken Kronstadt,' an anxious voice told me. 'We are fully mobilized'. It was Ilya Ionov, Zinoviev's brother-in-law. This was an appalling piece of news. If true, it meant that Petrograd itself would soon be lost.

'What Whites? Where did they come from? I can't believe it!'

'A general by the name of Kozlovski - '

'But what about our sailors? What about the Soviet? The Cheka? The workers at the Arsenal?'

'I've told you all I know.'

Zinoviev was in conference with the Revolutionary Council of the Army, so I rushed over to the headquarters of the Third District Committee.

Everybody was looking pretty grim. 'It's fantastic. But it's true.' 'Well,' I said, 'we must mobilize everyone able to walk. Immediately!' Someone replied, evasively: 'Yes, we must mobilize, but nothing could be done without instructions from the Petrograd Committee. Several comrades and I spent the rest of the night poring over a map of the Gulf of Finland. We got word that small-scale strikes were spreading through the suburbs. Whites in front of us, famine and strikes behind us! I left at dawn, and on my way out of the hotel I ran into one of the maids, quietly leaving the building with packages under her arm.

'Where to so early in the morning, grandmother? And with such a load?'

The old woman sighed:

'There's going to be trouble. You can feel it in the air. They will slit your throats, my poor boy, yours and the others' too. They'll steal everything that isn't nailed down, just as they did last time. So I'm packing off my belongings.'

At intervals along the deserted streets there were little wall posters announcing the treacherous seizure of Kronstadt by the counter-revolutionary general Kozlovski and his accomplices, and summoning the workers to arms. But even before I reached the District Committee headquarters I ran into several comrades who had already turned out, mauser in hand, and they told me that the Kozlovski business was a contemptible lie: the Kronstadt sailors had mutinied, and what we were up against was a naval rebellion led by the Kronstadt Soviet. If anything, that was still more serious; and the worst of it was the paralyzing effect of the official lie upon us. For the party to lie to us this way was something new. 'They had to do it because of the mood of the people,' some of my acquaintances explained. But they were frightened too. The strike had become almost general. Nobody even knew whether the street-cars would run.

Later that day I had a talk with my friends in the French-speaking Communist group (I remember that Marcel Body and Georges Hellfer were both present). We decided not to take up arms - to fight neither against the hungry strikers nor against the exasperated sailors. In Vassili-Ostrov, in a street white with snow, I saw a crowd gather, most of it women. I watched it push its way slowly forward to mingle with the military-school cadets sent there to open up the approaches to the factories. Patiently, sadly, the crowd told the soldiers how hungry the people were, called them brothers, asked them for help. The cadets pulled bread out of their knapsacks and divided it up. Meanwhile, the Mensheviks and the Left Social Revolutionaries were blamed for the strike.

Leaflets distributed in the suburbs put forward the demands of the Kronstadt Soviet. They added up to a program for renewing the revolution. In brief: new elections for the Soviets, with secret ballot; freedom of speech and freedom of press for all revolutionary groups and parties; liberty for the trade unions; liberation of all revolutionaries being held as political prisoners; no more official propaganda; no more requisitioning

in the rural districts; freedom of employment for artisans; immediate withdrawal of the street patrols which were preventing free purchase of food supplies by the general public. The Kronstadt Soviet, the Kronstadt garrison, and the sailors of the First and Second Squadrons had rebelled to get that program accepted.

THE PARTY REFLEX: LIES AND THREATS

Little by little, the truth broke through the smoke screen laid down by the press, whose mendacity now knew no bounds. And that was our press, the press of our revolution, the first socialist press in history, therefore the first incorruptible, unbiased press in history. Even in the past, to be sure, it had now and then laid itself open, to some extent, to the charge of demagogy (of a warm, sincere kind, however), and had used violent language about its opponents. But in doing so it had stayed within the rules of the game, and had, in any case, acted understandably. Now, however, lying was its settled policy. The Petrograd Pravda informed its readers that Kouzmin, Commissar for the navy and the army, had been man-handled during his imprisonment at Kronstadt, and had narrowly escaped summary execution - on written orders from the counter-revolutionaries. I knew Kouzmin, an energetic, hard-working soldier, a teacher of military science, gray from tip to toe; his uniform, even his wrinkled face were gray. He 'escaped' from Kronstadt and turned up at Smolny.

