

P 20
P 23

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BENSEN AFFAIR

Bert Bensen, an American supporter of CND and the Committee of 100, has been on the run in Britain since June 19, 1964. He is resisting an attempt by Henry Brooke, the Home Secretary, to deport him. According to the Home Office Mr. Bensen's continued presence in Britain 'would not be in the public interest'.

The principles involved are important. Does the Home Office now feel strong enough to deport people on the basis of rumours which it is not prepared to make public? Have we reached the stage where the backroom bureaucrats can totally disrupt a man's life without even attempting to justify themselves and without redress being available to the individual concerned?

This is no abstract matter. Bert Bensen is known to a large number of people in the anti-bomb movement. He is now faced with a united front of Government-backed malevolence and 'Opposition' impotence. To this should not be added the ignorance or indifference of potential supporters.

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The facts are fairly straightforward. Bert Bensen left the US in February 1959 and went to Italy to collect material for a PhD thesis. He came to England in August 1961. His legal stay in this country was initially provided through a three-month tourist visa, two extensions each of four months and a twelve-month extension in October 1962, expiring in October 1963. He then told the authorities he wished to stay in England 'more or less permanently'. He applied for another twelve-month visa, but only received one valid for four months. When this visa finally expired, in February 1964, he applied for a further extension. This was refused point-blank. He was given no reason for the decision but was told that he must leave the country by April 30, 1964.

Bert Bensen became a supporter of CND and of the Committee of 100 in the spring of 1962. He did not participate in any acts of civil disobedience. In the summer of 1962 he became involved in a political struggle in Marylebone CND, then largely under Stalinist control. Bert Bensen described his experiences in the bureaucratic jungle of Marylebone CND in a special article for Solidarity (Vol.II No.8).

At the second Marham demonstration he was arrested because he had sat down outside the Court in protest at the way demonstrators were being treated. He there secured his only conviction, which was for obstruction.

Late in April this year Mr. Ivan Geffen, a solicitor, took up Bert's case with the Home Office. He failed to obtain a sensible answer from them. All he got was parrot noises. ('It would not be in the public interest for Mr. Bensen to remain in this country,' etc. etc.) When Peace News, in turn, asked the Home Office why Bensen had to leave the reply was just as uninform-

formative: 'The Home Secretary has considered the representations made. He has decided that Mr. Bensen must leave the country'. *

Mrs. Judith Hart, Labour MP for Lanark, then entered the scene. According to Peace News (June 5, 1964) she would raise the matter in Parliament. She would seek a House of Commons debate. She would ask what the attitude of the Home Office was towards people from abroad who took part in British politics. She would ask what the Home Secretary considered to be in the public interest, etc. etc.

But the mountain gave birth to a mouse. Mrs. Hart only obtained an interview with Miss Mervyn Pike, under-secretary at the Home Office. On May 30 she even received a real letter (in writing) from Mr. Brooke, stating his decision was final and that he would only look at the case again 'if fresh evidence was forthcoming'. As no evidence (fresh, stale or otherwise) had ever been offered by Mr. Brooke, this presented Mrs. Hart with quite a problem!

The wheels of the State machine then slowly began to turn. On Friday June 5 the deportation order was issued. On Sunday June 7 three detectives called at Bert Bensen's home 'to enquire about his plans'. Bert spoke to them ... through an open door barred by a chain. He was told that a 'high Home Office official was willing to give up his Sunday afternoon' to discuss the matter. The callers were informed that Mr. Bensen was flattered, but could only discuss such matters in the presence of his solicitor ... who happened to be in the Midlands. Two days later Bert received a note from the Home Office: unless he or his solicitor had made adequate arrangements to leave, the deportation order would be put into effect at midnight on June 18.

Mrs. Hart got very upset at all these unseemly comings and goings on an English Sunday. She phoned the Home Office and was reassured that there was no intention of apprehending Mr. Bensen then and there or of bundling him off 'like a criminal'. The deportation was going to be handled 'in a civilised manner'. ** She breathed a sigh of relief. On Tuesday May 9, the Guardian reported her as saying that her 'intervention' may have saved Bensen 'from a hasty' (sic) 'ejection from Britain'.

The National Council for Civil Liberties then asked whether the usual right of deportees to appeal to a magistrate would be available to Bert Bensen. On June 17 the Guardian reported that the NCCL had been informed by the Home Office that Mr. Bensen had no such right. For the first time the word 'security' raised its ugly head: the only ground for refusing an appeal to a magistrate is on 'security' grounds.

By June 18, the 'democratic' process had been exhausted. The deportation order was liable to be executed within hours. Bert Bensen decided to take a powder. Prior to vanishing he sent a letter to Harold Wilson and a statement to the Press.

* Peace News, June 5, 1964.

** In a letter to the Daily Telegraph published on June 11, Bert Bensen commented forcefully on 'civilised' deportation.

In his statement he said: "I intend to resist the attempt to deport me by all the means at my disposal ... As my presence was not required when the decision to deport me was taken I don't see why it should be forthcoming now that the authorities seek to put their plan into effect ... I will not be 'at home' for some time ...

"I propose eventually to reappear at a time of my own choosing to challenge this most unfair deportation order. This will be in the autumn, shortly after the return of a Labour government. I hope that Labour's conception of what is or is not in the public interest differs fundamentally from that of Tory Home Secretary Henry Brooke."

In his letter to Mr. Wilson, Bert outlined the facts of his case. He hoped that Mr. Wilson would denounce the arbitrary actions of Tory Home Secretary Henry Brooke. He also hoped that under a Labour government he (Bensen) 'would again be welcome in Britain'.

Mrs. Judith Hart (a Labour 'left') reacted by calling Mr. Bensen 'a fugitive from justice' (sic!) who had 'spoiled things for himself'.* Harold Wilson said that it was now 'a matter for the police'.** Only Committee of 100 secretary Douglas Kepper showed any solidarity with Bert: 'I am pleased Bensen has decided to take this action. The Committee will support him all the way.' ***

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There is an interesting sidelight to the story. On June 1, 1964 the Stalinist-dominated Marylebone CND made its own distinctive and slimy contribution to the defence of civil liberties. They issued the following statement to the Marylebone Mercury, the Marylebone Record, and the Hampstead and Highgate Express:

"The committee of the St. Marylebone Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament gives support to any person victimised because of a constructive interest in the issues of peace, or pacifism. We have, unfortunately no evidence that the American visitor Mr. Bert Bensen's interests in these issues are constructive.

"Mr. Bensen's published statements include a letter to Peace News (24 August 1962), and a contribution to the anarchist magazine Solidarity (Vol.II No.8) carrying untrue and unfounded attacks upon individuals, this group, and CND in general. Most damaging attacks, if they had been taken seriously. They help to give some idea of the general tenor of Mr. Bensen's activities in this area.

* Evening Standard, June 18, 1964.

** The Times, June 20, 1964.

*** Daily Mirror, June 19, 1964.

"On the evidence of these activities this group concluded that Mr. Bensen was, at that time anyhow, neither a supporter nor a pacifist.