'It is hard to believe,' I said to him, 'that they intended to shoot you. Did you really see any such order?'

He looked embarrassed, and did not answer for a moment.

'Oh, one always exaggerates a bit. There was a threatening note.'

In short, he had let his tongue run away with him. That was the whole story. The Kronstadt rebels had spilled not a single drop of blood, had gone no further than to arrest a few Communist officials, all of whom had been well treated. (Most of the Communists, several hundred in all, had gone over to the rebels, which showed clearly enough how weak the party had become at its base). Nevertheless, someone had cooked up this story about hairbreadth escapes from the firing squad!

Rumors played an ugly part in the whole business. With the official press carrying nothing but eulogies of the regime's successes, with the Cheka operating in the shadows, every moment brought its new, deadly rumor. Hard upon the news about the Petrograd strikes, word reached Kronstadt that the strikers were being arrested en masse, and that the troops were occupying the factories. That was untrue, or at least greatly exaggerated, although the Cheka, running true to form, had undoubtedly gone about making stupid arrests. (Most of these arrests were for short periods). Hardly a day passed without my seeing Serge Zorin, the secretary of the Petrograd Committee. I knew, therefore, how many worries he had on his mind, and how determined he was not to adopt repressive measures against the workers. I also knew that, in his opinion, persuasion was the only weapon that would prove effective in a situation of this kind, and how,

to back up his opinion, he was bringing in wagon-loads of foodstuffs. He told me, laughingly, that once he had found himself in a district where the Left Social Revolutionaries had popularized the slogan: 'Long Live the Constituent Assembly!' - which clearly was another way of saying 'Down with Bolshevism!'. 'I announced', he went on, 'the arrival of several wagons full of food. In the twinkling of an eye it turned the situation upside down.'

In any case the Kronstadt uprising began as an act of solidarity with the Petrograd strikes, and as a result of rumors (about repressive measures) which were mostly without foundation.

Kalinin and Kouzmin, whose stupid blundering provoked the rebellion, were chiefly to blame. Kalinin, as chairman of the Republic's Executive, visited Kronstadt, and the garrison received ^{him} with music and shouts of welcome. But when the sailors stated their demands he called them traitors, accused them of thinking only of their own interests, and threatened merciless punishment. Kouzmin bellowed at them: the iron hand of the dictatorship of the proletariat would strike down all infractions of discipline, every act of treason! The two of them were booed and kicked out - and the damage was done. It was probably Kalinin who, back in Petrograd, invented 'the White general, Kozlovski'. From the very first, when it would have been easy to patch up the differences, the Bolshevik leaders chose to use the big stick. We were to learn later that the delegation sent from Kronstadt to explain the issues at stake to the Soviet and people of Petrograd had got no farther than a Cheka prison.

Some American Anarchists - Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and a young man named Perkus, the secretary of the Russian Workers Union in the United States - had arrived a short time before. A scheme for mediation took shape in the course of some talks I had with them on several successive evenings. When I told some of the party comrades about it, they countered:

'That won't do any good. We're bound by party discipline, and so are you'.

I protested: 'One can get out of a party'.

Cool, unsmiling, they replied: 'No Bolshevik deserts his party. And, anyway, where would you go? Ours is the only party - to put it mildly.'

The Anarchist mediation group used to meet at the home of my father-in-law, Alexander Roussakov. Since the Anarchists had the ear of the Kronstadt Soviet, it had been decided that only Anarchists would take part in the negotiations, and that the American Anarchists alone would assume responsibility vis-a-vis the Soviet government; so I was not present. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman had an interview with Zinoviev. They were received cordially, for they were still able to speak authoritatively in the name of a section of the international proletariat. Their mediation

scheme, nevertheless, was a complete failure. As a sop, Zinoviev offered them every facility for seeing Russia from a private railway car. 'Think it over and you will understand'. Most of the Russian members of the mediation group were arrested. I was not - an indulgence which I owed to the good opinion that Zinoviev, Zorin and a few others had of me, and to my position as a militant in the French workers' movement.