"Mr. Brooke's reasons for refusing to renew Mr. Bensen's visitor's permit need not be revealed. They could be unjust. However, this group's experiences of disruptive activities over more than a year suggests that Mr. Bensen's appeal for sympathy on the ground of his long term support of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is hardly candid."

This was Stalinism in action. The united front against Bert Bensen was now complete!

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Another interesting offshoot of the Bensen affair was to smoke out a certain Parliamentary candidate who, in the summer of 1962, had been busy spreading rumours in Marylebone CND to the effect that Bert Bensen was a CIA agent. When the Marylebone CND was planning its AGM, this person proposed that at the said meeting voting rights should be restricted 'to British and Commonwealth citizens who had been living in Marylebone for at least 2 years'. (This was not - as might be suspected - because Labour believes in Empire. It was because Mr. X did not believe in Bert Bensen)

When a Guardian reporter recently approached the said candidate, asking him to produce his 'proofs' that Bensen was a CIA agent, the candidate cited the Official Secrets Act and the case of the "silent reporters" at the Vassall tribunal as reasons why he should not discuss the matter. Asked whether the story should not then be publicly discounted he said: "That is something that often happens to the truth. You have to discount it and make up something else. So far as I am concerned you have not spoken to me".*

The Guardian did not name this smear merchant. We shall. It was Mr. Peter Merriton, prospective Labour candidate for Orpington.

* * * * *

Several weeks have passed and Bert Bensen has not been found. While on the run he has given an interesting interview to a Guardian reporter.*

In December 1961 Pat Pottle 'disappeared' for some two months,** re-appearing at a time of his own choosing. His success in evading the authorities and his subsequent self-conducted defence at the notorious Wethersfield 'Trial' changed the temper of the whole movement. The maximum possible capital was made out of the events.

Last November Terry Chandler also 'disappeared' for a period of ten days and was re-arrested by appointment. His absence forced the prosecution

* The Guardian, July 6, 1964.

** See Solidarity, Vol.I No.10.

to drop the conspiracy charge against him. * His subsequent challenging of jurors made legal history. Even The Times had to title its report of the Appeal proceedings: 'Crown rights not available to subjects' (Feb. 5, 1964).

Bert Bensen's disappearance could prove equally important. If he succeeds in carrying out his plan he will present the Labour Party with its first big 'civil liberties' headache. The Labour administration will have to get off the fence. Are their conceptions of what is in 'the public interest' different from those of the Tories? We doubt it, but will be delighted if proved wrong!

We call on everyone who values civil liberties to keep the Bensen affair alive. Stir it up! Discuss it with your friends, at work, at your YS branch or at your trade union meeting. Ask Labour candidates, during the election, where they stand on the Bensen affair. Write letters about it to your local paper. Ask Harold Wilson whether Labour's Home Secretary will continue the glorious Brooke tradition (Enahoro, Soblen, Carmen Bryan, Lenny Bruce). A Labour Government will want to deport Bert just as much as the Tories do. They will want to back up the Home Office bureaucrats as firmly as Brooke does. But they won't want to be embarrassed in their first few weeks of power. The greater the stink created about the matter the better Bert's chances are.

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Getting used to being 'in hiding' takes some doing but I'm learning. One day it may even be possible to carry on a 'normal' life doing something useful.

An important adjustment when Big Brother is out to do you, is not to call attention to yourself unnecessarily.

A MORAL TALE

The other day in a supermarket check-out line I forgot this when the woman behind kept bumping me back of the knees with her basket. I couldn't get out of the way and the line was long. So I turned and said: 'Lady, will you please stop bumping me with your basket. I can't move any faster than the people ahead.'

* See Solidarity, Vol.III No.2 p.2.

There was dead silence for a while. The the woman began to mutter: 'If you went shopping more often, you'd learn to be more civilised about it.' Etc, etc, etc.

Getting desparate, I said: 'Allright lady, I'm sorry I complained. Just go on bumping with your basket, but please, won't you shut up while you are doing it.'

But now that I had complained she had no intention of negotiating on any point. She muttered and bumped all the way to the counter. Once through, I escaped from justice. Protesting against oppression, if you can do no more than complain to the oppressor, won't help.

Moral: People who bump you with supermarket baskets don't give up easily.

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It doesn't look as though the MPs want to press Brooke for an explanation or to review his powers. When the case is a domestic one, fighting for civil liberties in practice mucks up the English image. It is enough to applaud civil liberties with 'adjournment debates' on 'points of principle'.

But I'm not a civilised Englishman and I'm sceptical about the English tradition of fair play and good manners. I think I'm being had, so I'm going to spill the beans.

A Special Branch man joined the Marylebone Labour Party and the Marylebone CND. Having taken political courses at LSE (under an assumed name) he was 'with it' enough to dismiss the CIA-spy-cum-violent-psychopathic-rapist stories he heard in Marylebone as crude (though internally useful) fabrications. But when he heard the really subtle rumour that I am an American Liberal turned Revolutionary Social Democrat, he knew he was on to something important.

'Cor', he thought. 'This bloke's a real twister. That's a contradiction in terms. If I nail him, it will go down well.'

He knew Brooke would never grasp the subversion lurking in a contradiction in terms. So before sending up his report he changed 'American Liberal' to 'American Libertine'. How well he knew the top chap.

Brooke gasped, 'It's Lenny Bruce and Soblen all in one. This man's a fornicating revolutionary!!!'

And that is the only reason I can think of why I did not get a renewal of my alien's permit.

BERT BENSON

(Somewhere in England
- August 1964)

CARDANALYSIS.

Paul Cardan is one of the editors of the French theoretical magazine Socialisme ou Barbarie. Solidarity readers may be familiar with his thinking through his articles "The Meaning of Socialism" (published as Solidarity Pamphlet No.6) and "Revolutionary Politics Today" (published in Solidarity Vol.II No.4)

The text below is a chapter from Cardan's book on contemporary capitalism which we hope to publish early in the new year. In its complete form the book depicts much more than the vision of a totally bureaucratic society provided in this chapter. It attempts a serious critique of many 'traditional' Marxist conceptions and at the same time seeks to discover the permanent weak points of a society in constant evolution, which, since World War II, has been compelled at least partially to solve some of the problems of pre-war capitalism.

A bureaucratic society is one which has succeeded in transforming the immense majority of the population into wage and salary earners. Only marginal layers of the population remain outside of the wage relationship and of the hierarchy that goes with it (5 percent of farmers, 1 percent of artists, intellectuals, prostitutes, etc.).

In a totally bureaucratized society the population is integrated into vast impersonal productive units (which may be owned by an individual, by a corporation or by the state). The people occupy a pyramidal hierarchical structure. Only slightly does this hierarchy reflect differences in knowledge, ability, etc.¹ It is based for the most part on the creation of arbitrary technical and economic differentiations, which are necessary from the exploiters' point of view.

¹ Differences in knowledge are themselves the product of education and of differences in income - and therefore tend to reproduce themselves from generation to generation.