WHY I SUPPORTED THE BOLSHEVIKS

After much hesitation, my Communist friends and I finally sided with the party. It was a painful step to take, and this is why we did it: the Kronstadt sailors, we reasoned, were right. They had begun a new freedom-giving revolution which would lead to popular democracy. Certain Anarchists who had not outgrown the illusions of childhood gave it a name: the 'Third Revolution'. The country, by this time, was in bad shape. Production had come virtually to a stop. Reserves of all kinds had been used up, including even the reserves of nervous energy which sustain popular morale. The workers' elite, formed in the course of the struggles under the old regime, had literally been decimated. The party, its membership swollen by the influx of bandwagon riders, inspired little confidence. And there was nothing left of the other parties but tiny cadres, of doubtful ability. Some of them, to be sure, might in a few weeks' time have put on flesh, but only by admitting en masse the soured, the bitter, the exasperated - very different types from the 1917 enthusiasts of the young revolution. Soviet democracy had lost its vitality. It lacked leadership. It had no organizational basis. And it had no defenders, except among the hungry and desperate masses of the people.

The popular counter-revolution translated the demand for freely-elected Soviets into the slogan 'Soviets without Communists!'. If the Bolshevik dictatorship were to fall, we felt, the result would be chaos: peasant putsches, the massacre of the Communists, the return of the émigrés, and, finally, another dictatorship, of necessity anti-proletarian. The dispatches from Stockholm and Tallinn showed that the émigrés were thinking in precisely these terms. (These dispatches, by the way, strengthened the determination of the leaders to put down the Kronstadt rebellion quickly, and without regard to the cost). Our thinking about all this had, furthermore, a factual basis. We knew of fifty rallying-points for peasant insurrections in European Russia alone. We knew that Antonov, the exponent of Revolutionary Socialism of the Right, was active in the area south of Moscow, and that he was preaching both the destruction of the Soviet regime and the reinstatement of the Constituent Assembly. He had at his command, in and around Tambov, a skillfully organized army made up of several tens of thousands of peasants, and he had negotiated with the Whites. (Tukachevsky liquidated this Vendée towards the middle of 1921).

In these circumstances, the party should have beat a retreat by admitting that the existing economic set-up was indefensible. It should not however, have given up power. 'In spite of its faults, in spite of

its abuses, in spite of everything,' I wrote at the time, 'the Bolshevik party, because of its size, its insight, its stability, is the organized force to which we must pin out faith. The Revolution has at its disposal no other weapon, and it is no longer capable of genuine renewal from within'.

COMRADE AGAINST COMRADE

The Political Bureau finally made up its mind to enter into negotiations with Kronstadt, lay down an ultimatum, and, as a last resort, attack the fortress and the ice-bound battleships. As it turned out, no negotiations ever took place. But an ultimatum, couched in revolting language, appeared on the billboards over the signature of Lenin and Trotsky: 'Surrender or be shot like rabbits!'. Trotsky, limiting his activities to the Political Bureau, kept away from Petrograd.

Meanwhile the Cheka had declared war on the Menshevik Social-Democrats by publishing an outrageous official document accusing them of 'conspiring with the enemy, planning to sabotage the railways,' etc. The Bolshevik leaders themselves were embarrassed; they shrugged the charges aside: 'More of the Cheka's ravings!'. But they let the charges stand all the same and promised only that there would be no arrests and that everything would come out all right. Even so, the Menshevik leaders Dan and Abramovitch were arrested (in Petrograd); and the Cheka (led at this time, as I remember, by a red-headed worker named Semionov, a hard, ignorant little man) wanted to have them shot - on the grounds that they had organized the strike, which was now almost general (and at least 75 per cent spontaneous). I had just had a run-in with Semionov over two students the Cheka had arbitrarily seized. I got word to Lenin through Gorky (who was also at that moment intervening to save the Menshevik leaders). Once Lenin had been informed, we knew our friends were out of danger.

Early in March, Red Army troops advanced across the ice against the Kronstadt fortress and fleet. The rebel artillery opened fire on the assailants. Infantrymen wearing long white parkas advanced in waves, and in some places the ice cracked under them. Here and there a huge block of ice would break loose and, turning slowly over, would carry its human cargo with it into the black depths of the water. And then, comrade against comrade, the shameful slaughter began...

'WE'LL BE OUR OWN THERMIDOR'

Meanwhile, in Moscow, the Tenth Congress of the party, on Lenin's motion, had abolished the requisitioning system ('War Communism'), and put the NEP into effect. All the economic demands of Kronstadt had been met! The Congress had, at the same time, gone out of its way to heap abuse upon all the opposition groups. The Workers' Opposition, for instance, had been described as an 'anarcho-syndicalist deviation with which the party cannot

make terms', although it was not Anarchist in any sense, and had advocated nothing but trade union management of production (which, incidentally, would have been a big step in the direction of workers' democracy). Finally, the Congress had drafted its members, many of whom belonged to opposition groups, for the battle against Kronstadt. The extreme Left winger Dybenko, himself once a Kronstadt sailor, and the writer and soldier Bubnov, leader of the group in favor of 'democratic centralization', went to do battle on the ice - against insurgents with whom, deep in their hearts, they had no quarrel. Tukachevsky was now preparing the final assault.

On one of these black days, Lenin said to a friend of mine (I use his exact words): 'This is Thermidor. But we shall not let ourselves be guillotined. We'll be our own Thermidor'.

The Orianienbaum incident is never mentioned; but in my opinion it brought the Kronstadt rebels within reach of a victory which they did not want - and might easily have resulted in the fall of Petrograd. Serge Zorin, the huge blond Viking who was secretary of the Petrograd Committee, noticed something peculiar about the orders being given by one of the infantry commanders. For instance, certain arbitrarily chosen cadets were kept standing guard close to the artillery emplacements, and regroupings were being effected for which there was no evident reason. After a couple of days there was no longer any doubt that a conspiracy was afoot. As an act of solidarity with Kronstadt, an entire regiment was going to switch sides and call upon the army to rebel. Zorin immediately ordered into the regiment men who could be counted on, doubled the number of sentry posts and the complement of soldiers assigned to each, and arrested the regiment's commanding officer, a man who had spent many years as an officer in the Imperial Army. He was brutally frank: 'For years I had looked forward to that hour. I hate you, you murderers of Russia. Now I've lost, life means nothing to me'. Along with a considerable number of his accomplices, he was shot. His regiment, by the way, had been withdrawn from the front in Poland.

THE CHEKA TAKES OVER

The rebellion had to be liquidated before the thaw. The final assault was launched by Tukachevsky on March 17 and resulted in an audaciously-won victory. The Kronstadt sailors, fighting without competent officers (one of their number, to be sure, was an ex-officer named Kozlovski, but he played an unimportant role, and had no authority), made poor use of their artillery. Some escaped to Finland; some fought a savage defensive battle, from fort to fort and street to street, and died shouting: 'Long live the world revolution!'. Some even died with the cry: 'Long live the Communist International!'. Several hundred were taken into Petrograd and turned over to the Cheka, which months later - criminally, stupidly - was still shooting little groups of them. These prisoners belonged body and soul to the revolution; they had given expression to the sufferings and will of the Russian people; and there was the NEP to show

that they had been right! Furthermore, they had been taken prisoner in a civil war, and by a government which for a long while had been promising an amnesty to those of its adversaries who were willing to become its supporters. Dzerjinski presided over this endless massacre - or at least let it happen.

The Kronstadt leaders, men unknown up to the uprising, were drawn from the ranks. One of them, Petrichenko, escaped to Finland and may still be alive. Another, Perepelkin, turned up later among some friends I used to visit at the old prison in Shpalnernaya Street - through which so many revolutionaries, Lenin and Trotsky among others, had passed in days gone by. From the depths of his cell, before disappearing finally from sight, Perepelkin told us the whole story of Kronstadt.

That dismal March 18! The morning papers had big headlines in honor of the proletarian anniversary of the Paris Commune. And each time the cannon fired on Kronstadt, the window-panes rattled in their frames. In the offices at Smolny, everyone felt uneasy. Conversation was avoided, except between close friends and even they spoke sharply to one another. The vast Neva landscape had never before seemed to me so bleak and desolate. (By a remarkable coincidence, there was a Communist uprising in Berlin on that same March 18, one whose defeat marked a turning-point in the strategy of the International, from the offensive to the defensive).