Work has lost all real meaning, even for the majority of skilled personnel. It only retains a meaning as a source of income. The division of labour is pushed to absurdity. The division of tasks only allows fragmentary tasks to subsist, themselves devoid of meaning.

For all practical purposes full employment has been permanently achieved. Provided they conform, wage earners, whether manual or intellectual, can face the prospect of endless employment. Except for minor fluctuations, production expands by a non-negligible percentage from year to year.

Wages also increase from year to year, by a percentage which does not differ significantly from that of production. The wage increases, plus the investments needed to bring about the regular expansion of production, plus the regular increase in state expenditure, together absorb the increases in production. The market problem has been essentially solved.

'Needs' (in the commercial or advertising sense) increase regularly with purchasing power. Society creates enough 'needs' to sustain the demand for the goods it produces. The 'needs' are either created directly, by advertising or consumer manipulation, or indirectly through the action of social differentiation or hierarchy (more expensive models of consumption being constantly proposed to the lower income categories).

The hierarchy of jobs in the factories has attained a sufficient degree to destroy the solidarity of the exploited. The system is open and flexible enough to create significant opportunities for promotion (say, a 1 in 10 chance for example) for the upper half of the working class.

Consequently, relations among workers in the factories are no longer modelled on the workshops of today, but on the offices of yesterday (sordid competition, intrigues, boot-licking, etc.). The factory ceases to be a place of positive socialisation, a potential locus of resistance.

City life and housing evolve in a direction which dislocates all integrated community living. This evolution tends to destroy local community life, both as a milieu for socialisation and as a basis for viable organic collectivities. These collectivities now cease to exist. There is only a monstrous juxtaposition of individuals and of families, each living for itself or anonymously coexisting. Whatever his work and wherever he may live the individual is confronted by surroundings that are either hostile or impersonal and unknown.

The only remaining motivation is the race after the carrot of consumption, after an 'ever higher standard of living' (not to be confused with true living, which has no 'standard'). As there is always another standard of living higher than the one enjoyed, this pursuit turns out to be a treadmill.

Social life as a whole keeps up its democratic facade (with political parties, trade unions, etc.). But these organisations, as well as the state,

politics and public life in general are profoundly bureaucratised.¹ Any active participation by individuals in the life of political or trade union organisations can have, properly speaking, no meaning at all. Objectively, nobody can do anything, nobody can effectively struggle against the existing state of affairs. Most individuals see such a struggle as void of meaning. Only a small minority of the population remains mystified in this respect and acts as a link between the bureaucratised organisation and the population at large. When the population 'participates' in politics, it is only in an opportunist and cynical way, at election time.

Not only have politics and political organisations become bureaucratised and abandoned by the people, but so have all organisations and all collective activity. As someone once put it, 'among bowls players there are still people who play bowls. But there is no one to elect officers, order new bowls or discuss questions of importance to bowls players.' Privatisation has become the characteristic attitude of individuals.²

Social irresponsibility becomes the dominant feature of human behaviour. For the first time, irresponsibility becomes possible on a massive scale. Society no longer has any challenges before it, either internal or external. Its capacities to produce enormous wealth give it margins unimaginable in any other historical periods. These allow it almost any errors, almost any irrationalities, almost any waste. Its own alienation and inertia prevent it from confronting new tasks and asking itself new questions. No crucial problem is even posed to it, which might put its fundamental incapacity to the test. Nothing ever makes it confront an explicit choice, however irrational the terms. Nothing even makes it understand that the possibility of such a choice exists.

Art and culture have become simple objects of consumption and pleasure without any connection with human or social problems. Formalism and the Universal Museum become the supreme manifestations of culture.

The philosophy of society becomes consumption for consumption's sake in private life, and organisation for organisation's sake in collective life.

The description we have just given is partly an extrapolation from present social reality; but much of this 'air-conditioned nightmare' is already upon us. Bureaucratic society is evolving in this direction at an ever increasing speed. This is the final objective of the ruling classes: to annihilate the revolt of the exploited and their struggle to be free by diverting it into the rat race of consumption, to break up their solidarity

1 The political bureaucracies are not of course simple replicas of the bureaucracies in production.

2 Of course, privatisation is not disappearance of society; it is a modality of society, a type of social relations.

through hierarchy, to prevent all possible resistance through the bureaucratisation of all collective endeavours and channels of protest. Whether conscious or not, this is the goal of bureaucratic capitalism, the actual meaning which unifies the policies of the ruling strata and the processes which take place in today's society.

But this project is utopian. It must fail and it is failing. It cannot overcome the fundamental contradiction of modern society, which on the contrary it multiplies a hundredfold. It cannot suppress the struggle of men and transform them into puppets, manipulated by the bureaucracies of production, consumption and politics. It is to the analysis of this failure that we now wish to turn.

PAUL CARDAN

ABOUT OURSELVES

Since the last issue of 'Solidarity' we have reprinted "Busmen - What Next?" several times. We have now printed 3,600, nearly all sold. We still need volunteers for selling this pamphlet, and its sequel "Glasgow Busmen in Action" (see advertisement, p.22) at bus garages in London and the provinces. What about you? Our sales of these pamphlets are only restricted by our ability to get them to busmen.

"Hungary '56", by Andy Anderson, has also gone well. 1,700 are already sold. There have been large orders from all over the world, including over 400 from the United States. We have still not been paid for substantial numbers of them, and this could seriously delay future pamphlets and books. Please hurry up with your debts. Donations for printing and duplicating would also be welcomed.

We have printed some "Bert Bensen Was Here" stickers (see articles pp.1-6). These are available from us at 2/6d. per hundred or 20/-d. per thousand.

We want to have more discussions in 'Solidarity' like the current one on shop stewards. For this we need more letters, comments, criticisms, cartoons, ideas, articles. From you - the people who buy and read 'Solidarity'. The relatively small group of Solidarists who are actively involved in producing the paper are well aware of their own limitations. The only way 'Solidarity' can be improved - or even kept up to the present standard - is by more readers being involved in the editorial work.

O. H. M. S.

If a civil servant is to handle confidential or secret documents, he first must be 'screened'. In the government department where I work, you don't know anything about it until that happy day when the boss tells you he wants you to do some work involving 'classified' documents. Nobody seems to know how, when, and by whom this screening is done. Most of my 'screened' colleagues were not even aware of the precautionary procedure laid down for those entrusted to handle classified documents.

Recently a superior (sic) officer phoned and told me to write down classified material which he would dictate. I pointed out that (a) I was not screened, and (b) it wouldn't do to dictate such material over the telephone. He hesitated. "Perhaps you're right. Just leave the classification off - I'll add it myself later."

One day, I heard two superior (sic, sick, sik) officers disagreeing about whether a particular document should be classified as 'confidential' or 'secret' before being circulated. They both read through the regulations about classification, but still couldn't agree. Finally, a compromise was reached - omit the classification and add it later when they were agreed about it.

On another occasion my boss (Mr. X) told his boss (Mr. Y) to find out who among his (Mr. X's) minions was screened. Mr. Y gave Mr. X a list.

Mr. X: "But that doesn't include Mr. Zed. He's screened!"

Mr. Y: "Oh, is he?"

Mr. X: "Well, he was when we were in the old building."

Mr. Y: "Oh well, I suppose he still is. I'll add him to my list."

As I've said, I'm not screened. I must be a security risk. Perhaps they concluded this from the fact that, although I don't take an active part in revolutionary socialist politics, I am the friend of a civil servant in the same Department who does. What seems a little odd about this is that he is screened. Perhaps his superior (sic, sick, sik) officers don't know that he is a friend of mine?

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

(to screened Solidarists only)

shop stewards - 4

We are continuing our discussion on the shop stewards movement. Our emphasis has been on a critical appraisal of the movement as it really is, not as we would like it to be. We shall welcome any further contributions.

The two contributors in this issue are Jim Petter (Secretary of Walthamstow Trades Council and a member of the AEU) and Brian Jeffreys (a rank-and-file member of the TGWU, who works at Fords, Dagenham).

Shop stewards are the backbone of the Trade Union movement. Without thought of ever threatening victimisation, they stand ready to place their experience and special abilities in the service of the least of the workers they represent. In loyalty to their fellow members and at considerable financial sacrifice to themselves, they act as watchdogs preventing the more unseemly acts of injustice from being implemented. Working class industrial history is a continuous epic of high courage, even heroism and sometimes martyrdom, by men who put the interests of their class before their own. But we only deceive ourselves if we pretend that this is the whole story.

We all know the shop steward who has become an institution in the factory; sociable and engaging, he usually runs some mildly dishonest fiddle like the loan club or football pool; he has a habit of accidentally running into the same weekend bar as the foreman; will be found working any overtime going; can be relied upon to find the best reasons for doing nothing; and occasionally fights a case to a successful and foregone conclusion. Nobody has ever seen him elected and he seldom fades away.

Then there are shop stewards completely without conscience. To nobody's surprise, they are promoted chieftain. Later they perhaps blossom into rate fixers, progress chasers, work study assistants, or even into the personnel office. The trade union bureaucracy is recruited almost without exception from rank and file trade union members; the more treacherous and reactionary they are, the more they boast that they were once shop stewards. We know the bureaucratic stranglehold Communist Party shop stewards established at Fords, which led inevitably to the debacle of two years ago. Before that, Trotskyist bureaucracy on the building sites brought disillusionment with sloganizing and indifference to any organized activity. Finally, just a year ago, Communist Party militants in the power industry exposed -- let us hope for all time -- the insincerity of those who claim for themselves the privilege of telling workers how to conduct the class struggle.

Who the hell wants to be a shop steward? Despite the well-known apathy in far too many shops, it is surprising that quite a few workers do. So long as stewards are as readily available as they are today, a Shop Stewards' Movement of some sort will continue to exist. A candidate's motives

are many and mixed, the lowest common denominator being a form of egoism: to prove himself of more account than others. There is nothing wrong with this; it is the other motives that determine whether a shop steward will be good or bad, and the self-seekers and megalomaniacs are easily spotted.

Probably the great majority of would-be stewards are initially moved by genuine good intentions and a desire to serve the members with whom they work. And it is in no way discreditable for a young new steward to take office with sponsorship from the Communist or Trotskyist backroom faction. But let the innocent, inexperienced new steward beware; neither the best intentions nor a determination to strike a militant attitude on all occasions will save him from disillusionment. After a short honeymoon when everybody kids him that his shop will cradle the revolution, he is left to carry the baby, deserted both by his own workmates and by the Party faction under whose tutelage he acted. He then either resigns in disgust -- if the boss hasn't already sacked him -- or becomes a puppet of the Communists, Trotskyists, Catholic Action, Moral Re-Armament, or some other aspiring bureaucrats to whom workers are just sheep for them to herd.

THE STEWARDS' JOB

Socialism can only be a reality when direct participation in decision-making is practised on the widest possible scale; when decision-making by delegate or representative is avoided whenever possible. Such democracy requires that all who participate have an interest in the outcome of the discussion. In any modern industrial workplace we have the prerequisites for direct decision-making; a shop meeting will necessarily be attended by men who have a vital and well-recognised common interest in the conditions of their employment. When they are members of a trade union, even though they never attend a branch meeting, their union badge is a visible sign that they recognise this common interest. But not all men are properly articulate, and sound decisions can only be taken in full knowledge of the relevant facts. The shop steward as a representative of his shop will see that the facts are made available to all, and that each individual point of view is given the consideration it deserves.

This democratic process is often lacking today. Before asking whether it is practical and desirable, we should first ask what we expect from trade union organisation.

Many well-meaning people, when asked to support nuclear disarmament, reply that much as they deplore nuclear weapons, the H-bomb is nevertheless a fact of life and we must learn how to live with it. There is today within CND a substantial minority whose intentions are far from well-meant; they want to emasculate the anti-bomb movement, to make it accept "living with the bomb" as the "practical politics" of nuclear disarmament. In the same way, the original aim of the trade unions was the overthrow of capitalism, but unfortunately the 'realists' who advocated 'living with capitalism' quickly took over. Today we have an established bureaucracy which is confident it can 'improve' capitalism and horrified by the idea of smashing capitalism. It is significant that none of the critics of the trade unions

suggest any change in the bureaucratic machine. Communist or Trotskyist militant, Catholic Action, Iris, Edward Martell's Freedom League -- all are agreed on at least one point: that the present bureaucratic structure must be preserved. There is no formal covenant between these various opposing groups, but a sort of gentlemen's agreement exists that in no event will the machinery of bureaucracy be destroyed. In fact, they all now advocate extending the bureaucracy. The shop steward -- who until recently was barely tolerated as a necessary nuisance -- is now being wooed into joining the junior bureaucracy. This may be the road the trade unions will march along in the future; they have already travelled it quite some distance. It does not even pretend to lead to socialism. It is the same road that leads to nuclear annihilation.

It is possible that no part of the present trade union movement will be active in the struggle for socialism; perhaps we shall have to start from scratch in building the workers' organization that will overthrow capitalism. But at least it seems that what passes for workshop organization today could be the embryo of future workers' councils and the nurseries in which workers' control develops. If this is so, then trade unions still have a role to play, in which the influence of the shop steward may well be decisive.

Of course shop stewards must concern themselves with the trivialities of the average workshop complaint, for the bulk of their activities will consist of rooting out the snail on the landing. Any steward not satisfied with that limited horizon will have to decide whether his duty is to strike the best possible bargain with the present bosses or to add his puny efforts to the genuine revolutionary struggle. How he resolves this dilemma will depend on whether he sees himself as a leader of his workmates or their representative.

SPOKESMEN NOT BOSSES

The cult of leadership assumes that ordinary mortals are incapable of making decisions, and that a privileged elite are sufficiently gifted to decide for them. Leadership can be practised only through a hierarchy in which some are more privileged than others, in which some are supposed to understand and others only to obey. Leadership can never admit to making mistakes, except long after the event when 'analysis' becomes a parlour game for politicians, and 'self-criticism' can be counted to advantage. When obvious mistakes are made, when treachery is obviously afoot, the most odious crime will be explained as 'tactically necessary'. (Always beware the tactician!)