THE GREAT IDEAS DIE

Kronstadt inaugurated a period of doubt and dismay inside the party. In Moscow, a Bolshevik named Peniuchkin, who had distinguished himself during the Civil War, pointedly resigned from the party to found a new political movement - to be called, if I remember correctly, the Soviet Party. He set up his party headquarters in a street lined with workers' homes, and for a while nothing was done about it. Then he was arrested. Several comrades came to me and asked me to intervene on behalf of his wife and child, who had been evicted from their home and were sleeping in a hall somewhere. I was unable to do anything for them. The worker Miasnikov, another Old Bolshevik - he had taken part in the revolt in the Upper Volga in 1905, and there was a close personal tie between him and Lenin - spoke out in favor of freedom of the press 'for everybody, from the Anarchists at one extreme to the Monarchists at the other'. After a sharp exchange of letters he broke with Lenin, and before long he was deported to Erivan, in Armenia. From there he went to Turkey. I was to run into him in Paris some twenty years later. The 'Workers' Opposition' seemed to be heading towards a definite break with the party.

As a matter of fact, we were already well on the way towards being overwhelmed by a nascent totalitarianism. The word 'totalitarianism' itself had not yet come into existence; but the thing it stands for was ruthlessly making itself our master without our knowing it. I belonged to

the ridiculously small minority which did know. But the majority, both of the party's leaders and of its militants, had come to regard 'War Communism' as a merely temporary economic adjustment analogous to the highly centralized productive arrangements which Germany, France and England had worked out during the war. These centralization schemes had been called 'War Capitalism'. So the majority believed that once peace was restored the state of siege would automatically dissolve, and that we would then get back to some kind of Soviet democracy - what kind it was no longer possible to say.

The great ideas of 1917, the ideas which had enabled the Bolshevik party to sweep along with it the peasant masses, the army, the working class and the Marxist intelligentsia, were certainly dead. Had not Lenin, in 1917, argued in favor of a Soviet press so free that any group able to muster 10,000 supporters would be allowed to publish its own newspaper, and at public expense? Had he not written that the transfer of power from one party to another within the Soviets could be accomplished peacefully, without sharp conflicts? Had he not held out, in his theory of the Soviet State, the promise of a form of political organization entirely different from the old bourgeois States, with 'no functionaries and no policemen, apart from the people themselves'? - a State in which the workers would exercise power directly through their elected Soviets, and would maintain order through their own militia system? What with the monopoly of power, the Cheka, and the Red Army, all that was left of this dream of a 'State-Commune' was a myth, of interest only to theologians. War, measures of internal defense against counter-revolution, and famine (leading to the creation of a bureaucratic machine to take care of rationing) had put an end to Soviet democracy. How and when would it be reborn? The party nourished itself precisely on the belief that the slightest relaxation of its grip on power would give the reaction the opportunity it was waiting for.

THE TOTALITARIAN POTENTIAL

In addition to these historical factors, there were important psychological factors. Marxism has meant different things in different periods. The child of bourgeois science and philosophy on the one hand and the revolutionary aspirations of the proletariat on the other, it makes its appearance at a time when capitalism is entering upon its decline. It puts itself forward as the natural heir of the society which gave birth to it. Just as capitalist-industrialist society tends to draw the entire world into its orbit, and to bring each and every aspect of life into conformity with its values, so the Marxism of the beginning of the twentieth century seeks to remake everything, transform everything - the system of property holding, the way production is organized, the map of the world (abolition of frontiers), even man's inner life (displacement of religion). Since its objective was a total transformation, it was, etymologically speaking, totalitarian. It included within itself both aspects of the society that was coming into being: the democratic and the authoritarian. The German Social-

Democratic party, largest of the Marxist parties through the period 1880-1920. adopted a bureaucratic form of organization modelled upon the State itself. It devoted itself to the conquest of power within the bourgeois State, and wound up thinking in terms of State Socialism.

Bolshevik thought takes it for granted that truth is its peculiar possession. To Lenin, to Bukharin, to Trotsky, to Preobrajensky, to many another thinker I could mention, the materialist dialectic of Marx and Engels was at one and the same time the law of human thought and the law of the natural development of societies. The party, quite simply, is the custodian of truth; any idea at variance with party doctrine is either pernicious error or backsliding. Here, then, is the intellectual source of the party's intolerance. Because of its unshakeable conviction of its exalted mission, it develops astonishing reserves of moral energy - and a theological turn of mind which easily becomes inquisitorial. Lenin's 'proletarian Jacobinism', with its disinterestedness, its discipline in both thought and action, was grafted upon the psychology of cadres whose character had been formed under the old regime - that is to say, in the course of the struggle against despotism. It seems to be unquestionable that Lenin chose as his co-workers men whose temperament was authoritarian. The final triumph of the revolution eased the inferiority complex of the masses - the always bullied and always downtrodden masses. At the same time, however, it awakened in them a desire for retaliation; and this desire tended to make the new institutions despotic also. I have seen with my own eyes how a man who only yesterday was a worker or sailor gets drunk on the exercise of power - how he delights in reminding others that from now on he's giving the orders.