When stewards are 'leaders' rather than representatives, they transfer their loyalty from the workers they should represent and become yesmen for a policy determined outside the factory. If an external faction has captured the shop stewards' committee, the will of the rank and file no longer matters. A shop stewards' committee is vital in factory organization so long as it limits its functions to communications and co-ordination between shops. But when the committee arrogates to itself the executive power to decide on every workshop struggle in conformity to some external analysis, then the rank and file loses confidence. When a crisis comes, disaster is assured.

The other choice is for the steward to take the less glamorous role of the workers' representative, who will never be more than a spokesman among equals. Although many talk glibly about smashing capitalism few do much about it, either because they are scared of what might come after, or because they simply cannot imagine the consequences. Do we accept workers' control and direct participation in decision-making as the socialist alternative to capitalism? If we do, then our objective in smashing capitalism must be to devise practical ways of smashing the concept that workers cannot and will not take responsibility for decision-making. A shop steward who remains the shop representative will see this as an essential part of the trust which has been placed in him. (If he is interested in dictionary definitions, he may remember that a 'steward' is a trusted servant and not a dictator.)

However much we may venerate the pioneer stewards of the first half of this century, however much we may admire those who still regard the boss as the real enemy, whether trade unions and shop stewards have any revolutionary potential will depend almost entirely on the extent to which stewards are mindful that they were elected to represent their workmates in the shop. The final challenge to all bosses cannot be negotiated by bureaucrats, neither can it be imposed by an elite nor analysed by politicians; it can only be consummated through the conscious act of the whole working class.

JIM PETER

* * * * *

dagenham

The joint Union-Management campaign to smash the militancy of Ford shop stewards has been only too successful. The union officials, for their part, encourage the shop stewards to indulge in potty struggles against members of other unions. When a worker who is, say, a member of the NUVB is transferred to a department which is mainly TGWU, he runs into prejudice right away. If he commits a 'crime' (clocking out one minute early or leaving the line without permission), the shop stewards in the department will find ways not to defend him because "He's not a member of our union." In one case I know of, they went as far as to tell the department supervisor in advance that they would not defend a certain worker who belonged to a different union. This factional mentality, almost unheard of 10 years ago, is constantly spreading.

The management, for their part, are often able to rig the elections. A militant worker who the management is afraid might be elected steward can be 'loaned out' far away to a different department until the election is safely over. I even know of one case in which a good third of the men in a certain department were 'loaned out' during elections, enabling a foreman's favourite to get elected.

If an active militant manages to become a steward, the management still have some tricks up their sleeve. To perform his duties, a steward must be able to leave his job occasionally to negotiate for, say, 15 minutes on a certain worker's behalf. Often he can transfer from an assembly line

job to a bench job, thus gaining the mobility needed for his duties. But management is often able to keep a militant steward tied to an assembly line job where it is almost impossible for him to tear away for a few minutes. Management is capable of more extreme tactics than those, though; I know of one case where a shop steward was transferred to another department as soon as he was elected. Finally, management is always left with the age-old tactic of bribery, in the form of merit money.

If all these manouvors fail, the company may go as far as to transfer an entire department, with all its machinery, from Dagonham to Halwood or even to Belgium. (Several departments of the Chassis and Transmission group are now being moved to Belgium.)

WHAT WENT WRONG

In my opinion, the rot started when the shop stewards started to take notice of what the union officials were saying. Paradoxically, the worst day's work the stewards ever did was to fight for union representation at Fords. I myself think they would have done better on their own. Most of the meagre improvements of conditions at Fords have been won by strike action, usually against the unions' interfering advice and orders. Nevertheless, some of the most militant stewards tend to refer matters to union officials before deciding. This has resulted in vacillation, delays, and -- as in the Bill Francis fiasco -- failure.

Because of the lack of strong, effective shop organization, the company is able to treat Ford workers like trained bears.

One worker I know wanted to have Friday off to attend his sister's wedding. Being a simple soul, he just asked his foreman for permission to take the day off -- without pay, of course. The following month he had a day off work (his son was injured and taken to hospital). Next day he was called to give account of himself. He explained to the supervisor his reasons for not coming to work. "You will have to do better than that," said the super. "You had three days off last month." The worker protested: "I only took one. I had permission for it, it was my sister's wedding." "It was still absence," the supervisor snapped, "and since the line was running Saturday and Sunday your absence for those days has been marked on your record card. Be sure it doesn't happen again." The worker was still shook up some days after. He didn't expect any help from his union, which has promised "full co-operation to ensure overtime working."

Not only do the company try to frighten the worker; they also try to humiliate him. All around the plant are signs and notices with slogans like "Quality is your business". But if a conscientious worker stops to test his work, or calls over an inspector to check a part, the foreman jumps right on his back: "Stop fucking about!"

The cry of "Stop fucking about!" could be the theme song at Fords. I once saw a new man stop work to blow his nose. While he fumbled for his

handkerchief of the chargehand rushed up. "What's wrong, has the machine broken?"

"No, I'm just blowing my nose," the man answered.

"Well, you're not paid to blow your nose," screamed the chargehand. "You're paid to work. Don't let me see you fucking about again!"

BRIAN JEFFREYS

PSYCHO - I

This is intended to be the first of a series of three articles dealing with personality and modern social science. The author is a research psychologist working at a London clinic.

For many social scientists, industrial psychology begins in 1924 with the attempt of the General Electric management to increase production at its Hawthorne works at Schenectady, N.Y. Wages in the plant were already considerably higher than the national average, and management was looking for some cheap way of raising output. They hired a team of investigators who thought that improving the lighting might do the job.

The experiment was quite simple. Two similar groups of employees were selected for study; the first was to work under different intensities of illumination and the second - acting as a check on the first - was to work under normal conditions, with lighting unaltered. The experimenters expected better lighting to increase the first

group's output up to a certain point. Management would keep the plant lit at that optimum point, and the researchers could go home.

But the results were not so simple. Lighting was increased, and output went up. Another increase in lighting, and another increase in production. But something unexpected happened at this point - the output of the second group rose as well, with no change in lighting. The first group's lighting was then reduced so that it was darker than at the beginning of the experiment - and again output increased. So did the output of the check group.

Both management and experimenters were baffled. They went ahead to vary one at a time such factors as hours, pay, meals and medical attention. Practically

every change increased output; and at the end of the study, when conditions were restored to the pre-test normal, output rose to an all-time high and remained there for nearly three months.

What was going on? Was it change itself that induced higher production? This wasn't a very helpful conclusion to such an expensive study!

* * * * *

Of course we object to the motives and attitude of the General Electric management. In fact, we find very often that psychologists and sociologists hire themselves out to big corporations - especially in America - who want them to help increase sales or production. But we can't dismiss all their findings just because they assist the ruling class. The experimental evidence is still there no matter who uses it.