'THE DANGER WAS WITHIN'

These same considerations explain some of the contradictions with which the leaders themselves (despite the verbal and sometimes demagogic solutions which the dialectic enables them to put forward) have wrestled in vain. On a hundred different occasions Lenin paid democracy high praise, and insisted that the dictatorship of the proletariat is both 'a dictatorship against the expropriated expropriators' and 'the broadest workers democracy'. He believed it, wanted it to be true. He went into the factories to give an account of his stewardship. He wanted to face all-out criticism from the workers... But he wrote in 1918 that the dictatorship of the proletariat was by no means incompatible with personal power, and by doing so justified in advance some kind of Bonapartism. When his old friend and co-worker Bogdanov came forward with embarrassing objections, Lenin had him locked up. He outlawed the Mensheviks on the grounds that they were 'petit-bourgeois' socialists who made themselves nuisances by always being wrong. He welcomed the Anarchist spokesman Makhno, and tried to convince him of the validity of Marxist doctrine; nevertheless, Anarchism was outlawed too - if not on Lenin's initiative, at least with his consent. He ordered a hands-off policy towards the churches, and promised believers a truce; but he kept on saying that 'religion is the opium of the people'. We were advancing towards a classless society, a society of free men; but the party never missed an opportunity to remind people that 'the reign of the workers will never end'. Over whom were the workers to reign then? And that word 'reign' - what does it mean anyhow? Totalitarianism - and within ourselves!

The only verbal opposition came from two members of the Dartford branch of the Communist Party. All in the hall, bar four, voted for these two resolutions.

4,000 copies of a leaflet reporting the meeting's decisions were immediately produced and distributed to all tenants. The rent strike was on.

Contest Election.

The movement against the Council's rent scheme now gathered momentum. The main Committee and sub-committees were meeting every few days. During these meetings the idea that the Association should contest the forthcoming local elections gradually took hold - and this despite warnings from some members about what this might involve.

Dartford is divided into six election wards. Two of these contain nearly all the council houses (Priory and Highfield). Six weeks before election day, the main Committee decided to put up a candidate in each of these two wards. Both tenants elected as candidates were Labour Party men. Each was a shop steward, one in engineering and the other in a cement works.

Many difficulties resulted from this decision. For example, all the parties (Labour, Liberal, Tory) had some sort of election machinery and, what is more important, canvass records. The Association on the other hand was comprised of people who had never worked together before, had no election experience and certainly no records. In each ward, there were a large number of private houses, from which no support could be expected.

The largest and most difficult ward (Priory) was practically unorganized. The other (Highfield) was well organized, but this was offset to some extent by known inter-Association disagreements, which probably reduced the vote.

The election took place on May 11. The results were as follows (results in brackets are those for 1958):

Highfield

Tory:	605 votes	(499)
Tenants:	542 "	(-)
Labour:	523 "	(808)
Liberal:	198 "	(260)
Communist:	16 "	(-)

Priory

Labour (Mayor of Dartford):	1240 votes	(returned unopposed in 1958)
Tenants:	732 votes	--
Tory:	669 "	--
Liberal:	379 "	--

So What?

At this stage no detailed conclusion can be drawn about this movement. The above is a very bald account of what took place. We are preparing a pamphlet which will describe the events of this period in detail, including the rent strike and the attitudes of the Press and of the traditional organizations. A survey is at present being conducted to discover, among other things, how the habitually inactive council tenant reacted to the rent increases, to the means test, and the subsequent campaign.

To our knowledge, this is the first significant working class dispute which has been waged with some effect by a scratch organization, in no way under the control of an outside political body. Throughout the whole campaign, full management of all activities rested with the tenants themselves. There are now in Dartford hundreds of people who formerly supported the Labour Party and now understand what a useless organization it is.