Similarly, socialists must attempt to cope with the central thesis of industrial psychology - that the wage packet (or inversely, fear of the sack) is not the only driving force behind workers, manual or white-collar. William Morris knew this very well; but orthodox "Marxism" (and too often Marx himself) had a much more mechanistic approach. The 19th century picture of man-at-work, shared by socialists and conservatives alike, was that of the donkey, lured on by the carrot of wages and threatened with the stick of dismissal. If the carrot is appetizing and the work itself not overwhelmingly hard, then "work" will follow; if it doesn't, then a bigger carrot or a dose of the stick will do the job! So high wages and reasonable "working conditions" - lighting, ventilation, recreation, paid holidays - are all that are

needed (with the threat of unemployment ready when necessary). With these factors available, output can be adjusted at the management's will; the donkey will respond as desired. The donkey may well do so - but will men? The 19th century bourgeoisie believed that they would. And so too did many socialists who absorbed unconsciously the ideas of the ruling class, thus justifying Marx's dictum that the ruling ideas in any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class.

* * * * *

There are some very important questions which this approach cannot begin to answer. Why is it that the lower grades of white-collar workers - who share the same objective situation as the manual worker and are often lower paid - are so less militant? Why is it that in most countries coal miners are more class-conscious than other grades of workers? Why are some factories strike-free while bitter struggles rage in other factories in the same industry with the same pay scale?

It would be very useful for socialists to be able to answer these questions. But capitalists would like to know the answers too. Since the pioneer study at General Electric 40 years ago, the more sophisticated capitalists have learned to reject the "donkey" view of man. For it was obvious that there was something at work at the Hawthorne works - and in countless plants studied since - that motivated workers at least as much as the carrot and the stick.

The researchers came to their conclusion that the experiment itself had resulted in a change of attitude among the workers. During the experiment, the workers had for the first

time been treated as men rather than donkeys; the researchers had asked their advice on a problem, and asked for their voluntary cooperation. The workers were so gratified to be for once treated like men, that they responded with a burst of loyalty to the company and higher production.

* * * * *

Social scientists began to look at a factory not only as something producing profits via goods, but also "creating and distributing human satisfactions" among the people under its roof. A main source of these human satisfactions lies in belonging to some kind of group to belong to, especially a group which permits intimate, face-to-face contacts. (It is no accident that the highest rate of nervous disorders occurs among "social isolates", people who belong to no group, formal or informal.)

Now clearly there is little satisfaction to be found in "belonging" to something like the Ford Motor Company or the United States Army. First, the organisations are too big to permit real human contact; but more important, the aims of the groups - profits in one case, death in the other - are quickly seen as the aims of other people. The worker or the soldier realises that he is being asked to sweat or die for the benefit of men who consider themselves too important even to eat at the same table with him.

So people turn to different kinds of groups: Moral Re-Armament, the Communist Party, Jehovah's Witnesses, Alchoholics Anonymous - or Solidarity. In addition to such special, formal groups, every place of work has an informal social life

composed of various cliques and groups. Often these informal groups keep production down by exerting social pressure against rate-busters. Management responds either by trying to break up these groups (making conversation difficult, erecting partitions, transferring people to other departments) or to turn them to its purposes by offering group incentive bonuses. In the United States Army, psychologists have found it more effective to ask men to die for their platoon than for their country.

Many enlightened capitalists, especially in America, think there is no limit to the control they can achieve by psychological manipulation. But in fact the capitalist system itself sets definite limits on how far such manipulation can succeed. Management wants to keep full power over production while convincing the workers that they have the power. This is an insoluble dilemma. Management can achieve a temporary increase in morale by permitting a "Productivity Council" or "Joint Consultation Committee"; but no one is fooled for long as to who has the final say. Management can eliminate the unnecessary arrogance and insults it used to permit itself, but it can never give up its power without abolishing capitalism itself. Manipulative techniques do work, and they may work even more in the future; but they can only go so far. The question is, whether the "critical factors" can be manipulated so as to remove completely the revolutionary drive which the frustration of the shop-floor situation induces.

Social psychologists are working on other problems which

question of leadership, for instance, incline to Luxemburg's rather than Lenin's view of what effective leadership is. Others are concerned with social attitudes (prejudices and class identification) or with

the influence of different social environment upon personality development. An attempt will be made to look at some of these questions - briefly and quite inadequately - in a later article.

JOHN BROADUS WATSON

MEMO FOR MARXIST MUMS

One of the fields which 'Solidarity' has not yet dealt with has been the systematic and insidious inculcation of capitalist and fascist ideas in the young, and the spontaneous revolutionary response to these provocations by young proletarians. For these reasons we welcome these two contributions on one aspect of this problem which we reprint (slightly abridged) from 'Strike!', a radical paper published in Ohio, U.S.A.

These articles prove conclusively that the authentic Marxist school of literary analysis is not dead.

NURSERY RHYMES, CRADLE OF PROLETARIAN CULTURE

The peoples of the world have preserved, in the folk poetry that they read to their children, their revolutionary aspirations and progressive outlook. For how many years have the bourgeois professors tried to hide the deep class significance of nursery rhymes and other folk tales? The time is ripe for the vanguard radicals to unmask these misleaders of the people and arm the masses with a correct understanding of nursery rhymes.

Fortunately, even capitalist stooges have not been able to hide the fact that Humpty Dumpty is an egg. Many people, however, believe that he is an ordinary chicken egg and miss the obvious symbolism which I shall explicate below.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Humpty Dumpty is the rotten egg of capitalism supported by a wall (i.e. Wall Street). It undergoes a fall (the falling rate of profit) and shatters into a thousand pieces, revealing its inner contradictions and rottenness. The massed forces of reaction, the king's horses (Cossacks, lumpen elements, and other fascist blackguards) and the king's men (bourgeois ideologists) cannot patch together the historically outmoded system of capitalism. What revolutionary confidence this little poem will instill in the young cadres of our working class nurseries!

By now the reader should be able to extract the class meaning from any nursery rhyme. In closing I will explain the lesson of "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep", which unlike the previous example depicts the present state of society rather than a revolutionary upheaval.

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes, sir, three bags full.
One for the master, one for the dame,
One for the little boy who lives in the lane.

A black sheep, of course, means a disreputable character, no doubt a scab or some sort of fink. The boss is questioning him about his production quota. (The wool is apparently being produced on a piece-work basis.) The sheep answers in a subservient manner ("yes sir"), showing cowardice in the face of the class enemy. The last two lines describe the outrageous inequality in the distribution of the social product. The little boy who lives in the lane, representing the broad masses who live in the urban ghettos, receives only one-third of the wool. The child reader will have no difficulty in understanding why one-third of the nation is poorly clothed.