Perhaps the most important result so far is that a number of the more active members of the Association have grasped the political implications of

their protest. If these people now extend their struggle to the wider and more fundamental issues, then the Dartford rent strike will represent a first step by a section of the British working class away from the political lethargy of the past decade.

A. ANDERSON.

B. WEEKES.

ABOUT OURSELVES

After six issues, we can now make a sober examination of our progress. Original sales have been maintained - the severest hurdle for any new paper. There has in fact been a modest increase in circulation.

While this assures us of continued publication - and the twopenny increase in price puts us in the 'black' instead of the 'red' - it can only maintain us in a duplicated form. Our hopes to produce a printed paper must remain hopes for the time being. We are firmly resolved not to achieve a printed paper, if it is to be based on 80 per cent donations and 20 per cent sales. Such a venture, when it comes, will be justified by a genuine increase in circulation.

Here we can only rely on our readers' cooperation and enthusiasm. Do you consider the paper is worthwhile and serving a useful purpose? If so, you can assist by taking more copies. We naturally welcome donations, but more important still is the obtaining of new readers.

Certain plans are in hand for improving the paper's coverage of international news. Not, we assure you, more 'expert' opinion on Summits, but more reports of struggles in other countries.

At Whitsuntide a group of our supporters met co-thinkers from France, Belgium and Italy. We agreed upon the regular publication of a bulletin reporting the various groups' activities. The more interesting of these reports will be published in 'SOLIDARITY'.

Arrangements are also being made to obtain reports of their recent great struggles from Negro workers in the USA. Our next issue will include a review of the book 'Indignant Heart', the story of a Negro car worker and of his experiences in both American industry and radical politics.

Our last issue aroused considerable comment because of the article on the Paris Commune. Much was favourable, the rest quite critical. The critics generally complained that the article was too theoretical and that it should not have appeared in a 'popular' paper. Although we are anxious

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'BOLLOCKS' (cont'd from p.6)

Ginger Wellington then announced that Bob Martin would give a talk on Sectarian Infiltration. Bob said that all previous groups had failed because they had tried to infiltrate into larger parties and capture the leadership. The job of Socialism Reaffirmed was to infiltrate into really small parties and seek to create even smaller ones. They had to admit to one failure already. Discussions with the London Anarchist Group had disclosed some measure of agreement. This sort of thing must had to stop. The job of Socialism Reaffirmed was to find the basis for the maximum disagreement on all possible issues.

'Socialism Reaffirmed' had been attacked by people with many years' experience of the wilderness because it did not clamour for a Party at the end of each paragraph. We had created situations in which facts did not comply with their theories! This was sheer disruption. Even Mr. Pearce would be hard put to find historical precedents. We did believe in parties, anyway... but preferably at week ends and only if everybody brought their own beer!

Ginger Wellington then read a letter from the Small Party of Good Boys. This started: 'There are two classes in society, the Master Class and the Working Class'. Paul Fitzgerald claimed that there were also evening classes... but only on certain days of the week. A heated argument followed. As Socialism meant that man was to be master of his own destiny it followed that the working class was also, really, the master class. No one denied the existence of evening classes. There were therefore three classes in society - not two - and the SPGB analysis was reformist to the core.

Norman Peacock, who had been reading Sartre, declared we were approaching the essence of scientific analysis. The Christians had a Trinity. Socialism Reaffirmed must have one too. We need not be too dogmatic on the question of the spirit as that could mean anything from vodka to the Holy Ghost. Two little daughters of St. Lenin who had been sitting at the back, picking their noses, agreed noisily. They claimed it was all strictly in accordance with the 'History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (B)'. They did not specify which of the many and varied editions of this famous work they were referring to.

Nick Weller then arrived, ninety seven minutes late. His pockets were full of ball-bearings and fragments of broken glass. He had obviously been disrupting the North London economy in a highly successful manner. 'The Common Market' he said 'offers us increased possibilities. We must extend our international work immediately. There are prospects of bigger and better economies to disrupt!'.