POLITT BURROUGHS

MOTHER GOOSE, IMPERIALIST LAPDOG

Even among progressives, few people realise the dangerous and pernicious influence of the poems collected by Mother Goose. The very anonymity of these poems should put us on guard. Who is this "Mother Goose" and why should the true authors hide behind this grandmotherly image? Whatever is the answer to this closely guarded secret, one thing is sure: these poems, read to our children at the formative age, are a primary tool of the bourgeois educational system to dull the revolutionary sensibilities of the coming generation.

It's clear that Aesopian language is not a leftist monopoly. For countless years apparently innocuous nursery rhymes have been sneaking reactionary sentiments past even the most vigilant parents. For example:

Little Jack Horner sat in the corner
Eating his Christmas pie.
He stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum
And said "What a good boy am I."

The authors cunningly invite the child to identify with Jack Horner by describing him as "little", thus giving him the aura of an underdog. But what does Horner proceed to do? He sits "in the corner", isolating himself from the masses, refusing to participate in their struggles. The next lines are obviously depicting Horner's petty-bourgeois status. He holds the economic pie in his lap and pulls out a plum (i.e. an especially large piece) for himself. The fact that it is a "Christmas pie" suggests collusion with the Church. The final line is both a display of petty-bourgeois smugness and an invitation for the child to follow Horner's infamous example.

In "Wee Willie Winkie" a disgusting attempt is made to win sympathy for the capitalist police.

Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town,
Upstairs and downstairs in his nightgown;
Rapping at the window, crying through the lock,
"Are the children in their beds for it's now 8 o'clock?"

At first glance Winkie seems to be a harmless figure that the normal child would identify with. But ask yourself this: Why is Winkie permitted to roam the streets when all other children must be in bed? The only conceivable answer is: Winkie has this privileged status because he is an agent of the capitalist state enforcing an eight o'clock curfew against children in the working class district! Some people have objected that Winkie is not wearing a uniform. I must admit that the nightgown is a clever touch, designed to mislead the unwary reader. It is perfectly explained when you realise that Winkie is a plainclothesman!

We all know that children go through a period when the activities of a capitalist police seem very appealing and romantic. How much harder it will be to give them a progressive outlook when they are invited to look with sympathy on the invasions of privacy and systematic terrorism practiced by Winkie.

SIDNEY DINGLEBERRY

JUST OUT

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czechmate

There's nothing I would like less than to re-open that god-awful discussion on whether the East European countries are socialist societies building communism, deformed workers' states, bureaucratic collectivist, state capitalist, or simply full of wogs.

For one thing, I do not pretend to know enough about Czechoslovakia -- the only East European country I visited -- to back up any world-historical generalizations I might make. In fact, I think it only fair to inform readers from the start exactly what are the sources of my information about Czechoslovakia.

I spent a bit more than a week there in the middle of June, most of it in Prague and a couple of days in other Bohemian towns. I came on an individual tourist visa and travelled quite freely, hitch-hiking or by train.* My knowledge is limited to the numbers from one to twenty (except 'four', whose pronunciation I never mastered); certain very useful nouns like 'coffee', 'tea' and 'milk'; and the phrase 'where is _____?' Many Czech workers speak German, which they learned the hard way, but my German is not quite good enough to discuss serious questions. So the only real discussions I had were with people who spoke English or French -- that is, students, white-collar workers or professionals.

The most striking thing about Czechoslovakia was the apparent absence of class differentials. Even in Prague, I strolled for hours without finding cafes, restaurants, cinemas, or neighbourhoods that were -- by their prices or their atmosphere -- clearly beyond the reach of ordinary people. By contrast, think of Central London, where cheap cafes (steak pudding w/2 veg -- 2/9) alternate with those discreetly expensive restaurants we would never dream of entering. I felt at ease everywhere despite my extremely casual (let's not say shabby) dress. I never had the kind of feeling you get when walking from Fulham into South Kensington, the feeling that suddenly you are a bit out of place.

The actual wage differentials, as I was able to determine them, corroborate this picture. A semi-skilled industrial worker earns about

* The reason I went to Czechoslovakia is that it is the only East European country with a reasonable visa policy. You have to get your visa before entering (cost about 15 bob). But once you've got it, you can enter whenever you like and leave whenever you like; no itinerary to submit, no compulsory advance hotel reservations, no minimum amount you have to spend. (Travel agencies will tell you that you must spend at least 28/6 a day; don't believe them.)

£8 a week,* an ordinary engineer perhaps £10, and a chief engineer something like £13. According to the official rule-book a factory director in the highest category (number 17) gets a basic salary of £28, plus production bonuses of up to 50% of his base pay. I mentioned this to several Czechs, who replied, 'Oh yes, of course. But you know there's not a single person in Czechoslovakia who's in Category 17!' An engineer in a factory employing 3000 persons told me that his director earned £16; and there were never any production bonuses because the plan was never fulfilled. Other Czechs told me this was a typical situation.

So the salary differential between a semi-skilled worker and a factory director would be on the order of 1:2. Quite a bit smaller than in Britain!

'MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION'

But there are privileges that can be bought for influence if not for money. For instance, many enterprises build blocks of flats or holiday resorts and offer places in them at very low prices, perhaps a quarter of the real cost. There are only enough places for, say, 1 in 20 employees, so 'model workers' are awarded a subsidised flat or holiday.

The transport situation is similar. Most people go by tram (very cheap -- 3d to go anywhere); some people squeeze their budgets to buy a motorbike or even a Skoda car; and a few people drive around in Tatras, the big hideous beetle-looking prestige cars. In fact, nobody can afford to buy a Tatra. But some people have the influence to use them. Thus, the head office of the Czechoslovakian Union of Youth -- a paper organization with no real functions -- owns seven Tatras for 'official purposes'. When I asked what conceivable function could require a Tatra rather than a Skoda, the 'youth leaders' told me: 'Well, you know, since we represent Czechoslovakian youth we have to make a good impression.'

It would seem that distribution of non-salary privileges goes on at all levels, unlike in the West. Consider for a moment: a British worker, no matter how 'model', never gets to live in Belgravia or in Chelsea. But I couldn't find any district in Prague that was equally exclusive (and I looked pretty hard). Everyone I spoke to agreed that factory directors, doctors, and top engineers usually lived in the same block of flats as manual workers. The best flats would be reserved for 'model' manual workers as well as bureaucrats.

* It is not easy to translate Czech money into sterling, because the government fiddles the currency. The official rate of exchange is 20 Czech crowns to the pound, but all visitors are given 40 to the pound. Czechs can buy Western currency legally, but they have to pay 80 crowns for a pound.

I have used the rate of 40 crowns to the pound in giving these salary figures, since at that rate food, clothing and consumer durables cost about the same as in Britain. It should be noted, however, that housing is very cheap -- a typical rent is 15 shillings a week for a two-room flat in Prague. So a Czech wage of £8 is probably equivalent in buying power to £10-11 in Britain. Note that this is for a standard work-week of 46 hours.

This egalitarianism was a pleasant surprise. I had never seen anything like it before, and I have a feeling that it doesn't exist in, say, the Soviet Union (although it might in China).

'CITY OF A HUNDRED SPIRES'

The disagreeable part is that, instead of everyone equally sharing a decent, civilised, perhaps beautiful public life, instead everyone shares the drabness and ugliness of a proletarian town like Leeds or Glasgow. To speak bluntly, 'Golden Prague', the 'City of a Hundred Spires', is a dirty, ugly place. The centre of town still has fine examples of baroque architecture. But everywhere else you find either old-fashioned brick slums or the modern reinforced-concrete blocks of flats which will be slums in ten years time, built without the slightest touch of imagination or originality. The shops, cafes, and local recreation-cum-propaganda centres all have the dusty run-down look of a Salvation Army reception centre. To top it off, the air is so polluted by soft-coal smoke that at times it is hard to breathe. Czechs talk with pride about the beauty of Prague, but it's very clear they just mean the baroque centre. If you talk about the rest of the city, they either wrinkle their noses in distaste or shrug with embarrassment.

The provincial cities I visited, Tabor and Dgecin, are if anything sleazier. Their only charm is in the medieval remnants, and everybody knows it. Curious -- that feudalism should build towns better than 'socialism'!

'POWER WITHOUT PRIVILEGE'

In a city like Paris or Rome, the drabness of ordinary life is broken up by flashes of bourgeois elegance. This makes life more interesting but also more cruel than in Czechoslovakia, where the power elite refrains from showing itself -- or perhaps even from being -- a privilege elite. The drabness is not only on the material side, but in the official 'style', in the absence of any wit or elegance or colour in the press and public life. One Czech was embarrassed because leaders like Novotny were so dull. 'We'd prefer someone like Kennedy or Khrushchev, someone with a bit of sparkle and life. But you know, these people we've got, they were simple workers before the war, they don't really know how to speak. ...'

The people who run Czechoslovakia's industry, politics and culture have been doing so for only 16 years. That is not long enough to establish the kind of elaborate rituals of social class that exist in the West. The men of power in Czechoslovakia do not boldly proclaim their presence in public display of privileges. Instead they are quiet, even grim in their public image -- rather like the English Puritan bourgeoisie of the Seventeenth Century.

CZOCKE

In the last few years there has been a definite -- if only partial -- destalinisation in Czechoslovakia. Stalinist terror has disappeared; 'normal' repression remains.

Over and over again people told me: 'Three years ago I wouldn't have dared speak to you, but now I can say whatever I want.' One fellow wanted me to send him books in English when I returned. 'You mean just send them through the post?' I asked. 'Wouldn't you get in trouble?' 'Oh no', he answered, 'you can even send me a book by Trotsky. They don't bother us anymore for things like that.'

FROM STALINISM TO MCCARTHYISM

Nobody goes to gaol anymore simply because of bureaucratic whims or secret denunciations. In fact, it seems that even having genuinely disloyal attitudes won't put you in nick. But if you aren't quite 'right' politically, you will have less chance of promotion; and if you are definitely 'wrong' politically (write letters of protest, get arrested in the occasional anti-government demonstrations, etc) you can lose your job or be expelled from university. This is essentially McCarthyism, but people who have lived under Stalinism find it quite an improvement.

There are no signs of any organized opposition. For several years there have been anti-government demonstrations of a sort on the evening of May 1; but they seem to be fairly spontaneous, the time and place being set by tradition rather than decided by anyone. There are songs on the radio whose words have bitter double meanings; there is a jazz club where Yevtushenko and Ferlinghetti are read; there is lots of grumbling about the tight housing situation or the falling standard of living*-- but these do not constitute organized opposition.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE CENSOR

The written word is still strangled; walk into any bookshop and you can almost hear sounds of choking. There is of course no opposition press in Czechoslovakia, and the only foreign newspapers on public sale are the organs of pro-Khrushchev Communist Parties. You can get the Daily Worker or

* Everyone, including the official press, agrees that the standard of living has fallen in the last three years. Wages have stagnated while prices have risen about 20%. The official explanation is 'mistakes' that have been 'rectified'. Privately, many people blame the military budget and the foreign aid program. An anti-government demonstration a year ago included the slogan 'Cuba si, meat no'.

L'Humanite, but not The Guardian, Le Monde . . . or Peking Review.* There are no original foreign-language books, neither Penguin nor Livres de Poche nor even the left-wing Editions de Minuit. You must rely completely on reprints done in East Germany or the Soviet Union, and the list is small indeed. Every English collection is chock-full of Sir Walter Scott, Mark Twain, or the old favourite, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists -- but there is absolutely nothing by men like Alan Sillitoe or C. Wright Mills. Freud and Sartre are equally unavailable in any language.

An aspiring young careerist told me, with some embarrassment, that in trying to do a University thesis on "The Theory of Socialist Management", he hadn't been able to find a single worth-while book or article in Czech or Russian. The only place he found any discussion of the theory of management was in American business journals! (He says he found them very useful in writing his thesis.)

GUNS INSTEAD OF PAPER

Two years ago J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye was published in Czech. It sold out in two days -- and hasn't been reprinted! This should not be interpreted as an attempt to suppress Salinger, for an edition of Shakespeare's sonnets was handled the same way. Regardless of the demand, books will stay out of print for years because of the 'paper shortage'. Since Czechoslovakia is a major exporter of timber and timber products, the paper shortage is clearly not an economic necessity but a deliberate administrative maneuver. God knows where they think these tricks get them.

I happened to meet some members of what you might call the 'cultural opposition' -- painters and poets who were in favour of 'socialism' but sorry it had happened to them. They are furious at the government for restricting travel, censoring books, and opposing amateur art. They are not asking for subsidies, but for a system that would allow unsubsidised art to flourish. Although very sensitive about civil rights, they are much less concerned with the question -- vital to any socialist -- of who runs industry and how. They have a vague sympathy for the workers, but many feel that the regime is too proletarian. And they have a fatal attraction for anything Western, Paul Anka as well as Thelonius Monk. Their perspective is for gradual liberalization like that of the last few years. They don't know anything about Hungary.

It is hard to say whether these people should be called a right opposition or a left. (They certainly have nothing to do with the real right opposition of which I met a few examples; explicitly pro-capitalist, anti-worker and anti-semitic.) There is no telling which way the cultural oppositionists will go, especially with the disappearance of the hot-house atmosphere that makes everything Western seem glamorous. They might take the path

* While not on general sale, Western newspapers like The Times or Le Monde can easily be found in government offices.

the Hungarian intellectuals took in 1956; an alliance with the workers for the establishment of real socialism. Or they might become fully domesticated critics, of the Crosland brand. Even though they are not revolutionaries now, I think we must show them sympathy instead of glibly denouncing them as reformists.

Until now you could travel cheaply in Eastern Europe only with an organized group of Communists or sympathisers. But with the recent change in regulations, British people can go to Czechoslovakia as easily as to the Costa Brava. A fortnight's holiday may not be enough to settle the question of the class nature of the Communist countries; but it would help in the slow process of forming contacts among ordinary people across national boundaries -- a process essential to the building of an international revolutionary movement.

MARVIN GARSON

SOLIDARITY PUBLICATIONS

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