Sylvia Bowes then reminded the group that Billy Graman was now speaking in Manchester. As Billy Graman also believed in the Trinity, she was certain he would welcome Socialism Reaffirmed. Always a great traveller at other people's expense, Bob suggested he should go to Manchester immediately and declare himself for God at a mass meeting. The significance of the new Trinity would appeal to Dr. Graman who would welcome the opportunity to assist in the sale of 'BOLLOCKS'. After all he had been doing this sort of thing for years! The only snag Bob could see was that while three was essential for a trinity, two was regarded as satisfactory for 'Bollocks'. Perhaps they could unite with Billy under the slogan 'Every worker needs another Bollock';* this should be sung to a lively hymn tune, and could be plugged on Radio Luxemburg.

* After all, until recently, many people accepted 'Three Brass Balls' as the real salvation of the working class!

Finally there was a short discussion on the role of Socialism Reaffirmed in the next sit-down. It was felt that the proceedings should be livened up with a little bomb throwing, possibly in conjunction with the Anarchists. This would, of course, be strictly non-violent and would only be carried out after the fullest consultation between the marshalls and the police. Everybody knew the workers' bomb was the only true instrument for peace, and that peace must be fought for, tooth and nail. Andy Hiller, who had forgotten both his dentures and his hammer, urged that in the interests of real infiltration, it would be necessary to assume disguises on the sit-down. The Anarchists could provide cloaks, but we would have to provide our own daggers. The meeting terminated with an agreement that there would be weekly practices in bomb throwing. The first bomb would be thrown outside TUC headquarters. A postcard would also be sent to all 'progressive' MP's.

ABOUT OURSELVES (continued from p. 26)

to keep 'SOLIDARITY' readable and pruned of jargon, we consider occasional articles of this type quite necessary. We do not accept that they should go into special theoretical magazines, to be read by the 'initiated' or by 'specialists' alone. We oppose the idea that revolutionary theory is for a 'clever elite' and that ordinary people should only be fed on simple little messages.

Our paper will try to combine articles of every description within each issue. There will be no room for 'politics' that are too 'complicated' for working men and women and are only understandable to 'specialists'. We believe the article on the Commune had something useful to say, and that this entitled it to appear in the paper.

We are extremely pleased at the sales of Ken Weller's pamphlet: 'What Next for Engineers?'. We recently sold 160 copies at three London AEU shop stewards' meetings. This completes the first edition :600, all sold. Another edition has now been printed. We are awaiting with some concern and interest the reactions of engineers to this pamphlet. In particular we are anxious to get written comments from workers on what they think of it.

Another pamphlet of ours scheduled for immediate publication is a slightly amended version of Paul Cardan's article 'Capitalism and Socialism'. This article originally appeared in 'International Socialism (Spring issue, 1961) and will be published jointly with the analysis of contemporary society adopted at the Whitsuntide Conference. The latter document also includes a statement of aims.

VICTOR SERGE (see p. 15).

Victor Serge was born in Brussels, in 1890, the son of a revolutionary Russian émigré. His youth was spent in active socialist agitation first in Belgium and later in France. Together with other Russian revolutionaries, he was arrested in France during the last years of World War I. He was detained as a hostage for the safety of certain officers of the French Military Mission, arrested in Russia. He chose to return to Russia early in 1919, during an exchange of prisoners.

Serge played an active role as organizer, educator and propagandist during the terrible siege of Leningrad a few months later. He was one of the editors of Severnaya Koumouna (The Northern Commune), the organ of the Leningrad Soviet. He was a founding member of the Communist International and in charge of both their publication department and of their Latin languages section. He was later entrusted with the Okhrana archives (i.e. the archives of the ex-Tsarist Ministry of the Interior).

Serge later sided with the Opposition. He was first arrested in 1928 and again in 1933, when he was sent to a concentration camp in the Urals. Three years later he was to owe his final release - and his life - to a vigorous campaign waged among left-wing writers and intellectuals in France, and to the personal appeal to Stalin of the famous French writer Romain Rolland.

Serge died a few years ago in Mexico. His most important works are his 'Life and Death of Trotsky', 'The Memoirs of a Revolutionary' and his novel 'The Case of Comrade Tulayev'.

* * *

The ADVERT on page 14 was sent to us by friends in the U.S.A.

It was first produced by the 'Student Peace Union',

(5504 South Woodlawn, CHICAGO, 37, Illinois).



'MY KNEES DO NOT TREMBLE AT THE WORD REVOLUTION'.

President Kennedy - May 1961.

P.S. 'I was just born like this...'